Traceable Threads:

A Case Study of a 12th Century Silk Textile from Al-Andalus

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Table of Contents

Introduction

Silk ranked among the most sumptuous products of the medieval Mediterranean. Luxurious silks featured prominently in the ritual life of court cultures from Cordoba to Constantinople, adorning regal bodies and gifted among rulers and respected officials. Those from the medieval Islamic world, particularly Al-Andalus (or Islamic Spain), were especially esteemed. As the Islamic presence expanded across the present-day regions of Spain and North Africa from the early 8th century onwards, the succession of rulers in Al-Andalus produced a flourishing court culture that fostered influential artistic traditions and an enduring cultural effervescence. This agenda was significantly aided by the discovery of natural resources and the establishment commercial industries and networks, including a prosperous textile industry and silk weaving traditions. Al-Andalus became renowned for sumptuous silk textiles which became coveted commodities that circulated within and beyond its borders.

This thesis examines the role of silk textiles from Al-Andalus through the case study of one 12th century piece known as the "Lion Strangler," whose name derives from its central iconography of a man grasping a pair of lions with both hands (Figure 1). The Lion Strangler is one of three textiles found in the tomb of Bishop Bernard Calvó (1180-1243 CE) at the turn of the 19th century. Following their discovery, the textiles were cut to smaller pieces and dispersed. Fragments of the Lion Strangler silk have been identified in multiple modern European and North American collections. Indeed, one piece exists in the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, and this fragment prompts the present investigation as it has not been published before. This thesis brings this unknown fragment of Lion Strangler to light, and reassesses its longer social life. Framing the Lion Strangler as a portable object transferred across borders and between environments over time, my study aims to "humanize" the textile by assembling its wider

biography, which is punctuated by seminal shifts in significance across multiple pathways that have shaped its life as a historical object.

This study's focus on biography and social life has been shaped by the work of cultural anthropologists Arjun Appadurai and Igor Kopytoff, whose insights have been instrumental for the study of objects and material culture at large.[1] Their work illuminates how objects uphold social, economic, and symbolic meanings as commodities within systems of exchange, stressing the agency of "objects in motion" as they traverse various forms of exchanges and in turn develop active social lives. These insights are especially insightful for re-animating a luxury silk of Andalusi manufacture that spent much of its life enshrined in a Christian tomb and then cut to pieces for the modern art market. In reassessing these different phases of its social life, my study sees objects as far more than inert artifacts but as active agents in the negotiation of medieval and modern cultural identity. By proposing a more expansive vision of the Lion Strangler's history, I critically challenge the prevalent position of what is termed the "triumphalist paradigm" in Islamic art historical scholarship that regards the circulation of objects of Islamic manufacture in Christian contexts as mere war plunder and symbols of religious triumph. In this way I redirect prevalent understandings of the Lion Strangler as a spoil of war, where it symbolizes Islamic defeat and Christian victory, and stress instead that its spoliation was but one transitory phase among several others in its long social life. Many functions, exchanges, and contact zones formed the Lion Strangler's life as a multivalent object deserving of a more nuanced interpretation. And in recognizing those different moments, I hope to redress the triumphalist narrative about the "Islamic art" in Christian hands that has dominated the

[1] Arjun Appadurai, ed., *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

scholarship to date and to provide a more nuanced account of active portable objects. In what follows, after a brief overview of the present state of the silk, Part I addresses the medieval life of the Lion Strangler silk with attention to its origins and interment in the tomb of Calvo. Then Part II elaborates on its longer social life by offering a reassessment of these contexts and highlighting those phases that have been elided in the scholarship on this specific textile as well as luxury objects from Islamic Spain more broadly.

Overview of the Lion Strangler

Despite its present division among multiple modern collections, there are enough fragments of the Lion Stranger to determine its original iconography. Its central figure, which lends its name to the imagery, is of a man grasping two lions by their necks with both his hands (Figure 1). He wears an intricate turban and an ornate collared robe embellished with a belt of circular ornaments. A multicoloured palette of now faded red, dark green, and gold, further enliven the textile's design. Gold threads enliven the man's face, robe, hands and feet in addition to the lions' heads whose bodies are uniformly red. These main figures are framed by a beaded or pearled medallion, whose inner and outer borders are filled with green and red pigment. A peripheral pearled roundel contains pairs of confronted winged griffins. Interstices and spandrels between the medallions incorporate palmettes that extend outwards from octagonal stars. A horizontal band filled with Arabic calligraphy contains a single repeating word: *al'amr* or "command, power, or authority" in Kufic script. The calligraphic invocation of power is consistent with imagery of majestic creatures, geometric patterns, and symbolic figures featured in courtly arts across the Mediterranean basin. The arts of Al-Andalus were no exception to these trends and incorporated regal imagery across a variety of mediums including textiles, ivory, and metalwork. In fact, it has been documented that Andalusi craftsmen were acutely aware of these

iconographic motifs and looked towards the arts of Byzantine and Sassanian courts as models for their creations. The cross-cultural employment of similar visual motifs and iconography has rendered it difficult to determine the origins of such textiles, which, as discussed further in Part I, could have easily between made in Islamic and Christian textile centers.[2]

As mentioned previously, the Lion Strangler silk was found as a funerary vestment with the remains of Catalan bishop Bernard Calvó (1180-1243 CE) in the region of Vich in Catalonia. On December 19, 1888 Calvó's tomb was opened, which marks a crucial turning point in the textile's trajectory as the Lion Strangler and additional accompanying textiles were removed and disseminated amongst private collectors and museums. In addition to the rather invasive and unscientific manner in which the textiles were removed, the surrounding details of its dispersal are further obscure due to a lack of thorough documentation.

Based on examples of extant dalmatics of Hispano-Islamic origin, the original Lion Strangler silk would have been approximately 140 cm in length and 120 cm in width. Presently, there are five known fragments of the textile that are documented among European and North American museum collections. The European fragments can be found in the Museo Episcopal de Vic, and the Kunstgewerbemuseum in Berlin.[3] In North America, the fragments reside at three

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[2] Eva Hoffman, "Pathways of Portability," *Art History* 24, no. 1 (2001): 18.

[3] The original source specifying museum collections that possess fragments of the Lion Strangler is derived from Shepherd's articles from the 1950's on the Calvó fragments. Decades later Judit Verdaguer I Serrat's 2016 article "A Museum within a Museum" further discusses the collection history of the Museu Episcopal de Vic specifically. However, upon recent investigation and some inconclusive inquiries to European museum collections in particular, it's unconfirmed how up to date these details are. For example, although Shepherd's publication listed a fragment at the Kunstgewerbemuseum (Berlin), it's quite probable that it may no longer be in their possession anymore based on the museum's inability to personally confirm these details upon request. This has been the case with the Musée des Arts Decoratifs (Paris), who has stated the fragment is not in their collection. Gaps in information among European fragments also pertain to the physical state of the fragments themselves. The Museo Episcopal de Vic (Barcelona) has not published or given specific details such as measurements or full-scale photographs of the fragments they possess upon request, although a photograph of a detail from the Vic fragment exists on its website, it does not depict the fragment in full.

separate institutions: the Cooper-Hewitt Museum in New York, the Cleveland Museum of Art, and the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. Here I outline in brief the known history and chronology of how the Lion Strangler fragments were distributed to some of these destinations.

Archival sources recount that following the opening of Calvó's tomb, the Lion Strangler textile was owned by the Spanish art historian and art collector Francisco Miquel i Badia.[4] During the 19th century, an emerging market for historical Spanish textiles instigated a widespread practice of selling and distributing textile fragments among collectors and antiquarians.[5] The Episcopal Museum of Vic has detailed that its collection of various Andalusi textiles was formed through contributions from private collectors consisting of Catalan bourgeoise, industrialists, and scholars.[6] In 1888, following the Lion Strangler's removal from Calvó's tomb, an exhibition known as the "Universal Exhibition" took place in Barcelona. The Bishop of Vic, Josep Morgades, contributed several textiles from Vic Cathedral to the emerging exhibition. In light of such events, it is plausible that prior to the Lion Strangler's dissemination among collectors, it was included in the Universal Exhibition. Following the exhibition, the Episcopal Museum of Vic became responsible for the safekeeping of textiles and other valuable art objects donated predominantly by regional religious institutions including most notably, the Vic Cathedral.

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[4] Dorothy G. Shepherd, "A Twelfth-Century Hispano-Islamic Silk," *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art* 38, no. 3 (1951): 59. These archival sources include personal letters between collectors and museum collection departments and acquisition reports from all three North American museums and curator Dorothy Shepherd's publications.

[5] Judit Verdaguer I Serrat, "A Museum within a Museum," *Datatèxtil*, no. 35 (2016): 45.

[6] The Episcopal Museum of Vic's textile collection was found in 1868, through the organization of the "Archaeological-Artistic Exhibition" which brought together objects from the collections of religious institutions in Catalonia. Notably, the Vic Cathedral, where Calvó's tomb and the Lion Strangler were housed, played a central role in the exhibition.

As for the three North American collections possessing fragments of the Lion Strangler, the central figure behind the acquisition of both the Cleveland and Cooper-Hewitt fragments is the prominent American financier and banker, John Pierpont Morgan. Personal letters and acquisition reports from the Cleveland Museum and Cooper-Hewitt detail that J.P Morgan bought an undisclosed amount of Lion Strangler fragments from Spanish art historian Miguel y Badia, a significant figure who is identified as the textile's previous owner among archival acquisition documents. Although the date of the transaction is not specified, it must have been between the opening of Calvó's tomb in 1888 and 1902, the year that Morgan sold fragments to the Cooper-Hewitt Museum. Of the known surviving North American fragments of the Lion Strangler, the Cooper-Hewitt fragment (Figure 1), is the largest to date, measuring at 49.3 x 52.7 cm. Following the sale in 1902, the fragments originally acquired by Morgan later reappeared on the market and reached other North American collectors, of which only Paul O. Berliz has been identified, a private collector who sold a fragment to the Cleveland Museum in 1950 (Figure 9).

In the Canadian context, the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts (MMFA), which formed the starting point for this case study, houses Andalusi textiles that have been largely overlooked by scholars. The figure behind the collection of textile fragments in Canada was Frederick Cleveland Morgan, a prominent Canadian art collector who was appointed as the first director of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. An avid collector, Morgan acquired the fragments from textiles belonging to Calvó's tomb during his travels to Barcelona in May of 1958, from José Guidol at the Institute Amaltar de Arte Hispanico. Three identified fragments from Bernard Calvó's tomb have been housed at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts since their acquisition. Of the three fragments possessed by the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, the Lion Strangler fragment suffers the most damage from environmental conditions and handling (Figure 7). Its

rather slight size consists of a vertical narrow strip that measures at 47.5 by 44 cm and forms the central medallion of the iconographic program of the male figure holding two lions.[7]

Part I. The Medieval Origins and Entombment of the Lion Strangler

Alongside the Lion Strangler, two additional textiles were identified from Bernard Calvó's tomb. On the basis of their iconography, they are generally called the Cloth of the Sphinxes and Cloth of Eagles. The former is characterized by its circular form and features confronting sphinxes or harpy figures with interlaced decorative wings inside a beaded medallion (Figure 11). The latter features double-headed eagles grasping pendant rings in their beaks while a pair of lions are addorsed at the bottom of the eagles' feet (Figure 12). The animals are enclosed by connected pearled roundels filled with a repeated geometric pattern. Interstices are filled with smaller concentric disks while the overall design is depicted in dark green and set against a brilliant red ground.[8] Collectively, the Lion Strangler, Cloth of Sphinxes and Cloth of Eagles represent the three surviving textiles that have definitively been identified as belonging to Calvó's tomb. However, the Museu Episcopal de Vic acknowledges that the tomb housed two additional textiles which have not been properly identified. Moreover, additional pontifical ornaments were found in Calvó's tomb but they found their way into various private and

[7] The fragment (1958. Dt.7) is in admittedly poor condition and has suffered heavily from discolouration and deterioration over time and has yet to be restored.

