

## CLOTH OF GOLD FROM WEST ASIA IN A LATE MEDIEVAL EUROPEAN CONTEXT: THE ABŪ SA‘ĪD TEXTILE IN VIENNA – PRINCELY FUNERAL, AND CULTURAL TRANSFER

From the early Middle Ages, textiles were among the luxury goods from Islamic states and Byzantium that were admired in Europe, widely available, and sure to make a lasting impression on contemporary viewers. As mobile objects they contributed to the exchange and spread of motifs of courtly culture, motifs that could retain comparable meanings across disparate regions and cultures or could be understood differently in each new context. Current scholarship also considers such objects as a phenomenon of cultural transfer.<sup>1</sup>

When the Ducal Crypt in St. Stephen’s Church in Vienna was opened in 1739 (fig. 9), Marquardt Herrgott described the burial of Rudolph IV (b. 1339, r. 1358–1365):

The entire body was visible, covered and ornamented by an atlas cloth (*attalicias teli*). The vivid interwoven gold was still radiant, revealing figures, and Gothic letters not so unlike those inscribed on stone tablets; if one seeks to verify their reading by deeper inspection, they appear to be nothing more than an artistic device of the fabric. In truth, the term garment (*vestis*) is not appropriate, for it was sewn around the body so that the hands, like the arms, were enclosed.<sup>2</sup>

After the renovation of the crypt in 1754, Rudolph was laid to rest in a new metal coffin, with his shroud and grave goods intact. When the coffin was reopened in 1933 (fig. 1), the shroud was removed and has since been displayed in the cathedral museum in Vienna (fig. 2).

What Herrgott in the Baroque epoch described as a textile with “figures” and archaic “Gothic letters” is a striped cloth of gold and silk with large Arabic inscriptions

<sup>1</sup> This contribution is based on a paper given at the conference at Riggisberg in 2011, and extends my entry in *Cat. Vienna 2015*. I am grateful to Juliane von Fircks and Regula Schorta for including this essay in the present volume, and I thank Lisa Lawrence for translating an earlier version. See ETTINGHAUSEN 1983, 65–71, on the status of textiles from Islamic states; HOFFMAN 2001, 17–26, on the transposability and recontextualisation of motifs from mobile objects of courtly art in the tenth to twelfth century; SHALEM 1996 on non-textile objects of Islamic art in Christian contexts. On theorizing cultural transfer in the medieval age, see GEROGIORGAKIS / SCHEEL / SCHORKOWITZ 2011. <sup>2</sup> HERRGOTT 1772, part 1, 183 (Latin text translated by the author).

Fig. 1: Rudolph IV shrouded in cloth of gold and silk, with sword and lead cross, in the Baroque metal coffin when opened in 1933



and small hunting friezes and animal motifs (figs 2–7). The cloth’s tailoring consists of a torso-leg piece (173 × 90 cm) and two sleeve pieces (30.5 × 76.5 and 30.1 × 74 cm). A study conducted in 2008 with the textile conservator Regina Knaller has *inter alia* reconstructed the original cloth (figs 4–5) and confirmed that the three preserved pieces were tailored to fit the body and limbs and then sewn around them. This ‘body bag’ enveloped the whole corpse except the head, almost like a holy relic (fig. 8).<sup>3</sup> The textile was used as a fitted shroud in the burial and for presenting the dead prince on the way to Vienna, as will be argued below, but not as a grave cloth or pall simply placed on or wrapped around the body, nor has the cloth ever been used as a garment.<sup>4</sup>

As a portable object, this cloth acquired various functions and meanings within at least two distinct late medieval contexts and cultures. Firstly, it was a representative luxury textile in an Islamic princely court in Iran in Western Asia, with the name and titles of the ruler presented in large inscriptions, and surely not intended for burial. A generation later it served, secondly, as a funerary textile in the burial of a Christian duke in Austria in Central Europe. Thirdly, on the way from Iran to Vienna, the cloth may have been used in another context, as a political and diplomatic gift, as will be suggested below. Recently, it has acquired a further, modern context in an art installation that quotes the inscriptions; they have been monumentalized and transferred into the medium of a wall painting that advertises the cathedral museum that houses the textile.<sup>5</sup>

3 See RITTER 2010 on the research project concerning the examination of the textile and its inscriptions, and questions related to its form and function within the history of Islamic art. For further literature, see RITTER 2010, 107, note 11; and RITTER 2012; on the gilt metal thread, JÁRÓ 2010. I am most grateful to Regina Knaller for studying the technical and conservational aspects of the textile, which she is to publish. 4 Some previous authors described it as a grave cloth, e. g., DEMEL 1933, 33; KUBA-HAUK / SALIGER 1987, 10 (“Leichentuch”); while others called it a garment, e. g., BAUM 1996, 100 (“Gewand,” “Kleid”). 5 Johanna KANDL, “Nah am Text (Close to the Text),”



Fig. 2: The cloth of gold and silk as presented in the glass case of the Cathedral Museum, in 2008; Iran, Tabriz [?], made between 1319 and 1335 for the Ilkhan Sultan Abū Saʿīd according to the inscriptions. Vienna, Dommuseum, Inv. Prot. L-7

## THE ṬIRĀZ TEXTILE FOR SULTAN ABŪ SAʿĪD AND ITS FUNCTION IN IRAN

While this essay focuses on the use of this textile in a European Christian context, it is necessary to recall its original manufacture for a Muslim ruler in Iran and its features relating to textiles in Islamic art.<sup>6</sup>

The fabric was woven in lampas technique; the ground is satin with a twill weave, with a pattern weft of paired metal threads. The thread consists of silver foil gilded on both sides and spun around a silk core. Three originally green or blue stripes with large-format Arabic inscriptions alternate with two red stripes that have a repetitive filigree pattern of tendrils and peacocks, each stripe framed by narrow hunting friezes featuring gazelles and felines (figs 3–7). The inscriptions on the cloth prove that this precious textile was made for the Mongol Ilkhan ruler of Iran and Iraq, the Muslim Sultan Abū Saʿīd (r. 1316–1335). The royal titles limit manufacture to the years 1319 to 1335, possibly in a court workshop in Tabriz, the principal seat of the Ilkhans in north-west Iran.

The three pieces preserved in the burial shroud of Rudolph IV can be demonstrated to have been cut from the same cloth. Fitted together they use 250 cm from the

2014. The work was painted in August 2014 on the construction fence erected for renovation work in the cathedral museum, and shows the inscription bands and accompanying hunting friezes, see the photo in Cat. Vienna 2015, 55, and BORCHHARDT-BIRBAUMER 2014. While fence and painted inscription are about 2.5 meters high and 20 meters long, the original inscriptions on the cloth measure only 16.1 cm to 18.5 cm wide. The artist used the scale drawing from our study (here fig. 4) as template. <sup>6</sup> What follows under this heading briefly summarizes some of the findings in RITTER 2010, see note 3.





