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**13th – 14th Century Yuan and Mongol Silk-Gold Textiles:
Transcultural Consumption, meaning and reception
in the Mongol Empire and in Europe**

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Abstract

This thesis examines the material and visual characteristics of silk-gold textiles produced in the Mongol empire during the 13th and 14th century. Their consumption and reception both within and beyond the Mongol empire is a central theme. Beginning with a discussion of the various consumption patterns of gold textiles and their multiple uses among the members of the Mongol elite, I then examine the eclectic gold designs and ornaments of the textiles and their symbolic representations in relation to aesthetics, cosmology and identity. The movement and transformation of gold textiles beyond the Mongol Empire is explored the second half and European consumption pattern are shown to share some similarities with the patterns of consumption practices discovered in the Mongol Empire. The comparative approach utilized here is new but these gold textiles have, in the past, been studied as products of one location, and categorized accordingly. Generally they have been assigned geographical and cultural provenances based on their stylistic features and their technical features. For this reason, gold textiles are often assigned to specific locations of production. This thesis challenges this practice and argues that concepts such as identity, authenticity, provenance and hybridity remain undependable measures when evaluating gold textiles from the Mongol period.

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- Figure 200: Dalmatic, pseudo-script. (*Oriental Silks*, p.294).
- Figure 201: Relic wrapper with dragons – see figure 139.
- Figure 202: Intercultural design transfer (www.Springinstitute.org).

Introduction

This thesis examines the material and visual characteristics of silk-gold textiles¹, produced in the Mongol Empire during the 13th and 14th centuries, and circulated to Europe in the same period. Their consumption and reception both within and beyond the Mongol Empire is a central theme of this thesis, as it is evident that their reception in both locations, although different, exhibited some similarities that have yet to be explored. A comparative study of this reception and its associated consumption patterns reveals, for the first time, that gold textiles were linked to political power, as well as divinity.

Mongol silk gold textiles have been studied before, however, their meaning and function as agents constructing identities of individuals and objects using theories of cultural transfer has yet to be explored in detail. Existing studies tend to concentrate on the technical aspects of weave constructions linked to certain geographical locations of the Mongol Empire. These studies are usually linked to specific museum collections or excavations focusing on recent acquisitions or localized discoveries of gold textiles, or in connection with exhibitions². Among the more prominent research are those by Anne Wardwell³, and key studies of textiles related to the historical period of the Mongol Empire⁴. Recently, the significance of the Mongol gold textiles has also been studied, shedding light on the technical and historical aspects, or both⁵. Rarely are the gold

¹ Gold textiles, as a term in this thesis, refers to a *lampas weave* textile, woven in the Mongol Empire and is defined as a silk weave with gold designs nearly covering the entire surface of the textile's surface, sometimes also the reverse. This technique is further discussed in chapter 1 and described in *Glossary and Terms*. Variations of this technique were produced in other countries such as Italy, Mamluk Egypt and Spain and will be named Italian gold textiles, Mamluk Egyptian textiles, and so forth. The difference between the gold textiles woven in the Mongol Empire and the textiles woven with gold beyond the Mongol Empire is also discussed in later chapters.

² James Watt and Anne Wardwell. *When Silk was Gold: Central Asian and Chinese Textiles*, New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1997; Linda Komaroff, L. and Stefano Carboni, eds. *The Legacy of Genghis Khan: Courtly Art and Culture in Western Asia, 1256-1353*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art; New Haven & London, Yale University Press, 2002; James Watt. *The World of Kubilai Khan, Chinese Art in the Yuan Dynasty*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2010.

³ Anne Wardwell, "Flight of the Phoenix: Crosscurrents in Late Thirteenth- to Fourteenth- Century Silk Patterns and Motifs." *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art* 74 no.1 (1987):2-35, Anne Wardwell, "Panni Tartarici: Eastern Islamic Silks woven with Gold and Silver (13th and 14th centuries)." *Islamic Art* 3 (1989): 95-173, and Anne Wardwell, "Two Silk and Gold Textiles of the Early Mongol Period." *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art* 79, no.10 (1992):354-378. Kjeld Folsach, *Woven Treasures – Textiles from the World of Islam*. Copenhagen: The David Collection Copenhagen, 1993.

⁴ Thomas Allsen, *Commodity and Exchange in the Mongol Empire: A Cultural History of Islamic Textiles*. Cambridge University Press, 1997; Thomas Allsen, *Culture and Conquest in Mongol Eurasia*. Cambridge University Press, 2001 and Thomas Allsen, "Robing in the Mongolian Empire". In *Robes and Honor, The Medieval World of Investiture*, edited by Steward Gordon. New York: Palgrave, 2001.

⁵ Karel Otavsky and Anne Wardwell. *Mittelalterliche Textilien II Zwischen Europa und China*. Die Textilsammlung der Abegg-Stiftung Band 5, Riggisberg, Abegg-Stiftung, 2011; Joyce Denny, "Mongol dress in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries." In *Chinese Silks*, Eds. Dieter Kuhn and Zhao Feng. 75-87. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012 and Denny, Joyce, "Elite Mongol Dress of the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368)." In *Oriental Silks in Medieval Europe*, eds. Juliane von Fircks and Regula Schorta, Riggisberger Berichte 21, Riggisberg: Abegg-Stiftung, 2016. 124-136. Also, Rossi and Rossi, *Styles from the Steppes, Silk Costumes and Textiles from the Liao and Yuan Periods 10th to 13th Century*. Ed. by Donald Dinwiddie, London: Rossi and Rossi Publications:2004.

textiles examined in the context of transcultural consumptions within and beyond the Mongol Empire. Studies of gold textiles are, furthermore, usually linked to specific collections providing extant information to a limit number of gold textiles⁶. The multiple pattern of transcultural consumption and reception of Mongol gold textiles, as this thesis will demonstrate, can also be studied using theories of cultural transfer to defining their meaning and purpose as cosmopolitan or hybrid objects in various locations of their function.

Historically, silk is one of the most important materials in world cultures. Indigenous to China, when traded it carried both monetary value and symbolic meanings linked to myths, exoticism and foreignness, to cultures beyond China. Gold, another precious material, was highly valued by the nomadic Mongols and west Asian cultures, who associated it with wealth and power. When these two precious materials were combined in a new *lampas* weave⁷ in the Mongol Empire, their particular asymmetrical gold designs and expensive pigments created eclectic products which were much sought after for their monetary and aesthetic values. Gold textiles presented a legacy in luxury weaves, rivalling other known silk weaves woven with gold for the Jin (1115-1234 AD), Liao (916-1125 AD), Northern Song (960-1127 AD) dynasty courts as well as the courts from Byzantium to Islamic cultures in Spain and the near East.

The detailed records of gold textiles from the Mongol Empire in European church inventories⁸ and royal courts establishing exceptional collections and treasures emphasize their significance during the 13th and 14th centuries. The gold textiles arrived in Europe via European trade, church and diplomatic missions, but also directly from

⁶ Zvezdana, Dode, "Juhta Burial Chinese fabrics of the Mongolian period in the 13th – 14th centuries in north Caucasus." *Bulletin 82 CIETA* (2005): 76-93; Zhao Feng, *Gold, silk Blue and White porcelain: fascinating art of Marco Polo era*, Hong Kong: Yi sha tan / fu shi gong zuo dui, 2005; Zhao Feng, *Silk Road and Mongol-Yuan Art: Paper collection of the international symposium*. Hong Kong: Yi sha tan / fu shi gong zuo dui, 2005.

Rosati, Maria Ludovica. "De Opere Curioso Minuto: The Vestments of Benedict XI in Perugia and the Fourteenth-Century Perceptions of "Panni Tartarici." In *Oriental Silks in Medieval Europe*, eds. Juliane von Fircks and Regula Schorta, Riggisberger Berichte 21, Riggisberg: Abegg-Stiftung, 2016, 172-183.

⁷ The technique of the *Lampas* weave, a figured textile combining fine silk threads woven with gold leaf mounted on animal gut, animal skin, or paper, is described in CIETA and in 'A few Characteristic weaving techniques used in Islamic textiles', Anne-Marie Kéblow Bernsted in Folsach, *Woven Treasures*, 65-93, especially 75. Also, see *Glossary and Terms*.

⁸ Such as the tomb of Fernandos and Alfonso de la Cerda dated 1275, Burgon, Monasterio de Santa Maria de Real de las Huelgas, inv. no. 00650510; The treasure of St. Mary's Church in Danzig/Gdansk, dated to the first half of the 14th century, Lübeck, St Annen-Museum, inv.no. M3, M23, M31, M32, M111, M112; Copenhagen National Museum formerly in Roskilde Domkirke; Regensburg, Alte Kapelle (Diözesanmuseum); The chasuble of the Chapter of St. Aldegonde in Maubeuge, église Saint-Pierre-et-Saint-Paul and, the burial of Cangrande I in Verona. Verona, Museo di Castelvecchio, and the cloth of gold and silk of Rudolph IV, Vienna, Dommuseum, Inv.Prot.L-7.

Mongol missions⁹, with gifts and diplomatic letters that contained messages from the rulers¹⁰. Three letters in the Vatican archives document examples of diplomatic missions that took place in Europe, their circumstances and the kind of gifts that were exchanged, which were likely to include gold textiles¹¹. The archives also preserve records with the seals of different Mongol Khans. Other letters addressing diplomatic exchanges between Khubilai Khan (r.1260-1294) and Philippe IV (r.1285-1314) and Ögodei Khan (1229 – 1241) and Philippe IV also exist¹².

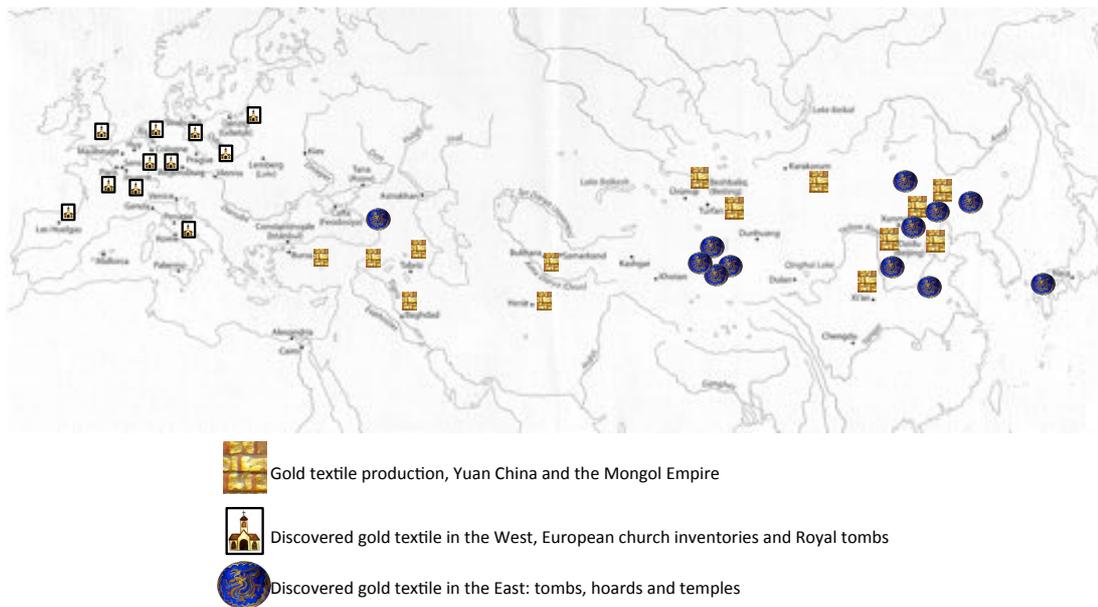


Figure 1. Mongol Gold Textiles, places of production and consumptions.

The sudden rise in the production of gold textiles during the Mongol period led to a peak in the history of textile technology: the development of an innovative true *lampas* technique in a fine silk weave ornamented with an eclectic all-over pattern of gold threads. The labour intensive and complex production process of a gold textile, taking up to one year, reached yearly production outputs of between 86 000 to 156 000 pieces from the middle of the 13th century¹³. The growing demand for gold textiles resulted in

⁹ For example, a delegation of Khubilai Khan offered gifts to the kings of France and England, and the Pope Nicholas IV in 1288. Another delegation travelled through Hungary and Germany into France and on to Avignon in 1338. National Archives, France. Mostaert, A and Cleaves, F.W.1952. "Trois documents Mongols des Archives secretes Vaticannes," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 3 / 4, pp. 422.

¹⁰ For an overview of the Mongol rulers, see appendix 1.

¹¹Ibid.

¹² Arnold, *Princely Gifts and Papal Treasures*, (San Francisco: Desiderata Press, 1999), 193.

¹³ Travelling, eyewitness accounts and the *Yuan Shi* report of the large production quantity of gold textiles; numbers derived from these sources range from a yearly output of 86,000 to 156,000 pieces of gold textiles. Marco Polo mentions "...And quite twelve thousand barons and knights ... are all dressed ... they are of one colour and all are cloth of silk and of gold" A.C. Moule, *Marco Polo, the description of the World*, (London: G. Routledge, 1938), 87. Also Allsen, 'Robing'. These numbers, referred to in historical accounts such as the *Yuan Shi*, by travellers and eyewitnesses such as Marco Polo, William of Rubruck, Ibn Battuta and Rashid al-

large-scale production processes, involving indigenous traditions and technological knowledge of sericulture and moriculture, and gold thread crafting. These indigenous traditions and weave expertise, which were new and unfamiliar to the nomadic Mongols, evolved at different stages and in various transfer modes. Produced in large quantities in different locations of the Mongol Empire, the gold textiles represented a convergence of textile technologies and iconic gold designs¹⁴; the technological know-how and the eclectic designs were derived from more than one source culture and from the territories which were absorbed into the Mongol Empire following the rapid military conquests, particularly under Chinggis Khan between 1206 and 1220 and his descendants between 1253 and 1279¹⁵. The immense Mongol territory, divided into four *Khanates* by the 1280, was ruled by the nomadic Mongol minority who were conquering nomadic, seminomadic and sedentary territories, namely lands of the Jin, Liao, Tangut and Uighur ethnicities and cultures of Central Asia, Islamic lands and China¹⁶. The multicultural Mongol Empire consisted of various ethnicities and religious diversities, such as Confucianism, as well as Buddhist, Islamic and shamanistic beliefs. The new members were, in a sense, colonized subjects of a carefully arranged hierarchical and class-conscious society based on ethnicity, tightly controlled by the Mongol elite.

One way of differentiating between classes was the use of textiles: certain types of weaves and colours distinguished by advanced textile technology functioned as

Din, may be unreliable primary sources for a number of reasons; written in the Ming period (1368 – 1644) by successors the *Yuan Shi* may have been written opinionated or by historians who may not have been in possession of the entire 'history' of the Mongol period as is very little recorded historical evidence of that period. Also, reports by travellers and eyewitness should also be approached with caution, as their accuracy could be compromised due to their possible fancifulness and inflated interpretations. Marco Polo, for example, has been widely used as a source by scholars in this field. In his recordings, he tells us about his visit to China, his encounter with silk and gold textiles and their large consumptions – see Marco Polo, *History of the World, Description of the World*, p.87. This edition establishes the amount of a yearly distribution of 156 000 gold textiles upon an earlier discussion pertaining to the doubled required amount: Yule examines the astounding number of twice the number of 156 000 robes of silk and gold in an earlier translation where the quantity appears in two separate chapters, misleading the reader. *The Book Ser Marco Polo, the Venetian, Concerning the Kingdoms and Marvels of the East*, translated and edited by H. Yule. London: Johan Murray, 1871, pp 343-345. These numbers, however, seem to correspond to the number recorded in the *Yuan Shi*, as well as with sources such as the "Treatise on the Five Elements" and the "Treatise on the Hundred Officials" – see *Chinese Silks*, 330. By combining these varied sources and observations made on the large-scale silk production output in the Mongol Empire (consumption of silk and gold textiles is further discussed in chapter 1, pp.60-61), these numbers have been sustained and accounted for by various scholars today, for example, Allsen, "Robing," 306, Watt and Wardwell, *When Silk Was Gold*, 131, Zhao Feng, *Chinese Silk*, 330 and Denney, *The World of Khubilai Khan*, 77.

¹⁴ Watt and Wardwell, *When Silk was Gold*, 142-163, and, Wardwell, "Panni Tartarici," 95-173.

¹⁵ Aspects of the impact of the early Mongol conquests in relation to gold textiles will be discussed below. For a general overview of the Mongol history and conquests see Allsen, *Culture and Conquest*, Watt, J. et al. *The World of Khubilai Khan*, Komaroff and Carboni, *The Legacy*, and Watt and Wardwell, *When Silk was Gold*. Also, Herbert Franke and Denis Twitchett, eds., *The Cambridge History of China*, vol.6, Alien regimes and border states, 907-1368, (Cambridge University Press, 1994), and J.A.Boyle, ed, *The Cambridge History of Iran*, vol.5, The Saljuq and Mongol Periods, (Cambridge University Press, 1968).

¹⁶ The boundaries of the four *Khanates*: Empire of the Great Khan (*Yuan China*), The Il-Khanid, The Golden Horde (*Kipchak Khanate*) and Chaghadai Khanate were established in 1280 based on the four divisions by Chinggis Khan.

categorizers, such as the gold textiles. The weavers, artisans and goldsmiths weaving gold textiles moved within the new cultural zone as booty or tributes¹⁷, and were considered *fu* or *asiran*¹⁸ belonging to members of the Mongol elite. The weavers, artisans and goldsmiths from disruptive places conquered by the Mongols, some of which with vibrant silk industries, carried important textile technology and weave knowledge to the Mongol Empire. Certain weaves and gold designs from the early conquests reveal connections to textile technologies from such textile strong traditions such as China, the Jin, the Liao and Central Asia¹⁹.



Figure 2. The Mongol Empire, divided into four Khanates, ca.1250

The appropriation of certain weave techniques enabling gold designs with specific indigenous design elements transformed the textiles into a new type of visual language linked to the Mongol political elite which, in a sense, reflected a new Mongol culture²⁰.

Gold textiles became one of the primary foundations for economic and social survival for the Mongol elite. The Mongols created emblematic costumes in silk woven with gold which, with specific borrowed motifs and ornaments alluded to notions of 'royal costumes' to mark their power. Gold textiles became essential components of Mongol identity, self-representation and signalled various levels of political and religious power.

¹⁷ Boyle, *The Cambridge History of Iran*, 512-513.

¹⁸ The word for slave in Chinese and Arabic.

¹⁹ For an overview of weave types, practices and workshops under the Northern and Southern Song dynasties, the Liao, the Khitan, the Jurchen Jin dynasty and the Xixia see Zhao Feng *Chinese Silks*, Eds. by Dieter Kuhn and Zhao Feng, (Yale University Press, 2012), 264-266.

²⁰ Gold textiles are mentioned in relation to imperial functions, *Yuan Shi* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1976) chapter 78, 1931 and 1938. Also, according to accounts by Marco Polo and Rashid al-Din gold textiles were presented as royal costume, tents and various furnishing and displays, Moule, *Marco Polo, the description of the World*, 87. For a discussion of Mongol authority, luxury objects and gold see Allsen, *Commodity*, 102-105. Also Wardwell, "Panni Tartarici," 115-117. Chapter two discusses Mongol political culture in relation to the designs of gold textiles.

The circulating of various kinds of gold textiles, as salary or currency, gifts, tributes or prestigious objects within members of the ruling elite became a necessity for maintaining and establishing the Mongol political culture²¹. The growing demand for raw silk and bolts of basic silk weaves from the second half of the 13th century was mainly driven by consumption of the Yuan state, the economically superior *Khanate* within the Mongol Empire, and resulted in the largest silk tax collection in Yuan China and in Chinese history²². Tax collection in the form of silk formed part of a growing government budget and was distributed among Mongol elite households; silk was used in tributes, gifts, and as an exported commodity, notably to Tibet. The Mongols were avid Buddhists and their escalating financial contributions to Tibetan leaders was likely linked to the redemption of their conquests, looting and the collapsing of entire cultures²³. The growing cooperation between the Yuan and Tibetan leaders may have functioned as a vehicle for being accepted as legitimate successors of the early rulers in China²⁴.

The relationship between territorial expansion and the increased production and circulation of silk and gold textiles is demonstrated by the various degrees of technological transfer which occurred at several levels of the Mongol society²⁵. The new and growing demands for gold textiles gradually contributed to innovative design developments. Large numbers of artisans and weavers²⁶, the carriers of textile

²¹ Allsen, *Commodity*. Also, Thomas Allsen, "Robing in the Mongolian Empire." The elite received silk as payment from their subjects and as annual grants from the court, Watt and Wardwell, *When Silk was Gold*, 18; Juvaini/Boyle, vol.2, 220 and 228. Furthermore, during the early 14th century, for example, "rolls of silk and embroidered silk" circulated as gifts between the Mongol rulers. For an overview of the date of distribution of such gifts see Allsen, *Culture and Conquest*, 44. Moreover, the *Yuan Shi* also mentions how the Mongol ruler Möngke granted a yearly apanage of 300 rolls of silk to Hülegü, see Allsen, *Culture and Conquest*, 23. Costumes in gold textiles were also distributed to a military commander for conquering a Song army in 1256, see Allsen, *Commodity*, 23. The *Yuan shi* furthermore refers to how bolts or cut gold textiles from bolts, were distributed. For example, Khubilai Khan distributed "9 pieces *na-shi-su*" to a military official in salary reward. Chapter 1 accounts for the ways in which silk functioned as a reward and as salary for funding the Mongol military force, the bodyguards, government officials and court entourage.

²² Zhao Feng, "Silk artistry of the Yuan dynasty," in *Chinese Silks*, 328.

²³ Vast amounts of silk were also distributed to Tibet as gifts and salary, and for the maintenance of the Mongol society and the cultivation of Tibetan Buddhism and will be further discussed in Chapter 1.

²⁴ Jing, Anning, "Financial and Material Aspects of Tibetan Art under the Yuan Dynasty". *Artibus Asiae*, 64, no. 2 (2004): 213-241.

²⁵ Territorial expansion and the surge in silk production presents a parallel to earlier historical events, for example, during the Han (206 BC – 220 AD) and Sui-Tang (581-618-907 AD) dynasties when Chinese silk production intensified under united and expanding rule, and where carriers of textile technology and know-how moved freely. See Rossabi, Morris, "The Silk Trade in China and Central Asia" in Watt, and Wardwell, 7-10. Also, Angela Sheng, 1999. "Why Ancient Silk Is Still Gold: Issues in Chinese Textile History". In *Ars Orientalis*, Vol.29, p.150.

²⁶ 'Forced migration' occurs for example in the event of war or conquests when people are moved involuntarily from one location to another with the aim to serve the 'conquerors'; this definition is contrary to 'economic migration' which can be defined as people moving from one location to another with the aim to improve their status of living. The exact number of captive weavers and artisans is unknown, however, the number of conquered subjects are mentioned in historical records in the thousands, see Biran, 2015. "Encounters Among Enemies: Preliminary remarks on Captives in Mongol Eurasia," *Archivum Eurasia Medii Aevi*, 21: 30-34. Weavers in China were traditionally women, however, sources describing the relocation of weavers and artisans refer to entire households which likely represented the work distribution between men and women where men worked the agricultural part of the moriculture, cultivating mulberry trees. Family members shared the tasks of caring for and feeding the worms with mulberry leaves. Women were spinning the silk threads and weaving documented by surviving paintings illustrated in Roselyn Hammers, *Pictures of*

technology who were circulated as forced migration, moved with a certain degree of permeability facilitated by *Pax Mongolica*²⁷. The movements of maker, material and technological knowledge, contributing to a new Mongol culture, formed an amalgamation of technologies and design repertoires derived from the home cultures of the relocated artisans, craftsmen and weavers. The Mongol geopolitical and military expansion strategy gradually formed a vast multicultural zone creating a certain degree of cosmopolitanism in the sense of a multilingual and multiethnic environment; a religious pluralism and the liberal Mongol court culture resulted in the intercultural exchanges within and beyond the Mongol Empire evidenced by the many visiting European embassies as well as church and commercial envoys.

The portable material of textiles was a key factor in the wide dissemination of Mongol culture and gold textiles which, as agents, transmitted aspects of Mongol power within and beyond the Mongol Empire. The luxuriously gold ornamented textiles and their eclectic designs prompted an immediate response and growing demand among the European elite.

Luxury textile traditions had existed in Europe since the 10th century when geopolitical influences from Christian Byzantium and Islamic influences from northern Africa established the textile town of Almeira in Andalusia, Spain²⁸. The circulation of precious textiles in Europe during this period can thus be traced to the network provided by the Roman churches. The popularity of the Cult of Saints that had spread in Europe during the end of the 12th century had increased the demand for religious art²⁹. Thus, precious textiles, whose demand expanded widely into the European market, began to serve new functions for various ceremonial uses. For example, precious silks were important elements of liturgical vestments and funerary clothes of dignitaries, in addition to

tilling and weaving: art, labor and technology in Song and Yuan China. Hong Kong University Press, 2011. See also Bray, Francesca. 1997. *Technology and Gender. Fabric of Power in Late Imperial China*, University of California Press, pp. 186-187.

²⁷ *Pax Mongolica*, circa 1250 – 1350 AD, enabled the safe and free movement of people, goods and services, see Allsen, *Commodity*, Wardwell, "Flight of the Phoenix," also, Zhao Feng, *Chinese Silks*, 330.

²⁸ Allegedly, hundreds of looms were weaving silk garments and precious brocaded robes with roundel motifs; these textiles were much sought after throughout Europe and have survived as church vestments and relics from the wrappers of saints. Ettinghausen and Grabar, *Islamic Art and Architecture 650-1250*, (Yale University Press, 2001), 281. Also, P. Deschamps, "Les Fresque des cryptes des cathédrales de Chartres et de Clermont et l'imitation des tissus dans les peintures murales" *Monuments et Mémoires Publiées par l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* 48 (1954), 91-106, figures 11 - 12.

²⁹ The acquisition of religious art became large endowments, which allowed the church elite to purchase luxury goods, even in times of economic depression. The need for liturgical furnishings, reliquaries and priestly vestments, all with the appropriate sumptuousness and varying according to the requirements of the liturgical calendar, also contributed to the demand for costly goods made of precious metals, silk and glass. Furthermore, treaties began to require 'appropriate fabrics' at ceremonies such as funerals which, according to material evidence, included gold textiles as seen above.

functioning as curtains and drapes for religious objects³⁰. The gold textiles participated in constructing identities and objects for the European elite.

The sources and terminology

Compared with the high number of produced gold textiles during the Mongol Period, only an astonishingly small quantity has survived - about 100 gold textiles. These rare objects may have perished due to poor conservation conditions, or they may have been burnt to recover their value of gold in dire times. There are several issues compounding a precise dating and geographical attribution of gold textiles. Moreover, the majority of the surviving gold textiles were moved from China and the Mongol Empire and were preserved in Europe. Excavated objects from China, Central Asia and the geographical area formerly known as the Mongol Empire, provide insufficient material to establish proper attributions and cultural origins.

A group of gold textiles that was preserved in Tibet is of particular interest for this research. Due to the dry weather conditions, high altitude and lack of insects, many gold textiles are in fairly good condition and may thus improve our chances for examining the objects and interpreting the material. Also, the documentary sources for Mongol silk-gold textiles, such as the Papal inventories, raise challenges with regard to terminology. It is both multilingual and representative of time and place, something which is not always taken into consideration by many studies related to this subject.

Some of the earliest recordings of gold textiles, and their production in the Mongol Empire, however, can be found in European travelling accounts and eyewitness reports dated to the 13th and 14th century, such as the accounts by Marco Polo (1254-1324)³¹, the Franciscan friars William of Rubruck (1120-1293)³² and Giovanni da Pian de Carpine (1185-1252)³³, who travelled as part of the diplomatic missions connecting the Mongol

³⁰ For example as recorded in a document from 1320 describing a gilt Chinese cloth to be used over a ceremonial chair: "*Item 1 pannum tartaricum deauratum pro facistorio*", see Hermann Hoberg, *Die Inventare des Päpstlichen Schatzes in Avignon 1347-1376*, (Citta des Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1944.), 45.

³¹ In second half of the 13th century Marco Polo reports of weavers from Muslim culture producing gold textiles east of Tenduc, Pelliot, "Une Ville," 261-279; Yule, *The Book of Ser Marco Polo*, 285.

³² *The Journey of William of Rubruck to the Eastern Parts, 1253-1255*, by Ruysbroek, Willem van, 13th century, (London: Printed for the Hakluyt Society, 1900), refers to the Mongols as Tartars.

³³ John of Plano Carpini travelled in the Mongol Empire between 1245-1247, Wyngaert, A.V.ed., Plano, J. of Carpini, *Ystoria Mongolarum*, (Florence, 1929). John of Plano Carpini *Ystoria Mongolarum*, ed. A.vanden Wyngaert (Florence, 1929). Also, 'A

rulers and European royal and church elite, as seen above. Other early sources include the accounts by Rashid al-Din and Juvayni³⁴, who worked for the Mongol Il-khanid rulers, Chinese travel accounts³⁵, as well as the *Yuan Shi*³⁶ which was recorded in the beginning of the Ming dynasty (1368-1644). Common in these early sources are the brief and incomplete definitions of the gold textiles they encountered, with a few exceptions, such as the *Yuan Shi*.

During the 19th and 20th centuries, gold textiles began to re-appear in different locations from Eastern China, Tibet and Central Asia to Western Europe and became the subject of study, raising questions about their consumption, reception and provenance which in many cases still remain unanswered³⁷. Gold textiles were described and defined differently at their various places of reception, obscuring their identities and provenance, and more recent studies and researchers have desired to define these textiles more narrowly. For example, historical sources and travel accounts reveal that gold textiles were named *Nasishi* or *na-che-che* in China, *nasidut*, *nakh* or *nasij* by cultures related to Persia and Central Asia, and *nacidut* by the Mongols; in Europe, they were named *dras de tartais*, *tartaires* or *Panni Tartarici*³⁸. *Camoca* was another term for

Narrative of Friar Johan of Pian de Carpine's Mission', this text was discovered in the MS, No. 2477 of the Colbert Collection in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, in *The Journey of William of Rubruck to the Eastern Parts, 1253-1255*,

³⁴ Juvayni reports on craftsmen brought to Khara Khurum between 1251-1252 from different cultures working for the Mongols, distributed by Ghingis Khan among his family and trusted. He also reports on Chinese from Shanxi Province living in Almanlik, as well as Besh-Balique, where also weavers from Herat worked. Anne Wardwell "Two Silk and Gold Textiles," 365 and 366.

³⁵ Ibid, Chinese craftsmen were also recorded in Samarkand by Li Zhichang between 1220-1224, and Zhang Chun, a Chinese Daoist priest recorded Chinese weavers working in Samarkand.

³⁶ *Yuan shi*, chapter 78

³⁷ The gold textiles were discovered in different locations in burials and hords, such as Monk Haiyun (1203 – 1257) in Beijing; Wanggu tribe in Mingshui township Damaobanner Inner Mongolia; Siziwang Banner, Inner Mongolia; North Tomb near Yanhu in Xinjiang; Jininglu, Inner Mongolia; Heishuicheng, western part of modern inner Mongolia; Gansu province of the Wang Clan; Shandong province 1350; Dove Cave, Longhua County Hebei province; Hunan, Yuanling tomb of the Chen family; Suzhou tombs of Madam Cao; Wuxi, Jiangsu province. Zhao Feng, *Treasures in Silk: an Illustrated history of Chinese Textiles* (Hangzhou Shi: Yi sha tang fu shi chu ban, 1999). Also, Zhao Feng, *Chinese Silks*, 327-369. A large group of gold textiles emerged from Tibet in the early 1990 and were sold through different art dealers mostly to museums in the West; some of the largest collectors were The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Cleveland Museum of Art, Musée Guimet, Paris and The David Collection, Copenhagen, however, a large group recently emerged from a private collector and will be examined in this thesis. Other gold textiles reached the art market during the late 1990s and the early 2000s and were acquired by the Museum of Islamic Art, Doha. The Golden Horn, Ulus Djuchi, North Caucasus, in the burial grounds of Novopavlovsky, Djuhta, Verbovy Log. Zvezdana Dode, "Juhta Burial Chinese fabrics of the Mongolian period in the 13th – 14th centuries in north Caucasus." *Bulletin 82 CIETA*(2005): 76-93, also Zvezdana Dode, "Determination of Chinese, Iranian and Central Asian artistic tradition in the décor of silks of the Mongolian period from the Golden Horde legacy" Ulus Djuchi." In *Silk Road and Mongol-Yuan Art: Paper collection of the international symposium*, ed. Zhao Feng, (Hong Kong: Yi sha tan / fu shi gong zuo dui, 2005) 265-277. Gold textiles, in various forms, have gradually been found in numerous church tombs and treasuries across Europe during the 19th and 20th centuries which will be discussed below.

³⁸ *Nasij* was the term used by Persian and Arabs see Allsen, *Commodity*, 2-3. *Nache-che* was used in China to name gold textiles, Zhao Feng, *Chinese Silks*, 335; The Mongols used the term *nacidut*, Pelliot, P.1927. "Une Ville Musulmane dans la Chine du Nord sous les Mongols." *Journal Asiatique*. Octobre-Décembre(1927):261-279, Komaroff, and Carboni, *The Legacy*, 62-73 and 168-195. Also referred to 'Tartar Cloths', see Allsen, *Commodity* and Wardwell "Panni tartarici, especially pp. 115-17. Anne Wardwell describes "Tartaricus" as a term used by Europeans to describe gold textiles from any regions belonging to the Mongol Empire, thus no distinctions are made between the four *Chagghatha* dividing the Empire into the Yuan dynasty (1278-1368), Mongol Iran, Chagatai Khanate and the Golden Horn, (appendix II, p.134). Wardwell, furthermore, notes that a rare exception occurs in the 1295 inventory of Pope Boniface VIII where a distinction is made between Tartar and Chinese textiles: "Tarse" or "Tharse" designated the lands of the Uighurs, E.Bretschneider, *Mediaeval Researches from Eastern Asiatic Sources* (London, 1967 ed.), vol. I: 66-67, note 1060. The related term: 'Tartani or *Tartaryns*' is defined in the Pisan original among precious stuffs and cloth of gold "*tartarini dicti*

a type of silk woven with gold. The textile was woven in China and discovered in Europe, where it was transformed and reused in an ecclesiastical context, as evidenced by figure 139. Today, however, it is known that this weave was also made in Tabriz, Herat, Nishapur and Baghdad during the Mongol period, thus compounding the issue of provenance and origin³⁹. The different existing terms have contributed to the bafflement of researchers, when it came to interpreting different sources, as well as challenged the very authenticity of the material and how this was determined. The examination of sources and material, in order to decipher their meaning and authenticity and contextualize them at their locations of use, will be reviewed in chapters three and four. These chapters will also examine the different aspects of transfer and movement of gold textiles from the Mongol Empire to Europe, exploring ways to clarify the terminology and signal ways of determining their provenance/authenticity.

Transcultural analysis and methodology

As the literature demonstrates, there is a gap in the study of the transcultural consumption patterns of Mongol gold textiles that needs to be addressed. This thesis, therefore, defines a new field that combines the existing knowledge on gold textiles produced in the Mongol Empire, with a study of patterns of consumption related to their function and reception in the Mongol Empire and in Europe: a study of consumption patterns enables assessing the different types of cultural transfers that occurred, and to approach an understanding of the consumption of gold textiles.

The starting point for this research is the meaning and function of Mongol gold textiles in their source environment. How were they connected to Mongol political power and religious functions?

cangiicolori", meaning shot silk; shot silk was traditionally linked to China. Tartary (in Italian: *tartarino*; in French: *Tartaire*) has been often referred to as diapered, brocaded or plain silk that can be striped and possibly a tabby weave, see Lisa Monnas, *Merchants, Princes and Painters*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 302. Pegolotti, on the other hand, describes it as: "- a silk cloth, possibly damasked or brocaded with gold, used for vestments and the draping of state beds; it was made in Persia, Syria and Cyprus, see Pegolotti, F. Balducci, *La pratica della mercatura*. Ed. A. Evans, (Cambridge, Mass.: Medieval Academy of America, 1936)415. See also appendix 2 for overview of gold textile terminology.

³⁹ David Jacoby, "Oriental Silks at the Time of the Mongols: Patterns of Trade and Distribution in the West." In *Oriental Silks in Medieval Europe*, eds. Juliane von Fircks and Regula Schorta, (Riggisberger Berichte 21, Riggisberg: Abegg-Stiftung, 2016) 93-123.

As gold textiles were not used only in the Mongol Empire, I also examine the way in which we interpret them as transcultural objects. In order to do this, I address these questions approaching the 'former field' of gold textiles from the Mongol period in the researched field. I focus on a group of gold textiles that has surfaced at a more recent date and has been inaccessible until now and refer to the 'former field'. However, I attempt this at a different level from the current literature, in order to illuminate aspects of transcultural consumption.

The majority of the existing 'former field' of gold textiles mostly belongs to western museums⁴⁰. Smaller collections of gold textiles are also held at museums and private collections, mostly in Europe⁴¹. New groups of gold textiles which have recently become available - such as the important group at the Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, Qatar, the Mardjani Collection in Moscow, the Aga Khan museum, the Toronto collection and at the Kunstgewerbemuseum, Berlin, many of which are still unpublished, will contribute to our current knowledge and enable us to interpret the various types of consumption patterns in the context of transfer.

Much of this research was textual, but for the most part, it was material and visual. The primary objects of my research examined first hand were costumes comprising of robes, headwear, bags, panels and various fragments from the Museum of Islamic Art, Doha Qatar, the David Collection, Copenhagen, the Aga Khan Collection and the Kunstgewerbemuseum, Berlin. Objects from the 'former field' were examined first hand at the Cleveland Museum of Art and at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. I was not able to access the Mardjani Collection in Moscow, however, catalogue descriptions, as well as correspondence and image discussions with the former owner of the objects, the retired art dealer Arthur Leeper⁴², provided me with the knowledge.

⁴⁰ The major museums with gold textiles from the Mongol period include the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; The Cleveland Museum of Art; The David Collection, Copenhagen; The Abegg Stiftung, Bern; Kunstgewerbemuseum zur Berlin; Musée Guimet, Paris; Victoria and Albert Museum, London; China National Silk Museum, Hangzhou; Hohhot Inner Mongolia Museum. Appendix A provides an overview of museums and private collections holding gold textiles, currently known.

⁴¹ Basilica di San Domenico, Perugia, Italy, Museo Diocesano Albani, Urbino, Italy, Eglise Saint-Pierre-et-Saint-Paul, Maubeuge, France, Dommuseum, Vienna, Monasterio de Santa Maria la Real de las Huelgas, Spain, St. Annen-Museum, Lübeck, Alte Kapelle, Diözesanmuseum, Regensburg, Germany and Deutsches Textilmuseum, Krefeld, Uppsala Church, Sweden, National Museet, Denmark, Holland, Tokyo National Museum, Palace Museum Beijing, Gansu Provincial Museum, Lanzhou, Heibei Longhua County Museum, Suzhou Museum and Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region Museum, Hohhot.

⁴² Retired American art dealer Arthur Leeper was one of the first foreign art dealers allowed into Tibet in the early 1980s accumulating an important collection, the majority of which is now in the Mardjani Collection, Moscow. Arthur Leeper collaborated with the China National Silk Museum, Hangzhou on the conservation and research of certain gold textiles. Email communication with Arthur Leeper, April 22, 2014 and June 17, 2014. A similar collaboration occurred between art dealer Carlo Cristi and the China National Silk Museum. Interview and email correspondence May 30, 2016.

Related objects from the 'former field' of gold textiles have continuously been a reference for my research, the most important of which were included in my field trips. Many of these objects found their ways to the museums mentioned above through art dealers⁴³ and auction houses⁴⁴. A considerable amount of textile fragments from the 'former field' arrived to European museum collections from two 19th century art dealers: Dr Fr. Bock⁴⁵ and von Weisner. These art dealers collected a significant number of gold textiles from European church treasuries, which were later divided, sold and scattered among different museums and collectors. For example, other fragments of the Berlin gold textile (figures 21 and 160) also exist in museums in Hamburg and in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam⁴⁶.

Of particular interest to this thesis is the range of costumes and accessories that were worn by the Mongol elite, which provides an instant pattern of consumption. Another point of interest is presented in the large panels used as furnishings on the inside of tents and palace walls, as well as smaller fragments with other purposes. With these objects, and with reference to objects from the existing 'body' of surviving gold textiles, this thesis places the greatest focus on the Chinese aspect, which will be established by visual and technical approaches discussed in the following section.

For a thorough interpretation of the material, it is necessary to have physical access to the object under analysis. This access includes the physical handling of the material, microscopic access to both sides of the fabric, retrieving threads from the warp and the weft to examine the spun, the dye, the material, as well as examining the weave construction, density of weave and the pattern. It is therefore a major drawback, in examining museum collections of gold textiles, when physical access to the objects is unavailable. For example, in my examination of robes, it was impossible to access the backside of most robes because they were lined. In most cases, it was not possible to take thread samples in order to examine twists, dye and (gold) material. In the worst

⁴³ A network of local dealers in China and Hong Kong are continuously supplying the market of gold textiles, usually through foreign art dealers and galleries in Europe, which then sell the objects to museums and private collectors worldwide. The foreign art dealers, based mostly in Hong Kong, London and the USA, provided many of the gold textiles from the 'former field' to the Cleveland Museum of Art, the David Collection, Copenhagen, the Abegg Stiftung as well as the Islamic Museum of Art, Doha. ('The Afterlives of Gold Textiles in Europe - their movement and distribution in 19th – 21st century Europe" - research forthcoming by author).

⁴⁴ A large group of gold textile robes and fragments now in the Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, were sold through Christie's in October 2011, sale 7987, lots 102-6 and 109. Bonhams has provided the Aga Khan collection with gold textile robes.

⁴⁵ Müller, G., *Geschichte der liturgischen Gewänder des Mittelalters*, Cologne : J.P. Bachem, 1859.

⁴⁶ Hamburg (Inv.no.1900.127), Rijksmuseum Amsterdam (Inv.no.N.M.11566), Berlin (Inv.No.00.53).

cases, the objects were on display and were therefore not available for even a basic microscopic analysis. Because of their rarity and their historical and ancient nature, some museums were reluctant to permit a private handling session for certain gold textiles. To address these shortcomings, I resorted to the visual examination of those pieces. However, this came with the price of some inconsistency concerning my research material. To address this gap I could, in most cases, consult existing material from the 'former field' and body of gold textiles, and employ methods of compare-and-contrast of the surface weaves, visual aspects and other discovered characteristics. I do not regard this drawback to be grave, since my aim regarding the material is not to 'read' the textiles in a scientific manner, but rather to draw upon signs and characteristics which indicate the existence of different types of costumes during the Mongol period; for example, the identification and justification of the 'original Mongol costume' to ascertain the 'aspiring-to-Mongol-costumes', in other words, the 'copy-costumes'. These costumes reflected various aspects of transfer, borrowing and adaptations of certain patterns and designs, as well as robe constructions, resulting in notions of cross-dressing.

The proper investigation of gold textiles is, however, an important part of this thesis with regard to the issue of provenance and authenticity. Regarding this, I was fortunate to be provided full access to a group of objects in the Kunstgewerbemuseum in Berlin. These objects contributed to a new way of 'reading' a certain type of gold threads, as well as of investigating the reception and transformation of gold textiles which occurred in Europe during the 13th and 14th centuries.

My investigation has been recorded and logged in a database. It includes costume styles, designs, motifs and ornaments discovered on the different gold textiles. Also, detectable material analysis of colours, thread counts, loom and fabric widths was included, and constitutes an important parameter when it comes to identifying textiles for the purpose of assigning them to a provenance. This database was created to evaluate the existing field of gold textiles and their categorization regarding classification and provenance. It provides an overview of the repeated motifs, pattern and colours and indicates some uses of metal threads. It is helpful for determining whether there are any consistencies in the different weave combinations. However, since the database does

not provide us with a total picture of the Mongol gold textiles produced in the Mongol Empire, as most are assumed perished, we can not use it to reach firm conclusions, but we can indicate certain trends that occurred in their consumption. The database will, however, gradually expand to include the currently known gold textiles and will, in the future, serve as a useful tool for examining newly discovered gold textiles, and for guiding new studies undertaken in the field.

I have supported my material and visual approach with comparative art historical material which reveal various aspects of gold textile consumption in the Mongol world. For example, Mongol gold textile costumes can be observed in Yuan tomb murals, hanging and handscrolls, portraits and *kesi* tapestry weaves, as well as in Persian miniature paintings, ceramic tiles and metal work. Various patterns and motifs found on gold textiles also appear on the same media. My material and visual approach thus includes both the physical use of gold textiles and the adoptive use of their designs and motifs.

In order to support my material and visual analysis and approach an understanding of transcultural consumption and reception of the gold textiles within and beyond the Mongol Empire I examined the material in the context of theories of transfer. Mongol visual language, as it was circulated within the Mongol Empire, can be paralleled to the theories of material culture studies that emphasize the 'social life of things'. In this sense, textiles and their visual language, as objects, are considered to be as active agents of social meaning and communication rather than passive tools of cultural expression. This visual impact of the textiles, as they moved across different levels of consumption and reception, may thus be more significant than their materiality and provenance⁴⁷.

The translational qualities of luxury costumes are evident in the full or partial adoption of gold textiles among remote conquered cultures of the Mongol Empire: various uses of gold textiles occurred regionally, as well as horizontally, among conquered subjects. However, vertical consumption also occurred, resulting in new consumption patterns of gold textiles in certain communities of elites within those cultures. This type of cultural

⁴⁷ Walker, Alicia, "Patterns of Flight: Middle Byzantine Adoptions of the Chinese Feng Huang Bird," in *Ars Orientalis*, Vol.38, Theorizing Cross-Cultural interaction among the Ancient and Early medieval Mediterranean, near East and Asia (2010), 119-200. Also, *The social life of things, commodities in cultural perspective*, ed. by Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge University Press, 1986).

cross-dressing immediately distinguished the wearer from his surroundings, while relating to an alternative cultural identity, or alterity⁴⁸. The circulation of gold textiles to distinct locations thus not only led to a taste for gold textiles but also to the spread of a new textile technology which, in certain textile producing locations, could replace a local production. This new technology and gold designs reflected therefore an improved status (or political power)⁴⁹. As a result, objects, as well as visual displays, participated in various degrees of movement and mechanisms of transfer. This model can, for example, also be paralleled to earlier historical periods where gifts and tributes of luxury silks were distributed to neighbouring cultures to indicate a certain degree of subordination, and where the gifts received displayed power and independence⁵⁰.

Transcultural consumption and the conscious or unconscious use of objects or visual displays reflecting aspects of 'otherness', or 'foreignness', and 'exoticness' were facilitated by *Pax Mongolica*. The intensified circulation of objects, ideas and personnel exchanges that occurred at several levels contributed to a cosmopolitan environment of Eurasia. Luxury textiles, such as precious silk, sometimes ornamented with designs and emblematic motifs expressing superiority or affiliations to a worldly power, were circulated as rare, sought after objects; they became essential acquisitions for the Mongol elite, for establishing and expanding their power. Luxury textiles, because of their monetary value and portability were, at the early period of the Mongol Empire, acquired as loots or spoils and used as tribute, traded goods and gift exchanges to secure an expansionistic conquest strategy: the nomadic Mongols were the conquerors or 'the colonizers' of the conquered and colonized cultures of the Uighur, Liao, Tangut, Central Asia, Islamic Lands and Northern and Southern China which, when combined became the large geographical and cultural zone of the Mongol Empire⁵¹.

⁴⁸ For a discussion on cultural cross-dressing see Barry F. Flood, *Objects of translation: material culture and medieval "Hindu-Muslim" encounter*. (Princeton University Press, 2009), 72-75.

⁴⁹ The circulation of gold textiles as objects of transfer can be paralleled to the mechanism of transfer discussed in Pierson, "The movement," 9-10.

⁵⁰ Canepa, "Theorizing Cross-Cultural Interaction," 8.

⁵¹ Pre-dating the conceptual theories of cultural transfer and cultural hybridity, the 13th and 14th century Mongol period shares certain similar events and historical parallels to the events that founded the concepts of cultural transfer and hybridity: "The question of cultural transfers is not just a matter for the 19th century. It can be observed between two religious or ethnic communities in remote periods including the spreading and semantic shifting of technical know-how at prehistoric times", posited by Dr Michel Espagne, email communication 11 September 2015. Also, Haj Yazdiha, "Conceptualizing Hybridity: Deconstructing Boundaries through the Hybrid," in *Formations*, Vol.1, No.1(2010): 31.

In order to better understand aspects of transcultural consumption and the emergence of Mongol culture, I engage with the theory of Homi Bhabha. According to Homi Bhabha, the colonizers and the colonized are mutually dependent in constructing a shared culture, which may be described as 'the third space', in the sense that systems of the original culture are abandoned, deconstructed or compromised to allow the re-emerging of subcultures in the new environment⁵². There are several parallels to these notions which can be found in the historical events concerning the Mongol Empire; to form new cultural systems in the Mongol Empire, a carefully planned selection process took place, which partially or fully adopted, appropriated or rejected certain knowledge, technologies, education, social, economic and religious systems and art forms from the local cultures which were absorbed into the new space of the Mongol Empire⁵³. These events will be discussed in chapter one, in relation to the rise and development of gold textiles.

