

# THREADS OF INFLUENCE

TEXTILES FROM THE 2ND–20TH CENTURY

FRANCESCA GALLOWAY 2021

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# FOREWORD

We are pleased to be presenting *Threads of Influence: textiles from the 2nd to the 20th century* in this online catalogue. The wide-ranging small group of works we have assembled are united by their cultural synthesis, or the way in which they interweave styles from across the globe, and their role as symbols of power, authority, and social status. As such they embody some of the most fascinating and complex aspects of textile art. A large Chinese Tree of Life painted silk palampore (cat. 8) is a spectacular and exceedingly rare exemplar of the reciprocity of design influences between India, China, and western Europe, facilitated by the various East India companies throughout the eighteenth century. Made for the European market, in response to the fashionable demand for what were known as ‘India’ goods, it borrows the idiom of painted chintz palampores produced on the Coromandel coast in India for the west, but is executed in the vivid palette of the silk painting workshops of Canton. An Ottoman velvet (cat. 6) employs Italianate motifs, indicative of the close relationship between these two weaving traditions in the late 16th century, while an important group of four silk embroidery fragments with Dionysian themes (cat. 1) gives an insight into the intersection of cultures on the Silk Road between the 2nd and 4th centuries AD. A large and rare medieval tapestry fragment from Northern Europe (cat. 5), may have been part of a striking 15th century throne canopy, and two magnificent Indonesian *palepai*, or ceremonial cloths (cats. 15 & 16), were only permitted to be owned and displayed by those of higher status in the community and shown at life crisis rituals (i.e. birth, marriage, death etc.). They would express their owner’s spiritual and secular authority.

This catalogue is also the result of our own reciprocal ‘threads of influence’, in containing a number of textiles that came to our attention through collaboration with esteemed colleagues, and that we discovered and worked on together: the Indonesian *palepai* (cats. 15 & 16) with Thomas Murray, the painted silk palampore (cat. 8) with Titi Halle of Cora Ginsburg, and the Nou-Rouz shawl (cat. 9) with Marie-Noëlle Sudre of Aux Fils du Temps.

We would like to thank Misha Anikst, William DeGregorio, Maximilien Durand, Hero Granger-Taylor, Maria João Ferreira, Rosamund Garrett, Will Kwiatkowski, Lukas Nickel, Sara Peterson, Matthew Reeves and Richard Valencia for their valuable contributions.

Exhibition concept and catalogue editing: Christine Ramphal, Danielle Beilby, and Mary Galloway

Francesca Galloway   Christine Ramphal







# I

## An important group of four silk embroidery fragments with Dionysian themes from the Silk Road

2nd–4th century AD

Silk with various embroidery techniques executed in silk thread

A 82.5 × 33 cm, Silk damask

B 25 × 27 cm, Silk tabby

C 29 × 19 cm, Silk tabby (not illustrated here)

D 12.5 × 15 cm, Silk tabby

This rare collection of embroidered fragments consists of two groups. A, B, and C make up the first, with D standing separately. The first group are all decorated with the same design, consisting of scrolling and overlapping bands of ribbon in cream, blue and red punctuated along their length with small dots. The ribbons are artfully configured to create a repeat pattern of ogival frames and small rhombuses which enclose a range of motifs: mostly flowers and grapes, but also birds and figures. This composition was adapted from popular Imperial Roman designs in which vine or acanthus scrolls were used to both divide up and embellish the surface area of mosaics and carved architectural components such as pilasters. As is so often the case with Roman ornament, the roots of this complex motif may be found in the art produced in the late Greek and Hellenistic worlds. The versatility and attractiveness of this scrolling arrangement meant that it was adapted to other high-status items, such as silverware. This pattern and its various decorative elements were exported from the Roman Empire to Central Asia in the early centuries AD, by means of small, portable luxury objects such as silver vessels, carved gems, and textiles. They were transmitted along the Silk Roads criss-crossing Eurasia, in which Bactria (in present-day Afghanistan and southern Uzbekistan) was an important stepping-stone. Bactria is associated with earlier textiles exhibiting Graeco-Roman ornament, including embroideries, which were disseminated east along these routes.<sup>1</sup>

On fragment A, one of the ogival frames contains the figure of small putto (sometimes referred to as Eros or Cupid), whose head is now missing. He carries a basin or large bowl. There are a number of motifs within the overall composition which share his orientation. He is flanked by over-sized wheat ears with a strong red outline, which are repeated within the composition, always within a rhombus. In addition, there are three amphorae hung with trailing ribbons, and two double-handled, fluted kylix cups. Both vessel types are associated with wine drinking. These should be viewed in light of the large bunches of grapes of various shapes and colours and accompanying vine tendrils, all featuring within ogival frames. This combination of motifs is also seen on fragment C. Similarly, stylised, somewhat flattened vine-leaves with tendrils are visible. Cumulatively, this iconography strongly suggests a Dionysiac theme, relating to wine production and consumption, and therefore we may construe that the little putto is himself a participant, a servant bearing a weighty basin of wine. The Greek god Dionysus and his Roman successor, Bacchus, featured widely in Graeco-Roman art and architecture.



Detail of fragment A

There are several additional details which provide insights into the iconography of these textile fragments. Firstly, the inclusion of wheat ears alongside Dionysiac imagery is not unknown but, intriguingly, the combination of wheat and grape is largely associated with Christian imagery in later Roman art, where they are interpreted as a reference to the Eucharist. Several texts in the New Testament refer to this Christian ritual, in which bread (alluding to Christ's body) and wine (alluding to his blood) are consumed. Therefore, it is possible that imagery on this textile has a Christian significance. This proposal is not at odds with the presence of Dionysiac iconography, since grapevine motifs and wine vessels were appropriated from pagan art for use in Christian contexts.

Secondly, grapes, vine-leaves and related Dionysiac imagery are among the most popular motifs in Bactrian art, featuring as early as the 2nd century BC on a basin handle found at the Hellenistic city of Ai Khanum.<sup>2</sup> Both naturalistic gold vine-leaves and a relief scene with Dionysus attended by a drunken Silenus were excavated from 1st century AD elite tombs at Tillya-tepe.<sup>3</sup> The 2nd–3rd century AD treasure house at Begram yielded both a plaster medallion decorated with a highly naturalistic grapevine and a single bronze vine-leaf.<sup>4</sup> Small details can be revealing: we even find small three-grape clusters with tendrils in a wall-painting at the 1st century AD Khalchayan,<sup>5</sup> similar to the blue grapes in the ogival frame below the putto on this textile.

Thirdly, the little putto seems to be wearing anklets, a type of jewellery which was not present in the Mediterranean world. Tillya-tepe in Bactria has yielded two sets of gold clasps featuring plump putti executed in a Hellenising style wearing this kind of ankle adornment.<sup>6</sup> Similar figures wearing anklets also appear on gold jewellery from Taxila in neighbouring Gandhara, which occupied present-day northwest Pakistan and Eastern Afghanistan.<sup>7</sup> Such anklets are overwhelmingly associated with Indic culture, and they are also sometimes worn by putti frolicking among vines and grapes in late 1st – 3rd century AD Gandharan stone reliefs, which is unsurprising when we recall that Gandharan sculpture drew much of its inspiration from Greek and Roman sources.<sup>8</sup> The presence of anklets on our putto does not imply an Indian origin for this textile, any more than it does for the Tillya-tepe clasps, but reflects the transmission of shared iconography across regions to the East of the Roman Empire. However, these anklets may offer a clue to the production source for our textiles – if they are from Bactria, then this would represent a continuation of earlier textile production in the area.

The configuration of putti figures within leafy frames occurs elsewhere on textiles from Central Asia. The Abegg Stiftung collection in Switzerland has two large fragments of a woollen weft-faced compound tabby textile, probably from Xinjiang, which uses a similar vocabulary of ornament, also derived from late Roman art. Furthermore, a young man wearing a typologically related textile was discovered in an early 3rd century AD tomb at Yingpan, on the northern branch of the Silk Roads around the Taklamakan desert, at Urumqi, in present-day Xinjiang.<sup>9</sup> He wore a finely woven, bright red woollen caftan decorated with repeated scenes of battling putti (without wings) carrying various weapons, and pomegranate trees flanked by frolicking goats, all in a vivid yellow.



Fragment B

Both Xinjiang textiles share elements in common with our fragments, all three employing a similar repertoire of motifs from late Antiquity. But the Xinjiang pieces are woven woollen textiles, a mode of manufacture which is conducive to a more formal composition, entailing repeat motifs and strict symmetry. In contrast, the decoration of our textile is hand stitched onto a silk ground. This technique provided the craftsmen with far more creative freedom than weaving, enabling them to produce individual floral motifs, executed in detail with vibrant colouring. The embroidery adds greatly to the charm and naturalism of elements within the design, resulting in a freer and more fluent composition than could ever be produced on a loom.

Returning now to textile fragment A, we should not overlook the presence of the blue-green parakeet with curved beak and outstretched wings, which perches within an ogival frame. He is perhaps a distant descendant of the famous parakeet in a mid-2nd century Hellenistic mosaic at Pergamon (present-day Turkey). Birds were even more popular on Roman imperial mosaics and wall-paintings, regularly appearing in vine-scroll compositions, no doubt attracted by the swelling grapes which hang temptingly around. We may perhaps see these birds as part of a paradisiacal composition, for example, as seen in the ceiling in the ambulatory of the early Christian church of Santa Costanza in Rome, dated to the 4th century AD, where they inhabit scrolling vines harmoniously alongside putti. It is worth noting the similarities between iconography found on mosaics and that on textiles, and complex compositions likely travelled west from the Roman Empire via the latter medium.

D is pieced and the design is overall much denser and depicts a nearly complete figure. The figure is dressed in an ornate top with a belt and a skirt made out of wide stripes or pleats and on its head is an elaborate headdress. The figure appears to have both hands at its hips. There are remnants of two further figures. One to the bottom of the central figure just described, and one which lays horizontally and with only part of the skirt and the left side of its upper body visible. Of the third figure only the left ear and part of the headdress remains. Furthermore, we can see (as in the other pieces) evidence of the stylized grape and floral motifs.