Fig. 3: Cloth of gold and silk of the shroud of Rudolph IV, torso-leg piece

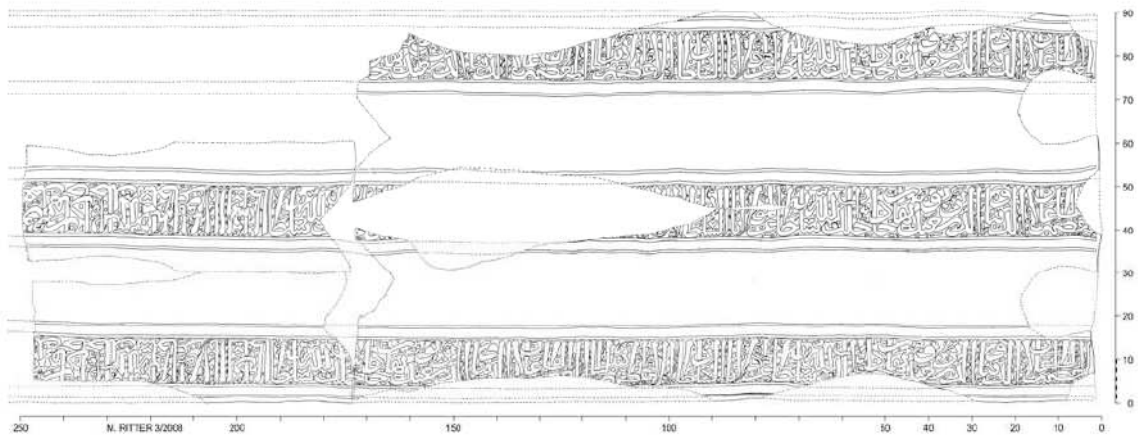


Fig. 4: Reconstruction of part of the original cloth, 250 cm long, based on the three extant pieces in the shroud; the complete length of the cloth can be reconstructed as 380–403 cm long

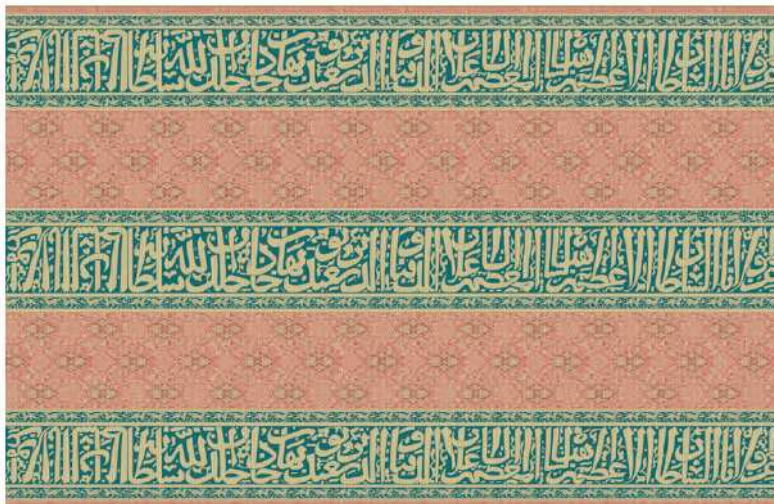


Fig. 5: Coloured and textured reconstruction of part of the original cloth, 137 cm long, in the shroud of Rudolph IV; colour analysis has confirmed the red colour and shown that the green may have been blue

cloth (fig. 4), and based on an amendment of the inscriptions, the entire length of cloth can be calculated to have been 380 or 403 cm long. The preserved selvages show that it was 90 cm wide. Judging from the preserved part, the textile came as an uncut cloth to Europe and had not been used as a garment before. All traces of cutting and stitching are from the cloth's use as a shroud in Vienna.

The design relates to a widespread type of lengthwise striped pattern used in textiles in Mongol lands and also in Mamluk Egypt and Nasrid Andalusia, which features stripes of inscriptions in Arabic together with various motifs. Yet it represents a variant





Fig. 6: Hunting frieze with feline and gazelle in the shroud of Rudolph IV

or a separate type related to a specific function in that the stripes of script have an unusually large format and dominate the design. One element of this variant, and a rare feature, is the specificity of the repetitive blessing text. In contrast to the short, formulaic, and anonymous text on other striped textiles, it is personalized and unusually long and detailed, giving the name and title of the Ilkhan ruler:

Praise to our lord, the glorious sultan, most glorious king of kings (*shāhanshāh*), highness of the world and religion, Būsaʿīd Bahādur Khān; may god perpetuate his rule.<sup>7</sup>

The text is in the Arabic language, although the textile probably originated in a Persian- and Turkish-speaking environment. It was common to use Arabic for such official inscriptions across different cultures in medieval Islam, just as Latin was used across medieval Europe.

A design feature unknown from other textiles with Arabic inscription stripes is a change of direction in the writing. In the reconstructed cloth, the inscriptions start from both short ends and meet in the middle, where the letters are joined in a well-conceived and harmonious form, as can be seen in the extant part. That suggests an original use and function in which the entire cloth was draped or hung from the middle. It was never intended for use in a burial, and Islamic law would have forbidden using cloth with gold in burials. Technically, the weaving and metal thread are of the highest quality. The text in the three inscription stripes is 117 cm long before it repeats, which meant an extremely long pattern sequence in the weaving.

A cloth of the type and quality of the Abū Saʿīd textile would have been produced exclusively for the ruler and his court. Under Ilkhan rule, inscriptions in cloth of gold were permitted in textiles only from royal workshops.<sup>8</sup> Textile inscriptions with the name of the ruler were called *ṭirāz*, and the same term was used for the royal workshops producing them.<sup>9</sup> Such inscriptions had an official character as they displayed loyalty to the ruler, and objects with such inscriptions were given as royal gifts. It was a Mongol tradition to present the ruling elite with cloth of gold, while royal garments

<sup>7</sup> For a reading in Arabic writing and its transliteration, see Ritter 2010, 111 (in the German translation, the title “King of Kings” is missing. <sup>8</sup> SERJEANT 1972, 68. <sup>9</sup> IBN KHALDŪN [1967], 220. <sup>10</sup> ALLSEN 1997, 12–26, 81–84; SPRINGBERG-HINSEN 2000, 246.



Fig. 7: Repeat pattern with peacocks, tendrils, flower-leaf medallion, lozenges in the shroud of Rudolph IV

for investiture and gifts were a custom of Arab and Persian rule.<sup>10</sup> With regard to Egypt, thirteenth- and fourteenth-century sources report that robes with golden *ṭirāz* were worn only by the sultan and high-ranking members of the court.<sup>11</sup> The historian Ibn Khaldūn (1332–1406) explained:

It is part of royal and governmental pomp and dynastic custom to have the names of rulers or their peculiar marks embroidered on the silk, brocade, or pure silk garments that are prepared for their wearing. The writing is brought out by weaving a gold thread or some other coloured thread of a colour different from that of the fabric itself into it. (Its execution) depends upon the skill of the weavers in designing and weaving it. Royal garments are embroidered with such a *ṭirāz* in order to increase the prestige of the ruler or the lower person who wears such a garment, or in order to increase the prestige of those whom the ruler distinguishes by bestowing upon them his own garment when he wants to honour them or appoint them to one of the offices of the dynasty.<sup>12</sup>

Ibn Khaldūn may have been thinking of garments with single inscriptions, such as bands around the upper arms that can be seen depicted in medieval miniature painting. Inscriptions as repeated motifs of several identical strips that constitute the pattern of a cloth would be a different case. Nevertheless, an official and representative

<sup>11</sup> MAYER 1952, 15, 34. <sup>12</sup> IBN KHALDŪN [1967], 219–20.



function of a textile with such inscriptions as those with the name of Abū Saʿīd seems evident.

