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Review

Reviewed Work(s): *Patterned Splendour: Textiles Presented on Javanese Metal and Stone Sculptures, Eighth to the Fifteenth Century* by Lesley S. Pullen

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Lesley S. Pullen, *Patterned Splendour: Textiles Presented on Javanese Metal and Stone Sculptures, Eighth to the Fifteenth Century*. Singapore: Yusof Ishak Institute, 2021, xix + 308 pp. ISBN: 9789814881845, price: EUR 32.48 (paperback); 9789814881852, EUR 30.43 (eBook).

Based on her 2017 PhD thesis, this monograph by Lesley Pullen is the first book-length study of the so-called “virtual textiles”, representations of cloth in stone, brick, and metal artifacts. Though noted previously, it is only recently that textiles and textile patterns represented on permanent materials have become the focus of dedicated studies. Another PhD theses on virtual textiles was defended in the same year (Sarjono 2017). The importance of a large corpus of virtual textiles for the history of textiles and dress of pre-Islamic Java cannot be overstated. The obvious reason is that very little of the actual materials has survived the humid conditions of tropical Java. To be sure, there is a small but growing corpus of Indonesian textiles pre-dating 1500 CE, as well as a small number of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Indian trade textiles imported to Indonesia, but this corpus remains to be fully published.

The book is divided into five chronologically organized chapters, followed by a short conclusion. The reader is also served by the final epilogue and several appendices, including a useful glossary of Old Javanese textile terms and a substantial bibliography. The first and second chapters can be read as an introduction into the textile world of Java and Sumatra before 1500 CE. The author discusses several prominent textile patterns, drawing comparisons between the virtual textiles, recent ethnographic textiles and more recent productions. Particularly interesting is a discussion of a decorative technique called in Old Javanese *tulis mas* (drawing in gold), which must have been a type of gold-leaf glue work, introduced to Java in the twelfth century CE (if not earlier), probably from Persia. The author suggests that especially among the thirteenth-century sculptures, a number of the textiles depicted with a pattern could be described as *tulis mas* (p. 25). Production and decorative techniques represented on Javanese and Sumatran virtual textiles have so far been identified as brocades, weft-faced and warp-faced ikats, double ikats, reserve-dyed textiles, as well as embroidery. The author suggests that “many of the patterns on the stone sculptures could represent *songket*, or brocade”, drawing mainly on similarities with modern Sumatran *kain balapak*, a kind of *songket* with a dense decoration of gold thread (p. 27).

The following three chapters are presented in the form of a detailed catalogue of the statues and other objects with visible textile patterns. The third chapter is devoted to the textiles represented on metal and stone sculpture dated to the eighth to eleventh centuries CE. The author ascribes to the view

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that most of the patterns documented from the Central Javanese period (ca. 750–928 CE) are based on foreign patterns. Four distinct groups of textile patterns are recognized. Among the first group, the author interprets the patterns in a repeat of small flowers, circles and dots as imported Indian tie-dyed textiles (*bandhani*) and compares this corpus with the famous block-printed cottons in the Newberry Collection (pp. 65–69, 80–81). Among the second group, an interesting sub-group of complex geometric patterns in bands is tentatively interpreted as block-printed, mordant dyed textiles, further decorated with the *prada*-technique (p. 102). Among the third group, a small group of statues show textile patterns interpreted by the author as either a heavy brocade or embroidery (pp. 112–14). The fourth group consists of only two statues from Bumi Ayu in South Sumatra. Dated between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries CE, the statues are shown wearing the lower wrap-up garment and a long-sleeved jacket.