In order to consider the various consumption pattern of gold textiles, this thesis also considers the transcultural consumption of gold textiles and the effects of their transmissions that occurred within the Mongol Empire and in Europe, in different time periods; this is because the effects of transfer, such as content, context and their mode being 'natural' or 'rapid', were impacted by different geopolitical and cultural circumstances⁵⁴. A rapid transfer, for example, involves acts of transfer appearing in sudden, abrupt and intense modes, and with notions of emblematic presence, and possibly the presence of a dissemination factor. Conquests or war, as they appeared during the early period of the Mongol Empire, exemplify such transfer which resulted in entire cultural collapses as a result of forced migration and relocation; the circulating cultures within the Mongol Empire impacted the different locations they encountered during their movement and contributed to the new Mongol culture, as we will see in chapter one.

⁵² Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, (London: Routledge, 1994), p.247. Compromised in the sense of having appropriated elements from the abandoned cultures to continue the 'third space', here the Mongol Empire. This theory is shared by Kate Lingley as she investigates cultures between China and Central Asia during the Sui and Tang dynasties. Lingley, Kate, "Naturalizing the Exotic," 50-80.

⁵³ Morris Rossabi, "Behind the Silk Screen: Movements of Weavers in Asia, Seventh to Fourteenth Centuries". *Orientalism*, March (1998): 84-88.

⁵⁴ Jelmer W. Eerkens and Carl P. Lipo, "Cultural Transmission Theory and the Archaeological Record: Providing Context to Understanding Variation and Temporal Changes in Material Culture," *Journal of Archaeological Research*, 15, no 3 (2007):247-252.

The relationship between gold textiles and identity, and the multiple functions of gold textiles, such as delineating rank and social class through displayable visuals, served as strengthening the position of power among the Mongol elite. The metaphorical use of luxury textiles also alluded to advancing the position of conquered subjects in Mongol society, in the sense of adopting a new identity associated with the ruling power, the phenomenon of *mimicry*, which will be discussed in chapter two. Notions of this practice were sometimes acknowledged by individuals of smaller and neighbouring cultures who adopted, or copied, elements of a particular style of costumes in order to represent themselves as powerful individuals. This practice was, in fact, also copied by Mongols themselves, as a trait of their nomadic culture, borrowing and appropriating various costume models and materiality in order to establish and distinguish themselves as the rulers of a vast empire.

As wearable and portable objects, textiles may be considered as passive or active displayable and transmittable objects. Certain gold textiles could express the ability of communicating a certain degree of power, rank, cultural identity or religious affiliation, serving as intentional metaphors for a certain social, political or cultural program: the appropriation of sumptuary laws, for example, where specific dress codes reflected a certain degree of segmentation with society. Intentional appropriation of specific motifs, designs and ornaments could thus unite certain individuals while posing ethnic, linguistic or religious boundaries to others. Some gold textiles could therefore function as agents transmitting a certain political or cultural agenda. Chapter two therefore explores signs, motifs and decorations adopted from the conquered cultures to transform the textiles into different types of narratives.

The role of gold textiles in Europe is explored in chapter three, which focuses on the inclusion of gold textiles as independent objects or as objects incorporated into other textiles, or used in collages along with other material taking on new meanings. Their changing identities in their new environments are considered in relation to a different European pattern of consumption, distinguished by religion, material wealth and the encounter of foreignness. Cultural symbolisms, such as visual motifs, costume rituals and beliefs, which are also dealt with in chapter two, may therefore reveal a variety of cultural sources and are likely to be defined in relation to other cultures, emphasizing

the possibility of a certain degree of transfer. This, furthermore, suggests that all cultures are part of, at a certain level, continuous movement of an infrequent mode or process. Hybridity, cultural identity and terms such as 'national culture' or 'cultural space' in relation to the consumption of gold textiles in the vast Mongol Empire's cultural zones and Europe will be explored in chapter four.

Chapter One: Historical context and introduction to the material



Figure 3, 3b. Gold textiles from the Mongol Empire; silk woven with paper-gold technique.

This chapter investigates gold textiles in terms of their material and production in China and in the Mongol Empire. Moreover, it explores the movement of weave technology and analyses the events and historical circumstances which led to the sudden rise in the production of gold textiles in China and in the Mongol Empire during the 13th and 14th century. Their use and the ways in which they spread beyond Asia to Europe in the same time period is also considered.

Silk - traditions and usages

Silk, a Chinese invention dating back to the Neolithic period (10 200 – 2000 BC)⁵⁵, is a natural fibre and the primary material mounted on looms producing gold textiles. It, has been exchanged as a commodity, and in the form of gifts and tributes, between China and its western neighbours, since the late Eastern Zhou period (770-256 BC), and in the Mediterranean territories since the 2nd century BC⁵⁶. Silk was exclusively produced in

⁵⁵ The earliest extant silk relics can be dated to about 5 500 years ago, discovered in 1980 in Qingtai village, Henan province, *Chinese Silks*, 72

⁵⁶ Silk was one of the most important and popular commodities of the East associated with China and the Romans spent large sums in the first century BC on importing silk, which they admired and treasured for its quality and uniqueness. In ancient Rome it was known as *Serica* and the Romans believed that silk was produced from fibres in trees located in the land of *Seres*. Shelagh Vainker, *Chinese Silk, A Cultural History*. (London: The British Museum Press, 2004) 6.

China until the 5th or 6th century, when technological know-how spread beyond the borders of China westward, gradually stimulating various forms of consumption and production, particularly in Central Asia⁵⁷. The long tradition of silk consumption among the ruling elite in China is reflected in historical accounts, as well as in surviving tomb goods⁵⁸. Silk was considered a sumptuous and valuable commodity with multiple uses and since its early invention it has been linked to myth and tradition in China⁵⁹. This durable and flexible material, which kept the wearer warm in the winter and cool in the summer, could be transported easily on caravans across land rather than by sea. Certain types of weaves, such as fine satin, created a shiny effect which, when woven in the colour yellow, resembled the shiny effect of gold⁶⁰. When combined with gold, the silk weave not enhanced its monetary value and also displayed technical expressivity.

Sericulture⁶¹ was the lengthy and complex process which made silk an exclusive product. The different stages in production, were honoured and considered a respected virtue. Elite women could occupy themselves with sericulture to pass their time, as seen in literati paintings dated to the Tang and the Song dynasties⁶². For example, associated with a spring ritual performance, a 12th century silk hand scroll depicting ladies preparing woven white silk provides evidence of the engagement of the Empress in palace sericulture, but as an idealised image showing ‘making’ once a year as a palace ritual⁶³. A 12th century hand scroll marked by the Empress Wu, *Pictures of Tilling and Weaving*, by Cheng Qi, depicts the different complex processes of silk making accompanied by poems⁶⁴.

⁵⁷ Silkworm and *sericulture* technique spread to Byzantium in the 5th – 6th century, and was possibly smuggled by two monks. Evidence of sericulture in Byzantium for the production of raw silk dates to the 6th century and shortly hereafter Byzantium began to produce its own silk. See A. Muthesius, *Studies in Byzantine and Islamic Silk Weaving*, (The Pindar Press, London, 1995), 120-121.

⁵⁸ For example, from the Zhou period (ca.1046 - 256 BC) a wider range of silk textiles, such as tabby, gauzes, twill-patterned tabby, and polychrome jin appear in royal and aristocratic tombs; the textiles appear among prestigious objects stating rank, such as bronze vessels and jade which suggest that silk was considered prestigious; The Mashan tomb in Jiangling, in Hubei province, excavated in 1982, dated to the Warring States period (340 – 278 BC), also presents some of the earliest silk findings. Cheng Weiji, comp., *History of Textile Technology of Ancient China*. (New York: Science Press 1992), 53.

⁵⁹ Early recordings of silk and silk making such as the “Book of Songs” dated to the 1100 – 600 BC, the “Book for Rites” dated to 1046-256 BC, “Master Zuo Qiu’s Tradition of Spring and Autumn Annals”, 475-221 BC, “Important Arts for the People’s Welfare”, 533– 544 AD all reflect traditions for silk in China.

⁶⁰ Dieter Kuhn and Zhao Feng, *Chinese Silks*.

⁶¹ For a description of seri- and moriculture see *Glossary and Terms*.

⁶² As seen, for example, in the 12th century handscroll *Court Ladies Preparing Newly Woven Silk*, attributed to Emperor Huizong (1082-1135), Museum of Fine Arts Boston, acc.no. 12.886.

⁶³ The 12th century hand scroll is thought to be a copy of an 8th century version which has disappeared, and is evidence of a continuous tradition kept in imperial circles.

⁶⁴ This hand scroll, at the Freer Gallery, Washington, is a similar version to one which can be found in the Heilongjiang Provincial Museum, Harbin; in the Harbin Museum collection a Song period hand scroll *Pictures of Silkworms and Weaving* can be found which illustrates detailed loom structures used for advanced weave structures.

Silk was also linked to religion, as seen in early Buddhist scripts concerning donations for piety dated to the 1st century⁶⁵. The worship of the God of Silk and burial goods of silk worms formed in jade even before the 1st century are evidence that silk was attached to a certain degree of worship, myth and tradition⁶⁶. The importance of the relationship between silk, gold textiles and worship intensified under the Mongols when Khubilai Khan adopted Buddhism as a national religion, as can be seen in surviving gold textiles, examined later in this chapter.

In China, silk was integrated in state affairs, used as a currency for salary, taxation, tributes and diplomatic gift exchanges. It was used in large quantities for peace offerings to neighbouring states from the Han dynasty (206BC – 220 AD)⁶⁷ within and beyond China, practices which were adopted by the Mongols, who began to circulate considerably large quantities, making silk one of the most important traded and transported objects within *Pax Mongolica*. This prompted the demand for silk and resulted in a significant expansion in its production in Yuan China and in the Mongol Empire.

Silk was also linked to status and functioned as a marker in society. Descriptions of a certain type of silk weaves and gold decorations, as well as their usage were linked to sumptuary laws which were imposed in an attempt to curb excessive consumption which would jeopardize the state budgets; this practice appeared in various dynastic accounts and continued to a certain degree during the Yuan dynasty.

Gold – traditions and usages

Gold, the material used for embellishing nearly the entire surface of gold textiles, was immensely important to the Mongol nomadic tradition. When gold became interwoven with silk it formed a luxurious cloth which not only functioned as a treasure for the

⁶⁵ Xinru Liu. "A Silk Road Legacy: The Spread of Buddhism and Islam," in *Journal of World History*, Vol. 22, No.1, (2011), 55-81, and Xinru Liu. *The Silk Road in World History*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2010. Also, Xinru Liu. "Silks and Religions in Eurasia, C.A.D. 600-1200." *Journal of World History* 6 (1)1, (1995)25-48 also, Xinru Liu. *Silk and Religion*, (Oxford University Press, 2007), 49.

⁶⁶ In a tomb discovery from Shaanxi province dated to the Western Zhou (ca. 1050 – 900 BC) silkworms formed in jade suggest that silk may have been considered important and prestigious. Wei, *History*, 53.

⁶⁷ A recorded amount of 20,000 bolts of silk and 9,000 kilograms silk floss were exchanged in 25 BC mostly to the nomadic Xiongnu culture. Patricia Ebrey. *The Cambridge Illustrated History of China* (Cambridge University Press, 1997), 70.

Mongols, but was also linked to early nomadic traditions and became increasingly important for the Mongol economic, political and cultural power.

Before the Mongol Empire, there was no indigenous silk or weaving tradition. Mongols decorated their plain felt or woollen clothes with small decorative gold objects sewn onto wool robes and headgear. This custom not only reflected rank and status but also functioned as 'wearing ones wealth'⁶⁸. It was a nomadic practice, as possessions and locations moved continuously. Gold permeated at different levels in Mongol society and was also used abundantly in works of art⁶⁹, forming part of the Mongol identity, culture⁷⁰ and tradition. As such gold carried certain cosmological importance representing the sun, the heavens and imperial authority⁷¹. Many Mongols, however, became avid Buddhists during the Mongol Period, and many more later turned to Islam; in Buddhist tradition, the use of gold symbolized the infinite light (Amitàbhà) while gold represented power and honour in Islamic cultures⁷².

Mongol nomadic culture linked gold and cloth to the important functions of the so-called robing tradition⁷³. Robes, costumes, gold belts and jewellery formed part of a 'salary system', which built on notions of loyalty and reciprocity. It was customary for members of a tribe to receive clothes, food and 'rewards' in exchange for loyalty to the Mongol rulers⁷⁴. This tradition became the foundation of the Mongol military system and remained a continued practice throughout the Mongol period in certain circles of the Mongol elite⁷⁵. The consumption of textiles was thus part of the economic system, in addition to representing aspects of Mongol identity.

⁶⁸ Customarily for nomadic steppe life gold played a vital role in decorative contexts aligned to status and sewing gold onto clothes subsequently wearing their wealth while they moved around. As far back as Scythian times, the steppe nomads wore gold ornaments sewn on to their outer garments. Jon Thompson. *Treasures from the Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, Qatar*, London: National Council for Culture, Arts and Heritage, 2004, catalogue no. 18, 72-73.

⁶⁹ The use of gold in Tibetan Buddhist art increased significantly from the second half of the 13th century under Khubilai Khan and peaked during the middle of the 14th century. Jing, "Tibetan Art," 219.

⁷⁰ Siberian gold supplies were in the proximity of the Mongolian steppe, available from the forest north of the Mongolian steppe. See Xinru, *The Silk Road in World History*, 122. Large quantities of gold vessels such as stem cups, ear cups, jewellery, belts, and saddles have been unearthed in the Golden Horn evidence of consumption of gold in various forms. Qi Dongfang, "The "Golden Horde" and Mongol Yuan Gold and Silver Ware," in *Silk Road and Mongol-Yuan Art*, 54-64.

⁷¹ A tradition also shared by certain Central Asian cultures, Allsen, *Commodity*, 67-68.

⁷² Krishna Riboud, "A Cultural Continuum, A New Group of Liao and Jin Dynasty Silks." *Hali* 82(1995): 104.

⁷³ *Robing* was a widespread tradition in nomadic and Central Asian cultures and presented an institution of exhibiting political and social culture that was mutual and reciprocated. An analysis and discussion of the perception, value and display of robes of honour will be presented in chapter two. See also *Glossary and Terms*.

⁷⁴ Booty was commonly distributed as rewards during periods of war and conquests. Allsen, "Robing," 305-313.

⁷⁵ Allsen, "Guard and Government in the Reign of The Grand Qan Möngke, 1251-59." *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, Vol. 46, Nr. 2 (Dec., 1986), 495-521.

The continuous technological evolution of new silk weaves woven with gold, which occurred in the 6th century and reached a peak during the Mongol period, was enabled by the constant patronage behind silk technology. Particularly the Sogdian merchants, the Liao and the Song Emperors were strong patrons, followed by the Mongols who adopted aspects of this tradition. Strong patronage was not only linked to the creation of a valuable object; notions of intentional communication reflecting identity were also part of it, and various forms of silks, gold and gold textiles became indispensable objects used in tributes, as salaries and currency in traditions adopted by the Mongols in their new locations.

The three Periods

We will now turn to the historical contexts that impacted the technological evolution of gold textiles. The gold textiles are linked to three periods, which are related to technical, historical, socio-economic and cultural events, impacting their production and designs.

The Early Period

Gold textiles belonging to the early period, circa 1206 – 1260 AD, were, in a sense, war textiles, as they constituted either looted objects accumulated by the Mongol elite, or objects offered to the Mongol conqueror as a tribute for peace. From these conquests they gradually became integrated in Mongol social and economic establishment, and their importation began. The early military invasions resulted in the rapid surrender of the Uighur people in 1209 followed by the conquests of the Tanguts of the Xixia, the Jürchen of the Jin dynasty and the fall of Beijing in 1215. There was a particularly close connection between the Mongols and the Uighur culture with the intermarriage of Chinggis Khan's daughter Chichegan and Turalji, who belonged to a culture related to the Uighurs⁷⁶. The Mongols adopted the Uighur script and Uighur traditions appeared in Mongol visual culture, for example, in certain motifs, as well as in the *kesi* weaving tradition, which intersects with certain types of gold textiles and gold threads. Uighur weavers and craftsmen were known for mastering the technique of twisted gold threads⁷⁷, which we shall examine below.

⁷⁶ William Woodville Rockhill, ed., *Journey of William of Rubruck to the Eastern Parts of the World, 1253-55* (Hakluyt Society, 2012), 149.

⁷⁷ Zhao Feng, "Silk artistry of the Yuan dynasty," 283.

The conquests of the Kara-Khitan in 1218 and the large Muslim territories of the Khwarizmi Empire, such as Samarqand, Khurasan and Bukhara in the 1220s, contributed to the transformation of a vast multicultural zone dominated by the minority Mongol conquerors⁷⁸. These rapid conquests transformed the Mongol military into a powerful and intrepid conqueror imposing advanced military systems that far surpassed any previous conquests. They led to numerous disruptions and collapses of entire cultures, with important textile production centres coming to an abrupt halt, which were followed by large-scale relocation programs of weavers, goldsmiths and artisans in the early 1220s – 1260s. The early silk textiles decorated with gold from this period formed part of the large amount of appropriated lootings and tributes for peace, which began to circulate among the Mongol elite. For example, merchants from Bukhara offered gold-embroidered textiles to the court of Genghis Khan in Karakorum and the Mongol court regularly received raw silk as a tribute from the southern Song dynasty, which may have impacted certain changes of the consumption pattern at the courts of Genghis Khan⁷⁹. The most significant encounters with appropriated objects of silk and gold brocaded textiles, however, are likely to have been accumulated by the voluntary and enormous tributes for peace from the surrendering cultures. Tribute and booty textiles were highly prized movable objects. They were exchangeable and functioned as currency, and were recycled as tributes and rewards within the Mongol Empire thus contributing to various degrees of transfer. For example, the Uighur chief of Gaochang, Turfan submitted tributes of silk and gold textiles in 1210; the Jin rulers offered '*silk decorated with gold pattern*' as peace gifts from 1215; the Tangut state supplied the Mongols with silk satins; Korea gifted the Mongols '*Ten thousand pieces of genuine purple gauze*' for peace; and large collections of silk and gold came as booty from Khurasan and Bagdad⁸⁰.

⁷⁸ J.A.Boyle, ed., *The Cambridge History of Iran*, vol.5, The Saljuq and Mongol Periods (Cambridge University Press, 1968), 304-306. For an overview of the military conquests see Allsen, *Commodity*, 5-7.

⁷⁹ According to Juvayni the encounter with the merchants from Bukhara may have initiated ideas and plans for acquiring prestigious and luxurious products. Allsen, *Commodity*, 37. According to Rachid-al-Din Chinggis Khan had a knowledge of gold dresses in the beginning of the 13th century and wished to dress his wives and daughters in gold robes: '*As my quiver bearers are black like a thick forest and my wives, spouses and daughters glitter and sparkle like red hot fire, me desire and intention for all is such: to delight their mouths with sweetness of the sugar of benevolence, to adorn them front and back, top and bottom, with garments of gold brocade...*', quoted in Allsen, *Commodity*, 12.

⁸⁰ Watt, "Textiles of the Mongol Period in China". 72. Also, *The Secret History of the Mongols* written between 1228-1240 mentions the Jin rulers submission, in Allsen, *Commodity*, 28. Booty from Khurasan was also known as 'large colourful tents' and plunder from Bagdad came in large quantities of 'textiles and precious garments'.

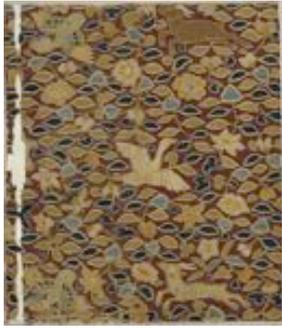


Figure 4. *Kesi*, Bird and Flower, Song dynasty.



Figure 5. Birds, roundel, scripts Iran 11-12th C., Islamic culture.



Figure 6. *Kesi*, Flowers, leaves, running animal Eastern Central Asia, 12-13th C., possibly Uighur?

The involuntary movement of weavers, artisans and goldsmiths from different cultures within the Mongol Empire led to new technical developments, which enabled the production of the true *lampas* gold textiles, an amalgamation of techniques and designs. This mobility was facilitated by *Pax Mongolica* during the 1st period, which stimulated a certain degree of enculturation in a new cultural area of the vast Mongol Empire. The two-way movement of makers and materials was a practice which continued throughout the Mongol period to meet the increasing demand for gold textiles. For example, 300 households were moved from Samarkand in the early 1240s to revive gold textile production in Herat, and weavers and goldsmiths from Beshbalique were moved to the imperial palace in Dadu in 1275. Towards the end of the 1st period, new economic, cultural and religious boundaries divided the Mongol Empire into four cultural zones ruled by descendants of Chinggis Khan.



Figure 7. Gold textile fragment, the 'Abu Bakr *tiraz*'; script and cloud collar motifs, *Early Period*.

The Mongol expansionistic strategy led to a rapidly growing multicultural military belonging to the different Mongol rulers in the new vast area of the Mongol Empire⁸¹.

⁸¹ Michal Biran, "The Mongols and Nomadic Identity: The Case of the Kitans in China' in *Nomads as Agents of Cultural Change*," Eds. Amitai, R and Biran, M. University of Hawaii Press (2015), 152-182. Also, Allsen, "Population Movements in Mongol Eurasia," in *Nomads as Agents of Cultural Change*. Eds. Amitai, R and Biran, M. University of Hawaii Press (2015), 119-152.

The imperial guards, *kesig*, and certain military forces began to play an increasingly important role in the context of silk and gold textiles, which formed part of a system of salary and rewards⁸².

The Middle Period

Gold textiles of the 2nd period, circa 1260 – 1330 AD, present technical and design advancements of gold textile production, as a result of the steady supply of silk, gold, and skilled personnel, which in turn resulted from the conquests of the important textile producing areas of Baghdad, Tabriz and the Southern Song in 1259, 1265 and 1279. A fervent patron of gold textile production, Khublai Khan was elected the Great Khan of the Mongol Empire, and of the most important economic and superior *Khanate*, the Yuan Dynasty (1279-1368). Khubilai Khan moved the Mongol capital from Karakorom to Dadu, today's Beijing, and established several workshops for the production of silk and gold textiles in China, as well as important offices specialized in gold threads and Buddhist iconography⁸³. Dadu, the former capital of the Jin dynasty, was also an important textile centre with an advanced silk and gold technological knowledge, and with relocated Chinese weavers who were captured during the early Jin, as shown in material evidence. Several pieces of surviving silk brocaded with gold objects, figures 14-16, provide evidence for the existence of an advanced textile industry.

Weavers and goldsmiths were still considered high-ranking slaves because of their economic value; however, during the second period, many of them were granted a certain degree of liberty in producing commissions for private demands after paying the required silk tax⁸⁴. This liberal policy is also reflected in the increase of private workshops, which thrived beyond the imperial palace and its control⁸⁵ and signalled the spread of gold textile production throughout the Mongol Empire, particularly in Yuan China.

⁸² Michael Biran, "Encounters Among Enemies: Preliminary Remarks on Captives in Mongol Eurasia," *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi*, (2015) 21:34.

⁸³ Farquhar, *Government*, 319.

⁸⁴ Zhao Feng, "Silk artistry of the Yuan dynasty," 327-369. Also, Biran, "Encounters," 27-42.

⁸⁵ These workshops, mentioned by Marco Polo, were mostly located in the southern regions of the Yuan dynasty such as in Suzhou, Chengdu and Quanzhou. Zhao Feng, "Silk artistry of the Yuan dynasty," 329.

Moreover, a liberal attitude towards religion allowed Buddhist monasteries, mosques, and Christian churches to co-exist with Mongol nomadic and shamanistic worship. The presence of Tibetan Buddhism intensified during this period and became a state religion in the Yuan China *Khanate*, while Hulegu's follower Gazan's conversion to Islam in the Il-Khanid *Khanate* in 1295 marks a shift in Mongol political and visual culture. The usage of Chinese and Buddhist iconography and the adapted representation of Islamic culture intensified in the visual arts from this period, as is evidenced in gold textile designs.

Textile technology continued to transcend traditional boundaries, transmitting Mongol visual culture within and beyond the Mongol Empire. The Il-Khanid *khanate* and Venice established a trade agreement in 1320 and a peace treaty was reached between the Il-Khanids and the Mamluks in 1323; also, travel and trade relations intensified between the Empire and the Europeans, notably diplomatic embassies, merchants and church representatives.



Figure 8., 8b. Gold textile tent panel fragment, roundel motifs. Detail of cloud collar, dragons, phoenixes. *Middle Period.*

The Later Period

From the 1330s onwards, gold textiles reached technical maturity with the abundant usage of gold in fine silk weaves displaying eclectic designs. The visual language displays homogenous designs of a multicultural repertoire by assimilated second and third generation weavers, artisans and goldsmiths, who perfected the production of gold textiles.



Figure 9. Section of a cloud collar. Later Period.



Figure 10. Men's robe *bian xian*. Later period.

The consistent representation of certain Chinese and Buddhist motifs in Mongol visual culture appeared with a certain degree of consistency during the 3rd period, while Mongol patronage in Tibet intensified. This period was also marked by political and economic turmoil, the spread of *Black Death* and major breakouts in 1353 - 1354 within the Mongol military, and the gradual disintegration and collapse of the Mongol Empire.

Gold textiles – Multicultural Representations



Figure 11. Gold textile robe, Dragon motifs and Buddhist symbols. Figure 12. Gold textile robe, Lotus flowers and vines.

Looking closely at the designs of gold textiles made in Yuan China or the Mongol Empire, a maze of multicultural motifs emerge in glittering three-dimensional pattern of gold woven into the fine silk. Some of the textiles reflect a continuous history dating back to the Han dynasty (206 BC – 220 AC), or earlier; for example twill-pattern tabby weaving had been continuously produced in China since the Shang dynasty (circa 16th – 11th century BC) and weft-faced compound twill weave emerged during the Northern Dynasties (386-534) and the Tang⁸⁶. Other gold textiles can be linked to the different

⁸⁶ Peng Hau, "Sericulture and Silk Weaving from Antiquity to the Zhou Dynasty," in *Chinese Silks*, Dieter Kuhn and Zhao Feng, 78.

conquered cultures. However, it is nearly impossible to identify a specific type of weave and to pair it with an exact geographical location and culture, as the textiles' make and origin were rarely identified. However, certain characteristics of the material such as the weave structures, twist direction of the silk threads, selvage binding and the gold threads, may be linked to specific traditions. For example, gold threads were typically silk threads wrapped with gold foil backed with paper, a Chinese tradition, or animal substrate, a Central Asia custom. Certain gold threads were backed with leather, a custom linked to both the northern territories of China and Central Asia; twisted pure gold threads without the use of adhesive were however, exclusively a Chinese tradition. Un-twisted, un-spun and 'S'-direction-spun silk threads were commonly found in Chinese textiles, whereas 'Z'-direction-spun silk threads were characteristic of weaves from Central Asia and cultures beyond China.

Certain exceptions, however, reveal that customs and traditions moved from culture to culture. For example, unearthed robes in China has revealed Z-twisted weft core yarns wrapped unbound in gold foil and gold textiles produced with animal substrate were discovered in China. Other surviving objects reveal threads of linen and cotton in the weave and gold threads mixed with a high content of silver or copper⁸⁷. Various types of movement are also demonstrated in designs. Pattern dimensions may indicate the use of specific loom types, which may be attributed to certain cultures. An example is presented in the Seljuk robe, figure 122, with large roundels and kufic inscription in Arabic dated to the 11-12th century, woven in weft-faced compound twill. The technique of weaving large roundels draws on Sogdian textiles of the 8th century or earlier.

Narrow looms techniques, however, were linked to Chinese weave tradition, for example, those reflected in the widths of taxed silk which ranged from 41 to 65 cm⁸⁸. Specific examples of loom widths from the Yuan period are found in tomb excavations, revealing bolts of silks and garments. Selvages from a pair of woven lampas trousers dated to the Yuan Dynasty reveal a loom width of 55 to 60 cm and surviving robes cut and assembled with fabric widths of both selvages between 45 and 60 cm⁸⁹. However, wide and large looms, such as the cross harness draw loom allowing the weaving of

⁸⁷ Zhao Feng, "Silk artistry of the Yuan dynasty," 336.

⁸⁸ Dieter Kuhn and Zhao Feng, *Chinese Silks*, 520.

⁸⁹ Rossi and Rossi, *Styles from the Steppes*, 65.

complex patterns such as lampas, began to appear in Chinese textile productions from the 10th century. The transmission of knowhow, which was linked to geopolitical circumstances occurred at various stages and in different modes, and will be examined below.

Technology transfer

A number of factors have impacted the transfer of silk, weave and gold technology. Scholars, with a certain degree of consensus, suggest that the most effective mechanisms for technological textile transfer were itinerant craftsmen, migrating weavers and involuntarily relocated textile workers who were primary carriers of loom and weave technology⁹⁰. This can be traced throughout history, with some of the earliest records in China dating back to 589 BC⁹¹. The circulation of makers and material recurred through the pre-Mongol period, impacting weave technique and design.

When members of a culture change their physical location, it is likely that these individuals disseminate elements of their local culture within their new location. Similarly, the weavers, artisans and goldsmiths may absorb new cultural elements from their new locations when asked to work according to a new style. While they are likely, in a forced or economic migration, to re-use or include technological knowledge that is derived from their home culture in the new production, it is also likely that in the relocation process, aspects of technical knowledge are re-used or included in the production of textiles in the new location: the so-called 'hitchhiking' effect, posited by Eerkins and Lipo⁹², where more than one forms of transfer appear simultaneously. This suggests that different cultures participated, to a certain degree, in the continuous movement of various modes and occurrences, and that the different cultures may in fact be considered as travellers, or units, consciously or unconsciously collecting, disseminating and incorporating ideas, objects and beliefs over time. Evidence of a technological evolution and the impact of technology can be observed on surviving

⁹⁰ Morris Rossabi, "Behind the Silk Screen: Movements of Weavers in Asia, Seventh to Fourteenth Centuries". *Orientalis*, March(1989):84-88. Also, Wardwell, "Two Silk and Gold Textiles" 354-378, and Komaroff and Carboni, "*The Legacy*."

⁹¹ The Chu state attacked the Lu demanding weavers and craftsmen as prize booty; during the Northern Wei over 100,000 weavers and craftsmen were moved from Shandong to the capital Datong in Shanxi province; under the reign of Emperor Taiwudi (r. 424-452) more than 1000 weavers were assigned to weave a certain type of textiles, *ling* damask and *jin* textiles. See as quoted in Dieter Kuhn, "Reading the Magnificence of Ancient and Medieval Chinese Silks" in *Chinese Silks*, Ed by Dieter Kuhn and Zhao Feng, 10-11.

⁹² Eerkins and Lipo, "Cultural Transmission".

objects of, for example, the pre-Mongol and Mongol period gold textiles displaying weave technology derived from several cultural sources. In the event of a ‘hitchhiking’, home culture textile and material technology seem to be transmitted with greater accuracy than designs, which seem to have greater variations of inaccuracy when reproduced in new locations.

We will now examine some examples of pre-Mongol textile technology transfer into China, in order to illuminate the various modes of transmission which contributed to the invention of gold textiles. The purpose of the analysis is also to elucidate the role of textile technology as agent, and the fact that gold textiles evolved as a consequence of the transmissions of technical knowledge and cultures. Gold textile cannot, therefore, be considered a *hybridized* element, in the sense of originating from *unmixed* and *isolated* cultures. They were composed from a multicultural weave repertoire, circulated for centuries in the area conquered by the Mongol Empire.

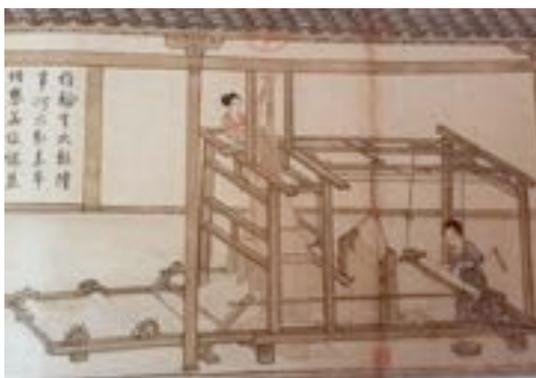


Figure 13. Cross harness loom, 14th century China.

From early compound weaves technique to Lampas gold textiles

Before the Tang period, Chinese weaves were traditionally warp-faced compound techniques, the so-called *Jin* weave⁹³, which was woven on narrow looms with pattern arrangement on the warp-threads⁹⁴. The shift from warp-faced compound weave to weft-faced compound weave, where designs are woven with the weft threads on

⁹³ The *Jin* weave, warp-faced compound tabby, was woven over the longest period from the Warring States period to the Tang dynasty and was produced in great quantities; the polychrome compound weave was the most complex and prestigious fabric and was circulated in the Western Regions. Dieter Kuhn, *Chinese Silks*, 82.

⁹⁴ Evidence from excavations in Astana dated back to the 6th century have yielded such examples. The excavation corresponds to the period when sericulture spread beyond China through Kucha and Khotan to the Byzantium circa 5th – 6th century, see Otavsky, and Wardwell, *Mittelalterliche Textilien II*, 325.

specific large draw-ooms (figure 13) is likely to have occurred in Turfan during the 6th and 7th century. During this period migrating Persian and Central Asian weavers intermingled with relocated Chinese weavers, introducing weave techniques from their home cultures to Sogdian patrons. It is likely that the wide loom technology employed in Turfan occurred when Chinese, Persian and Central Asian weavers shared, adopted and perfected loom and weave techniques⁹⁵. Some of the earliest records of silk woven with gold can be traced back to the Sui and the Tang dynasties; the imperial treasury also mentions two pieces of bathing robes woven in silk with a bird pattern in gold belonging to the wardrobe of Emperor Xuanzong⁹⁶.

Weft-faced compound techniques were more economical and more rapidly produced, and the wider loom allowed greater pattern flexibility, such as the large roundel pattern and complex and lengthy scripts; these were traditions found in Central Asian and Islamic textiles. Throughout the Tang and the Song dynasties, China refined the technique of producing weft-faced textiles⁹⁷ and it is likely that Chinese weavers transmitted this technique in new locations and in their home culture. The transfer of certain weave techniques recurred, for example, when Chinese textile workers were captured by the Khitans and resettled in the Mongolian steppe lands during the 10th century⁹⁸; textile technology migrated again when the Jürchen re-located Chinese textile artisans to the Jin imperial workshops⁹⁹. The particular technique of using gilded paper in Jin textile productions is likely to have been transmitted when Chinese weavers were re-located during the Tang and the Jin periods¹⁰⁰. However, the technique of weaving with gold may have been transmitted to the Jin from the Uighur weavers and craftsmen who were reported to have mastered the technique of twisted gold threads, as we have seen above.

⁹⁵ Discoveries in Astana dated to the same period and to 7th century have yielded examples of weft-faced fabrics woven on Central Asian looms suggesting that transfer of loom and weave technique occurred. Zhao Feng. "Weaving Methods for Western-style « Samit » from the Silk Road in Northwestern China," in Regula Schorta, *Central Asian Textiles and Their Contexts in the Early Middle Ages*. Riggisberger Berichte 9. Riggisberg: Abegg-Stiftung, 2006, 294

⁹⁶ Dieter Kuhn and Zhao Feng, *Chinese Silk*, 528. Also, Zhao Feng. *Treasures in Silk*, 224.

⁹⁷ This is evident in a number of surviving textiles, for example, two fragments dated back to the 7th and 9th century display large roundel measuring 80 cm in diameter can be found at the Abegg Stiftung, Inv. Nr. 4909 and 4903, see Otavsky and Wardwell, *Mittelalterliche Textilien II*, cat. 4 and 5, 27-34.

⁹⁸ *The Cambridge History of China*, vol.6, Alien regimes and border states, 907-1368, edited by Herbert Franke and Denis Twitchett, (Cambridge University Press 1994). Also Karl Wittfogel and Feng Chia-sheng. "History of Chinese Society: Liao (907-1125)" in *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, Philadelphia: 1949, 369.

⁹⁹ Other example of technology transfer can be found in two textiles in the Abegg-stiftung woven in *Samit* dated to the Liao dynasty (907-1125 AD). *Samite* or *Samit* is the old term for weft-faced compound weave.

¹⁰⁰ Angela Sheng, "Why Ancient Silk Is Still Gold," 147-168. Jin Dynasty Historical records mention different weave techniques using gold.

Some of the first simple silks, woven or embroidered with gold, emerged during the Tang dynasty. The spread of loom technologies and techniques of weaving with gold is evident in numerous surviving gold brocaded silk tabby fragments dated to the Jin dynasty (figures 14-17). The Song and Western Xia also produced weaves with gold



Figures 14 and 15. Gold brocades, Jin dynasty. Coiled Dragons and Phoenix in flight.

embroidery, brocades or twisted gold threads from the 11th century. Textile workshops in Central Asia and Islamic lands supplied the Byzantine courts with a different type of silk and gold textiles by the 10-11th century, and a type of proto-lampas weave, which led to the gold textiles, was produced in different locations in Persia and Seljuk territory. The movement of the proto-lampas weave technology most likely occurred through the involuntary movement of weavers and craftsmen who settled in different locations¹⁰¹.



Figures 16 and 17. Gold brocades, Jin dynasty Swan Hunt and Deer.

¹⁰¹ Various examples of involuntary relocation and textile technology transfer occurred, for example, silk production also moved westward with the Arab conquerors that introduced silk technology to Spain in the 8th century, and was present at the Sicilian courts under Norman royal patronage. See *The Glory of Byzantium*, (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1997), 507.

Modes of transfer

There are several factors that may have impacted the effects of a technological transmission, for example, content, context and mode¹⁰²; as we have seen a transfer may also be considered as 'natural' or 'rapid'. Various aspects of a textile, such as the value of the material, may contribute to the effects of a transfer. For example, the combined monetary value of the materials (silk and gold) enhanced the net worth of a gold textile as a commodity and its usefulness as a currency. The lampas weave technique, enabling gold designs to be woven onto defined spaces covering nearly the entire surface, enriched the monetary value of the gold textile. However, variations, created by combining different technical methods, may also enhance their value in another sense: that of transforming the textile into a communicative display or device signalling certain messages or ideas. The technique of combining two different types of gold threads in a complex weave presented a certain visual content considered as an optical refinement, as the light reflects directly in wrapped and flat gold threads, bringing life to the fabric. This method was also useful in evoking attention to a specific area of a design, as exemplified in figure 18 (a running animal woven in paper gold is highlighted by the flat woven gold background).



Figures 18-18.a Gold textile, demonstrating the effects of light reflection using paper gold silk weft threads and flat woven leather gold strips.

The simultaneous appearance of gold thread traditions and techniques suggests that a certain degree of transfer had occurred via skilled workers from different cultures. It may also suggest that the weaver may have acquired new knowledge through its circulation in the multicultural environment of the Mongol Empire. Style, content and technical appropriation recurred at different times during the Mongol period, with the

¹⁰² Eerkens, Jelmer W. and Lipo, Carl P. 2007. "Cultural Transmission," 247-252.

intentional use of certain techniques and weaves from different cultures reappearing. An example from the early period which demonstrating the relation to the early relocations of weavers and artisans can be seen in figure 19. Dated from the mid 13th century, a silk tabby ground weave woven with a supplementary decorative silk and paper gold weft thread on a wide loom, presents motifs and technology from Chinese and Central Asian cultures: the Phoenix in flight soaring upward, lotuses and peony flowers, and the representation of a 'western' dragon with horns placed on the heads of the Central Asian Makaras.

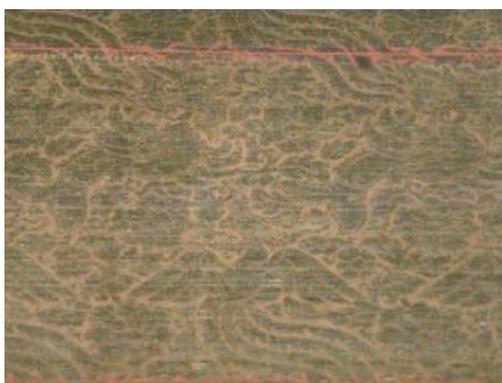


Figure 19. Makaras, Phoenixes and Flowers, mid 13th century.

Form, displays, modes and frequencies of the various transfers were likely to have been organized following the formation of a new cultural system in the Mongol Empire¹⁰³. For that, the Mongols partially or fully adopted, appropriated or rejected various forms of expertise, technologies, education, social, economic and religious systems as well as art forms from the conquered culture. In replacing former cultures, the interactions between the conquerors and the conquered, created a 'third space' from which the new Mongol culture emerged. Appropriation, in the sense of sourcing from various cultures for source material for a new cultural expression, is visible in most Mongol gold textiles as a consequence of the circulation of makers and materials facilitated by *Pax Mongolica*; source material from different cultures is also visible in paintings and metal work but also in particular ceramics which feature many of the same motifs found on gold textiles. The frequency of appropriated cultural motifs indicates the Mongol rulers' preferences and displays cultural and political power.

¹⁰³ Morris Rossabi, Morris, "Behind the Silk Screen," 84-88 and Morris Rossabi,, *Khubilai Khan: His Life and Times*.(Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

A natural transfer is one that takes place at a pace that follows a natural evolution over time and includes mechanisms of non-forced influences, such as economic migration, trade, commerce and diplomacy. In this context, we may consider a mechanism which allows transfer to occur in a gradual and vertical manner, interlinking generations of households; for example, the introduction of tea drinking which was gradually integrated as a 'cultural characteristic' in a non-forced manner. This mode of transfer may therefore be considered stable and durable. A rapid transfer, in contrast, involves sudden, abrupt and intense modes and with notions of emblematic presence, as well as, possibly the so-called presence of a dissemination factor. Its impact, which occurred during the first period and was considered to be rapid because of its intensity and propagandaring intentions, can be related to the Mongol war conquests. For example, the early conquests of the Jin, the western Xixia, northern Song and parts of Central Asia, resulted in various degrees of cultural collapses and in one of the largest scales of forced migration of carriers of textile and gold technologies.

This distinct mode of transfer may be considered unpredictable and temporary, and may run parallel to specific historical events, for example the Sogdian merchants in Turfan during the 6-8th century¹⁰⁴. As this section suggests, the relationship between technology transfer and the mobility of carriers enabled the emergence of new types of textiles during several consecutive occurrences prior to the Mongol conquests. The Mongols, unaccustomed to the tradition of silk making, followed a similar approach to create silk and gold textiles as convertible commodities for expanding the Empire and to ensure their socio-economic and cultural survival.

Gold Textiles – technique and production

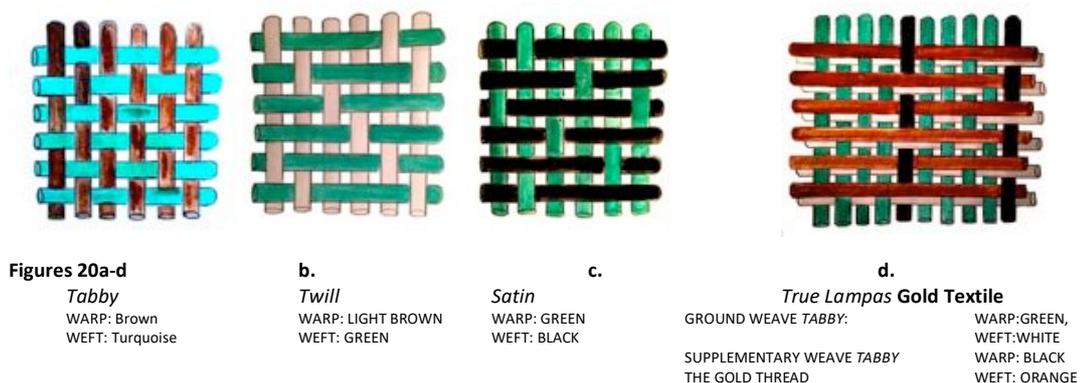
Lampas Weave Technique

The earliest gold textiles woven in true lampas technique with a continuous overall pattern in round or flat gold threads, the so-called *nashishi* or *nasij*, first appeared in Chinese weaving workshops during the Yuan dynasty and in Central Asian production

¹⁰⁴ The Sogdian created a new textile weave combining weave techniques from Chinese and Central Asian weavers during the 7th - 8th century creating new textile designs and emblematic patterns of large roundels, see Angela Sheng, "Why Ancient Silk Is Still Gold," 151. Looms for producing this type of *jin* silk weave practised in China dates back to the Han period, see Angela Sheng, "Woven Motifs in Turfan Silks: Chinese or Iranian?." *Orientalions*, April 1999, 45-52. Also, *Chinese Silks*, 27 and 523.

locations in the early period of Mongol rule. The gold textiles can be distinguished from earlier Chinese and Central Asian versions, figures 4-6, by the enormous amount of gold applied by a supplementary weave creating the design as seen in figures 10-12. The lampas weave technology was unique in the use of large and wide looms, which enabled a greater variety of complex patterns. The loom construction included a number of shafts and a tall ‘tower’ in the middle where the ‘drawboy’ would pull the necessary threads allowing the gold pattern to be created, figure 13. The weaves were usually very fine, as demonstrated by their high yarn count¹⁰⁵, with the gold threads constructed with silk threads wrapped with paper, leather or animal substrate, mounted with thin gold foils.

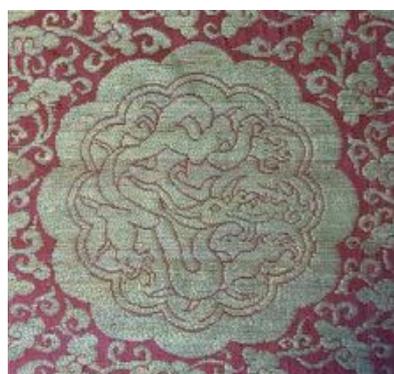
A *lampas* weave is constructed with two weaves: a ground weave and a supplementary weave, which forms the gold design. The ground weave is woven in tabby, satin or twill technique, and the supplementary design weave can also be woven in tabby or with different twill techniques, depending on the complexity of the pattern, figures 20a-d. The ground weave and the supplementary weave are joined in a bind by the supplementary warp thread. The raw silk consumption for weaving the *Lampas* structure is considerably greater than most weaves since the supplementary weave requires nearly as much silk material as the ground weave.



Figures 21a exemplify a *lampas* tabby weave construction. The ground and the supplementary weaves are both woven in tabby; the supplementary warp binding the weft gold thread is demonstrated by the visible pink thread in the reverse design of figure 21b. The high yarn count of 105 warp threads per cm, and 48 weft thread per cm

¹⁰⁵ Yarn count is the density of the warp and weft silk threads, which is measured by the centimetre. See *Glossary and Terms*.

of which 24 are gold weft, demonstrates that the weave is fine. The supplementary gold weft threads are created with gold foil backed with paper and wrapped around a silk core.



Face side



Reverse side

Figures 21-a-b. Tabby woven Gold textile decorated with Dragon in roundel, surrounded by tiny clouds.

Gold threads

The different weft gold threads embellishing the gold textiles consisted of fine silk threads wrapped with gold foil. The latter, composed with various qualities of gold, provided different hues and shine to the silk thread wrapped in gold, and thus to the overall gold textile weave and design. Pure 24 karat gold, and consisting of 99,7% gold, was extremely malleable. Threads with 22 karat gold usually consisted of 91.67% gold, 5% silver, 25 Copper and 1.33% zinc. 18 karat gold consisted of 75% gold and various combinations of copper, silver, nickel, zinc, Aluminum, Iron and Cadmium¹⁰⁶. There were also examples of a gold content of below 18% and with a higher content of silver which, in case of erosion, left black traces. 'Pure gold' thus enabled a bright and shiny golden colour while gold with a high content of copper provided a reddish golden glow. All other alloying metals tended to whiten the colour. As we have seen, there were different sources of gold available in the Mongol Empire; the *Yuan Shi*, however, mentions that gold, silver and pearls were acquired beyond the borders of China¹⁰⁷. Gold was also circulated as precious material and was used as a gift in diplomacy. Gold objects were also circulated among the Mongol rulers and as tribute to Tibet. Therefore, it cannot be considered as a proper source for determining the provenance or the geographical location of the production of gold textiles.

¹⁰⁶ www.totalmaterial.com/page.aspx?ID=checkArticle&site=ktn&NM=230 accessed 22 August 2016

¹⁰⁷ *Yuan Shi*, chapter 78, 1976: 1938.

The gold foil was mounted on paper, sheep leather or animal substrate or, occasionally, wrapped directly around silk thread¹⁰⁸; these methods replaced earlier uneconomical methods of weaving with drawn gold¹⁰⁹. Paper gold was a technique that had been used in China since the 8th century. It was used in textile production by cultures in the North of China during the Liao and the Jin dynasties; it was likely introduced by relocated Chinese weavers during the Tang and the Jin dynasties. Gilded animal substrate threads, which look similar to paper gold threads under microscopic examination, were widely used in Central Asia and Middle Eastern production in products for the Byzantine Empire from the 10th century. Current and historical accounts have linked the use of paper derived from the Mulberry tree fibre as the source for paper gold. This may be plausible, due to the essential use of moriculture for silk making and the fact that plant fibre was readily available as a useful material in the production pipeline.



Figure 22. Paper gold thread.



Figure 23. Long and short plant fibres.

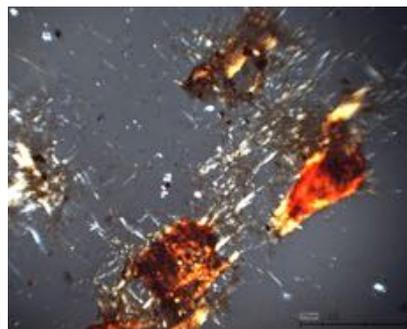


Figure 24. White 'sparkling starch'.