*Extract from a description by Sara Peterson. Report and references available on request.*

- 1 See for example: Mayke Wagner et al. 'The ornamental trousers from Sampula (Xinjiang, China): their origins and biography,' *Antiquity* 83 (2009): 1065–1075. Sergey Yatsenko, 'Yuezhi on Bactrian Embroidery from Textiles found at Noyon Uul, Mongolia,' *The Silk Road* 10 (2012): 39–48
- 2 Afghanistan, *Hidden treasures from the National Museum, Kabul*, eds. Frederik Hiebert and Pierre Cambon (National Geographic, 2008): 112, cat. 13
- 3 Ibid: 258, cat. 84; 286–287, cat. 136
- 4 Ibid: 185, cat. 189; 175, cat. 178
- 5 Galina A. Pugachenkova, *Khalchaian: k problem khudozhestvennoi kul'tury Severnoi Baktrii* (Fan 1966): 144, cat. 87
- 6 Hiebert and Cambon, 2008: 244, cat. 59; 256, cat. 80
- 7 Elizabeth Rosen Stone, 'Die Adaption westlicher Motive in der Kunst von Gandhara,' in *Gandhara das buddhistische Erbe Pakistans*, ed. Christian Luczanits (Philip von Zabern 2008), 99, cats. 30 and 32
- 8 They are commonly found in bands of ornaments, for example. See also: Benjamin Rowland, 'The Vine Scroll in Gandhara,' *Artibus Asiae* 19, 3/4 (1956): 353–361
- 9 Afried Wiczorek and Christoph Lind, eds., *Ursprung der Seidenstraße: Sensationelle Neufunde aus Xinjiang, China* (WBG 2007): 260, cat. 162



Fragment D



Fragment A

**Parading bulls**

Central Asia, Sogdia, following Sasanian prototypes, mid-7th – 8th century AD

Silk samite

119 × 64 cm; size of bulls approx. 34 × 33 cm

Radio carbon 14 (EH-45349) – 95.4% probability 650 AD–770 AD

(74.2% probability 650 AD–730 AD; 21.2% probability 740 AD–770AD)

This silk samite fragment depicting two rows of large-scale bulls on a pink red ground – three facing to the right above another row of bulls facing in the alternate direction – is associated with the group of post-Sasanian ‘Sogdian’ silks. The design and colour scheme of our silk, featuring bulls, is sophisticated. Holding a lotus blossom in their mouths, with their tails curled up and dropping down, typical of the way cows use their tails to swot flies, their cream bodies are highly decorated with pearled roundels and an elaborate collar with pairs of attachments at the back of the neck, one pair streaming out behind the neck with the appearance of fish while two other pairs hang down on each side of the body. In addition to these attachments, the bulls are decorated with a number of ‘bulls-eye’ motifs of different sizes, particularly over their joints, and with leaf-like motifs around the perimeter of their bodies.

The five complete or part bulls in the width of this fragment indicate, that if all these five bulls were originally represented whole, this could mean an original minimum width for the textile of c. 175 cm without borders. In practice, the two outer bulls are likely to have been compacted widthways due to the denser spacing of the warp towards the selvedges, making c.160 cm more likely.

The arrangement of the animals in rows marching alternately left and right is typical for this sub-group of post-Sasanian ‘Sogdian’ silks and can be compared to the winged horses silk and the bull silk fragment (T.111) in the Sancta Sanctorum in Rome, now in the Museum Sacro of the Vatican. Another example of alternate rows of animals on plain ground are the fragments of tiger silk (Inv.Nr.4865/5066) in the Abegg Stiftung. Another silk from the Sancta Sanctorum is a fragment showing the rear half of a bull where the complete design must have been very similar to this one (T.110). This group is less common than the typical Sogdian design of confronting animals or birds within roundels.

*Report by Hero Granger-Taylor available on request.*





# 3

## Silver-gilt plaque with winged horse

Central Asia, Tubo Empire, second half of the 7th century AD

Repoussé silver-gilt

26.8 × 24 cm

A winged-horse stands in profile, framed by cloud tendrils whose patterns are echoed in its wing and tail. The horse is gracefully rendered and shaded through a series of fine incisions, with decorative holes in its body and mane. The central image is framed by a border of interlocking curved forms, with a fragmentary outer border with further cloud tendrils. To the right we can see the edge of a repeating border, meaning that this delicate plaque could have once been part of a larger piece, though this is not entirely clear.

The shaped holes in the horse's body and mane, and the cloud above, would most likely have held precious stones, such as turquoise. The much smaller holes around the plaque's border (most obviously seen on the left-hand side) might have been used to stitch the plaque to a textile. It is doubtful that such plaques were affixed to garments, but more likely that they were used as decoration for large textile panels, for instance those which might have been used as a hanging inside a tent.



# 4

## An Abbasid linen *tiraz* with kufic inscriptions in red, made presumably for Caliph Al-Radi (r. 934–940)

Egypt, 10th century

Linen with woven silk inscription

11 × 32.5 cm

### *Provenance*

Bouvier collection, Switzerland

Carl Leonhard Burckhardt collection (1902–1965), Alexandria

### *Exhibition*

Tisserands et teinturiers d'Égypte, textiles de la collection Bouvier, exposition dossier, Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris, June 2002 – January 2003