[8] The Museu Episcopal de Vic details that from their collection of Calvó's pontifical ornaments, "there only remains a strip of parament from the alb, in Andalusian silk, with a Naskhi inscription; a fragment of the stole; of the dalmatic and fragments of the 'Cloth of Gilgamesh' or 'of the Lion Strangler' and the 'Cloth of the Sphinxes', without us knowing which fragments are from are from one piece or the other." See "Pontifical Ornaments of Saint Bernat Calbó, Bishop of Vic (1233-1243)", Textiles and Clothing, Museu Episcopal de Vic, accessed March 22, 2019, https://www.museuepiscopalvic.com/en/colleccions/textiles-and-clothing/pontifical-ornaments-of-saint-bernat-calbo-bishop-of-vic-12331243-mev-10618-2251-10620-10617-3890-1320-790-791.

museum collections or have been lost (Figures 13-14). Such circumstances have thus contributed to the rather difficult and incomplete nature of the historical record.

Detailed writings that focus directly on all three textiles from Calvó's tomb are also scarce. Curator Dorothy Shepherd from the Cleveland Museum of Art published articles on all three identified textiles during the early 1950's and her studies remain the earliest North American publication on the textiles.[9] In her writings, Shepherd asserts that prominent Christian figures, including Calvó, were frequently adorned in exquisite garments from regions under Islamic rule.[10] Such practices were motivated by aesthetic and economic interests based on the value ascribed to Andalusi silks as luxury commodities and consequently the bleak reality of their frequent arrival in Christian hands as war plunder. Shepherd's conclusion that all three textiles, were looted by Christian forces and came into Calvó's possession as a reward for his role in the Reconquista, forms the prevailing scholarly interpretation of the textiles. Stemming from these initial studies, the most comprehensive North American survey dedicated Spanish textiles is Florence Lewis May's 1957 *Silk Textiles of Spain*.[11] In her review of Andalusi textile traditions and the production of luxury silks May reiterates Shepherd's previous conclusion that the textiles from Calvó's tomb were war plunder distributed as gifts and were "among the finest of the [pearled] roundel textiles to have been found in Spain."[12] May clarifies the unstable

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[9] Additional writings on the textiles are scattered amongst museum archival records or exist as brief references in catalogues that reiterate Shepherd and May's original conclusions about the textiles' status as war plunder that were reappropriated in Christian contexts.

[10] Dorothy G. Shepherd, "A Twelfth-Century Hispano-Islamic Silk," *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art* 38, no. 3 (1951): 59-62.

[11] Florence L. May, *Silk Textiles of Spain: 8th to 15th Century* (New York: Hispanic Society of America, 1957).

[12] Florence L. May, *Silk Textiles of Spain: 8th to 15th Century* (New York: Hispanic Society of America, 1957), 45. Of the textiles found in Calvó's tomb, May observes that "perhaps, of the many silks and brocades that the victorious king [James I] distributed as gifts after that memorable day [from the victory in Valencia], some were

provenance of the Lion Strangler by corroborating its Spanish origins based on the "honeycomb" weaving technique utilized for the textile's gold brocade which was representative of weaving centers based in Almeria. For May, the Spanish origins of the textiles is further demonstrated through parallels between their use of confronting animal motifs and figural design that are also found in sculptural design programs of marble basins from Cordoba and on several Romanesque capitals.[13]

Building on Shepherd and May's observations, a detailed overview of the textiles' attribution will help illuminate the medieval phase of their respective biographies. Both the Lion Strangler and Cloth of Sphinxes can be attributed to the city of Almeria, a port city at the southern tip of Spain. Almeria was renowned for its role in the textile industry of Islamic Spain. During the first half of the 12th century, Almeria's role as a producer for luxury textiles was solidified under the Almoravids, a Muslim dynasty from North Africa. The coastal city was paramount for the production of luxury textiles, overshadowing even the renowned city of Cordoba with its copious workshops and weaving centers.[14] Almeria's dominance is testified by sources from the period. The celebrated geographer Al-Idrisi eloquently describes Almeria as follows:

> "…an Islamic town in which there were all kinds of industry… including eight hundred workshops [known as tiraz] for silk manufacture. Here they made all kinds of silk products: fine thread, fancy fabrics and brocade [dībāj and sīglātūn], silks in the style of Isfahan and Jurjān, silk curtains and netting, clothing and coverings, striped silks ['attībī] and knotted silks [mu'ajar] and all other categories and types of silks."[15]

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reserved for this prelate [Bernard Calvó]."

[13] Florence L. May, *Silk Textiles of Spain,* 48. May makes connections between the lion motif both within the visual culture of Islamic Spain and beyond.

[14] Cristina Partearroyo, "Almoravid and Almohad Textiles," in *Al-Andalus: The Art of Islamic Spain*, (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1992), 105.

[15] Thomas F. Glick, *Islamic and Christian Spain in the Early Middle Ages*, (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 243.

The chronicler Yāqūt further elaborates that Almeria surpassed Cordoba as center of cultural production: “brocade of excellent manufacture” was “first made in Cordoba but then Almeria outstripped it…. In the land of Andalus there is not to be found a people who make more excellent brocade than those of Almeria.”[16] Despite possible rhetorical exaggeration, observations such as these suggest that America was known for the finest quality of silk production.

Based on the city’s elevated role in textile production and the relative absence of identifiable textiles from other regions in Al-Andalus specifically from the first half of the 12th century, both the Cloth of Sphinxes and the Lion Stranger can be localized specifically to Almeria. It has been asserted that these two pieces are among a group of approximately 20 textiles produced by the same workshop there and found exclusively in funerary or reliquary contexts.[17] The provenance for the group in question was based on the chasuble of San Juan de Ortega (Figure 4), which formed the basis of determining the group’s Spanish provenance and narrowing the period of production to the 12th century.[18] Among the textiles from the group, the

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[16] Cristina Partearroyo, “Almoravid and Almohad Textiles,” 105.

[17] Dorothy G. Shepherd, "A Twelfth-Century Hispano-Islamic Silk," *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art* 38, no. 3 (1951): 60. In her discussion on the Lion Strangler and the Baghdad group, Shepherd observes, “The weaving technique of this silk is unusually fine and complex and shows technical peculiarities in the weaving of the main fabric and in the gold brocading, which are only found in a limited group of silks, almost every one of which has come from a tomb or reliquary in Spain. In all, it has been possible to bring together a group of about twenty pieces identical in technique and so alike in color and design as to make it seem probable that all came from one workshop or, at least, from the same weaving center.”

[18] Dorothy Shepherd, "A Dated Hispano-Islamic Silk," *Ars Orientalis* 2 (1957): 377-78. “The Quintanaortunia silk [a fragment of the chasuble of San Juan de Ortega from the parish church of Quintanaortunia] may be shown to be closely related to a whole group of silks which for both stylistic and technical reasons must be considered the product of a single school. Its importance is therefore greatly enhanced because, rather than standing alone as an isolated document, it carries the whole group with it providing them for the first time with concrete evidence for dating and confirming beyond question their Spanish provenance. Among the earliest known and most famous of this group are the two textiles mentioned above, the "Baghdad" silk from Burgo de Osma and the Lion-Strangler silk from the tomb of St. Bernard Calvo at Vich.”

shroud of San Pedro de Osma (Figure 15), or the famous "Baghdad silk", features an inscription which declares: "*This was made in Baghdad, may God watch over it.*"[19] Despite this proclamation, scholars have emphasized its Spanish origins, which raises important questions about how we read topographic inscriptions.[20] It turns out that Hispano-Islamic workshops often imitated textiles from Baghdad in order to bolster their value given Baghdad's prominence for textile production in the wider Islamic world.[21] What became known as the "Baghdad group" also utilize a binding system to create a brocade composed of a unique honeycomb pattern that has not been found from any other period or region outside of Spain. In technical terms, the textiles are known as brocaded lampas, typically made of silk in combination with gold or silver thread and characterized by specific sets of warps and wefts to produce a ribbed effect (Figures 16 - 18).[22] Brocaded lampas also incorporate medallions or roundels that are pearled and filled with pairs of confronted or addorsed animals including: lions, sphinxes, harpies and eagles that often hold smaller animals as prey. Figures and interstices are typically separated through four

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[19] Cristina Partearroyo, "Almoravid and Almohad Textiles," 106.

[20] Dorothy Shepherd, the preeminent source from which later scholarly interpretations surrounding the textiles' Spanish origins, asserts that the Lion Strangler, Cloth of Sphinxes, the chasuble of San Juan de Ortega and San Pedro silk are of the same workshop. Shepherd bases this conclusion on the textiles' numerical binding system (of ground warps arranged in groups of 2-2-4 with the binding warp running in with groups of four) which was unique to Spain and resulted in a honeycomb weaving technique. Additionally, iconographic details such as the combination of pearled roundels, pairs of confronting or addorsed heraldic animals or figures, and colour palettes of dull red, green and blue on ivory ground with gold highlights were also specific to Peninsular weavers from Spain.

[21] Cristina Partearroyo, "Almoravid and Almohad Textiles," 106. Partearroyo further observes that between the eleventh and twelfth centuries that the phenomenon of pseudo inscriptions was prevalent enough to warrant regulations that prohibited the practice. This context further lends itself to Partearroyo's conclusion that the Hispanic inscription on the San Pedro silk and stylistic similarities with other pieces from the group evidence the work of the same weaving center or workshop in Almeria.

[22] Cristina Partearroyo, "Almoravid and Almohad Textiles," 106. Partearroyo further specifies that "Hispano-Islamic workshops are characterized by the use of two sets of warps and wefts, of which one set produces the ground fabric and the second, interwoven with the first, yields the design. Warps of the foundation are disposed in groups of 2-2-4-2-2-4 and the warp that joins the weft of the design is run in with each group of four background warps. This creates a pronounced ribbed effect on the right side of the background weave."

palmettes that form a central star shape. A horizontal band of Hispano Kufic inscription unique to Spain is also incorporated in several textiles from the group, including the Lion Strangler (Figures 19 - 20). The precise linework of Almoravid textiles of the period results in what art historian Cristina Partearroyo has eloquently describes as "an intricate and delicate product that tends to resemble a painted miniature more than a textile."[23] Based on these noted technical characteristics, shared iconographic details, and the leading reputation of Almeria during the 12th century for textile production, the group of textiles can be attributed to the region of Almeria with a great degree of confidence.

Like the Lion Strangler and Cloth of the Sphinx, the origin of Cloth of Eagles too has been hotly debated. The textile was presumed to be a Byzantine production based on a group of Byzantine eagle textiles found in the region of Auxerre (Figure 21).[24] The enduring influence of Byzantine visual traditions on Islamic art is traceable across various media, from mosaics to textiles.[25] This was made possible through the transmission of ideas, techniques, and styles formed through cross-cultural exchange between prominent centers in the medieval world. The fluidity that characterized the Mediterranean basin was especially salient between the 10th to 12th century.[26] The adoption of visual motifs and styles through cultural interchange during this specific period has made it difficult to distinguish between Byzantine and Islamic textiles, as exemplified by the Cloth of Eagles. That said, the textile's attribution to Spain prevailed and

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[23] Cristina Partearroyo, "Almoravid and Almohad Textiles," 106.

[24] Dorothy G. Shepherd, "The Third Silk from the Tomb of Saint Bernard Calvo," *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art* 39, no. 1 (1952): 14.