However, recent examination reveals that other sources also existed, for example Gambi fibres from the *Thymelaceae* family, a plant fibre which is short and with a broad central part, unlike *Mulberry*, *Hemp* or *Flax* fibres, which are long and narrow, figures 22-24¹¹⁰. These were widely used in paper production in China according to records compiled at the Textile and Conservation department of the National Museum of Denmark¹¹¹. Several facts suggesting that Gambi fibres, the so-called 'silk-bast-fibres', were used to back the gold foil. Microscopic examination of the gilded silk threads dissolved in water demonstrated, firstly, a separation of fine silk threads and tiny fragments of gold. Secondly, a variety of very fine and short fibres of various widths is

¹⁰⁸ For example, certain surviving Liao textiles demonstrate the use of un-backed gold foil wrapped directly on a silk thread, z-twisted, see Dieter Kuhn and Zhao Feng, *Chinese Silks*, p.xvii.

¹⁰⁹ Also, see *Glossary and Terms*.

¹¹⁰ Correspondence from Conservator Anna-Grethe Rieschel, Material Science, National Museum of Denmark, April 6, 2016.

¹¹¹ Gambi fibres along with Daphne and Meisn, fibres also belonging to the *Thymelaceae* family were widely used in China for paper; the difference of the fibres shows both the use of the long Mulberry fibre and short fibre both dated to the 8th century, Turfan.

also visible, and can be classified as Gampi. Furthermore, microscopic photographic data not only reveals the different short lengths of plant fibres, it also shows white sparkling encircled crosses which represent a certain type of starch which was characteristically part of the paper making procedure in China. The gilded paper technique (gilded paper twisted around a silk core, figure 25a), or woven flat, figure 25d, were methods commonly used in China from the 8th century, linked to the Tang period textile production and widely used during the Liao and the Jin dynasties¹¹².



Figures 25a-d. Gold textiles, illustration of different gold threads.

25a. Satin weave, paper-gold.

25b. Satin weave, leather-gold.

25c. Tabby weave, Animal substrate.

25d. Satin weave, Paper-gold strips.

Gold foil beaten onto leather and then cut into strips, figure 25b, was a common technique during the Jin period and can be linked to northern Chinese productions during the Yuan dynasty; however, it has also been associated with certain Central Asian productions¹¹³. This technique is similar to that of paper gold¹¹⁴, figure 25c, and was widely used in Central Asia and in Middle Eastern productions. Rare examples of animal substrate gold thread have, however, also been discovered in tombs in Yuan China, as seen above compounding the issue of provenancing gold textiles according to their materials.

The Organization of the Production of Gold Textiles in the Mongol Empire

Several procedures enabled the successful production of gold textiles. Symbiotic relationships between mori-culture agriculturalists and silk weaving workshops were

¹¹² Evidenced by surviving textiles, for example *Brocade with Phoenixes*, illustrated in Watt and Wardwell, *When Silk was Gold*, 32.

¹¹³ Zhao Feng, "Silk artistry of the Yuan dynasty," 336. Also, Wardwell, "Panni Tartarici," 98.

¹¹⁴ The methods of preparing gilded paper silk threads and gilded animal substrate silk threads are the same, *Woven Treasures*, 89-92. During my research and through discussions with textile conservators, I discovered methods by which special analysis can identify paper or substrate as material; these methods were encountered at the laboratory of the Kunstgewerbemuseum zur Berlin, the Museum of Islamic Art, Doha and in the National Museum of Denmark.

essential, as was the cooperation between rural and urban locations and the coordinated work environment between the goldsmiths, silk spinners and weavers. Traditionally, weaving workshops were located close to the regions cultivating moriculture for the production of silk worms. The production of a gold textile was a lengthy and costly process, which could take from one to three years depending on the size, scale and complexity of the weave, the dyes and the gold decoration. The organization of such complex processes presumably required a well-established and coordinated work environment to accommodate all phases of production.

It involved:

- Preparing the silk.
- Preparing the gold.
- The building and maintaining of different types of draw looms.
- Pattern makers to design the commissioned gold textiles.
- The setting of the loom.
- Access to skilled personnel.
- Proper storage of materials such as silk, gold threads, dyestuffs.
- Organization of a network of textile workshops within the Mongol Empire.
- Skilled tailors transforming the gold textiles into various objects such as costumes, tent panels, furnishings, accessories.

The preparation of the silk involved mulberry cultivation, silkworm rearing, silk yarn spinning and dyeing¹¹⁵. Therefore, it required proximity to a silk producing location, or ensuring a steady supply from a well-connected distribution supply chain for raw or twisted silks and dyestuffs, and material that was not found in the proximity of the production location. This required different a skilled and a varied trained personnel.

The preparation of the gold leaf is likely to have taken place at the goldsmith's facilities; this material is unrelated to silk making and it is possible that gold leaves were produced at a different location and then transported to the gold silk producing workshops. A gold leaf is very light and could easily be distributed from a central storage point. One troy

¹¹⁵ Peng Hao, "Sericulture and Silk Weaving," 68-74. Also, *Glossary and Term*.

ounce, approximately 31.10 grams, of beaten gold amounted to a sheet of 30 square meters. This amount in the form of gold leaf attached to paper, for example, would produce a thread of 1,6 kilometres. The decoration of a wide panel such as that in figure 21, measuring approximately 120 cm from selvage to selvage, would require approximately 2,500 gold threads, or an average of 2 kilograms of gold to weave four meters¹¹⁶.

As we have seen, various types of draw looms that matched the required commissions, existed for the different types of weaves¹¹⁷. For example, a narrow width loom was used for the production of details for Mongol costumes, such as the fine decorative bands embellishing the cuffs and lapels costumes and cloud collars, a certain ornament that was linked to Uighur culture, as we shall see in chapter two. This type of narrow loom is mentioned in historical records in relation to Imperial Palace workshops. For example, to produce the design repeat of a complex pattern with large roundel, such as figure 8, a loom width that could accommodate the pattern repeat and selvage borders of 124 cm was required¹¹⁸.

Pattern designs and information about pattern makers is regrettably unattainable. However, it is likely that the pattern maker liaised with patrons of the commissions to organize the motifs and colours. Once the pattern was set, the total size of the commission could be calculated and the material was ordered in accordance with the weavers who would set the looms with the required warp threads and arrange the weft threads. For example, the setting of the loom for the gold textile, figure 21, is estimated to have required the use of approximately 12.000 silk warp threads per production panel¹¹⁹. Gold threads were most likely produced within or near the weaving workshop, since the dye of the silk core of the gold threads and the warp threads in all examined pieces are identical. Gold threads were, however, also stored at the Imperial Palace where they were supervised by the 'Gold Department'¹²⁰. It is also worth mentioning that transporting gold threads could have been impractical and unsafe due to the high risk of theft; however, it is a possibility, which cannot be excluded.

¹¹⁶ These figures are calculated based on the yarn count per cm and multiplied by the width and height of the panel.

¹¹⁷ Zhao Feng, "Silk artistry of the Yuan dynasty," 332.

¹¹⁸ Calculations based on research at The Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, in 2012 and 2014.

¹¹⁹ This figure is calculated by counting the yarn count per cm multiplied by the width of the panel from selvage to selvage.

¹²⁰ *Yuan Shi*, chapter 85, 2147.

Skilled personnel such as draw boys who, in conjunction with weavers produced the gold designs, were required for the producing the advanced lampas weave. Due to relocation, the carriers of this technology transmitted their techniques and also absorbed new ones. During the middle period, and with the expansion of the industry, the knowledge was spread to meet the growing demand. Entire households were engaged in the industry of seri- and moriculture, since both men and women were equal contributors to silk taxes; women were traditionally weavers and men worked in the fields of the mulberry production¹²¹. The tending of the silk worms was typically a shared task, sometimes involving all members of the household¹²². Information about workshop employment in other parts of the Mongol Empire is scarce; however, entire households were reportedly relocated from Central Asia and Islamic lands to Mongol Empire, and thus similar work structures may have existed in those locations. Literary records reveal that certain workshops in Beshbaliq were integrating migrating artisans¹²³ suggesting that a certain assimilation of work force might have taken place.

A proper storage for the materials is likely to have been close to the workshop. However, this applied, presumably, only to current productions due to the costly materials. There are a number of literary accounts suggesting a certain degree of production organization at the level of the Imperial Palace. For example, large storage facilities for raw silks, dyestuffs and gold existed at the Imperial Palace and were distributed under strict allocations¹²⁴. During the middle period, Khublai Khan established several offices within the Imperial Palace related to silk and gold textile production. In addition to the storage rooms, there were offices for “weaving Buddhist Icons¹²⁵” and offices responsible for ‘Brocade weaving’, ‘Rare embroideries’, ‘Rare textiles’ as well as an office for ‘gold threads’¹²⁶. This suggests that possibly, not only were material allocations controlled by the Imperial Palace, but pattern and designs were also likely to have followed the materials, which were allocated to the different weaving workshops. Surviving objects

¹²¹ Francesca Bray, *Technology and Gender. Fabric of Power in Late Imperial China*, (University of California Press, 1997),186.

¹²² Peng Hao, “Sericulture and Silk Weaving,” 68-74.

¹²³ Zhao Feng, “Silk Artistry,” 328.

¹²⁴ *Yuan shi*, Chapter 85, p.2147 describes the structure of the imperial storages, which was divided into four different departments: the first was responsible for weaving and the second for embroideries; the third was concerned with different colours and dyes and the fourth handled the gold.

¹²⁵ *Yuan Shi*, Chapter 88, p.2228, 2229, 2230. Also chapter 85, p.2147 mentions the government bureau responsible for weaving with silk and certain colours; Dadu is mentioned in this context as a place of production and is assumed to be the imperial office.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.* Also, D. Farquhar, “*Government*,” 86-88.

displaying a variety of Buddhist icons may have been linked to those offices and it is likely that these objects were part of the religious patronage linked to the Mongol elite.

Silk and gold textiles were interrelated for the maintaining of the Mongol political, economic and cultural power. In order to elucidate the sudden rise in the volume of gold textiles, we will now move on to examine the different stages of silk supplies.

Supply and demand mechanisms in the Mongol Empire

The most important silk producing regions in China were located near the Yellow River basin and accounted for over 80 percent of the official production. This is reflected in the high tax percentage derived from silk and mulberry production, of which 50 percent of all claimed taxes in those regions, including the capital Dadu, were derived from either in silks or mulberry cultivation¹²⁷. The traditional silk production location of the southern Song near the Yangze River, Hangzhou and Fujian maintained their productivity during the Yuan dynasty and yielded significant outputs of raw silk and plain weaves used as 'silk tax'. Nanjing was another important site for silk production, and collaborated directly with the Imperial Palace. The latter controlled the organization of silk production in Yuan China and initiated a surge in the production of silk during the middle period, as we shall see below. Information about silk and gold producing sites beyond Yuan China is scarce, however, travel accounts and eyewitnesses mention places within the Il-khanid *khanate*, some of which operated as weaving workshops supplying silks to the Byzantine rulers. For example, Syria was an important supplier according to the travelling accounts of Marco Polo. Gold textiles were also produced in Geogien, in Mosul, Bagdad, Tabriz and other places in Persia, in addition to the most important production place in the East, Dadu.

Silk supply – silk taxes

China remained the most important silk supplying and exporting nation during the Mongols and is likely to have surpassed the output of silk production of the other *Khanates* of the Mongol Empire. The mentioning of site-specific places is indicative of the way in which the Mongol rulers appropriated and revived former textile producing

¹²⁷These figures are mentioned in the *Yuan Shi* and referred to by Zhao Feng, "Silk Artistry", 330.

locations within the large geographical and multicultural zone of the Mongol Empire¹²⁸. No government administrative records of gold textile production in the western part of the Mongol Empire survive¹²⁹. Eyewitness and travelling reports which mention the numerous active weaving workshops scattered throughout the Mongol Empire during the 13th and 14th centuries also support these accounts.

Unlike earlier dynasties, the Mongol rulers began to collect raw silks in large quantities directly from households in Yuan China¹³⁰. Raw silk circulated among the Mongol elite and was used at the Imperial courts for the production of luxury textiles¹³¹. There are numerous facts suggesting that Yuan China became the primary supplier of silk within the Mongol Empire. The growing demand for raw silk for the production of gold textiles and bolts of silks for salaries and tributes for the Mongol elite is likely to have surpassed the capacity of locally produced silk. It is likely that the Mongols encouraged a revival and an expansion of the traditional silk industry in China, which had come to a halt during the conquest.

Evidence for the increased silk production can be found in the tax income recorded in silk fibre from the 2nd period to the 3rd period¹³². For example, silk tax amounted to 425 tons in 1263, then rose to 589 tons in 1265 with another increase to 628 tons in 1266. Silk tax was recorded at 654 tons in 1267, and maintained the level of 655 tons in 1279. Following the unification with the Southern Song in 1279, the recorded tax income rose steadily until the beginning of the 3rd period, in 1330¹³³, and the beginning of the disintegration of the Yuan dynasty. There is little evidence for the circulation of silk tax in other parts of the Mongol Empire. Information demonstrates that taxes accumulated in the Il-Khanid was paid in kind, for example in the form of grains and fruits¹³⁴, which further suggests that China was the principal supplier of silk in the Mongol Empire.

¹²⁸ Site specific locations mentioned in literary accounts: Almalik, Bagdad, Besh-baliq, *Bukhara*, Isfahan, Herat, Isfarain, Kashan, Karakorum, Khabushan, Nishapur, Mosul, Samarkan, Sultaniya, Tabriz, Tus, Yazd in the West, and Chengdu, Dadu, Hangzhou, Henan, Hongzhou, Jinkang, Liaoning, Nanjing, Pingjiang (Modern Suzhou), Quanzhou, Shandon, Shanxi, Xunmalin, and Zhuozhou (Hebei province) in the East, see Wardwell, "Flight of the Phoenix," 2-35; Zhao Feng "Silk artistry," 330; Literary accounts by Rashid al-Din are mentioned in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, 508 and 513; Shelagh Vainker, *Chinese Silk*, 138.

¹²⁹ Liu Xinru, *The Silk Road in World History*, 122.

¹³⁰ Zhao Feng "Silk artistry," 328.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² *Yuan Shi* Chapter 93, page 11, in Schurmann, *Economic structure of the Yuan Dynasty, translation of Chapters 93 and 94 of the Yuan Shi*. (Harvard University Press, 1956), 101-102. Also, quoted in *Chinese Silks*, p.328: footnote 2(*Yuan Shi* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1976), 93:2354.) Silk tax recorded as fibres.

¹³³ Dieter Kuhn, *Science and Civilisation in China*, 286-289.

¹³⁴ *The Cambridge History of Iran*, 513.

Furthermore, records mention how silk and gold were tributes from the Yuan rulers to the Il-khanid during the middle and later periods while other types of commodities, such as animals and precious stones, represented tributes offered to the Yuan rulers¹³⁵; this further supports the argument for the flow of silk and gold from the East to the West.

Gold Textile production

There is evidence that the principal sites of gold textile production were located in northern China from the middle to the later periods¹³⁶. Also, literary records mention the weave types and gold threads of the gold textiles, *nasij* or *nashishi*¹³⁷. During the 1st period, and prior to the Yuan Dynasty, some of the most important gold textile producing workshops were located in Besh Baliq, Xunmalin and Hongzhou¹³⁸. Besh Baliq was a well-known centre for gold production during the Tang dynasty¹³⁹ and was located near the Altay Mountain, which had traditionally been a source for gold¹⁴⁰. Gold was also sourced throughout China¹⁴¹, notably during the middle and the later periods, to meet an extraordinary demand not only for the production of gold textiles and gold objects but also, importantly, for gold associated with Tibetan Buddhism that evolved under Khubilai Khan and became one of the largest expenditures of the Yuan state¹⁴². Silk and gold became two of the most circulated materials within the Mongol Empire.

Production sites of silk and gold textiles

The locations of silk and gold textile production were likely to overlap, and were traditionally situated in the proximity of mori- and sericulture. Workshops, however, could have also been located beyond the traditional sites, due to the mobility of the material and makers; For example, historical records mention the production of gold textiles at Khara Khorum, the Mongol capital during the early period¹⁴³. In addition to Besh Baliq, Xunmalin and Hongzhou other locations such as Zhending, Jining and

¹³⁵ Mentioned in the *Yuan Shi*, quoted in Allsen, *Culture and Conquest*, 42-45.

¹³⁶ Dieter Kuhn and Zhao Feng, *Chinese Silks*, xviii.

¹³⁷ *Yuan shi*, chapter 78, 1931 and especially 1938, also chapter 85, 2147 and chapter 77, 1925-1926.

¹³⁸ Watt and Wardwell, *When Silk was Gold*.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ Xinru, *The Silk Road in World History*, 122.

¹⁴¹ Gold was in particular sourced from Fujian, Jinagxi, Hubei, Hunan, Guangdong, Sichuan and especially Yunnan and Heilongjiang. See Carol Michaelson, *Gilded Dragons*. Buried Treasures from China's Golden Ages (The British Museum Press, 1999), 15.

¹⁴² During the middle period of the Yuan Dynasty the funding of Tibetan Buddhism climbed to unprecedented levels only topped by the military budget, see Anning Jing, "The Portraits of Khubilai Khan and Chabi by Anige (1245-1306), 216.

¹⁴³ Chinese and Muslim weavers worked in joint cooperation in Karakorum. Wardwell, "Two Silks and Gold," 365 and footnote 26: Ata-Malik Juvaini, *Genghis Khan: The History of the World-Conqueror*, trans. and ed. J.A.Boyle. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997), 236.

Yongping, Datong and Baoding are mentioned as important weaving workshops. However, little information exists on the yearly outputs, although unspecified figures below suggest that a considerable quantity of silk and gold textiles were produced.

In the capital *Dadu* 1398 households were working at silk and gold workshops, and 1540 in Daming; in Zhenjiang about 300 households were producing a yearly output of 3561 pieces of satin¹⁴⁴. In Ningbo several hundred households resided in just over 100 rooms and produced 3291 pieces of gold textiles with 25 looms and four different dyeing facilities¹⁴⁵. Nanjing was the largest organized workshop, with more than 3000 households producing silk and gold textiles and the largest organization of weavers and craftsmen, operating a total of 154 looms and weaving 4527 pieces of silk per year¹⁴⁶.

I have indicated in this section the silk and gold textile production sites known to date. However, it is likely that more sites existed, such as private workshops owned by Mongol princes or members of the Mongol elite who received skilled personnel, such as weavers, as tribute and salary, in addition to large land possessions: for example, wealthy patrons such as Rashid al-Din, were in possession of large land areas and skilled personnel and thus contributed to the circulation of textiles, financing large commodity exchanges with silks.

The demand for silk

During the 1st period, it can be argued that among the collected plunder, silk and gold were objects specifically selected for their monetary value. As we have already seen, they functioned as rewards and as salary for funding the Mongol military force, the *mingghans*¹⁴⁷, while expanding the Mongol Empire. Silk salary was distributed to Mongol bodyguards, the so-called *kesig*, to government officials, court entourage and to members of the Mongol elite. These types of silk allocations suggest a link between the expansion of the Mongol territory and the increasing production of silk and gold

¹⁴⁴ Mentioned in the *Zhishun Zhenjiang Zhi* (discussions of the history of the Yuan dynasty) by Yu Xilu, in *Gazetteer of Zhenjiang in the Zhishun reign-period (1330-1333)*, Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 1990, juan 6. Quoted in Zhao Feng, "Silk artistry," 329 and 511, footnote 8.

¹⁴⁵ Quoted from the *Yuanchao shihua* (discussing the history of the Yuan, by Qiu Shusen, Beijing: Zhongguo qingnian chubanshe, 1980) and mentioned in Zhao Feng, *Chinese Silks*, 329 and 511, footnote 9.

¹⁴⁶ New gazetteer of Jinling (1341-1369) (*Zhang Xuan, Zhizheng Jinling Xinzhi*), Collection of Song and Yuan local gazetteers (*Song Yuan difangzhi congshu*), and Taipei: Zhongguo dizhi yanjiu huibian, 1978, vol. 3, juan 6 following Feng "Silk artistry of the Yuan dynasty," 329 and 511, footnote 10.

¹⁴⁷ *Mingghans* were units of 1000 'horsemen', which were formed across tribal affiliations who had joined Chinggis Khan in the early years of the Mongol Empire. Allsen, "Guard and Government," 495-521. Also, *Glossary and Terms*.

textiles. By 1227, there were approximately 129 *mingghans*¹⁴⁸ and an estimated 150 000 – 200 000 soldiers¹⁴⁹, of which some were recipients of silks and gold textiles. Varied estimates of travel accounts¹⁵⁰ and historical records dating to the beginning of the middle period, however suggest that the greatest increase in the demand for gold textiles occurred under Khubilai Khan and until the beginning of the later period¹⁵¹. The yearly demand for gold textiles, ranging between 84 000 to 156 000 pieces, may seem inflated and questionable; however, with the aforementioned salary consumption and specific court regulations at the Yuan imperial palace, and as similar consumptions possibly occurred among the Mongol elite beyond Yuan China, it is plausible that the demand for gold textiles peaked between 1260 and 1330. Another reason for the increase was the patron and priest relationship between the Mongol elite and the Tibetan monks, *yon mchod*, also defined as “an alliance between secular and spiritual powers¹⁵²” that built on reciprocity of support and benefit: the Mongols supported and protected the priest and his land, Tibet, and in return the head lama priest became the spiritual advisor and guarantor of rites to the Emperor¹⁵³. Several thousands of bolts of silks, and gold, in the form of redistributions of collected taxes from the Yuan state, became the Mongol contribution for the support and protection of Tibetan priests and their lands during the middle period, under Khubilai Khan. Among these gifts there were robes of silk and gold¹⁵⁴, and is evidenced by the large quantity of gold textiles that came out of Tibet during the early 1990 which will be discussed in below chapter.

Expansion and transfer of textile technology

In addition to the constant relocation of makers, another principal mode of transfer was the circulation of re-printed texts and books about seri- and moriculture production which contributed to its revival after it had suffered under the military conquests¹⁵⁵.

¹⁴⁸ *The Cambridge History of China*, 345. Also, *The Secret history*, section 202, 141-142.

¹⁴⁹ *The Cambridge History of Iran*, 307, mentions the military at an estimated number of 150 000 – 200 000 during the conquests of Utrar in 1219. This figure therefore seems plausible for the middle of the first period since the number seemed to grow throughout the Mongol period.

¹⁵⁰ “...not that they are so dear robes as those of the king, but they are of one colour and all are cloth of silk and gold.....are those of the barons who for loyalty are nearest of the lord and are called quesitan....that thirteen times a year, solely for the thirteen moons of the year, the great Kaan gives rich robes adorned with gold pearls and precious stones with the girdles and shoes aforesaid, altogether to the number of 156000, to those twelve thousand barons and knights, and he clothes them all with a like clothing with himself and of great value, so that when they are dressed and thus richly adorned they all seem to be kings. ...and for each time one colour is distinct from the other”. Marco Polo, *History of the World, Description of the World* p 87.

¹⁵¹ *Yuan Shi*, chapter 143, 3414 mentions gold textiles in relation to rewarding government officials, chapter 77, 1925-26, chapter 67, 1669, chapter 37, p.812 and chapter 12, 247 mentions different consumption of gold textiles.

¹⁵² Anning Jing, “Financial and Material Aspects of Tibetan Art under the Yuan Dynasty,”214.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*,219-220.

¹⁵⁵ *Yuan Shi* chapter 93, page 2354 translated in *Yuan Shi* 93: Schurmann, *Economic structure of the Yuan Dynasty*, 50.

Appropriated elements from books and publications from the Song period, containing specific information about how to make silk and build looms, as well as instructions about different weaving techniques were circulated. The publications were circulated with a certain degree of forced intention to increase silk production in order to meet the increasing demand for silk tax during the middle and the later periods¹⁵⁶. However, there was also an incentive related to mori- and sericulture: before the Mongol conquests, agriculturists, weavers and craftsmen were traditionally placed at lower ranks in society. During the Yuan period, this group moved up the social ladder enjoying opportunities and a certain degree of self-employment, after fulfilling their silk obligations. These publications, by presenting the re-use of ideas or visual content from another culture, may be regarded as content appropriation, which, in a sense, appeared as a sudden, abrupt, intense and rapid mode enabling the transfer of textile technology. This mode of intentional transfer may also be related to the so-called “presence of a dissemination factor”.



Figure 26 Weaving silk tax tabby

Pictures of Tilling and Weaving, circa 1275.

These publications promoted various stages of the silk industry. For example, a publication from 1264, *Traditions of the Joiners' Craft (Ziren yizhi)* promoted methods of weaving and dyeing and provided a complete guide for loom construction¹⁵⁷. Different loom types were required for different types of weave; for example, for the weaving of plain, pattern, gauze, polychrome and brocade textile¹⁵⁸. The *Compilation on Agriculture and Sericulture (Nongsang jiyao)* issued more than one thousand copies just in Zhejiang in 1273¹⁵⁹, suggesting that it is likely that large numbers were distributed in other silk

¹⁵⁶ Ibid. 50-56, 88, 98-102.

¹⁵⁷ *Traditions of the Joiners' Craft* described in detail draw-looms used for the production of gold textiles and described in details the size and placement of each loom components. Dieter Kuhn, *Die Webstühle des Tzu-jen i-chih aus der Yüan-Zeit* (The looms described in the “Treatise of the Joiners' Craft” of 1264), (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1977).

¹⁵⁸ Zhao Feng, “Silk artistry of the Yuan dynasty,” 332.

¹⁵⁹ Specific publications specialized in technological descriptions. Ibid. 333.

producing regions in Yuan China. Publications with instructions about sericulture technology were circulated during the later period, for example, *Illustrations and Explanations on the Planting of Mulberry Trees (Zaisang tushuo)* by Miao Haoqian (?-1312), *Book of Agriculture (Nongshu)* by Wang Zhen (1271-1330) published in 1313, and *Selection on Agriculture, Sericulture, Clothing and Food (Nongsang yishi cuoyao)* by Lu Mingshan (fl.1330), which also illustrates weaving methods¹⁶⁰. Depictions of the different procedures of silk making, and notably weaving brocaded silk textiles, were presented in hand scrolls such as *Pictures of Tilling and Weaving*¹⁶¹ by Cheng Qi, which illustrated the attention drawn to silk production at different levels of society¹⁶².

Some evidence for the intentionality of silk production can be found in a policy document concerning moriculture, which decreed that "Each male adult is to plant twenty mulberry trees each year..."¹⁶³. The implementation of an increasing household silk tax structure in the middle and later periods may also be regarded as an indirect mechanism eliciting forced modes of transfer.

Little information is available on silk and mulberry production in the western part of the Mongol Empire, apart from eyewitness. These locations, however, which had been renowned for their silk industry supplying the Byzantine elite, began to show progress in both seri- and moricultures in the middle period¹⁶⁴. Sources reveal that mulberry production was managed in the Yazd oasis cultivating a particular type of mulberry bush, which were developed under Khubilai Khan, and produced a higher yield of leaves, although of a lower grade than the traditional mulberry trees¹⁶⁵. Rashid al-Din (1247-1318) owned a Chinese agricultural manual on seri- and moriculture, dated from 1313¹⁶⁶, which indicated that a certain degree of technology transfer may have occurred between the Yuan China and the Ilkhanid *khanate* and that it may have encouraged the expansion of silk production and mulberry cultivation¹⁶⁷ in the western regions. In his

¹⁶⁰ The book of Agriculture also illustrates methods of weaving. See Weiji, *History of Textile Technology of Ancient China*. 452-469. Zhao Feng "Silk artistry," 331.

¹⁶¹ The object belongs to the Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C.

¹⁶² Roselyn Hammers, *Pictures of tilling and weaving: art, labor and technology in Song and Yuan China*. (Hong Kong University Press, 2011), 211.

¹⁶³ *Yuan Shi* chapter 93, 2355, quoted in Shurmann, *Economic structure of the Yuan Dynasty*, 52.

¹⁶⁴ *The Cambridge History of Iran*, 504.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid*, p. 505.

¹⁶⁶ The Chinese manual Chinese manual *Nung-shu* by Wang Chen issued in 1313 and the *Nung-sang i-shih ts'uo-yao* issued in 1273. See Allsen, *Culture and Conquest*, 118 and 119.

¹⁶⁷ Aside the mulberry leaves also the bark from the mulberry tree was used for paper backing gold leaves creating gold threads for gold textile production, a custom by Chinese craftsmen who may have resided in the western regions during this period.

account, Rashid al-Din demonstrates a profound knowledge of specific Chinese plants and customs of the southern Chinese or the Khitan in the North, including specific references to the use of mulberry trees for silkworms¹⁶⁸. This was the result of the widespread textile technology and the concentration of mulberry production, which came about as a consequence of Mongol elite's increased demand for silk. Towards the end of the later period, the disintegration of Mongol rule which occurred at various locations of the Empire¹⁶⁹, gradually affected the production and circulation of commodities within the Mongol Empire.

Multiculturality

Some carriers of textile technology, which were treated as booty during the 1st period, were relocated during the middle and later periods to revive or establish new silk and gold textile producing workshops in the Mongol empire. This contributed to the circulation of new textile technology and multicultural visual displays.

Intentionally organized multicultural work environments existed at various levels of the Mongol society and enabled a certain degree of control. The Mongols, which were a minority group lacking in cultural and administrative expertise, surrounded themselves with specialists to fill the administrative posts of the lands they conquered¹⁷⁰, constructing a hierarchical structure of a governing power. Allies from other minorities such as Uighurs, Turks, Tibetans, Tanguts, Persians and Central Asians were employed with administrative responsibility and ranked above Han Chinese, sinified Khitans, Jurchens, and lastly people from the southern Song. This carefully selected multicultural organization prevented any majority group from gaining dominance over the Mongol rulers¹⁷¹.

The phenomenon of interculturality is visible however, at different levels in relation to gold textiles: at the level of the production which comprised of a multicultural work

¹⁶⁸ M. Sutudah and I. Afshar, eds, Rashid al-Din, *Athar va Ahya'*, Theran University Press, 1989. 70, 77, 80, 86-7, 89 and 95-6 referred in Allsen, *Culture and Conquest*, 117-119.

¹⁶⁹ For example, some of the import shifts took place in the many disrupting wars within the Mongol Empire. See also Shane McCausland. *The Mongol century: visual cultures of Yuan China, 1260-1368*. (London: Reaktion Books, 2004).

¹⁷⁰ Allsen, *Culture and Conquest*, 4-7, especially 6.

¹⁷¹ Patricia Ebrey, *The Cambridge Illustrated History of China*.

force, and government administration offices overseeing material and designs were overseen by different minorities close to the Mongol elite¹⁷². There is evidence, for example, that the relocation program, which was intentionally organized by the Mongol rulers, impacted the social and cultural environments, resulting in rapid changes of ethnic make-up at specific locations. For example, during the early period, Chinese craftsmen settled in Khurasan, and a joint workforce of Chinese and Muslim weavers were relocated to Karakorum¹⁷³. There was a Chinese community in Almalik where Chinese weavers and craftsmen shared work space with weavers and craftsmen from Herat and Nishapur in Beshbalique, and in Samarkand there was a workforce of Kithan and Tanguts¹⁷⁴. 3000 households of weavers from Samarkand worked in Xunmali¹⁷⁵, intermingling with Chinese workers, and another shared work environment existed in Hongzhou, where settlements of 300 households of weavers from Central Asia and 300 Chinese weavers from Bianjing produced gold textiles. Persian weavers relocated to the Imperial workshops in Dadu, and Hongzhou housed 300 household-weavers from Bianjing¹⁷⁶. Some weavers, artisans and goldsmiths were re-located on numerous occasions; for example between 1236 and 1239, 300 household-weavers were relocated from Beshbaliq back to Herat to revitalize the weaving industry¹⁷⁷. Khubilai Kahn relocated several hundred weavers and goldsmiths to the Imperial palace in 1260 to reinforce the weaving of gold textiles¹⁷⁸ and about 400,000 artisans were employed at the Imperial Palace and government sites under Khubilai Khan,¹⁷⁹. This highlights the importance of establishing a Mongol culture at several levels of the Mongol society. Surviving gold textiles provide evidence for the fact that not only technology transfer, but also an intercultural design repertoire recurred in the form of gold, as we shall investigate below.

¹⁷² Multiculture versus intercultural, see *Glossary and Terms*.

¹⁷³ Li Chih Chang, *Travels of an Alchemist*, translated by A. Waley, (London, 1931), 93. Also, Wardwell. "Two Silks and Gold Textiles," 365 and footnote 26: Ata-Malik Juvaini, *Genghis Khan: The History of the World-Conqueror*, trans. and ed. J.A.Boyle. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997), 236.

¹⁷⁴ This community was identified by a Chinese envoy of Mongke Khan in 1259, quoted in Wardwell, "Two Silks and Gold Textiles," 124 and 365, footnote 27.

¹⁷⁵ Pelliot, "Une Ville," 261-279.

¹⁷⁶ Rossabi, "The Silk Trade in China and Central Asia," in Watt and Wardwell, *When Silk was Gold*, 14.

¹⁷⁷ In 1236 Ögedei ordered the rebuilding of Herat and had weavers from Herat working in Besh-Balique returned. *The Cambridge History of Iran*, 487 and 513.

¹⁷⁸ Komaroff and Carboni, *The Legacy*. Also, James Watt, "Textiles of the Mongol Period in China". *Orientalia*, March(1998):72-83. *The Cambridge History of China*, 654.

Gold designs and motifs

The multicultural weaving environment of the textile workshops in the Mongol Empire may have allowed for a wide design selection, however, surviving gold textiles and literary evidence suggest that certain design patterns, enabled by specific loom technologies, recurred.

The weaves associated with textile technology traditions from China, the Jin, the Liao and Central Asia feature gold designs that are predominantly linked to Chinese and Central Asian cultures, but also present motifs and iconography from Buddhist, Jin, Liao cultures, and from Islamic cultures.

Different motifs and patterns ornamenting gold textiles existed, some of which belonged to the early period of the Mongol Empire. Other motifs intensified in presence from the second half of the Mongol period when they reappeared.

Chinese-inspired motifs such as the dragon, phoenix, lotus, peonies, chrysanthemums, and the mythical lion dog (*kilin*) appear frequently among surviving gold textiles. Based on data from surviving gold textiles, compiled for this thesis, the most frequent design categories include:

Animals

Dragon, phoenix, lion, deer, birds, swan, double fish, double-headed griffins, double-headed falcons, facing animals.

Flowers/ Leaves

Lotus, peony, palmette, split palmette, vegetable scrolls, tiny pattern of flowers.

Roundels

Large roundels with facing or adorsed animals, various sizes and shaped smaller roundels (lobed, tear dropped, flamed roundels) with single animals or flowers in repeat.

Geometric Structures

Interlinked rings, ingots, squares, hexagons, coins, turtle shells.

Other

Various cloud patterns, such as large floating clouds, tiny cloud-flower pattern and cloud-collars. Pseudo-scripts, Buddhist iconography, notably swastikas and endless knots also appeared frequently on gold textiles.

The different motifs can be linked to the different cultures that came under Mongol rule. Certain motifs criss-cross various cultural categories, showing their dependence on the forces of movement, representing thus more than one culture and reflecting patterns of early transfer, for example, the deer, the lion and certain geometrical patterns like the endless knot.

Several events may have impacted the frequent appearances of Chinese and Buddhist motifs on gold textiles from the middle period. As noted above, the Mongols were avid Buddhists in addition to their nomadic shamanistic beliefs. Many Khitans, Uighurs and Tanguts, however, were also affiliated with Tibet and Buddhism prior to the Mongol period and were thus likely carriers of transfer. The offices responsible for 'weaving Buddhist Icons', weaving 'Rare embroideries', 'Rare textiles' and 'gold threads' are likely to have commissioned specific objects and gold textiles for the imperial courts and for tributes¹⁸⁰.

The close relationship between the Yuan and the Il-Khanid *Khanates* during the middle period and first half of the later period may also have resulted in commissioning specific designs. For example, the Chinese dragon, phoenix and clouds also appear on tiles and architectural surfaces such as the Imperial summer palace, Takh-i Sulayman¹⁸¹. It is evident that the movement of individuals and objects impacted designs throughout the Mongol Empire, and was a continuation of various mechanisms of transfer.

We could trace the roundel border and the representation of pearls framing motifs to several cultures and locations, namely the Uighur culture of Eastern Central Asia and the Tangut Xia dynasty, which was absorbed into the Mongol Empire. The pearl roundel was

¹⁸⁰ *Yuan Shi*, Chapter 88, p.2228, 2229, 2230. Also chapter 85, p.2147 mention the government bureau responsible for weaving with silk and certain colours; Dadu is mentioned in this context as a place of production and is assumed to be the location of the imperial office.

¹⁸¹ Komaroff and Carboni. *The Legacy*. Also, P. Soucek, 'Ceramic Production as Exemplar of Yuan-Ilkhanid Relations', *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, No.35, Intercultural China(1999).

also widely used in Sasanian art among the Sogdian merchants before it spread to China during the Tang dynasty. However, this much-travelled motif can ultimately be traced back to Egypt and the eastern lands of the Mediterranean in representations dated back to the 1st and 2nd century. Large animal motifs of birds such as eagles, as well as lions and elephants enclosed by roundels can be linked to Central Asian tradition (figure 7); however, similar large roundels with four birds have been discovered in Liao textiles, providing evidence for the spread of this motif. During the Liao period, many treasure symbols appear in textiles, such as the Buddhist wheel of law, which also existed during the Southern Song periods. The motifs of falcons, geese and deer can be linked to the hunting activities of the Khitan and the Jürchen nomadic cultures, who used these motifs (figures 15 and 17).

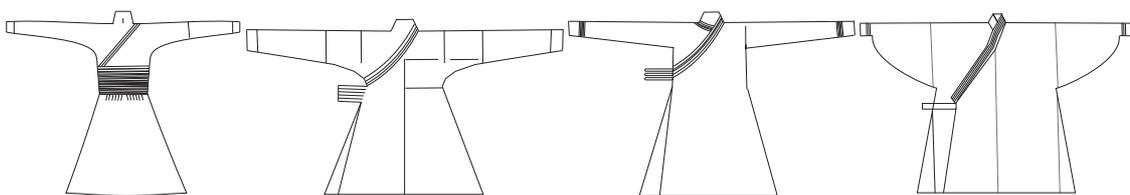
In this chapter, I have demonstrated how gold textile technology, gold textile designs and motifs were interrelated with the conquered cultures and with ethnicities close to the Mongol elite. Outputs of silk and gold textile production were seemingly greater in Yuan China. Textile technology and gold designs followed the movement of the weavers, craftsmen and goldsmiths as ‘forced appropriations’, which occurred through intense and rapid modes of transfer and a large-scale relocation program following the Mongol military conquests during the early and middle periods. There was an emphasis on Chinese-inspired and Buddhist gold motifs towards the middle and later periods, during which the supply and demand for silk, gold and gold textiles peaked. This was due to increased silk tax, increased military spending in the form of silk and gold textile salary, and large quantities of silk and gold given as tributes to Tibet. Gold textiles were important for the economic, political and cultural survival of the Mongol elite, and were used as currency and salary for military and government officials, as well as for ceremonial usage at the imperial courts. They were thus consciously integrated into the Mongol society, contributing to the creation of textile conscious societies, which depended on the material for various uses.

In the following chapter we will explore how silk and gold textiles increasingly became necessities in Mongol society, not only in the context of expansion policies, but also as economic valuables for the establishment and maintenance of Mongol society’s structure.

Chapter Two: Consumption, function, design and reception in the Mongol Empire

In the previous chapter I discussed the rise of gold textiles within and beyond the Mongol Empire, their increased and the role of their makers and their circulated technological knowledge. This chapter will consider the various ways in which the gold textiles were consumed by the Mongol elite and explore their association with movement: as wearable, displayable and exchangeable objects they were likely to change locations frequently as they moved within the Mongol empire, according to their function. I furthermore discuss the ways in which specific gold motifs, designs and ornaments decorating the textile objects became significant symbols for users and viewers in the context of 'majesty'. The eclectic decorations of the gold textiles, which became an important part of the Mongol visual language, were spread widely within Mongol society as they were circulated among the Mongol elite.

Costumes



Figures 27a-27d Costume styles

a. Men's robe '*bian xian*'.

b. Men's outer robe.

c. Women's inner robe.

d. 'Married' Women's outer robe.

The distinct robe styles and eclectic gold designs ornamenting the Mongol costumes were important visual signposts among the Mongol elite, incorporating various forms of symbolism. For example, regarding robing ceremonies, gold textiles were fashioned into various types of styles according to rank. Certain costumes were worn in ceremonial contexts to mark celebratory occasions or important events, such as the emperor's birthdays or the bi-annual celebrations at the imperial palace. At those occasions, certain gold textile robes were presented to dignitaries and foreign diplomatic and religious envoys. The different robe constructions, styles and gold decorations not only signalled a specific rank, but could also indicate a cultural affiliation; in this sense, and as we will discuss below, they functioned as 'classifiers' segmenting the members of the Mongol elite.



Figures 28a – 28c. Details of the hanging scroll, *Khubilai Khan Hunting*.

a. Presentation of robe styles and colours. b. Khubilai Khan and his consort, Chabi. c. A hunter's robe style.

While the construction of the costumes, robes, headwear and accessories were derived from the nomadic and semi-nomadic cultures of the Uighur, Tangut, Kithan and the Jürchen, silk and gold and the technique of weaving with gold came from the subjugated cultures of China, Central Asia and Islamic lands. The Mongol elite thus depended on the makers and materials that came from conquered lands.

Some costume types appear as pictorial evidence in the large hanging scroll *Khubilai Khan Hunting*, figures 28a-c, and in the detailed sketch-portraits of the Yuan Emperors and Empresses, figures 29 and 30¹⁸²; a more vague representation appears in murals of the tombs of Dongercun and Yuanbaoshan, figures 32 and 33. The *kesi* woven *Vajrabhairava Mandala* shows another example of Mongol costumes worn by the Emperor, Wenzong (r.1328-1332), his brother Khoshila and their wives, Budashiri and Babusha, figure 31a-d. Mongol style costumes also appear in numerous Persian epic miniature style paintings, such as the *The Little Shahnama* figures 34 and 35, and *The Diez Album*, figures 64-67. The objects inspected first hand, (figures 31a-d, 34, 35 and 64-67) revealed that depicted costumes used gold to illustrate the designs and motifs depicted on the costumes, for example the decorative bands worn by the Mongol Empresses (figure 29), also appeared on the decorative bands of surviving costumes in designs. The costumes belonging to Emperor Wenzong, and his brother Khoshila and their wives Budashiri and Babusha, discovered in the *kesi* woven *Vajrabhairava Mandala* (figures 31 a-d), were also produced using silk gold for the decorative dragon designs,

¹⁸² It is believed that those portraits, ink and colour on paper, were made for use as models for weaving very large *kesi* portraits, three copies of each individual, for display in monasteries during religious services to bestow good fortune on the individuals. Such weavings were about three metres high, and given the number of small portraits that have survived, at least 100 of them must have been made, though none is known to have survived.

which also correspond, in terms of design, to the costume depicted in *Khubilai Khan Hunting* (figure 28a-c)¹⁸³. Because of the scale certain images, specific pattern and motifs cannot be fully identified; the images, however, still provide examples of a costume style that was shared by the Mongol elite. The different illustrations show the variations of the distinct type of costume, the use of bright colours such as the different shades of red, blue green and yellow, or gold, and furthermore provide certain details of the pattern used for embellishing the robes.



Figure 29. Sketches for *kesi* tapestry portraits of Mongol Empresses, second half of the 13th century.



Figure 30. Sketch for a *kesi* portrait of Khubilai Khan.

¹⁸³ Other examples exist such as seen in the pattern of the heads of the griffins (figure 86) and the displayed falcons (figure 107), identified by Anne Wardwell as being similar, in design, to the edge of the collar in the portrait of Chabi (figure 29), Watt and Wardwell, *When Silk was Gold.* My research, furthermore, identifies the design of a small scale dotted pattern of the Doha robe figure 11 and 36 a-c as being similar, in design, to the edge of the collar in several of the portraits of the Empresses (figure 29) as well as the costumes worn by Budashiri and Babusha, figures 31a-b.



Figures 31a-31d. Kesi tapestry, Mongol imperial costumes, early 14th century.

Figures 32-35. Representation of Mongol costumes.



Figure 32. Dongercun, PUNCHENGXIAN, Shaanxi Province.



Figure 33. Tomb at Yuanbaoshan, Inner Mongolia.



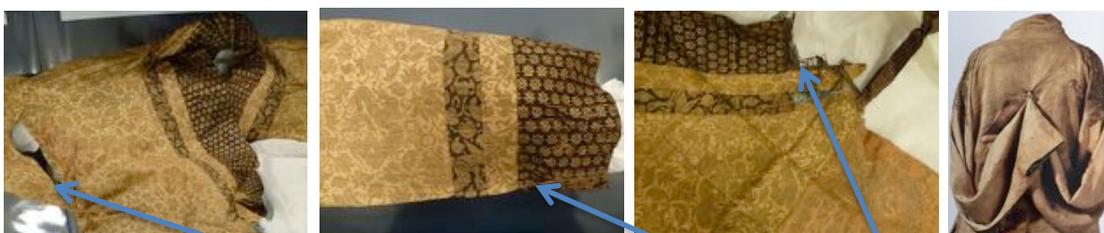
Figure 34. *The Little Shahnama* early 14th century.



Figure 35. *The Little Shahnama* early 14th century.

Mongol men and women wore different types of seasonal costumes, such as inner- and outer, short and long-sleeved robes, which were often worn in layers. The wearer consequently possessed robes in gold textiles in different sizes and styles according to their function and depending on the season. Seasonal outer robes and costumes for special occasions were ornamented according to rank and status. Long narrow sleeves were typical of the traditional robe style and an overlapping front closure, forming a 'V' at the neck, tied at the right side seams for men, or at the left side seams, for women. Robes were worn over trousers and were constructed with many pleats at the waist or with a high slit at the side, to create loose and comfortable skirts suitable for horseback riding. Men wore boots and boot covers, which were visible, with the length of the robe

fashioned just below the knees. Women wore their robes long, covering the footwear. Certain robes were constructed with vertical slits of about 10 to 12 centimetres long, situated just below the shoulder points as elongated openings, figure 36, serving a dual function: when slipping the arms through the vertical arm slits and the pulling back the sleeves, the robe was transformed into a short-sleeve style with the sleeves fastened at the back with loops and buttons, figure 37. This particular feature probably derived from the early Central Asian robes¹⁸⁴, then migrated East where it was used by the Liao culture. Pictorial evidence of robes constructed with this feature appear in *Khubilai Khan Hunting* and demonstrate how they were worn by hunters, figure 28.c; this style was also worn by women, as shown in the same hanging scroll, figures 28-b, and is evidenced in figures 3, 11, 12 and 36a.



Figures 36.a-c. Robe details of arm slit, and narrow decorative bands at the sleeve hem and neckline.

Figure 37. Folded sleeves attached at the back.

My research shows that the cut of the front and back pieces of the robes likely fitted the width of a fabric roll; the front or the back pieces were either constructed in one whole length or assembled with two parts, depending on the fabric width, figure 38a-c. The lower wider parts of the robes were typically assembled with more than one fabric width, revealed by cut lines, 38b. My analysis of several men's and women's inner robes also demonstrates that the front, the upper back and the sleeves of the robes were cut and assembled from narrow widths of fabrics of an approximate width of 90 centimetres, with additional fragments added to construct the proper shape of the style, with a total fabric consumption of approximately 7 to 8 metres per robe. The discovery of robes constructed with different fabric widths prompt us to seek a provenance in that narrow fabric widths were customary in Yuan China and wider fabric widths were traditionally used in in Central Asian workshops; however, as we have seen in chapter

¹⁸⁴ An example dated to the 8-9th century belongs to the Abegg-Stiftung.

one, weave technology was mobile and was transmitted within the Mongol Empire. Nevertheless, it is tempting to hypothesise that the gold textiles unearthed in China, for example, the trousers constructed on a loom width of 55-60 centimetres¹⁸⁵, could be a provenance of a Yuan China production. We should, though, bear in mind that costumes also travelled as gifts among the Mongol elite. Garment construction might therefore provide some indication of provenance considering, however, that also bolts of silks, gold and gold threads were also circulated or were exchanged within the Mongol Empire in various consumptions.



Figures 38a-c. Example of a gold textile robe construction.

The reuse of irregular or different pieces of textiles to fill areas of a pattern, extend sleeves or to alter the shape of a neck opening, which was a practice that created disrupted decorative pattern constructions, appear as intentional in surviving pieces. For example, a contrasting gold textile with certain motifs was intentionally used, and constituted a trending fashion among women's robes; it is evidenced in the double ribbon ornaments, which appear at the neckline as the lapel and along both sleeve hems, figures 36a-c. The random use of yet another fabric appears on a number of robes in the form of 'hidden' panels; for instance, beneath the fabric, that is covered by the front panel, and closing the robe at the side seams, figures 39 - 41. These other fabrics, however, appearing in random locations on robes, could point towards issues related to lack of fabric or repair, or they could be indications of a certain taste for a specific design or motif. For example, the content of a fabric purse found in a tomb, figure 82, demonstrates the tomb occupant kept several different gold textile fragments, which may have been collected and kept for repairs or as a type of pattern book.

¹⁸⁵ Zhao Feng, "Silk Dress with Golden Threads," in *Styles from the Steppe*, 65.