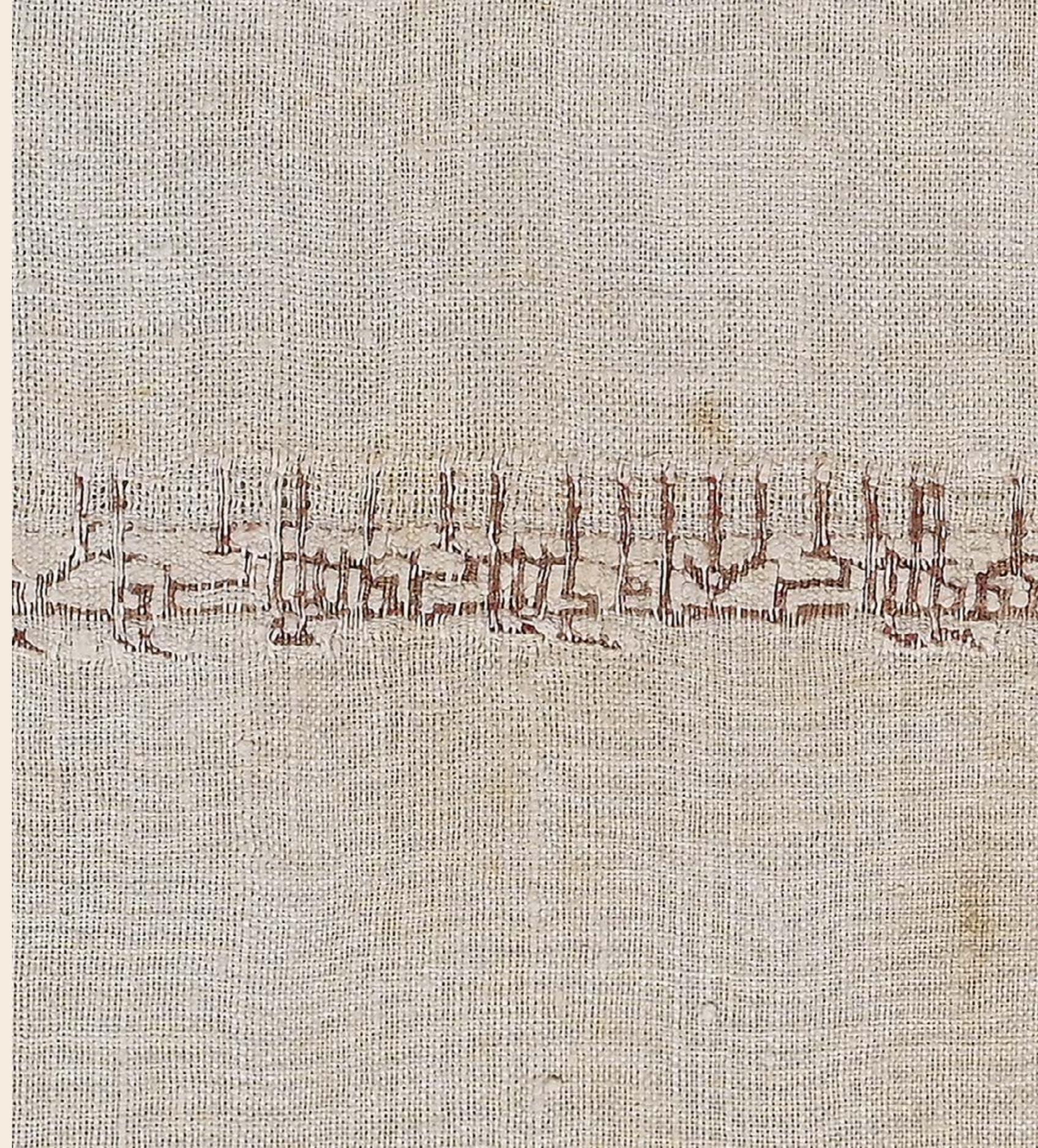
### *Inscription*

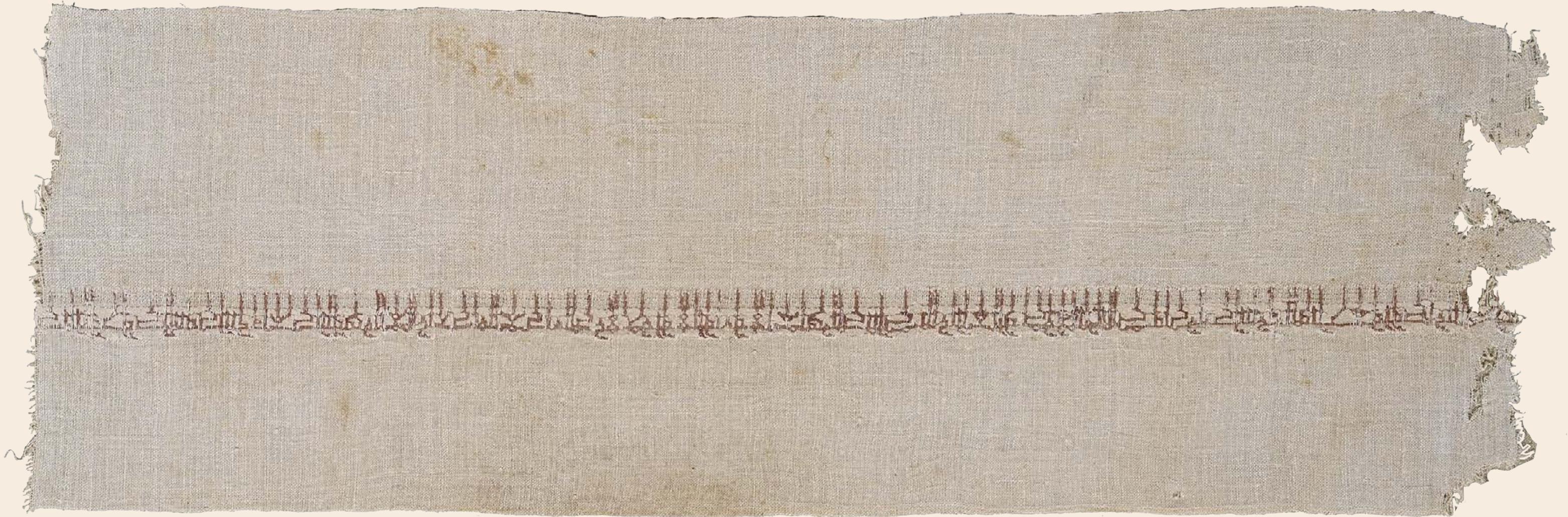
In red Kufic, Arabic prayers and blessings (not all decipherable):

*'And He is the Most High, the Supreme, the Supreme, who does not change and does not cease to exist and does not ... and in "His hands is the dominion of all things: And to Him will ye Be all brought back" (Qur'an 36:83) and blessings ...'*

A *tiraz* is a decorative woven, painted or embroidered strip which would have decorated formal dresses and turbans during the Umayyad period (661–750 AD), particularly during the Abbasid and Fatamid Caliphates up until the Mamluk period. Made exclusively in royal workshops, these honorary textiles were offered as gifts to important guests, as a reward to those in favour at court, or worn by sovereigns themselves. Many carry inscriptions in Kufic characters, or in Nashki cursive script from the 11th century. In some cases, these inscriptions mention the name of the Caliph. Our woven inscription seems unusual in the sense that it consists of prayers and blessings and not of any of the customary texts, nor does it contain any historical information.

*We thank Will Kwiatkowski for his translation of the Kufic inscription. A transcript of the inscription is available on request.*





# 5

## A tapestry fragment, perhaps from a throne canopy

France or Southern Netherlands, c. 1425–50

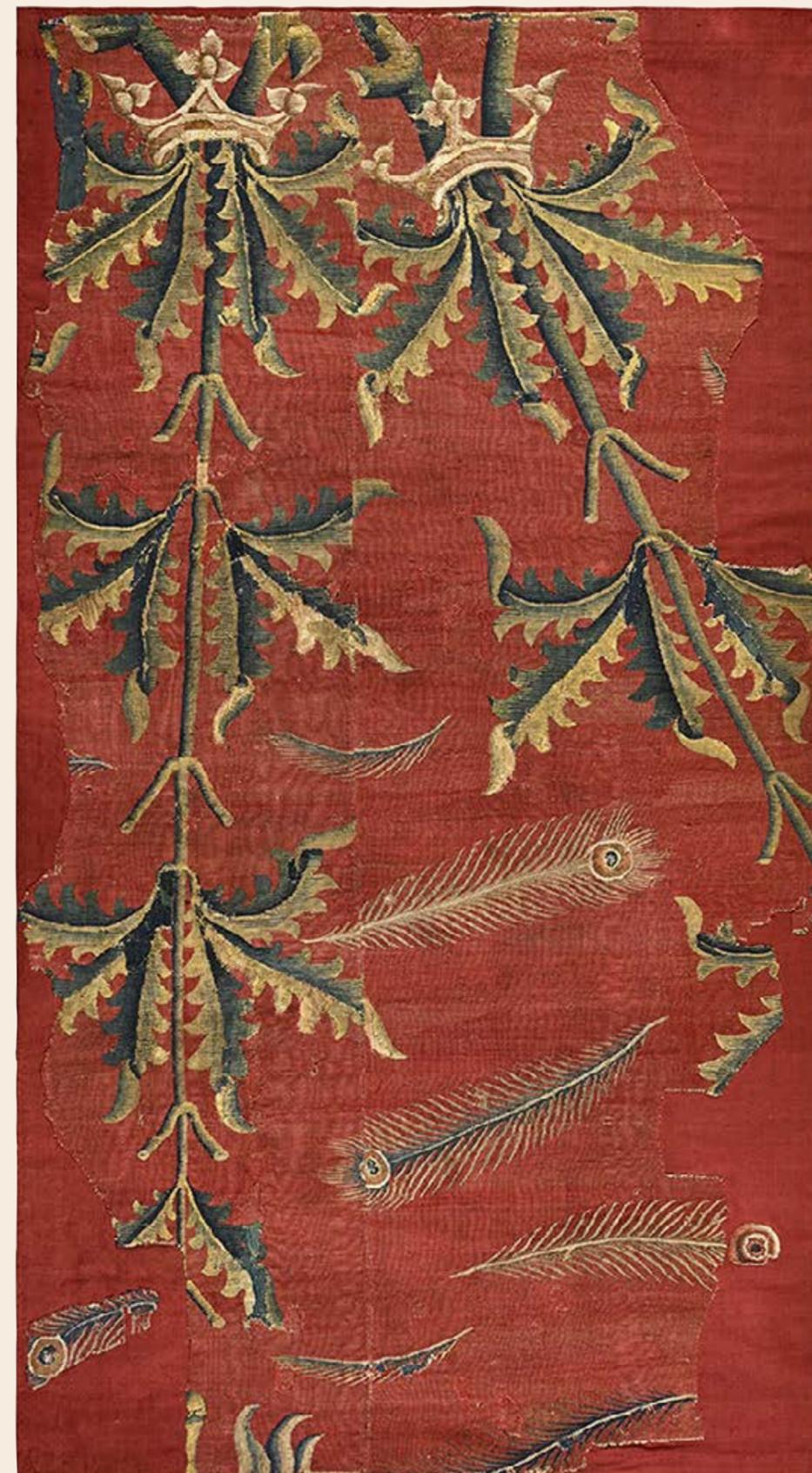
Tapestry of wool and silk wefts on an undyed wool warp, secured on a dyed linen support,

6½ warps per cm

210 × 118.5 cm

In this tapestry fragment, a plant with spiky foliage impales inverted coronets accompanied by peacock feathers on a brilliant red ground. The plant, which most closely resembles a cardoon – a relative of the artichoke and the thistle – dominates the field with its sculptural, deeply lobed leaves and sharply linear stem. In the lower left corner, a trace of what appears to be the capitulum, or flower head, can be seen. Offshoots from the stem between each tier of foliage appear cut, preserving the clarity of the composition. At the base of each plant two cut stems are bound together by a coronet ornamented with three trilobed fleurons – flower-shaped pinnacles – rising from the band of the crown. Elegantly scattered throughout the field and between the plants are fully pigmented and white peacock feathers, as well as smaller feathers without eyespots. The confident design of the cardoon, subtly modelled in shades of dark to light green, forms a bold motif against the striking red ground while offering a pleasing contrast to the softness and lightness of the feathers. Despite the fragmentary condition of the tapestry, the essence of its vivid colours and striking design has been well preserved, allowing the contemporary viewer a glimpse of the vibrancy of fifteenth-century interiors.

This hanging represents an extraordinary survival, as few other tapestries of this type of bold design on a plain ground are known. Due to the lack of documentary evidence, limited comparable objects and the hanging's fragmentary condition, this compelling tapestry poses a number of questions regarding its dating, design, function and even its orientation. The scale of the cardoon motif and the size of the hachures (triangular shapes used for shading one hue of colour into the next) suggests that the tapestry was designed to be seen from a distance. The direction of the warp, which runs in parallel with the most complete cardoon, indicates that this fragment was not displayed vertically. If this piece was displayed horizontally (as the evidence of the additional two cardoons at the upper right and left corners, seeming to diverge from a central axis, suggests), the fragment must have been part of an extremely large wall hanging. The stems may have continued in an arc, or even a full circle. Alternatively, the tapestry may have been restricted to around five plants, with the opposing orientation of the cardoons and the coronets explained by the fact it may have been seen from below as the tester – or ceiling – to a throne canopy. What may have marked the centre of this axis is not clear, as this part of the design is now lost. The rays of the cardoons, with their bulbous flower-heads, would have echoed the form of a lavish peacock tail, visually rhyming with the feathers featured in the design.





Tapestries featuring repeated motifs such as this were usually armorial, that is, representative of a patron's coat of arms. However, this tapestry does not appear to be strictly heraldic. The design may, however, represent an *impresa* – a personal device, or emblem, that was often paired with a motto. *Imprese* are often difficult to decipher today as they were frequently changed, with many relating to brief moments that resonated with an individual's emotional life (Jean-Bernard de Vaivre 1983, 'À propos des devises de Charles VI', *Bulletin monumental*, Société Française d'Archéologie, Paris pp. 92–95). The fragmentary condition of this tapestry may also mean that certain key motifs that would assist in identifying its meaning are missing. What is apparent is that this tapestry necessarily required bespoke commissioning, which, combined with the costliness of the medium, reflected the patron's considerable financial means. The identity of this patron, however, remains mysterious.

Tapestries with heraldic motifs on single-colour grounds were made from the mid-fourteenth to the late fifteenth century, demonstrating the enduring demand among patrons for such designs. However, relatively few survive. The stylized outlines of the foliage, minimal use of silk and the use of slits and dovetail joins, but not the more complicated interlocking joins, are suggestive of a date around 1440–60.

