

Session Textiles and Archives

On Textiles

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Unraveling Heritage: Interpreting Textile Adornments at Angkor Wat Temple Textile adornments within Angkor Wat Temple hold profound cultural significance, yet their interpretation remains challenging due to the absence of physical remains or depictions in paintings. This presentation delves into the nuanced symbolism and cultural contexts of these elusive textiles, drawing from archaeology, art history, and local expertise.

Using Angkor Wat as a focal point, I examine the intricate designs and motifs found on the wall and other remains of its architectural parts, uncovering their roles in the construction and decoration of the building, religious rituals, social hierarchies, and artistic expression. Through careful analysis of architectural elements, inscriptions, and historical records, we decode the cultural messages embedded within these artifacts. Local knowledge has been utilised to enhance our comprehension of Khmer heritage, with comparative studies to some neighboring countries to expand and deepen our understanding of the subject matter.

By navigating the challenges of interpretation, we strive to illuminate the complexities of Angkor Wat's textile adornments and their significance in the broader context of Southeast Asian history and culture.

On Archives

Magali An Berthon, Postdoctoral fellow at the Center for Textile Research, University of Copenhagen.

This paper centres on the textile collection of the National Museum of Cambodia, about 400 textile pieces, especially silk textiles in the *hol* (polychromic ikat) technique and dance costume elements from the Royal Ballet, acquired until the 1960s.

Upon the museum's reopening in 1979 in the aftermath of the Khmer Rouge dictatorship, only seventy-two examples of silks and a costume collection of about thirty pieces were recovered; the rest was most likely lost to looting and environmental damages.

Despite the lack of comprehensive photographic records on the collection and the degradable nature of textiles, a set of archival documents (pre-1970 catalogs, inventories and index cards) found at the National Museum help to reconstruct precious knowledge on these objects, their provenance, styles and acquisition history.

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