Figure 39. Different size pattern, inner panel



Figures 40 – 41. The use of different fabrics, weaves and designs as inner panels.

Certain men's robes also show sleeve cuffs, lapel and bottom hems made from different fabric, figures 52 and 53. Some robes, moreover, exhibit an intentional change in the weave pattern, in the form of a broad shoulder band ornament in a different pattern, and sometimes using more than one gold thread, figures 38, 42, 45, 46 and 47. In most cases, however, these seemingly contrasting shoulder band ornaments appear to have been woven as an extension of the main fabric: the change of the weft threads resulted in a weave transition which occurred only in *lampas* weaves. This will be explored below, in relation to motifs, designs and ornaments. The close examination of these examples by the author demonstrates that gold textiles were appropriated as material to construct a certain type of costumes, however, the appropriation of various materials could be seen as different local responses to the Mongol costumes as a concept, thus indicating various types of localized consumption patterns.



Figure 42. *Bian xian* style.

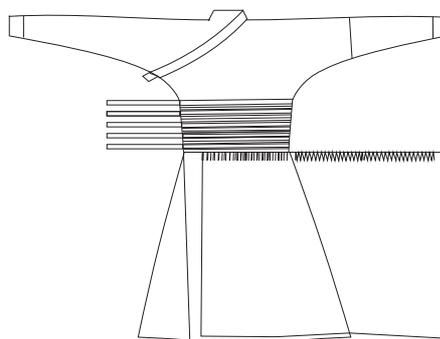


Figure 43. front 'pleated skirt' panel construction.



Figure 44. *Shilin guangji*.

To explore the different patterns of consumption further, and the way in which they were localized in the Mongol Empire, we will now turn to the *bian xian* style which has survived in different areas of the Mongol Empire.

The distinct *bian xian* style of the Mongol robe worn by men (figure 42 – 44) and was traditionally constructed with a broad cross collar and sleeve hems in the main fabric. The lower section of the front piece of the robe was constructed as a voluminous skirt with many pleats, enabling the weaver's movement and comfortable horseback riding. The so-called *bian xian* style, which had migrated from nomadic cultures and was incorporated into Mongol costume styles at the beginning of the 13th century, became emblematic of the Mongol elite in China. It is documented as an illustration in the publication *Shilin guangji* dated to the 1330s, figure 44, and is described therein and in historical records as a type of robe with lines at the waist and fine pleats used by ceremonial guards¹⁸⁶. It was defined by a distinct narrow braided waist construction, which gave it its name '*bian xian pao*', which means 'braided threads robe'¹⁸⁷. A number of robes dated to this period which incorporate these different types of waist ornament exist; they were separate pieces constructed in silk and gold threads which were attached to a straight front piece, with three deep pleats in each side of the seams, or to a pleated skirt. The skirt was typically constructed by assembling two pieces of fabric, which were gathered to form numerous deep pleats at the waist, figure 48. The *bian xian* waist ornament used a technique of couching with up to 96 pairs of silk and gold threads¹⁸⁸, figure 49. Different solutions were available for closing the robes, such as strings and elaborate buttons, as well as loop constructions for fastening them.



Figure 45. *Bian xian* ribbon closure, pleated skirt.



Figure 46. *Bian xian* loop-button closure, no skirt.



Figure 47. Skirt and Supplement gold.

¹⁸⁶ *Yuan shi*, Chapter 78, vol.7:1941

¹⁸⁷ Zhao Feng, *Styles from the Steppes*, 49.

¹⁸⁸ These observations were noted during my inspection of a robe belonging to the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha, at the Aga Khan Museum's storage in Geneva and at the Abegg-Stiftung, Bern. Similar styles from the same period also exist in the China National Silk Museum Hangzhou, the David Collection Museum of Mongol art, Hohhot, China and in the Mardjani Collection in Moscow.

It is likely that the *bian xian* wide braided or pleated waist constructions, although purely decorative, reflected notions of the Mongol belt tradition which was linked to a certain degree of rank and power¹⁸⁹, and included in the *Yuan shi* in the section about the Emperor's costumes¹⁹⁰.



Figure 48. Construction of the 'skirt'.



Figure 49. Detail of one of many types of *Bian Xian Pao* construction.

One of the earliest surviving complete *bian xian* robe styles was excavated from the Mingshui tomb and was likely worn during the Jin Dynasty¹⁹¹. Surviving fragments of a *bian xian* skirt woven in the *kesi* technique¹⁹², may, however, also suggest that this distinct style formed part of the Uighur culture ritual robes¹⁹³, figure 54, and may have been transmitted into the Mongol culture with the early submission of the Uighurs to the forces of Chinggis Khan. Interestingly, some of the earliest visual presentations of the *bian xian* style appear in murals at Dunhuang, figure 51, which shows men wearing boots and pointy hats dressed in *bian xian* short-sleeved, A-shaped styled robes ornamented with cloud collars. The A-shaped robe, without the skirt, but with deep pleats and a long slit at the side demonstrates, together with other surviving *bian xian* styles, the varied forms and variations of this style and is evidenced by figures 45 - 47. The figures also show how the style evolved and how it adapted to accommodate different aesthetics and tastes in the multicultural environment of the Mongol Empire. For example, the Mardjani robe, figure 53, reveals how elements of the *bian xian* style

¹⁸⁹ Allsen. *Commodity*, 48-49 and 84-85.

¹⁹⁰ This section reflecting the importance of the visual belt, describes two types commonly worn, *Yuan shi*, chapter 78 : 1931.

¹⁹¹ The robe was excavated in 1978 from the Mingshui township tomb, Damao banner, Baotou, Inner Mongolia and belongs to the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region Museum, Hohhot. Denny, "Mongol Dress in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries," 251. A pottery figurine dated to the Jin or Yuan dynasty wears a costume that resembles closely to the *bian xian* style, illustrated in *The World of Khubilai Khan*, 54.

¹⁹² The *kesi* weave technique was mastered by the Uighurs since the 8th century – see *Glossary and Terms*.

¹⁹³ The *bian xian* skirt belongs to a private collection and fragments of a sleeve and back piece in the same fabric also in the same collection suggest that when connected it would have formed a complete robe. See Denny, "Textiles in the Mongol and Yuan Period," 245.

were transmitted: the *bian xian* waist, also with narrow contrasting gold textile bands, typically used for women's robes, was applied at the collar and sleeve hems while combined with a caftan robe style tradition. As this section shows, the *bian xian* robe was appropriated in a variety of ways at different locations and levels of society. The use of different technologies to form the wide belt reflected rank of individuals, and, at the same time the ability to acquire various degrees of luxury through the intensity of gold used which expressed wealth and power. We also saw how *bian xian* and narrow decorative bands were incorporated into other costume styles. This type of consumption reflected a selective appropriation of a concept that represented power. I will discuss the concept as power representation in the following sections.



Figure 50. detachable cloud collar.



Figure 51. Mural, men wearing *bian xian* robes and cloud collars.



Figure 52 and 53. Different types of *Bian xian* robes with contrasting narrow bands.



Figure 54. *Kesi* *Bian xian* fragment.

Another type of *bian xian* style was linked to the so-called *jisun*, *zhama* or *zhisun*, which consisted of monochrome, gold textile robes, sometimes decorated with pearls¹⁹⁴. The *Zhisun* robes were used at certain ceremonial events at the Mongol imperial courts and were related to Song dynasty clothing customs concerning the Emperor's annual award of uniforms to individuals of special rank¹⁹⁵. The bi-annual *zhisun* celebrations, which

¹⁹⁴ *Jisun* means colour in Mongolian; *Zhama* means garment in Persian; *Zhisun* the Chinese meaning of the monochrome robes used for the bi-annual imperial celebrations.

¹⁹⁵ Zhao Feng, *Treasures in Silk*.

occurred at the Yuan courts, included the distribution of monochrome robes as a ritual, which formed the compulsory attire¹⁹⁶ of participants of the various prestigious events; they included the large entourage of the *kesig*, court officials, guards, members of the imperial families, and other dignitaries visiting the courts.



Figure 55. 'All weather robe' with vertical slit at shoulder.



Figure 56. 'All weather robe' with vertical slit at shoulder.



Figure 57. 'All weather robe' with vertical slit at shoulder.



Figure 57b. Detail of motif.



Figure 58. Short-sleeved robe.

Elite Mongol women wore long straight A-shaped styles with a high waist, deep pleats and a long side slit at the left side seam, which formed a vent that facilitated horse-riding, figures 55-58. Visual and material evidence reveal that these robes were typically constructed with a gold textile fabric for the body and the sleeves, and two different narrow gold textile bands in two contrasting gold designs, which were arranged at the neckline, lapel and the sleeve hems. During my research, I also discovered that some of these decorative bands were woven with gold threads that were different to the ones used for robes that were made with the main fabric. For example, the robe decorated with dragons, figures 36a-c and 55, is woven with paper gold threads and the decorative

¹⁹⁶ *Yuan Shi*, chapter 67, p1669, chapter 37, 812 mentions punishment for those not wearing the *zhisun*.

bands are woven with leather gold threads; it is thus likely that different gold textile fabrics or materials for producing gold threads were circulated among the weaving workshops. The tradition of decorating the edges of a robe reflects earlier costume practices commonly found among Chinese, Central Asian and Islamic robe traditions¹⁹⁷ and suggests that the Mongols adapted this tradition, using a certain type of gold textile, which was produced at the imperial courts.

Figure 59-64. Different types of Outerwear robes for women.



Figure 59. Large roundels, shoulder script



Figure 60. Fur lapel, detachable



Figure 46. Cloud collar, sun and moon



Figure 62. Robe with *kesi* ornaments



Figure 63. Rows of animal motifs



Figure 64. Robe held by attendant

The shape of the outer robe, figures 27d, and 59-64, is distinguished by the wide dimensions of the chest and waist and the balloon shaped sleeves, and by the fact that it could be worn over inner robes and attire; the outer robes were likely to require nearly double the silk and gold consumption of an inner robe, thus making them heavier and costlier to produce; while the estimated consumption for an inner gold textile robe could weigh two to three kilograms, the outer robe could weigh up to five kilograms, depending on the gold design. Mentioned in *Meng da bei lu* the sleeves were “as wide as crane cape¹⁹⁸” and the skirt supported by the wearer’s attendants, a description which corresponds to the depiction in the *Demotte* Persian painting, figure 64. The *Xi jin zhi*,

¹⁹⁷ Decorative trimmings along the neck line and cuffs embellished robes at least from the Western Han dynasty, 168 BC up until the Song dynasty following excavations in Mawangdui, Changsha, Hunan province; another example is a miniature size plain tabby weave from the Warring State period, 340-278 BC. illustrated in *Chinese Silks*, 102 and 130.

¹⁹⁸ Zhao, Gong, *Meng-Da bei-lu und Hei-Da shi-lü: Chinesische Gesandtenberichte über die frühen Mongolen 1221 und 1237*, trans. Erich Haenisch and Yao Tsung-wu (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1980). Also, *Gold, silk, blue and white porcelain: fascinating art of Marco Polo era*. Zhao Feng and Jin Li, eds. (Hong Kong: Yi sha tang/Fu shi gong zuo dui 2005).

furthermore, describes how the narrow cuffs were made in a certain woven gold material, and that the robe closed with a purple gauze ribbon, also evidenced by the inspected robes, figure 59 and 62. The cuffs and lapels of the outer robes were constructed with narrow decorative bands in contrasting material made of gold textiles. Married women wore this type of robe for certain ceremonial functions, as noted by William of Rubruck when he visited the Eastern regions of the Mongol Empire: “They put it on after the wedding ceremony and the shaving of half of the head”¹⁹⁹. The tradition of shaving half of the head can also be seen in four of the seventeen imperial portraits of Yuan empresses through the fine gauze of their headwear, *Gugu*²⁰⁰ or *bokhta*, figures 29 and 68.

The different types of headwear worn by Mongol men and women were distinct because of their particular form and characteristic decorations, such as feathers, precious pearls and stones.

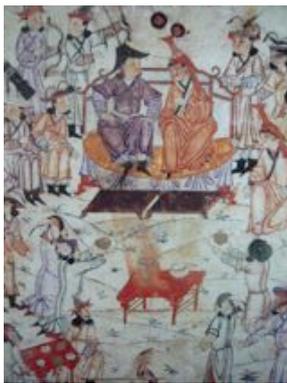


Figure 65. Diez Album
Majestic setting, Chinese furniture.



Figure 66. Diez Album, Chinese furniture
Colours: red robes, green, white.



Figure 67. Diez Album, Chinese folding chair
Purse similar to figure 83a-c.



Figure 68. Empress wearing *Gugu*.

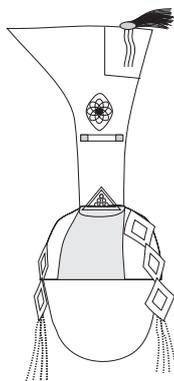


Figure 69. *Gugu*



Figures 70 and 71. Donor figures wearing *Gugu*, Dunhuang cave, Bezeklik.



¹⁹⁹ *The Journal of William of Rubruck to the Eastern Parts, 1253-1255.*

²⁰⁰ *Gugu* is the term for the headwear as it was known in Chinese, a transliteration of the Mongol word.



Figure 72a-b. Conservation of a *Gugu* frame removal of gold textile, discovery of Phagspa text.

Figure 73. *Gugu* restored.



Figure 74. *Desert Caravan* Five Dynasties (907-960 AD)

Figure 75. *Gugu* 'cover'.

The women are wearing the red *Gugu* headwear protected by a darker colour 'cover' fastened with ribbons and in close similarity to the 'cover' figure 75.

Of all the different types of headwear used by the Mongols, the most significant types were the *Gugu* for women and the so-called 'all weather hat' for men.

The tall structure of the *Gugu* was assembled in two parts: a hollow bark, figures 72a-b, or similar light material, figure 77, that extended about 15-20 cm above the head; the tall structure was kept in place by the lower part, shaped to fit the cover of the head, which fastened under the chin with strings and loops, figure 76. It was regarded as a personal object 'not to be touched' by people other than the wearer. Red gold textile, which was often composed by combining several different fragments, was used over the structure. Several different objects were also used to ornament the *Gugu*; for example, the imperial *Gugu* was decorated with amulets of gold, silver, turquoise, filigree, pearls and feathers from the Wutai Mountains, figure 73.



Figure 76a. Strings for tying the *Gugu* fasten at the neck.



Figure 76b. Decorative pearls, 'rosettes' Detail of the strings.



Figure 77. birch structure Imprints from fabric.

The elongated headwear style may have derived from nomadic traditions such as the Scythians and Tokharians, who wore it before the custom spread in Turkic cultures; it is likely that the headwear also spread to the nomadic cultures of northern China. There are several visual representations of the *Gugu* with the earliest being depicted in a Tang mural of a seated Uighur Nobelswoman in worship next to a lotus flower, figure 71; the woman wearing the tall headwear is dressed in a red robe. In poor weather conditions or during travel, the *Gugu* and its precious decorations was protected by a 'cover', figure 75. My research has shown that this *Gugu* cover is similar to plainer gold fabrics used for robes; it was composed by different fragments of gold textiles in a brownish colour. Moreover, the contour of the 'cover' was decorated with contrasting bands woven in a different fabric, probably to accentuate and bring stability to the form. A visual depiction of the *Gugu* 'cover' can be seen in a 10th century painting from the Five Dynasties period, *Desert Caravan*, figure 75, and is evidence for how this particular headwear was consumed over a significant period spanning more than four centuries.

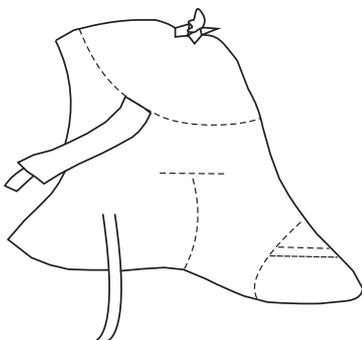


Figure 78 Man's Hat with 'cloud' at crown, private collection.



Figure 79. Decorative band at edge.

The men's 'all-weather' hat has a hood-style silhouette, which could be transformed into different versions using strings, buttons and loops that could adjust the shape of the hat according to weather conditions, figures 78 and 79. Material evidence proves

that the hats were typically made from different gold textile fragments and silk gauze strings similar to those discovered on robes. Some hats were decorated with a particular protruding four-pointed ornament at the centre of the crown, figure 78, and all the ceremonial headwear of the Yuan courts were embellished with either gold or agate on the crest²⁰¹.

In addition to robes and hats, gold textiles were used as the primary material for various portable objects such as bags or pillow cases, figures 80 and 81. They were also used as secondary material, for example, embellishing the rims of gold stamped leather pouches²⁰², sections of saddle covers and boot covers, as seen in figures 83 and 84. This provides evidence of the different consumption patterns and responses to gold textiles and how their functionality developed from the use of robes to purses and to headwear.



Figure 80. Square bag, gold textiles.



Figure 81. Round bag, gold textiles.



Figure 82. Purse with gold textiles.



Figure 83a-c. Leather pouches decorated with gold textiles.

Figure 84. Saddle cloth, gold textiles and *kesi*.

In addition, gold textiles were also used as hangings in various forms, for example to decorate the interior of tent pavilions, which were essential objects belonging to the

²⁰¹ Zhao Feng, "Silk Dress with Golden Threads," 55.

²⁰² This type of pouches were typically attached to a belt or a saddle; the gold stamped motifs of tear-drops and three-foil leaves correspond to motifs that were part of the visual language woven into gold textiles, as seen above; gold printing became popular in Yuan China and was associated with Liao culture. Zhao Feng, *Chinese Silks*, 351.

Mongol elite used during military expeditions or during the hunting season. The following section examines the consumption of various types of hangings and their function as visual material.

Tents and hangings

As seen earlier, advanced loom technology facilitated the production of wide panels with complex patterns, such as large motifs of roundels, animals, and objects and various types of scriptures. Several accounts indicate how large gold textile panels decorated the interior ceiling and walls of large tent pavilions that followed the Mongol elite on military campaigns²⁰³. Symbolically, the tent represented identity, heritage and an affiliation to the nomadic culture of the Mongols. Practically, the portable tents were instrumental for the Mongol conquests during the early period; they were movable objects which accompanied the Mongol elite during military expeditions. After the military conquests, tents continued to function as portable palaces during the hunting seasons and ceremonial events. They circulated as gifts and tributes among the Mongol rulers; Möngke (r.1251-1259) sent a tent pavilion woven in gold textiles to his brother Hülegü (r.1256-1258), and the Yuan court received a tent from the ruler of the Golden Horn²⁰⁴.

Material evidence illustrates the different types of hangings, which were likely to have been used for decorating the interior of tent pavilions and palace walls of Mongol rulers, figures 85-88, and many were made of silk and gold fabrics. Five large tent panels, when joined, would create a large interior hanging, which could have ornamented the interior of a tent pavilion, figure 88b. These hangings typically presented large-scale designs and were visible from afar.

The large tents reportedly accommodated more than 1000 people, which may seem exaggerated; however, this figure can provide an indication of the scale of the gold textile consumption that was used for the interior decoration of numerous palace

²⁰³ For example, A "camp tent" is reported at Sira Ordo about twenty kilometers Southeast of Qara Qorum and was founded by Ögödei. See John A. Boyle, "The Seasonal Residences of the Great Khan Ögödei," *Central Asiatic Journal* 16,(1972), 125-131.

²⁰⁴ Pelliot, *Notes on Marco Polo*, vol. II, p.640. Also, Khubilai Khan kept tent at the Imperial Palace of Dadu. Watt, *The World of Khubilai Khan*.

tents²⁰⁵. Some large tents apparently contained gold plated columns and golden nails highlighting the Mongols' appreciation for the material²⁰⁶. The production of tents, which was supervised in China by a Tent Office²⁰⁷ at the Yuan imperial courts, expanded during the later period; this was likely related to the growing Mongol elite and the upkeep of the Mongol Empire, where gifts and tributes continued to function as payment, salary and objects exchanged for peace.



Figure 85-87. Panel fragments presenting large and complex designs.

Figure 88-88b. Tent panels.

Gifts, tribute and trade

There is evidence suggesting that certain gold textiles such as robes and panels were produced and circulated as gifts and tributes not only among Mongol rulers, but also to vassal states and Tibet²⁰⁸, such as the panels discovered in Tibet, figures 85 - 88. The variety of gold textiles from the 'Tibetan Group', mentioned above, possibly circulated as gifts and tributes within the Mongol Empire before these textiles were collected and re-distributed by the Yuan and Il-Khanate rulers as a result of intensified religious affiliations between the rulers of Yuan China and Tibet from the 1260s. The good condition of most of the gold textiles from this group suggests that they may have been used for a short period of time and were then preserved. However, material evidence such as weave technique, motifs and designs, also reveal that some of the textiles were likely to have been produced prior to the establishment of the Mongol Empire, figures

²⁰⁵ See Robert Shaw, *Visits to High Tartary, Yarkand and Kashgar*, (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1984), 239-240. Also John Andrew Boyle, trans., Rashid al-Din, *The Successors of Ghengis Khan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), 63.

²⁰⁶ Literary accounts describe how the tent pavilions were made entirely of gold textiles and by a special workforce using several complex looms, which provide evidence for our hypothesis of the spread and the use of advanced loom technology, as well as the production of tent panels for consumption within the Mongol Empire.

²⁰⁷ Farquhar, *Government*, 205.

²⁰⁸ For example, brocaded costumes, ceremonial and banquet robes were awarded to Anige, who, as an artist, served at the Sa skya Monastery in Tibet before serving Khubilai Khan at the Yuan court. Jing, Anning, "The Portraits of Khubilai Khan and Chabi," 40 and 49.

14-17, and were in a sense 'war textiles'. One example is seen in a cut panel, the so-called Abu Bakr *tiraz*²⁰⁹, woven with animal gilded silk threads, which reveals a legible script towards the upper section of the fragment²¹⁰, figure 7. The script indicates that the textile was intended for *Abu Bakr*, who was the subjugated ruler of Fars. Possibly, the *tiraz* was produced as an imperial donation, never reached Abu Bakr before his death in 1260, and thus became part of the gifts and tribute to Tibet, where it was discovered²¹¹.

Other examples from the 'Tibet Group' can be linked to the middle and the later periods, as suggested by the eclectic designs intermingled with Chinese, Buddhist and Islamic culture, such as figures 85-88. The later period, reflecting a more acculturated and multicultural visual repertoire of the Mongol design can also be seen in gold textiles, for example in figure 93. These examples from different periods suggest a continuity of gold textile supplies to Tibet. As we can see from the variety of the 'Tibetan Group', certain gold textiles reflect different usages. Other gold textiles from this group indicate that certain transformations may have occurred, which caused their usage to deviate from its original intent. For example, the different shades of the tent panels, figures 88b, suggest that some panels were exposed to more light than others. It is likely that the tent panels' functions were transformed in Tibet, to accommodate other uses such as roof hanging, which was customarily used to protect the deities displayed in the temples²¹². Other textiles were cut into appropriate shapes and used as sutra covers, figures 89 and 90. Fold marks, which have caused the fabric to disintegrate on robes at several locations, also suggest that entire robes remained unused as abandoned or rejected objects, figures 55 and 56.

²⁰⁹ The script reads: "*Salghur Sultan Abu Bakr ibn Saud, Ruler of Fars from 1226-1260*," The David Collection, Copenhagen, accessed 13 April 2017, <https://www.davidmus.dk/en/collections/islamic/materials/textiles/art/20-1994>. Inscribed tirazes were precious and exclusively reserved for rulers and high officials. See A. Grohman, "*Tiraz*," *Encyclopedia of Islam* (London: Luzac and Leiden: E.J.Brill, 1934). Also, *Glossary and Terms*.

²¹⁰ This rare legible inscription is often used as a benchmark for dating gold textiles. Abu Bakr was the subjugated ruler under Ögödei (r. 1229-41), and for Hülegü after 1256 during 1226 – 1260. K. Folsach, *Woven Treasures*. Also, Watt and Wardwell, *When Silk was Gold*, 134-5.

²¹¹ Watt and Wardwell, *When Silk was Gold*, 135. The object belongs to David Collection and is mentioned in Folsach, *Woven Treasures*, 374 and 360. Another fragment can be found in the Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, TE. 141.2003.

²¹² In communication with Professor Christian Luczanits, SOAS, January 19, 2017.

Gold textiles as religious and funerary objects

There is evidence suggesting that gold textiles were circulated in religious, spiritual and funerary contexts in the Mongol Empire. Besides Tibet, excavated tombs reveal how silk and gold textiles, which were part of funerary consumption, also displayed motifs and designs related to religious and spiritual contexts, such as Buddhist mantra and Buddhist symbols, the so-called 'treasure pattern'²¹³, figures 91 and 92.



Figure 89. Sutra cover?



Figure 90. Sutra cover?



Figure 91. Buddhist motifs.

Different shapes including triangles and cut fragments may suggest other types of consumption; gold textiles may have also served as currency or tribute in their transformed shape. Gold textiles representing Buddhist affiliations were not only circulated for cultivating Tibetan Buddhism in Tibet, but in other locations of the Mongol Empire where Buddhism was practiced. For example in the Il-khanid *Khanate* and in Suzhou, Jiangsu province, a gold textile made up as a skirt, excavated from Madame Cao's tomb, displays a pattern of Buddhist auspicious symbols such as the endless knot, double fish, the sacred vase dragon, the parasol intermingling with the dragon amidst mushroom clouds and fire, figure 91.

²¹³ Buddhist treasure patterns were drawn from the Eight Auspicious Buddhist symbols, which originated in Tibetan Buddhism as was followed by the Mongol rulers: These symbols are: the endless knot, the (dharma) wheel, double fish, lotus flower, conch shell, banner, parasol and vase. These were also adopted in Chinese design in the late 13th century.



Figure 92. Paper gold.



Figure 93- 93b. Buddhist motifs: emblem of the wheel, endless knots.

Silk and gold textiles were used in other religious contexts too, such as Confucian ceremonies and nomadic cosmology²¹⁴. For example, the *Gugu* headdress wrapped in gold textile is likely to have been used in the context of worship: surviving evidence suggests that the *Gugu* and certain decorative devices displayed certain religious rituals associated with Buddhism and Mongol nomadic beliefs. The small silver cases ornamenting the front and the back of the headdress have revealed papers with prayer wishes written in phagspa²¹⁵; triangular pearl ornaments associated with the three jewels and miniature replicas of *stupa*²¹⁶ also decorated the base of the elongated ‘chimney’ (figure 73). Moreover, similar pearl ornaments also appear in the depiction of the portraits of the Empresses; for example, in the portrait of Chabi, the end of the ribbons is ornamented with pearls formed into triangular shapes; tail feathers of cocks from the sacred Buddhist site of the Wutai Mountain adorn the top of the *Gugu*²¹⁷. Furthermore, the attached symbolic objects related to divinity suggest that such gold textiles may have been significant in the context of rites linked to Mongol spiritual customs. This also suggests that a certain degree of visible syncretism occurred in the Mongol Empire, with the intermingling of Buddhism and nomadic shamanistic beliefs.

The above analysis has demonstrated the different uses of gold textiles and their circulation among the Mongol elite in the Mongol Empire. The multiple ways in which they were used indicates that besides monetary purposes, such as in the forms of gifts and tributes, gold textiles also had functional uses, as wearable items, accessories and hangings. However, gold textiles were used in yet another context, in relation to

²¹⁴ Watt and Wardwell, *When Silk was Gold*, 18. Also, Allsen. ‘Mongolian Princes and Their Merchant Partners’. *Asia Major*, 3rd series, 2/2(1989), p.83-126 and Cammann, “Mongol Costume – Historical and recent,” 157-166.

²¹⁵ In email communication April 4th 2014, from the former owner of the object. See also p.112.

²¹⁶ The *Stupa* is a symbol of the enlightened mind and universal divinity and relates to the Buddha’s body, his speech and his mind. It shows the path to enlightenment. Robert Beer, *The Handbook of Tibetan Buddhist Symbol*, (Shamhala publications, 2003).

²¹⁷ *Contemporaries of Marco Polo consisting of the travel records to the Eastern parts of the world of William Rubruck (1253-1255); the journey of John of Pian de Carpini (1245-1247) & the journey of Friar Odoric (1318-1350)*, 69.

spirituality. I will now go on to examine the functions of the different motifs, designs and colours found on the gold textiles to further elaborate on the ways in which they were consumed. I will also explore the designs in relation to their aesthetic value and symbolism, and discuss their meaning and significance.



Figure 94. Section of cloud collar.



Figure 95. Pre-Mongol Robe. Blue silk, *kesi*, gold brocade, 'skirt', *tiraz*, dragon collar.

Motifs, designs and colours – majestic consumption and symbolism

Very little is mentioned in historical records about the purpose and meaning of gold textile patterns and designs. Moreover, the authenticity of those records themselves can be challenged, which prevents us from drawing definitive conclusions about their exact intent. Certain literary accounts, however, accompanied by material evidence, may offer some clarification on the meaning and uses of the designs²¹⁸. As we have seen above, there were different types of designs ornamenting the gold textiles. Several of those design elements seem to be repeated on different gold textiles, which prompts us to question their presence and intentionality as gold displays. For example, variations of the phoenix and the dragon, clouds, the lotus, the lion and the deer motifs, can be found in the Chinese culture. Motifs, such as the lotus, the lion and the deer²¹⁹, however, also appeared in or originate from other cultures; this demonstrates how motifs and designs were continuously circulated among certain cultures and participated in various degrees of transfer. This obscures a classification or assignment of a provenance to the gold

²¹⁸ For example, the restricted use of the sun, moon, phoenix, dragon and tiger, mentioned in the *Yuan Shi* chapter 78:1930 (see p.106, footnote 256), as well as the use of colours and pattern sizes (*Yuan Shi* 78, 1938 and 1931 – also see page 106). Material evidence for these motifs notably appear on ceramic objects but also on sculptures, for example figure 102a-b, 105a-c and 111. These designs also exist on metal work, for example displayed on a brass candlestick and a large tray in the Museum of Islamic Art, Doha.

²¹⁹ Stacey Pierson, *Designs as Signs: Decoration and Chinese Ceramics*. (Percival David Foundation, 2001), 84 and 86. Also, Rawson, *Chinese Ornament The Lotus and the Dragon*. 49, 90 and 199.

textiles and leads us to question their origin and authenticity. Bearing these factors in mind, we will approach the eclectic motifs and designs and attempt to explain their various modes of representation according to surviving material and visual records.

It is our hypothesis that the imperial courts, that also allocated gold and silks to the different weaving workshops through a controlled distribution network, influenced and, to a certain degree, defined the development of the designs ornamenting the gold textiles during the early and the middle period. Using the expertise of captured weavers, artisans and goldsmiths, the Mongols initiated a grand scale production of gold textiles and, to some extent, probably relied on the makers artistic vocabulary. Objects belonging to this period were thus likely to display designs with greater affiliations to a particular culture. During the middle and later period, however, with the expansion beyond the royal courts and Yuan China, it is likely that independent weavers used familiar motifs and patterns combined in new designs characterized by an intermingling of the key motifs and designs from the early period. It is also likely that designs and techniques were enhanced by the process of the weavers' assimilation and acculturation among their descendants. Second and third generation weavers also moved continuously, likely resulting in augmented technical knowledge and refined designs, such as the fine red lampas weaves dated to the later period, figures 93 and 94.

Some of the most popular motifs found on gold textiles included different types of animals and variations of the lotus flower. Animal motifs, displayed individually or paired in a running sequence, also appeared widely on pre-Mongol textiles constituting design themes belonging to cultures that had been absorbed into the Mongol empire.

As seen in the previous chapter various types of roundel motifs were likely to have migrated from the West to the Sogdian culture and spread eastward during the Tang period, reaching various nomadic cultures. This motif, traditionally framing objects and becoming linked to traditions of the hunt, is exemplified by numerous fragments, for example figures 39, 42, 57, 61 and 63, but it was also linked to Muslim cultures²²⁰. Unframed objects, however, an apparent convention from the Jin period recurred

²²⁰ Zhao Feng, *Treasures in Silk*.

during the Yuan period in various types of designs such as the dragon, the phoenix, rabbits and hares, figures 19, 36, 41, 56, 61 and 63.

The motif of the dragon can be traced back in literature to the Han dynasty; however, it becomes relevant to textiles as it is mentioned in a 694 AD decree listing the patterns for senior officials and princes of the Tang imperial household²²¹. Figuratively, the dragon was closely related to the mystical and superior heavens of the highest imperial order reserved for the emperor, as the phoenix represented the empress. These two motifs appear on the ceiling of Dunhuang caves dated to the Song dynasty, in which the cloud motif appears in particular mushroom designs²²²; dragon and phoenixes are also worn by the Song Empress Madame Cao. This combination seems to have been incorporated into the Mongol design repertoire, evidenced by figure 103. The cloud motif, however, often presents itself as a background 'filler' in various sizes and shapes, for example in figures 21, 96, 97 and 108. Schuyler Cammann summarized the symbolic meaning of the cloud collar²²³ and suggested that it related symbolically to the cloud shoulder, *yunjian* motif, which was originally a detachable object and functioned as a wearable collar ornament, figure 50. The imitation of the *yunjian* in costume shoulder ornaments worn by Tang dignitaries could also be associated with Tibet²²⁴. As see above, the cloud collar is traceable to costumes worn by donors depicted in a Dunhuang cave, and appears to be a separate ornament placed on the shoulders, such as in figures 50. Images of this ornament seem to have been transmitted into certain Mongol robe decorations. Evidence that this motif was used by the Mongol elite can be found in the images of the robe, figure 103. Evidence that the cloud motif could also be associated with the Uighur culture is provided by surviving fragments, in *kesi* tapestry probably panels used for robes, figures 99 to 101.

²²¹ See *Glossary and Terms*. For an overview of the Dragons importance and interrelation with various cultures.

²²² Dunhuang yan jiu yuan, *Dunhuang shi ku quan ji*. (Shanghai: Shanghai shi ji zhu ban ji duan: 2000), 197, 206 and 207.

²²³ Schuyler Cammann, "The Symbolism of the Cloud Collar Motif," *The Art Bulletin*, Vol.33, No. 1(1951):1-9.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*



Figure 96. Cloud scrolls framing a phoenix in flight, headwear.



Figure 97. Cloud scrolls framing a phoenix in flight, fragment.

The cloud motif, in its variations, became one of the principal motifs decorating gold textiles under Mongol rule; it was also extensively incorporated into other media, particularly the ceremonial blue and white porcelain vessels, figures 102a-b. Evidence that the cloud motif spread West can be found in numerous Persian miniature paintings.

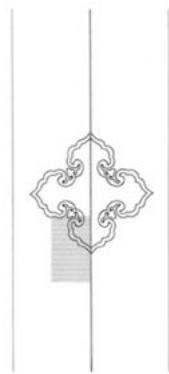


Figure 98. Two joined panels illustrating the pattern for a robe.



Figure 99. Fragment of a *kesi* Cloud Collar.



Figure 100. Fragment of a *kesi* Cloud collar.



Figure 101. Fragment, and dragons *kesi* Cloud collar.



Figures 102a-b.



Blue and White porcelain vessels, 102a similar in design to the *kesi*, figure 101.



Figure 103. Robe woven with Cloud Collar motif.



Figure 104. Clouds amidst dragons in roundel.

The particular floating mushroom shaped cloud, which has been described as a Yuan period invention²²⁵, can also be found in Dunhuang murals dated to the Song period. Camman, furthermore, notes that in the introduction of the *Song Shi* clothing section²²⁶ the cloud motif was also associated with cosmological visions of the heavens. This motif's shape was apparently altered over time, in its course of transcultural consumption; for example, in the early period, the so-called Abu Bakr fragment's main motifs are Chinese cloud collars arranged in diagrams forming a square of 'the universe in microcosm' with flowers in staggered horizontal rows, figure 7. During the middle and the later period, the cloud motif took a curvier and broader shape which can be seen across various media such as ornaments embellishing the shoulders of a marble figure of a Mongol nobleman, figure 105, ceramics, paintings and gold textiles framing the phoenix, figures 96 and 97. The cloud motifs were notably used as 'fillers' in designs, for example, between displayed falcons, figure 108, and amidst dragons, figure 21, as well as in the narrow bands decorating the robes of the empresses, figure 29.



105a. Chinese folding chair.



105b. Detail, shoulder decoration, floating clouds.



105c. Various lotus designs.

Figures 105a-c Marble figure of seated headless Mongol noble.

²²⁵ Rawson, *Chinese Ornament*, 139 and figure 126, 140.

²²⁶ Cammann, "The Symbolism," 1-9.

The falcon was a popular motif among Central Asian cultures, and was also related to Mongol nomadic customs, evident in several designs appearing on gold textiles, figures 106-108. This falcon design, similar to that of the falcon amidst large clouds both displaying wings and body adorned with the flowers with the tip of the outer feather transformed into dragon heads is, however, woven amidst a dense pattern of rounded cloud-scrolls, similar to those ‘fillers’ appearing in the Yamatanka Mandala, for example, figures 31a-d. A recurrence of the principals of this design also appears on the headwear, figure 106, highlighting the popularity of designs which were circulated within the Mongol Empire, disseminating certain design ideas and absorbing elements of specific motifs, such as the different cloud symbols.



Figure 106 . Headwear, falcons and clouds.



Figure 107. Fragment, falcons.



Figure 108. Robe, falcons and clouds.

The lotus flower, which was often presented as a stylized peony or chrysanthemum blossom, was one of the most frequently used motifs in gold textiles. One example of a stylized peony represented amidst lotus vines is found as a large scale design on a woman’s robe, figure 110, and it is related to Chinese Song culture; a visual reference corresponds to *The crossing branches’ peony (cotton rose) hibiscus* pattern and can be found in the *Nan Song Huangsheng’s* tomb in Fuzhou, figure 109. Further evidenced for its being incorporated into Mongol visual culture is provided by its appearance on a marble slab in Kharakorum, and on a coffin in Huhehot, dated to the Mongol period, figure 111.



Figure 109. Pattern from Huangsheng tomb, Southern Song.



Figure 110. Stylized lotus-peony design.



Figure 111. Stylized lotus-peony design.

Scripture as ornaments

The use of different types of scripture designs appearing as ornaments at specific sites on gold textiles is an interesting phenomenon that deserves our attention. This section explores the meaning, content and uses of these scriptures displayed as ornaments, or *parergor*, which provide another example of the many layers of transfer which were connected to the use of ornaments. I will begin with a description of the different types of scripts and their cultural affiliations throughout their development. Then I will turn to the position of ornaments in relation to Mongol culture.

Certain gold textiles were decorated with illegible scriptures, which appeared as broad ornamented bands formed by the gold wefts. The bands were typically located at the upper end of a textile, figures 85-87, or occupied the space across the shoulders of a robe, figures 112-116 and 119. The different types of script ornaments are likely to have originated from the honorific Arabic armband worn by men, the *tiraz*²²⁷ tradition, which marked of the wearer's identity and which probably moved eastwards with the gradual spread of Islam during the 6-7th centuries. The long traditions of inscribed textiles in China, Central Asia and Muslim cultures, which also existed among nomadic tribes, present us with several issues concerning their intent and value. Scholars have suggested that they were woven by re-located weavers from different locations of the Mongol Empire, unfamiliar with the local Arabic or Persian scripts²²⁸. However, assuming that gold textile designs were executed and controlled by the Royal weaving workshops and followed instructions from Mongol patrons, the hypothesis of incorrectly scripted motifs seems unlikely. Many Muslim weavers, artisans, scholars and merchants

²²⁷ Isabelle Dolezalek, "Comparing Forms, Contextualising Functions: Arabic Inscriptions on Textiles of the Norman King William II and Fatimid Tiraz," in *Oriental Silks*, 81-93. Also, see *Glossary and Terms*.

²²⁸ Anne Wardwell, "Two Silk and Gold Textiles," 354-378.

resided in Yuan China. For example, Rashid-al Din mentions six Iranian artisans who managed the imperial wardrobe of Khubilai Khan during the middle period²²⁹. This suggests that certain designs derived from Muslim culture were likely to have been produced in Dadu.

As seen above, weaving workshops across the Mongol empire employed a mixed work force and produced inscribed robes throughout the Mongol empire by the 13th century²³⁰. Pseudo-kufic, as a conventional style, also evolved during the 10th-11th century as a fashion adopted by the Byzantine courts²³¹. The latter were supplied with silks woven with gold from eastern central Asia, cultures which were absorbed into the Mongol Empire. However, more evident was the spread of Turko-Persian style scripts among a small Buddhist kingdom located at Muslim sultanates of Ghazni and the Hindu kingdom of Kashmir during the 11th and 12th century²³².



Figure 112. Shoulder decoration, pseudo-script.



Figure 113. Shoulder decoration, pseudo-script.



Figure 114. Shoulder decoration, pseudo-script.



Figure 115. Shoulder decoration, Buddhist motifs.

²²⁹ According to Rashid al-Din the individual names were: Isma'il, Muhammad Shah, Akhtachi, Mubarak, Turmish and Yighmish. See Boyle, trans., Rashid al-Din, *The Successors of Ghengis Khan*, 297.

²³⁰ However, the sources provide no specific details of the content of the inscriptions, Allsen. *Commodity*, 91-93.

²³¹ Silvia Pedone and Valentina Cantone, "The pseudo-kufic ornament and the problem of cross-cultural relationship between Byzantium and Islam," in *Opuscula Historiae Artium* / 62, 2013, 120-136.

²³² Flood, *Objects of Translation*, 64.



Figure 116. Shoulder decoration, pseudo-script.



Figure 117. Shoulder decoration, Buddhist 'wheel', endless knot. **Figure 118.** Shoulder decoration, Phoenixes, pearls, clouds.



Figure 119 Shoulder decoration, pseudo- script.

The script ornaments take different forms: Some exhibit pseudo-kufic inscriptions, or ornamented illegible inscriptions, for example figures 85 and 87 and 112-114, 116 and 119; others display motifs which may be related to Buddhist iconography, figure 117. The ornaments were, seemingly, either related to the culture of the wearer or purely decorative.

It is likely that the gold textiles from the early period, the so-called 'war textiles' presented and transmitted designs related to scripts, which were produced by and consumed in Central Asian, Byzantine and Islamic cultures. Certain nomadic and semi-

nomadic cultures were also recipients of textiles with scripture designs; ninth century shoulder fragments with scripts framed by large pearls have been linked to a minor Central Asian culture, figure 120. Evidence of the spread of another type of script decoration which appears on a royal Jin robe linked to Tibetan Buddhist script, figure 131, is provided by a wide scripted gold band framed with a range of pearls extending from the shoulders to the sleeve hem²³³. The script band, which also appears as a horizontal band above the bottom hem of the robe, furthermore demonstrates the development of the script as a decorative ornament. It also suggests how different cultures applied script ornaments to different places on robes. My study, concentrating on the shoulder decoration, suggests that this script was more likely associated with one or more minority cultures close to Nepal, whose language and scripts were derived from Tibet²³⁴. Although not identical to these scripts, closely related prayer scripts were discovered on temple stone plinths, as well as at the Tengboche Monastery in Nepal; various types of illegible scriptures also appeared on the ceilings of temples in that region. This practice of covering the temple ceiling with precious and colourful textiles to protect the deities of the temple was common. These painted ceiling scriptures, displaying the same angular strokes, are displayed amidst eclectic designs of painted imitations of textile patterns. It is, however, more likely that the script is related to pseudo-Arabic inscriptions using angular Kufic script rotated by ninety degrees, as discovered on worn armbands depicted on the robes worn by royal figures in the Dukhang. This type of script can be related to one of the most common forms of pseudo-inscription used in the 12th century Islamic Mediterranean and Central Asian cultures. It also suggested that the scripture originated from the central characters of the Arabic word *Allah*²³⁵, although it now appears to have departed from its origins, as noted by Finnbar.

²³³ The robe was excavated from the Prince Qi royal tomb in Chenhzi village, Juyuan county, Heliogjiang Province and the script has been linked to the Phaghspa script and the rituals of Jürchen culture although the robe predates the Mongol period. Regina Krahl, "Mediaeval Silks Woven in Gold: Khitan, Jürchen, Tangut, Chinese or Mongol?," in *Orientalia*, April (1997): 181-87 and Tanaka, "Oriental Scripts in the Paintings of Giotto's Period," 214-226.

²³⁴ I thank Professor Christian Luczanits for the insight regarding these scripts and the discussion on the movement of the *tiraz* as ornament. Sherpa was possibly one source culture in regard to the mentioned scripts; the Sherpa culture was a migrating culture and moved, with its people as merchants, between Tibet and the mountainous region.

²³⁵ Flood, *Objects of Translation*, 69 and 71.



Figure 120. 8-9th century band, pearl bord framing script.



Figure 121. 8-11th C. China/Iran?



Figure 122. Seljuk, Iran 11-12th C.



Figure 123. Robe, Central Asia *Kucha* 12-13th C.



Figure 124. Robe, early 13th C.



Figure 125. Robe, early 13th C.



Figure 126. Robe, 12-14th C.(?)*Kesi* and *Tiraz*.

One of the earliest gold textiles providing a legible inscription across the shoulders as ornament is the fragmented robe²³⁶, figure 124. This robe, which may have belonged to the early ‘war textiles’, is an example of how the narrow armband *tiraz* script tradition migrated and developed into a wider decoration first placed across the chest. This probably occurred during the 11-12th centuries, attested by other examples, figures 121-123, before arriving later at the shoulder point. Another example is provided by the gold and blue robe displaying a pseudo-kufic inscription, figure 127.

²³⁶ The width of the Kufic border is 16,5 cm and the inscription, which identifies the wearer, reads: *al-Sultan al-azam* (‘the most great sultan’). Another much smaller inscription reveals the name of the weaver: *amal Ali ibn Abu’l Qasim*, (the work of Ali son of Abu’l Qasim). Schorta, Regula, “A Central Asian Cloth-of-Gold Garment Reconstructed.” In *Orientalia*, May(2004): 53-56.



Figure 127. Early 13th century, China/Iran?

During the migration process, it is likely that this phenomenon of including scripts in certain robe designs was absorbed by various cultures responding to its display. For example, the Sogdians wore robes with a wider type of *tiraz* evidenced by murals, figures 128 and 129, as well as the sartorial robes at Alchi which were adopted by the Tibetan elite in the 8-9th centuries²³⁷. The Uighur culture also used the armband *tiraz*, as we have seen above, on the dress worn by a woman donor, figure 71. This demonstrates that not only did the Uighur culture absorb this tradition but that the *tiraz*, possibly, crossed gender and religion. The use of *tiraz* style armbands spread to cultures linked to the Khitan and Liao, a fact that is evidenced by the *kesi* technique that was used to decorate a robe's *tiraz* armbands, figure 126.



Figure 128. Mural, Lashkari Bazar 11th C. Robes decoration with *tiraz*.



Figure 129. Uighurs dressed in robes decorated with *tiraz*.



Figure 130. Decorative band, blue five-clawed dragons, clouds and phoenixes. Madam Cao.

²³⁷ Flood, *Objects of Translation*, 67.



Figure 131. Fragment of robe with script framed by a pearl bord.



Figure 132. Manuscript, sleeves with scrip.

As the different representations of gold textile on the shoulder ornaments show, form, placement and content seem to have transformed into various types of ornaments which may have been linked to one or more cultures absorbed into the Mongol Empire. These ornaments may have been purely decorative, or they may have held specific with symbolic significance. Furthermore, the shoulder bands, which were woven consecutively in the main fabric, were probably designed in accordance with the main weave. For example, the green-and-gold *bian xian* robe in the David collection, figure 116, displays a wide *pseudo-kufic* inscription with interlaced dragonheads framed by narrow bands of running animals across the shoulders. Dragonheads and running animals are used in similarly themed ornaments on the shoulders of a woman's outerwear from Doha, figure 59 and 118, suggesting that the *pseudo-kufic* inscriptions were not gendered, found both in robes of men and women. While the main fabric of the David robe is comprised of Buddhist lions enclosed by a staggered lobed tear-shaped roundel motif set against a swastika background, the Doha robe is decorated with enormous roundels of running animals enclosing four round 'sun discs' which may be related to the so-called 'Buddha's Eyes', also referred to as 'Wisdom Eyes', which when enclosing the wheel of law symbolizes the omnipresence of Buddha or the presence of divinity. Other Buddhist-inspired symbols, such as the wheel of law and lotus rosettes, appear as shoulder decorations on a robe from the Mardjani collection. Chinese-inspired motifs such as phoenixes in flight amidst clouds chasing a flaming pearl framed by key frets are shown on the shoulder decoration of another robe, figure 118.

Large panels using double gold threads to form the *pseudo-kufic*-inspired ornaments were also produced with various types of motifs. The large tent panels, figures 88a-b were seemingly also produced with *pseudo-kufic* at the top section, however, they have now been removed. A robe in the same fabric as the tent panel, which was woven with

a large ornament of the dragon across the shoulders, demonstrates that shoulder decorations were possibly not only purely decorative, but related to a certain degree of expression of power or majesty.

Therefore, the various cultures that were absorbed into the Mongol empire may have contributed to the variations of the script decorations. It is likely that what appeared to be incorrect inscriptions may have been indecipherable texts belonging to small nomadic tribes which linked their scripts to Tibetan Buddhism, such as the Phagspa and the Sherpa script, or, where angular strokes derived from Arabic script rotated 90 degrees related to the Arabic word for *Allah*. Various degrees of transfer seemingly occurred in the process of embellishing robes. The above examples show different scripts in the decorative performance of embellishment at the location of the shoulders, or at the top of large panels. Although the exact meanings of these design combinations remain unknown, the various cultural design aspects, the context of the *parergon* and the main fabric of the robe or panel design should be taken into consideration as expressions of majesty and power.