*Extract from a description by Rosamund Garrett. Report and references available on request.*



# 6

## An early 'Italianate' double-ogival velvet (*kadife*)

Ottoman Turkey, Bursa, late 16th century  
Silk velvet brocaded in gilt-metal and silver against crimson pile  
159.5 × 62.5 cm; mounted on a stretcher

Provenance  
Charles Ratton (1895–1986) collection

A length with almost two full repeats of circular palmettes enclosing tulips and carnations, with enfolding *rumi* leaves, in a double ogival layout with floral vines. Where the ogival bands meet there is a central crown motif. Silver and gilt metal threads are used to differentiate between different design features. For the silver threads, very thin sheets of silver are wrapped around a white silk core, while gilded silver leaf is wrapped around a yellow silk core for the 'gold threads', to intensify the effect of each metal. The palmettes, *rumi* leaves, and double ogival design are typical of Ottoman vocabulary. The crown is an Ottoman adaptation of an Italian motif. The beginning of the 16th century saw an exchange of tastes and influences between the Ottoman and Italian courts, partially fuelled by a mutually beneficial export trade market. Bursa was the main production centre for Ottoman velvets from the later 14th century onwards, as well as becoming an international centre for trade in raw silk, which increasingly attracted Italian merchants. The often symbiotic relationship that developed between weaving in Ottoman Turkey and Italy resulted in their velvets sharing many similarities. However, they can be clearly differentiated on technical grounds.

Charles Ratton was an important dealer and curator of art from Africa, the Americas, and the Pacific who did a great amount to promote the art from these regions. He was influential in the 1930s art scene in Paris, organising a pioneering exhibition of African and Oceanic art with Dada founder Tristan Tzara. Like other major dealers of his generation he also acquired Ottoman textiles. A large number of works which passed through Ratton's gallery are now in the collections of important museums around the world, including the Musée du Quai Branly in Paris and The Metropolitan Museum in New York.

Velvets from this group are found in museum collections around the world, including the Cooper-Hewitt in New York, the Art Institute of Chicago, Kremlin Armoury in Moscow, and the Topkapi Museum in Istanbul. For further reading and discussion of this group, see Raby, J., Effeny, A., ed., *IPEK – The Crescent & the Rose – Imperial Ottoman Silks and Velvets*, Azimuth Editions Limited, 2001, pp. 300–303. See also Contadini, Anna, 'Threads of Ornament in the Style World of the Fifteenth and Sixteenth centuries', in Necipoğlu, Gülru and Payne, Alina, (eds.), *Histories of Ornament: From Global to Local*, Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, pp 290-308 and notes on pp. 397.



# 7

## Embroidered hanging and chasuble

China (Guangzhou/Canton?), for the Portuguese market

1st half of 17th century

Silk satin weave embroidered with gold-wrapped paper thread, silk and double twisted silk thread;

hemp fibres as padding

Hanging 242 × 182 cm

Chasuble 119 × 54.5 cm

From the middle of the 16th century, Chinese textiles like these were used in Portuguese Catholic liturgical ceremonies. This was a practice of the missionary campaign developed alongside the expansion of the Portuguese empire in Asia. Shortly after their arrival in India (in 1498), the Portuguese quickly established important trading centres in Goa, Ormuz, Malacca and Macau. In 1557, the Portuguese obtained imperial authorization to establish a permanent settlement in Macau and to participate in the annual fair of Canton. Relations between the Portuguese and Chinese were still in an embryonic stage, but Chinese traders and craftsmen were fully aware of the economic potential of trading with the Portuguese and they started to produce textiles suiting the tastes and needs of their Portuguese clients. In 1561, this was confirmed by the Jesuit Luis Frois, who mentions the use of Chinese-manufactured pieces with Christian imagery owned by the Catholic communities in Goa, in whose colleges they had been used throughout the previous decade<sup>1</sup>. Around the same time a Chinese set of ecclesiastical vestments (chasuble, mantle, dalmatic) and an altar frontal was used in the 1568 Christmas Night Mass at the monastery of Our Lady of Conception in Matosinhos (Oporto)<sup>2</sup>. These two examples highlight how quickly the production of Chinese ecclesiastical textiles took off locally and internationally along the Portuguese trading routes, through intermediaries mainly based in Macau.

These two embroideries are characteristic of the Chinese textiles that arrived in Portugal, in the 1620s/1630s. They used Chinese materials, and relief and texture effects by means of filling materials like hemp fibres or paper rolls. Other examples from this group are in Portuguese collections (Museu da Irmandade de Santa Cruz, Braga; Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, inv. 3407 Tec) and abroad (Musée National de la Renaissance, France, Inv. E.CI.13140A).

This hanging features a field dominated by a central medallion and quarter circles at the corners decorated with albarrada vases with branches and flying birds. The design is completed by a border with botanical elements and human faces placed above flower corollas with stems, which can be seen in Renaissance grotesque motifs. On the



chasuble, the front and back feature the typical ogival structure with pomegranate pattern, characteristic of Spanish, Italian and even Ottoman fabrics from the 16th and 17th centuries, defined by sinuous branches with leaves, peony flowers and tendrils.

The commission of liturgical textiles required the supply of coordinates (i.e. exact instructions) to Chinese craftsmen. Whilst the first embroidery shows a quarter plan composition clearly denoting a planned manufacturing according to specific dimensions, the chasuble results from the tailoring of pre-existing embroidered panels to the desired shape. With identical compositions, the front panel shows only one vertical module bounded by lateral borders whilst the back panel is larger, showing how the pattern distributes laterally. Although this adaption could have originally taken place in China, it is highly probable that it occurred later, possibly in the 18th century, due to the shape of the chasuble. The analysis of documentary sources and objects shows that the alteration of secular pieces like coverlets and wall hangings to sacred ones, such as vestments or canopies was, after all, a common practice in the early modern period in Portugal.

Although blue is not included in the five colours established for the liturgical calendar (white, green, red, purple and black) by Pope Pius V in 1570, this colour was not only tolerated in liturgical vestments but was also consecrated to celebrations in honour of the Virgin Mary. Besides an altar frontal with the representation of Our Lady (Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, inv. 612), this is the only known example of this typology in a blue fabric.

Thanks to their good condition, one can imagine the chromatic and vibrant palette that originally characterized these pieces, above all, the brightness that would radiate from the gold paper thread – so appreciated for its delicacy and lightness, whose exact manufacture was kept secret. Charles Germain de Saint-Aubin, designer of King Louis XV's wardrobe commented in 1770: 'The Chinese, [...] often edge their embroidery with gold paper that is wound around a silk thread, which only they know how to do.'<sup>3</sup>

Over time the paper thread was replaced by silk and the relief effect and the double twisted silk thread, so characteristic of the 17th century Chinese production, disappeared, giving rise to an international production more suitable to all the East India trading companies that started directly to negotiate with the Chinese following the Kangxi decree in 1685.

1 Maria João Pacheco Ferreira, 'Chinese Textiles in Christian Contexts in Sixteenth Century India', *CIETA – Bulletin*. Lyon: CIETA, 86–87 (2009–2010), 40–47

2 Fr. João da Póvoa, *Memórias sôltas e inventários do oratório de S. Clemente das Penhas e do Mosteiro de N. Sa da Conceição de Matozinhos, dos séculos XIV e XV* (introd. A. de Magalhães Basto), Sep. de *Boletim Cultural da Câmara Municipal do Porto*. Oporto: Manânus, v. 3, fasc. 1., 1940, p. 22

3 Charles Germain de Saint-Aubin, *L'Art du Brodeur*. Boston and London: Los Angeles County Museum of Art – David R. Godine, Publisher, 1983, p. 16 (1770)





### A large Tree of Life painted silk palampore

China (Guangzhou) for the European, probably British, market, third quarter of 18th century

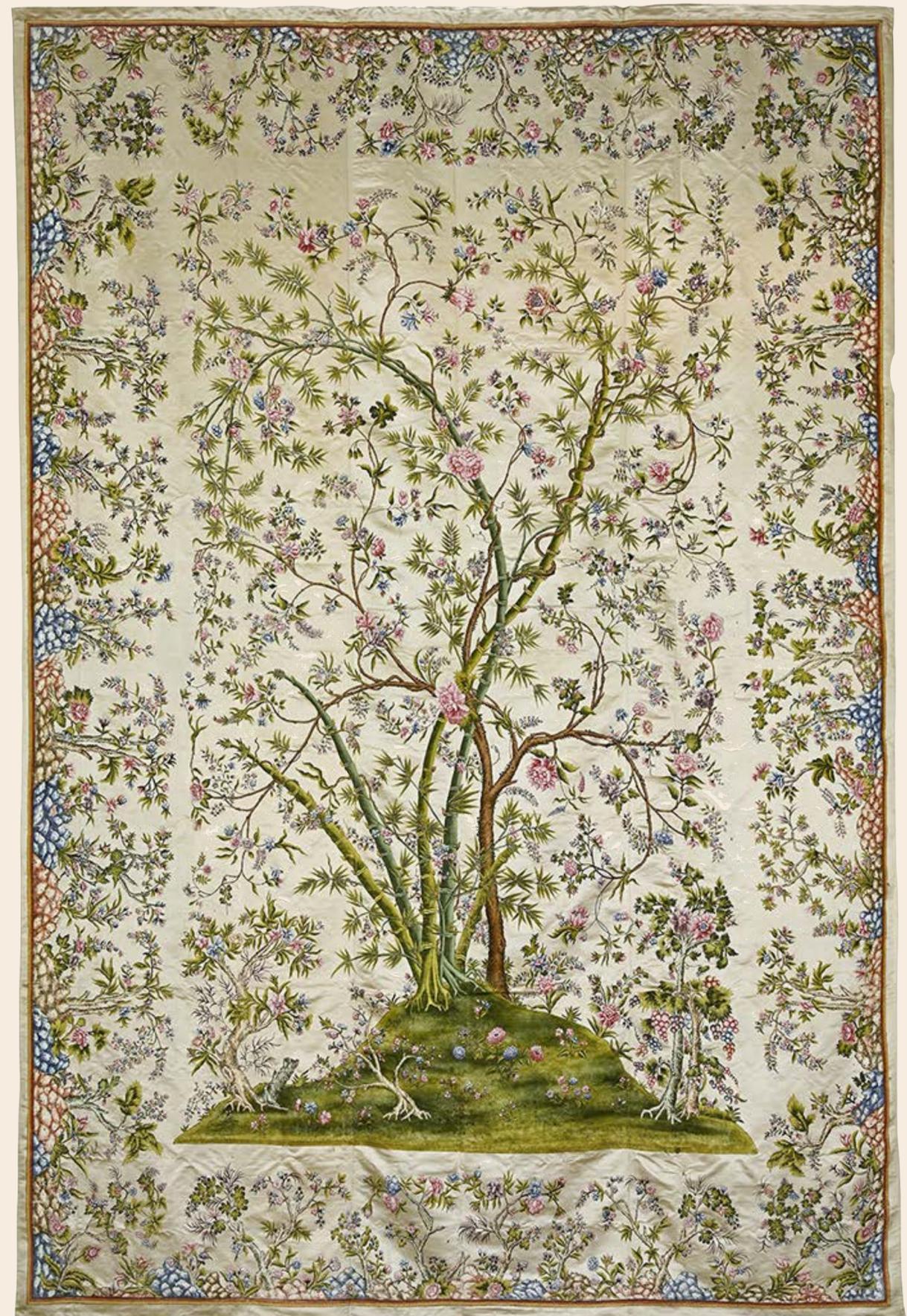
Silk satin painted with opaque mineral and vegetable pigments on four panels (three full selvedge-width approximately 73.5 cm wide, one 17 cm)