[25] Oleg Grabar, "Islamic Art and Byzantium," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 18 (1964): 67-88. Grabar has made seminal observations on the Byzantine influence as seen with the mosaics of the Great Mosque of Cordoba.

[26] Eva Hoffman, "Pathways of Portability," *Art History* 24, no. 1 (2001): 17-50.

became widely accepted for several reasons. It is noted that Hispano-Islamic workshops actively sought to emulate the designs of Byzantine textiles by employing similar heraldic iconography such as double-headed eagles. Nevertheless, these emulations differ from their prototypes through their treatment of motifs. The figural imagery and decorative elements of the Cloth of Eagles is far more representative of Islamic artistic traditions.[27] Alternating floral bands, palmettes and floral motifs decorating the eagles' wings, and the adornment of lions grasped by eagles, all exhibit a proclivity for ornament that has come to define Islamic art. The overall symmetry of the eagles, in addition to the textile's recurring patterns and ornament attests to the geometric, floral, and vegetal patterns prominently featured in Islamic art. While the double-headed eagle was common in Byzantine art between the 11th and 12th century, the inclusion of double-headed eagles specifically capturing prey was more characteristic of the arts of Al-Andalus. Although the Cloth of Eagles can be localized to Spain, its regional specification is still undetermined. Nevertheless, it has been attributed to the first half of the 12th century based on an existing group of Andalusi textiles that were reproductions of Byzantine silks. The frequent circulation and distribution of textiles more broadly explains the reality that Hispano-Islamic weavers were indebted to Byzantine models. Based on such evidence it is likely that the Cloth of Eagles and other Spanish imitations would have been produced around the same time as the Byzantine models they imitated during the 12th century.[28]

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[27] Priscilla Soucek, "Byzantium and the Islamic East" in *The Glory of Byzantium: Art and Culture of the Middle Byzantine Era, A.D. 843–1261*, Evans, Helen C., and William D. Wixom, eds., (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1997), 270.

[28] Dorothy G. Shepherd, "The Third Silk from the Tomb of Saint Bernard Calvo," *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art* 39, no. 1 (1952): 14.

In thinking about the origins of these three silks that were found together in Bishop Calvo's tomb, we can see that the Lion Strangler was part of a lavish collection of silks that were made in al-Andalus but whose designs invoked a much broader medieval network of iconography and technology. Some cited the ultimate imperial power iconography eagles associated with Constantinople. Others forged false but literal connections to the great cosmopolitan center of Baghdad. All represented the motifs and iconographies of splendour found throughout Mediterranean court cultures.

Returning to the Lion Strangler cloth in particular, following its production in an Almeria, it made its way to the northeastern coastal city of Valencia. Evidence for this phase of its social life comes from the *Chronicle of James I* which briefly describes the capture of Valencia from Muslims in 1238 as part of a larger mission for reconquest. Bernard Calvó is notably identified among "the bishops and barons who were with [James]."[29] The textual account further details that the Muslim civilians of Valencia "surrendered the town [of Montcada] and themselves as prisoners…with much good and fine silken and cotton cloth…rich silks and many other valuable stuffs."[30] Reference to rich textiles reaffirms the likelihood that the Lion Strangler was among several silks stolen in the aftermath of battle. Additionally, the *Chronicles'* recognition of Calvó's participation in the conquest of Valencia further bolsters his connection to the textile. There is a general consensus that the textile was given to Calvó as a gift, as part of his support for James' campaign to reclaim the city from Muslims.[31] Moreover, two treasury

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[29] Dorothy G. Shepherd, "A Twelfth-Century Hispano-Islamic Silk," *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art* 38, no. 3 (1951): 61.

[30] Dorothy G. Shepherd, "A Twelfth-Century Hispano-Islamic Silk," 61.

[31] As previously mentioned, both Shepherd and curator Florence Lewis May have asserted this position which has been reiterated in later scholarship and discussions on the textile.

documents from the Vic Cathedral archives further detail Calvó receiving property in Valencia among other regions as a reward for his efforts.[32] The textiles likely formed the gifts the Catalan bishop received for his supportive role, which in turn corroborates the Lion Strangler's status as a spoil of war. While the Lion Strangler's historical record is fragmented, Bernard Calvó remains the central figure affiliated with its biography.[33] Although extensive details surrounding the figure of Bernard Calvó are scarce, his position within the church is well documented. Calvó served as the Bishop of Vic, a region in the county of Barcelona between 1233 - 1244 CE. It is noteworthy that Vic, alongside the regions of Barcelona and Girona were temporarily governed under a single archbishop. In fact, it has been argued that during the medieval period, Vic, Barcelona and Girona jointly "constituted the most important axis of political and ecclesiastical control of the County of Barcelona."[34] The jurisdiction of the Church over the diocese of Vic and other regions in Catalonia underscores the significance and hypervisibility of Calvó's authoritative position in the wider governing body of the Church and among Catalan society.[35]

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[32] Dorothy G. Shepherd, "A Twelfth-Century Hispano-Islamic Silk," 61. While Shepherd does not specify the type of documents that confirm Calvó was rewarded for his participation in battle, one can reasonably assume they were records of land ownership: "[Calvó] received his share of the lands is proven by two documents in the Chapter Archives of Vich Cathedral, which record his having received a house in Valencia and other lands in the province. That he may have received some of the other booty of war, such as the "rich silks" mentioned by King James, is suggested by these Hispano-Islamic textiles which formed the vestments found in his tomb."

[33] Congreso de Historia de la Corona de Aragón. *Congrés d'historia de la corona d'Aragó dedicat al rey en Jaume I y a la seua época*, (Barcelona: Stampa d'En F. Altés, 1909), https://archive.org/details/congrsdhistoriad02cong. "King James in December 1224 gave Saint Bernat a house in Valenica…from a document dated in the same city. In Barcelona, on the day before the November calends of 1241, he gave him two farmhouses in the district of Murvedre and in substitution of two other farmhouses of Alcudia and Benialcazim given before, he gave him the castle of Sagart, confirming this donation from Barcelona to 3 ides November 1241."

[34] María Judith Feliciano, "Medieval Textiles in Iberia: Studies for a New Approach," in *Envisioning Islamic Art and Architecture: Essays in Honor of Renata Holod*, ed. David J. Roxburgh, (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 59.

[35] Paul Freedman, *The Diocese of Vic: Tradition and Regeneration in Medieval Catalonia*, (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1983), 163. Calvo's well respected role is observable through later characterizations, including historian Paul Freedman's study on the diocese of Vic, in which Calvó is described: "the most purely 'spiritual' bishop of Vic."

In terms of chronology, the period between the Lion Strangler's production in the mid 12th century up until its arrival in Valencia, constitutes the next segment of its life. Unfortunately, no information exists on the textile's departure from the southern city of Almeria to its arrival in northern Valencia. It is plausible that the textile was produced as a commission for an individual residing in either city, but it ultimately remains undisclosed who specifically the textile was made for. As far as patronage, it is possible the textile's owner was a ruler, or perhaps a royal official based on the inscription's lack of specificity and omission of a name. Like the fate of many Islamic objects that were looted, the Lion Strangler is marked by an absence of details and context prior to Christian contact.

Roughly a century after the Lion Strangler's production, its capture by Christian forces marks an important turning point. Bishop Calvó's support and contribution to Christian victory in Valencia was rewarded by King James I, who gifted Calvó luxurious textiles. Although the Lion Strangler's final form was a funerary vestment, it would have previously been worn by Calvó as a chasuble for public appearances and ecclesiastical rituals. One can broadly envision what it would have resembled as a vestment based on other Andalusi textiles that were used as liturgical garments, such as the tunic of Infante Don Garcia (Figure 2-3), which was crafted from a well-preserved 12th century Andalusi textile with double-headed eagles alongside vegetal motifs and pearled roundels. Another example is the chasuble of San Juan de Ortega (Figure 4-5), similarly adorned with lions and Hispano-Kufic inscription, whose form as a mantle is more clearly delineated.[36]

[36] Cristina Partearroyo, "Almoravid and Almohad Textiles," in *Al-Andalus: The Art of Islamic Spain*, (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1992), 106–108.

Andalusi textiles that were used as garments, such as the chasuble, help determine that the Lion Strangler's approximate scale would have similarly been roughly the size of Calvo's body. Considering the scale of such textiles and their function as garments, these examples also elucidate how textiles could be divided several times for distribution purposes (Figure 6).[37] As a liturgical garment, the textile helped form an ecclesiastic repertoire that visually signified the Catalan bishop's religious authority. However, the textile's most pivotal moment was at the Catalan bishop's funeral. Bernard Calvó's death in 1243 would have been highly publicized given his revered position in the church and Catalan society. As such, the Lion Strangler's role as a participant in the spectacle of an aristocratic funeral and in the specific form of a luxury object, cannot be overstated. Adorned in opulent silks for the last time, the bishop's body visually illustrated a display of power that bolstered his legacy.

The history of Calvó's tomb attests to how the tomb functions as a container for the bishop's ornaments and as a site mediated by human interaction. Although details concerning both the tomb and textile are extremely scarce, the later chronology of the tomb suggests that it was became interactive site over the years. The tomb was opened several times after Bernard Calvó's burial; and, further, Calvó's remains were moved at various points.[38] In 1362, the original mitre in which Calvó was buried was replaced due to its poor condition, while additional items including an embroidered alb and cincture were introduced.[39] In the same year Calvó's

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[37] Dorothy G. Shepherd, "A Dated Hispano-Islamic Silk", *Ars Orientalis* 2, (1957): 374. Dorothy Shepherd's diagram of San Juan de Ortega's chasuble also helps elucidate and visualize the reality that multiple fragments could emerge from a full individual textile based on the sheer scale of the original whole cloth.

[38] Unfortunately, despite these details a lack of documentation limits a fuller understanding of the tomb's archaeology, including the processes and individuals that were involved.

[39] "Pontifical Ornaments of Saint Bernat Calbó, Bishop of Vic (1233-1243)," Museu Episcopal de Vic, https://www.museuepiscopalvic.com/en/colleccions/textiles-and-clothing/pontifical-ornaments-of-saint-bernat-calbo-bishop-of-vic-12331243-mev-10618-2251-10620-10617-3890-1320-790-791.

coffin was also placed into an alabaster tomb.[40] Centuries later, in 1694, Calvó's coffin was replaced and a Baroque mitre was added to the tomb. In 1728, Calvó's remains were relocated for a second time to a new silver tomb. Finally, on December 19th in 1888 the tomb was opened for a final time and all of its contents were permanently removed.[41] From that point onwards, the precious silks were divided into smaller pieces in order to be distributed widely on the art market.

Part II. Reassessing the Biography of the Lion Strangler

Attention to the full trajectory of the textile's history—to the extent that it can be known—allows it to exist within a wider matrix of different meanings. The Lion Strangler underwent a series of transactions during its circulation that reveal multilayered histories. To develop this argument further it is instructive to turn to Arjun Appadurai's explication of objects as commodities. Appadurai understands commodities as "objects of economic value" within systems of exchange whose value is determined through judgements made by human agents. In his seminal anthology *The Social Life of Things*, Appadurai establishes commodities as "objects of economic value," whose value is assigned through judgements made by human agents.[42] He organizes commodities into four categories:

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[40] "Pontifical Ornaments of Saint Bernat Calbó, Bishop of Vic (1233-1243)," Museu Episcopal de Vic, https://www.museuepiscopalvic.com/en/colleccions/textiles-and-clothing/pontifical-ornaments-of-saint-bernat-calbo-bishop-of-vic-12331243-mev-10618-2251-10620-10617-3890-1320-790-791.