The fourth chapter is devoted to the rich corpus of textiles represented on stone and metal sculpture of the Kadiri period (1042–1222 CE) and Singhasari period (1222–1292 CE). Virtual textiles of these periods are typified by bold patterns, animals in roundels, and animals emerging from scrolling vegetation. Tracing the bold Javanese patterns to foreign models, the author draws attention to the similarities with contemporary Chinese and Central Asian textiles and emphasizes demonstrable Tantric influences (pp. 147–49, 163–65). As to the decorative techniques reflected in virtual textiles from this period, Pullen notes that “the stylistic grammar of the decoration would suggest an embroidered or a brocade fabric such as a *songket*” (p. 166), adding elsewhere that a *gringsing* double ikat may be represented in at least one case (p. 182). One of the most important innovations of the Kadiri period has been an introduction of batik, hand-drawn resist technique (Wisseman Christie 1993: 191–92). Pullen is less optimistic about the existence of batik as early as in the Kadiri period and considers the statue of Durgā Mahiṣāsuramardinī from Trenggalek regency (now in the Mpu Tantular Museum), dated to the early fourteenth century CE, to be among the earliest possible clues that batik was known in Java (p. 202).

The fifth chapter is devoted to textile patterns represented on the stone sculpture of the Majapahit period (1293–1520s CE). The overlapping circles pattern has invited much attention of textile scholars. Typically likened to modern batik *kawung* pattern, it has often been considered its direct or indirect ancestor. Pullen prefers to interpret the overlapping circles pattern as the *songket* technique or a *prada* textile (p. 58). In my view, Old Javanese textual evidence suggests that batik was known in Java already by the Kadiri period so that we should not disregard the possibility that the *kawung* pattern may reflect a reserved-dyed technique.

The book is an important contribution to the history of Javanese pre-Islamic dress. The author notes representations of the *dhoti*; for example, on two metal figures of Śiva from the ninth century CE (pp. 32, 93) and on a figure of *dvār-apāla* (p. 79). Pullen is among the few scholars who have noted visual representations of tailored garment in pre-Islamic Java and Sumatra, such as jackets and trousers. Among the most remarkable and detailed representations of stitched, long-sleeved, and patterned jackets are two stone statues from Bumi Ayu Temple 1 in South Sumatra, dated to the eleventh to thirteenth centuries CE (pp. 114–16). Pullen also notes the presence of trousers (pp. 70, 74, 87, 166), a type of garment that must have been more common in pre-Islamic Java than is usually believed. The author also pays attention to infrequent depictions of layered garments, hence the inner and outer garment (pp. 87, 93, 103). I find the numerous photographs of dress details and meticulous drawings of textile patterns particularly useful. For example, a photograph of a statue of the couple where we clearly see a detail of the left hand of a male holding the sash of a female (p. 234, fig. 164) gives us a possibility to fully appreciate the style in which the sash is gathered into an elegant bow. Pullen notes that “[a]round the neck of the knot is a detailed beaded ornament, which is a feature that is seen on many Singosari sculptures” (p. 232). The beaded, obviously metal ring that holds the bow in position can possibly be identified with an enigmatic Old Javanese term *puṅḍutan*. In my view, the *puṅḍutan* would serve as a fastening device for the waist-sash or girdle and has no exact parallel in modern Javanese dress.

Though generally well-researched and nicely presented, at several places I must disagree with the author. On p. 87, Old Javanese term *dodot* is interpreted as “a sizeable ceremonial hip wrapper worn only by royalty”. Old Javanese texts, however, show that *dodot* must have been a kind of court dress, the use of which was certainly not limited to the members of the royal lineage. On p. 239, the author speaks about the “very sudden collapse of the Majapahit”, a view that has already been proven wrong by Noorduyn (1978). On p. 270, the genre of *kidung* is glossed as “a form of Old Javanese poetry”, yet *kidungs* are composed in Middle Javanese. On p. 52, the *wayang wong* dancer is said to be depicted in figure 20, but the photograph is in fact figure 19. On p. 145, Candi Loro Jonggrang is misspelled as Lorong Jongorrang. All of these comments, however, amount to only minor criticisms of what is a well-researched book, and indeed a milestone in the study of Javanese and Sumatran pre-Islamic dress. The book will be of use to textile scholars, art historians, and to everyone interested in the rich heritage of Southeast Asian cultures.

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