Another significant factor was the use of colours, which could carry various symbolic meanings apart from mere aesthetic value, and will be examined below.

Colours and motifs

A number of traditions from the conquered cultures may have been significant for the colour palette of Mongol gold textiles²³⁸. The most frequently used included gold, and yellow, red, blue, brown, green and white²³⁹. Visual evidence also demonstrates the rich colour palettes of the various dyes which were used for costumes, hangings and accessories. For example, these colours appear on visual representations of Mongol costumes worn by Khubilai Khan and his entourage, figure 28. Other examples can be found in the imperial donor figure costumes in the *Yamantaka Mandala*, figures 31a-d, and the imperial portraits, figures 29 and 30, figures 28 - 35. Certain colours had a strong representation among some of the conquered cultures; for example blue, red and gold appeared frequently among surviving textiles from the Liao and the Jin.

²³⁸ Supplies of dyestuffs and market conditions may also have influenced the availability of colours, but will not be part of this analysis.

²³⁹ Zhao Feng, "Silk artistry of the Yuan dynasty," 365.

The yellow colour of gold had customarily been the colour of imperial garments in China since the 4th century up until the Liao dynasty, where it was reserved for the emperor²⁴⁰. According to the Song history the emperors wore golden gauze robes brocaded with dragons and clouds in red. Gold carried a certain cosmological importance relating to male principle, the sun and the heavens, and was the preferred colour of the Mongols²⁴¹. However, my research shows that a remarkable amount of surviving gold textiles is woven with gold and blue. Blue, the second favourite colour of the Mongols after gold, represented the sky and possibly the deity, Tengri, or the ‘blue wolf and white deer’, associated with shamanistic belief and the Mongols’ ancestors²⁴². The blue wolf was also linked to the ancestors of Chinggis Khan, and wearing the colour blue may have alluded to the protection from evil spirits and ancestors. This is evident in several robes, for example in the lining which appear in the robes figures 55, 56 and 34, or narrow ribbons, figure 133, tied around the boots, as belt loops, or as headwear.



Figure 133. *Bian Xian Pao* Robe, Blue Ribbon.



Figure 134. Robe with blue lining.

The Mongols imported the cobalt-blue pigment from Central Asia²⁴³; the best lapis lazuli was derived from the Badakhshan mountains, in today’s Afghanistan. The blue pigment

²⁴⁰ Literary records state that the Northern Wei dynasty (386-534D) had special workshops to dye the royal yellow colour. The emperor Wendi of the Sui dynasty (581-618) wore a damask court robe of a reddish yellow colour whereas the emperor Gaozu of the Tang dynasty delegated the reddish yellow colour for the ordinary official robe to reserve the yellow colour for special use. This colour is among the Chinese “Five Colour Theory” including blue, red, white, black and yellow, which can be traced back to the Zhou period relating to Daoist traditions, *Chinese Silk*, 63. For a historical survey of the “Five Elements and Corresponding Colours” see Yuan Chen, “Legitimation Discourse and the Theory of the Five Elements in Imperial China,” in *Journal of Song-Yuan Studies*, Volume 44, 2014, pp. 325-364. Published by The Society for Song, Yuan and Conquest Dynasty Studies.

²⁴¹ Allsen, *Commodity*, 74.

²⁴² P. Soucek, “Ceramic Production as Exemplar of Yuan-Ilkhanid Relations”, *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, No.35, Intercultural China, (1999),128. Also, Cleaves, F.W., trans. *The Secret History of the Mongols*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982),1. Also, Zhao Feng, “*Silk Artistry*,” 367, and Yuka Kadoi. “Textiles in the Great Mongol *Shahnama*: A New Approach to Ilkhanid Dress.” In *Dressing the Part: Textiles as Propaganda in the Middle Ages*. Edited by Kate Dimitrova and Margaret Goehring. Belgium: Brepols, 2014,154-155.

²⁴³ Yuka Kadoi “Persian Blue: Arts of West Asia”, in *Orientalia*, 42, no. 3 (2011), 39-42.

was obtained from the mountainous Altai region from lazurite, *lapis lazuli*, which when ground and mixed with hematite produces an intense blue hue²⁴⁴. The lengthy and expensive process of obtaining the blue pigment was possibly what contributed to making the colour much sought after, not only by the Mongols. It was also used to under-glaze blue and white Jingdezhen porcelain, and appears often in Il-Khanid manuscripts depicting sky and water, in addition to its appearance on Mongol costumes. A more affordable dye was extracted from the indigo plant, which was used as an alternative, for example in the Il-Khanid *Khanate*, and also appears in gold textiles from the early period²⁴⁵. This blue, also named Persian blue, was probably used for non-imperial commissions. Another alternative was found in the use of a lower grade *lapis lazuli* which, however, produced a more greenish colour.

The colour red or vermilion continued to be important during the Yuan period and was used by officials and nobles²⁴⁶ and it could be obtained from cinnabar, a natural source²⁴⁷. In China, safflower (*honghua*) and sapanwood (*sumu*) were used in addition to madder to dye silk red. The colour white was associated with good fortune and was the most common in the Yuan dynasty²⁴⁸. The combination of red and gold was largely used in ceremonial robes and constituted a continuation from pre-Mongol traditions; White and red were the ceremonial colours of the Mongol emperors in Yuan China and are the colours worn by Khubilai Khan and Chabi, figure 28b.

The *Yuan shi* categorizes colours and their uses according to season and rank and, together with the motif sizes, also carried certain symbolic meanings and were reserved for specific members of the Mongol elite. For example, during the *Zhisun* celebrative occasions at the Imperial courts, participants wore embellished monochrome robes according to their rank and social standing²⁴⁹. Different colours thus functioned as categorizers, and it is likely that the strict monochrome observance and conformity also

²⁴⁴ Victor Borges, "Nasrid Plasterwork: Symbolism, Materials, Techniques," *V&A Conservation Journal* 48 (Autumn) 2004, 10-14. Also, Zhao Feng, "Silk Artistry," 333.

²⁴⁵ Dye analysis of the olive green colour of the fragments reveal indigo and yellow-brown tannin dye. Regula Schorta. "A Central Asian Cloth-of-Gold Garment Reconstructed." *Orientalia*, May(2004):53. Also, Otavsky, and Wardwell, *Mittelalterliche Textilien II*, 222-227.

²⁴⁶ Zhao Feng, "Silk Artistry," 367.

²⁴⁷ Borges, "Nasrid Plasterwork: Symbolism, Materials, Techniques," 12.

²⁴⁸ Thomas Allsen. "Commodity," 61. An example is provided by a white skirt with gold designs of clouds, dragons and Buddhist motifs such as the endless knot, the vase, double fish, the parasol; it is dated to the late Yuan dynasty, excavated from the tomb of Madame Cao and belonging to the Suzhou Museum, illustrated in Zhao Feng, *Chinese Silks*, 366.

²⁴⁹ *Yuan Shi*, chapter 78, 1938.

represented notions of unity and identity. Also motifs, pattern and design sizes may have functioned as rank classifiers at the Yuan imperial courts²⁵⁰. The colour red was used in the winter and the colour white was used in the summer²⁵¹. Red could be found in nine different hues, and its relation to rank was determined according to brightness and appearance²⁵². Colours with patterns also functioned as signifiers of rank within the imperial courts, with clear instructions for nine different levels of government officials²⁵³.

The colour purple also appears to be significant and is mentioned in the detailed description of the Emperor's robe in the *Yuan shi*. The Yuan Emperor's outer robe was purple, and the inner robe carried red decorations, including the cosmological motifs of the sun and moon, the dragon and phoenix, the swastika and clouds as well as pearls decorating the collar, cuffs and boots. Furthermore, colours and decorations indicate a certain degree of diffusion of cosmological and Buddhist elements and may have been derived from Tang traditions. The motifs correspond to a wall painting in the Mogao cave 220, Dunhuang, dated to the Tang period. It depicts Emperor Taizong wearing a robe decorated with the motif of the sun and the moon at the shoulders. Robes with cosmological motifs are also depicted in the Dunhuang caves 17 and 154 dated to the mid Tang period, c. 800-850. Furthermore, the use of these motifs points to the traditions that continued to be present throughout the Song dynasty and were also used by the northern nomadic cultures such as the Liao and the Jin²⁵⁴, as mentioned in Peng Taya's travelling accounts from the late 1230s²⁵⁵. This indicates that those motifs were present and were circulated beyond China, before they were absorbed into the Mongol visual culture, and were recorded in the *Yuan shi*²⁵⁶, and appear on imperial robes as evidenced by figure 136.

²⁵⁰ For example, the first grade officers and their wives could wear large motifs of 16 x 10 centimetres, and second grade officers were entitled to wear motifs of 10 x 10 centimetres in size. *Yuan Shi* Chapter 78, 1938 and 1931.

²⁵¹ *Yuan Shi* chapter 78, 1938.

²⁵² For example, the bright red colour used with gold was reserved for first rank; the brighter red was used for second rank, a pale red was used for third rank, a pink-red combined with blue and green was associated with fourth rank, and finally, a purple-red with yellow was used for fifth rank. *Ibid.*

²⁵³ For example, the colour purple combined with a large flower pattern measuring 16 cm x 5 centimetres was reserved for the first level officer; the colour purple in addition to a smaller sized flower pattern with leaves of 10 x 3 centimetres indicated the second level officer, and so on. (The third level purple with small pattern of flowers with no leaves measuring 2 x 3.3 cm. The fourth and fifth level used purple with quite a small flower 1.5 x 3.3 cm, and the sixth and seventh level used red with an even smaller flower measuring 1 x 3.3 cm). *Yuan Shi* Chapter 78, 1931.

²⁵⁴ Schuyler Cammann, *China's Dragon Robes*, (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1952), 7.

²⁵⁵ Allsen, *Commodity*, 107

²⁵⁶ The *Yuan Shi* mentions the use of silk woven with motifs of the sun, moon, phoenix, tiger, and in particular the motif of the five-claw dragon was reserved to the Emperor's costumes. *Yuan shi*, chapter 78:1930



Figure 135.

The last levels of eighth and ninth rank officers used the colour green without a pattern²⁵⁷. Green pigment possibly came from a mixture of ground malachite and copper. Another source originating from the northwest of China was from the buckthorn flowers (*shuli*). In the early period, green was possibly related to the Liao and the Jürchen traditions, as seen in figure 15 for example²⁵⁸. In the middle period, when Islam became the state religion in the Il-khanid, green was also possibly related to cultures from Islamic lands: this could stem from the fact that green is related to nature and is considered to be a sign of life and vitality; it is also regarded as the highest colour to be found in the seventh heaven in Muslim practise²⁵⁹. According to literary records, official workshops produced silk weaves in green for Yuan officials, this colour indicating the multicultural environment of the imperial courts. An example is presented in the production of a 13th – 14th century textile with paired parrots, figure 135, a popular motif in Islamic art which has been possibly produced in China²⁶⁰, likely by a relocated and joined work force of weavers and goldsmiths from Iran and China.

Regulations were applied to the officers' wives too. For example, wives of the officers graded from first to third level were allowed to use silk woven with gold, whereas the wives of fourth and fifth graded officers could use pearls and gold; the wives of level six to nine officers were allowed to use gold only for earrings. This specific consumption of gold textiles, reserved for high ranking officials and their wives functioned as a rank classifier and, in a sense, as a social organizer. For lower ranks, the dimensions of the

²⁵⁷ Ibid, also p.1931.

²⁵⁸ Watt and Wardwell. *When Silk was Gold*, 107.

²⁵⁹ Sheila Blair and Jonathan Bloom, eds., *And Diverse Are Their Hues. Colour in Islamic Art and Culture*. (Zale University Press, New Haven and London, 2009)

²⁶⁰ According to technical analysis and comments by CIETA, AEDTA No.3246, based on the use of paper gold, S-twisted gold threads and a narrow loom width.

motifs gradually decreased, and monochrome robes without pattern or motifs were used for the eighth and the ninth grade officers. It is tempting to draw parallels between these descriptions and surviving examples, such as the David robe, figure 116, and the three Doha robes, figures 39,55 and 56, which feature motifs corresponding to those with larger dimensions. The production of motifs corresponding to the recorded dimensions in the *Yuan shi*, is seen for example in the robe with animals in roundels, figure 39, where the face fabric of the robe features a pattern of motifs measuring 5.5 x 5.5 centimetres. Larger size roundels measuring 10 x 10 centimetres appear on inner panels, only visible when the robe was opened. The use of different sized patterns may suggest that the larger sized pattern was used randomly to complete the dress and that certain sewing workshops were relaxed about rules and regulations, or that the wearer was not bound by the regulations. The robe in bright red, figure 56, displaying large peony and lotus flowers sized 16 x 10 centimetres is another example of a pattern which was produced according to the decree. Other surviving panels similarly demonstrate the dimensions of motifs according to the rules and regulations such as the green robe, figure 116. However, how the decree was reinforced beyond the Yuan China imperial court remains unclear. As seen above, certain rules and regulations may have not always been reinforced. Certain rules and regulations were also likely to become obsolete with time. Gold textiles were circulated and consumed in other locations where the Yuan dynasty's rules did not apply, and gold textiles moved beyond Yuan China within the Mongol empire as gifts or tributes and were consumed for other purposes.



Figure 136. Robe, five-claw dragons, the sun and the moon.

The records also mention that those symbols were part of the 12 symbols used on sacrificial costumes, thus they were also associated with a certain degree of ritual. The use of the dragon motif, however, was spread during the Mongol period. The significant meaning of the five or fourclaw dragon probably originated from the Khitan, Jürchen and the northern nomadic cultures, since the traditional Chinese dragon only had three claws²⁶¹, although five clawed dragons appear in Song art.

Cultural Assimilation and Identity

In the multicultural society of the Mongol Empire, certain subjects from the conquered cultures voluntarily or involuntarily adopted the traditional Mongol costumes and became assimilated to the new customs, in an act of re-identification. Consuming gold textiles with the intent to change or improve one's current or future status may also be related to the so-called cultural *mimicry*, as posited by Bhaba²⁶². The term *mimicry* here refers to a behaviour whereby the colonized subjects copy or adapt to the colonizer, in the prospect of accessing power. The colonized subject thus compromises or suppresses self-ethnicity or cultural identity in the process of re-identification by using different means, for example, costumes. Adopting the traditional Mongol costume may therefore be regarded as disguising one's cultural identity. Thus, this likely two-way process, may have induced certain individuals to dress in Mongol fashion, indicating the various stages of re-identification demonstrated as assimilation, affiliation or admiration of the Mongol tradition. For example, a re-identification processes may have occurred in funerary contexts, such as the Dongercun tomb, figure 32, which depicts the tomb occupants dressed in the traditional Mongol costumes: the man is wearing a white the *bian xian* robe with the characteristic wide 'belt' closure, the 'all-weather' hat and visible boots highlighted in a bright red colour, the colour combination symbolising the high rank of imperial affiliation. His consort is likewise dressed in red wearing the distinguished outer robe and the *Gugu* headwear reserved for elite women. The couple, seated and surrounded with Chinese furniture and the Chinese name giving titles attached to the

²⁶¹ Cammann, *China's Dragon Robes*, 7.

²⁶² The term *mimicry* emerged in colonial and post-colonial literature, Homi K. Bhaba, *The Location of Culture*. (London: Routledge, 1994).

tomb, may suggest that the self-representation of the tomb occupants as Mongols was intentional, with the purpose of re-identifying themselves in the afterlife²⁶³.



Figure 137a-b. Chinese-style dragon and geese.



Figure 138a-b. Stylized lotus-peony motifs.

The Juhta burial site in the western *Khanate* of the Mongol empire offers another example in relation to the question of identity. Excavated and assembled textile fragments constitute *kaftan* styled robes that contain gold textiles. The textiles, produced with the paper gold technique originating from China, display adapted motifs from Chinese and Buddhist traditions, such as the dragon, the phoenix, lotus flowers and the Buddhist vase, figures 137 and 138.

Majesty

The gold textiles not only highlight the Mongols' appreciation for gold but also point to a certain degree of majesty, demonstrated by the complex design arrangements which indicating a 'program' associated with the Mongol political, cultural and social power and controlled by the imperial palace. Symbolic ornaments, as noted by Jessica Rawson, may be considered as 'bearers of meaning', while the use of certain motifs and designs could also be considered as method of communication; however, they may also be purely decorative²⁶⁴. Either way, they contributed to the development a visual 'program' as a visual language displayed on gold textiles.

²⁶³ Nancy Steinhardt, "Yuan Period Tombs and Their Inscriptions: Changing Identities for the Chinese Afterlife." *Ars Orientalis*, 37(2009),(Freer Gallery of Art, The Smithsonian Institution and Department of the History of Art, University of Michigan): 140-174.

²⁶⁴ Jessica Rawson. *Chinese Ornament*. Also, Stacey Pierson. *Designs as signs: Decoration and Chinese Ceramics*. (London: The School of Oriental and African Studies. 2001).

There were several meanings attached to gold textiles themselves, apart from their eclectic gold designs, whose significance lay in their consumption and their ability to represent power, 'majesty' and, to a certain degree, identity and 'protection'. As seen earlier, Yuan China represented social, cultural and economic systems which were deemed to be far superior to the other *khanates* of the Mongol Empire, and which the Mongol elite was eager to adopt. Certain selected design elements associated with Chinese culture may have thus reflected notions of superiority which appealed to Mongol elitism and suggested a certain degree of re-identification: the Mongols thus, in a sense, performed *mimicry* themselves when copying powerful elements from foreign cultures. For example, the heraldic motifs of the Chinese dragon and phoenix, the Buddhist lion and the Central Asian falcons were likely to have been to present this superiority, power and majesty.

This adaptation suggests the motifs' significance to Mongol representation of power. Furthermore, decorating nearly the entire surface of textiles with gold alluded to the vastness of the Mongol power, and the form and size of the motifs and *parergon* determined the level of majesty. For example, the plain *bian xian* robe with small animal motifs, figure 45, probably belonged to a lower ranked individual in contrast to the distinguished robe figure 47, which was probably was a special commission, as indicated by the shoulder ornaments accentuated by the supplementary gold lotus motif below the left shoulder point, the large Buddhist lions in roundels and the wide woven 'golden belt' highlighting Mongol nomadic culture, thus Mongol power.

The highly important relationship between Tibetan leaders and Yuan Mongol Emperors was thus likely to have impacted certain aspects of the visual design repertoire, which repetitively included various Buddhist motifs such as the eight auspicious symbols and the frequent use of variations of the lotus motif, the swastika, and the lion motif. Their use was probably directed by the Supervisorate of Buddhist Images, which was located at the imperial palace near the gold office²⁶⁵.

²⁶⁵ Anige, the Nepali artist who was responsible for the Buddhist designs also worked in silk tapestry *kesi*, which represented much of the same visual language that was found of the gold textiles," 53-54.

The heraldic motifs of the dragon and the phoenix were successively transferred from one ruling power to the next and became important for the Mongol elite. Robes with fiveclawed dragons were worn by Khubilai Khan, figure 28 and also appear on the costumes of Emperor and Empresses, figures 31a-d. The frequency of these designs reflects the powerful Mongol visual and political culture within the vast multicultural Mongol Empire. Their meanings, however, were likely to have assumed an alternative or aesthetic value in the second and third period, with the appropriation of Mongol visual language among the various member cultures of the Mongol Empire.

Moving on to the heraldic motifs of the falcon, these were widely used among the Mongol elite to hunt large birds such as geese, cranes and ducks and were a symbol for ceremonial events marking seasonal hunts, as seen in figure 28a. Falcons, which became a symbol of noble rank were also offered as gifts and tributes between the Mongols representing thus a monetary value as well.

There are several examples demonstrating how script designs along the shoulders functioned as *parerga*, ornaments and supplementary designs, carrying various symbolic meanings. The display of broad decorative shoulder bands in a different design, sometimes woven with two different kinds of gold threads creating a three-dimensional effect enhancing the reflection of light, may not only have reflected identity, rank or cultural affiliation or an aesthetic design preference of the user; the shoulder band may have also conveyed various meanings reflecting a certain degree of majesty and power related to spirituality, drawing the attention of the viewers to the double gold threaded ornaments. Viewing the textiles in person suggests that the weave combination of two types of gold threads not only amplified the reflection of light but could also intensify their appearance. Thus, it may have also been intended to demonstrate superiority in connection to divinity and celestial powers, for example by including Buddhist motifs, or a script relating to 'Allah'.

As we have seen above, amulets such as the metallic cases containing written messages on paper were mounted on the front and the back of the elongated *Gugu* headwear. Scripts were also found on the structure of the extending part, figure 72b, from which,

however, only the word *Tengri*, which means 'heaven', could be translated²⁶⁶. Were the functions of these metallic cases placed on the elongated headwear merely for aesthetic reasons, or did they signify something beyond that? It is possible that the *Gugu* reaching towards the heavens may have been a vehicle for worship, or that it had some kind of divine connection. As we have seen, the *Gugu* was considered 'sacred' and only to be 'touched' by the wearer, therefore suggesting a certain degree of exclusivity in the relationship between the wearer and the function of the headwear; the *Gugu* may thus also be considered as an object possessing a certain degree of power. It was worn by the imperial elite, as we have seen in the material evidence of the life size prototypes of the Empress portraits, figure 29, which were probably used in processions, hung in temples or brought on expeditions across the Mongol empire to demonstrate the ruling power. The displays of the *Gugu* in the Mandala, figure 31a-b, and in numerous enthronement scenes depicted in Persian miniatures, figures 64 – 66, provide further evidence for the intentional representation of the headwear as a powerful symbol of Mongol power.

The headwear worn by men also reflected notions of rank and power. The *Yuan Shi* mentions that hats decorated with the phoenix were worn by the Emperor, which is evidenced by the headwear decorated with a grid pattern of clouds surrounding a phoenix, figure 96²⁶⁷. Men's headwear also presented falcons, figure 106, and facing lions²⁶⁸, both emblems of power linked to Central Asian and Buddhist traditions. Therefore, it was also associated with Chinese culture and may, in this context, be related to a demonstration of Mongol sovereignty in the Yuan *khanate* of subjugated China.

The use of lions, falcons, clouds, lotus flowers as motifs in the narrow bands ornamenting the cuffs and lapels of robes may also have surrounded the wearer with a metaphorical image of power. The frequent consumption of such bands may also have been the result of a transcultural transmission where elements of the traditional Mongol style were borrowed and incorporated into local use.

²⁶⁶ In email communication April 4th 2014, from the former owner of the objects now belonging to the Mardjani Collection.

²⁶⁷ Zhao Feng, *Treasures in Silk*.

²⁶⁸ The Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, (CO.95.2000).

Another representation of majesty and power was evident in large hangings made into portable tents, which not only represented Mongol culture, heritage and conquests but continued to function as important emblems of political power, reflecting a sense of Mongol *omnipresence* at different locations. Their bold designs in their enormous displays of roundels and emblematic motifs were visible from afar and were likely to impress the viewers.

The particular protruding four-pointed ornament at the crown centre, figure 78, which took the shape of a miniature cloud collar was probably a sign of rank. The widely used motifs of clouds and cloud collars may have been significant to the Mongols in relation to the representation of 'Sky Gate' and the four directions considered as representing the whole universe in miniature, following Cammann²⁶⁹. Cammann, furthermore, describes the body of the individual to be considered as representing the axis column of the universe, which (since the post-Han period) was thought to extend from the earth up until the Sky Gate in China²⁷⁰. Many of the motifs on robes and hats discussed above could thus be considered in relation to these traditions, for example, the so-called Abu Bakr gold textile, figure 7, as well as the robe displaying a cloud collar around the shoulders 103.

We could hypothesize then, that the designs used for the main textiles may have had some degree of affiliation to the ornamented shoulder script. For example, the design of the Abu Bakr fragment presents the cloud collars in a diagram arrangement forming a square of 'the universe in microcosm', thus alluding to the important role intended for Abu Bakr. Therefore, the clouds may be perceived as a sign for the ruler, a symbol that had been transmitted from the Jin Dynasty where the cloud collar design was reserved for the Emperor.

The consumption of the traditional woven Mongol costume may not always point towards a particular identity or culture of the wearer. The Mongol elite encouraged members of the *kesig* and Mongol entourage to wear gold textiles and certain costume styles in order to define their rank; gold textiles thus, function in this context as

²⁶⁹ Cammann, "The Symbolism," 1-9.

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

categorizers. Some individuals, however, may have been encouraged to dress in certain textiles to ameliorate their status in society. Despite strict sumptuary laws and regulations, it is likely that when these rules were relaxed, during the middle and later period, certain members of the Mongol Empire gained access to such costumes, and with the decline of the Mongol Empire more independent workshops appeared. The representations found on Mongol costumes could also indicate a certain degree of assimilation, affiliation or admiration of the Mongol tradition. The tomb occupants in Dungereun, for example, were depicted dressed as Mongols but in a Chinese setting: they present us with an example of self-representation, expressing a change for the afterlife²⁷¹.

While the movement of gold textiles, enabled by *Pax Mongolica* and the cosmopolitan environment of 13th – 14th century Eurasia, reflected aspects of hybridity as a result of their foreign origin, as well as advanced know-how and alteration at their new locations, gold textiles were also regarded as objects linked to rank, identity and celestial connection. Chapter three explores the movement beyond the Mongol Empire, as well as the arrival and reception of gold textiles among the Europe royal and church elite. It also explores their functions as luxury goods and the similarities of their functions with those in the Mongol Empire.

²⁷¹ Nancy Steinhard, “Yuan Period Tombs,” 140-174.

Chapter Three: Mongol Gold Textiles beyond Asia



Figure 139. Relic wrapper, phoenix and dragons.



Figure 140. Dragon and lotuses.

In the previous chapter I examined the visual material characteristics of the Mongol gold textiles, their meaning and function, and the ways in which they were consumed and received in the Mongol Empire. I also examined their symbolic meanings associated with ‘majesty’ and political power, as well as identity.

I will now turn to the consumption pattern of gold textiles in Europe and examine the process of their arrival and circulation. Aspects of foreignness and exoticism related to their ecclesiastical use will also be analysed, along with the symbolic roles of foreign luxury objects in the context of adaptive re-use of textiles and identity. I argue that aspects of syncretism and transfer, in relation to moving objects and visual images, occurred through gold textiles in Europe as well as in the Mongol Empire. I argue that certain objects referred to and merged with their makers and users, the people and cultures that exchanged them and the relationship through which they were defined.

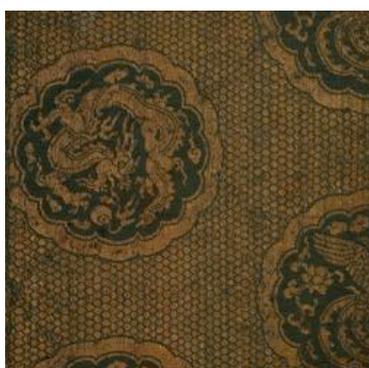


Figure 141. Phoenix and dragons in roundels set against a pattern of tiny dots.

The detailed records of gold textiles from the Mongol Empire in European church inventories²⁷² and royal courts establishing exceptional collections and treasures emphasize their significance during the 13th and 14th century. The gold textiles arrived in Europe via trade, church and diplomatic missions, but also directly from Mongol missions, with gifts and diplomatic letters that contained messages from the rulers²⁷³. Three letters in the Vatican archives document examples of diplomatic missions that took place in Europe, their circumstances and the kind of gifts that were exchanged²⁷⁴. The archives also preserve records with the seals of different Mongol Khans. Other letters addressing diplomatic exchanges between Khubilai Kahn and Philippe IV (r.1285-1314) and Ögödei Khan and Philippe IV also exist²⁷⁵.

In Europe, gold textiles were admired as *Object de luxe* for their attributes of sumptuousness, shiny appearance and value of silk and gold. They were also admired for their foreignness that made them exotic and much sought after among the European state and church elite; The response to gold textiles was particularly concentrated among the European royal and aristocratic courts, but was also significant among wealthy merchants who formed part of the buying and distribution chain between the Mongol Empire and Europe. Gold textiles were also cosmopolitan objects, agents of visual and technological transfer in their new European locations. There, they also began to form part of the religious apparatus of European religious identity, “the cult of relics” that erupted during the 12th - 13th centuries²⁷⁶. The ceremonial display that the luxury objects presented for the liturgical apparatus prompted an increased consumption among the ruling elite²⁷⁷.

²⁷² Such as the tomb of Fernandos and Alfonso de la Cerda dated 1275, Burgos, Monasterio de Santa Maria de Real de las Huelgas, inv. no. 00650510. Also from the treasure of St. Mary's Church in Danzig/Gdansk, dated to the first half of the 14th century. Lübeck, St Annen-Museum, inv.no. M3, M23, M31, M32, M111, M112; Copenhagen National Museum formerly in Roskilde Domkirke; Regensburg, Alte Kapelle (Diözesanmuseum), and the chasuble of the Chapter of St. Aldegonde in Maubeuge, église Saint-Pierre-et-Saint-Paul; the burial of Cangrande I in Verona, Museo di Castelvecchio, and the cloth of gold and silk of Rudolph IV, Vienna, Dommuseum, Inv.Prot.L-7.

²⁷³ For example, a delegation of Khubilai Khan offered gifts to the kings of France and England, and the Pope Nicholas IV in 1288. Another delegation travelled through Hungary and Germany into France and on to Avignon in 1338. Cleaves, “Trois documents.” *mongols des Archives secretes vaticanes*, *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 3 / 4, pp. 422.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁵ Arnold, 1999, appendix III, p. 193

²⁷⁶ Reliquaries of the Catholic Church played an important role during the 13th and 14th century, and objects that were associated with Christian saints, including their earthly remains, were preserved wrapped in costly material, such as gold textiles.

²⁷⁷ R. Goldthwaite. *Wealth and the demand for Art in Italy 1300-1600*. (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995),153



Figure 142a. Eagle dalmatic, Southern Germany mid 14th century.

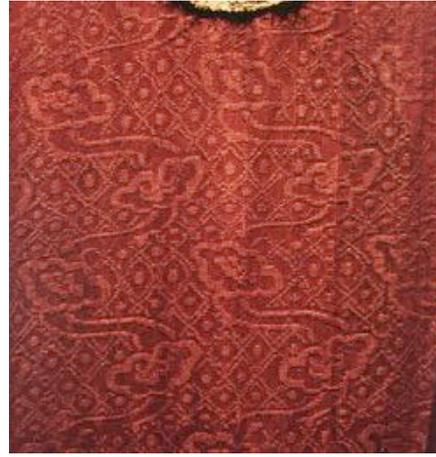


Figure 142b. detail, floating clouds.

Gold Textiles In Situ

Since Mongol gold textiles began to re-appear in different locations, from Eastern China to Western Europe during the 19th and 20th century, many questions remain unanswered about their purpose and consumption in their discovered locations. Their discovery in Chinese, Central Asian and European burial sites suggests that they were consumed as funerary and liturgical objects by different cultures. Of the exceptionally high numbers of Mongol gold textiles produced during the 13th and 14th century, only few have survived. Most of these have been preserved in European church inventories and tombs. These findings include gold textiles transformed into dalmatic, chasubles, copes, mitres, curtains, shoes, purses and different sizes of fragments cut from larger pieces. We also know that similar robing ceremonies existed in the Mongol Empire and in Europe, which suggests that these cultures shared a certain degree of textile culture²⁷⁸, which may have been practised in a transnational context. Using textiles and robes of honour in gift-exchanges was a universal phenomenon that crossed cultural, political and religious boundaries. For example, in the European Christian context, the mantel, sometimes made from Chinese silk, was anchored in this dual function of power and divine protection and can be traced back to biblical and early times²⁷⁹. One example

²⁷⁸ The phenomenon 'textile culture' can be related to the use of textiles in relation to the expression of identity, hierarchy and rank among members of a culture.

²⁷⁹ Robes have traditionally functioned as attributes of political and religious privilege, and in biblical accounts to the prophet Elijah (Kings II, 2-13-15). Since biblical and early times, mantles were instruments for the designation and transmission of holiness and power and were worn by rulers and the clergy as signifiers of divine authority. The mantel provided a sense of power and authority to the rulers and their realms that in return received protection, which was considered divine. See Igor, Kopytoff, "The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process," in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. A. Appadurai, (Cambridge, 1986), 64-94. Also, Patrick Geary, "Sacred Commodities: The circulation of Medieval Relics," in *Social Life of Things*, 169-191.

can be found in the so-called 'Eagle dalmatic', dated to early 14th century China²⁸⁰, figure 142: The Chinese red silk, with a design of floating clouds set on a background of tiny squares, typical design motifs from Mongol visual culture, is decorated with embroidered biblical figures and the heraldic symbol of the eagle in roundels. This perception of the mantel, which in certain Central Asian and Mongol nomadic milieus may have been paralleled to the 'robe of honour', evoked similar notions of power and divine protection among the members of the Mongol elite. It also brings to mind notions of the power demonstrated by precious textiles which were, to a certain extent, shared perceptions in the cosmopolitan circles of the Mongol and European elites.



Figure 143. Asia from the Catalan Atlas by Abraham Cresques (circa 1375), vellum.

World maps dated to the 14th century offer interesting images revealing how Latin Europe viewed the East and how it perceived foreignness. Mapmakers depicted alterity in the costumes, headwear and accessories worn by figures that reflected travellers' diaries of their encounters with foreignness, figure 143. The contributions made by long distance travellers, such as merchants, Christian envoys, commercial or diplomatic missions between the East and the West, should be cautiously approached in terms of their accuracy, due to their fancifulness and inflated interpretations. Mapmakers were also likely to have been pleasing the expectations of their audience of kings and wealthy

²⁸⁰ The fabric is provenance of China based on stylistic grounds, the weave, the dye and motifs. Katja Schmitz-von Ledebur, "Eyn Ander Braun Rok mit Swarczen Adelarn": Reflections on the Eagle Dalmatic of the Coronation Regalia of the Holy Roman Empire and Its Chinese Silk Damask," in *Oriental Silks in Medieval Europe*, 185-194, especially, 188-189.

merchants who had commissioned the work and aspired to majestic displays. For example, in the pictographic Catalan atlas by Abraham Cresques (1325-87), we find not only how people, cultures and objects were perceived, but we also gauge a certain degree of visual account of world order and power²⁸¹. Various rulers are portrayed in acknowledgement of their authority, such as the Mongol Khans in the East in contact with the family of Marco Polo (1254-1324) travelling by camel caravans, a way of reflecting the economic power of merchants. Religious leaders, however, commonly appear through depictions of biblical memories and crusaders' strongholds, and regional power appears through images of seated rulers and diplomatic delegations. Employing specific colours and using recognizable cultural features to portray a crowned King in the West and a Mongol Khan and tents in the East were visual representations of worldly powers, in addition to reflecting perceived cultural identities. Adopting or appropriating emblematic objects and recognizable cultural elements, motifs or designs from powerful neighbours or Empires enabled a re-conceptualization of identity, along with a projection of a certain degree of power. The notion of power transfer could thus occur with the incorporation of specific textile elements, such as gold textiles, into visual displays in relation to the European political elite.

Terminology and sources – defining gold textiles discovered in Europe

The presence of gold textiles in European church inventories has been recorded in numerous papal and royal archives. These sources reveal aspects of the importation of Mongol gold textiles into Europe and the ways in which they were circulated therein. However, the early documents raise some issues regarding the interpretation of the terminology used at the time, making the accurate presentation of the content and meaning of the inventory entries quite challenging. A fundamental problem lies in the terminology of the Mongol gold textiles *nachi*, *pannini tartarico*, *camoca*. In the commodity glossary and index of Pegolotti's handbook for merchants²⁸², eight different

²⁸¹ Felicitas Schmieder, "Colourful, but Were They Seen by European Eye-Witnesses?," in *Oriental Silks in Medieval Europe*, 165-171.

²⁸² Francesco di Balducci Pegolotti, a Florentine employee of the Bardi family during the 1330s, wrote a handbook for traders travelling to the East. Francesco Balducci Pegolotti, *La pratica della mercatura*. Ed. A. Evans, (1936) Cambridge, Mass.: Medieval Academy of America.

types of silks are defined, that are used by the banking house of the Bardi²⁸³. *Cammocca* or *Camucca di Seta (Camaca)* is defined as ‘a silk cloth, possibly damasked or brocaded with gold, used for vestments and the draping of state beds’. It was made in Persia, Syria and Cyprus²⁸⁴. However, in the 19th century inventory of Victor Gay, *Camocas* is referred to as a silk gold weave that characterized damask weaves, and which could also have originated from China²⁸⁵. This is furthermore suggested by David Jacoby, who mentions Tabriz, Herat and Nishapur as production sites of *Camoca* from the early 14th century, but he states that *Camoca*, as a term, was also linked to *kamkha*, a product woven in Damascus²⁸⁶. In his records, Victor Gay furthermore mentions that *camocas* could be woven in satin or tabby, and with gold ornament in twill, a description which corresponds to some of the gold textile weave combinations we have seen earlier, and to the relic wrapper linked to the French church inventory of Notre Dame, Paris, and features one of the most travelled and popular roundel motifs that have crossed the Mongolian empire, figure 139, illustrated and described in Victor Gay’s inventory as “Camocas chinois à dragon²⁸⁷.” The weave, with motifs of six tiny dragons in an asymmetrical design similar to Mongol visual design repertoire, figure 136, presents a fine paper-gold weave of high yarn count linked to China²⁸⁸. In France and Italy, naming them *Camocas d’outremer*, or *camocas d’outre-mer* distinguishes them from the European produced examples from Lucca²⁸⁹. The Glossary of Victor Gay’s inventory lists several examples of *d’outremer* entries, with detailed descriptions of colour, pattern, origin and use, most of which belong to the inventory of Charles V (1338-1380). The Inventory treasury of Notre Dame de Paris lists several descriptions of ecclesiastic textiles categorized as *camoca*; however, it does not distinguishing *tartar* and *d’outremer*, thus complicating the issue of terminology.

²⁸³ Cattua or Cattiva (categorized as Cathay silk), Turci (Turkey Silk), Pisciaccheri (?), Ghella (identified as silk from Ghilan, south of the Caspian), Guardabanco (?), Taliva or Talina (Talış silk from a district in Azerbaijan on the west coast of the Caspian), Leggi del Golfo/Gollo d’Erminia (south of the Caspian). Ibid, 297, 430 and xv-xvi.

²⁸⁴ Ibid, 415.

²⁸⁵ Gay, *Glossaire Archéologique du moyen age et de la renaissance*. (Paris: Librairie de la Société Bibliographique, 1887), 265-267. The Glossary lists numerous examples of *d’outremer* entries with detailed descriptions of colour, pattern, origin and use, most of which belong to the inventory of Charles V.

²⁸⁶ David Jacoby, “Oriental Silks at the Time of the Mongols: Patterns of Trade and Distribution in the West,” in *Oriental Silks in Medieval Europe*, 103-104.

²⁸⁷ ...avait un fond satiné, quadrillé ou ouvré comme du linge, sur lequel les ornements se détachent en tissu sergé... et dans les espèces les plus précieuses, elle offre des partitions d’or espoulinées et non brochées; Victor Gay clearly distinguishes between the brocaded gold textiles and the lampas weave which suggests a knowledge of the different types of textiles woven with gold., Gay, “*Glossaire Archéologique*,” 266. For example, gold textiles such as the dragon robe, the tent panels and the dragon cope are classified into Gay’s list.

²⁸⁸ Otavsky and Wardwell, *Mittelalterliche Textilien II*, Cat.no. 70, 201-203.

²⁸⁹ „Le camocas tissé en Orient, dans l’Inde, la Chine et la Perse, à Bagdad, Tibris, Neicapour, Samarkand et Damas, états applés d’Outremer pour le distinguer des imitations faites, dès le milieu du XIV siècle, par les fabriques de Lucques. Gay, “*Glossaire Archéologique*,” 266.

In Italy *Tartani* (*Tartaryns*) is defined as shot silk and it is listed among precious stuffs along with 'cloth of gold', which is often also referred to as brocaded²⁹⁰. Documents of this early period suggest that *Panini tartartico* could refer to luxurious silk fabrics decorated with a woven pattern of gold; however, they do not necessarily specify its origin or use. Some inventory entries clarify its use and its specific nature. For example, in the inventory of Charles V items are described as being used for decoration or clothing. Duits²⁹¹, however, argues that *Panni tartarici* was a silk fabric imported into Italy from China at the time of the Mongol Yuan dynasty (1279-1368), when trade relations between China and the West were at their highest point.

Liturgical vestments made of *panni tartarico* are listed in the inventory of the treasury of St Peter's in Rome made at the death of Pope Boniface VIII in 1303²⁹², and Hoberg's interpretations of 1944 include numerous entries of *Pannus Tartaricus* in the Papal inventories of Clemens V, Johann XXII, Clemens VI. However, these only reveal information about their colours, motifs and function at the time of the entries²⁹³. Only rarely do the inventory entries describe how they were perceived at their place of reception, with a few exceptions found in the Perugia inventory noted above, dated to the 1311. Rosati discusses the adjectives, which were used to describe the gold textiles: *pulcri*, which means beautiful, *subtiliter*, which means delicate, and *curiosus*, which means curious. All these words reveal a certain degree of appreciation²⁹⁴. The gold textiles seemed to have impressed the people who encountered them in their new European locations in the same way they had impressed Marco Polo, who described them in his travel accounts as "beautiful and costly silk fabrics of crimson and other colours". These descriptions offer some insight into how the gold textiles may have been perceived, and the ways in which they were differentiated from earlier known textiles, as they were associated with exoticism and foreignness.

²⁹⁰ As defined in the Pisan "*tartarini dicti cangiicolori*," meaning shoot silk, and traditionally linked to a Chinese manufacture. See footnote 38.

²⁹¹ Duits, *Gold Brocade and Renaissance Painting*, (The Pindar Press, London, 2008), 19-35 and 36-40 for a discussion on silk terminology.

²⁹² Müntz, E. *Il Tesoro della basilica di S. Pietro in Vaticano del XIII al XV secolo con una scelta d'inventarii inediti*, Roma: Soc. Romana di storia patria, 1883, p.12: "Item undecim planetas diversorum colorum de scyamito, panno tartarico, et dyaspro" and "Item duo pluvialia de dyaspro et panno tartarico".

²⁹³ Hoberg, Hermann. *Die Inventare des Päpstlichen Schatzes in Avignon*, 23, 25, 28, 45, 63, 91-95, 97, 122, 172, 193, 197, 200, 217, 284, 454.

²⁹⁴ Maria Ludovica Rosati, "De Opere Curioso Minuto," 172-183.



Figure 144. Asymmetrical design, Sweeden.



Figure 144b. Detail of the 'flaming lotus pattern'

Panno Tarsico is also mentioned in the inventory of S. Paul's Cathedral, London, dated from 1295²⁹⁵. Gold textiles also found their way into northern European churches, however, they did not appear in inventory records with a specific date of entry. For example, Chinese twill damasks dated to the end of the 13th century are preserved in Åbo Cathedral, Finland, and Uppsala Church in Sweden, and preserved fragments of gold textiles were also ascribed to Chinese manufacture²⁹⁶, such as those in figure 144, two copes made from gold textiles belonging to to Århus Domkirke, Denmark, one of which was discovered as a foot stool by the altar. In Øster Højst Kirke, Tønder, Denmark, a cope made from 50 fragments of gold textiles, also dated to the 13th century, was discovered beneath the floor during the restoration of the church. The copes were probably hidden in these places during the Reformation in the early 16th century²⁹⁷. Some of the most significant recoveries constitute, probably, the Abu Said textile in Vienna²⁹⁸, the vestments in the treasure of St. Mary's Church in Danzig/Gdansk²⁹⁹, the so-called "Heinrichsgewänder" in Regensburg³⁰⁰, and the funerary gold textiles of Pedro de Castilla and Alonso de la Cerda, Spain. However, a remarkable chasuble in gold textile

²⁹⁵ William Dugdale. *The history of Saint Paul's cathedral, in London, from its foundation*. (London: Lackington, 1818.) *Item Tunica et Dalmatica de panno Indico Tarsico besantate de auro...* A Tunica and a Dalmatic in blue (or purple) Tarsico with woven with excessive gold ... *Item Tunica et Dalmatica de quodam panno Tarsici coloris, tegulata cum besantiis e aboribus de auero filo contextis...* A tunica and a Dalmatic polychrome Tarsico with gold threads.

²⁹⁶ Agnes Geijer. *Textile Treasures of Uppsala Cathedral*. 1964, 30, plate 18. The silk fragment of Chinese origin, 13th or 14th century, or possibly Central Asian, was part of a tunic. The pattern comprise of an animal motif of the dragon and the hare woven with leather gold on a narrow loom width measuring just 53 centimetres, which was typical of Chinese looms.

²⁹⁷ Vibeke Michelsen, "To korkåber fra Århus domkirke", in *Nationalmuseets Arbejdsmark* (Nationalmuseet 1967), 43-54.

²⁹⁸ Markus Ritter, "Cloth of Gold from West Asia in the Late Medieval European Context: The Bu Said Textile in Vienna – Princely Funeral, and Cultural Transfer," in *Oriental Silks in Medieval Europe*, 231-251.

²⁹⁹ Birgitt Borkopp-Restle, "Striped Golden Brocades with Arabic Inscriptions in the Textile Treasure of St. Mary's Church in Danzig/Gdansk," in *Oriental Silks in Medieval Europe*, 289-299.

³⁰⁰ Juliane von Fircks, "Islamic Striped Brocades in Europe: The "Heinrichsgewänder" in Regensburg from a Transcultural Perspective", in *Oriental Silks in Medieval Europe*, 267-287

was discovered in the French Chapel of St. Aldegone in Maubeuge³⁰¹, figure 145, which provides further evidence of transcultural consumption of gold textiles.



Figure 145. Chausuble, Maubeuge, woven with leather gold. Maubeuge. **Figure 145 b.** detail of pattern, dorsal parrots.



Figure 146. Headwear discovered in Yuan China. **Figure 147a-b.** Fragments, Pedro de la Castilla and Alonso de la Cerda, Spain.

Another problem arising from written or material sources is the fact that many of the early descriptions are often very limited, which makes it difficult even to determine whether the objects are of a local make or imported. However, a good amount of written sources categorizes objects by stating the cities of either Lucca or Verona. The abundant documentation of local production in Lucca or Verona has yielded evidence that firmly establishes the existence of textile production during the 13th and 14th century. For example, the Inventory treasury of Notre Dame de Paris lists several descriptions of ecclesiastic textiles, among which an object of '*Luques vert ou blanc*', which refers to

³⁰¹ Nicole Cartier, "The Cloth-of-Gold Chausuble of the Chapter of St. Aldegonde in Maubeuge", in *Oriental Silks in Medieval Europe*, 253-265.

Lucca as a place of production. Lucca was thus one of the most important Italian production places that appropriated the Mongol gold production technique. The Italian production not only copied elements of the production know-how to create a luxurious weave, but used selected motifs and designs from the Mongol gold textiles which were also absorbed into the design repertoire and which evolved into a new visual language linked to the European elite. The Italian imitations could present a more affordable version of gold textiles and thus competed with the imported originals which, however, remained superior in quality: the finely woven gold textiles with high yarn counts and often high gold content remained unrivalled. The Italian production often consisted of more affordable versions³⁰²; The metal threads used for the Italian production could, furthermore, consist of higher contents of silver than gold in which leather gold was wrapped around a linen thread³⁰³. This prompts us to consider the intention of the Italian gold textiles: they could have been used to mimic a certain majesty. However, this could also suggest a promotion of the illusion of 'majesty' for a new and fast growing class elite, in addition to the church and royal elite.

The different terms used to describe gold textiles at their European places of reception obscures their cultural identity and geographical provenance. The different sources also question their authenticity in comparison to other precious textiles which were circulated among the European elite. However, descriptions suggest that certain objects of *panni tartarici* and *camocas d'oultre-mer* may have been considered to be of Chinese origin or coming from places beyond the near East, however, until today no discovered gold textiles in Europe have yet been assigned secure provenance.

Colours

Purple, blue, red, white and gold are the colours that most frequently appear in the European inventories listing the Pan-Mongol gold textiles and are also noted in the travel accounts of the Christian envoys and European travellers and merchants. These colours are not only found among some of the surviving gold textile fragments, but their

³⁰² The yarn count in a wide selection of Italian Gold Textiles have revealed to be lower than those identified originating from China. The gold content was furthermore also identified as lower compared with Chinese examples.

³⁰³ Ibid.

variations also appear in Italian church paintings and in French manuscripts depicting textiles.

Similarly to the Mongol Empire, textile colours were symbolic and were used to emphasize one's rank and status. Their degree of luxury was linked to the availability of colorants which were an important component in determining the price of the silk. Rarity suggested value, making the product more luxurious. For example, the most expensive colour was purple and a variety of its shades could be obtained in the dyeing process³⁰⁴. Because of its value and use among the royal elite, purple was not only restricted by sumptuary laws, but was considered to be sacred. It represented a certain degree of divinity and holiness, as the royal and church elite were considered to be associated descendants of the gods.

Blue, which was the most favoured colour by the Mongol Khans, was mentioned by Pope Innocence III in a decree regarding liturgical and symbolic colours during the 12th century. Blue, however, seldom appears in Pope's inventory lists of the 13th and 14th century because at the time it was categorized as *purple*³⁰⁵. In church paintings from this period the blue coat that dresses Christian figures such as Maria and the Saints is visible but is, however, gradually replaced by the colour red, which begins to dominate³⁰⁶, probably because of the lower price of the dye. The presence of red becomes more apparent in church inventory lists from the 14th century.

