



Orient-Institut Istanbul Lecture Series
convened by Esther Voswinckel Filiz
(Orient-Institut Istanbul)

Registration Information

The lectures will be held online via Zoom.

To attend this virtual lecture series, prior registration is necessary. Please send an email specifying your name and academic affiliation to events@oiist.net two days before each lecture, i. e. by Monday (27 September / 11 October / 18 October 2021).

For technical reasons, the number of participants is limited. You will be informed about the organizational and technical procedure a day before the lecture series starts.

Prof. Dr. Hülya Tezcan
Nişantaşı University, Istanbul

Topkapı Sarayındaki Din Konulu Tekstillere
Genel Bir Bakış / *Textile Religious Paraphernalia
at the Topkapı Palace – an Introduction**

Wednesday, 29 September
18:00 (Turkish time, GMT+3)

Dr. Nikolaos Vryzidis
Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

Reflections of Identity on Silk:
Towards a Re-Reading of the »Islamic«
and the »Secular« in Greek Orthodox
Church Fabrics

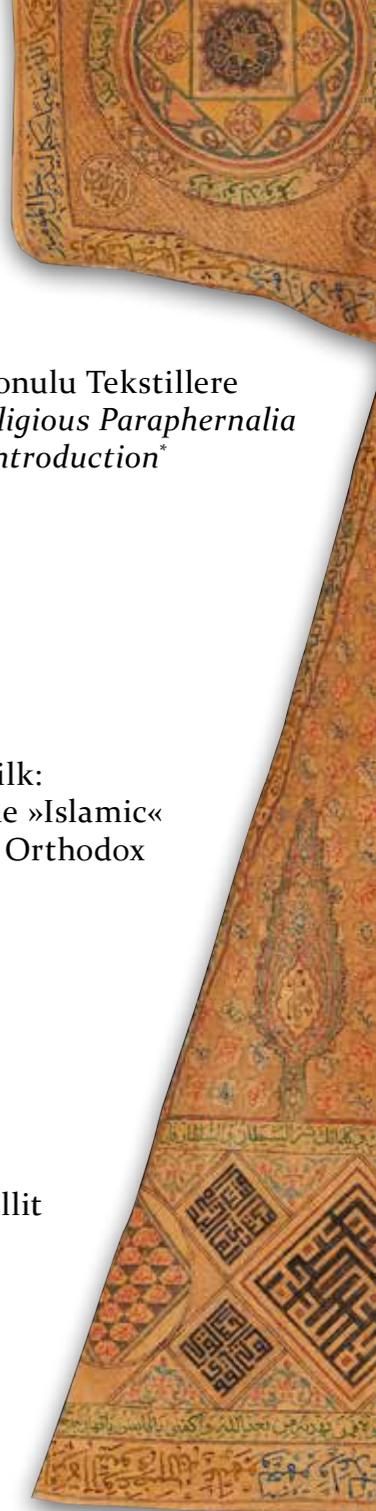
Wednesday, 13 October 2021
19:00 (Turkish time, GMT+3)

Dr. Esther Juhasz
Shenkar College / The Israel Museum, Jerusalem

The Jewish Prayer Shawl Tallit

Wednesday, 20 October 2021
19:00 (Turkish time, GMT+3)

*This talk will be delivered in Turkish.



»Oh you who covers himself [with a cloak]«

This first verse of the 74th chapter of the Quran refers to the Prophet Muhammad who, after receiving the first words of revelation from the Angel Gabriel, is remembered as wrapping himself up with a cloak.

Religions are more than written texts. They are also fabrics that veil or reveal; they wrap up and provide for shelter, forming permeable media between inside and outside, between the body and the world, between the hidden and the visible. While scholars of religion have for a long time privileged the study of texts, the closeness between the words *text* and *textile* (both are derived from Latin *texere*, to weave, to fit together, braid, interweave, fabricate, build) may invite us to conceive of religious traditions as practices of artfully interweaving words with the material world – in countless techniques.

Cult vestments or fabrics used in religious settings, their designs and their stories reveal moments of exchange between the neighboring religious communities in the Eastern Mediterranean that challenge established divisions between scholarly fields of enquiry. The study of textile paraphernalia also points to everyday religious practices that have only partially found their way into the realm of theological doctrines.

The aim of this lecture series is to enquire into the intricacies of religious history and local forms of devotion in the Eastern Mediterranean through the medium of textiles. What insights can be gained by exploring textiles – their making, their use and ritual, and their multi-layered meanings – as a source for the study of religion? By bringing together approaches from anthropology of religion, textile studies, and art history, the lecture series will open up a forum for discussing the significance of textiles in the realm of lived religion in the Eastern Mediterranean, historical and contemporary, from three different perspectives.

Esther Voswinckel Filiz

Wednesday

29 September 2021

18:00 (Turkish time, GMT+3)

on Zoom



Photo: Tent of the surre caravan carrying presents from Istanbul to Mecca. Courtesy of Prof. Dr. Hülya Tezcan.