320 × 231 cm

In 1763, a new guidebook detailing the grandest houses in and around London described the charms of Whitton, the Duke of Argyll's country home near Hounslow Heath. The entire upper floor was decorated in 'the Chinese Taste,' and included 'a with-drawing Room hung with fine India Paper [...] next to that is a Bed Chamber in the same Manner, with a most elegant painted Taffeta Bed, and a Palampour of the same [...]' (*A Short Account of the Principal Seats and Gardens in and About Richmond and Kew*, London, P. Norbury and George Bickham, 1763, p. 14).

This monumental painted silk palampore is one of the very few surviving examples of the same genre of trade goods that once hung at Whitton. It is a spectacular and exceedingly rare exemplar of the reciprocity of design influences between India, China, and western Europe, facilitated by the various East India companies throughout the eighteenth century. It unmistakably borrows the format and idiom of the painted chintz palampores produced on the Coromandel coast for the west, but is executed in the vivid chromatic palette perfected in the silk painting workshops of Canton, embodying the clever interplay of substitution and simulation in the relentless quest for novelty that characterized the market for 'India' goods, and particularly textiles, in this period.

Hand-painted on a cream satin ground, this palampore preserves the vibrant riot of color that distinguishes painted Chinese export silks. Select motifs were printed in ink on the prepared silk, but many components were drawn by hand in ink or liquid silver. The field is dominated by a stand of green and blue-green bamboo shoots and mature stalks issuing from a verdant green mound, intertwined with a lone tree whose sinuous branches sprout a variety of blue, pink, purple, and orange flowers that fill the sky. Smaller flowering and fruiting trees roughly disposed in two pairs flank the central group in the foreground. The wide border represents more trees of varying type growing from an alternating series of blue, orange, and brown rocky clusters.





No doubt this piece was intended for one of the exuberant 'Chinese rooms' considered the height of taste in the second half of the eighteenth century, often decorated with an eclectic mélange of Chinese and Indian decorative arts, often consisting of Indian chintz, Chinese painted or embroidered silk, and Chinese wallpaper. The pair to this piece (in the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation since 1958) features an identical muster, or pattern, but with the central field in reverse, suggesting that these two panels may have once served as curtains for a large state bed, or were intended to be hung as wall panels. Chinese silks were technically banned in England for much of the eighteenth century, though a vast smuggling trade sprang up to satisfy the demands of English consumers for these materials, often procured by friends or family directly connected with the British East India Company. Objects declared 'gifts' or 'of personal use' also bypassed importation bans, and could then be sold or bartered illicitly (Helen Clifford, 'Chinese wallpaper: From Canton to country house,' in *East India Company at Home*, eds. Margot Finn and Kate Smith, UCL Press, 2018, p. 52).

Goods typically took about fourteen months to arrive on Company ships. This lengthy time lag may account for the pristine condition of this panel, which was never apparently used or exposed to light—fashions may simply have changed in the interval it took to be created. A large pictorial hanging such as this was probably a bespoke commission from a Company supercargo.

In addition to the Williamsburg palampore, only three other painted silk palampores are known: in the Royal Ontario Museum (955.70), the V&A (T.3-1948), and in a private collection.

*Extract from a description by William DeGregorio. Report and references available on request.*



***Nou-Rouz shawl***

French, designed by Jean Baptiste Amédée Couder, manufactured by Gausсен aîné et Cie, for the *Exposition des Produits de l'Industrie Française* of 1839

Kashmir wool woven *au lance*  
370 × 165 cm (excluding fringe)

This spectacular textile is a feat of Jacquard loom weaving par excellence. Perhaps the most exciting of all 19th century French shawls, the composition of its design necessitated more than 101,000 Jacquard cards and twelve different colour weft threads. The design is repeated mirror image both lengthwise and across the width of the shawl. Gausсен masked the red warp threads under the yellow wefts by using a special weave, a process which was very expensive. Its yellow ground is noteworthy since, according to correspondence with Monique Levi-Strauss, all published examples of the *Nou-Rouz* have been on a white ground up until this point.

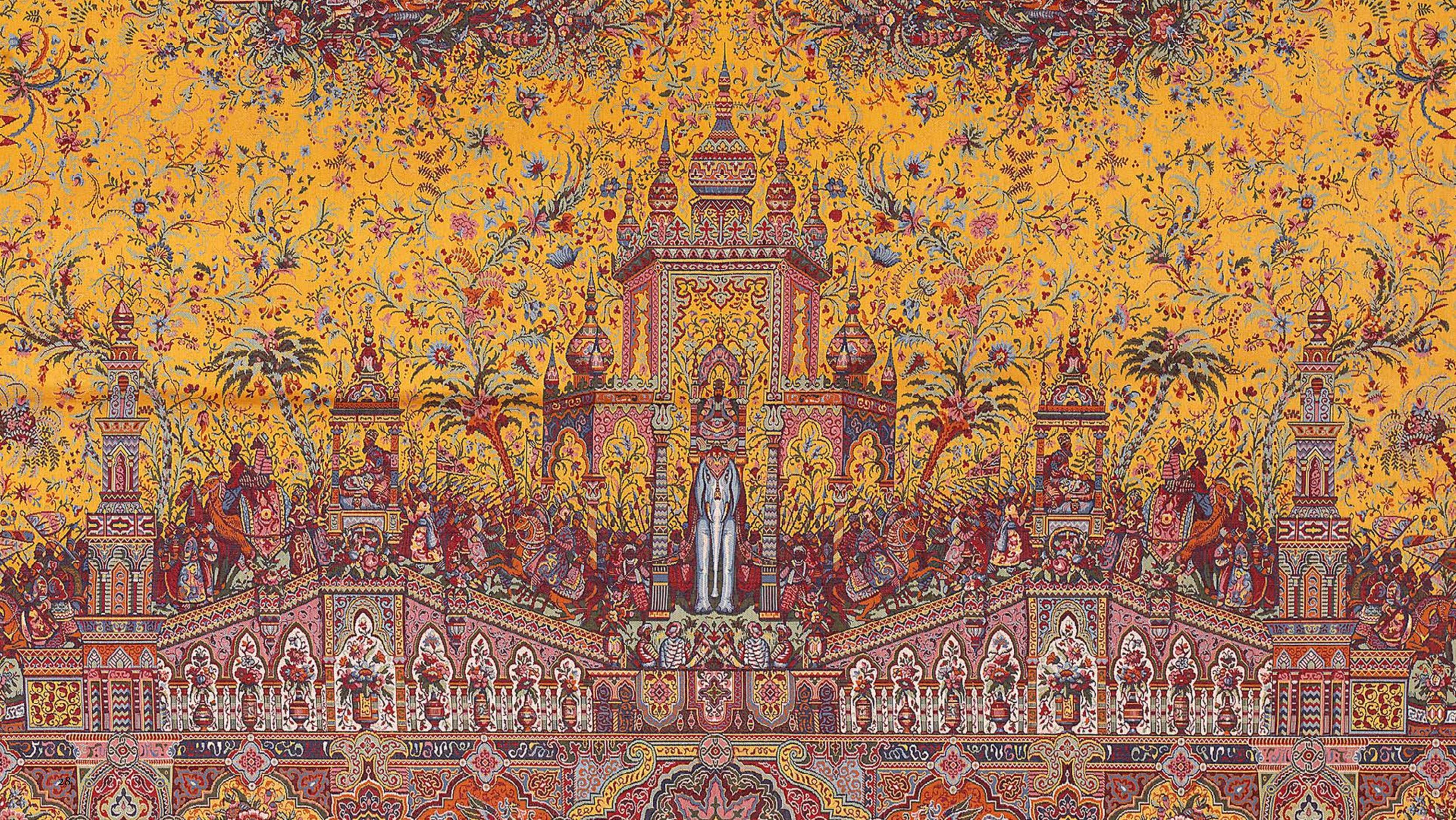
The shawl was presented at the *Exposition des Produits de l'Industrie Française* in Paris in 1839 where it was bought by the Duke and Duchess of Orléans and where the manufacturer, Gausсен, won a Gold Medal. Amédée Couder (1797–1865), France's most outstanding industrial designer in the 1830s, wrote of the *Nou-Rouz* shawl: 'The *Nou-Rouz* is Persia's most important festival, being at one and the same time the Festival of the Flowers and the first day of their New Year: in the East they are undoubtedly more logical than we Westerners, for they start their new year when nature reawakens. In the middle of this shawl the Shah is shown mounted on a white elephant, surrounded by the dignitaries of his empire, receiving homage from vassal states. Another part of the decor shows his kingdom's book of civil and religious laws lying open on a sort of altar. A long procession has formed, with deputations laden with costly gifts and, perhaps, tax revenue from the various provinces, slowly winding their way towards their powerful sovereign underneath triumphal arches which have been erected to mark the arrival of spring and the overall spirit of celebration. This magnificent caravan takes the place of the gallery; the border shows the interior of the palace: through one archway we glimpse a splendid feast, in another a sensuous dancing display'. The impact of the *Nou-Rouz* and its predecessor, the *Isfahan*, triggered a dramatic change in the French shawl industry, resulting in what came to be known as the 'Renaissance' style.