[41] "Pontifical Ornaments of Saint Bernat Calbó, Bishop of Vic (1233-1243)," Museu Episcopal de Vic, https://www.museuepiscopalvic.com/en/colleccions/textiles-and-clothing/pontifical-ornaments-of-saint-bernat-calbo-bishop-of-vic-12331243-mev-10618-2251-10620-10617-3890-1320-790-791

[42] Arjun Appadurai, ed., *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 3. Appadurai utilizes sociologist Georg Simmel's term "economic objects" in reference to the way "[economic objects] exist in the space between pure desire and immediate enjoyment, with some distance between them and the person who desires them." This suggested distance between desire and demand is mediated specifically through economic exchange. In the case of the Lion Strangler, the relation between desire and consumption is formed through the collective judgement of commercial markets, weavers, merchants and patrons

> (1) commodities by *destination*, [are] objects intended by their producers principally for exchange; (2) commodities by *metamorphosis*, things intended for other uses that are placed into the commodity state; (3) commodities by *diversion,* objects placed into a commodity state though originally specifically protected from it; (4) *ex-commodities,* things retrieved, either temporarily or permanently, from the commodity state and placed in some other state.[43]

This classification bears on my analysis of the Lion Strangler because it lends a critical vocabulary to the different moments of an object's social life and trajectory. Originally, the textile can be understood according to Appadurai's terminology as a "commodity by destination," in that it was produced in Almeria for a specific individual or elite class of individuals, thereby sitting at the center of an exchange between producer and patron(s). However, a shift takes place when the Lion Strangler is finally buried with Calvó—the textile is removed from its commodity state and reduced to an "ex-commodity," which denotes a temporary halt for the textile's circulation in social spheres.

The commodity phases of an object also underscore the significance of movement or portability as a category of analysis.[44] As the Lion Strangler exemplifies, objects are distinguishable for their ability to move between environments and across borders. Building from characteristics of portability, Appadurai's classification similarly implies that objects also traverse in and out of different commodity states. The notion of "commodities in motion" is incisively outlined by fellow anthropologist Igor Kopytoff in his discussion on the "cultural biography" of an object.[45] Much like humans, objects also possess a life history that coincides

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that have all collectively ascribed value to Andalusi silk textiles and deemed them creations of sophisticated craftsmanship that were well suited for extravagant tastes.

[43] Arjun Appadurai, "Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value," 16.

[44] Eva Hoffman, "Pathways of Portability," *Art History* 24, no. 1 (2001): 17-50.

[45] Igor Kopytoff, "Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process," in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 64-91.

with their constructed biography. It is through the process of commoditization that the respective life histories and biographies of objects entail a succession of phases and changes in their status as commodities, a progression that Kopytoff conceives as "a process of becoming."[46] These various states are formative to the respective life history of objects and underscore the fluidity they possess. The construction an object's biography leads Kopytoff reflect on pertinent questions often applied to humans and instead redirects them towards objects:

> Where does the thing come from and who made it? What has been its career so far, and what do people consider an ideal career for such things? What are the recognized "ages" or periods in the thing's "life," and what are the cultural markers for them? How does the thing's use change with its age, and what happens to it when it reaches the end of its usefulness?[47]

Kopytoff's series of questions help trace the multiple histories woven into the Lion Strangler's wider biography. Teasing out these interlacing histories undermines previous emphasis on indeterminate details related to the textile's provenance. Reassembling the Lion Strangler's biography reveals a composite of periods and environments, from its origins in Almeria to its modern dissemination across private and public collections. As previously noted, a crucial marker in the textile's biography was its burial. The textile's internment fundamentally transforms its status to an ex-commodity that can no longer participate in a system of exchange. Withdrawn from a commodity state the textile further becomes "deactivated" or "decommoditized." Despite a temporary halt in the textile's potential for circulation and exchange, however, its value as an object remains intact and is arguably further amplified. Its removal from the systems of exchange and access embellishes it with a distinctive, rare or even sacred status. As an ex-commodity, the textile may still have its value reinstated, which raises the

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[46] Igor Kopytoff, "Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process," 73.

[47] Igor Kopytoff, "Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process," 66-67.

underlying reality that "commoditized things remain potential commodities."[48] Upon the Lion Strangler's discovery at the turn of the 19th century, its value is renewed as it transitions into a commodity state once again—now as a historical artefact. Yet, its discovery and return to this commodity state occurs at the expense of its original physical form, which exists as a series of disseminated fragments.

Following the Lion Strangler's exhumation, it entered a radically different set of historical and cultural contexts. In the process of its transference the textile acquired a new set of meanings and identities. In its modern context as a historical artefact, the textile became an embodiment of medieval Iberia. In what is now considered Spain, the turn of the 19th century yielded an increased interest in historical textiles as a transmission of national heritage but even more so as a reactivated commodity. As such the textile's value is reinstated both as a historical object and a luxury commodity whose history amplifies its worth. In consideration of the Lion Strangler's funerary context and Kopytoff's notion of "potential commodities", I would suggest the "potentiality" of the Lion Strangler as a commodity could not be activated or fully realized until it was retrieved from the tomb of Bernard Calvó. As mentioned, following the textile's discovery it acquired a status as an artefact. As an artefact the textile existed in an inherently social context, among the social relationships of its makers, patron, owners, and its intended public. The allure or mythology surrounding the textile as a historical artefact is arguably perhaps formed by the social network and relations it was enmeshed in. It is through this inherently social context and the Lion Strangler's enduring biography, bound to a specific historical moment and persons, that it is perceived as valuable. The question of potentiality and

[48] Igor Kopytoff, "Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process," 76.

the ontological shift in the Lion Strangler's reception is also a matter of temporality, as anthropologist Alfred Gell aptly describes in his theoretical discussion of agency, in which both people and objects "occupy a certain biographical space, over which culture is picked up, transformed, and passed on, through a series of life-stages."[49] This sequential understanding of culture relates to Lion Strangler's ontological status, as a rediscovered artefact from the medieval period, whose value was reinstated but in the radically different social and cultural context of 19th century discovery.

An anthropological approach to objects is concerned with the role of agency. As Alfred Gell describes in his theory of agency, artefacts or objects emerge as "social agents" in the relational context of their makers, owners, and spectators, as outlined earlier. Much like Appadurai and Kopytoff, Gell's seminal discussion on agency emphasizes how objects take on qualities of personhood and are thus social agents who exercise agency exclusively through social contexts.[50] He further specifies that objects function as "secondary agents" that are enacted upon by "primary agents" (individuals with intention). As a social agent, the Lion Strangler exhibits and enacts its agency through primary agents, who either create, utilize, or observe and are impacted by its presence. These primary agents include the artisans who assembled and crafted materials to produce a luxurious creation that mesmerizes, the textile's owners who wore it to visually represent their status and prestige, and the textile's recipients or spectators who it left a visual and psychological impression on.

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[49] Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 11

[50] Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency : An Anthropological Theory*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 16. In Gell's terms, a social agent is defined as "a person or a thing 'seen as initiating causal sequences of a particular type, that is, events caused by acts of mind or will or intention, rather than the mere concatenation of physical events" Gell's definition of agency allows for the possibility that anything become an art object, but more distinctly emphasizes action, or what an object does, in its relational context.

The Lion Strangler's cultural performance in the social contexts and environments it traversed between, was equally formed by its materiality, usage by its owner and its reception among an audience. The realm of the social and ecclesiastical environment was mediated through the material—that is through textiles, altarpieces, crosses, and other objects or monuments that sacred environments and their accompanying social roles (e.g. the Christian clergy) accommodated for in turn to solidify their sociocultural associations. The centrality of the textile and its materiality was traceable through its intricate fibres and patterns of surface embroidery to create an image and in Gellian terms a "virtuosity" that left an undeniable impression on both its wearer and viewers.[51] It is through the textile's integration in ecclesiastical rituals in particular, that its complex performance as a material agent is exhibited. The textile enacts on and entices its recipients by providing the material for displays of power that form a specific set of associations about its owner. Through this cultural performance, the textile mediates a social relationship between its user and audience, whose performative effects is simultaneously rooted in the material.

Returning to Appadurai and Kopytoff's notions of commodity and the formation of social life, the process of commoditization is clearly exemplified when the textiles from Calvó's tomb were purchased, cut into fragments, and sold to those eager to possess a remnant of history. While such an act may come across as startling, it was a common, albeit contentious, practice among textiles of the time. Archival sources from the Episcopal Museum of Vic reveal that the division of a whole cloth into fragments received mixed responses from the diocese appointed with the task of safeguarding textiles. Among these sources is an emphatic letter from Father

[51] Susanne Küchler and Timothy Carroll, *A Return to the Object: Alfred Gell, Art, and Social Theory*, (London: Routledge, 2020), 153. The use of virtuosity referenced here is described as "an apprehensible quality of an object arises when the craftsperson manipulates the media in specific ways that capitalise on the desirable qualities inherent in the raw materials."

José Guidol, art historian and curator at the Museum of Episcopal Vic between 1898 and 1931. Guidol expressed concerns over the fate of historical objects:

> The dignity of clothes that have been consecrated to God, that have received His blessing […] should be sufficient to prevent their sale as cheap merchandise, so often leading into unworthy hands and to uses not fit for such robes and ornaments. If one piece and another were to find their way to museums, where they could serve to inform under careful conservation, this fault could be excused; but they are all too often converted into decorative items for lounges and workshops, and this when they are not taken apart and condemned to a life as a chair cover or converted into cushions and placed beneath the feet of all manner of people. Who has not seen maniples used as curtain loops?[52]

Guidol's commentary raises compelling questions about the value of objects and their afterlife. For Guidol, textiles were sacred objects once they underwent consecration. In the case of Andalusi textiles, the ritual of consecration erases their previous history and assigns an inherently religious meaning upon their introduction into ecclesiastical environments. As such, the specific portion of the Lion Strangler's life prior to Christian contact is effaced in favor of its new identity. This is emphasized by Guidol's remarks on the sanctity of liturgical robes and ornaments and their associations with prominent members of the church and their ritual life. According to Guidol, "the ideal career" in Kopytoff's terms, for the Lion Strangler and other such textiles should preserve the religious function assigned to them. Guidol pointedly critiques the desecration of textiles from the threat of commercialism, or what Appadurai might conceptually describe as a "commodity by diversion," which reduces sacred objects to "cheap merchandise." The transformation from sacred object to quotidian item fundamentally involves a process of commoditization that sheds religious associations when repurposed as a secular everyday object. Guidol condemns the alteration of sanctified textiles into decor that are cut up

[52] Judit Verdaguer I Serrat, "A Museum within a Museum: The Textile Collection at the Episcopal Museum of Vic," *Datatèxtil* 35 (2016): 43.

and "condemned to a life as a chair cover or converted into cushions and placed beneath the feet of all manner of people."[53] From these comments, he insists that such luxury textiles should be reserved for worthy individuals of a specific stature, such as ecclesiastical figures, who are inherently respected and whose appearance further demands it, but Guidol also makes an exception for the dissemination of fragments to museums, which could educate the public on the historical and cultural value of such objects.