Gold, the colour and material most favoured by the Mongols, was equally important in Europe and had also been used in textiles in Europe, before the arrival of gold textiles, in the form of embroidered gold threads stitched onto liturgical robes to create biblical designs³⁰⁷. When Italy began to produce gold textiles imitating techniques and designs from imported gold textiles, liturgical vestments, which were circulated among the European church elite, became even more sumptuous in appearance and value.

³⁰⁴ Jacoby, "Silk Economics," 209-210, also 455-56 and n.17-19.

³⁰⁵ Leoni von Wilckens, *Die textilen Künste, Von der Spätantike bis um 1500* (München: C.H.Beck, 1991), 90.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid*, 92.

³⁰⁷ An example of one of the earliest gold uses decorating funerary clothes in Europe can be dated back to between 5th – 8th century.

The colour green was, similar to the Mongol Empire, associated with Islamic culture, as well as with southern Muslim Spain. Therefore, when green gold textiles appear in travel recordings, they may be considered as acquired in situ from the workshops in the Mongol Empire producing textiles for a Muslim audience, or made as commissions for tributes destined for a Muslim culture, for example Mamluk Egypt³⁰⁸. Green, however, also became associated with Italian gold textile production from Lucca. Material evidence from Lucca can be found at L'église St-Pierre in Avignon, France, in the form of a green and white dalmatic, which is considered to be the relic of the Cardinal Pierre de Luxembourg. The gold design is derived from the Mongol visual language and displays motifs of birds, lotuses and the heraldic motif of the 'winged' lion in an asymmetrical composition, figure 13, 13b and 13c³⁰⁹ demonstrating, the transcultural consumption of Mongol visual culture.

This section has indicated the different uses of colours in Europe, which paralleled certain consumptions patterns in the Mongol Empire, and which rendered the gold textiles from the Mongol world attractive and desirable, independently of the value of the precious silk and gold. We will now examine other examples of how the European elite was predisposed to the reception of gold textiles.

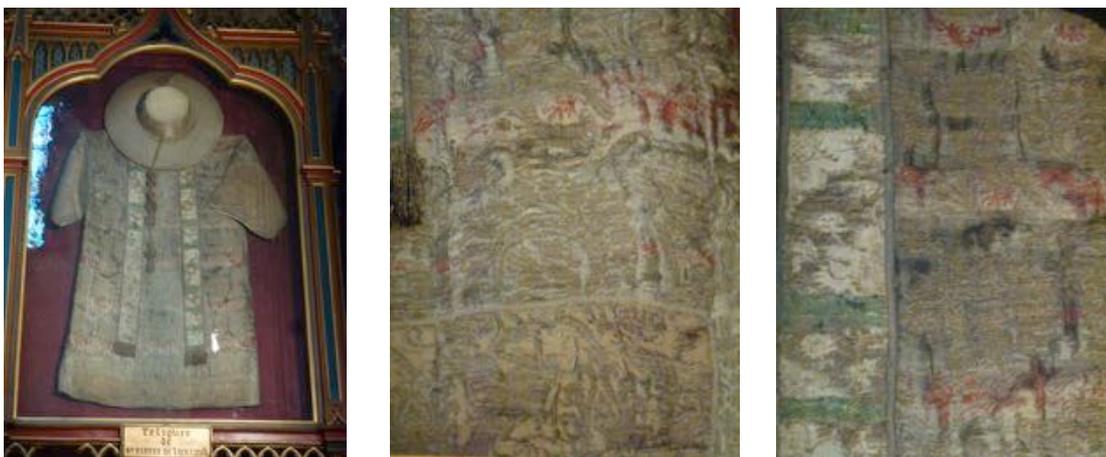


Figure 148a-c. Relic, Dalmatique, Pierre de Luxembourg. Motifs of phoenix, lotus, lion.

³⁰⁸ The Mamluks received tributes from the Mongol rulers in addition to the trade that flowed between the rulers despite the Mongols' failed conquest attempts.

³⁰⁹ *Les Tresors des Eglises de France, Musée des Arts Décoratifs*, 1065. Paris: Caisse Nationale des Monument Historiques, p.357. Also Abbé Requin, 1890. "Histoire et description de" in *Inventaire et Richesses d'Art de la France*, Paris: Plon, p.10. Also, in situ inspection and email communication with L'église St-Pierre, Avignon in 2014.

Predispositions

There are several examples of how the pre-Mongol period Mediterranean ruling elite was predisposed to foreign objects and exoticism as symbols of political power and how the re-use of exotic objects was common among leaders of the holy empire for the purpose of stabilizing political power across cultures. Commodity exchanges and international trade, which had taken place between the East and the West for centuries, brought about new objects which, due to their rarity, were considered precious. Precious objects included silks, gold, metal, glass and fine porcelain, which were also circulated as gifts among the nations' rulers and were associated with a certain degree of power; thus, they could be used to display majesty and sovereignty. For example, to help define himself as Holy Roman Emperor, Henry II (972-1024 AD) appropriated exotic artefacts to create a cultural collage and decorated the pulpit, the so-called *The Ambo of Henry II*, in Aachen, Germany³¹⁰. The pulpit represents *spolia* of different foreign religious and non-religious imagery and artefacts from various cultures creating a sense of power from former authorities. The imageries combined also represented a certain degree of foreignness and exoticism from the Eastern Mediterranean world.

Luxury textile traditions had existed in Europe since the 8th century, encouraged during the reign of Charlemagne and Byzantine envoys, and intensified during the 10th century where geopolitical influences from Christian Byzantium and Islamic influences from northern Africa established the textile town of Almeira in Andalusia, Spain³¹¹. From this period onwards, European luxury textiles were embroidered or embellished by brocading with gold thread, gold or silver strips, stamped plaques, glass beads and pearls³¹², to create luxurious dresses which were regulated by sumptuary laws. In ecclesiastical and court circles embellished luxury textiles were justified as they, in principle, represented notions of heavenly court. They were also consumed by saints. The light reflecting on the decorated textiles made them shimmer and sparkle, offering

³¹⁰ Karen Rose Mathews, "Expressing Political Legitimacy and Cultural Identity through the use of Spolia on the Ambo of Henry II," *Medieval Encounters*, vol.5, issue 2, (1999),156-183, especially 171-179 discussing the political position of Henry II and his connection to the tradition of imperial Christian affiliation to Roman, Byzantine and non-Christian cultures. Also, Toussaint, Gia, 'Cosmopolitan Claims: Islamicate Spolia During the Reign of King Henry II, 1002-1024.' *The Medieval History Journal*, 15, 2 (2012): 299-318.

³¹¹ Ettinghausen and Grabar. 2001. *Islamic Art and Architecture 650-1250*. Yale University Press, 281. Also, P. Deschamps, "Les Fresque des cryptes des cathédrales de Chartres et de Clermont et l'imitation des tissus dans les peinture murals" *Monuments et Mémoires Publiés par l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* 48 (1954), 91-106. Figures 11 and 12

³¹² M. Schuette and S. Müller Christensen, *The Art of Embroidery*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1964). Also, A. Santangelo, *The Development of Italian Textile Designs from the 12th to the 18th Century*, (London: Zwemmer, 1964), 18-19.

some inclination of the glory of the eternal and celestial light, similarly to the Mongol gold textiles.

The circulation of precious textiles in Europe during this period can thus be traced to the network provided by the Roman church utilizing this notion of divine power. Furthermore, the 'multi-way' exchanges of textile objects, ideas and power between the interconnected noble and the Church elite³¹³ ensured their position of power in society. Gifts and diplomatic exchanges from wealthy merchant trade embassies also contributed to the distribution of gold textiles within Europe, for example, noblemen gifting precious textiles to local churches in pious donations. The consumption of gold textiles and their symbolism were thus unified in Christian practises.

With Islam on the rise and after the loss of Jerusalem in 1244, a certain degree of 'power building' emerged between the European Christian rulers and those in Constantinople. Byzantium, a silk producing power since the 5th century that was supplying European rulers with sumptuous silks, was holding the largest number of relics in the 12th century³¹⁴. Relics had existed in the West since the 5th century and was well established by the 8th century during the Carolingian period (750 – 887 AD). The rulers of Byzantium took on the mission of protecting Christianity and began to circulate and exchange relics. Among these were precious gold textiles used for the wrapping of relics, for burial costumes for dignitaries or for coronation costumes. One example is seen in the relic wrapper woven in Samit with gold threads, dated to the 12th century, from the church in Aachen, Germany. Other examples can be linked to the relics of Saint Godehard, in Hildesheim where the interior of a coffin was lined with sumptuous silk woven in Spain³¹⁵. This not only indicates the burial pattern of the European elite, but also the predisposition and receptiveness for sumptuous gold textiles, which became available through new distribution channels linking the European church and royal elite to the Mongol Empire. For example, the textiles from the Castilian Royal Tombs in Santa Maria

³¹³ Uncovered luxury textiles from this period have appeared in France and Germany; especially belonging to this network during the 1100 century were the Holy Roman Churches in Augsburg, Bamberg, Bremen, Brixen, Chur, Eichstätt, Freising, Kassel Domschatz, Halberstadt, Hildesheim, Köln, Konstanz, Magdeburg, Mainz, Mecklenburg, Oldenburg, Paderborn, Passau, Regensburg, Salzburg, Schleswig, Strassbourg, Toul, Utrecht, Würzburg, Woms. See *Geschichten der bildenden Kunst in Deutschland. Romantik*. (München, Berlin, London, New York: Prestel, 2006).

³¹⁴ Oliver Impey, *Chinoiserie, The impact of Oriental Styles on Western Art and Decoration*, (New York, London: Charles Scribner's Sons 1977), 63. Also, an example is the famous 10th century 'elephant' silk; This piece, from the tomb of Charlemagne and now at Aix-la-Chapelle, Aachen, where it was placed after the Emperor Otto III had opened Charlemagne's tomb in 1000 AD.

³¹⁵ The Abegg-Stiftung Exhibition 27 April – 9 November, 2014, *Veil and Adornment; Medieval Textiles and the Cult of Relic*.

de Las Huelgas in Burgos, Spain, reveal various types of gold textiles dated to the 13 and 14th century Mongol Empire³¹⁶ featuring designs of lotus flowers, birds, kufic or pseudo Kufic inscription bands, as well as trade ink stamps of different shapes, which provide evidence of the gold textiles' change of locations, figures 147a-b. The motif of the dorsal and facing parrots is closely related to an unearthed headwear from Mingshuicun, figure 146, as well as the Maubeuge chausable, figure 140. The ink stamps are also closely related to those found on the fragments related to figure 160 and furthermore relate to ink stamps appearing on robes from the Regensburg, Germany. Stamps are rarely discovered on textiles, however, some can be found in the Abegg Stiftung, a textile attributed to the Liao dynasty. These stamps may be associated with movement, with merchant stamps for example, or they may also be related to the location of production, but are to date not linked to a provenance.

Visual Effects

Luxury textiles, as important transnational elements of communication, had a variety of features that seemed appealing to the European church elite. While the influx of the satin weave from China during the late 13th century was particularly popular because of the shimmering effect of the weave, it was the introduction of the lampas technique that enriched the fabric. Certain gold textiles, moreover, were produced with more than one weft gold thread enhancing their shimmering and reflection effect. This, most likely, was a novelty and improvement, and appealed to the European ecclesiastical and royal court circles in the same way that it phenomenon impressed the Mongol elite.

The Vatican inventory of 1295 includes an entry for '*pannus tartaricus arcium ad aurum*' which has been interpreted as "the sun's rays motif, woven into the stuff in gold". Moreover, the asymmetrical gold textile patterns featuring new motifs presented something very different to the existing symmetrical design repertoire displaying paired animals surrounded by roundels, striped or geometric patterns³¹⁷, as seen in chapter

³¹⁶ Concha Herrero Carretero, "Marques d'importation au XIVe siècle sur les tissus orientaux de Las Huelgas," *Bulletin du CIETA*, 81 (2004), 41-47. Also Kristin Böse, "Beyond Foreign: Textiles from the Castilian Royal Tombs in Santa Maria de Las Huelgas in Burgos", in *Oriental Silks in Medieval Europe*, 213-230.

³¹⁷ Anne Wardwell, "Panni Tartarici."

two. Varieties of the lotus flower design, cloud motifs or Chinese dragons and phoenixes probably seemed exotic to the Europeans:



Figure 149. Dalmatic, Pope Benedict XI.



Figure 150, Cope, Pope Benedict XI.

While earlier robes were decorated with more motifs of larger roundels in bolder designs³¹⁸, surviving European 13th to 14th century robes were constructed with various fragments of smaller designs, sometimes made from imported gold textiles. In contrast to the earlier designs which, because of their dimensions and depictions of large roundels and animals, may have been viewed as more ‘legible’ from a distance, the substantial amount of gold used for the gold textiles rendered the 13th to 14th century robes more noticeable, despite of their smaller and illegible motifs. These effects thus functioned as a communicative vehicle related to ecclesiastical use as seen, for example, in the dalmatic and cope attributed to Pope Benedict XI (1303-1304), figures 149 and 150. The dalmatic is made of a blue silk of Italian production, a white silk with a gold pattern of tiny flowers and leaves attributed to Central Asia, Persia (Tabriz) or China³¹⁹, and a fabric stitched with biblical images. The cope, however, is made entirely of a tiny gold leaf pattern on white ground³²⁰. Two similar fragments in the same colour and pattern can be found in the Cleveland Museum of Art³²¹ and in the Kunstgewerbe

³¹⁸ Larger roundel motifs from Byzantine design repertoire spread among the European elite from the 11th century as recognizable elements of majestic emblem.

³¹⁹ The variegated attributions are based on material and stylistic analysis carried out by different scholars, more recently Maria Ludovica Rosati, “De Opere Curioso Minuto,” 173-175.

³²⁰ Apart from the fragile condition of the robe, large fragments have been removed, which probably circulated before they appeared on the art market where one fragment was acquired by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (19.191.3 and 46.156.22).

³²¹ The Cleveland Museum of art, 1985.33; this object was formerly identified as paper gold in Wardwell, “Flight of the Phoenix,” 8 and footnote no.33, and changed provenance to a Central Asian weave with gold threads made of animal substrate in James Watt and Anne Wardwell, *When Silk was Gold*, 148.

Museum, Berlin³²², suggesting that this type of gold textile was circulated and consumed in Europe³²³. Another example from the same inventory is a left shoe³²⁴, figure 151, constructed with a different weave and pattern: a tiny leaf design surrounding dorsal *quilins* and lotus flowers in a tear-drop ‘flamed’ roundel³²⁵. An imitation of this design and shoe style appears in the burial of Cangrande della Scala, figure 152, and in another piece that belongs to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. This Cangrande shoe, however, is woven in felt and wool. This also shows the different type of consumption pattern and local response to gold textiles and in different ways in which they were appropriated at different levels of society: as material, but also as design source. This may reveal aspects of ‘prestigious imitation’ and self-representation at a cultural level rather than the *mimicry* in the sense of political power, as seen earlier regarding the Duncun tomb depictions, figure 32.



Figure 151. Shoe, Pope Benedict XI, silk, leather gold Z-spun. **Figure 152.** Burial shoe, felt, wool, Cangrande, Venezia early 14th C.

Variations of the tiny leaved lotus vine pattern, as well as leather gold thread used for weaving lampas, have a long history in both Central Asia and in China and became popular in Italy during the 14th century. These patterns are described in the inventories of Pope Clement V (1264-1314) in 1311, and in the inventory of the Vatican in 1361 and close variations of the tiny leaf pattern can be found in the robes and purses woven with paper and leather gold threads, figures 36, 80-83. The adoption of this type of pattern in Europe is further reflected in the church paintings by Simone Martini dated from 1330 - 1340, on the robes of holy figures, figures 154 and 153. The design variations of this

³²² Kunstgewerbemuseum, Berlin, Inv. Nr. 62,98; this object has been identified as a weave in silk and leather gold. Leoni von Wilckens, *Mittelalterliche Seidenstoffe*, 49.

³²³ Rosati discusses the movement of the Perugia gold textiles as gifts between the Papal residencies of Perugia, Lucca, Assisi and Avignon. Technical analysis: Perugia, Maria Ludovica Rosati, “De Opere Curioso Minuto,” 173-183.

³²⁴ *Ibid.* The right shoe was composed with lampas silk and gold from Lucca Italy.

³²⁵ Anne Wardwell, “Flight of the Phoenix,” 8. In this publication Wardwell discusses the weave construction as Chinese with a supplementary weft paper-gold thread, however, in a later publication the same object has changed provenance to a Central Asian weave and with animal substrate gold threads.

pattern gradually spreads to French and northern European paintings and manuscripts used by the royal and church elite in what appear to be sparkling monochrome. The appropriation of gold textile as design thus shows another consumption pattern that occurred. Depicting Chinese-like luxurious silk gold costumes suggests a certain degree of intentionality; the patron of the commission may have not only indicated connections to a foreign country denoting foreignness and exoticism, but may have also pointed towards a knowledge about valuable commodities indicating rank and distinction. In the example of Simone Martini's paintings, the depiction has been associated with ecclesiastical vestments belonging to Pope Benedict XI (1303-04)³²⁶, which indicates that this type of gold textiles was associated with a certain degree of divinity.



Figure 153. Annunciation, 1333 AD.



Figure 154a-b. Maestra, 1340s AD, Chinese tiny pattern.

Other gold textile fragments with tiny patterns recovered from European Churches can be found in Maastricht³²⁷ and in the Victoria & Albert Museum, London, figure 155-157³²⁸ demonstrating a similar consumption of cloth with minute shimmering designs beyond Italy. The Victoria & Albert Museum fragment, figure 156, also features a tiny pattern of the emblematic cloud design which shares some similarities with the 'Eagle Dalmatic' in Vienna, figure 142a-b. The design of tear-drop roundels amidst the floating cloud design brings to mind the emblematic motifs of the Mongol visual culture.

³²⁶ Anne Wardwell, "Flight of the Phoenix," 2-35.

³²⁷ Blue and gold silk damask with small-scale leaf pattern, Church of San Serva, Maastrich, 13th to 14th century, inv.no. 13-1.

³²⁸ Red silk and gold damask with an all over leaf pattern, 13th century, inv.no. 7047-1860; a red and gold twill damask with tiny tear-drop pattern, 13th century, inv.no.7046-1860, and a bi-coloured silk damask with tiny leaf pattern, inv.no. 7082-1860.



Figure 155. Chinese? Tiny leaves.



Figure 156. Clouds and teardrops.



Figure 157. Chinese? Tiny leaf pattern.

Perception

The shimmering gold decorations of foreign motifs and designs made the Mongol gold textiles appear exotic and possibly represented a degree of majesty. For example, in the inventory of Pope Benedict, the foreign gold textiles are described as: “*wonder, admiration, beautiful, with decorations and preciousness*”³²⁹. This vocabulary of these descriptions suggests that they were admired and imbued the viewers with an aesthetic pleasure. These objects are furthermore described as: “*curious, with technical superiorities, ‘genius’, illuminations of gold*”, which may suggest that they were recognized as carrying a certain degree of ‘power’, or advantage and dominance compared to other textiles consumed at the time. The records also suggest that certain forms and symbols from foreign places were adopted and accepted by the royal and ecclesiastical elite. Figures 149, 151 and 154 exemplify the adoption of Chinese-like orientalism in Italy during the 14th century, which spread through Europe in continuation of the 12th century Byzantine cultural influence. For example, the pseudo-kufic inscriptions that began to appear in Italian Church paintings ornamenting costumes worn by celestial figures from the 12th century were sometimes replaced by illegible script associated with *Phagspa* or scripts related to 13th - 14th century Mongol visual language, as seen, for example in the Sienna paintings³³⁰. Gold textiles woven with

³²⁹ The translator of the early 14th century inventory list has carefully consulted the vocabulary used at the time in order to define and proximate the accurate meaning and significance of the words. See Rosati, “De Opere Curioso Minuto,” 173-183.

³³⁰ Illustrated in Tanaka, „*Oriental Scripts in the Paintings of Giotto’s Period*”.

clouds, lotuses and stylized Chinese characters such as *shou*, meaning longevity, also began to appear, figures 158 and 159.



Figure 158. *Shou*, 'longevity'.



Figure 159. Pseudo-Chinese character.

In medieval Europe, these foreign scripts were perceived as exotic and was seemingly unrelated to a desire for legible script or the use of an illegible script relating to a specific religion³³¹. The message of power attached to them was transmitted regardless of their content. For example, the use of cope fragment in a Christian context with the written symbol *Allah* demonstrates a certain indifference to its meaning and to that of the dragons in roundels and a tiny cloud design, figure 160³³². Religious symbolisms was valued for its aesthetic features, as well as for its exoticism. Some scholars have suggested that the Arabic script may have been understood as an ancient foreign scripture connected to Christian or Hebraic script, thus carrying notions of sacred symbolism related to the holy land; in other words, it may have been regarded as a 'Christian textile'. This hypothesis is connected to the relations, marked by gifts and commodity exchanges, between the Mongols and European rulers, as a result of *Pax Mongolica*. Christianity was promoted in the Mongol Empire and the Mongol rulers were perceived as powerful by Europeans. The gold textiles, however, were likely to be associated with a certain degree of cosmopolitan power. During my research I have discovered that both pre-Mongol gold textiles and a new era of cosmopolitanism

³³¹ Isabelle Dolezalek, "Comparing Forms, Contextualising Functions: Arabic Inscriptions on Textiles of the Norman King William II and Fatimid Tiraz", in *Oriental Silks in Medieval Europe*, 81-91.

³³² These gold textiles will be further discussed in chapter four.

stimulated by *Pax Mongolica* constituted forces that were at work simultaneously. They will be discussed in the following section.

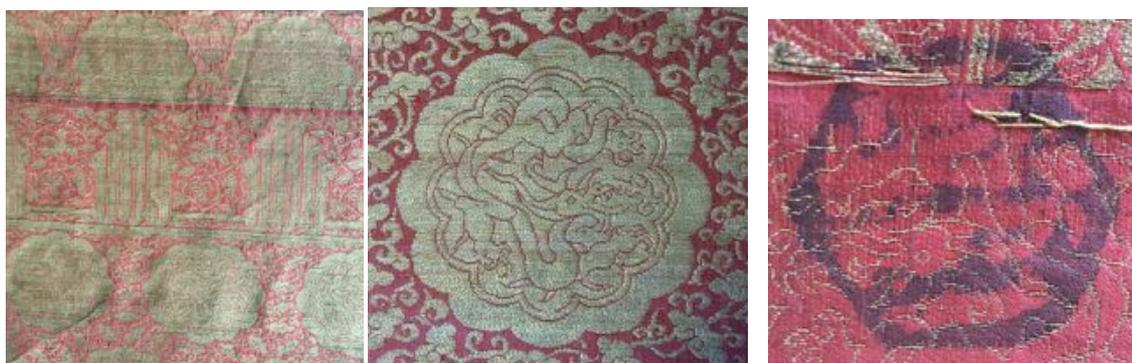


Figure 160a-c. Fragment of a Cope, decorated with a dragons in roundels, birds, and a scrip symbol for *Allah*.

Demand and distribution

There were several events which enabled the influx of Pan-Mongol gold textiles into Europe. Before the end of the Fourth Crusade and following the siege of Constantinople in 1204, Byzantine reliquaries diffused into Europe through Italy, which had opened up the way for the commercial contact between the East and West. Italy was the centre of a distribution network extending over all of Western Europe³³³, and with the fall of Byzantium, the major silk producing Italian city, Lucca, began to specialize in church vestments supplying great quantities to many Popes³³⁴. Genoa and Venice were important trading points for imported gold textiles, that arrived through the channels of *Pax Mongolica* and were distributed through well-established networks before being circulated into Austria, France, England, Belgium, Germany, Bohemia and Hungary³³⁵.

The popularity of the Cult of Saints that had spread in Europe during the end of the 10th century surged the demand for religious art during the 12th century³³⁶. Thus, precious textiles, began to serve new ceremonial functions. For example, imported precious silks

³³³ The 'Fourth Lateran Council' held in 1213, amidst the first wave of the new imports, stimulated the demand for more luxurious reliquaries. The council ordered by a decree that relics were to be housed in appropriate shrines subsequently prompting the Pope to donating costly utensils to Roman churches. One example of a gold textile relic in a shrine is the Avignon dalmatic discussed above, figure 148, another relic is the wrapper, figure 139.

³³⁴ For example, the Caetani family ordered 29 pieces of silk with motifs of the arms of Boniface VIII. See Impey ,64.

³³⁵ David Jacoby, "Oriental Silks at the Time of the Mongols," 106-108.

³³⁶ The acquisition of religious art became large endowments, which allowed the church elite to purchase luxury goods, even in times of economic depression. The need for liturgical furnishings, reliquaries and priestly vestments, all with the appropriate sumptuousness and varying according to the requirements of the liturgical calendar, also contributed to the demand for costly goods made of precious metals, silk and glass. Furthermore, treaties began to require 'appropriate fabrics' at ceremonies such as funerals which, according to material evidence, included gold textiles as seen above.

were important elements of liturgical vestments and funerary clothes of dignitaries, in addition to functioning as curtains and drapes for religious objects, as mentioned in various records such as in the Avignon Papal inventories³³⁷.



Figure 161. Relic coffin, early 14th century.



Figure 162. Relic purses with precious fabrics.

The quantity and distribution surge of gold textiles during the 13th century³³⁸ also resulted in the creation of a variety of smaller objects, such as the relic wrapper, figure 139, and other objects discovered in European churches inventories, such as the reliquary, figure 161, and the small purses decorated with precious fabrics, figure 162. A lampas gold textile combining the Chinese-inspired motif of the lotus flower in a tear-shaped roundel surrounded by a cloud motif and running animals is placed on the ‘roof’, of the relic coffin, with precious stones and biblical images intercepting the display. The tear-drop design shares some similarities with the Pope’s and the Cangrande’s shoes, figures 151 and 152. The front of the miniature church, figure 161, is decorated with two large images with a gold background and figures representing biblical scenes in a bright colour palette of red blue and green set against a brilliant gold. The sides of the reliquary are ornamented with a striped gold textile of a geometric design intersected by bands of illegible script, which share similarities with the design of the Copenhagen cope. The re-use of three different kinds of Mongol gold textiles in conjunction with Christian biblical images may point towards some aspects of the user’s taste and preference; it is possible that the choice had been random, however, it could have been a way of symbolically connecting with divinity while demonstrating affiliation to a foreign power,

³³⁷ For example as recorded in a document from 1320 describing a gilt Chinese cloth to be used over a ceremonial chair: “*Item 1 pannum tartaricum deauratum pro facistorio*”, see Hoberg, Hermann. *Die Inventare*,45.

³³⁸ David Jacoby, “Silk Economics and Cross-Cultural Artistic Interaction.”

the Mongol Empire, who used the cloud motifs in this way. It is also likely that the user have been unaware of these different symbolic meanings, or had chosen them by coincidence. So far no recovered material can point to a definitive understanding of the gold designs embellishing the gold textiles. With the shift in perception and aesthetics that occurred during this period in Europe, balanced designs were interrupted and intermingled with objects, signs, and myths from different foreign cultures. There is also the possibility that the user may have been inclined to display a certain kind of connection to sacredness and ‘holiness’, following the traditions of Christian Europe regarding the representation of golden cloths, that was established in the 12th century.

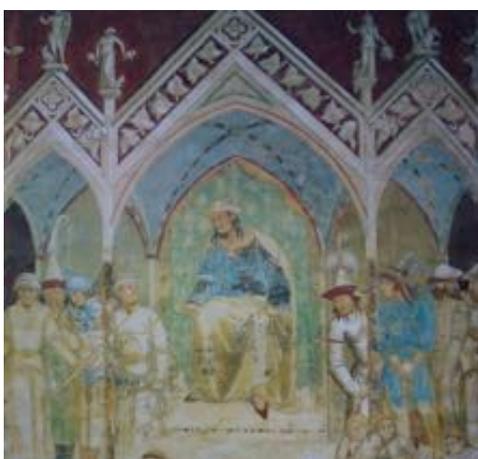


Figure 163a-c. ‘Good Government’, Siena.

Detail of *bian xian* robes.

Detail of teardrop pattern.

Entire Mongol robes designed with lotus flowers in a tear-shaped roundel pattern may have existed in Europe; they were depicted in churches paintings, figure 163a-c, and manuscripts by painters who probably painted their commissions based on imported fabric, made available by their donors and masters, such as the reliquary, figure 161. Other examples of small wooden cases that served as reliquaries with similar images can be found in European churches³³⁹, figure 162. These also feature various Pan-Mongol gold textiles with tear-drop roundels and tiny-leaves patterns that share similarities with the relic wrapper shown in figure 139. They further share similarities with styles composed of small-scale patterns that are commonly found on Yuan China gold textiles dated to the Yuan period³⁴⁰, and which begin to appear as backdrops and ‘curtains’ in French manuscript paintings, figures 164 – 172.

³³⁹ For example, finds from Chur, Switzerland, Brussels and Brixen, see Magagnato et al., *Le Stoffe de Cangrande*,

³⁴⁰ Zhao Feng, *Treasures in Silk*.



Figure 165a. Duc de Berry. Robe with 'grid pattern'.

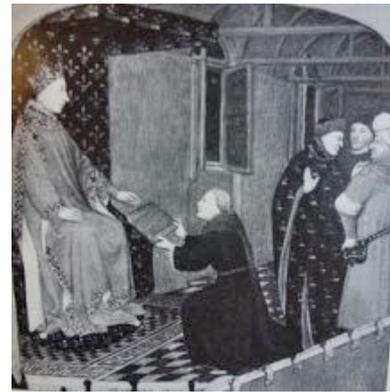


Figure 165b. Charles IV and Duc de Berry.



Figure 165c. Duc de Berry (?)



Figure 165d. Duc de Berry before the Madonna.



Figure 165e.



Figure 165f.

Subsequent transfer French illuminators, back drops or 'curtains' with various roundel motifs.



Figure 165g.



Figure 165h. Abraham and the Three Angels wearing roundel motifs.

The expansion of Christian art during the 12th century onwards also resulted in greater consumption by the church and in an increased demand for architecture with the building of more churches. This expansion impacted the demand for luxury textiles for ecclesiastical garments, hangings, furnishings and reliquary objects. The demand for pictorial art decorating church walls also soared and brought about the development of new genres for church paintings and sculptures³⁴¹. To meet the growing demand for gold textiles Europe was looking for alternative supplies after the fall of Byzantium.

Several events facilitated the importation of gold textiles into Europe: first, the rise of Islam and the geopolitical situation prompting the collaboration of Christian Europe and the Mongol Empire during the mid 13th century; second, the opening of a safe network of trade routes under *Pax Mongolica* during the late 13th century that enabled increased exchange activities between merchants and diplomatic envoys from the West to the East, such as those of Marco Polo³⁴² and Francesco Pegolotti³⁴³. From the middle period, as we saw in chapter one, the contact between European Christians and the members of the Mongol elite was marked by trade and diplomatic mission; In addition, pilgrims, crusaders and the Italian merchants facilitated an international market platform and encouraged western demands for eastern commodities. These events impacted 13th – 14th century Europe on three fronts and marked the cosmopolitan era which connected Europe with the Mongol Empire: a shift in the political climate; a social-economic transition; the arrival of a new religious aesthetic³⁴⁴.

The European perception of the Mongols underwent a transformation since their earlier portrayal by Matthew Paris in 1240 as '*inhuman and beastly, rather monsters than men*' and as barbaric and ruthless invaders. Mongols in Hungary and Poland had also threatened to invade Austria in 1242 via Klosterneuburg, just a few miles from Vienna³⁴⁵. However, they withdrew suddenly with the death of the Mongol ruler Ögödei (r.1229-1241) in

³⁴¹ Goldthwaite. *Wealth and demand*, 80-83. Evidence of an increased demand can also be seen in relation to the number of religious communities that increased during the early 14th century; for example, in 1316 there were 567 friaries in Italy compared with only 264 in France, *Ibid*, 94-95. Further statistics can be found in John R. H. Moorman. 1983. *Medieval Franciscan Houses*. New York. Also, Wolfgang Braulfels. 1972. *Monasteries of Western Europe: The Architecture of the Orders*. (Princeton), 129.

³⁴² Although there is a dispute regarding Marco Polo's travels to China, as seen earlier, Francis Wood, *Did Marco Polo go to China?*, it is also worth noting that other European travelling missionaries and merchants do not all appear in written recordings. This may, however, be due to the fact that all the Chinese names of all visiting foreigners at the Chinese courts have not been disclosed according to Rachewiltz, *Papal Envoys to the Great Khans*.

³⁴³ Pegolotti, *La Pratica della mercatura*, 28, discusses the safe trade routes between the Black Sea to Cathay.

³⁴⁴ David Jacoby. "Oriental Silks at the Time of the Mongols." Also, Goldthwaite, *Wealth and demand*.

³⁴⁵ Rachewiltz, 1971. *Papal Envoys to the Great Khans*. London: Faber & Faber, p.81.

1241. The Mongol army's withdrawal from Europe's borders also coincided with a geopolitical shift in the power struggles between the European Christians, the Mongol Khans and the Mamluks. For example, French monarchs and the Papal emissaries were not only interested in the successors of Ögödei and the Mongols' future intentions of invading Europe; during the 1260s, the European ruling elite were particularly interested in an alliance with the Mongols to prevent the further spread of Muslim power. The Mongols, on the other hand, needed the alliance to conquer Mamluk territory. Muslim presence in southern Europe and at the western edges of Mongol territory posed a military and religious threat to both the European and Mongol rulers³⁴⁶. The Christians in the West and the Mongols in the East had found a common enemy in the Muslims and were inclined to form an alliance that could present a united front from both sides³⁴⁷. A visual record of these events is found in the *Little Shahnama*, figure 34.

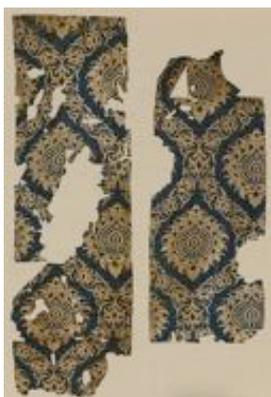


Figure 166. Mamluk.



Figure 167. Boucicaut Masters.



Figure 168. Fragment, Chinese? Uppsala.

Egypt and the Mamluk courts were engaged in trade between the Mongol Empire and Italy despite the political tensions, which is evident in a number of gold textile fragments excavated in Egypt, for example, figure 166. The Chinese-inspired designs of the 'flamed lotus' and peony flower, figure 166, arranged in a symmetrical design surrounded by small leaves were possibly adapted for the tributes that went to the Mamluk courts from

³⁴⁶ For an overview of the Crusades and Europe see Riley-Smith, J. 1987. *The Crusades: A Short History*. New Haven: Yale University Press. For the Muslim impact in the western Mongol territories, see: Boyle, ed., *Cambridge History of Iran: The Saljuk and Mongol Periods*.

³⁴⁷ The mutual interest strengthened diplomatic contacts and enabled trade relations to unfold which impacted gifts exchanges and circulation from the second half of the 13th century. The irregular trade flow between the East and the West nearly came to a halt in 1259 when the Mamluks sized Egypt and Syria while fighting off the Mongols, resulting in Papal authority placing a ban on trade. For political and commercial reasons, European merchants were eager for new alternatives: the Papal powerful religious authority was equally anxious to build new relations with the Mongols in order to create a balance in the power struggle with rising Islam. Moorman, John. 1968. *A History of the Franciscan Order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

the Mongol rulers. This design shares some similarities to the popular asymmetrical design theme of the 'flaming lotus or peony' framed by cloud and curving vines, figures 168-169, which are closely related in design and weave of the *mitre* of Oddone da Colonna³⁴⁸, figure 170.

To meet the increasing demand for gold textiles of the new Church apparatus it is likely that variations of 'the flaming lotus pattern', which appeared in Italian church paintings and in many French manuscripts, gained popularity; for example the back drop depicted by the Boucicaut Workshop, "*Messengers before King Louis*", figure 167, shares similarities with the 'flaming lotus' motif, figures 168 and 169 and demonstrates how designs from gold textiles were circulated and were appropriated as a design source.

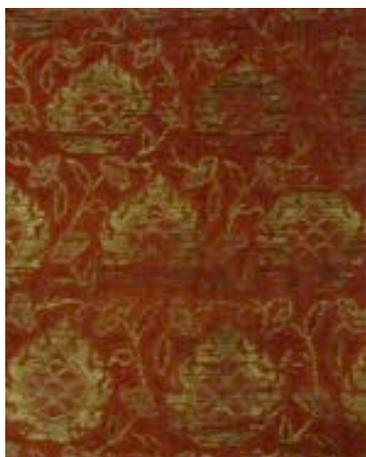


Figure 169. Flaming Lotus.



Figure 170. Mitre, 'Flaming Lotus.'

The Boucicaut brothers were masters of numerous manuscripts for the French King and probably had access to his belongings, in order to depict the commissions as accurately as possible. A similar costume can be found in '*Les Très Riches Heures du duc de Berry*', figure 171, which depicts the French King Charles V's (r. 1338-1380) brother Duc de Berry's blue robe with a gold design of a similarly structured pattern to figure 168, however, with adaptations to the main motif. The inclusion of Chinese-inspired designs was probably the result of the circulation of gold textiles, which entered the collection of Duc de Berry. The Duc de Berry was an admirer Marco Polo and was impressed by the foreign cultures he encountered, particularly the court of Kubilai Khan. According to his inventory Duc de Berry owned three copies of *Wonders of the World*³⁴⁹, which

³⁴⁸ Rosati. "'De Opere Curioso Minuto,'"182.

³⁴⁹ Guiffrey, Jules, tr., *Inventaires de Jean duc de Berry (1401-1416)*, (Paris: E. Leroux, 1894-96), 'Inventaire 'A'', no. 982, 1000 and 1005.

functioned as the design for the five hangings listed in his inventory³⁵⁰. The appropriation of Marco Polo's manuscript illustrations not only suggests an interest in the foreign and the exotic, but also in the worldly power that was associated to the Mongol Empire. Another Chinese-related object owned by the Duc was the Fonthill Vase: a diplomatic gift from a Mongol ruler to the Pope Benedict XII in 1338, which, before it entered Duc de Berry's inventory, had been in the hands of Louis the Great, king of Hungary (r. 1342-82)³⁵¹.



Figure 171. 'Les Très Riches Heures du duc de Berry', circa 1416.



Figure 172. Belle Heures du Duc de Berry, ca. 1420.

The warriors depicted in 'Les Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry', figure 171, are wearing red robes with golden roundels, bearing a resemblance to the familiar roundel motif pattern seen in Mongol visual culture, and were probably modelled after gold fabrics from the Duc's wardrobe. The depiction of the roundel motif in the painting may have had a dual meaning: on the one hand, the roundel motif may have represented a certain affiliation to the Holy Crusades, which had functioned as a channel for the influx of gold patterns into Europe; on the other hand, it may have pointed to an affiliation to the purpose and cause of the Crusades. Or, it may have been a depiction of an exotic textile.

³⁵⁰ Guiffrey, Jules, tr., *Inventaires: Histoire du grant Caen*, 'Inventaire de 1416', Tapis et Tapisseries, no. 7 – 12,

³⁵¹ The object, now in the collection of the National Museum of Ireland, Dublin, is illustrated in McCausland, Shane. 2014. *The Mongol Century, visual cultures of Yuan China, 1271-1368*. London: Reaktion Books, 184.

Golden roundels on red silk appear in a number of European church paintings, for example figures 174 - 46; material evidence specifically as 'tartaire' have also survived³⁵², figures 173 and 177.

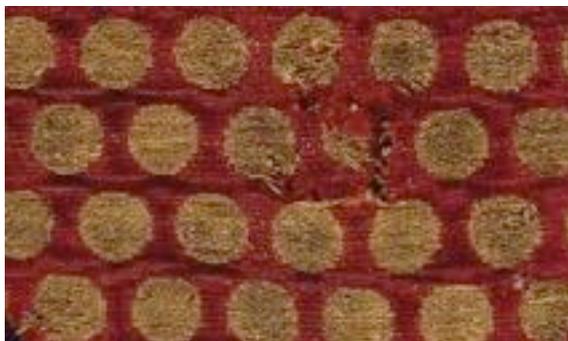


Figure 173. Silk and gold threads, European church find.



Figure 174. Red-gold robes worn by holy individuals.



Figure 175. Robe red-gold.



Figure 176. Backdrop Red-gold.



Figure 177. Red-gold robe, Europe 14th century.

The inventories of Duc de Berry include several entries referring to objects from the inventories of Charles IV, V, VI and VII, illustrating how objects from different time periods were circulated among the royal elite. As we have seen above, objects from church or royal inventories also functioned as sources of inspiration for designs, paintings and manuscripts, used by artists who had access to the surroundings of Duc de Berry in order to execute commissioned work, such as *Belles Heures du Duc de Berry*

³⁵² Gold discs woven in silk and gold threads, velvet, dated to the 14th century, The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. See Anne Wardwell, "Panni Tartarici," p.111 for a discussion of red velvet with gold discs, also illustrated in appendix II, no.51; textiles with this pattern were produced in the late 13th and 14th centuries as they are described in the 1295 inventory of Boniface VIII, the 1311 inventory of Clement V, and the inventory record in 1341 of the church of San Francesco in Assisi. This pattern is also mentioned in Canterbury Cathedral, in 1354, see Dugdale, *The history of Saint Paul's Cathedral*, entry 109: "Casula rubea de Tharse, cum besanciis aureis..." – "Red chasuble of 'Tharse'(cloth), with gold coins(?)..." One of the textiles described in the Papal inventory of 1295 was a red velvet with gold discs: "Item, unum pannum tartaricum pilosum rubeum ad madelias aureas" – 'A piece of red Tartar velvet with gold discs'. In the *Saint Louis of Toulouse* painting by Simone Martini, dated 1319, in the Museo di Capodimonte in Naples, Saint Louis' cope is ornamented with a pattern of discs.

depicting an angel in white silk and gold roundels, figure 172. The different types of cultural cross-dressing, as well as prestigious imitations represented by the figures in the paintings commissioned by the Duc de Berry, also indicate a certain degree of self-representation in a worldly context.

Exchanges – Religion, Trade and Diplomacy

Apart from the Mongols' own shamanistic beliefs, there were several other religious followers present at the Mongol courts, including Daoists, Buddhists, Nestorians, Muslims and Latin Christians³⁵³. Under the rule of Mongke Khan, Nestorians enjoyed a privileged position in the cosmopolitan Mongol Empire. Devout believers surrounded Sorghaghtani Beki, a Nestorian Christian who was the mother of both Mongke and Khubilai Khan, with many uncovered Nestorian gravestones in Hangzhou documenting their presence in China³⁵⁴. There were many religions flourishing in the Mongol empire, and the Khans were devout Buddhists. However, prior to Ghazan's conversion to Islam in 1295, the Mongol Empire had several encounters with Christian Europe, particularly with the western region, which continued the diplomatic and trade relations between Christian Europe and the Mongol Empire after 1295. After Buddhism, Christianity was the most important foreign religion in the Chinese Mongol Empire. There was also a high number of Franciscans, who interacted with the European ruling elite, with traders and diplomatic envoys. More than 100 European missionaries, merchants and travellers were active in China³⁵⁵ during the Yuan period, following their predecessors.

Pope Innocent IV sent Friars John of Piano di Carpine and Stephen from Bohemia to the Mongol capital of Karakorum in 1245. This journey may have resulted in the discovery of several Mongol gold textiles in the burial places of the Bohemian royal elite.

The first transaction involving Mongol gold textiles was recorded in Cypress in 1255³⁵⁶. Then, Venetian merchants in the Adriatic port of Zara or in Venice sold the first recorded

³⁵³ Arnold. 1999, 19-20.

³⁵⁴ Igor de Rachewiltz, *Papal Envoys to the Great Khans*, 135.

³⁵⁵ Apart from the Polo family from Venice (1276-1294), Pietro Lucalongo of Genoa (1294-1305), the Franciscan Friars from different Italian cities and from Cologne, Germany(1245-1348) and several more mentioned in Grousset, *The Empire of the Steppes: A History of Central Asia*. (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1970), 313-319, and Reichert, F. *Begegnungen mit China: Di Entdeckung Ostasiens im Mittelalter*. (Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 1992), 86.

³⁵⁶ David Jacoby. "Oriental Silks at the Time of the Mongols," 93-123.

piece of 'tartar' gold textile to the Hungarian court in 1264³⁵⁷. From 1260 onwards, the distribution of silks in Europe increased, and the marketing of Mongol gold textiles as an important product that boosted western demand was in a large part due to pilgrims and crusades. Trade was the principal mode of the distribution of Mongol gold textiles into Europe. Acre was a forum for pilgrims, crusades and merchants and also what seemed to be a marketplace for silk and Mongol gold textiles trade³⁵⁸. It is also likely, however, that the spread of silk and gold textiles into the West occurred when crusaders and pilgrims returned home³⁵⁹. Gold textiles such as "Tartar cloths" appear in Lay inventories in Europe between 1276 and 1278, and again in 1281, in significant numbers³⁶⁰, and they present evidence of their early disperses and uses beyond Italy.

There were several events suggesting a two-way transfer between Yuan China and Europe at the end of the 13th century. In 1289, John of Monte Corvino established a Christian church in Beijing, funded by Pope Nicholas IV, where he baptized 6400 Christians and translated the New Testament into Phagspa³⁶¹. This could explain how script related to phagspa began to appear on gold textiles depicted in Italian church paintings. In 1307, Pope Clement V made John of Monte Corvino archbishop of Beijing, and a delegation from the Franciscan Fra Odorico provided relics for churches in Hangzhou and Quanzhou³⁶². The relics, probably wrapped in precious material, provided new ideas for gifts and tributes, which then returned to the European patrons. These events suggest the possibility of a growing two-way transfer of religious worship and textile consumption. The new demand may have also inspired Chinese workshops to produce certain types of gold textiles for liturgical objects that emerged from European consumers.

³⁵⁷ Three *purpure tartarenses* are recorded in a list of grants made in Hungary by Stephen, the son of King Bela IV and are listed in an undated document by Soranzo, G. (ed.) „Acquisti e debiti de Bela IV re d'Ungheria”, *Aevum* 8 (1934):348-356, see Jacoby. "Silk Economics and Cross-Cultural Artistic Interaction 2004:232, in particular footnote 196-198.

³⁵⁸ *Tartaire* appear in the inventory of Count Eudes of Nevers, who owned twenty-three silk gold textiles during the time he spent in Acra, where he died. See Chazaud, A.M (ed.). „Inventaire et comptes de la succession d'Etudes, comte de Nevers (Acre 1266), „*Mémoires de la Société Nationale des Antiquaires de France* 32(1871): 187, 191, 203, 206.

³⁵⁹ Ibid: as in the case of Count Eudes of Nevers. See also Jacoby. "Silk Economics," 232.

³⁶⁰ Dehaisnes, C. (ed.). *Documents et extraits* 71 and 75.

³⁶¹ Arnold, *Princely Gifts and Papal Treasures*.

³⁶² The evidence of Christian presence is also evident in two funeral markers with Latin inscription and medieval iconography dated to 1340 AD, see illustrations in Arnold, *Princely Gifts and Papal Treasures*, 134, 138, 139, 146 and 147. In the seaport of Quanzhou, where the commercial language was Persian, the resident bishop Andrea of Perugia mentioned in a letter the presence of Italian merchants among the many foreign traders, who were motivated by the low prices of Chinese silk and also exchanged gold, silver and precious stones for "cloth of gold of which they find great quantities for sale here". According to written account dated to 1330s from Archbishop of Sultaniya, John de Cora, see Yule, ed. *Cathay and the Way*, 3:98.

Pax Mongolica provided another important two-way transfer mechanism for Italian merchants. Frequenting the trade routes of the Mediterranean Sea at the important trading towns of Alexandria and Aleppo, the merchant family Polo, Maffeo and Nicolo Polo, travelled to the imperial court of Khubilai Khan in 1260³⁶³. In 1269 the Polos returned with letters from the Khans requesting 100 teachers of science and religion to instruct the faith of Europe. During this period, Mongol diplomatic missions were also present at the western courts, enabling the distribution of Chinese silk and reinforcing various types of two-way exchanges, which occurred in the forms of giving and returning gifts, commodities and letters between the East and the West. For example, a Tartar emissary attended the Council of Lyon in 1274 and another visited the court of Edward I in England, in 1277³⁶⁴. At the Lyon council, an important letter from Abagha outlined the Mongols' co-operation in spreading Christianity and fighting the Muslims, and the baptism of three Mongols, which was a result 'of their good will'³⁶⁵. Between 1287 and 1289, the Ilkhan Argun (r.1284-1291) in the Ilkhanid *khanate* sent a number of embassies to Italy³⁶⁶, which brought large quantities of gold textiles, of which a large number reached the papal court in 1295. Some of these historical events appear in a series of miniature paintings that emerged in the early 1330s, the so-called '*Little Shahnama*', and are also depicted in European missals recording encounters between the Mongols and the Europeans³⁶⁷. The Franciscans distributed the missals in northern Italy, as well as in the regions around Avignon and Cologne, where they were copied in Franciscan monasteries. The painting style of French missals and prayer books stands in contrast to the sumptuous Italian church paintings depicting details of a foreign visual vocabulary derived from the gold textiles. The costumes are presented with simplicity, using primary colours that reserve the representation of gold for the backdrop, for example figures 30 – 34 and 48. These examples demonstrate that a selective style

³⁶³ Mack, *Bazaar to Piazza*, 15.