Other examples of *Nou-Rouz* shawls on a white ground are in the Victoria & Albert Museum (inv. no. t.189–1960), London, Museum für Angewandte Kunst, Vienna, le Musée des Tissus, Lyon, the Columbia Museum of Art, Columbia and the Etro collection, Milan. A design for this shawl is in the Bibliothèque Forney in Paris, and a water-coloured full design for weaving, signed by Amédée Couder is in the Musée National des Techniques (C.N.A.M.), also in Paris.

For further reading, see Levi-Strauss, M., *The Cashmere shawl*, Dryad, London, 1987, pp. 82–89.







# 10

## ***Choga* (man's ceremonial coat)**

Central Asian court wear, early 19th century; made of Benares silk (c. 1800)

Silk and metal thread brocade

Length 128 cm; Arm span 177 cm

This impressive *choga*, in near perfect condition, is made of Benares silk from the early 19th century, and lined with fine blue silk, probably of Chinese origin.

Silks of a nearly identical design were fashioned into a child's tunic (*angarakh*) and a child's cape (*ghughi*) made for the Jaipur court, both of which are now in the collection of the Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II Museum, City Palace Jaipur (Acc.No.477.73 & 459.73). Another child's *angarakh*, also using an almost indistinguishable fabric, is in the Victoria & Albert Museum (IS.214-1953). The design and weave of our brocade is related to the Benares silk textile cover (RCIN 1005025) for the *Padshahnama* in Windsor Castle given to Lord Teignmouth, Governor General of India in 1798, for presentation to King George III.

This garment is in remarkably good condition and appears to have never been worn.





***Achkan* – made for H.H. Maharaja of Darbhanga (1907–1962)**

India, probably Calcutta, early 1930s

French Art Deco silk woven with metal thread; edged with velvet at the cuffs and neck; with mother-of-pearl buttons

*Provenance*

Maharaja Kameshwar Singh Bahadur

According to Sir John Tarlton Whitty (1879–1948), the Maharaja and he exchanged dinner jackets at a dinner hosted by Whitty when he was magistrate and governor of Bihar (October 1934–February 1935).

The *achkan* is a type of formal tight-fitted knee-length coat worn by men, with buttons down the front, similar to the *sherwani*, which later evolved into the Nehru jacket. The coat is made of a silk fabric, the collar and cuffs are covered in pink velvet, with the lining in shocking pink satin. The design and weave of this silk is both sophisticated and technically complex. The technique and the use of gold threads point to a Lyonnais production, possibly the Maison Bucol. An analysis of the textile indicates that it is a warp-printed textile (ikat weave) with a warp-faced 8-end silk satin, and 2 liseré wefts (or 1 lancé and 1 liseré, if one is a foundation weft and the other a supplementary pattern weft). Warp printed textiles require a very skilled hand, since the warp is printed prior to the weaving process. It is this and the subsequent weaving process that gives ikat textiles their distinct and complex gradated or ‘blurred’ appearance.

This garment was made for the famous and multi-talented Maharaja Kameshwar Singh Bahadur, from the family of Zamindars and rulers of Mithila and Darbhanga district in Bihar. He ruled from 1929 up until Indian independence in 1947. He was known to be close to Mahatma Gandhi, who in an interview during his visit to Bihar in 1947, described him as being like a son to him.

Indian princesses began ordering in Paris for their trousseaux from the late nineteenth century onwards and designers such as Jeanne Lanvin, Callot Soeurs, Jeanne Paquin and Madeleine Vionnet, to name but a few, counted Indian princesses amongst their clients. They created European-style clothes as well as stylish chiffons suitable for saris. Indian princes and maharajas prioritised jewellery in their European purchases, but were also known to commission and acquire pocket watches, cufflinks, tie pins, lighters and belt-buckles. This jacket, made in French silk with an Art Deco design, but in the form of an Indian *achkan*, is an exemplar of the stylistic fusion of this period, marrying Indian tradition with some of the audacity of the European avant-garde. For further reading see Jaffer, A., ‘Indian Princes and the West’, in *Maharaja: The Splendour of India’s Royal Courts*, V&A Publishing, London, 2009, and Raphaële Billé and Louise Curtis (eds.), *Moderne Maharajah: un mécène des années 1930*, MAD, Paris, 2019.

*We thank Maximilien Durand for his technical analysis of the silk fabric.*





# 12, 13, 14

## The International Moorish Style

From the early days of the Grand Tour in the late 17th century, aristocratic European travellers re-created their experiences in spaces that evoked the look and feel of the places they had visited.

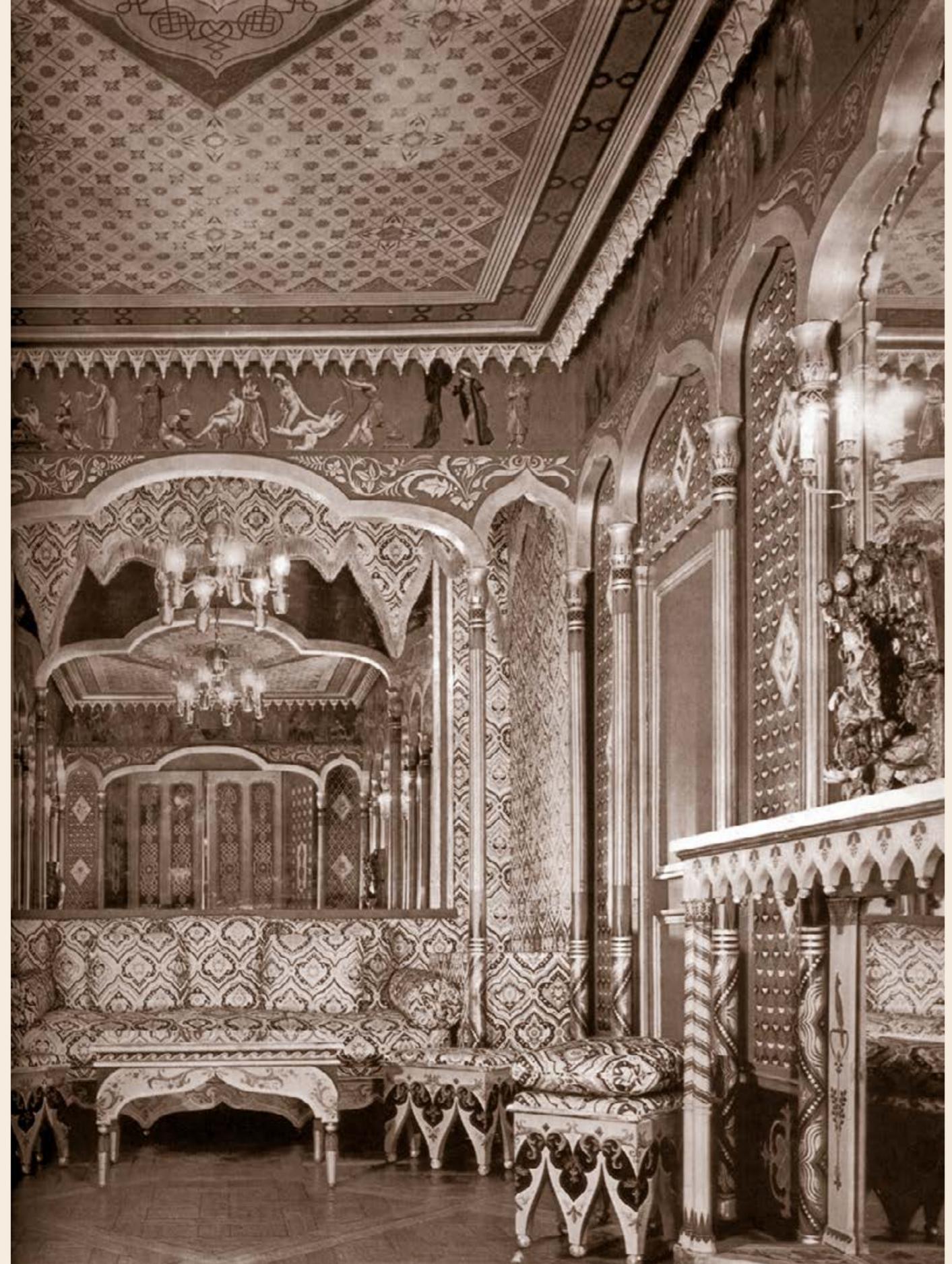
By the 19th century, travellers had become fascinated with the Middle East in addition to Italy and Greece. Moorish Spain, in particular the Alhambra in Granada, encapsulated their ideal of Islamic architecture and design, largely due to the widespread dissemination of Owen Jones's *Grammar of Ornament* which was first published in 1856. His architectural manuals and his designs fed the fashion among members of elite society for a 'Moorish' room in their house (see image of a room in the Hôtel de Beauharnais). The vogue spread to America during the Gilded Age, when the enormous fortunes made by industrial barons were spent on building huge mansions, furnished in a variety of old-world styles, especially Baroque and Renaissance, but often with a Moorish-style smoking room.