Guidol's commentary draws attention to the reality that throughout the medieval period, textiles more often than not strayed from their original form and were converted for alternative functions. Textiles were repurposed, displaced and adopted into new forms, environments or contexts. This practice can be explained in part by the portable and flexible nature of textiles, which allowed them to be easily adaptable as wall hangings, curtains, robes, and more. Did it make a difference whether the textile originally served a secular or sacred purpose? While Guidol and those who share similar views may wish for consecrated textiles to remain in Christian contexts, it is crucial to remember that Andalusi textiles held a previous set of functions, meanings, and affiliated identities prior to their consecration. The insistence that textiles remain strictly fixed as sacred objects that fulfill a religious function, neglects the fact that the majority of Islamic objects arriving into Christian settings, were originally used in secular contexts. Notwithstanding this glaring reality, the previous histories and lives of many Islamic objects remain unclear. Church treasuries, for example, often omit the Islamic past of acquired objects in favor of emphasizing their Christian donors. This consequently makes it

[53] Judit Verdaguer I Serrat, "A Museum within a Museum," 43.

difficult to piece together a fuller history of these objects, which often results in such objects being recognized primarily on the basis of their Christian connections.[54]

Like many portable objects of the Islamic world, the Lion Strangler's survival was contingent on its dispossession and use in a Christian setting. Textiles from Islamic Spain were often used in northern Christian kingdoms as linings for caskets, wrappings for relics, as well as robes, ecclesiastic or otherwise. In these contexts, their associations are often understood in religious terms as spoils of war that symbolize Christian victory over Islam, espoused by the historical backdrop of reconquest. In fact, several objects acquired from Al-Andalus were used to store the relics of Christian saints that were once buried in territories under Islamic rule and were subsequently transported to Christian territories between the 11th and 13th century in medieval Iberia.[55] This exemplifies what is known as the "triumphalist paradigm," which interprets such objects as trophies of war acquired from the aftermath of religious based violence. This line of thought privileges religion as the paradigm for interpreting art objects without recognizing the complex position they hold in cross-cultural relations. While it may be a convenient explanation for the complicated trajectories of such objects, holy war and spoliation are by no means the only modes of transmission that can account for the presence of objects from Islamic courts in Christian contexts. As will be elaborated, alternatives to religious based conflict include, first, trade through extensive commercial networks and, secondly, diplomatic gift exchange

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[54] Avinoam Shalem*, Islam Christianized: Islamic Portable Objects in the Medieval Church Treasuries of the Latin West*, (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1998), 121.

[55] Mariam Rosser-Owen, "Islamic Objects in Christian Contexts: Relic Translation and Modes of Transfer in Medieval Iberia," *Art in Translation,* 7, no. 1, (2015): 40. Rosser-Owen further critiques the generalization of Islamic objects in Northern treasuries as spoils: "The Islamic objects in the church treasuries of medieval Spain are perhaps best understood as trophies of war. In contrast to the lands beyond the Alps, where Islamic objects enjoyed the aura of exotic vessels from the Holy Land, …the lasting wars in Spain and the continuing hope of pushing the Muslim invaders southward created a situation in which almost every looted object was regarded by the Christians as a further symbol of the liberation of the Iberian Peninsula."

characteristic of medieval court culture. In exploring these alternative modes for the dissemination of precious objects, I hope to offer a speculative history for the Lion Strangler silk as a counter balance to its history that is better documented, namely its history in a Christian tomb and modern collection.

Alternate Modes of Transmission

In order to highlight the commercial circulation of textiles in medieval Iberia, it will be necessary to consider the development of silk in Al-Andalus, the formative role of its textile industry and networks, and the status of Andalusi silk textiles as a commodity more generally. The production of silk, known as sericulture, began in the Iberian Peninsula after Arab conquests in the 8th century. By the 9th century, the development of silk weaving centers and workshops in Al-Andalus established its participation in the commercial market for silk.[56] Referred to as *tiraz,* these centers and workshops were financed by royal courts as state monopoly. Of Persian origin, the term translates to "embroidery" in reference to the practice of bestowing inscribed robes of honor to aristocrats and other respected figures in pre-Islamic Persia under Sassanian rule.[57] Tiraz also denoted the robes themselves, whose inscriptions included panegyric, religious, and imperial messages often in relation to its patron.[58] Although tiraz possesses multiple meanings, it was used primarily to refer to the state-owned textile centers. Individuals overseeing the production of textiles in such royal establishments held important positions amongst court life. Prominent 14th century historian Ibn Khaldūn observed that, "the honour of managing the *tiraz*

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[56] Florence L. May, *Silk Textiles of Spain: 8th to 15th Century* (New York: Hispanic Society of America, 1957), 5.

[57] John Gillow, *Textiles of the Islamic World*, (London: Thames & Hudson, 2013), 12-13.

[58] Jochen Sokoly, "Textiles and Identity," in *A Companion to Islamic Art and Architecture*, eds. Finbarr Barry Flood and Gülru Necipoğlu, (New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc, 2017), 276.

factory was generally bestowed on a noble of the court, although a trusted individual might be chosen."[59] For a court official, being assigned the task of overseeing silk production elevated his social status based on its lucrative position. This further attests to the overall value textiles held and their centrality to sociocultural life within Al-Andalus.

The industry of silk weaving in Al-Andalus was particularly well documented due to regional specialization and thriving commercial demand.[60] It reached the height of its success during the Almoravid and Almohad periods.[61] During this time, according to chroniclers there were eight hundred tiraz workshops and "one thousand for excellent tunics and brocade."[62] It is clear that Al-Andalus established itself as an important center for silk weaving and textile production alongside other prominent Mediterranean centers such as Constantinople, Baghdad, and Sicily. The city of Almeria in particular, as previously discussed, was a renowned center for silk textile production that surpassed even Cordoba.[63]

The collective value assigned to Andalusi silk textiles in the commercial sphere by producers, merchants, and patrons affirms its status as a luxury commodity. As historian Olivia Constable elaborates in her seminal study on commerce and trade relations, silk remained a

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[59] Florence L. May, *Silk Textiles of Spain: 8th to 15th Century* (New York: Hispanic Society of America, 1957), 5.

[60] Thomas F. Glick, *Islamic and Christian Spain in the Early Middle Ages*, (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 277. Historian Thomas Glick aptly observes in his landmark study, "Of the various medieval textile technologies, silk weaving is the best documented. Because of the regional specialization typical of medieval craft organization and the demand in international commerce for high-quality silken cloth, this industry was characterized by a relatively high degree of diffusion and imitation of style and techniques."

[61] Olivia Remie Constable, *Trade and Traders in Muslim Spain: The Commercial Realignment of the Iberian Peninsula, 900-1500*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 173.

[62] Thomas F. Glick, *Islamic and Christian Spain in the Early Middle Ages,* 277.

[63] Jerrilynn D. Dodds, ed*., Al-Andalus: The Art of Islamic Spain*, (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1992), 105.

fundamental export for Al-Andalus and travelled well beyond its own borders. The detailed typology for silk among weavers and merchants is evidenced by distinctions made between its various forms and types:

> Medieval Arabic authors refer to numerous varieties of raw silk or silk thread with gradations dependent both on the original quality of the silk and on the care with which the delicate fibre was handled. Among the most common commercial categories for raw silk, were *ibrīsm* (high quality floss silk), *lasīn* (waste silk), *iltiqāt* (thread woven from waste silk, literally 'pick-ups or 'scraps'). Woven textiles were also specified by type, with names such as *dibāj, siqlātūn, washī*, and '*attābī*.[64]

The high degree of familiarity with silk stems from its widespread proliferation in one form or another. Historian Thomas Glick further details how silk became crucial for overseas trade and Iberia's craft industries:

> Silk was not just another article of trade, but a high-value commodity which was the object of capital investment. It was traded raw and worked in other countries; finished silken cloth was exported in abundant variety…so great was the market for this commodity, that there was even a heavy trade in inexpensive "pickups" (*iltiqat*), cloth made from waste silk spinnings, much handled by Andalusi merchants.[65]

Silk's privileged role in both overseas and domestic trade is partly explained by its adaptability as a material that takes on various forms: raw, finished cloth, and even remnants of repurposed silk spinnings. The value of silk was retained across the various categories listed and to such a degree that even its fragments or "pickups" were well appreciated. The documents from the Cairo Geniza further elucidate the widespread value of silk textiles across the Islamic world. The Judeo-Arabic documents reveal significant details about the trading patterns of Jewish traders who were active in important commercial centers across the Mediterranean, especially between the 11th and 12th centuries. Numerous references to Al-Andalus in the Geniza reveal the

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[64] Olivia Remie Constable, *Trade and Traders in Muslim Spain*, 175.

[65] Thomas F. Glick, *Islamic and Christian Spain in the Early Middle Ages,* 277.

assortment of resources local to the region and further indicate that Al-Andalus held a prominent position within a wider commercial network that had ties with Europe, the Near East, and Asia.

The centrality of silk textiles in medieval Iberia is most clearly evidenced by the proliferation of Andalusi textiles in the northern Christian ruled regions of Hispania. Northern interest in Andalusi textiles reached its height after the 12th century as documented by Andalusi manufacturers and merchants, as well as references in European commercial contracts and literary sources.[66] The demand for Andalusi textiles in the north is well represented by the inclusion of Andalusi textiles for sartorial and ritual purposes among the Christian elite. In fact, northern interest and consumption of Andalusi textiles dates as early as the tenth century and steadily remained well into the 13th century.[67] The abundance of Andalusi textiles that have survived in ecclesiastical church treasuries and in tombs at monasteries throughout Northern Iberia demonstrate widespread consumption.[68] Numerous extant textiles, including the Lion Strangler illustrate a clear preference for Andalusi textiles among Christian elites.

The preference for southern produced textiles is further explicated by the fact that northern Spain could not adequately parallel or compete with the well-established textile industry of Al-Andalus. While Al-Andalus' textile industry was renowned even beyond its own borders, the development of similar craft industries in Christian Spain was considerably slower. The textile industry of northern Spain did not meet the standards set in terms of the quality or

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[66] Olivia Remie Constable, *Trade and Traders in Muslim Spain,* 178.

[67] Maria Judith Feliciano, "Medieval Textiles in Iberia: Studies for a New Approach," in *Envisioning Islamic Art and Architecture: Essays in Honor of Renata Holod*, ed. David J. Roxburgh (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 1.

[68] Among these are surviving textiles in tombs at the monastery of Santa Maria la Real de las Huelgas in Burgos, the reliquary of Santa Librada from the Sigüenza cathedral, and textiles from the treasury of San Isidoro in Léon among others.

quantity of textiles, for domestic or international demand.[69] As a result, northern Spain looked towards Al-Andalus in the south to fulfill their taste for luxury cloth. As far as the commercial relationship between both regions went, Christian Spain economically depended upon al-Andalus and "in the context of international trade, it [Christian Spain] was primarily a producer of raw materials and, to the extent that it purchased finished goods, it did so in and through the Andalusi commercial network."[70] This commercial context accentuates the domestic role of Andalusi silk textiles within medieval Iberia, as they were often used for sumptuous displays in secular and sacred contexts by the aristocracy of northern Iberia. The economic exchange between the northern elite who desired extravagant silks and producers from Al-Andalus thus facilitated and bolstered relations between Iberia's communities in a commercial context.

In addition to the commercial sphere, gift exchange constituted another means for the diffusion of Andalusi textiles and Islamic objects more broadly. A crucial component of court culture involved diplomatic relations that were both established and maintained through the economy and exchange of gifts. As art historian Cecily Hilsdale articulates, "medieval gifts arbitrate diplomatic cross-cultural encounters; they mediate familial and dynastic relations; and they triangulate sacred transactions as votive offerings. In these diverse contexts, gifts negotiate rivalries and also serve as agents of union."[71] The long history of Muslim rulers who have bestowed extravagant rarities to Christian nobility, for various political and personal reasons, was formative to cross-cultural relations and exchange between both groups. The number of

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[69] Thomas F. Glick, *Islamic and Christian Spain in the Early Middle Ages,* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 141.

[70] Thomas F. Glick, *Islamic and Christian Spain in the Early Middle Ages*, 143.

[71] Cecily J. Hilsdale, "Gift," *Studies in Iconography*, 33, (2012): 174.

surviving objects of Islamic origin in Christian regions also stems from their active participation in the gift economy of medieval court cultures.