Other striped textiles of cloth of gold that have been attributed to the Mongol realm differ in technique, quality, and style. Their origin is uncertain. They use metal thread of gilded membrane woven flat or spun. In textiles at Verona (fig. 10), Burgos (see Böse in this volume, p. 228, fig. 6), Regensburg, Danzig (see von Fircks and Borkopp-Restle in this volume),<sup>13</sup> and Hall, for example, the design is characterized by densely alternating thin and wide stripes, with the use of a variety of geometric ornament and animal motifs of Chinese origin, structured into oblong rectangles. The cloth in the so-called ‘Chasuble of Hedwig’ and in its stola and maniple at Hall in Tyrolia shows alternating blue and red stripes bordered by thin green stripes (figs 11, 12).<sup>14</sup> The golden décor displays geometric patterns in oblong cartouches; dragons, lions, and ibexes in square and oblong fields; and a frieze with lotus flowers, knots, roundels, and felines hunting a rabbit. Inscriptions on this kind of textile are anonymous and consist of short general formulas of blessing. They lend themselves much more to production in large numbers and to export and trade.

### SHROUDING THE DECEASED RULER IN EUROPE

The display of a dead sovereign clothed in sumptuous garments, as well as the preservation of the sovereign’s body, was common practice in medieval Europe. As long as a ruler was not yet buried, he took part in the ceremonies like a living person. Therefore he needed to be presentably and representatively arrayed.<sup>15</sup>

Cloth of gold was the most precious and esteemed kind of textile for royal and princely garments in the late medieval period, and that applied to the dead as well. In *The Canterbury Tales* written by Chaucer toward the end of the fourteenth century, the dead royal knight Arcite is covered with cloth of gold in his funeral:

Theseus has ysent  
After a beere, and it is overspradde  
With clooth of gold, the richest that he hadde  
And of the same suite he cladde Arcite.<sup>16</sup>

13 WARDWELL 1988/89 groups together the striped textiles at Verona and Burgos (“category I,” see note 42 below), based on technical criteria, and those at Regensburg and Danzig (“category V”). Regensburg, Alte Kapelle: cloth Ia–c, IIa–b (WARDWELL 1988/89, figs 23–25; BAUMGÄRTEL-FLEISCHMANN 2002, figs 161–62, 164–66). Fragments of cloth Ib, Ic and IIb are in London, Victoria & Albert Museum (mentioned in BAUMGÄRTEL-FLEISCHMANN 2002, 386–87, note 719). A fragment of Ib is in Vienna, MAK (RITTER 2010, fig. 14). Danzig: Berlin, SMPK, Kunstgewerbemuseum, inv. nos 75,259 and 75,260 (WARDWELL 1988/89, 106–08, figs 41–42 and 75; VON WILCKENS 1992, 50–52, cat. nos 82–83). 14 GRIESSMAIER 1959 and GOTTSCHALK 1966 on the chasuble (which is not included in WARDWELL 1988/89). They do not mention that, along with the ‘Hedwigskasel,’ a stola and a maniple made from the same cloth exist. All three pieces are here illustrated together in fig. 11. In a preliminary study Regina Knaller and the author inspected these textiles in May 2009. 15 BRÜCKNER 1966, 29–30. 16 Cited after HODGES 2014, 15. I thank Lisa Lawrence for drawing my attention to this passage.



Literature here reflects reality. King Edward I of England, who died in 1307, was covered with a cloth of gold when he was transported to his burial.<sup>17</sup> After Emperor Henry VII died in Siena in 1313, he was displayed in Pisa in a red and gold cloth with designs of heraldic eagles and lions.<sup>18</sup>

There are few reports of the events surrounding Rudolph's death. He died on July 27, 1365, during a visit to various allied princes in Northern Italy. On June 14 he was given a grand reception by Cansignorio della Scala in Verona (r. 1365–1375) and stayed there for two days. Shortly thereafter he was a guest of Bernabò Visconti in Milan (r. 1354–1385). It was here that he became ill at some point in June, and steadily declined until his death. Rudolph was provisionally interred *cum maximum honore* in Milan at the Church of San Giovanni in Conca.<sup>19</sup> Bernabò had previously turned the church into a private chapel connected to his palace, and also had a cenotaph with an equestrian statue erected for himself.<sup>20</sup> In autumn, the body of Rudolph was transferred to Vienna; the historical sources name Verona, Klausen, and Neumarkt as stations along the way. A chronicle from Verona reports that Rudolph lay in state at the Church of Sancti Pietri Archivolta, and that Cansignorio and prominent citizens, as well as the common townsfolk, paid their "greatest respect" to the deceased duke. He was buried before the beginning of December in the Ducal Crypt at the Church of St. Stephen in Vienna. The exact day and contemporaneous accounts of the burial are unknown.<sup>21</sup>

This course of events indicates that a deliberate choice of cloth for the deceased ruler was possible and even probable. After an illness lasting several weeks, Rudolph's death was not completely unexpected. It is feasible that he and his inner circle made arrangements for his passing. There also would have been several months in which to make preparations for the transferral of the body and burial in Vienna. At Verona, he lay in state with princely honours. This may have been the case at other stations along the journey to Vienna.

Rudolph's shroud made from cloth of gold was perfectly suitable for that purpose. It may have been sewn in Milan, or at the latest for the funeral audience in Verona. Previously, Rudolph's body must have been embalmed or preserved as a whole just after death to make its display and transport possible. The formerly common method of removing the flesh by boiling the body (*more teutonico*, or "according to German custom"), leaving only the bones, had been proscribed by Pope Boniface in 1299 and 1302.<sup>22</sup>

Indeed, the cut of the shroud and its arm and leg dimensions indicate that although the body was reduced in volume, it was intact and not simply a bundle of bones. Regina Knaller ascertained in our study of the textile that all the needle holes in the three pieces related to the cloth's use as a shroud, and that the intervals of stitching on one edge matched those on the counter-edge showing how they were sewn together. Thus it was possible to cut and sew from calico cloth the model of an exact reconstruction of the entire shroud wrapped around the body (fig. 8).

17 CHILDS 2008, 282. 18 BRÜCKNER 1966, 67. 19 KURZ 1821, note II on p. 300 f.; BAUM 1996, 307–08, 313. 20 Of the building, only the crypt survives today. 21 KURZ 1821, note \*\*\* on pp. 300 f. 22 BRÜCKNER 1966, 29.