³⁶⁴ The presence of the Mongol delegation was highly noticed as three individual received a baptism, but it was also the first time that participants from outside Europe were invited; the main aim of the conference was to reconcile political and religious differences not only with the East but also within Europe, in the attempt to create a truly unified front and confront the Muslim threat in the Holy Land. See Moorman, *A History of the Franciscan Order*, 177.

³⁶⁵ Igor de Rachewiltz. *Papal Envoys to the Great Khans*, 153.

³⁶⁶ Magagnato et al. 1983, *Le Stoffe*, 234.

³⁶⁷ For example, *Fra Odorico Leaves for China from the Papal Court*, and *Fra Odarico Arrives in Quanzhou*, ca. 1400 at the Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris, Ms. Fr. 2810, fol. 97r and fol.110v. The leaves are depicted ca.1400 AD based on travel accounts with the painters' imaginations of medieval architecture and western-looking people; however, certain elements of the figures in the costumes are related to Mongol style fashion, especially the hats. Also, 'The Great Khans Feast', the journey of Marco Polo and different themes related to the Mongol Empire which appear in a European version that is parallel to the illustrated tales of Rashid al-Din(1247-1318 AD), *History of the World, Compendium of Chronicles*.

borrowing occurred, which was more suitable to the taste and preference of the viewers.

An ongoing two-way exchange was also evident between Mongol Christians based in Tabriz and Rome during the 1300s, after the conquest of Jerusalem and defeat of Muslim power, as well as a high-level contact between Pope Benedict XII and the Mongol Yuan Emperor Toghon Temon (r.1332-1368 AD). Communities of Italian friars settled in Tabriz³⁶⁸ and Mongol ambassadors visited Italy in 1336, as evidenced by a copy of a *Lotus Sutra* at the Vatican dated from 1346³⁶⁹, with a cover in gold on indigo blue³⁷⁰. The Lotus Sutra, illustrating the life of the Buddha, not only shows that the Christian Mongols continued to practice more than one faith and had a certain degree of tolerance towards different cultures, but also demonstrates that exchanges took place at many levels. The scroll may have entered European collections as a gift, or as an attempt to convert or present Buddhism to Europeans. Offering richly decorated sutra scrolls was customary in the eastern tradition, in a strategic attempt to convert fellow rulers. Similar traditions – which the European Christian envoys brought with them – existed among European dignitaries, such as the illustrated missals and bibles brought to Mongke from King Louis of France³⁷¹.

Religion continued to be an important element in the relationship between China and Europe after Papal power was transferred to Avignon and probably contributed to the spread of gold textiles in France and northern Europe. For example, after John of Monte Corvino's death in Beijing in 1328, emissaries visited the Pope in Avignon requesting a successor. Avignon also received a letter from the Yuan courts in 1353, delivered by Friar John of Marignolli, requesting more Christian preachers³⁷².

³⁶⁸ Petech, L.1962. "*Les Marchands Italiens*," 206.

³⁶⁹ Roxann Prazniak, "Siena on the Silk Roads: Ambrogio Lorenzetti and the mongol Global Century, 1250-1350". *Journal of World History*, 21(2)(2010):185. The Lotus Sutra houses in Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Barberini Or. 148 II.

³⁷⁰ The use of gold or silver script on blue background is thought to originate from the early 4th century Christian book illuminations, and later copies were transmitted to China probably via Nestorian Christian or merchants along the silk routes; the colour purple, sometimes replacing the colour blue, was as codices a luxury item commissioned by wealthy donors. See Pall, Pratapaditya, 1988. *Buddhist Book Illuminations*, New York: Ravi Kumar Publishers and Hacker Art Books, Inc., 237-238.

³⁷¹ Arnold. *Princely Gifts and Papal Treasures*.

³⁷² However, by then the Black Death had spread in both Europe and parts of the Mongol Empire, whose power also gradually declined, Igor de Rachewiltz, *Papal Envoys to the Great Khans*, 197-202.



Figure 178. French Missal, 14th century.

Avignon

Avignon may have served as an entry point for gold textiles and a location where diffusion of material culture and subsequent transfer occurred, with the presence of Italian painters, such as Matteo Giovannetti, who decorated the Papal Palace³⁷³. What appear to be Chinese silks are documented in the inventory lists of the court of Clement V, who moved from Rome to Avignon in 1309, where the papacy was based until 1377. The succeeding court inventories show that the popes kept a considerable stock of gold textiles³⁷⁴. For example, 24 ‘cloths of gold and silk in various colors’, and, 35 ‘gilt cloths with arms of the previous pope’ were left to John XXII, who succeeded Clement V in 1314³⁷⁵. These objects not only alluded to the status of the popes, but they were probably commissioned or received as gifts. The 1342 inventory list made for Clement VI records up to 76 Chinese silks (*panni tartarici*), among which 56 are listed as gold textiles³⁷⁶. One entry mentions the religious consumption of the objects and outlines how the textiles’ ceremonial function was incorporated into liturgical vestments and accessories such as relic wrappers, hangings or draping religious objects³⁷⁷. Other

³⁷³ The representations of Mongol style costumes are also illustrated in the Dome of the Palace of the Pope in Avignon.

³⁷⁴ Hermann Hoberg, *Die Inventare des Päpstlichen Schatzes in Avignon 1347-1376*.

³⁷⁵ Hermann Hoberg, *Die Inventare*; 4, Klemens’ V. 1314-1316: Item 24 panni de auro et syrico de pluribus coloribus; ,Item 35 panni deaurati cum signis domini nostri defuncti’.

³⁷⁶ Ibid, 55, Klemens’ VI. 1342-1343: ,Item 3 pannos de serico Tartaricos dictos de matomat’, Item alium pannum de auro coloris viridis de opere Tartarico borlatum de sindone rubea’.

³⁷⁷ Ibid, 45: ,Item 1 pannum tartaricum deauratum pro facistorio’as it is recorded in a document from 1320 describing a gilt Chinese cloth to be used over a ceremonial chair.

examples of possibly Chinese silk appear in the inventory list of Urban V, made in 1369³⁷⁸.



Figure 179. Book of Hours of Johannette Ravenelle, 14th century, Paris.

Gold textile designs in Northern European Paintings and Manuscripts

From the late 13th century onwards, gold textile designs from the Mongol visual repertoire gradually moved beyond Italian paintings and began to appear in French miniature paintings and textiles, mentioned in northern European church inventories. Figure 49 exemplifies how elements of a shared Mongol design repertoire decorate the back drop of biblical scenes with silk textile hangings rather than clothes worn by saints or dignitaries, as discussed above. The back drop design in red and gold reminds us of a variation of the 'grid pattern' presented in gold textiles, figures 180-182. The design to the right presents a bright cobalt blue and gold grid pattern, bringing to mind a variety of colour representations found in Mongol gold textiles, such as the robe, figure 125 and 127.

³⁷⁸ Hermann Hoberg, *Die Inventare*, 144 and 432.



Figure 180. Birds and clouds in a 'grid' pattern.



Figure 181. Lotus, in a 'grid' pattern.

This composition, which stands in contrast to the Italian Church depictions in its modest use of gold, may be explained by the different church culture of northern Europe. These cultures, which developed at a later period, were influenced by different social and economic factors. More importantly, however, they did not have the same exposure to the oriental material culture and appreciation of foreignness that for decades had ingrained the Italian churches and society. With its proximity to the Middle Eastern countries and position as an active trading partner, Italy had been exposed to foreign objects and ideas since the Roman times, which influenced its perception of silk and gold.

Perception and Consumption of luxury objects

The above discussion suggests that the consumption of luxury goods in Europe can be divided into two modes: the economies of northern Europe had developed at a later period and were thus at an inferior stage compared to their southern neighbours, while the southern Mediterranean countries had been close to civilizations providing objects of precious materials, that had been accumulated and circulated since the opening of direct trade with the Far East. Furthermore, in the northern European kingdoms the preference for luxury 'showy objects', only began to increase during the 12th and 14th centuries, with the spread of Catholicism and the cult of relics. These luxury objects were thus displayed and consumed differently in northern Europe. As demonstrated in visual materials, such as church paintings or miniature paintings and missals, the representation of gold textiles appeared with modesty and was sometimes reserved only for the back drop, hangings, as a supportive object, or worn by royals, figures 165 and 182.



Figure 182. Use of grid pattern for wholly and royal figures.

Chapter Four:

Interpreting Mongol Yuan textiles: Movement, technology and the problem of provenance

In the previous chapters I examined the technical advancement and design innovation of the Mongol gold textiles and demonstrated how the textiles revealed information about style appropriation, adaptation, imitation and the borrowing of symbols, motifs and decorations from different cultures. I have shown how eclectic designs transformed the gold textiles into different types of narrative objects that were circulated within the intercultural space of the Mongol Empire and were linked to various cultural identities and levels of power. The same textiles circulated as gifts and commodities in Europe where they were consumed differently at their different new locations. I will now turn to some of the difficulties associated with interpreting Mongol gold textiles, particularly regarding provenance and classification terminology because the objects as well as the makers and the materials seemed to have circulated continuously. As we have seen earlier, different types of terminologies, as well as various descriptions for their eclectic designs were used for gold textiles and the textiles were transferred. Does this provide an example what might be called 'hybridity'- the intermingling of distinct and un-mixed cultures in other locations? Does hybridity relate to concepts of identity and methods of attribution in relation to Mongol gold textiles, which were made in Yuan China or in Central Asia? Or should gold textiles simply be regarded as made in the Mongol Empire, retaining this identity wherever they travelled?

In order to approach these questions, I will analyse the current terminologies through a case study examining two objects produced in the Mongol Empire during the 13th and 14th centuries. The aim of the case study is to illuminate some of the problems encountered when categorizing Mongol gold textiles. Terms such as 'hybrid', 'ethnicity', and 'authenticity' are commonly used, but are problematic when identifying these textiles. The objective is, furthermore, to demonstrate why such terms should be approached with caution when classifying objects with eclectic content, and that travelled and were re-used. My first example examines these terms in relation to a gold textile found *in situ* in the Mongol Empire. In my second example analyse a gold textile

that was transported beyond the Mongol Empire into Europe, as well as its afterlife therein. In this case study I will demonstrate the agencies of gold textiles as cosmopolitan objects within and beyond the Mongol Empire. I will argue that provenance, in relation to ethnicity, authenticity and geographical location should be assigned to the Mongol Empire rather than site-specific locations or cultures. I will further argue that the term 'hybridity' does not apply to gold textiles within the Mongol Empire but may be a more appropriate term for re-used gold textiles at their new locations beyond the Mongol Empire.

Provenance

Mongol gold textiles began to be discerned in different locations from Eastern China to Western Europe during the 19th and 20th centuries. They became the subject of study but many questions about their provenance still remain unanswered. Various scholars, museums and institutions repeatedly seek to justify attributions pertaining to the gold textiles' origins. Provenance is of interest to authenticate objects for our further understanding of their function, meaning and pattern of consumption. Until now, however, no textiles from this period can be classified with certainty, due to a lack of proper evidence. One of the most compounding issues is that the textiles rarely contain a useful indication of their production and origin, unlike certain types of ceramics and paintings which, because of their seals, reign marks or inscriptions, may be objects assigned to either a place of production or an artist, or have an indication of belonging to a genre. As we have seen, very little about Mongol gold textile production is mentioned in historical records and the authenticity of those records itself can be challenged. Information about designs, colours and pattern creation in relation to loom technology is nearly non-existent.

Movement

Another factor obscuring provenance was the mobility of makers and materials ensured by *Pax Mongolica*. Technical knowledge provided by the Chinese and Central Asian weavers and goldsmiths moved continuously within this inter-cultural space of the Mongol Empire as a result of conquests and large-scale re-location programs with the

aim of building and maintaining Mongol political power during the early period of the Mongol Empire. However, as we have seen earlier, this phenomenon also occurred during the middle and later periods, according to the movements and intentions of the Mongol rulers.

In this process of cultural relocation it is likely that these individuals disseminated elements of their knowledge within their new location, in addition to absorbing new cultural elements. This so-called *hitchhiking* effect, which may have resulted in more than one forms of simultaneous transfer, such as weave, loom and gold threads' technologies, as well as emblematic motifs and designs, suggests that different cultures participated in ongoing movements resulting in various types of transfer. As we have seen earlier, these different cultures be seen as 'travellers' or units that were consciously or unconsciously collecting, disseminating and incorporating ideas, objects and beliefs over time. This prompts us to consider these circulations in the Mongol 'cultural space' or 'cultural zone' rather than assuming the existence of a 'national cultural label' for the weavers, goldsmiths or artisans.

Cultural Appropriation

It is evident that a certain degree of style and content appropriation occurred throughout this period, where the material and tools used for the production of gold textiles - silk, various types of gold threads, and loom technology - could change location along with weavers and goldsmiths. The latter may have gained new knowledge in the intercultural space of the Mongol Empire, subsequently adding to the problematic issue of provenance. We have already seen how the re-use of ideas and specific visual content from one or more cultures, probably with intention, was incorporated into the design of gold textiles during this period. For example, the recurrence of Chinese dragons and phoenixes, the cloud motif and the lotus flower, as well as modified images of scriptures from Central Asian cultures. Appropriation, in the sense of sourcing for material for new cultural expression from various cultures, is therefore visible in most Mongol gold textiles and was the consequence of the circulation of makers and materials.

'Modern' Attributions

There are a number of factors impacting the attribution of gold textiles; not only those related to their visual characteristics, but also those reflecting their own context. The time and place of those who have acquired them can reflect the viewers' biases and background. For example, scholars and museum experts attempting to assign an ethnicity to the weavers of gold textiles be reflecting their own views, echoing the museum's cultural and geographical location, mission statement and visitor affiliation.



Figure 182. Tent panels, end 13th century
Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, Qatar.

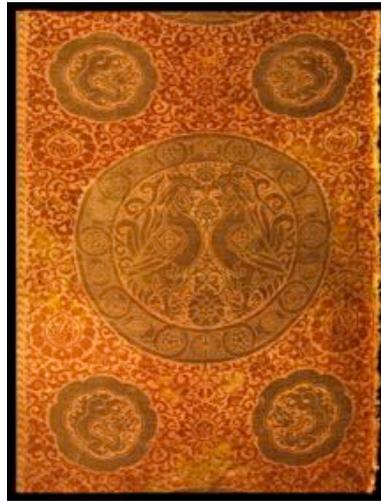


Figure 183. Tent panel, detail of fragment, 13th-14th century,
The David Collection, Copenhagen.

The same object may be assigned different provenances in different museums: for example, the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha attributes the tent panels, figure 2 to Central Asia; the David collection, possessing a different fragment of the same textile, figure 3, previously attributed this exhibit to Central Asia, however, recently had its attribution changed to China or the Eastern Islamic area. Recently established museums with vast and rapidly acquired collections, such as the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha, may rely on attribution material provided at the time of acquisition, as well as their cultural and geographical location, mission statement and visitor affiliation. Smaller and more established institutions or private museums, for example the David Collection in Copenhagen, with a different cultural and geographical location and visitor affiliation, might be concerned with engaging in and articulating new research, nationally and internationally. The broadening of a geographical provenance may also provide affiliations with a wider museum network for exhibitions, participation and research.

Certain changes of provenance for gold textiles, however, occur with the surfacing of new material evidence; however, this is not always the reason for changes.

As seen earlier, combining various methods or disciplines, such as stylistic analysis, historical documentation, technical weave and material analysis, visual and microscopic examination can identify consistencies in time, place and a cultural space. Although numerous scholars in the field have offered propositions and assumptions based on such comprehensive stylistic and technical studies, there are still a number of problematic issues associated with the interpretation of the existing 'body' of Mongol gold textiles, as well as with their categorization within specific geographical and cultural locations, as both location and culture seem to change and fluctuate. With new material gradually surfacing during my research of gold textiles, it seems essential to employ critical classification methods when assigning cultural identities and geographical provenance.

Multicultural knowledge

Before proceeding with the examination of the two textiles, I will provide a brief overview of the process required for producing gold textile. This overview aims to clarify the different processes of movement, involved in the production of gold textiles.

The production environment:

- The silk
- The gold
- The looms
- The designs
- Setting the loom – silk threads and weft gold threads
- Skilled personnel
- Skilled tailors for fashioning objects
- Proper storage
- Organization of workshops within the Mongol Empire

As we have seen, the production of a gold textile, from the preparation of the material to the finished product, was a lengthy, complex and costly process, which presumably required a well-established, organized and coordinated work environment. To accommodate all phases of the production aspects such as seri- and mori-culture, dye-stuffs, the preparation of various gold threads, building, maintaining and setting of draw

looms, the existence of pattern designs and skilled personnel was required. With these facts in mind, let us turn to our first case.

In our first example, figure 182, a collection of large panels woven in silk and gold which are believed to have decorated the interior of a Mongol tent pavilion, we can see the operation of a multicultural shared workforce. The panels were discovered in Tibet and reached the international art market in the 1990s. Each panel measures about 220 cm in warp length and 124 cm in weft width from selvage to selvage, which are formed by loops. The panels are carbon-14 dated to a period between the second half of the 13th century and the first half of the 14th century. The weave delineates a densely synthesized pattern in gold. In this textile we find a rare weave combination of silk threads wrapped with paper gold and silk threads made of flat animal substrate wrapped with gold.



Figure 184. Animal substrate with gold.

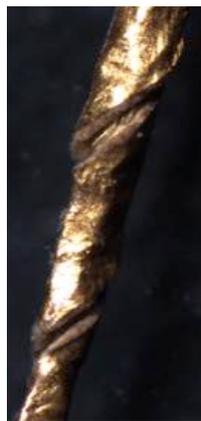


Figure 185. Silk core with paper gold.

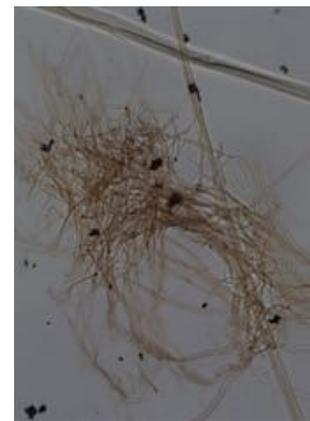


Figure 186.Detail of paper plant fibre with gold mounted on paper.

This combination belongs to a group of gold textiles that are considered to be significant for their refined optical effects, which occur as the light reflects differently in wrapped and flat gold threads, bringing life to the fabric, as we have seen earlier, figure 18-18a. As we have seen above, weaving with paper-based gold threads was associated with China since the 8th century. However, is a technique that had moved and was introduced most likely by Chinese weavers who were relocated during the Tang and the Jin dynasties. Gilded animal substrate thread - which looks similar to paper gold thread under microscopic examination, and thus requires a particular form of analysis to distinguish one from the other - was widely used in Central Asian and Middle Eastern production since the 10th century, as well as for productions for the Byzantium Empire.

The six tent panels, figure 182 and 183, were most likely from the same commission; however, the weaves and decorations indicate minor differences that point to the use of different draw looms, and possibly to the fact that different weavers were working on the same commission. For example, the number of pearl decorations differs from one panel to another, which is probably due to the fact that they were made on different looms. At the selvages, fringes are formed by the loop weft, a phenomenon associated with textiles woven in the eastern part of Central Asia, as pointed out by Anne Wardwell in her comprehensive study of gold textiles identified as 'eastern Islamic silks' based on stylistic and technical studies. More noteworthy, however, is the use of thick wide paper gold strips known from Chinese weaving traditions, at one section of a panel, while the same section in a different panel is woven with narrower gilded animal substrate; these traditions come from Central Asia and the Middle East, as noted by Kjeld von Folsach in his research³⁷⁹. These different combinations and uses of paper gold and gilded animal substrate threads provide information about the weavers' expertise and the organization of the place of production. This information may suggest that some weavers were familiar with the Chinese paper gold technique, while other weavers were more familiar with animal substrate. The location is obscured, but the theories put forward about a joint workforce and the merging of techniques from different cultures are reinforced.

Hybridity?

The visual aspects of the textiles indicate a multi-cultural design incorporating motifs and symbols that are stylistically unique to the different cultures that were absorbed into the Mongol Empire. In the tent panels an example for this can be found in a pattern of different sizes of staggered roundels that leads up to a lobed arch motif possibly indicating an Islamic *saff* - which may be associated with a prayer rug, possibly presenting a section of a Uighur cloud collar that became an immensely important symbol during this period. Next to it we can see large pairs of Central Asian roosters framed by roundel motifs of ducks. Lotuses and Buddhist iconography are flanked by

³⁷⁹ Kjeld von Folsach, "A Set of Silk Panels from the Mongol Period," in *God is beautiful and loves Beauty*. Edited by Bloom and Blair, 219-239.

motifs of the dragon and the phoenix, emblematic to China, arranged in lobed and teardrop roundels, traditions linked to Central Asia; also, a horizontal range of pearls frames the top edges indicating the beginning of a pseudo-kufic decorative inscription. The representation of different types of religious symbolism in the same object also points to a synthesis of design that compounds the issue of provenance but highlights the fluidity and acceptance of cultures and religions contributing to, the flourishing cosmopolitan and multi-cultural environment of the Mongol Empire. Manufactured in a synthesizing fashion, this design presents different elements of the visual language which became associated with Mongol culture, rather than a hybrid style. The different elements that were absorbed into Mongol culture were not hybridized elements in the sense that they originated from unmixed and isolated cultures, but had been part of a design repertoire which was circulated for centuries prior to the Mongol Empire.

The circulation and transfer of design repertoires, based on the assumption that motifs have a single origin and that they retain elements of that origin as they move, can be demonstrated in below example of the so-called pearl motif.

Movement of design repertoire

The dragon in a roundel chasing a flaming pearl was a widely used motif as evidenced by several examples woven with silk and paper gold, as seen earlier, figure 187. The appropriation and repeated inclusion of certain motifs, for example the majestic image of the dragon, here also suggests a universal attraction to certain designs, which may explain the movement of the motifs, and their frequent inclusion in textile pattern across the Empire.



Figure 187. Framed dragons, 13th – 14th century, Gold textiles with paper gold.

The roundel border and the representation of pearls framing motifs can be traced to several cultures and locations; for example, in the Uighur culture of Eastern Central Asia, they appear in *kesi* silk tapestries of the 11th and 12th century. In the Tangut Xia dynasty *Thangkas* (figure 190 and 193), varieties of the motif appear in the Kizil cave dated to the 6 and 7th century, the 7th century (Afrasiyab) wall decoration, and the 8th century Bezeklik Eastern Tarim Basin wall painting depicting Sogdian traders before the iconic motif spreads to China during the Tang dynasty (figures 189, 191 and 192). However, this much-travelled motif can ultimately be traced back to Egypt and the Eastern lands of the Mediterranean, in representations dated to the 1st and 2nd century³⁸⁰ (figure 188), revealing numerous important modes of transfer. Significantly, the pearl roundel was an important marker and was widely used in Sasanian art, becoming closely linked to Sasanian culture and powerful Sogdian merchants who dominated trade along the Silk Road during the 6th – 8th century. The Sogdian merchants adopted the iconic roundel motifs, with animal representations carrying great symbolism and displaying a certain sense of power and majesty. These appeared elaborately onto textile costumes of important rank, as well as on important wall paintings along strategic locations, as seen above, revealing the cross-cultural and diplomatic trade relations that occurred, and underscoring the important and worldly role of the Sogdians at the time. With their mercantile acumen, the Sogdian merchants invested largely in new textile technology and began to produce luxury textiles in Turfan, employing Central Asian and Chinese artists and craftsmen who merged their respective weaving techniques and traditions,

³⁸⁰ One of the earliest roundel motifs found on a garment dates back to the 2nd century AD: a statue of portraying King Sanatruq, Hatra Jessica Rawson, *Chinese Ornament, The Lotus and the dragon*. London: The British Museum Press, 1984.

contributing to new technological inventions³⁸¹. Under the Tang period, the roundel motif became a well-integrated icon appearing widely on sumptuous textiles, adopted for example by a Tibetan minister (figure 192). This highlighted its importance and reflects aspects of visual transfer that continued throughout the Mongol period, presenting various technological design developments.



Figure 188. Egypt culture 1st – 2nd C.



Figure 189. Sassanian, Kizil, mural, 6-7th C .



Figure 190. Uighur culture 11th – 12th C.



Figure 191. Sogdian, Afrasiyab, 7th C.



Figure 192. Tibetan minister 7th C.



Figure 193. Tangut Xia dynasty, 13th C.

Clearly most motifs may have belonged to more than one cultures, which suggests that movement or transfer occurred over time as a result of trade and commodity exchanges, as well as the migration and relocation of weavers and artisans. Taking into account these factors, therefore, renders the use of the term hybridity problematic as people,

³⁸¹ Chinese migrants settled in Turfan during the 5th century and migrating weavers and artisans from Central Asia during the 6th – 7th century due to the changing political scenery as well as Islamic expansion. Angela Sheng, 1999. “Why Ancient Silk Is Still Gold”, 151. Complex textiles, referred to as *jìn* in Chinese historical texts were developed adapting Chinese advanced methods of silk twist woven on Central Asian large looms that allowed more pattern varieties and created new variations of the Sassanian Pearl roundel motifs with single or facing animals. Ibid, 119-121.

objects and cultures are involved in a degree of gradual transfer. These types of transfers could occur in abrupt, intentional or involuntary modes, such as the Mongol conquests, as a continuous process resulting from various types of voluntary migration, or as irregular and unpredictable transfers caused by acts of *force majeure*.

The tent panels therefore represent the use of a visual culture that became related to Mongol culture in general and cannot be considered as hybrid: the various cultural agents that seemingly participated in the creation of the visual representation of Mongol culture cannot be assigned a specific provenance. Approaches to cultural representation, however, identified by stylistic analysis, historical documentation, technical weaves, material analysis, visual designs and the viewers' response may provide indications of a possible provenance without, however, confirming a specific one.

Let us now turn to our second case, which considers the afterlife of a gold textile at its new location in Europe, further complicating the picture.



Figure 194a-b. The 'cope', dragon in roundels amidst clouds, script associated with 'Allah.'

The material

In the Kunstgewerbemuseum Berlin, four fragments of the same fabric, when joined, take the shape of what appears to have been a cope: a liturgical vestment used in a religious context, figures 15 and 16. The four fragments are made from the same lampas

weave and have been dated to the 14th century based on stylistic analysis³⁸². Their geographical provenance, however, has been widely disputed by scholars and museums alike, on the grounds of divergences in analyses of the gold threads carried out in the 1990s. A recent analysis, however, carried out in early 2016, confirms that threads of paper gold, and not to animal substrate, were used³⁸³.

Three of the four fragments have recently emerged from storage previously located in East Berlin and Russia where they were kept during the Cold War. The cope formerly belonged to a church in Schlesien, Poland, and was probably collected by a German art dealer who sold many of its fragments to different museums in Europe in 1900, including these four pieces that now belong to the Kunstgewerbemuseum³⁸⁴.



Hexagonal stamp - Merchants stamps?



A repeated Arabic script of the word 'Allah'



Lining joining the fragments



Triangular stamp



Detail of the lined shape of the cope

Figure 195. Fragments of the cope.

³⁸² This lampas weave is in tabby with a warp structure 4(x2):1. The main warp is silk, with a red a Z-twist. The binding warp is silk and in a lighter red colour, two-over-one. The weft is silk, red, with no visible twist. Paper gold, loose/locker (with gap) Z-twist around a silk, Z-twisted, every 24 cm. Both selvages are preserved and form looped double weft threads. The width of the fabric is approximately 100 cm. Pattern step 1:2, Z-Yarn count: Warp: 44-48 double+11-12(binding warp)/cm = 105 threads/cm. Weft: 24 double = 48 per cm. Pattern rapport: 9:11 cm.

³⁸³ The test was conducted at the National Museum, Denmark.

³⁸⁴ Other fragments exist in Rijksmuseum Amsterdam (Inv.no. N.M. 11566), Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg (Inv.no. 1900.127) and Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe. Von Weissner and other European art dealers who dominated the market during this period collected precious textiles from churches and sold them to western museums and private collections during the early 20th century.

Two of the four fragments include a preserved repeated script of the Arabic word '*Allah*', which normally bears a significant meaning, but in this context appears as a decorative motif. Two of the fragments are triangular-shaped and the other two are rectangular; when joined the dimensions of the whole cope are approximately 110 cm in the weft direction and 207 cm in the warp direction. The four pieces show visible stitches at the sides, which were joined to form the cope. The lining that was used to join the fragments is preserved on two of the fragments. Different black ink stamps appear on the reverse side of two of the fragments, and seem to be similar to a form of Arabic script, one stamp being triangular and the other hexagonal. Stamps are rarely discovered on textiles as noted earlier; however, stamps that are closely related to these ones exist on three other well-known Mongol period textiles preserved in Regensburg, Germany, Burgos, Spain and Bern, Switzerland on a textile attributed to the Liao dynasty. These stamps may be associated with movement - merchant stamps for example - or, they may also be related to the location of production; however, they have not, to this day, been linked to a provenance³⁸⁵.

The Visual representation

An asymmetrical design of lobed roundels with a Chinese dragon chasing a flaming pearl is repeated in 17 staggered rows with the dragons oriented to the right in one row, and those in the next row oriented to the left – a popular design appropriated by the Mongols from the Jin period, as seen above. The roundel motif is set on a background of a tiny cloud motif evenly distributed around the dragon roundels, representing elements from the Mongol cosmological visual repertoire, which were also widely used by the Mongol elite in various decorative arts, as evidenced earlier.

The decoration of the majestic motifs of the dragon amidst clouds intermingling with the Arabic script *Allah* suggests that not only did a design transfer take place in the original textiles, but that there was also a degree of political acceptance and shared culture within the multi-cultural space of the Mongol Empire. This points to an

³⁸⁵ This study is currently ongoing and I hope to relate to possible points of exchange between the Mongol Empire and Europe considering the trading cities in the Levant but also Quanzhou, which had an active Muslim merchant community and where similar Arabic scripts appear on tombstones.

intentional selection of this design for local consumption rather than for export or for a market where the symbols did not carry any meaning for the viewer, and is similar to the tile representations of the Chinese dragon and phoenixes surrounded with Arabic scripts from the Mongol Summer Palace at Takh-i Sulayman.

Hybridity

It is possible that the fabric that was used for this cope reached Europe as part of the huge influx of Pan-Mongol gold textiles from the Mongol Empire in the 13th century. It is also likely that this object was created for a different purpose in its old location and was then modified as a cope, to adapt to its new function in its new location. We could, in this context, consider the cope as a *hybrid* because of its foreign-sources material and ‘technology’ and it’s transformation in a new location. In Europe, Pan-Mongol gold textiles were admired as *objets de luxe* for their attributes of sumptuousness, shiny appearance and the value of silk and gold, in addition to their foreignness that made them exotic and much sought after among the European state and church elite, as we have seen in chapter 3.



Figure 196. Shoe made from gold textile, deer and lotus motifs.

Figure 197. The ‘roof’ of a reliquary made in gold textile.



Figure 198. Chausable gold textile, ‘parrots’.

Figure 199. Cope, gold textiles, dragons’.

Figure 200. Dalmatic, pseudo-scripts.



Figure 201. Relic wrapper, dragon roundels.

Several surviving European chasubles, copes and dalmatics and relic wrappers from this period were constructed with Mongol gold textiles, local fabrics and embroideries transforming the gold textiles and giving them a new identity, figures 145, 149, 150 and 170, as seen in chapter 3.

The provenance of the cope has been widely disputed based on technical and stylistic grounds. As with our first example, the tent panels, we can assume that this cope represents a visual appearance common in the wider Mongol culture and conclude that no provenance can therefore be assigned. However, further investigations into the two stamps may provide additional information that will contribute to determine a more precise provenance.

Conclusion

The root of the problem of cultural identification and provenancing a Mongol gold textile is the recurring movement of maker and material as well as the lack of identification, such as useful stamps or inscriptions, indicating a workshop or a geographical location; the absence of detailed historical documentation of weaving workshops and their production orders as well as the type of designs and motifs that were commissioned further compound the matter of provenance. This may prompt us to revise our expectations regarding the issue of provenance. A 'Made-in-China' or 'Made-in-Central Asia' label and the assigning of a provenance to a maker culture is usually confined to a specific geographical location and a culture within specific boundaries. This type of specificity in the study of Mongol gold textiles is a reflection of relying on certain

weaving methods and gold threads as well as the stylistic features, which are plausible methods. But as we have learned, weavers, goldsmiths, artisans, silks, dyestuffs, gold, paper-gold, leather-gold and looms moved or had the ability to move freely without boundaries within the Mongol Empire. With such mobility of personnel and production assets and with scarce information about textiles related to a specific location of production, it is nearly impossible to use the terminology 'provenance' in relation to the manufacture of Pan-Mongol gold textiles. Perhaps the correct label should not be 'Made in China' or 'Made in Central Asia' but rather 'Made in the Mongol Empire'.

Conclusion

This thesis investigated gold textiles produced in the Mongol Empire that were transferred to Europe in the Medieval period. My aim was to explore transcultural consumption and reception by comparatively investigating their meaning, function and in the Mongol Empire and in Europe during the 13th and 14th centuries. Their visual and material characteristics were examined in order to define and question identification and provenance. The Mongol elite substituted felt for the luxury material of silk and gold for their costumes and furnishings, in order to declare their elevated status during the early period of the Mongol Empire. In this location gold textiles were strategic objects linked to the expansion and maintenance of Mongol rule and power, and were associated with conceptions and representations of identity and rank. The Mongol elite effectively created a textile-conscious society that relied on gold textiles. In my research, I have shown how the rise in output of the production of gold textiles resulted from a vast supply of silk and gold acquired in Yuan China to meet the need for textile currency for the maintenance of the Mongol society and the cultivation of Tibetan Buddhism. I argued that large volumes of gold textiles were consumed by different cultures that became members of the Mongol elite and that the material and its visual features represented monetary and symbolic values. Above all, gold textiles epitomized majesty and political power in the Mongol world and through exchange and transfer, the same values attached to these textiles in Europe. The research carried out here has shown how gold textiles were used to alter or construct identities of individuals and objects in both the Mongol Empire and in Europe. Yet the study of these textiles has revealed a new problem: that identifying sites of production or maker identities (provenance) is nearly impossible as they rarely carry useful inscriptions indicating their place of production or patron, and weavers, goldsmiths, craftsmen and the material silk and gold could move or circulate continuously. The fabric was mobile as were its makers and their techniques. Possibly all aspects of the production process could move and circulate continuously thus contributing to various degrees of transfer. I have shown how various modes of technological and design transfers could impact modes of transfer, such as *hitchhiking*, and how a Mongol visual language developed through various processes of appropriation and dissemination of knowledge in processes of movements. This leads

us to the discussion of the mobility of cultures and how we defined cultures in relations to hybridity, and to the concepts of refashioning of textiles that occurred in Europe.

Their local manufacture and consumption within the Mongol Empire rendered them multicultural rather than hybrid objects, as is traditionally argued. That is, because, as demonstrated here, gold textiles did not reflect the concept of 'pure' cultures. People, objects and cultures were circulated continuously and were involved in some degree of gradual transfer, thus were not intermingling with distinct and un-mixed cultures which constitute 'hybridity'. However, I have also demonstrated how, in their new European environments, these gold textiles were regarded as foreign sourced material and 'technology', and explored the transformation that occurred to them in their new locations. Within Europe, gold textiles were consumed in different ways, determined by several socio-economic factors. Proximity and early exposure to the East made southern Europe more adaptive to gold textiles and their eclectic, luxurious features than their northern neighbours. The latter, with their inferior economic position and later development, approached gold textiles with a more modest consumption. Thus, this research significantly contributes to elucidating the way in which gold textiles were consumed, altering or constructing the identities of individuals and objects.

In the time period explored here, gold textiles had different functions in different locations, however. Depending on their various decorations gold textiles could function as salary or traded commodity, or, participate in ceremonial functions, where their main function was to express identity. Their function in religious context served too as a justification of their past conquests.

Certain designs and motifs carried symbolic meanings associated with heraldic imagery, representing superiority and divinity, while other designs functioned as 'categorisers' of subjects linked to the Mongol elite, such as types of animal motifs in different sizes to identify individuals participating in the seasonal hunting expeditions. Certain recurring motifs, such as animals or flowers in different sizes, on monochrome robes, classified subjects participating in the ceremonial functions at the courts. Decorating the shoulders with various types of pseudo-scripts furthermore acted as a 'categoriser', as

did the use of specific narrow bands embellishing the sleeve cuffs and neckline, and highlighting the wide waist of the *bian xian* robe.

In Europe, the primary consumers of gold textiles were found in the circles of the royal and church elite, where the material and visual features of the gold textiles signalled majesty and political power, particularly when associated with religious functions, such as 'the cult of relics', and divinity.

To investigate how the Mongol rulers could establish a growing textile industry to meet the continuous demand for gold textiles continuously I investigated the surge of silk supply and the ways in which a supply network was established in the Mongol Empire. My research showed that the Mongol rulers disseminated the knowledge of silk technology and loom construction to expand silk production in Yuan China. The spread of technological knowledge occurred extensively in rapid modes of forced transfer in Yuan China, and the increased figures of silk production suggest that China was the primary supplier of silk for the production of gold textiles. The evidence of gold textile producing workshops in Yuan China and the periphery boundaries of the Mongol Empire also indicated that there was a well-established network for the circulation of material aimed at the production of gold textiles. The limited information about other gold textile workshop and silk production locations beyond Yuan China obscures the picture of a supply network of silk and gold textiles within the Mongol Empire. This thesis therefore argues, considering the value of silk and gold, as well as the complexity of the weave, as indicated in chapter one and four, that the production of gold textiles occurred in workshops located near the Mongol elite and in the proximity of silk producing regions. Since Yuan China was likely to have been the principal supplier of silk in the Mongol Empire, the main production of gold textiles could, hypothetically, have occurred in Yuan China. However, with the circulation of weavers, goldsmiths, craftsmen, silk and gold, *Pax Mongolica* facilitating the movement of objects and personnel, the production of gold textiles could have occurred at various locations.

Gold textiles were important for the economic, political and cultural survival of the Mongol elite. Their uses as currency and salary for military and government officials, in relation to ceremonial usage at the imperial courts, and tributes to Tibet were

significant. Their uses as gifts and tributes to foreign envoys and diplomatic exchanges, however, linked the gold textiles to a global consumption that made them cosmopolitan objects enabling new types of consumptions. The horizontal and vertical integration of gold textiles in the Mongol society and increasingly in Europe depended on a steady supply of silk and gold.

The material and the decorative features of gold textiles were instrumental for displaying Mongol power. The restrictive uses of those symbols among the ruling elite, mentioned in the *Yuan Shi*, reinforced the political powerbase that the Mongol elite established in Yuan China, as well as in the Mongol Empire, which admired the advanced society of Yuan China. My research on the consumption of costumes demonstrated how the Mongol rulers used Chinese motifs and designs to reinforce their power and affiliation to the superior power base of Yuan China. The robe decorated with the five-clawed dragon across the shoulders, and the sun and the moon, figure 136, is key for our understanding of Mongol majesty and power, and transcultural consumption of gold textiles. The Mongols mimicked the sartorial traditions of the subjugated cultures to express their status as conquerors; there was a conscious inclusion of specific powerful designs and motifs, which signalled majesty, power and affiliation to divinity and that provided the Mongol rulers with a new self-identity and sense of alterity to rule as Sovereigns. Motifs such as heraldic designs, as well as motifs linked to cosmology and divinity - the sun and the moon, the dragon and phoenix, clouds and cloud collars – in addition to Buddhist iconography, were repetitively included as primary motifs alluding to an identity linked to universal power. The appropriation of heraldic motifs not only distinguished the Mongol elite from subjugated individuals but also expressed notions of ‘otherness’ alluding to worldliness and demonstrated a sense of cross-dressing: while the costumes styles remained traditionally nomadic - the cross-over closure, the robes with pleated ‘skirts’, *bian xian*, the oversized outer robes and the particular headdresses – the material silk and the decorations in gold were appropriated to signal power.

The thesis argues that the consumption of robes with different types of shoulder decorations on robes and panels were intentionally created in a different pattern to show a certain degree of power or identity. The location of the pattern, sometimes

woven with two different types of gold threads, indicates the importance of the featured motifs that included different types of pseudo-scripted ornaments or Buddhist motifs. It is tempting to draw parallels to the *Tiraz* tradition, which migrated and spread across Central Asia, notably adopted by certain nomadic cultures. Creating illegible scripts or Buddhist motifs rather than a readable Kufic inscription can be perceived as a submission to Mongol power, as noted in chapter two. The use of more than one gold thread creating a light reflection made the decoration shimmer and sparkle which may have offered some inclination of celestial light relating to religious worship and divinity, as discussed in chapter two. The consumer of these motifs was thus affiliated with a concept of rank and identity that alluded to various degrees of 'otherness' not just 'foreignness'. My research found this area to be understudied, offering many opportunities for future research. Thus we can now see how both materiality and visual designs contributed to the aspects of identity and divinity. To gain a better understanding of my research, I investigated the important relationship between gold and Buddhism.

The reuse of Buddhist imagery highlights the strong affiliation that existed between Tibet and the Mongol elite. To further my research in this area, I investigated the Mongol affiliation with Tibet and the relationship between the large volumes of gold tribute supplies that were directed to Tibet and the Mongol rulers. In Buddhist tradition, the use of gold symbolized the infinite light (Amitàbhà). In addition to the regular tributes of silk, gold textiles represented the luxury version of that tribute, and certain gold textiles were consumed as hangings in the temples. Gold textiles were included in the tribute that went to Tibet, evidenced by the 'Tibet group' discussed in chapter two. Some of the gold textiles contain motifs related to Buddhism and some were woven with 'double gold thread' to highlight certain designs and motifs in the reflection of light. The use of Buddhist motifs in gold textiles unrelated to the 'Tibet group' and their inclusion in the Mongol visual vocabulary across media, notably ceramics, confirms the strong affiliation between the Mongol rulers and Tibet. I have indicated how Buddhist motifs were included in various gold textiles, such as shoulder decorations, and how prayers written in *Phagspa* appeared on the distinct *gugu* headwear. The use of clouds and cloud collar decorations also indicates the use of motifs affiliated with divinity, as shown in chapter two. These motifs, depicted in certain Dunhuang caves, were

associated with the sky gate. Similar motifs of the cloud and cloud collars are found on gold textiles. The examined 'Abu Bakr' gold textile displaying a pattern of clouds arranged in a pattern of 'cloud collar' motifs surrounding a lotus flower belongs to a design category which constitutes another example of a type of gold textile signalling Mongol power. The use of motifs connected with celestial symbolism also alluded to a consumption connected to Buddhism. Gold textiles were intentionally decorated with Buddhist related motifs as part of the wider Mongol visual vocabulary. The inclusion of Buddhist symbolism in numerous gold textiles demonstrates the link between gold textiles, Mongol power and affiliation with Tibet. Above all, the inclusion of specific motifs and designs created representations of 'majesty' and world power.

Gold textiles defined identities among the subjugated members of the Mongol elite. Chapter two has shown how different colours, designs and sizes of specific motifs signalled rank, which corresponded to historical records, and which suggests that certain motifs and ornaments were associated with sumptuary restrictions, for example, the narrow ribbons reserved for the Mongol elite. My research into the different costumes worn by the Mongol elite indicated the existence of different types of robes that were required in large volumes for ceremonial uses. Through my research, I also demonstrated several examples of a consistent use of specific motifs, sizes and colours confirming that a certain 'program' existed in the visual vocabulary for gold textiles. These were used as 'categorizers' and indicated different identities in Mongol society specified by the Mongol rulers. The development of identity through the consumption of gold textiles was thus a two-way mechanism; identities were not only created by the Mongol elite: as the gold textiles travelled and were consumed in their new locations, they contributed to the creation or alteration of individuals as well as their objects. The fact that an inconsistent use also appeared, together with the intermingling of various pattern and dress styles, also demonstrates that different consumption patterns occurred in the Mongol Empire. Some *bian xian* robes, reserved for ceremonial uses, were found having different sized motifs; other *bian xian* robes were embellished with narrow contrasting bands, which were typically reserved for women's robes; non-Mongol style costumes were made from gold textiles decorated with dragons and Buddhist iconography in the Mongol Empire and in Europe. Patterns were used inconsistently on some robes, however, their variegated uses, consciously including

design elements related to Mongol power, show a desire to express notions of ‘foreignness’ and majesty. Nevertheless, inconsistencies in the uses of gold patterns may also be related to a new kind of aesthetics. The continuous movement of maker and material within the Mongol Empire had an impact on the consumption pattern, figure 202. The perception of certain designs was also modified by their surroundings. I therefore argue that a ‘program’ for certain motifs and designs stipulated by the Mongol rulers, existed, however, material evidence shows too that the circulation of gold textiles and the various consumptions at different locations did not follow that program.

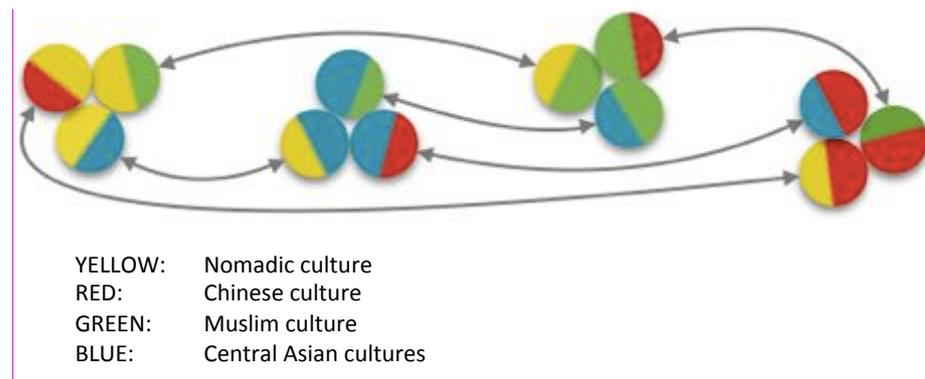


Figure 202. The impact of the circulation of maker and material among the different cultures absorbed into the Mongol Empire resulting in various eclectic designs on gold textile.

The mobility of Mongol material and therefore visual culture was also evidenced in the consumption of panels decorating the interior of tents. The repeated use of the same design was discovered on a robe and demonstrates how motifs and objects were infused with the same visual vocabulary. The large surfaces of the panels exhibited the intentional use of grand-scale motifs that were visible from a distance and could signal power. I discovered that large panels were often decorated with the same type of illegible repetitive inscription, similar to those found on robes, sometimes using two different types of gold threads. Placed at the top of the panel, these inscriptions served as emblematic and celestial decorations as they did as ornaments on robes in the Mongol Empire and in Europe. Chapter three demonstrated how European churches consumed the same type of gold textiles with shimmery effects of two different gold threads. As I showed in chapter one, the use of different types of gold threads not only reveals the intentional focus on a particular ornament, it also indicates aspects of the production cycle which would require different types of material, possibly linked to

different traditions. The research field in respect to different gold threads in gold textiles is not yet sufficiently developed, offering opportunities for further study.

Chapter three demonstrated the affiliation between the European royal and church elite and the Mongol Empire which through diplomatic and trade relations, led to an increase in the consumption of gold textiles. The Mongol Empire represented an important link in terms of geopolitical contexts in Europe involving the royal and church elite. The consumption of gold textiles in Europe was linked to divinity and the royal and church elite. Many gold textiles were distributed via the Catholic churches where they functioned as relics or funerary costumes, or were included in various copes. I have demonstrated how the visual effects of the small-scale motifs, sometimes created with double gold threads, alluded to divinity and that gold textiles were particularly important functioning as communicative vehicles related to ecclesiastical uses in church robes. I also argued that the reception of certain motifs alluded to foreignness and exoticism. Similarly to the Mongol elite, the European consumers of gold textiles engaged in cross-dressing which was defined here as enhancing one's position through the dress. The wearer, intentionally appropriating elements of a superior material, the Mongol gold textiles, was not only distinguished from other subjects, but also showed an affiliation to a worldly power. Above all, gold textiles gestured a connection to divinity, in Europe as well as in the Mongol Empire.

My research showed that the consumption and reception of gold textiles in Northern Europe was different from that in Southern Europe. Depictions of gold textiles in church paintings were scarce and mostly appeared in manuscript paintings as backdrops of tiny patterns motifs. The Berlin cope discussed in chapter 3 is, however, one example of adaptive consumption, with the relic wrapper, linked to Notre Dame Paris, demonstrating a different form of consumption. Both objects are examples of how gold textiles were retrofitted and consumed to alter or construct an identity for an individual or an object in Europe, thus making them into hybrid objects, contrary to the gold textiles in the Mongol Empire. Mongol gold textiles, however, can also be classified as cosmopolitan objects, due to the way in which they moved across cultures and were consumed and refashioned into various uses. As I have demonstrated throughout this thesis, however, it is nearly impossible to assign an attribution to gold textiles, as they

are rarely marked with useful inscriptions revealing their place of manufacture or their patron

At this point, it is useful to turn to Haj Yazdiha, who suggests that all cultures are, at a certain level, part of a continuous movement of an infrequent mode or process. Culture may in fact be defined as a 'traveller' or a unit collecting and incorporating objects and beliefs over time. We may, therefore, reconsider aspects of the authenticity of a 'national culture' in our discussion of provenance and hybridity, both depending on a 'pure' culture. As this thesis has demonstrated, weavers, goldsmiths, craftsmen, silk and gold moved continuously, as did their predecessors. Therefore, assigning the Mongol gold textiles provenance or characterizing them as 'hybrid' may be misleading.

