

Textile as Traveller: The Transmission of Inscribed Robes across Asia in the Twelfth through Fourteenth Centuries

The twelfth to fourteenth centuries marked a period of cross-continental exchange on an unprecedented scale between East, Central, and West Asia. Textiles woven with script or script-like elements shed some light on this cross-continental movement, as inscribed textiles were produced across Asia. These woven inscriptions, likely derived from the West Asian tradition of *ṭirāz* and connected to practices of honorific robing, appear in both pseudo and readable scripts. Their appearance in East Asia hints at the semiotic significance *ṭirāz*-style inscriptions had, even outside the Islamic world. The trend of employing foreign scripts as a decorative motif on robes appears to have reached its apex during the Mongol period (*ca.* 1206–1368). However, evidence for such decoration has been unearthed from the centuries prior to the Mongol conquests as well. Tracing the routes that inscribed textiles took across the continent reveals the kinds of cultural, political, and technological exchange occurring throughout Asia during these 300 years.

Keywords: textiles; inscriptions; robing; *ṭirāz*; material exchange; Mongol Empire; Mamluk Sultanate.