Fig. 8: Model of the shrouded body of Duke Rudolph IV in burial, reconstruction in original size, directed by Regina Knaller; model made from calico, inscription stripes indicated in outline

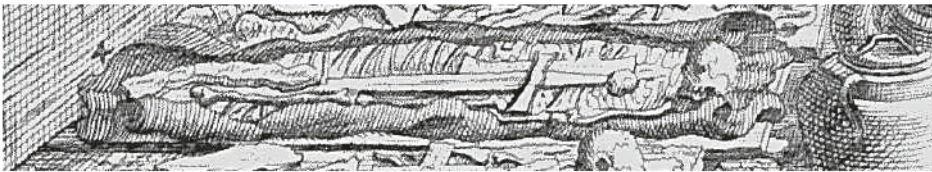
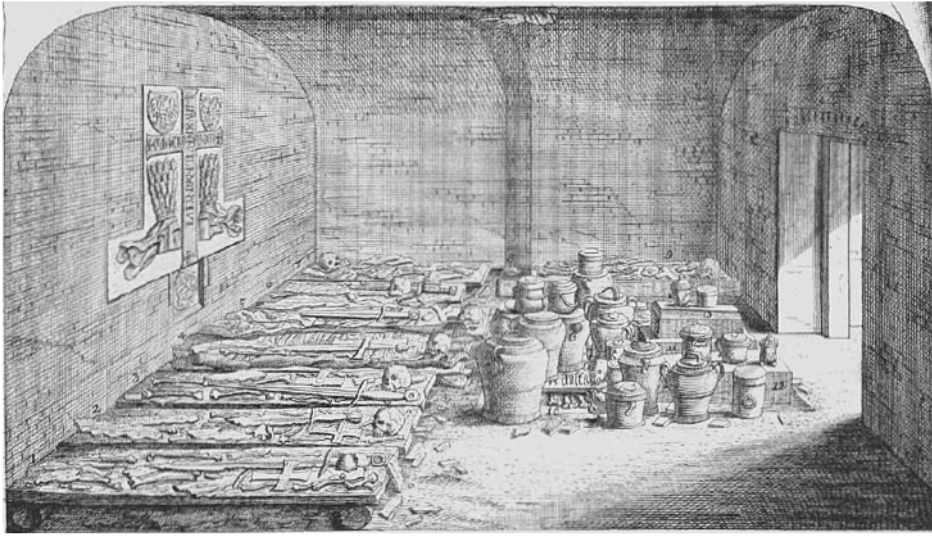
## THE BURIAL CONTEXT IN VIENNA

Rudolph IV's title as "Princely Majesty" and his promotion to the *principes* of the Holy Roman Empire was a central aspect of his politics and of his display of sovereignty. He held it of utmost importance that his princely rank and its significance be clearly stated and remembered, even during and after his death. Funerary planning began during life. In the course of construction work beginning in 1359 in the Church of St. Stephen in Vienna, Rudolph had the Ducal Crypt built below the *Gottleichnam* (Corpus Domini) altar in the choir. He tried to raise the prestige of St. Stephen's by vigorously collecting relics and by promoting it to a church with collegiate. The crypt's size indicates that it was likely conceived from the beginning as a family tomb, turning the church into a royal and dynastic building.<sup>23</sup> The well-known portrait of Rudolph showing his new archducal crown hung in the church *apud suum mausoleum* (close to his tomb), as the chronicler Thomas Ebendorfer described it before 1463, while a later source reports it on the south wall of the choir, closer to the main altar.<sup>24</sup> In any case, Ebendorfer's phrase suggests that the portrait and its place could be understood as a visual link to the crypt.

The arrangement, decoration, and inscription programme of the crypt can be shown to reflect the person of Rudolph and the importance of his burial. This is evidenced in the earliest descriptions by Testarello (1685), Choler (1721), and Herrgott (1772), before the Baroque reconstruction of the crypt took place. The best source for our purpose is the earliest image of the crypt, the engraving by Salomon Kleiner from

<sup>23</sup> SCHWARZMEIER 1988, 11–23 (on the collection of relics); BAUM 1996, 101, 182; W. WAGNER 1999, 193–95; DAHM 2000, 339. Austrian historical research, e. g., GRASS 1966, emphasises that the Church of St. Stephen became similar to an episcopal see and, as a *capella regia Austriaca*, a royal cathedral comparable to St. Vitus Cathedral at the imperial seats in Prague and Sainte-Chapelle in Paris. <sup>24</sup> M. SCHWARZ 2015, 37.





Figs 9: a) The Princely Crypt of St. Stephen's Church in Vienna when opened in 1739. Engraving by Salomon Kleiner in HERRGOTT 1772, part 2, pl. 16, middle; b) Detail showing the burial of Duke Rudolph IV in the Princely Crypt; the body is shrouded and wrapped with straps; it rests on an open leather covering; the sword and lead cross are on the body

1739, published along with Herrgott's description (fig. 9).<sup>25</sup> It shows Rudolph's burial as directly opposite the entrance on the crypt's main axis, in the centre of an array of later burials along the eastern wall. A relief carving in stone on the ceiling, at the centre point of the vault and aligned with Rudolph's burial when viewed from the entrance, consists of a right hand with extended index and middle fingers pointing in a gesture of blessing towards Rudolph's resting place. An inscription on the hand makes its message even more clear: *Hic iacet fundator* (Here lies the Founder).<sup>26</sup> The hand also marks the middle of a cross painted in red, whose arms stretch across the entire ceiling vault, with the lateral arms continuing down the walls and reaching the floor.<sup>27</sup>

Rudolph's remains lay on a bare wooden plank or bier with his feet at the eastern wall; his face was directed to the East, toward the High Altar and Jerusalem, and to a large stone tablet incorporated in the wall, featuring a cross, Habsburg and Austrian heraldic devices, and two helmets with peacock-feather crests (fig. 9a).<sup>28</sup> The tablet

25 TESTARELLO 1685, in: KLEINDIENST 1889–1908, vol. 9.1 (1889), 7–8. CHOLER 1721, 12, 126–27. HERRGOTT 1772, part 1, 178, 183; part 2, pl. 16. 26 HERRGOTT 1772, part 1, 178. 27 CHOLER 1721, 12. 28 HERRGOTT 1772, part 1, fig. on p. 177. In the new baroque crypt, the tablet was placed in a wall niche to the right of Rudolph IV's sarcophagus.

bears an inscription: *Rudolphi fundatoris ecclesiae S. Stephani* ([tomb of] Rudolph, Founder of the Church of St. Stephen).<sup>29</sup> On the floor under the plank, another inscription marked the position of the burial: *Hic iacet Rudolphus fundator qui credidit in Ihesum Christum crucifixum* (Here lies Rudolph the Founder who believes in the crucified Jesus Christ).<sup>30</sup>

In Kleiner's engraving, a large lead cross<sup>31</sup> and a long sword, ritually arming the dead, lie on top of the bodily remains, centred on the chest area. The remains are shrouded in a cloth that is bound and wrapped with straps. This bundle rests on an outer covering, which is opened and slightly curls over the shrouded remains along the sides (fig. 9b). Herrgott informs us that the cloth-covered body was wrapped with twenty straps and that the covering was of black cowhide, which had probably constituted a container for the body on the way from Milan to Vienna.<sup>32</sup>

The study of the torso-leg piece of the shroud confirmed these straps; their imprints were clearly visible in raking light. The textile must have been sewn around the body before the straps and then the leather covering were wrapped around it. The body lay with arms crossed at the wrists. This can be concluded from the position and shape of lighter discoloured areas in the textile left by the arms in the sleeve pieces and in the upper part of the torso-leg piece. Our new photograph of the cloth (fig. 3) clearly shows the discoloured areas, running in a curve from the arm holes to the side and then continuing downwards, as well as horizontally running imprints and discoloured lines from the leather stripes. Dark stains on the cloth result from liquids from the corpse.