This style was also imported to the Middle East and to India. Revivalism was just as popular in Cairo, Damascus, Istanbul and Hyderabad as in the cities of Europe and America. The Khedive Isma'il of Egypt (r. 1863–79) had an Alhambresque palace built on Gezira island in Cairo, to serve as a guesthouse for the European monarchs attending the inauguration celebrations of the Suez Canal in 1869. The Moorish style was seen as pan-Islamic, responding to a sense of nostalgia for the golden age of the Caliphate. The Ottomans also patronized the Moorish style. For example, Sultan Abdülaziz of Turkey (r.1861–76) ordered the reconstruction of the Çırağan Palace in Istanbul in the 'Arab' style. The Falaknuma Palace in Hyderabad was built in the late 19th century in European revivalist styles, and decorated with silks woven in France and England.

The Lyonnais silk weaving houses produced the finest quality textiles in the 19th century, often to special commission. The Moorish revival silks are extremely rare and their study is still in its infancy. Their historical importance lies within the study of 19th century interior decoration, not only in France and elsewhere in Europe but also in the palaces of Istanbul, Cairo and Damascus.

*right*

The boudoir at the Hôtel de Beauharnais, Paris, decorated in a pseudo-Turkish style



# 12

## Alhambra (blue)

French, Lyon, design after Owen Jones, probably woven by Mathevon et Bouvard, 1866–80  
Brocaded silk lampas  
150 × 54.5 cm

This striking silk, in a blue and red colourway (cats. 12 & 13), is inspired by Spanish Nasrid decoration, in particular the *Alhambra* Moorish palace in Granada.

From the early 1830s a series of publications featured detailed architectural drawings of this magnificent palace. The first was produced by the Frenchman Joseph Pierre Girault de Prangey followed by Pascal-Xavier Coste, and then in 1842, Owen Jones along with Jules Goury published 'Plans, Elevations, Sections and Details of the Alhambra'. This was a two-volume publication of which the second volume illustrated the stone and stucco work of the walls, columns and arches within the palace. The design of this textile is inspired by an amalgam of designs from this Moorish Palace. Some of the scrollwork pattern elements of this silk can be seen in all these publications as well as the later printing of the 1856 Owen Jones 'The Grammar of Ornament', again composed and written by the architect Owen Jones. The publication looked at design from many different cultures. These books were instrumental in influencing all European decorative arts of the time, including silk design. Silks of similar design and weave structure by Mathevon et Bouvard are now in the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris and are illustrated in Jean-Paul Leclerc's article (LeClerc, J., *Union Centrale des Arts Décoratifs Musée de la Mode et du Textile*, La Revue des Musées de France, Revue du Louvre, Paris, April 2004, p. 109). These silks, in unused condition, came from the estate of George and René Hamot, who were also active collectors of silks woven by Mathevon et Bouvard.



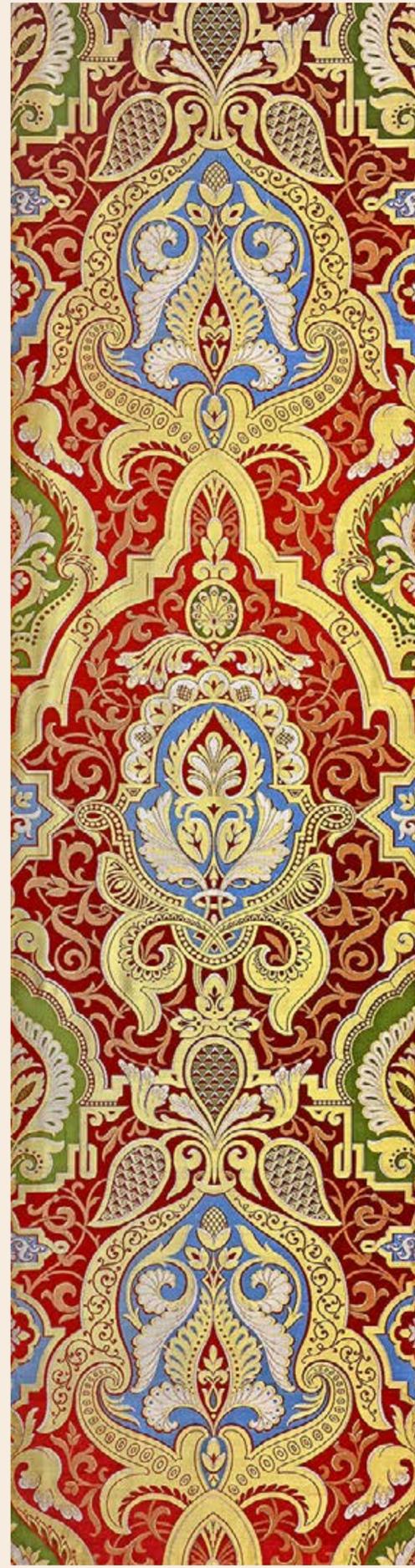
# 13

**Alhambra (red)**

French, Lyon, design after Owen Jones, probably woven by Mathevon et Bouvard, 1866–80

Brocaded silk lampas

192 × 54.5 cm



# 14

## Mauresque

French, Lyon, for Ferdinand Duplan et Cie, 1856–70

Brocaded silk lampas

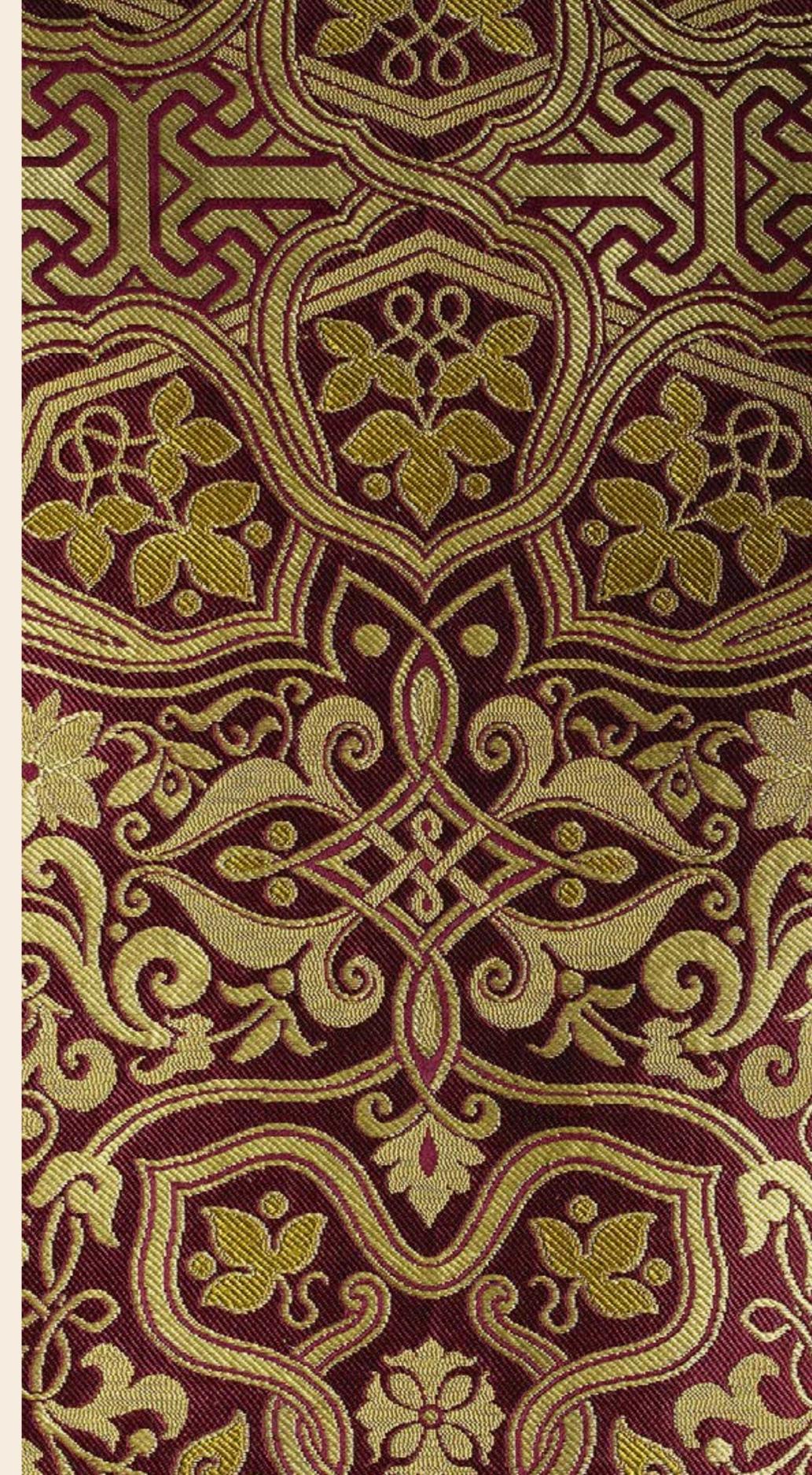
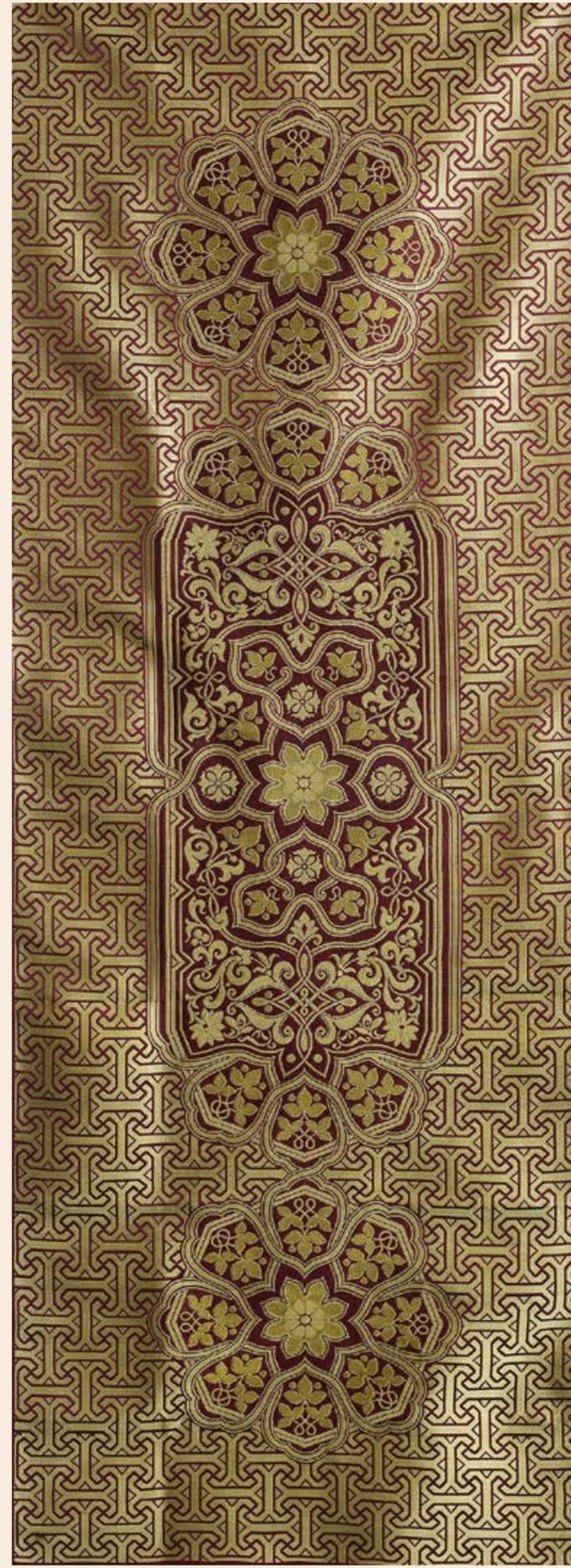
165 × 60 cm