Gifts also underwent transformations and acquired a new set of meanings once they changed hands and moved between secular and sacred spheres. These changes also call attention to the common practice of re-gifting—in which previously acquired objects are gifted to another individual. In the case of the Lion Strangler, the Museu Episcopal de Vic alludes to this process of regifting older objects: "It would seem that all these fabrics were given by James I to the bishop [Bernard Calvó]…and *although they were already old then* [italics added], given their great value they were used to make his pontifical ornaments."[72] While the act of regifting might come across as distasteful according to modern social conventions, in the medieval period it was a regular, and even valued, social practice. Art historian Maria Feliciano aptly points out, "the reuse of fine textiles, especially those that had undergone ritual consecration for the ornament of sacred spaces or to facilitate liturgical ritual, was the medieval norm."[73] The regularity of this practice also attests to the adaptability of textiles that took on a different set of functions upon entering new contexts as they were regifted.

The alternative modes of transmission described here provide critical background for reconsidering the circulation of art objects from the courts of Al-Andalus. The Lion Strangler was undoubtedly a luxury object designated for a courtly environment based on its costly material, elaborate weaving technique, complex decorative elements. Its inscription supports this

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[72] "Pontifical Ornaments of Saint Bernat Calbó, Bishop of Vic (1233-1243)", Textiles and Clothing, Museu Episcopal de Vic, accessed March 22, 2019, https://www.museuepiscopalvic.com/en/colleccions/textiles-and-clothing/pontifical-ornaments-of-saint-bernat-calbo-bishop-of-vic-12331243-mev-10618-2251-10620-10617-3890-1320-790-791.

[73] Maria Judith Feliciano, "Sovereign, Saint, and City: Honor and Reuse of Textiles in the Treasury of San Isidoro (Leon)," *Medieval Encounters,* 25, (2019): 96-123.

point. Although the Lion Strangler's horizontal band of calligraphic inscription *al-'amr* (command, power, or authority) does not identify an individual, the effort to include a panegyric inscription at all, albeit brief, suggests the authoritative presence of a figure. This may include a state official or prestigious individual, as opposed to a ruler.

Given the associations of power and exclusivity of inscription, it is unlikely that the Lion Strangler was intended for mass production amongst commercial markets. Its classification as a court object is further confirmed by James of Aragon's decision to reclaim the textile from its previous owner in the aftermath of battle at Valencia. James' decision to gift the textile to Calvó, confirms its status as a valuable object only worthy for a suitable recipient. Adorned in sumptuous silk garments, Calvó likely made appearances with the Lion Strangler during special events—the most powerful being his own funeral. Exquisite textiles were imbued with the power to mesmerize and symbolically designate an individual's importance through outward appearance. As a central religious figure of the church and by extension King James' court, Calvó would have understood how regal attire visually conveyed his position of power. The Lion Strangler's exclusivity as a sumptuous object ensured that it was a highly valued gift that was well suited for outward displays of power through adornment.

Objects and Confessional Difference

The alternative modes of transmission discussed here raise pertinent questions about the role of religion in the circulation of Andalusi textiles and other objects produced in Al-Andalus. As previously suggested, religion as a tool of analysis is rather contentious and limited. A religious reading categorizes the Lion Strangler primarily as an "Islamic" object, however religion as an interpretive framework is restrictive because it primarily rests on misleading

definitions and ideas of what constitutes "Islamic" art.[74] The majority of what falls under the umbrella of Islamic art is, in fact, secular in function. And yet, objects and architecture are defined as "Islamic" based on their production in regions under Islamic rule or the inclusion of Arabic inscriptions which have come to broadly signify the presence of Islam regardless of linguistic meaning. On the surface, the inclination to interpret "Islamic art" through religion seems harmless based on the religious identities surrounding their production and ownership. One might easily assume such art and architecture to be reflective of either cooperation or hostility between Muslims and Christians. However, a religious standpoint espouses a singular function and meaning, that fails to acknowledge the complex interplay of factors and influences that shape cultural and artistic production, the diffusion of objects, and their evolution.

This point is all the more poignant when discussing objects that travel from a predominantly Muslim culture to a Christian one, as with the case of Andalusi textiles. It has been suggested that Islamic objects underwent a process of "Christianization" through their integration in Christian rituals and close proximity to the bodies of sacred figures which include members of the church and saints.[75] Even secular Christian objects were often consecrated before they were introduced in religious ceremonies. It is conceivable that objects from the Islamic world such as the Lion Strangler also underwent some sort of consecration as part of their introduction to Christian contexts. Although it was worn as a vestment by a notable Christian bishop, it is reductive to consider the Lion Strangler exclusively in terms of its newly assigned

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[74] See Avinoam Shalem, "What Do We Mean When We Say 'Islamic Art'? A Plea for a Critical Rewriting of the History of the Arts of Islam," *Journal of Art Historiography,* no. 6, (June 2012): 1-18.

[75] Avinoam Shalem discusses Christian treasuries at length in *Islam Christianized: Islamic Portable Objects in the Medieval Church Treasuries of the Latin West*, (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1998). See also Mariam Rosser-Owen's remarks on the transmission of relics in Northern Iberia in "Islamic Objects in Christian Contexts: Relic Translation and Modes of Transfer in Medieval Iberia," *Art in Translation,* 7, no. 1, (2015): 39-63.

religious function and therefore a "Christian" object. Not only does this omit the Lion Strangler's Islamic origins but it also prohibits the possibility that it upheld multiple functions and meanings as it moved between cultures. As mentioned, it was common for regal Christian figures to be adorned in luxury textiles produced in workshops of Islamic courts. The proliferation of Andalusi luxury textiles throughout the Iberian Peninsula contributes to their overall acceptance—and even desire—among the Christian north. The use of religious categories (Christian or Islamic) to interpret objects that were largely secular restricts a comprehensive understanding of their multiple valences.

It is far more productive to view the Lion Strangler as a totality of its multiple phases and histories. The presence of Arabic inscriptions underscores this position. The Kufic inscription on the Lion Strangler marks the piece explicitly as a representative of the southern regions of Al-Andalus and more broadly, of Islamic culture. Even with stylized inscriptions were not always legible, especially in the case of garments in motion, the Kufic inscriptions advertised the origins of the silk as Andalusi. It is important to note, however, that the Arabic inscriptions did not necessarily negate its newly acquired Christian associations—they complemented them. In other words, the Arabic inscriptions probably signified an aesthetic appreciation for the status of textiles from al-Andalus, rather than making a statement about Islam.

The pre-eminence of religion as the paradigm for analysis for the arts of medieval Spain more broadly relates to Iberian historiography. The extent to which the relationship between Iberia's communities of Christians, Muslims, and Jews can be characterized by violence advocated during the reconquista has been debated throughout historiographic traditions.[76] As a

[76] The nature of social relations between Christians, Muslims, and Jews within medieval Iberia during the reconquista has been at the center of historiographic tradition. Cultural historian and literary critic Américo Castro's notion of convivencia proposed that Iberia's communities of Christians, Muslims and Jews defined by coexistence, as opposed to hostility and rivalry, through a shared social and cultural environment. In response, historian Claudio

category of analysis, religion is liable to reduce objects produced in Islamic Spain to mere victims of power struggles between religious communities, or alternatively as an embodiment of their coexistence. The religious classification of Andalusi objects and categories such as Islamic, Hispano-Muslim, or Mudejar are oversimplified and further imply hierarchical dichotomies which consider objects merely as recipients of religious conflict, as espoused by the polarizing agenda of the reconquista.[77] By presenting the limitations of religion, I am not suggesting that it is irrelevant to the study of Andalusi objects. Instead, I am asserting that relying exclusively on religion forces objects to fit an insular framework, which consequently obscures their agency and dynamism. In fact, despite the emphasis on confrontation rooted in religious difference, contact between Muslims and Christians persisted as they closely interacted with one another through textile production, consumption, exchange and reuse.[78] These interactions, which art historian Jerrilynn Dodds describes as "felt encounters," suggests a shared intimacy through proximity which underscores the reality that medieval Iberian society was organized with an awareness of difference that did not strictly divide its communities but instead led to their entanglement. From

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Sánchez-Albornoz's essentialist hypothesis maintained Islamic and Jewish presence as peripheral within the wider formation of Spain. The lingering influence of Islam and Judaism on the Iberian Peninsula thus inevitability posed a problem for Spanish historiography and national myths of a purely Spanish and Catholic identity. The encompassing historiographic views are informed by the ideology of the Reconquista and coincide with the belief that the relationship between Christians and Muslims is innately marked by antagonism and strife. See Soifer, Maya. "Beyond Convivencia: Critical Reflections on the Historiography of Interfaith Relations in Christian Spain." *Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2009, pp. 19–35; Mann, Vivian B., Thomas F. Glick, and Jerrilynn Denise Dodds. *Convivencia: Jews, Muslims, and Christians in Medieval Spain*, (New York: G. Braziller in association with the Jewish Museum, 1992).

[77] The term Mudejar is used to refer both to Muslims living under Christian rule as well as the specific artistic and architectural style that developed as a result of this encounter which exhibits a fusion of Islamic and Christian elements.

[78] See Jerrilynn Denise Dodds, Maria Rosa Menocal, and Abigail Krasner Balbale, *The Arts of Intimacy: Christians, Jews, and Muslims in the Making of Castilian Culture*, (Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2008).

the perspective of material culture, these encounters between religious communities are traceable through the adoption of various visual motifs and architectural elements between groups, but also through the conversion of religious architecture. I would further argue that the practice of repurposing objects, in the case of textiles produced under Islamic rule and later used in Christian contexts, also exemplifies the entanglement of identities. These practices produce a hybridity that undermines longstanding portrayals of a strictly polarized society which maintained a myth of cultural purity.[79]

The most rigorous reconceptualization of Andalusi textiles and the role of religion in Iberian material culture has been instigated by art historian Maria Feliciano.[80] Feliciano's studies contest the explicit misrepresentation of medieval Iberia as a society deeply divided by religious and ethnic differences as espoused in historiographic tradition. She calls attention to how Andalusi textiles form and communicate social identity and subvert mischaracterizations of social relations in Iberia. In this sense, Andalusi textiles become a conduit for felt encounters between Iberia's entangled communities. Through extant textiles and patterns of consumption, it is clear that Christian hostility against Muslims sits alongside Christian respect for the material culture produced by Muslims. As Feliciano points out, a longstanding interest in costly silk fabrics was shared amongst medieval Iberia's communities. The regional and typological

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[79] Examples of this cultural hybridity include many mosques that were converted to churches, which involved a process of confiscation and rebuilding that often left behind remnants of previous Islamic architectural elements. The common practice of repurposing religious architecture and the incorporation of architectural elements from other cultures is representative of a cultural synthesis that took place in the Iberian Peninsula, where architectural sites and monuments upheld multiple meanings that were in flux.

[80] Maria Judith Feliciano, "Muslim Shrouds for Christian Kings," in *Under the Influence: Questioning the Comparative in Medieval Castile*, eds. Cynthia Robinson and Leyla Rouhi (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 101-133, Maria Judith Feliciano, "Medieval Textiles in Iberia: Studies for a New Approach," *Envisioning Islamic Art and Architecture: Essays in Honor of Renata Holod*, eds. Renata Holod and David J Roxburgh, (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 46-65, Maria Judith Feliciano, "Sovereign, Saint, and City: Honor and Reuse of Textiles in the Treasury of San Isidoro (Leon)," *Medieval Encounters,* 25, 96-123.

diversity found in trade documents, for example, demonstrates how the proliferation and interest in silk textiles was traceable across borders. Trade records substantiate Al-Andalus' established role in commercial networks and the specific nomenclature used to describe textiles from Al-Andalus in commercial documents attests to their renowned status. Silks from Al-Andalus were distinctively categorized as "*ibrisam andalusi,*"[81] drawing attention to its specialized position as a producer of fine textiles. Based on the development of textile production, trade and collecting practices, I argue that northern demand for textiles in the Iberian Peninsula fueled and bolstered commercial relations between its communities. The dramatic increase in the production of luxury textiles further endorsed their status as objects that were highly sought after and worthy of investment.