### “TATAR CLOTH” OF GOLD IN LATE MEDIEVAL EUROPE

The cloth of gold and silk used for Rudolph's shroud belongs to a class known at this time as *panni tatarici*, “Tatar cloth” (figs 10–12). The elite status of such textiles in Europe resulted from their stunning appearance with intricate patterns, precious materials such as gold and silk thread, and their unrivalled technical quality.<sup>33</sup> In fourteenth-century Italian and English literature, the analogous terms *drappi Tatarsi*, *drappi tartareschi*, and “cloth of Tars” were used by Dante, Boccaccio, and Chaucer (already cited above) as synonyms for extravagance defined by the use of gold, bright colours, and bold patterns.<sup>34</sup> In inventories of the thirteenth and fourteenth century, *panni tatarici* signified cloth of gold and silk having an actual or alleged origin in the Mongol Empire, which was divided into sovereign territories in Iran and Iraq, the Crimea, Central Asia, and China.<sup>35</sup> Gold and silk cloth was manufactured in some of these areas, as well as in

<sup>29</sup> TESTARELLO 1685, in: KLEINDIENST 1889–1908, vol. 9.1 (1889), 8; HERRGOTT 1772, part 1, 178.

<sup>30</sup> HERRGOTT 1772, part 1, 173. <sup>31</sup> The cross is pictured in HERRGOTT 1772, part 1, fig. on p. 184.

<sup>32</sup> The engraving and Herrgott's description leave no doubt that the leather underlay was originally a complete outer covering of the body. The descriptions of other authors are less clear, e. g., TESTARELLO 1685, in: KLEINDIENST 1889–1908, vol. 9.1 (1889), 8; and CHOLER 1721, 127. According to BRÜCKNER 1996, 29, the use of cowhide leather was common in funerary transferrals. <sup>33</sup> VON FIRCKS 2008, 55–56, 61; VON FIRCKS 2014, 73–76. <sup>34</sup> TOYNBEE 1900. ALLSEN 1997, 1–2, cites another poem by Chaucer (cf. above) from *The Knight's Tale* that refers to the Indian king Emetrius wearing “cloth of gold” and “cloth of Tartary.” <sup>35</sup> WARDWELL 1988/89, 134–44, with a list of textual evidence in inventories.



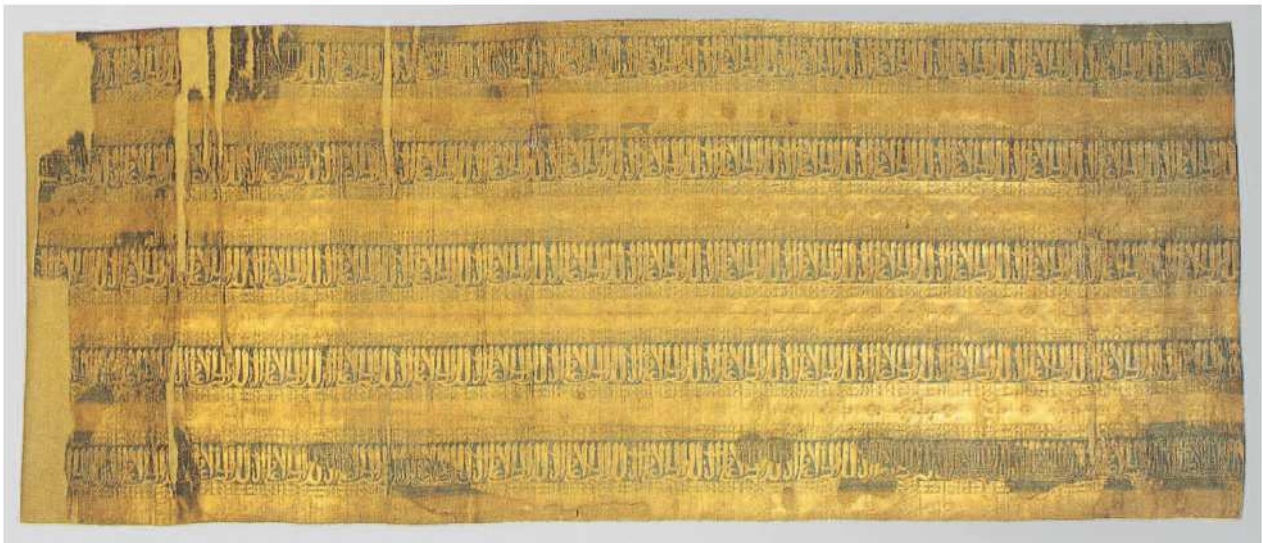


Fig. 10: Cloth of gold and silk with stripes of Arabic inscription "reperto A", from the burial of Cangrande I in Verona. Verona, Museo di Castelvecchio



Fig. 11: Chasuble, stole, and maniple made from cloth of gold, details. Hall (Tyrolia), Damenstift





Fig. 12: Chasuble in Hall, detail

the Mamluk Empire in Egypt and Syria, and was called *nasij adh-dhahab* (gold fabric) in Arabic- and Persian-period sources.<sup>36</sup> It was traded under the *pax mongolica* in Asia along various routes and places—about which merchants such as Marco Polo from Venice (d. 1324) and Francesco Pegolotti from Florence (fl. 1310–1347) wrote manuals—to northern Italy and eastern Europe, eventually stimulating the production of gold and silk cloth in Italy.<sup>37</sup> Determining the exact provenance of surviving textiles is difficult and often disputed by scholars. The term *panni tatarici* could also be applied to Oriental textiles originating outside the Mongol Empire, and even those living at this time period were sometimes uncertain about distinguishing between these and cloth produced in Italy.<sup>38</sup>

It is an exceptional stroke of luck that the historical inscriptions on the cloth of Rudolph's shroud indicate unequivocally that it was made for the Mongol Ilkhan of Iran and Iraq; it is therefore, according to historical use of the term as well as to modern understanding, an actual "Tatar cloth." Also, the portrait of Rudolph IV with his recently acquired archducal crown regalia, depicts him wearing a gold patterned garment.<sup>39</sup> The design is different from that used for the shroud, but the repeating pattern of palmettes and birds belongs to a class of ornament introduced to Europe by "Tatar

36 ALLEN 1997, 2–3. 37 JACOBY 2010a. 38 As WARDWELL 1988/89, 134, shows on the basis of information from contemporary inventories. 39 KUBA-HAUK / SALIGER 1987, fig. 2; M. SCHWARZ 2015, fig. on p. 29.



cloth.” It signified a precious and luxurious textile associated with that kind of cloth, regardless of whether the painter was looking to a model produced in Mongol lands or in Italy.