Prof. Dr. Hülya Tezcan graduated from the Department of Art History at Istanbul University in 1968. In 1971, she joined Topkapı Palace Museum, while at the same time continuing her academic career with a Ph. D. in Byzantine Archeology. Between 1978 and 2006, she acted as a curator of the Topkapı Palace Collections responsible for the Department of Sultan Gar-

Topkapı Sarayındaki Din Konulu Tekstillere Genel Bir Bakış / *Textile Religious Paraphernalia at Topkapı Palace – an Introduction**

Topkapı Palace has a collection of 87 Ottoman-period talismanic shirts that are in most cases made out of cotton, more rarely silk. Talismanic shirts are garments that are believed to confer blessing, to carry healing qualities, and to shield the wearer from harm. These shirts are covered with calligraphy, religious formulae, geometrical grids containing numbers and letters, symbols and ornaments. The collection not only includes the elaborate and lavish talismanic shirts prepared for the Sultans and the imperial family, but also some made to be worn by dervishes. Another category of textiles with particular religious significance to be found at the Topkapı Palace collections are cover cloths (*kisve*) of the Kaaba. Starting in 1517, these precious, embroidered dresses sewn for the Kaaba were each year commissioned by the Ottoman Sultans and sent to Mecca with a festive parade carrying gifts (*surre*). A closer look at the intricacies of decor and ritual related to the *kisve* and its journeys from Istanbul to Mecca, and back, reveals the itinerant, and textile, dimensions of the holy place at the centre of all Muslim ritual orientation: the Kaaba. Drawing on decades of experience as a curator of the textile collections of Topkapı Palace, Hülya Tezcan will provide an introduction into the Topkapı collections as an archive for the study of the textile dimensions of Ottoman religious history.

**This talk will be delivered in Turkish.*

ments and Textiles. Her publications related to Ottoman textile culture include: *Children of the Ottoman Seraglio. Customs and Costumes of the Princes and Princesses* (2006), *Tailors to the Court. M. Palma, D. Lena, P. Parma* (2008), *Topkapı Sarayı Koleksiyonundan Tılsımlı Gömlekler* (2011), *Silk of Bursa* (2017, with Nurhan Atasoy ve Walter Denny),

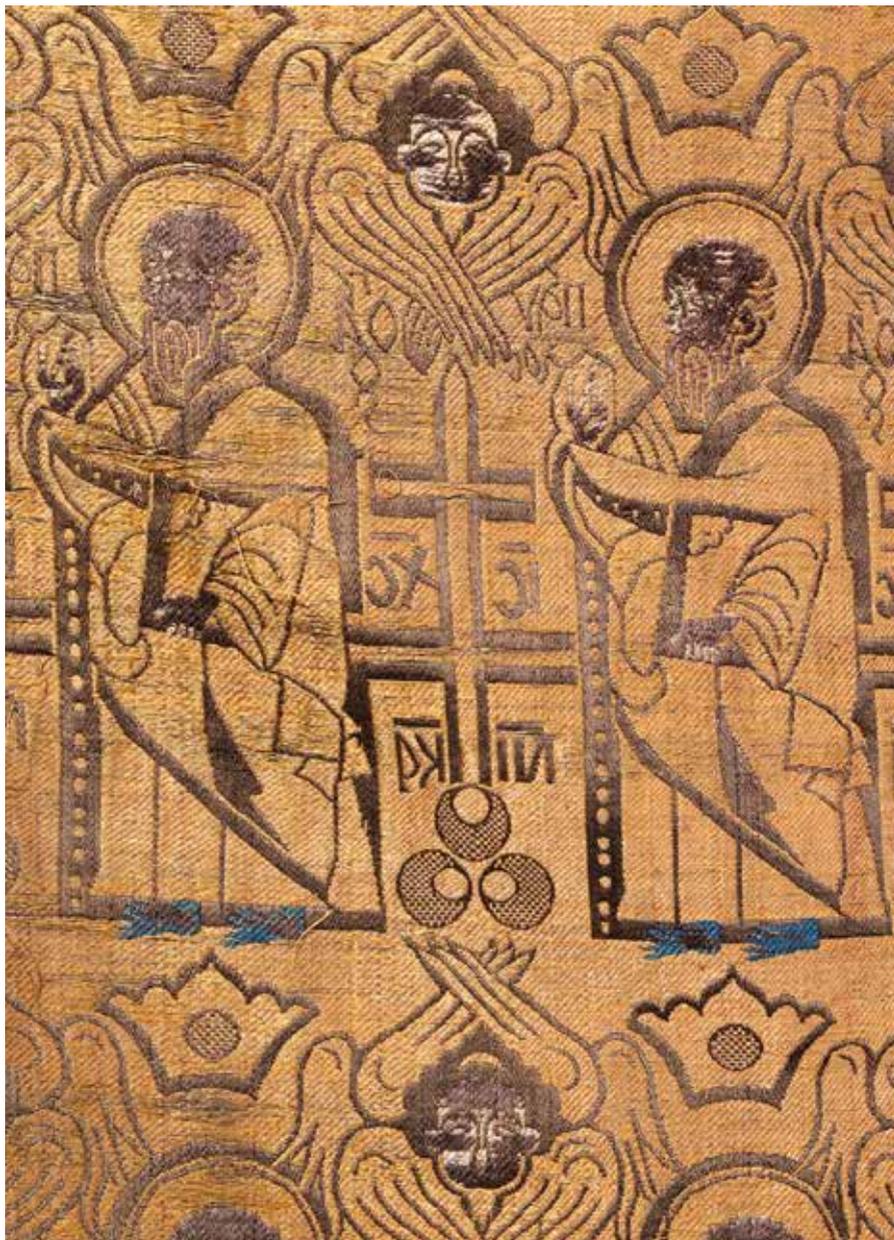
and *Sacred Covers of Islam's Holy Shrines with Samples from Topkapı Palace* (2017). Currently she is teaching in the Department of Textiles and Fashion at Nişantaşı University in Istanbul.