The unwavering preference for Andalusi textiles among Christian elites and ecclesiastical figures is attested by the proliferation of luxury textiles across public and private spheres of medieval Iberian society. As luxury objects, Andalusi textiles were utilized in sumptuary displays which consolidated the sociopolitical power and identity of the noble bodies they adorned. The incorporation of textiles in public appearances, ceremonies and funerary rituals suggests an acute awareness of visibility and displays of power in both life and death. Members of Christian nobility and the church, including Bernard Calvó, reflected their power and legitimacy through self-presentation and bodily adornment. Based on such practices, I

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[81] Maria Judith Feliciano, "Medieval Textiles in Iberia: Studies for a New Approach," *Envisioning Islamic Art and Architecture: Essays in Honor of Renata Holod, eds. Renata Holod and David J Roxburgh,* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 51. Feliciano elaborates, "The remarkable range of references to silk textiles in the Cairo Geniza documents from the eleventh century mirrors Iberia's own specialized language. Silk from around Damascus (*harir ghuti*), silk from Khurasan (*ibrisam khurasani*), dyed silk from Constantinople (*harir qustantini masbugh*), and a type of Sicilian textile (*harir siraqusi*) are but a few contemporary documentary references that illustrate the intricate and extensive map of silk production and trade across the medieval Mediterranean...Iberia's position within it was privileged and celebrated--*ibrisam andalusi* is, after all, commonly found in contemporary trade documentation."

corroborate Feliciano's original suggestion that Andalusi textiles were not necessarily perceived as incongruous or "exotic" within Christian social spheres north of the peninsula. Instead, sumptuous silk textiles were included in both daily and ritual life of medieval Iberia, where they formed part of the symbolic repertoire of kingship and ecclesiastical power.

While no extant textual sources directly discuss the mortuary or ecclesiastical contexts of Andalusi textiles in the Christian north, Feliciano cites the later writings of King Alfonso X of Castile's *Siete Partidas* (Title XIII, Law XIII) to shed light on the importance textiles held in social spheres like the court. Alfonso X's text endorses the role of resplendent silk cloth for signifying status, as Partida II (Title V, Law V) indicates: "Dress has much to do with causing men to be recognized whether as noble, or servile...kings should wear garments of silk, adorned with gold and jewels, in order that men might know them as soon as they saw them, without inquiring for them."[82] It is clear from the *Partidas* and social practices that luxury silk textiles were highly conspicuous objects exclusively reserved for individuals of high social status as a means to further symbolize their power and prestige.

The relationship between textiles and bodily adornment continued even in death through the adaption of textiles as funerary garments and wrappings for Christian relics. It must be reminded that extravagant silks were not just limited to garments. Andalusi textiles were in high demand due to their multifunctional nature as early as the 10th century.[83] The diverse uses for Andalusi textiles can be parsed through textual accounts from northern Spain which detail the

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[82] Maria Judith Feliciano, "Muslim Shrouds for Christian Kings," *Under the Influence: Questioning the Comparative in Medieval Castile*, eds. Cynthia Robinson and Leyla Rouhi, (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 101-133.

[83] Maria Judith Feliciano, "Medieval Textiles in Iberia: Studies for a New Approach," *Envisioning Islamic Art and Architecture: Essays in Honor of Renata Holod,* eds. Renata Holod and David J Roxburgh, (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 3. "By the 10th century Andalusi textiles "adorned church altars, wrapped saints' relics, covered regal, ecclesiastical, and noble bodies, and complemented commodities of various kinds, such as ivories, wood, and metalwork, among other media."

environmental role of textiles as they were hung in churches and adapted as altar covers and mantles in church displays.[84] Historical accounts observe how Andalusi textiles were repurposed to suit Christian environments and functions, thereby reaffirming the adaptability of their form.

While the Lion Strangler arrived to Northern Spain through the specific circumstances of war and was subsequently reduced to its final form as a funerary vestment, the manifold roles and functions it held in its previous contexts embed it with additional layers. Expanding the possibilities for the Lion Strangler's existence returns back a question of its circulation and materiality. The remarkable mobility of textiles and adaptable physical form ensured their circulation through both daily and ritual life. The ubiquitous nature of textiles characterized the Islamic world as a "draped universe," as evocatively described by art historian Lisa Golombek.[85] More than just garments, textiles were multivalent objects, again, commonly adopted as architectural elements, domestic furnishings and as accessories for rituals and ceremonies. She reminds us about the presence and heightened role of textiles in the medieval Islamic world as follows:

> We tend to forget that doorways were hung with curtains; that hangings made the open colonnade a private place; that the bare floors, sometimes unpaved were laid with carpets and mats; and that through these halls marched a continual procession of richly clothed personages. Outside in the gardens, royal spaces were created by spreading a cloth or rug and erecting over it a tent or brocade, or a baldachin.[86]

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[84] Avinoam Shalem, *Islam Christianized: Islamic Portable Objects in the Medieval Church Treasuries of the Latin West*, (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1998), 162. Examples of identified Islamic textiles that were utilized in church environments include the 14th century banner of Los Navas des Tolosa hung in the church of Las Huelgas in Burgos, a Nasrid silk used for a statue of the Virgin in a church near Valencia, and a 14th century Mamluk silk mantle in a church near Valencia among others.

[85] Lisa Golombek, "The Draped Universe of Islam," in *Late Antique and Medieval Art of the Mediterranean World*, ed. Eva Rose F. Hoffman, (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007), 97-115.

[86] Lisa Golombek, "The Draped Universe of Islam," 98.

In thinking about such rich environments enlivened by textiles we see how visual and material culture provide alternative access to the felt encounters between Iberia's communities that textual sources might lack or omit altogether. For example, Christian participation in the material culture of Islamic Spain is evidenced through church treasuries that were filled with objects produced in Al-Andalus. In fact, a majority of luxury arts from Al-Andalus survived specifically through relocation and storage in church treasuries north of the peninsula. As such, despite the rhetorical distancing between Christians and Muslims in church chronicles and other polemical texts, Northern Christian treasuries reveal an alternative outlook of interest, if not admiration, towards Islamic artistic production and culture. General consensus may agree that the Lion Strangler arrived to Bernard Calvó as war plunder, carrying clear implications as an inversion of power and act of political triumph. However, this should not overshadow the textile's radically different set of owners, functions, and meanings prior to Calvó's ownership that can subvert previous interpretations that position it as a victim of religious conflict.

Conclusions: Multiple Histories and Embedded Memories

A renewed theoretical focus on the social life of the Lion Strangler produces a far more expansive biography that gives weight to the textile's history before its main affiliation with Calvó, and the various phases of its trajectory that follow that association. In doing so, it redistributes attention to the various moments of the work's life that have been eclipsed by the dominant and religiously based argument about spoliation and triumph. The argument builds on scholars such as Eva Hoffman, who stressed the category of portability over rootedness, and Avinoam Shalem who similarly emphasized a multilayered approach that encompasses the

transactions, phases, and contact zones that objects move through in their lifespans.[87] Shifting scholarly interest from objects' "places of departures and the location of arrivals" to "alternative interactive spaces or contact zones and the sets of exchanges between these specific sites of departure and arrival" serves to offer a more thorough and nuanced account of an object's life history.[88] My reassessment of the Lion Strangler attempts to present it as a multivalent object that becomes further enlivened through an integrative framework that highlights its multiple temporalities, contact zones, and histories. The various borders the Lion Strangler crossed between Al-Andalus to Hispania and into its present-day international dissemination into North America and Europe, attests to the plurality of contexts and meanings it has acquired as a commodity, gift, and artefact.

Shalem's insights on the lives of objects also accentuate the more abstract qualities objects possess, which he describes as "anima".[89] According to Shalem, the anima of an object constitutes less tangible aspects, such as "the thoughts that objects carry with them, not only physical, tangible evidence, but ideas and memories, be they contrived, legendary or semi-historical."[90] These anthropomorphic qualities present an alternative point of entry to interpret the biography of the Lion Strangler and further enrich my reading of the textile. Although the Islamic origins of the Lion Strangler and most Andalusi textiles were predominantly secular, through the act of transference their anima acquires new sacred memories and religious

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[87] See Eva Hoffman, "Pathways of Portability," *Art History* 24, no. 1 (2001): 17-50; Avinoam Shalem, "Multivalent Paradigms of Interpretation and the Aura or Anima of the Object," *Islamic Art and the Museum: Approaches to Art and Archaeology of the Muslim World in the Twenty-First Century*, Benoît Junod, Georges Khalil, Stefan Weber, and Gerhard Wolf, eds., (London: Saqi Books, 2012), 101-115.

[88] Shalem, "Multivalent Paradigms of Interpretation and the Aura or Anima of the Object," 102.

[89] Shalem, "Multivalent Paradigms of Interpretation and the Aura or Anima of the Object," 103.

[90] Shalem, "Multivalent Paradigms of Interpretation and the Aura or Anima of the Object," 103.

affiliations under Christian contexts and owners. Guidol's criticism about antiquarians who collected and repurposed textiles like the Lion Strangler also raises the underlying motivations behind such actions—namely the pervading historical nostalgia surrounding the Lion Strangler and Andalusi textiles more broadly as objects representative of the contending ideas of Spanish national identity and cultural heritage. For collectors and antiquarians, the acquisition of Andalusi textiles is a testament of the Islamic-Christian encounter and a hybridized cultural identity that invoked a historical nostalgia. Admiration for the cultural effervescence of Spain's historical past is imposed on the Lion Strangler and resulted in the need for individuals across various groups—be it members of the church, collectors, or museum officials—to possess, redistribute and preserve the textile. A very significant portion of the Lion Strangler's anima is formed by such invocations of historical nostalgia and the embodiment of a specific cultural moment.

Additionally, the Lion Strangler's specific transference within Iberia, also leads it to possess a dual history, or what Shalem describes as "first and second histories."[91] The initial first history pertains to the Lion Strangler's Islamic origins in Al-Andalus, whereas its second history is formed of its existence under Christian ownership and Christian environments. However, I would assert that a third history also exists, which pertains to the Lion Strangler's modern-day state following its fragmentation and dissemination at the hands of collectors. In other words, the Lion Strangler shares at least three cultural spaces. This includes its origins in Al-Andalus as its initial cultural space of which little is known, although one can presume it resided in a courtly environment or under elite ownership. The textile's later relocation to northern Spain as a war trophy and ecclesiastical vestment formed its second cultural space.

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[91] Shalem, "Multivalent Paradigms of Interpretation and the Aura or Anima of the Object," 103.

Based on the identifiable details surrounding the Lion Strangler's transference and owners, this second cultural space is more distinguished and part of a wider cultural context of sacred ecclesiastical environments in Christian tradition. Departing from these two cultural spaces, I argue that the Lion Strangler's third space is perhaps more ambiguous and complicated. Much like the previous notion of a third history, I argue that this third cultural space is comprised of the Lion Strangler's modern dissemination across museum collections, where it exists as an object situated in a larger cultural environment by cultural institutions vested with authority and dedicated to representing history. This third cultural space involves attempting to recontextualize the Lion Strangler and the cultural milieu it originated from. However, the Lion Strangler also passed through the hands of multiple private collectors prior to its arrival to museums. In the case of its ownership under private collectors, its cultural space and function remains ambiguous.