This silk panel decorated in yellow/gold on a crimson ground was probably designed and woven as a long cushion or bolster cover for an Orientalist room or a Turkish salon which was then fashionable in Paris. Some of the Turkish palaces in Istanbul, such as the Çırağan Palace (1863–67), were also built in the Arab style by Sultan Abdülaziz who would have commissioned similar style silks from Lyon. The shape and general design of this silk is inspired by Islamic textiles but the individual motifs are a European interpretation. The fabric features a central floral and scroll section with stylised petal edges; each petal contains a floral sprig. At each end of this middle section is a stylised flower where again the petal and floral sprig is repeated around a flower centre. The ground of the cloth is woven in a crimson red silk in an interlocking rectangular shape. Various pattern elements of this piece were inspired by study drawings undertaken by several architects of the mid nineteenth century and can be seen in Coste 1867, pl. 22; Prangey 1836–39, pl. 15; and Jones 1842, pl. 12.

Coste, P., *Monuments Modernes de la Perse, mesurés, dessinés et décrits par Pascal Coste, Publiés par ordre de son excellence le ministre de la maison d'empereur et beaux arts*, A Morel, Paris, 1867

Jones, O. & Goury, Jules M., *Plans Elevations, Sections & Details of the Alhambra: taken from drawings on the spot in 1834*, Vol. I, Owen Jones, London, 1842

Prangey, de G., *Monuments, Arabes et Moresques de Cordoue Séville et Granade: dessinés et mesurés en 1832 et 1833*, A Hauser, Paris, 1836–9



## Introduction to cats. 15 & 16

The textile tradition of the Paminggir people (from the south of Sumatra) is known for its great beauty, compelling iconography and weaving virtuosity. Long described as the apex of all Indonesian weavings, *palepai* are ritual cloths of great length, often more than four metres long. They frequently featured depictions of ancestors housed in grand pavilions, together with auspicious animals such as elephants, water buffalo and birds, all riding atop a great ship or pair of ships with arching bows and sterns. As textiles of remarkable complexity, social significance, and art historical importance, *palepai* have always been amongst the most iconic, and the rarest cloths in the Indonesian archipelago. This is in part due to the very restricted honour of owning and displaying a *palepai*, a privilege of noble birth or higher status granted by the Sultan of Banten, who ruled the south of Sumatra from the late 16th to the very beginning of the 19th century. His blessing conferred access to the wealth-creating trade in pepper, and it was only from those riches a clan leader could afford all the feasts of merit and other requisite ceremonies to achieve and maintain their high status. This included commissioning textiles by the finest of weavers. *Palepai* were placed on the walls of the community house behind where the chief sat at clan gatherings, conveying the owner's authority in all matters, of both a spiritual and secular nature.

These distinctive cloths were woven using a supplementary weft patterning technique on a backstrap loom, fitted with a comb to keep the handspun cotton and silk threads in balanced relation. Deep natural dye colors were achieved using indigo for blue, *morinda citrifolia*, a root dye, for deep brick reds; the rattan fruit provided a more crimson color known as 'dragon blood red;' and yellow came from powdered turmeric. Metallic threads of gold and silver foil wrapped on a substrate were often worked into the pattern as a prestige highlight. Men carved the wood loom but otherwise all the other work involved with creating a *palepai* was restricted by ancestral customary law, *adat*, to be exclusively performed by women.

Classical *palepai* come in six styles: beaded *maju palepai*, single red ship, double red ship, single blue ship, a variant featuring two or three rows of repeated human figures, and lastly, a cloth subdivided into rectangles, often with four or more

trees in a row. Their use in ritual context suffered a disruption of profound magnitude with the 1883 volcanic explosion of the nearby Krakatoa island. This disaster killed thousands, especially along the Lampung coast, and thereby destroyed by flood and fire the great repository of classical textiles held in shoreline communities, most especially Kalianda, long considered the primary cultural site of the Paminggir people in the development and use of *palepai*. This traumatic event brought about the destruction of the pepper fields that generated the wealth that permitted the feasts of merit. This, with added pressures from the colonial Dutch and the strengthening of classical Islam in the region, combined to bring about the demise of the *palepai* weaving, though they continued to be kept as valued heirlooms, sometimes being cut up and divided between family members.

The deep symbolism of the ship motif remains elusive. Dr Mattiebelle Gittinger offers several interpretations, envisioning it as an iconic 'lifeboat' serving to aid in the transition of one phase of life to another, or a 'ship of state,' serving as a marker of aristocratic status. Gittinger also suggests that the blue ships are true boats, while the red ships are actually depictions of sacred birds, with great wings flying through the air with ancestors being transported on its back. Bronwen and Garrett Solyom proposed that what has long been described as a ship is in fact a land based ancestral house, which were known to have curling elements extending from roofs. There is a chance that the weavers replicated patterns which at one time may have had great meaning but over the last two centuries that meaning was lost. The actual act of weaving, grandmother, mother and daughter sitting at their looms weaving and talking together, sharing stories of heroic headhunters, learned dyers and fabled weavers of the past, could have carried the importance of the ritual cloth beyond attempts to interpret the motif elements. Perhaps it was the process even more than the product where the cultural transmission took place.

*Extract from an essay by Thomas Murray, individual descriptions by the same. Full report and references available on request.*

For further reading, see Gittinger, M., *Splendid Symbols, Textiles and Tradition in Indonesia*, Washington, D.C., 1979, and Solyom, Bronwen & Garrett, *Fabric Traditions of Indonesia*, Washington State University Press, 1985.

# 15

## Ceremonial cloth, *Palepai*, with Single Blue Ship

Paminggir people, Semangka Bay, Lampung, 19th century

Cotton, metallic-wrapped threads, silk with supplementary weft

325 × 60,5 cm

### *Provenance*

Swiss private collection, previously on loan to the Indianapolis Museum of Art

Observed we see a bold blue ship with powerfully abstract bow and stern elements curling outward from the ends of the boat. Moving inward from left to right, we encounter the first of four geometric structures that could be trees, and then a yellow animal, likely a simplified elephant lacking a trunk, a buffalo, or a horse, standing in a small boat atop the blue ship. There is a central pavilion, 'home of the ancestors,' with roof projections that recapitulate the graphics of the primary boat. Below the great blue ship, we see ten small but elongated boats of alternating red and blue colours. The textile is accentuated with silk highlights and silver threads.

Other related pieces are in the Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam (1772-1531, 7082-S-493-1 and 1772-1549), the National Museum of Ethnology, Leiden (3947-3), the Ethnographic Museum, Zurich (35987), the Art Institute of Chicago (2002.920) and the Metropolitan Museum, New York (3947-3).





# 16

## Ceremonial cloth, *Palepai*, with Double Red Ship

Paminggir People, Kalianda District, Lampung, 19th century  
Cotton, metallic-wrapped threads, silk with supplementary weft  
424 × 79 cm

### Provenance

Swiss private collection, previously on loan to the Indianapolis Museum of Art

Double red ship *palepai* are exceptionally rare, sumptuous textiles, rich with elusive meaning. An ancient colour-coding system is reflected in these *palepai*, with the dominant shades of deep red associated with the upperworld of ancestors, while gold equates with wealth and status, the colour of the sun. For some scholars, the blue ship *palepai* is a depiction of a true sailing vessel, while the red ships have a more subtle significance. They might represent the full length of a ship, or, as Mattiebelle Gittinger has proposed, the imagery could have started with a large bird, wings spread, carrying ancestors that evolved into a cross section of a boat, oars extending forth from the deck; a cosmic galley powered by ancestors. The iconography of each boat is the same, symmetric across the centre of each boat and the central axis of the *palepai*. Ancestor figures abound.

We see double decks with a prominent central pavilion, festooned with human figures, trees, birds, and a pair of animals that are either elephants or water buffalo. There are medallions on the side of the boat of alternating colours, and a row of ancestors below the ship.

This cloth was woven on a backstrap loom with the width of the cloth delimited by the reach of the weaver's arms, to permit the insertion of the weft shuttle by hand. Using an old *palepai* for guidance, the weaver had to keep in her mind not only all of the design elements that must be included for the textile to meet local customary law criterion, but she had to do this with the design elements progressing sideways and with the pattern side downward, while not losing count to make sure both of her ships maintained an elegant symmetry. Truly the work of a master weaver.

Other related pieces are in the Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam (1772–1533), the Art Institute of Chicago (1991.758 and 2002.914), Yale Art Gallery (ILE2012.30.99 and ILE2012.30.98), and The Textile Museum, Washington (962.41.1).