The high esteem for such cloth made the textile of Rudolph’s shroud an obvious choice. However, it belongs to a quality and a type that set it apart from the various forms of cloth of gold and “Tatar cloth” that were traded to Europe, as has been pointed out above. It must have been a rarity, which, as a marker of distinction, could have contributed to its choice as a princely shroud.

## ARABIC SCRIPT AND OTHER MOTIFS IN THE TEXTILE IN LATE MEDIEVAL EUROPE

More general reasons for the choice of exactly this cloth may be sought in the motifs. Most dominant are the luminous golden stripes with large Arabic inscriptions (see figs 3–5). Although some scholars would have been able to read them, such persons were rare in late medieval Christian Europe. Three possibilities of understanding may be explored here.

First, we can consider how often cloth with Arabic inscriptions was used in elite burials in late medieval Europe. Striped textiles with inscriptions constitute only a fraction of the diverse designs of “Tatar cloth” that reached Europe. Of sixty-seven extant textiles in Anne E. Wardwell’s catalogue (1988/89), only ten are striped, and of these only six have Arabic inscriptions; of those without stripes, only two have writing.<sup>40</sup> In III written records of *panni tatarici* compiled by Wardwell from inventories of the period, mainly from churches, mention is made nineteen times of bands or stripes as a characteristic of the cloth, but only one mention is made of script, leaving open whether it was organized in inscription stripes: a “green Tartar atabi cloth with white letters and lions” in an inventory from Pope Boniface VIII.<sup>41</sup> Today these lists might be somewhat longer, with a piece added here and there, but the general conspectus remains the same.

Now there are ten documented cases of “Tatar cloth” used in a European elite funerary context.<sup>42</sup> Three of these are of striped cloth with Arabic inscriptions. They

40 WARDWELL 1988/89, 147–65 (catalogue in the illustrations). 41 WARDWELL 1988/89, 135–44, the evaluation of eleven inventories in the period from 1295 to 1380; here: nos 9–27 and no. 70. 42 Striped cloth with Arabic inscriptions: (1) Cangrande I (d. 1329), Verona: “reperto A,” here fig. 10 (WARDWELL 1988/89, pl. VIII A, fig. 14; FRATTAROLI 2004, 87, figs on pp. 84, 86; FRATTAROLI / CERVINI 2004, 283–84). (2) Alfonso de la Cerda (d. 1333), Burgos, Santa María de las Huelgas (WARDWELL 1988/89, fig. 13; HERRERO CARRETERO 1988, 117). (3) Duke Rudolph IV (d. 1365), Vienna. —Gold and silk textiles considered to be “Tatar cloth” with other motifs: (4) Bishop Hartmann (d. 1286), Augsburg: repetitive figural pattern with a motif from the Persian story of Bahram Gūr and Āzāda (WARDWELL 1988/89, figs 47, 47A). (5) King Edward I of England (d. 1307) was carried to burial with a cloth of gold (see note 17) but it is unclear whether this was “Tatar cloth.” (6) Pedro I de Castilla, son of Sancho IV (d. 1319), Burgos: repeating pattern of birds (WARDWELL 1988/89, fig. 12; HERRERO CARRETERO 1988). (7) Blanche of Portugal (d. 1321), Burgos: pattern like no. 6 (WARDWELL 1988/89, 150, fig. 12). (8) Cangrande I (d. 1329), see above no. 1: “reperto D, DI, E, F, G, H” (FRATTAROLI 2004, figs on pp. 90, 95–96, 98; FRATTAROLI / CERVINI 2004, 285–90). (9) Archbishop Dom Gonçalo Pereira (d. 1348), Braga Cathedral: pattern like nos 6–7 (VON FIRCKS 2014, 75). (10) King Rudolph I of Bohemia (d. 1307), Prague (Cat. Prague 1995).



Fig. 13: Burial garment of Emperor Frederic II, sleeve-end with Arabic inscriptions; engraving made when the grave in Palermo Cathedral was opened in 1781. After DANIELE 1784, pl. R

include one of the textiles from the burial of Cangrande I della Scala (d. 1329) in Verona in a stone sarcophagus, of which several have been attributed to the Mongol Empire. Uppermost lay a grave cloth or drape with four stripes of script running along its length, similar in type to the Vienna cloth but with thinner script stripes (see fig. 10). A very similarly striped fabric with five stripes of script was used for the Castilian Prince Alfonso de la Cerda (d. 1333) in a royal tomb at the convent Santa María la Real de las Huelgas near Burgos (see Böse in this volume, p. 228, fig. 6). In both of these latter cases, the provenance has yet to be proven. The forms of script resemble each other; however, it is questionable to what extent they conform to rules of Arabic calligraphy. Also of note, the cloth in Burgos has narrow stripes with non-Arabic characters, which have not yet been satisfactorily explained. The third case is the burial of Rudolph IV at Vienna in 1365.

A further, earlier case of a similar type but of different origin, is the imperial burial of Frederick II of Hohenstaufen in Palermo (d. 1251). Two months after his death he was buried in a garment whose sleeves were trimmed with a cloth having a band or stripe of Arabic script and one of circular medallions and cartouches with script (fig. 13). Described and illustrated at an opening of the grave in 1781, the cloth was no longer recognizable at a re-opening in 1998. According to an earlier description, the text mentioned the Holy Roman Empire and used no specific Islamic or Arabic protocol. It compares with Norman-Arabic inscriptions and indicates the textile's provenance from a royal workshop in Sicily or Apulia.<sup>43</sup>

43 DANIELE 1784, 103 f., pl. R; reading of the texts, see DANIELE 1784, 104, note o, by the German scholar of Oriental languages, Oluf Gerhard Tychsen. On the protocol of Norman-Arabic inscriptions, see JOHNS 2004, 37. Other extant textiles from the thirteenth century having short Arabic inscriptions as a subsidiary motif were previously ascribed to the royal workshops in Palermo; striped textiles are not among these. VON FALKE 1921, 20–22 with pl. V and figs 155–56, 163. In 1220 Frederick had his court workshops moved from Palermo to Lucera in Apulia, see R. BAUER 2004a, 121.



Adding the Palermo cloth to the group of six surviving striped ‘Tatar cloths’ with Arabic inscriptions mentioned above, four out of seven were used in royal and princely burials. This number seems proportionally high, given that plenty of other patterns in cloth of gold would have been available at the time and that burials constituted only a fraction of the different usages of textiles. This is an uncertain basis, as the context is incomplete, knowledge about textiles in elite burials limited, and rarely is the original burial situation preserved or the subsequent opening well documented. Nevertheless it allows raising the question whether among Eastern cloths those with Arabic inscriptions played a special role in the burials of princely elites in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Noteworthy is the burial at Verona, where the cloth with Arabic inscriptions was only one among many textiles, but it was the one placed uppermost on the body.

