

Jacqueline **Simcox**

Chinese Textiles

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All works of art in this catalogue are for sale

Asian Textiles and Works of Art (Visit by appointment only)

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1

A silk kesi panel, woven with a design of seven dragons chasing flaming pearls amongst clouds on a purple ground. The dragons each with five claws and long curling snouts; their scales, spines and bodies edged in gilded animal substrate wrapped around a silk core; the edges of the clouds similarly decorated.

Central Asia, 13th century

Length: 58 cms (22 7/8 inches)

Width: 31.5 cms (12 3/8 inches)

Right hand selvedge preserved; other edges cut.

Illustrated:

'Chinese Textiles', no. 1, Spink & Son Ltd exhibition catalogue, London, 1994

For other examples see:

'When Silk Was Gold', James C.Y. Watt & Anne E. Wardwell, nos. 17 & 18 for panels of the same design and two examples showing a cloud collar incorporated into the design. Exhibition catalogue, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1997

2

An embroidered silk thangka depicting Maitreya, the Compassionate One, the future fifth Manushi Buddha. The figure seated with legs crossed and feet upturned; his hands in mudra and holding lotus flowers which support the Wheel of the Law and the kundika, beside each shoulder. The figure seated on an elaborate lotus base and the embroidery embellished with fresh water seed pearls. The brown silk mount brocaded in gold with a pattern of lotus flowers.

Chinese, Ming dynasty, 1368-1644

Height: 47 cms (18 1/2 inches)

Image: 15.3 x 13.3 cms (6 x 5 1/4 inches)

Provenance:

From a private American Collection

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3

A sleeveless, front-opening military jacket, the dark blue cotton exterior embroidered in silk on the front and back with a side-facing, four-clawed dragon chasing a flaming pearl against a background of clouds and above a curved, scalloped border of waves and spray. The lower part with large lotus flowers; two at the front and three at the rear. The whole surface of the exterior with rows of circular metal studs which pierce the beige cotton lining and are riveted to seven rows of applied metal plates.

The jacket has several cotton loops on the surface which would have attached to padded epaulettes, sleeves, underarm protectors and a cover for the lower front opening, to protect the stomach. The jacket would have been worn over a split skirt with similar metal studs and decoration, suitable for wearing on horseback.

Chinese, Ming dynasty, 1368-1644; Wanli period, 1573-1619
Length from shoulder to hem: 76 cms (30 inches)

Parade armour from the Qing dynasty (1644-1911) is known, but examples of Ming dynasty textile armour, which would have been worn in battle, appear to be unrecorded.





4

A dark blue silk *kesi* canopy, woven with eight cranes in flight amongst clouds. The central medallion formed with a *yin/yang* symbol surrounded by four archaistic dragons and the background embellished with Precious Objects and *ruyi*-heads, (or wish-granting gems), tied with coloured ribbons.

Height: 356 cms (11 ft 7 1/4 ins)

Width: 254 cms (8 ft 4 ins)

Chinese, Ming dynasty, 1368-1644; Wanli period, 1573-1619

Provenance:

From a private English collection

The symbolism on this canopy is appropriate for Daoist use. The design of eight cranes, forms the words *baxian shangshou*, meaning 'may the eight immortals grant you longevity' and their placement among clouds shaped like the *lingzhi* fungus of long life, together with the *ruyi*-heads, or wish-granting gems, reinforces this message. At the centre, the four archaistic dragons echo the four dragon quarters of the celestial heavens around the Pole star, while the *yin/yang* symbol represents the duality of life and the turning of the year as it alternates between its male and female half, as the sunlight increases and decreases in a perpetual rhythm.







5

A square rank badge embroidered with a pair of egrets, for a sixth rank civil official;

the birds worked in couched white cord. The background filled with five-coloured clouds worked in red, blue, green, yellow and pink (substituting for white); also emblematic of the Five Phases, Five Directions and Five Planets. The lower edge with water and mountains embroidered in floss silks using long stitches and couched threads. The centre of each large red quatrefoil-shaped cloud further embellished with gold thread. The edges of the clouds raised over an under-thread to give a three dimensional effect. The background worked in dark blue silk with a twisted thread for a matt effect.

Chinese, Ming dynasty, 16th century
Measurements: 36.83 x 38.1 cms (14 1/2 x 15 inches)

Provenance:
Palazzo Corsini, Florence

The badge presented here was once part of a group of badges of similar style, sewn together into a curtain and housed in the Palazzo Corsini where, by reputedly, they had passed down through the family. They exhibit a style which is provincial in technique and it is possible that they were made in southern China and exported through Macao to Portugal in the 16th century.

The Dominican friar, Gaspar da Cruz, wrote in 'Tratado' in 1569 of the five grades of the emperor's people, who wore emblems on their front and back, decorated with 'serpents' (dragons) embroidered, or with gold thread, and how the emblems had come to Portugal and were now in the churches. (See p. 209, 'As Alfaias Bordadas Sinoportuguesas (Séculos XVI a XVII)' by Maria João Pacheco Ferreira, Lisbon University, 2007

For other rank badges from the Palazzo Corsini see:
'The Imperial Wardrobe: Fine Chinese Costume and Textiles from the Linda Wrigglesworth Collection', lot 19 for a first or second rank military official's rank badge of a lion. Christie's New York auction, 19th March, 2008

'Power Dressing: Textiles for Rulers and Priests from the Chris Hall Collection', no. 60, for a sixth rank civil official's badge of egrets, similar to our badge published here; and no. 69 for a fifth rank military official's badge of a bear. Exhibition catalogue, Asian Civilisations Museum, Singapore, 2006