From this thesis, we have gained a better understanding of the materials, techniques, designs, meanings and reception of Mongol gold textiles in two locations. We also have more knowledge about consumption patterns in both locations as well as the role of these textiles in identity formation and representation. From a critical perspective, these textiles enabled us to explore the concepts of hybridity and transculture, revealing that as the gold textiles were cosmopolitan objects in the Mongol Empire they were transformed into objects in their new locations in Europe where they were considered hybrid objects. The textiles were agents of transfer and identity, and can now be recognized as such. A very useful follow on from this research would be to explore the various types of gold threads, as this is an area that is under researched but this thesis has now provided the tools for a certain consumption pattern using more than one gold thread. Investigating a wider range of gold threads could provide further knowledge not only about their productions, materiality and sources but also about how and when they were used within the concepts of rank and identity. Linked to this is the various representations of shoulder decorations, sometimes using more than one gold thread. More knowledge in this field would provide us a better understanding of the different cultures that intermingled during the cosmopolitan ear of the Mongol Empire, as well a better understanding of the scripts in context of power and identity. Research into ink inscriptions and stamps on gold textiles, in particular robes, is furthermore not yet sufficiently developed offering opportunities for further study.

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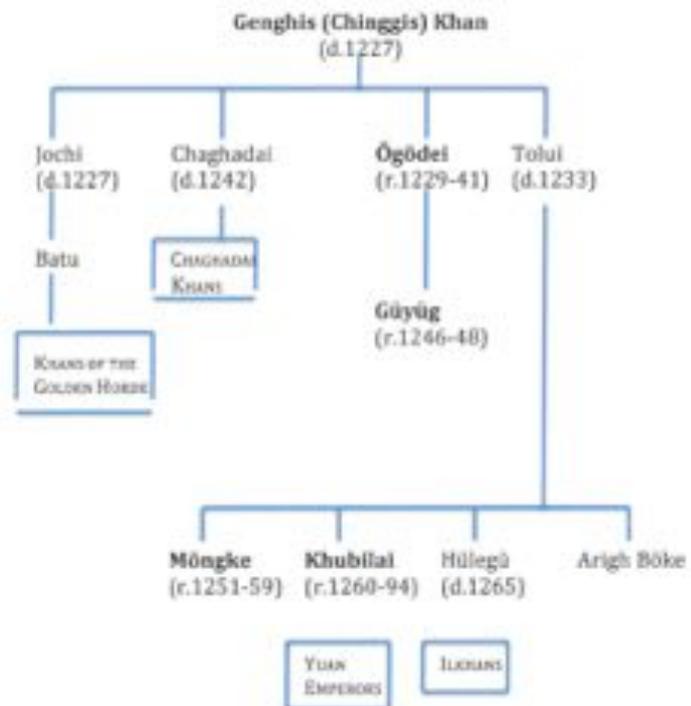
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Appendix 1.

The Mongol Khans

[Great Khans shown in bold]



Appendix 2.

TERMINOLOGY AND SOURCES

DEFINING SILK AND GOLD TEXTILES IN THE MONGOL EMPIRE AND IN EUROPE

Pegolotti's silk categories, 14th century

CATTUA or CATTIVA	Silk from Cathay / China
TURCI	Silk from Turkey
PISCIACCHERI	(?)
GHELLA	Silk from Ghilan
GUARDABANCO	(?)
TALIVA OR TALINA	Silk from Azerbaijan
LEGGI DEL GOLFO/ GOLLO D'ERMINIA	South of the Caspian

Terminology the Mongol Empire

	Culture	Definition
<i>Nasidut</i>	Mongol	Gold textiles
<i>Nashishi/na-che-che</i>	Yuan China	Gold textiles
<i>Nasij or nakh</i>	Persia	Gold textiles
	Central Asia	Gold textiles

Terminology Europe

	Culture	Definition
<i>Cammocca or Camucca di Seta</i>	Italy	Silk cloth, damasked, or brocaded with gold, tabby or satin weaves
<i>(Camaca)</i> <i>Camocas</i> China	France	Gold twill ornaments from

Terminology Europe

	Culture	Definition
<i>Camocas d'outremer</i> or beyond	France	Gold textiles produced Europe (China or Persia)
<i>Camocas d'oultre-mer</i>	Italy	Gold textiles produced beyond Europe (China or Persia)
<i>Camoca</i>	Italy	Produced in Tabriz, Herat and Nishapur
<i>Kamkha</i>	Italy	Linked to <i>Camoca</i> , produced in Damascus
<i>Panini tartartici</i>	Italy	A general term for gold textiles from the Mongol Empire
<i>Panni tartarico/</i>	Italy	Gold textiles, inventoried at St Peter's Rome treasury of Pope Boniface VIII 1303
<i>Panni tartarici</i>	Italy	Gold textiles, inventoried at Perugia's treasury of Pope Benedict XI
<i>Panno Tarsico</i> <i>Pannus Tartaricus</i>	Italy Italy	Gold textiles, inventoried at the Popes' treasuries in Avignon of Pope Clemens V, Johann XXII and Clemens VI
<i>Tartaricus</i>	Europeans	A general term for gold textiles from the Mongo Empire
<i>Tarse / Tharse</i>	Italy	Silk and gold textiles linked to the Uighur culture
<i>Tartarino</i>	Italy	Gold textiles: tabby, plain or striped silk, or twill

Terminology Europe

	Culture	Definition
		brocaded gold pattern
<i>Tartaires</i>	France	Gold textiles: tabby, plain or striped silk, or twill brocaded gold pattern
<i>Tartani or Tartaryns</i>	Italy	Precious stuffs, gold textiles related to shot silk and China

Appendix 3.

GOLD TEXTILES in the Mongol Empire Colours, Designs and Dimensions

Colours

R	RED
B	BLUE
G	GREEN
W	WHITE
B	BROWN – this colour was popular during the Mongol period however, many gold textiles appearing to be shades of brown may originally have been woven in shades of colour red which fade into brownish hues with degradation of various types of metallics, especially with high content of silver. The majority of the brown gold textiles examined are still subject to closer examination for colour origins (red or brown).

Gold Threads

Paper -
Leather -
Animal substrate

Figure	Object	Dimensions	Colour	Gold tread	Gold Decoration
3a-b	Robe	H: 145; W:202	R	Paper	Dragons, tiny flowers
7	Panel	H: 66; W: 41	RED	Animal subst.	Tiny Clouds, Script
8a-b	Panel	H: 228; W: 63	RED	Paper-Ani.Sub.	Dragon Roundels, lotus
9	Panel	N/A	RED	N/A	Cloud Collar, phoenixes
10	Robe	H: 130; W:195	GREEN	Animal Sub.	Dogs, Roundels, script
11	Robe	H: 145; W:202	R	Paper, leather	Dragons, tiny flowers
12	Robe	H: 149; W:191	R	Paper, leather	Large lotus vines
18a, b	Robe	H: 146; W:205	RED	Paper, Ani.sub.	Animal, roundel, script
19	Panel	H: 75; W: 51	RED	Paper	Makara, Phoenix, Flower
21 a-b	Panels	H: 46; W: 36	RED	Paper	Dragon, Roundel, Cloud
		H: 176; W: 78	RED	Paper	Dragon, Roundel, Cloud
		H: 64; W: 44	RED	Paper	Dragon, Roundel, cloud
		H: 78; W: 118	RED	Paper	Dragon, Roundel, cloud
25a	Panel	H:109; W: 170	RED	Paper	Felines and Eagles
25b	see Figure 11				

25c	Panel	H: 14; W: 15	WHITE	Ani. Sub.	Tiny Leaves
25d	Panel	H: 20; W: 20	BLUE	Paper	Dragons in Roundels
31a-d	Mandala	H: 209; W: 245	RGBWB	Paper	Vajrabhairava ***
36a-c	see Figure 11				
37	Robe	H: 119; W: 224	BROWN	N/A	Birds, shoulders: Lotus, clouds
38	Robe	H: 140; W: 198	BROWN	N/A	'Blazon' Roundel, Script
39	Robe	H: 132; W: 205	B B**	Paper(?)	Khilin, Roundel, Script
40	see Figure 11				
41	see Figure 12				
42	Robe	N/A	RED	N/A	Lobed roundels
45	see Figure 39				
46	see Figure 38				
47	see Figure 10				
48	see Figure 39				
50	Cloud c.	H: 43; W: 70	RED	Paper	Dragon, Phoenix, Roundels
52	Robe	H: 130; W: 225	RED	N/A	Roundel, vines, script
53	Robe	H: 135; W: 207	RED	N/A	Faded design, rabbit
54	Panel	H: 137; W: 76	RGBWB	N/A	Lotus, Phoenix, Tiny Flowers
55	see Figure 11				
56	see Figure 12				
57a-b	Robe	H: 147; W: 208	R B**	N/A	Deer, Roundel, Lotus
58	Robe	H: 146; W: 83	RED	N/A	Roundel, lotus, script
59	see Figure 1				
60	Robe	N/A	BROWN	N/A	Deer, roundel, fur, script
61	Robe	N/A	RED	N/A	Faded design, Script
62	Robe	H: 140; W: 225	RED	N/A	Flowers, Roundels, <i>kesi</i> , Script
63	Robe	H: 142; W: 207	RED	N/A	Rows of Animals, Script
73	Headw.	H: 91; W: 28	RED	N/A	Large Clouds, Roundel
75	Headw.	H: 52; W: 31	RED	N/A	Lotus, Roundels, Clouds
76	Headw.	H: 26; W: 17	RED	N/A	'Lotus' Pearl decoration
78	Headw.	H: 35; W: 46	BROWN	N/A	7 Patterns, Phoenix, Clouds
79	Headw.	H: 38; W: 41	GREEN	N/A	Tiny Roundels, Flower
80	Bag	H: 25; W: 25	R B	N/A	Tiny Leaves, Embroidery
81	Bag	H: 25; W: 25	R B	N/A	Tiny Leaves, Deer, Embroidery
82	Panels (various small)				
83a-c	Pouch	H: 22; W: 6	BW	N/A	Tiny Leaves, Gold Stamps
84	Saddle	H: N/A; W: N/A	RED	N/A	Lobed Roundels, <i>kesi</i>
85	Panel	H: 82; W: 56	BROWN	LEATHER	Griffins, Roundels
86	Panel	H: 124; W: 49	RED	PAPER	Lions and Griffins
87	see Figure 25a				
88a	see figure 8a				
88b	Panels	H: 228; W: 126	RED	Paper-Ani.Sub.	Identical to figure 8a
89	Panel	H: 31; W: 21	BLUE	Paper	Phoenix, Shoe, Cloud
90	Panel	H: 58; W: 31	RGBWB	N/A	Dragon, Clouds
91	Skirt	H: 90; W: 340	WHITE	N/A	Buddhist auspicious Symbols
92	panel	H: 146; W: 56	RED	Paper	Tibetan Buddhist Mantra
93a-b	panel	H: 56; W: 79	RED	PAPER	Buddhist Iconography
94	Panel	H: N/A; W: N/A	RED	N/A	Section cloud collar
95	Robe	H: 129; W: 196	BLUE	N/A	**** Figures, Animals, <i>kesi</i>
96	see Figure 78				
97	Panel	H: 17; W: 14	RED	Paper	Phoenix in Cloud Grids
99	Panel	H: 56; W: 28	RGBWB	N/A	<i>Kesi</i> Cloud Collar Section
100	Panel	H: 45; W: 26	RGBWB	N/A	<i>Kesi</i> Cloud Collar Section
101	Panel	H: 59; W: 31	RGBWB	N/A	<i>Kesi</i> Cloud Collar Section

103	Robe	H: 135; W: 197	RED	N/A	Cloud Collar, Shoulders
104	Panel	H: 32; W: 51	BLUE	Paper	Dragon, Roundel, cloud
106	Headw.	H: 52; W: 37	RED	N/A	Falcon, Cloud, Lotus
107	Panel	H: 57; W: 18	RED	Paper	Falcon, Dragon, Lotus
108	Robe	H: 135; W: 205	RB	Paper	Falcon, Dragon, Cloud
110	see Figure 12				
112	Robe	H: 123; W: 202	BROWN	N/A	Roundels, Deer, Script
113	see Figure 62				
114	see Figure 46				
115	see Figure 108				
116	see Figure 10				
117	Robe	H: 145; W:201	BROWN	N/A	Flowers, Buddhist Wheel
118	Robe	H: 144; W:203	BROWN	N/A	Phoenix, Dogs
119	see Figure 18				
124	Robe	H: 58; W: 90	BR	Leather	Falcons, Script
125	Robe	H: 142; W: 197	BLUE	N/A	Falcon, Star-Cross, Script
126	see Figure 95				
127	see Figure 125				
133	Robe	N/A	RB**	N/A	Vines, Roundels
134	see Figure 39				
135	Panel	H: 61; W: 54	GREEN	Paper	Parrots, Roundels
136	Robe	H: N/A; W: N/A	RED	N/A	Dragon, Sun, Moon, Rabbit
137	Panel	H: N/A; W: N/A	RED	N/A	Dragons, Phoenixes
138	Panel	H: N/A; W:N/A	RED	N/A	Lotus-Peony Flowers
139	Panel	H: 21; W: 7	RED		Paper Dragons
140	Panel	H: N/A; W: N/A	RED	N/A	Dragon, Lotus Roundels
141	see Figure 25d				
142a, b	Robe	H: 165; W:138	RED	N/A	Clouds
144a, b	Panel	H: N/A; W: N/A	BLUE	Paper	Flaming Lotus Motif
145a, b	Robe	H: 130; W: 155	RED	Leather	Parrots or Falcons
146	Headwear	H: 36; W: 36	RED	N/A	Parrots
147a, b	Panel	H: N/A; W: N/A	RED	Leather	Parrots
148a-c	Dalmatic	H: 105; W: 70	RGW	Leather	Bird, Lion, Flower, Horse shoe
149	Dalmatic	H: 143; W: 168	BW	Leather	Tiny Leaves, Stylized Lotus
150	Cope	H: 157; W: 277	RED	Ani. Sub.(?)	Tiny Leaves
151	Shoe	H: N/A; W: N/A	RED	Leather	Flaming Lotus, Tiny Leaves
152	Shoe	H: N/A; W: N/A	GREEN	Leather	Flaming Lotus, Tiny Leaves
155	Panel	H: 23; W: 17	RED	Paper	Tiny Leaves
156	Panel	H: 16; W: 10	RED	Paper	Roundel, Floating Clouds
157	Panel	H: 19; W: 22	GREEN	Paper	Tiny Leaves
158	Panel	H 40; W: 30	BLUE	Leather	'Shou' scrip in cloud roundel
159	Panel	H: 57; W: 41	BLUE	Leather	Pseudo-Chinese, Lotus, Vines
160	see Figure 21				
166	Panel	H: 54; W: 35	BLUE	Leather	Flaming Lotus, Script
168	Panel	H: N/A; W: N/A	BLUE	Paper	Flaming Lotus, Vines
169	Panel	H: 18; W: 28	RED	Paper	Flaming Lotus
170	Mitre	H: 28; W: 29	GREEN	N/A	Flaming Lotus
173	Panel	H: N/A; W: N/A	RED	N/A	Golden Roundels
177	Cope	H: N/A; W: N/A	RED	N/A	Tiny Golden Roundel
180	see Figure 97				
181	Panel	H: 113; W; 32	RED	Animal Sub.	Rosettes in Grid, Script
182	see Figure 88b				
183	see Figure 8a, b				
184	see Figure 25c				

187	see Figures 8, 21, 25, 501, 104			
194a, b	see Figures 160a-d			
195	see Figures 160a-d			
196	see Figure 151			
197	Panel H: N/A; W: N/A		N/A	Flaming Lotus, Clouds
198	see Figure 145			
199	Chasuble H: N/A; W: N/A		Leather	Dragon in Profile
200	Dalmatic H: 124; W: 134		N/A	Lotus motifs, Scripts
201	see Figure 139			

** Evidence of blue lining

*** Yuan Emperors Wenzong, Mingzong and their respective wives Budashiri and Babusha.

**** This robe probably belongs to pre-Mongol period and may have been recycled and retrofitted with a *kesi* tapestry along edges and at upper arms during the Mongol period.

Appendix 4.

Glossary and Terms

This glossary provides an overview of the most important weaving techniques and steps related to the production of silk and gold textiles during the period leading up to and during the Mongol period in China and Central Asia. The definitions and terms are based on consultation of the following works: Centre International d'Étude des Textile (C.I.E.T.A.)³⁸⁶, in Wardwell's "*Glossary of Weaving Terms*" and "*Glossary of Embroidery Stitches*"³⁸⁷, as well as the explanations of Dieter Kuhn and Zhao Feng in *Chinese Silks*³⁸⁸, and "A few Characteristic weaving techniques used in *Woven Treasures*"³⁸⁹. The work from Hoke has also been examined³⁹⁰.

Bolt of fabric

A measurement for plain-woven silks, which was used for quantifying taxes, tributes or gifts. During the Tang dynasty (618-907) one *pi* equalled four *zhang* of silk fabric. During the Northern and Southern Dynasties one *zhang* equalled 1 meter. However, on average, a bolt of silk was 56 cm wide and 12 meters long.

Bokhta or Gugu

Woman's headdress used by married women of the Mongol elite.

Buddhist symbols

The Eight Buddhist Emblems are: the conch, an emblem of the voice preaching the Buddhist doctrine; the wheel, symbolizing the eternal unchanging laws of the doctrine; the umbrella, reflecting notions of expanding and contracting; the canopy, which stands for extensive coverage; the lotus, a symbol of purity; the vase reflecting completeness (vase non-leaking); the fish symbolizing energy and strength; and the endless knot, symbolizing continuous quality.

Brocade

A textile woven with discontinued supplementary (pattern) wefts.

Carbon-14 Dating

³⁸⁶ CIETA, ed., *Vocabulary of Technical Terms: Fabrics* (Lyon, 1964).

³⁸⁷ Watt and Wardwell, *When Silk was Gold: Central Asian and Chinese Textiles* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1997), 213-216

³⁸⁸ Dieter Kuhn, *Chinese Silks* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 521-529

³⁸⁹ "Islamic textiles," in Folsach, *Woven Treasures – textiles from the World of Islam* (Copenhagen: The David Collection, 1993), 65-93

³⁹⁰ E. Petrascheck-Heim. 1977. "Microprobe Analysis of Gilded Silver Threads from Medieval Textiles." *Studies in Conservation*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (May), 49-62.

A technique for determining the age of organic materials, such as silks, based on their content of radioisotope ^{14}C acquired from the atmosphere when they formed part of a living plant. The ^{14}C decays to the nitrogen isotope ^{14}N with a half-life of 5730 years. Measurement of the amount of radioactive carbon remaining in the material thus gives an estimate of its age³⁹¹. This method is sometimes used to identify the period of production of gold textiles that were typically woven without any indications of place or production and where doubts are cast concerning the originality of the materials. Carbon-14 method defines a broad time range spanning between 50 and 200 years where the middle dates are insufficiently reliable. Literary sources, recorded historical events and burial time further assist narrowing provenance; scholars in the field seem to agree on categorizing textiles in accordance with a combination of these methods while bearing in mind the relocation of artists and craftsmen East and West during the first half of the Yuan period.

Cloud Collar

The cloud collar began to appear on Mongol costumes during the Yuan period, notably on *kesi* robes as shoulder decorations. Depicted cloud collars on costumes can be found in Persian miniature paintings. The motif of the shaped collar, also referred to as *ruyi* appeared frequently on Yuan period porcelain.

The cloud collar, a four pointed pattern that was adapted to form a collar for decorating the upper part of a robe, also appeared on ceramics and metal work during the Mongol period. The motifs evolved as a four leaf pattern on bronze vessels during the Chou dynasty (4th-3rd Century BC) and became a fully integrated design on bronze mirrors during the Han dynasty (1st century AD). The cloud collar can be seen in a hand scroll dated to the Tang period decorating a robe and was also worn by nobles of the Seljuq Turks in the 11 and 12th century³⁹². It is mentioned in historic records of the Jin dynasty in relation to an imperial robe decoration depicting the sun and the moon, associating the motif with cosmic symbolism. It was used by the Jin (Tartars in Northern China) in the 12th and 13th century and symbolised the emperor 'clothed in the universe'³⁹³. The cloud collar has been related to the cosmic mandala diagrams with the centre being the 'Sky Gate' and the four directions of the motifs representing the whole universe. During the Mongol period it became an integral symbol decorating robes. This is evidenced in numerous 13th and 14th century Persian miniature paintings. The custom was widespread among the northern territories and in Central Asia evidenced by Uigurs figures depicted on murals in Turfan wearing costumes embellished with this motif. Another example of the spread of this practice can be found in a relief in Daghestan Russia of a nobleman wearing a costume with a cloud collar.

Damask

³⁹¹ <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/radiocarbon+dating>

³⁹² Schuyler Camman, 'The Symbolism of the Cloud Collar Motif', *The Art Bulletin*, Vol.33, No. 1(Mar., 1951), pp. 1-9.

³⁹³ Schuyler Camman, 'Mongol Costume – Historical and recent', *Aspects of Altaic Civilization. Proceedings of the Fifth Meeting, Uralic and Altaic Series*, Vol. 23. Ed.Denis Sinor. (Indiana University Press, 1963),165-166.

Damask is a figured textile with one warp thread and one weft thread. The pattern is created by using two contrasting weaves, such as twill and satin, or the two faces of satin, which makes the pattern reversible. Damask is normally used for translating the Chinese term *ling* but originates from the city Damascus in Syria. Damask is one of the basic weaving technologies of the Byzantine and Islamic weaving centers of the early medieval age.

Dragon motif

The dragon motif belongs to one of the ancient symbols of Chinese cosmogony and can be traced back to the Zhou dynasty (1100-722 BC); it has become an artistic image since the Han period (206-221 BC). The dragon symbolizes the male principle Yang that was associated with fertile water, clouds, mountain peaks and the sky but later stood for the meaning of might and perfection, and became the symbol for the Emperor's power in the Han dynasty. The motif became related to sumptuary laws when mentioned in a 694 AD decree as one of the textile patterns for senior officials and princes of the Tang imperial household. At this time, it also frequently appears coiled on the back of portable objects such as silver mirrors, with the motif reappearing during the Mongol period and resembling other designs³⁹⁴. Its importance during the Tang period may not only be linked to the dragon in Central Asian decorative motifs, but also to possible remote precedents in the late Roman world where a similar design, that of chasing a sun or a moon³⁹⁵, appeared on late Roman shields. Throughout the 10th century the coiled dragon was present in different decorative arts³⁹⁶ and first appears on textiles in a portrait of Emperor Taizu (r.960-979) and on a costume of a patron of the Western Xia dynasty depicted on a wall painting³⁹⁷. Figuratively the dragon was closely related to mystical and superior heavens of the highest imperial order reserved for the emperor, as the phoenix represented the empress. These two animal motifs were successively adopted from one ruling power to the next and appear in the silk and gold textiles dated to the 14th century Mongol period; the 5-clawed dragon 'chasing-a-flaming-pearl-of-wisdom', was associated with immortality.

During the Mongol period, textiles woven or decorated with five-clawed dragon were reserved for the Emperor and the Court and indicated that the owner was either a noblewoman by birth, or received the robes as an imperial gift.

Drawloom

There were different loom types for weaving *Lampas* gold textiles: a draw loom with figure towers for the drawboy to control the development of the pattern (*da hualou zhiji*), narrow looms for producing decorative weaves for cuffs and edges of costumes,

³⁹⁴ For example, a mirror decorated with a dragon dated to the Mongol period, belong to the David Collection, Copenhagen.

³⁹⁵ Nickel. "The Dragon and the Pearl". *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 26 (1991), pp.139-46.

³⁹⁶ John Vollmer, 2003. *Silks for Thrones and Altears, Chinese Costumes and Textiles from the Liao through the Qing dynasty*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 22-23.

³⁹⁷ Dunhuang, cave 409, Watt and Wardwell, *When Silk was Gold: Central Asian and Chinese Textiles*, (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1997), 116.

and cloud collars (*yunjian lanxiu ji*), looms for weaving gauzes (*luoji*), polychrome *jin* weave looms (*shuji*), and the more basic looms for plain weaves, (*suji*), and looms for basic pattern (*huaji*). These looms were illustrated in several publications with instructions on how to build them, such as the *Book of Agriculture* by Wang Zhen and *Traditions of the Joiners' Craft*, by Xue Jingshi³⁹⁸.

Gauze

Pairs of adjacent warp threads are twisted around each other before the weft is passed through them. The wide gaps between the warps produce a light, airy cloth suitable for summer clothing.

Goldbeater

Goldbeating has been a well-known craft since antiquity to produce gold as drawn, flattened and beaten thread. By using different weights of hammers the goldbeater formed the thinnest type of gold into a *gold leaf*.

Golden Fish

As a pair, this motif signifies happiness, fertility and abundance in Buddhism. In China, this motif represents conjugal and unity and is fidelity and is often used on wedding presents. The symbol of 'fish in pair' was used as a decorative motif on ceramics and bronzes since the Han dynasty.

Gold leaf - To prepare thin gold leaves it is essential to use as pure gold as possible, that is first hammered as flat as the width of a finger nail. The gold is then cut into little square pieces with sides measuring 2-3 cm and is then placed between mulberry leaf paper brushed with a thin vegetable gum and yellow ochre. A pouch is tightly filled with a stack of 175 to 200 pieces of the square gold pieces placed between papers, and then wrapped between two pieces of parchment. For about half an hour the gold is beaten with a 7 kg hammer; then beating continues with a 4 kg hammer for two hours. When the square pieces reach 12 cm in width, each gold square is divided into 4 square pieces, beaten, divided and beaten for another four hours using a 3 kg hammer. When the gold leaves are nearly transparent and have reached the thickness of circa 1/8000 mm the gold leaves are placed inside a book between sheets of silk paper covered with ochre to keep the gold from sticking³⁹⁹. One troy ounce (31.10 grams) of beaten gold produces a sheet of 30 square meters; this amount in the form of gold foil wrapped around a substrate or animal membrane, such as skin or leather, or paper, will produce a thread of 1,6 km; this method is also referred to as 'flat strips'. One troy ounce of beaten gold transformed into a thin wire would be 80 km long.

Gold wrapped strips and thread have been in use since the Tang dynasty in China, and during the Byzantine period in Central Asian cultures.

Gold and a note on Gold Threads

Pure 24 karat consists of 99,7% gold and is extremely malleable. Gold threads are made with 22 karat gold, which contained 91.67% gold, 5% silver, 25% Copper and 1.33% zinc,

³⁹⁸ Zhao Feng, "Silk artistry of the Yuan dynasty," 332.

³⁹⁹ H. Wulff, *The traditional crafts of Persia: their development, technology and influence on Eastern and Eastern Civilizations*, (Cambridge, Mass.M.I.T. Press, 1966), 41.

and with 18 karat gold consists of 75% gold and various combinations of Copper, silver, nickel, zinc, Aluminum, Iron and cadmium. There are also examples of a gold content of below 18% and with greater content of silver, is greater in which case erosion leaves black marks. 'Pure gold' gives a bright and shiny golden colour, and gold with a high content of Copper gives a reddish golden glow. All other alloying metals will tend to whiten the color.

Gilder

The *gilder* mounts the thin gold leaves on either animal gut or skin, a practice widely used in Central Asian textiles, or on paper made from the bark of the Mulberry tree, a Chinese custom⁴⁰⁰.

Gold animal gut/substrate

The methods used for making gilded animal gut or skin are nearly the same; the gut material is a very fine internal membrane such as a core of sheepskin that is covered in gold foil then cut into thin strips that are then woven into the weave – or spun around a silk thread⁴⁰¹. A sticky protein-based moist substance released from the gut enables the strips to easily adhere onto the thread⁴⁰². This method was widespread in Central Asia.

Gold leather

Also known as 'leather gold' the Chinese term (*pijin*) or 'sheepskin gold' (*yangpi jin*) – is a widespread method used in northern China/Mongolia since the Jin and the Liao.

Gold paper

Gilded paper is made from the bark of the mulberry tree which is thin, shiny, very strong and light; one hundred sheets cut into 24 cm x 16.5 cm weigh approximately 45 grams⁴⁰³. The paper is gilded on one side only if it intended to be spun around a silk thread core. To ensure that the gold is well fasten a mixture of raw varnish and sulphur is applied onto the paper; after it has fixed well the leaf is cut into very narrow strips⁴⁰⁴ and then either woven in flat as lamellae or spun as thread around a silk core. Two-sided gilded paper was used to produce flat-woven lamella enabling the gold to be visible on both sides. This method was especially wide spread during the Mongol period⁴⁰⁵.

Gilded paper has been in use in China from the 8th centuries⁴⁰⁶. It was used in textiles by the cultures residing on the northern frontier of China during the Liao period (907-1125 AD) and the Jin dynasty (1115-1234 AD). The use of paper money was introduced in Sichuan in 1120 AD⁴⁰⁷ and may have influenced the use of paper for gilding used for *kesi* or tapestries⁴⁰⁸ during the Song dynasty (960-1279 AD).

Gold Printing

⁴⁰⁰ Leonie von Wilkins, *Die textilen Künste von der Spätantike bis um 1500*, (München, 1991), 86.

⁴⁰¹ Sofus Larsen, *Nordisk Guldspinding og Guldbroderi i den tidlige Middelalder*.(København 1939).

⁴⁰² Wulff, H.1966.

⁴⁰³ According to a 19th century travelling account describing the methods of paper gilding paper in China, see Larsen, pp.97-98.

⁴⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰⁵ For example as illustrated in figure 104.

⁴⁰⁶ Anne Wardwell, "Panni Tartarici". A Tang embroidery with gilded strips of paper wound around a silk core demonstrates the early use of this technique. An example can be found in The Cleveland Museum of Art (CMA 54.121.)

⁴⁰⁷ Karel Otavsky and Anne Wardwell, *Mittelalterliche Textilien II Zwischen Europa und China*. cat.nr.71, 204.

⁴⁰⁸ *Kesi* is the Chinese term for slit tapestry; also known as 'carved silk'. See *Kesi*.

Gold leaf is applied onto a design outlined with a fixative paste mixture; after the paste has dried, the excess gold remaining is removed by wrenching and rubbing the fabric. Gold printing was popular during the Tang period (618-907 AD) evidenced by excavated objects from the Famen Monastery. During the Yuan period techniques of gold printing evolved into advanced gold designs using a substantial amounts of gold that experimented with new methods of gold appliqués⁴⁰⁹.

Gold Painting

Gold paint is created by mixing gold, pounded into a fine power, with a chemical solution and water. This decorative method was widely used during the Song, Liao, Western Xia and Jin dynasties but was under strict sumptuary law prohibiting commoners from wearing it.

Gold Thread

The gold foil was mounted on paper, sheep leather or animal substrate or, occasionally, wrapped directly around silk thread.

Gold in textiles has appeared as drawn, flattened and beaten since 3500 BC in Egypt and has been used throughout the 18th century; it was predominately used during the Byzantine era where the major production was in Syria. However, drawing pure gold into a fine thread was a lengthy, complicated and costly method. If a great deal of gold were to be used in a silk weave, the material would become very heavy. This is the reason why, possibly, the following two methods were applied during the 13th and 14th century⁴¹⁰.

Gugu or Bokhta

Gugu is the term for the headwear as it was known in Chinese, a transliteration of the Mongol word.

Hybridity

Hybridity can be defined as originating from *pure* cultures.

Interculture

The term *interculturality* signals to different cultures under the same system exchanging ideas in mutual cooperation interacting with one another, versus *multiculturality* defined as a system with different cultures under the same social system not necessarily interacting with each other.

Investiture

Investiture is the act of a formal bestowal, a confirmation or a presentation of rank, office, or a possessory or prescriptive right, which, in the context of the Mongol tradition, usually involved the giving of gold textiles, objects such as robes, belts and headgear. See also **Robing**.

⁴⁰⁹ Zhao Feng, "Silk Artistry of the Yuan Dynasty", 351.

⁴¹⁰ See H. Wulff, *The Traditional Crafts of Persia*, 42. Also, Larsen, *Nordisk Guldspinding og Guldbroderi*, 73-74.

Jade

In ancient China, jade became an early luxury commodity because of its rarity, durability and mysterious features and was often used in worship and burial rituals. The nine ornamented silk worms in jade formed as pendant were unearthed in 1981 from Qiangjia village, Fufeng, Shaanxi province, now in the Shaanxi Zhouyuan Museum⁴¹¹.

Jinduanzi

A Chinese terminology for a brocaded silk woven with gilded weft threads in which the weft is either round or woven flat, and where the decorative pattern is composed of Chinese motifs. These silks begin to appear during the Liao dynasty⁴¹².

Jin Weave

This weave stems from the Western Zhou (1046-771 BC) and is a warp-faced polychrome compound tabby weave. To form a pattern, different colours of warp threads were used. Three types of jin exist in Chinese terminology⁴¹³ of which the most important is the *Tejiejing zuzhi*, which refers to the *Lampas* weave.

Kesi

Kesi is the Chinese term for slit tapestry woven of silk, or silk and metal threads, also known as ‘carved silk’. The weft threads do not pass from selvage to selvage but continue where a design is intended. The technique originated from wool tapestry weaving and was adapted for Chinese silk weaving during the Tang period. It was probably introduced by the Uighurs and became popular during the Song period in figurative art. During the Yuan period, the Mongol rulers had their portraits made in *Kesi* and regarded the technique superior to painting⁴¹⁴.

Kesig

Military guardsmen to the Mongol rulers who were allocated gold textiles as salary. *Kesig*, a Mongolian word meaning “turn” (tour de service; service fait à tour de role”. In Yuan sources, it was used to signify the Imperial Guard created by Ghenghis Khan⁴¹⁵.

Kufic

⁴¹¹ Chen Weiji, comp., *History of Textile Technology of Ancient China*, (New York: Science Press, 1992), 53.

⁴¹² Kuhn and Feng, *Chinese Silks*, 523.

⁴¹³ The three types of *Jin* weaves refer to: polychrome compound weave, Shuangceng zuzhi, which is a double-layer weave and *Tejiejing zuzhi*, the *Lampas* weaves, *Ibid*.

⁴¹⁴ According to a quote from Tugh Temür in 1329: ‘To weave an image so that it seems to come alive is not something that can be equaled by the application of colors in a painting. To make an image of clay is even more inferior. Thus human skill can match the wonder of nature’, taken from *Yuan wenlei*, vol.6, p.618. See Watt and Wardwell, *When Silk was Gold*. Figure 31a-d, exemplifies the *Kesi* weave.

⁴¹⁵ *The Military Establishment of the Yuan Dynasty*, Hsiao, Chiching, Harvard University Press, 1978: 34 and 148.

A historical reference, “from the city of Kufa in southern Iraq⁴¹⁶”; however, it is also a term used for a rectangular script typical of early Islamic times and in Mongol gold textiles, and appears in the context of *Pseudo-Kufic* script.

Lion

The lion was related to Buddhism and was a symbol of the Sakyamuni Buddha⁴¹⁷. Indigenous to China the lions were associated with Buddhism and mythical powers and began to appear in Chinese culture during the Tang period.

Lampas Weave

A *lampas* is a figured textile and is constructed with two weaves: a ground weave, which is woven in tabby, satin or twill, and a supplementary weave forming the gold design. The ground weave and the supplementary weave are joined in a bind by the supplementary warp thread. The supplementary weave can be in tabby or different twill techniques depending on the complexity of the pattern. Complex patterns are typically woven on wide looms, which enable large motifs, lengthy scripts and repeats, and which were constructed with a double warp beam, which separates the ground warp and the supplementary warp.

The earliest lampas weave woven in a continuous overall pattern with round or flat gold threads existed in Central Asia from the 9th and the 10th century AD and first appeared in China as *Nasij* during the Yuan dynasty. The supplementary weave was formed by using a special loom, likely to have originated in Central Asia, that was constructed with a double warp beam enabling the separation of the ground warp and the supplementary warp, and allowing patterns of gold to be woven on the face side.

Lapis Lazuli

The blue pigment, from lazurite, which forms the bulk of the gemstone lapis lazuli which when ground coarsely and mixed with hematite, produces an intense blue hue⁴¹⁸.

Mingghans

Mingghans were units of 1000 ‘horsemen’, which were formed across tribal affiliations who had joined Chinggis Khan in the early years of the Mongol Empire. These units were made up of people from different tribes to avoid old enemy rivalry and the risks of uprising and betrayal. For example, tribal groups such as the Tartars, Keryid or Naiman were systematically broken up and assigned separately to new *Mingghans*. The *Mingghans* were structured as households and included soldiers’ families. This structure was rooted in the steppe household culture where the whole family traditionally was on the move during peace time, in search for grasslands, and at war families worked in teams; women had high positions within the Mongol communities and assisted for

⁴¹⁶ Sheila Blair and Jonathan Bloom, Eds. *And Diverse Are Their Hues. Color in Islamic Art and Culture*, (Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2009) 359.

⁴¹⁷ Robert Beer, *The Encyclopedia of Tibetan Symbols and Motifs*, p.78.

⁴¹⁸ Victor Borges, ‘Nasrid Plasterwork: Symbolism, Materials, Techniques’, in *V&A Conservation Journal* 48 (Autumn, 2004),10-14.

example in preparing weaponry for battle and in organizing household members; they also participated in strategic military positions on the battlefields⁴¹⁹.

Mongol

The term *Mongol* or *Mongols* has existed since the 7th century according to Tang literary sources. Ancestors of the Mongol nationality originated from one of the Tangut tribes north of the Daxinganling Mountains and migrated to close to the Onan River.

Moriculture

Moriculture involves propagation, planting, cultivation, leaf harvesting and pruning of mulberry trees - the leaves being fed to the silkworms⁴²⁰.

Mulberry trees and bushes can produce different grades of leaves depending on the climate in which they grow. A favourable climate for wild mulberry trees, the variety *bombyx mori*, has existed since the Neolithic period in the regions of the Yangzi and the Yellow River basins⁴²¹. Shandong province was another location noted for its fine white silk made from the mulberry 'white' variety, and was used in some of the first imperial silk workshops during the Han dynasty⁴²². Varieties of mulberry leaves can influence the quality of the silk produced by the silk worms and was practiced during the Yuan period. A number of publications were compiled with numerous guidelines to *sericulture* and *moriculture*; for example, feeding large silk worms leaves from the *morus bombycis* mulberry tree produced higher grade and more durable silks, whereas an inferior quality but more economical silk could be produced when smaller silk worms were fed leaves from the *morus alba* variety⁴²³.

Multiculturalism

The term *multiculture* defines a system with different cultures under the same social system not necessarily interacting with each other, versus *interculturality*, where different cultures under the same system exchange ideas in mutual cooperation interacting with one another.

Nashishi

The Chinese terminology for *nasij*, cloth of gold, lampas weave. See also *Jinduanzi* and *Tejiejin*

Nasij

Derived from the Arabic verb, *nasaja*, 'to weave' and used as a shortened word for cloth of gold, *lampas weave*, in Arabic, *nasij al-dhahab al-harir*.

⁴¹⁹ See Thomas Allsen, "Guard and Government, 495-521.

⁴²⁰ Peng Hao, "Sericulture and Silk Weaving from Antiquity to the Zhou Dynasty", 68.

⁴²¹ According to archaeological evidence from microorganisms Peng Hao. 'Sericulture and Silk Weaving from Antiquity to the Zhou Dynasty', in *Chinese Silks*, (Yale University Press, 2012), 68.

⁴²² Shelagh Vainker, *Chinese Silk*, 12.

⁴²³ According to the literary records of *Compilation on Agriculture and Sericulture* published in 1273 and widely distributed to promote the sector along with other specialized books on technology of sericulture, see Feng, "Silk artistry of the Yuan dynasty," 331.

Paper

Paper originate in China in the first century AD and spread to the west during the 8th century when Chinese prisoners of war⁴²⁴ revealed the fabrication techniques to the Arabs in Samarkand, from where it quickly spread within the Islamic world and beyond. Paper was used to back gold used in the production of gold textiles, the earliest examples dating back to the Tang. Paper produced from Mulberry tree or plant was customarily used for paper gold during the Mongol period; however, this thesis has discovered the use of Gambi fibres, the so-called 'silk-bast' fibers, which were also used for producing paper gold threads in the production of gold textiles. Gambi fibres were widespread in China.

Phoenix

The motif of the phoenix can be traced back in Chinese art since the Warring States period (475-221 BC), where it appears along with the images of the dragon, the unicorn and the tortoise, representing peace and wealth; it controls the heavens and symbolizes the sun and warmth. During the Yuan period, the phoenix symbolized the empress and the female principle.

Pigments *in manuscripts*

Vegetable or mineral pigments were used to make coloured inks and paint for decorations of miniatures. White pigment was created from ceruse and talc; Yellow was obtained from orpiment or saffron with white; Orange came from red lead; Red was made from mercury sulphide, ochre or plant or animal exudations; Green was achieved from a mixture of orpiment and indigo, Appian green, the green earth of Smyrna or verdigris. Blue, the most precious colour, was principally obtained from a base of lapis and together with gold; lapis lazuli was the most precious material.

Provenance

Provenancing a gold textile consists of the dating and locating of the place of production. It can also be linked to the ownership of the object. Provenancing is, however, often quite challenging because the textiles rarely have a type of identification such as a stamp or inscription indicating date or place of production, or who produced or commissioned the object.

Robing

Robing was a widespread tradition in nomadic and Central Asian cultures; using textiles and robes of honour in gift-exchanges was a universal phenomenon that crossed cultural, political and religious boundaries within the area that became the Mongol Empire. The robe of honour/robing presented an institution of exhibiting political and social culture that was mutual and reciprocated. Imperial "robe distribution" ceremony could take up to three days.

⁴²⁴ After the battle of Talas in 751 AD.

Roundel Motif

One of the earliest roundel motifs found on a garment dates back to the 2nd century AD, a statue of portraiting King Sanatruq, Hatra⁴²⁵. This motif spread across Central Asia and China from the Tang period and specific motifs began to carry various level of importance linked to rank and identity although certain designs were purely decorative.

Samit

Samite or *Samit* is the old term for weft-faced compound weave. Samits were generally woven on draw-loom equipped with three shafts to control the binding warps. In a Samit, the face of the silk is weft-faced and the reverse warp-faced. However, technological development in draw-loom innovation of the late Tang dynasty resulted in weft-faced face and reverse. Such an example exists in the Abegg-Stiftung⁴²⁶.

Satin

A broken twill based on a unit of five warps and five wefts; warp threads pass over at four or more weft threads, then under one, etc. Satin first appeared during the late Tang period and became a popular and highly esteemed weave during the Yuan period because of the cloths' sheen, which is created by the rows of floating warp threads.

Selvage cord

The selvage is the finished edge formed by the warp threads and by the turns of the weft threads as they pass back and forth through the sheds. When both selvages are preserved, it presents the full width of the fabric.

Sericulture

Silk is made by cultivating silkworms⁴²⁷ and their cocoons, also called *Sericulture*, which includes silkworm rearing and processing of the cocoons into silk yarn⁴²⁸. Silk making also involves *moriculture*. Silk making probably dates back to the Neolithic period (10,000 to ca. 2100 BC) in Ancient China⁴²⁹.

To achieve a successful harvest it is essential to know the silkworm's life cycle, which passes through four completely different stages. Firstly, eggs are gradually hatched into miniscule caterpillars that feed off chopped mulberry leaves for 30 to 35 days before they begin to build cocoons; at this stage the silk worm is only 3 cm long and is capable of producing up to 1000 meters of silk. As silkworms grow, it is crucial to provide them with optimal conditions for a successful cocoon production; factors such as humidity, temperature, noise control and the feeding of the silk worms during the day and night

⁴²⁵ Jessica Rawson, *Chinese Ornament, The Lotus and the dragon*.

⁴²⁶ See also Riboud/Vial. *Tissus de Touen-Houang conservés au Musée Guimet et à la Bibliothèque Nationale* (Paris: Mission Paul Pelliot. Documents archéologiques 13, 1970). Also, Zhao Feng, 'Satin Samit. A Bridge from Samite to Satin', in *Bulletin du CIETA* 76, 1999, 46-63.

⁴²⁷ Belonging to the family *Bombycidae* in the insect order of Lepidoptera, see Kuhn, *Science and Civilisation in China*, 301-314.

⁴²⁸ Anna Muthesius, *Studies in Byzantine and Islamic Silk Weaving*, (London: The Pindar Press, 1995), 267-268

⁴²⁹ According to archaeological findings the earliest discovery of sericulture was made in 1926 at a Neolithic site in Shanxi where a half silk cocoon dating back to between 2,200 and 1,700 BC and was discovered – in 1958 a silk fragment in a *tabby* weave was discovered in Zhejiang province which was carbon dated to ca. 2770-2500 BC. See Peng Hao, "Sericulture and Silk Weaving from Antiquity to the Zhou Dynasty," in *Chinese Silks*, 71-72.

are important for good results of cocoon spinning⁴³⁰. Trays must be adjusted according to the size of the growing silkworms and must be cleared of waste products after feeding. At stage two, the silkworm transforms into a chrysalis within the cocoon it has built, and about two weeks later, the silkworm has become a moth that emerges from the cocoon, during stage three. In stage four, the silkworm begins to mate and lay eggs, beginning the circle again before it dies. To produce one kilo of silk requires more than 4000 silkworms are⁴³¹.

The earliest written evidence of *sericulture* appears on unearthed tortoise shells and oracle bones excavated from a Shang Dynasty (ca. 1500 – 1050 BC) site from Anyang, Henan province; these pictographs present themes related to silk, sericulture and mulberry leaf harvesting, and also display inscriptions for rituals for offerings to the God of Silkworms, which implies that silk was regarded mythical and for ceremonial use since the early beginnings⁴³².

Shed

The shed is the space between separated warp threads, and which allows the weft thread shuttle passage for creating the weave and the pattern.

Spinning silk

Spinning silk involves binding together fibres of normally irregular length from waste silk after degumming.

Swastika

In Buddhism, the swastika motif represents auspiciousness and good fortune; the motif also relates to Buddha's footprint and heart. It can be found imprinted on Buddha's images on the chest, palms and feet and also appears on the first of 65 auspicious symbols on the footprint of the Buddha. The motif appears on Buddhist temples, notably from the Liao period, and is displayed on decorative borders around paintings, altar cloths and banners; it is also used as clothing decoration in Tibetan Buddhism.

In China, this motif was appreciated as a symbol of plurality, eternity, abundance, prosperity and long life⁴³³. This motif is mentioned in the Yuandian Zhang where it is specified that it is only allowed to be worn by the Emperor, thus produced at royal workshops⁴³⁴. The motif appears on a number of gold textiles from the Mongol period.

Tabby

Tabby is a plain weave: one over, one under, so that each set of two warp and two weft threads completes a woven structure. The weave is one of the most basic and simple weave structures that can be dated back to the Shang period (1600 – 1046 BC) and was

⁴³⁰ Muthesius, *Studies*, 268

⁴³¹ Ebry, *Illustrated History of China*, 54.

⁴³² See Zhong Yuanzhao and Lu Xinzhong eds., *History of Textile Technology of Ancient China*, (New York : Science Press, 1992), 53.

⁴³³ Damien Keown "Swastika", *A Dictionary of Buddhism* (Oxford University Press, 2003.), 287.

⁴³⁴ Yuandian Zhang chapter 58.

also used for silk taxes (*juan*). Tabby is commonly used as one of the weave structures in the production of gold textiles under the Mongols.

Taffeta

Taffeta is the term for silk fabrics in tabby weave. In medieval times, however, taffeta was originally a weave made of silk and cotton from the Attabiya, a district of Baghdad⁴³⁵.

Tapestry

See *Kesi*

Tejiejin

The Chinese description of a *lampas* weave used in the production of gold textiles.

Tiraz and scripts on textiles

The *tiraz* is a textile with a woven or embroidered Arabic or Persian inscription, often carrying messages associated with the identity of a person, and with a certain degree of power and authority. As narrow legible embroideries, the *tiraz* marked rank while providing information about the wearer, about Islamic rulers or, later, provided sincere inscriptions in Arabic offered as gifts by various Muslim courts. Certain robes with inscriptions revealed the location of production. The legible *tiraz* Arabic script band, seemingly only readable at close proximity, is likely to have had symbolic importance as an armband motif among viewers⁴³⁶.

Inscriptions on textiles in China can be dated back to the Han dynasty; for example the polychrome *jin* textiles were excavated at Nizy, Minfeng, Xinjiang, which displays Chinese characters amidst clouds and dragons with auspicious messages of good wishes. Inscribed textiles also have a long tradition in Central Asian and Islamic cultures, which were likely linked to the Islamic *tiraz* tradition.

Twill

The weave is based on a unit of three or more warps and wefts, in which each warp passes over two or more wefts and under the next. This creates a simple diagonal pattern. Twill was commonly used as one of the weave structures in the production of gold textiles during the Mongol period.

Twisting

S-twisting (left-spun), Z-twisting (right-spun).

Warp

⁴³⁵ David Jacoby, "Silk Economics", 197-240, especially 217.

⁴³⁶ Isabelle Dolezalek, "Comparing Forms", 81-93; David Jacoby, "Silk Economics," 203, and, Folsach, *Woven Treasures*, 12-18.

The warps are the vertical threads of a textile that are stretched on the loom and interlaced with the weft.

Weft

The wefts are the horizontal threads of a textile that interlace with the warp.

Weft-faced compound Tabby /Twill

The entire surface is covered by weft threads, which hide the main warp. The construction is called weft-faced compound tabby if the passes are bound in tabby, and weft-faced compound twill if bound in twill.

Yarn Count

Yarn count is a method used to define the density of the weave and is measured across the warp threads and weft thread by counting the number of threads of woven fabric per cm. A thread count between 80 and 120 is considered a fine weave; a thread count below 40 is considered weak.