A second aspect is that Arabic script may have been invested with a Christian significance. It is true that aesthetic appreciation of the script could have played a role.<sup>44</sup> In our case, Herrgott understood the writing on the cloth to be “an artistic device of the fabric,” but this was in a later period, in eighteenth-century Baroque. Yet for the late medieval age two hypotheses concerning a Christian iconography of Arabic script have been proposed. Firstly, it might have been understood as an ancient Christian or Hebraic script and therefore connected to sacred historical locations in the Near East. This would also be an explanation why Arabic script was imitated in European art with religious themes.<sup>45</sup>

Another suggestion relates specifically to the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the time of the *pax mongolica* in Asia. The occasional but false European belief that the Tatars were Christians, and the correct assessment that they were sovereigns tolerant of or open to Christianity, along with the old legend of Prester John, a Christian priestly king in East Asia,<sup>46</sup> could have contributed to the high esteem bestowed upon “Tatar cloth.”<sup>47</sup> In Vienna, the account by the Franciscan Odorich from Udine who travelled to China via Iran, was translated from Latin to German in 1359; he reported that part of the Great Khan’s court in China was Christian, with Christian monks being accorded welcome and participating regularly at courtly banquets.<sup>48</sup> In the thirteenth century, the Mongols had sent emissaries and letters to the Pope and the kings of England and France seeking to form an alliance against the dominance of the Mamluk sultans over Egypt, Syria, and Palestine. Some Ilkhans were inclined toward Christianity or had Christian wives. There were not only native Nestorian Christians in Mongol lands, but also representatives of Roman Catholic Orders. In Iran under the Ilkhans, new episcopal sees were established for papally appointed bishops.<sup>49</sup>

“Tatar cloth” may thus have been regarded as Christian fabric and the Arabic inscriptions on them as Christian texts showing a relation to holy sites or to Christian nobility, particularly in the period after the Crusades<sup>50</sup> when there were no religious-

44 ETTINGHAUSEN 1983, 63; SHALEM 1996, 137, 171. 45 ETTINGHAUSEN 1975, 14; ETTINGHAUSEN 1983, 62 f.; MACK 2002, 52, 72. 46 SCHMIEDER 1994, 89–109; JACKSON 2005. 47 VON FIRCKS 2008, 59; VON FIRCKS 2014, 72–73. 48 STRASMANN 1968, 7–9, 102–05. 49 BAUSANI 1968, 541 f.; BOYLE 1976; LANE 2006; PREISER-KAPPELLER 2014, 264–92. 50 The last papally supported crusade was undertaken by the English prince and later king, Edward I, in 1270–1272. In 1291, the Mamluks conquered the last crusader stronghold in Acre.

ly motivated confrontations between Christian and Islamic states. The so-called crusade of the Cypriot King Pierre I against Alexandria, Tripoli, and Tartus, from 1365 to 1366, was considered a raid, and a commercial-political undertaking, not religiously motivated. Such an understanding of Arabic script could have applied to other objects besides textiles. Also, Christian interpretations were often given to indecipherable writing, or so-called “secret writing” readable only by the initiated. It is interesting to note that Rudolph IV himself created and used a “secret script.”<sup>51</sup>

A third aspect to consider here relates to the question of a representative and legitimizing understanding of Arabic script during this time period. Because Rudolph died in northern Italy, local practices for the preservation and arrayment of a deceased duke according to his rank could have played an important role. Also, his provisional burial for several months in the palace chapel of the Visconti in Milan, and the rites held by the Scaligeri in Verona, may have conformed more or less strictly to local custom. Italian instances of the use of gold and silk cloth with Arabic inscriptions, as in the burial of Cangrande I della Scala in Verona and in the funerary garment of Frederick II in Palermo,<sup>52</sup> could have influenced the choice of cloth in Rudolph’s case (figs 10, 13). Ettore Napione has suggested that the funeral of Cangrande I, who had been imperial vicar of the Holy Roman Empire, was intentionally staged to follow imperial burial traditions in Palermo.<sup>53</sup>

If such a thought were possible in 1329, it could have determined the choice of cloth for Rudolph’s shroud in 1365 (see fig. 3). It may then be understood in connection with Rudolph’s Italian politics<sup>54</sup> and his efforts to place himself within imperial traditions, as evidenced, for example, in his reference to the Hohenstaufen emperor, Frederick I Barbarossa, when issuing the *privilegium maius*. The most obvious visual connection between Arabic script and imperial sovereignty was to be found in the embroidered coronation mantle of the Holy Roman Empire, whose border carries an Arabic inscription. The mantle was made in 1133 in the Sicilian court workshops but was believed at the time to have been the mantle of Charlemagne. Rudolph’s father-in-law, the Emperor Charles IV, had possession of the mantle in 1350 and probably wore it in 1355 at his coronation. Beginning in 1361 he displayed the mantle publicly once a year, along with the imperial crown jewels.<sup>55</sup>

Finally, the choice of the textile may be explained by Rudolph’s identity as a ruler. The importance attached to clothing appropriate to his princely status can be seen in a passage from the *Privilegium maius*, a forged document commissioned by Rudolph himself. Among the eighteen “liberties” belonging to a duke of Austria, the following may be noted: “attired in a ducal garment (*ducali pilleo*)” and other regalia “he should receive his fief from the Empire in the manner of the other imperial princes.”<sup>56</sup> Although the animal figures on the cloth (see figs 6, 7) are on a miniature scale compared to the script, an eye sensitive to heraldry could have regarded them as referring to the Habsburg and Austrian coat of arms,<sup>57</sup> thus fitting the stone tablet in the burial crypt (fig. 9a). Generally hunting scenes and the crowned peacock could be perceived as

51 MÜLLER 2015. 52 For both, see above note 28. Apparently nothing is known about funerary textiles of the Visconti in Milan. 53 NAPIONE 2004, 31, 33. 54 BAUM 1996, 109, 277. 55 R. BAUER 2004, 89–90. 56 BAUM 1996, 88. 57 As represented in the Zurich Armorial (1335/1345), see RUNGE 1860, nos 17, 34.



royal motifs. The felines in the textile's hunting frieze could indicate not only the lion on the Habsburg shield and on the helmet above it, but also the panther on the Carinthian coat of arms. The peacocks with long tail feathers could be seen to refer to peacock feathers of the Habsburg lion and on the helmet surmounting the Austrian trib- and escutcheon.

## THE TEXTILE'S TRANSFER FROM IRAN TO VIENNA

With the death of Sultan Abū Sa'īd in 1335, the cloth lost its direct, representative function in a courtly Muslim context, which derived from the display of the sovereign's name and titles and a prayer for him in the woven inscriptions; yet it remained a valuable luxury textile. We do not know when the cloth left Iran, when it arrived in Europe before its use as a shroud for Duke Rudolph IV, and whether this took place in one or more stages. A further question is raised by the fact that the pieces in the shroud make up only part of the entire length of the reconstructed original cloth;<sup>58</sup> it remains a matter of speculation where in the history of the textile the other part was used.