'Silks for Thrones and Altars', John E. Vollmer, no. 11 for a fifth rank civil official's badge of silver pheasants; and no. 12 for a first or second rank military official's rank badge of a lion. Exhibition catalogue, Myrna Myers, Paris, 2003

'Making the Grade', The Badge of Rank III, p. 54 for a first or second rank military official's rank badge of a lion; and p. 55 for a fifth rank civil official's rank badge of silver pheasants. Exhibition catalogue, Linda Wrigglesworth, London, 1996

6

A silk gauze panel embroidered in counted stitch with butterflies and insects amongst exotic leaves. The yellow background with a lozenge trellis, linked with circles, squares, formalised flower heads, roundels with archaistic dragons and *ruyi* heads, or wish-granting gems. The panel may be from a wall hanging or possibly an imperial informal robe. Yellow was reserved exclusively for imperial use.

Chinese, Kangxi period, 1662-1722
Measurements: 21.5 x 67.3 cms (8 1/2 x 26 1/2 inches)

Provenance:
From a private American Collection



7

A silk brocade panel woven for the Lantern Festival, with a lantern set under a canopy topped with a *shou* character for long life and decorated with double gourds. The pendants carrying smaller lanterns, musical stones, ruyi-heads, finger citron, conch shells and peaches, and the lantern itself decorated with various flowers. The design carries wishes of great joy and fulfilment of wishes, appropriate for the New Year festivities.

The Lantern Festival was celebrated fifteen days after the New Year, at the time of the first full moon, and the circular lantern is symbolic of the full moon.

Chinese, Wanli period, 1573-1619
Height: 113 cms (44 1/2 inches)
Width: 65 cms (25 1/2 inches)

Provenance:
From a private English collection

8

A pair of silk *kesi* tapestry chair covers woven with golden pheasants on rocks surrounded by peony blossoms. Above, a *shou* character and peaches, emblematic of long life and below, a medallion surrounded with buddhist emblems above a dragon, rocks and waves.

Chinese, early 18th century
Height: 174 cms (68 1/2 inches)
Width: 60.3 cms (23 3/4 inches)

Provenance:
Museum of Classical Chinese
Furniture, California
Spink & Son, Ltd, London

Chair covers in rectangular form appear first in the early Wanli period, 1573-1619. It is probable that they were a response of the textile industry to a change in the law in 1567, when a ban on foreign trade was lifted. One result was the importation of large quantities of fine hardwood which stimulated furniture production.



9

A horizontal embroidered silk panel, made for a buddhist temple, the sky blue ground worked with skulls and pendants of jewels under a half vajra, or thunder bolt. The border with a Tibetan inscription written in black ink.

Chinese, 18th/19th century

Height: 16 cms (6 1/4 inches)
Width: 173 cms (68 1/4 inches)



10

A red silk *kesi* panel, woven with a bold dragon amongst clouds; with red flames streaming out behind him. One foreleg stretched upwards, the five claws extended towards a flaming pearl.

Chinese, Ming dynasty, 1368-1644
Height: 54 cms (21 1/4 inches)
Width: 35 cms (13 3/4 inches).







11

A silk *kesi*, semi-formal court robe, woven with nine five-clawed dragons in gold thread chasing flaming pearls. The background of clouds, bats and paired buddhist emblems above a wave border.

Chinese, early 19th century
Length: 137 cms (54 inches)

Since blue was the Qing dynastic colour, members of the court wore blue for their costumes, unless otherwise specified by rank or as a member of the imperial family. The layout of the robe design envisaged the wearer as the axis of earth, with the heavens spread out around him, ending in the waters surrounding the earth.

Provenance:
From a private English collection





12

A blue-black silk surcoat for an empress, embroidered with four front facing dragon roundels around the neck, each with the Four Imperial Symbols: the sun, moon, constellation and mountains, placed above the dragons on the shoulders and front and back of the neck opening. The skirt with four side facing dragon roundels. The cuffs with a dragon and wave border and the hem with a deep wave border embellished with buddhist emblems.

Chinese, late 19th century
Length: 136 cms (53 1/2 inches)

Costume design for the court and aristocracy was strictly controlled. The use of the Imperial Symbols on costumes was limited to the emperor, dowager empress and empress and a very few other members of the imperial family, while the emperor alone wore the Four Imperial Symbols on his surcoat. However, in the 19th century it became customary for the empress to add the Four Imperial Symbols to her surcoat.



13

A silk rectangular throne cushion cover, embroidered entirely in Peking knots with a symmetrical design of a central medallion of lotus flowers, peony blossoms and camellia accompanied by bats, emblems of blessings. The main field and wide border similarly decorated and with bats in flight amongst the foliage, or carrying beribboned coins, wishing blessings and long life and with paired buddhist emblems of endless knots and parasols, or umbrellas and fish, outlined in gold thread. Other parts of the design outlined with a fine yellow cord. The colours of multiple shades of burned orange, blue, maroon-lavender and grey, all on a pale yellow silk ground.

Chinese, 19th century

Measurements: 111.10 x 168.9 cms (43 3/4 x 66 1/2 inches)

The presence of 108 bats, for the circle of the life and the heavens, reinforces the buddhist association, but is an ancient numerology for the cycle of the sun and moon, while the number of flower heads in each section relates to other lunar and solar cycles of time. The measurement of the whole, adding the height to the width, relates to the 28 hsiu, or lunar mansions in the celestial heavens.