Wednesday

13 October 2021

19:00 (Turkish time, GMT+3)

on Zoom



Reflections of Identity on Silk: Towards a Re-Reading of the »Islamic« and the »Secular« in Greek Orthodox Church Fabrics

Many historical vestments and church fabrics of the Greek Orthodox rite survive today in monastic sacristies and museums. Until now, textile and dress scholars have primarily focused on their ultimate origin, historic evolution, and dogmatic meaning. In my view, these important material remnants inform us on underexplored dynamics in the society that produced them and illuminate the ways in which trends originating from different milieus were appropriated within clerical context. As reflections of cultural, religious, and artistic identity, ecclesial fabrics can offer insights on the Church's association to religious otherness and profane, or better, court aesthetics. Focusing on liturgical textiles and vestments, the lecture will discuss how the »Islamic« and »secular« elements were negotiated by the Church during Byzantine and Ottoman times. Essentially, our discussion will be centered on the tension between the usefulness and the limitations these taxonomies present when studying premodern church material culture.

Dr. Nikolaos Vryzidis is a postdoctoral research fellow at the Department of History and Archaeology of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. His scholarly work explores issues of identity in relation to material culture, and especially ecclesial textiles and metalwork, in the late medieval and early modern Mediterranean, subjects on which he has written more than twenty articles and book chapters. In 2016 he convened

a conference on Mediterranean textiles, which resulted in an edited volume of essays (*The Hidden Life of Textiles in the Medieval and Early Modern Mediterranean*) published by Brepols in 2020. He also pursues research in cross-cultural aspects of medieval art, part of which will be published in a forthcoming volume on the religious arts that he currently co-edits.

Wednesday

20 October 2021

19:00 (Turkish time, GMT+3)

on Zoom



The Jewish Prayer Shawl Tallit

The *tallit*, the fringed garment, is worn by observant Jewish males to this day. The appending of the fringes – *tzitzit* – to one's attire is a fundamental biblical commandment, and its significance transcends the realm of dress. Its fulfillment is deemed equivalent to the fulfillment of all the *mitzvot* (commandments) a Jew is expected to perform.

The commandment is imbued with mnemonic, mystical, and magical meanings, and is expressed in the *halakhic* literature and in the wealth of local custom and interpretation. These bear on such material matters as the fabric, size, color, and knotting of the tassels, on who may make the *tallit* or knot the tassel strings, and on how, when, and where the garments should be worn and more. Drawing on decades of research of Sephardi material culture in the Ottoman Empire and on her experience working with the ethnographic collections of The Israel Museum (Jerusalem), Esther Juhasz will shed light onto the vital role and the multiple implications of threads, knots, fringes, and fabrics in Jewish ritual life, past and present.

Dr. Esther Juhasz is a researcher of Jewish material culture who studies dress, textiles and visual religion in the intersection between art, folk culture and popular culture. She has worked for many years in curatorial and research positions at The Israel Museum, Jerusalem. There she specialized in ethnography and published the book *Sephardi Jews in the Ottoman Empire. Aspects of Material Culture* (1990) for which she received the Dawidowicz Prize for Ethnography and Folklore. She holds an M.A in Art History and a Ph.D. in the Folklore and Folk Culture Studies department at the Hebrew University and

complemented her studies in material culture at the department of Anthropology, University College London. Currently she is teaching at Shenkar College of Engineering Design and Art in Ramat Gan. Her recent publications include *The Jewish Wardrobe. From The Collections of the Israel Museum* (2012), of which she is both the editor and principal author, *Trousseau Lists of Jewish Brides from Izmir Between an Official Document and a Personal Narrative* (2015), and *Visibility, Perception and Memory in Clothes: Dilemmas of Identity in the Dress of Jewish Women in Immigrant Communities* (2020).

Fabrics of Devotion
Religious Textiles in the Eastern Mediterranean
Orient-Institut Istanbul Lecture Series
September/October 2021
convened by Esther Voswinckel Filiz (Orient-Institut Istanbul)

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