This textile was not produced for trade, but it may have entered trade after the death of Abū Sa'īd.<sup>59</sup> It would have come to Europe by one of the known routes of trade with the East through northern Italy, the Danube, or the Baltic Sea. Trade cities such as Genoa and Venice in northern Italy had close links to the eastern Mediterranean and Iran.<sup>60</sup> In northern Italy, where Rudolph died, the textile could have been obtained by his court or presented as a gift by one of his Italian allies. However, at that time and already by the mid-fourteenth century, trade between Iran and Europe had declined; Ilkhan rule had disintegrated into small regional fiefs after Abū Sa'īd, who had no son as successor.<sup>61</sup>

That and the long period of thirty years or more between the cloth's manufacture in 1319–1335 and its use in 1365 for the shroud concedes to an alternative hypothesis that the textile came through intermediary stages as a gift to Rudolph or his court during his lifetime. Such a transfer outside of trade might better fit the historical situation as well as the princely qualities of the textile. Direct political contacts between Vienna and lands of the earlier Mongol Empire are not known to have existed,<sup>62</sup> but in 1358 and 1364, respectively, Vienna was visited by the Lusignan kings Hugues IV and Pierre I of Cyprus.<sup>63</sup> They also ruled over the Armenian kingdom of Cilicia, a former vassal of the Ilkhans of Iran and Iraq.<sup>64</sup> Another emissary came in 1362, accompanied by Archbishop Isaias of Seleucia (Silifke in present-day, southeastern Turkey).<sup>65</sup> Pierre I tried without success to coax Vienna to participate in a new crusade. Within this framework, a possible scenario is that the cloth was first given by the Ilkhan Abū Sa'īd

<sup>58</sup> See above with note 6. <sup>59</sup> The latter was suggested by DEMEL 1933, 36. <sup>60</sup> JACOBY 2010a. <sup>61</sup> WING 2014, 315–17. <sup>62</sup> VON FIRCKS 2008, 59, suggested a political-representative relationship with the Mongol empire as a reason for the use of the cloth in the shroud, yet it is difficult to find evidence for this in Rudolph IV's case. Moreover, the rule of the Mongol Ilkhans no longer existed at that point in time. <sup>63</sup> W. KOCH 1967, 127; BAUM 1996, 164. <sup>64</sup> DASHDOND OG 2010, 219, 224; also see above, note 49. <sup>65</sup> W. KOCH 1967, 195. The titular Archbishop Ortolf of Apamea (in Syria) was in Vienna in 1365.

as a diplomatic gift to his vassal Armenia or to Cyprus, for which it was excellently suited by the large inscriptions flashing his name and titles in gold. It could have come to Vienna in the course of the Lusignan missions as a gift that demonstrated an acquaintance with Eastern rulers and the potential success of a crusade. This would mean one more historical context for the use of the textile, that is, as a political and diplomatic gift in two instances. There is no proof for either the trade or the gift scenario, but a course of events in which the textile passed directly from one princely court to another may be more probable in view of its extraordinary qualities.

Other possible transmitters of objects from the East to Vienna may be noted briefly. The previously mentioned Odoric, from Partenau (Pordenone) in Habsburg territory, had direct contact with the Mongol Empire and Iran in the time of the Ilkhan Sultan Abū Saʿīd. In 1314/1318 he set out for China and returned in 1330. Via Trabzon on the Black Sea he arrived at the capital of the Ilkhans, the northwestern Iranian city of Tabriz, whose importance as a trade centre he emphasized. He continued through Sulṭ ānīya, Kāshān, and Central Iran; at Hurmūz in the Gulf he boarded a ship to India. He spent several years in China and at the court of the Mongolian Great Khan in Peking, then returned overland to Europe, possibly again via Iran.<sup>66</sup> Friedrich Kreuzbach has been named as another possible transmitter; he was a knight errant and traveller to the Orient and was appointed Master of the Hunt by Rudolph in 1358.<sup>67</sup> Such travellers and their reports were potential mediators between cultures and helped to shape a local understanding of the Orient, but it is not known if these connections also led to the arrival of objects of Islamic art in Vienna.

### CLOTH OF GOLD AND CULTURAL TRANSFER

For the textile used in Rudolph IV's burial shroud, at least three and maybe more late medieval contexts of use in different places can be traced and suggested: as product for a princely Islamic court in Iran; possibly as a political and diplomatic gift for other courts in the East and for Vienna, or as an object of trade; and as a representative precious textile for a dead ruler in Europe and for laying him to eternal rest in a Christian burial. In each case the textile was invested with different meanings owing to the specific function and context. Common ground arose from the materiality of the object: silk and gold and the skilled weaving technique made it a royal and princely object. In Iran the type of textile had a precise visual and readable message and a political function; it was not intended for a burial. In Europe, cloth of gold and "Tatar cloth" were more generic attributes of noble status used in a variety of functions, including funeral.

The arrangement of Rudolph's burial in the crypt was planned beforehand, the transferral of the body attentively carried out. This supports the view that the choice of cloth in which he would be displayed en route and was laid to rest in Vienna was

<sup>66</sup> STRASMANN 1968, 8, 42–45. On Tabriz as a trading centre with European-Christian and Mongolian-Muslim connections, see BLAIR 2014a and PREISER-KAPPELLER 2014. <sup>67</sup> KUBA-HAUK / SALIGER 1987, 10; BAUM 1996, 124.



carefully considered. The late medieval Christian European use of gold and silk cloth from the Mongol Empire in the funerary trappings of a high-ranking noble was not a singular occurrence. The Arabic inscriptions were probably not read but may have been charged with Christian or representative meanings relating to the Empire. That would have made the textile in the shroud of Rudolph IV an apt fabric for eternity.

In his study of cloth of gold textiles in Mongol culture, Thomas T. Allsen has examined the transmission of functions of textile usage and of textile technology as an Inner-Asian phenomenon, arguing the importance of West Asian and Iranian traditions.<sup>68</sup> The spread and use of Mongol cloth of gold and silk constitutes also an example of artistic and cultural transfer from Asia to Europe in the late medieval period, if we take lasting effects as one criterion<sup>69</sup> for such a transfer.

These textiles reached Europe in large numbers; they changed their original contexts and functions when they moved to Europe: they had an effect on the arts, stimulated and influenced Italian silk production, and became a literary trope. If it was the case that in “twelfth century romance [...] the weaving of Tyrian purple fabric designates royalty but by the late fourteenth century it is more usual to signify the dress of royalty as ‘cloth of gold,’”<sup>70</sup> then the thirteenth- and early fourteenth-century transfer of Mongol cloth of gold and silk to Europe may have been the reason for this change in perception.

**68** ALLSEN 1997, 71–98. **69** GEROGIORGAKIS / SCHEEL / SCHORKOWITZ 2011, 413, 419. **70** HODGES 2014, 20.

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RIGGISBERGER BERICHTE 21

# ORIENTAL SILKS IN MEDIEVAL EUROPE

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