Among its plurality of meanings and histories, the Lion Strangler's ultimate survival in an ecclesiastical setting, much like other Islamic objects, raises an important question: which historical memories and associations are kept alive through the present day? Curiously, the Lion Strangler's Arabic inscription proclaims its origins in Al-Andalus and serves as a tangible reminder or memory of the textile's previous life. Although the Lion Strangler's circulation through Christian settings and affiliation with Christian figures is far more identifiable, I have attempted to outline that its origins and life under Islamic rule should be equally considered, given how minimized it has been in previous discussions of the textile.

While the Lion Strangler presents a fragmented and imprecise provenance, rather than dismissing it as insufficient or worthless, I have prioritized its objecthood in order to trace its meanings alongside its multiple forms, uses, and trajectories. In doing so, I aim towards a nuanced interpretation that emphasizes the textile's multivalent nature. Insights from object-

oriented methodologies lift the Lion Strangler from the misdirected peripheral status as a decorative object and attitudes that deem such objects as inert or mute. By reassembling the Lion Strangler and its wider biography, I ultimately argue that it "speaks" and is enlivened through its richly active life as a portable object that circulated various commercial and cultural spheres.

Set against the wider historical context of medieval Iberia, the Lion Strangler becomes politicized when embroiled in the rhetoric of the Reconquista, stereotyped as an object of war. However, as I have explained this assigned status occludes other important facets of the textile's identity. In fact, when given to Calvó, the textile takes on an additional set of meanings as a gift and a sacred ecclesiastical ornament. Through its relocation into Northern Spain, the Lion Strangler existed in two domains and acquired a second history or life, as an Islamic object in a Christian context. Following its burial with Calvó, the textile remerges through its discovery in a starkly different Spain during the 19th century. It is subjected once more to human interests, which leads to its dissemination, not as a whole cloth but as fragments amongst collectors, auction houses, private owners, and museums. The series of transactions and exchanges the textile went through reactivated and further extended its social life. It is from these contexts that the Lion Strangler eventually found its way into the local context of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, where I personally encountered it and came to realize that not only did the MMFA possess fragments of all three identified textiles from Calvó's tomb but that these fragments were completely excluded from any published discussions on the respective textiles.

Presently, as mentioned, the Lion Strangler's fragments remain in various collections of private owners and in storage facilities of international museums. Encased by glass or in storage, the textile's current setting is reminiscent of its previous burial in the mid 13th century. Its current fate raises Kopytoff's pressing question of what happens when an object reaches the ends of its

usefulness? Like many art objects, the Lion Strangler is now removed from its previous contexts and active life where it was exchanged, worn and used. By transitioning into a historical artifact, its "usefulness" presently resides predominantly in its didactic or pedagogical capabilities, as an object that holds the potential to inform the public as a tangible testament to the artistic production, intercultural relations and commercial spheres of Medieval Iberia's rich sociocultural fabric. These multiple contexts and embedded meanings are deeply entangled and this case study has been an attempt to retrace the individual threads of the Lion Strangler's rich lifespan and trajectory, which I argue, continues long after its presumed final destination.

List of Figures

Figure 1. Fragment of the Lion Strangler, early-mid 12th century, Almoravid period, Almeria, Spain, lampas, taqueté, and plain-weave variant: silk and gold thread, 49.3 x 52.7 cm. Cooper-Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum, New York.

Figure 2. Tunic of Infante Don García, first half of the 12th century, silk and gold thread, Parochial Church, Oña, Burgos.

Figure 3. Tunic of Infante Don García (Detail), first half of the 12th century, silk and gold thread, Parochial Church, Oña, Burgos.

Figure 4. Chasuble of San Juan de Ortega, first half of the 12th century, silk and gold thread, Parochial Church, Quintanaortuño, Burgos.

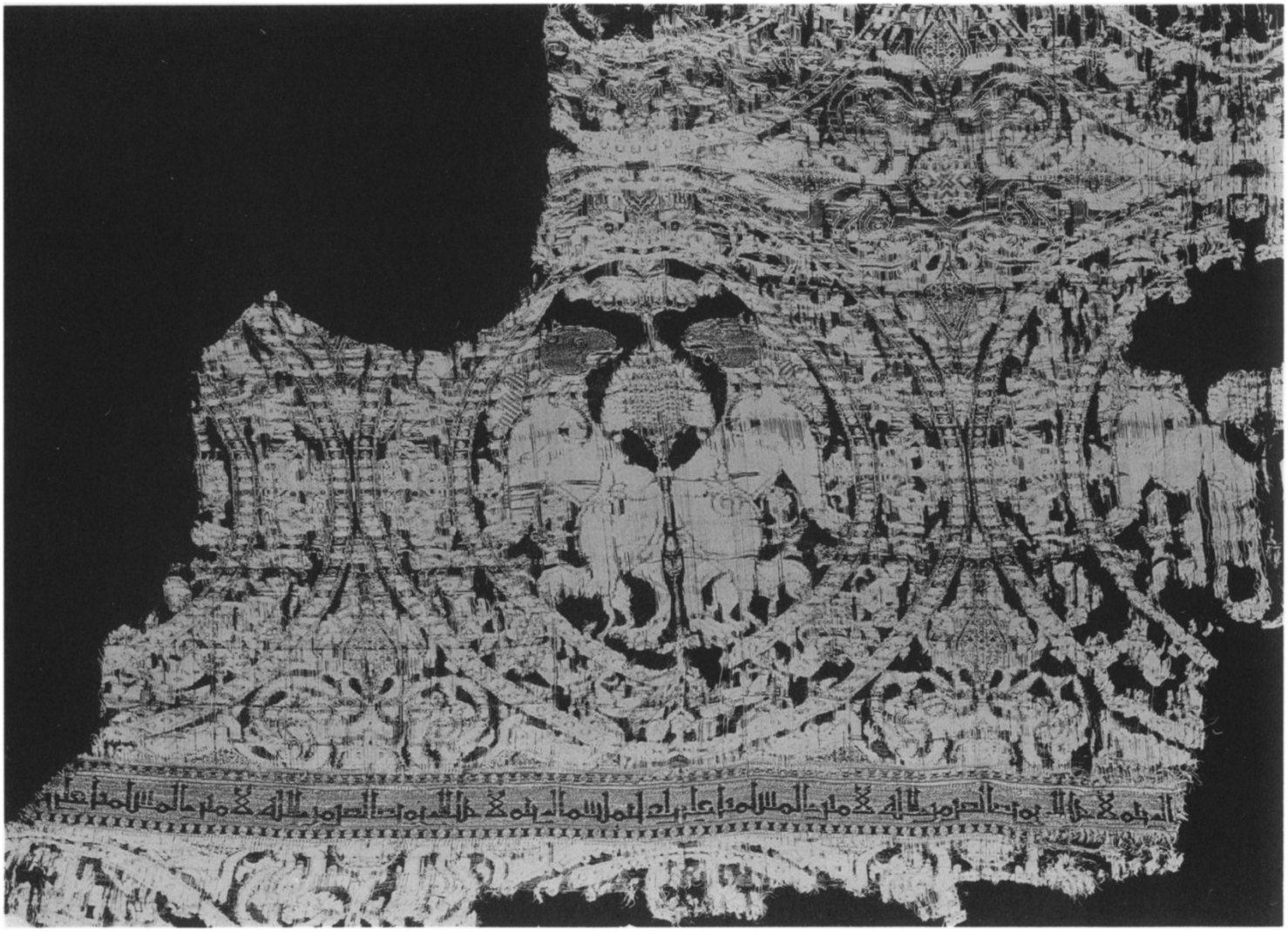

Figure 5. Chasuble of San Juan de Ortega featuring inwoven inscription band, first half of the 12th century, silk and gold thread, Parochial Church, Quintanaortuño, Burgos.

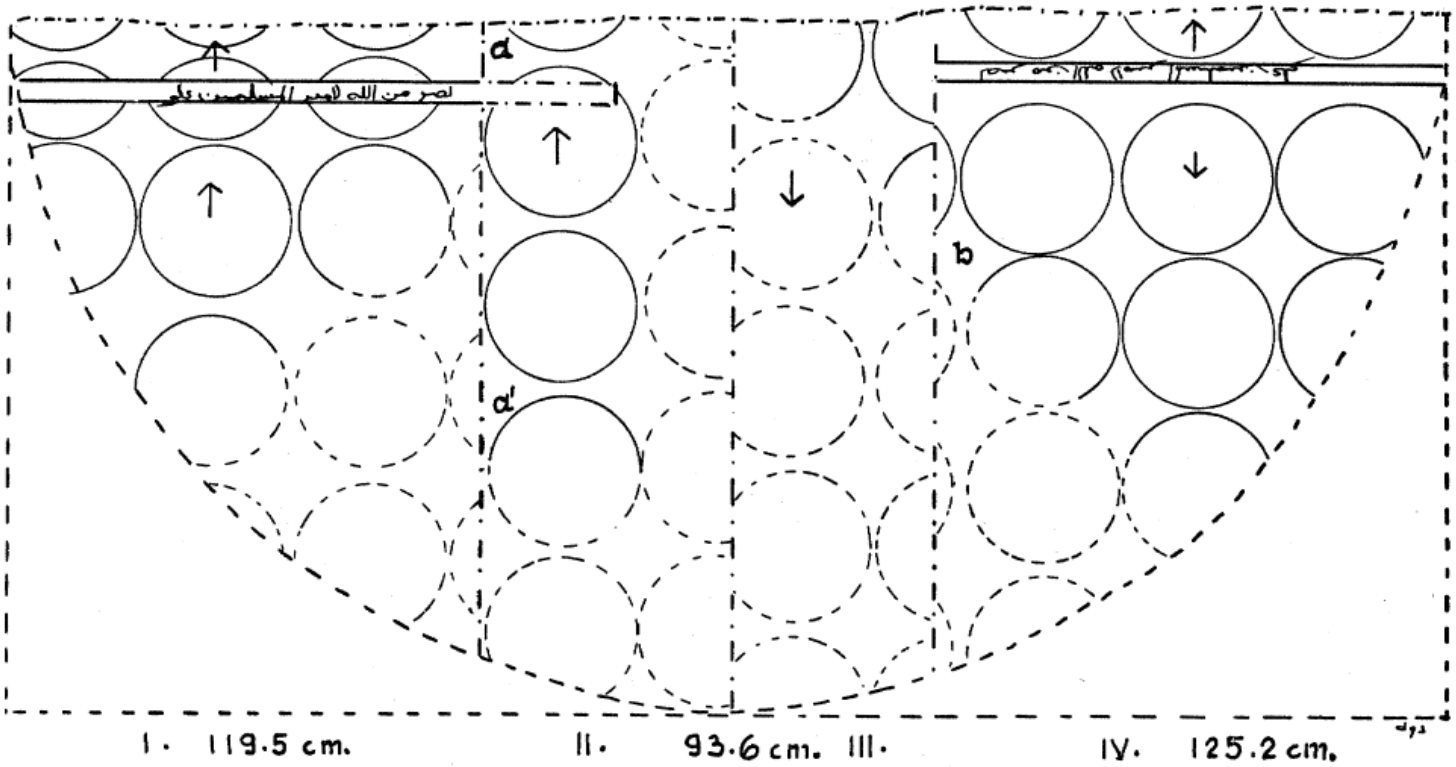

Figure 6. Dorothy Shepherd's diagram of San Juan de Ortega's chasuble laid flat to show the arrangement of the textile's fragments.

Figure 7. Fragment of the Lion Strangler, early-mid 12th century, Almoravid period, Almeria, Spain, lampas, taqueté, and plain-weave variant: silk and gold thread, 47.5 x 44 cm. Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, Montreal.

Figure 8. Sketch of the Lion Strangler's principal motif.

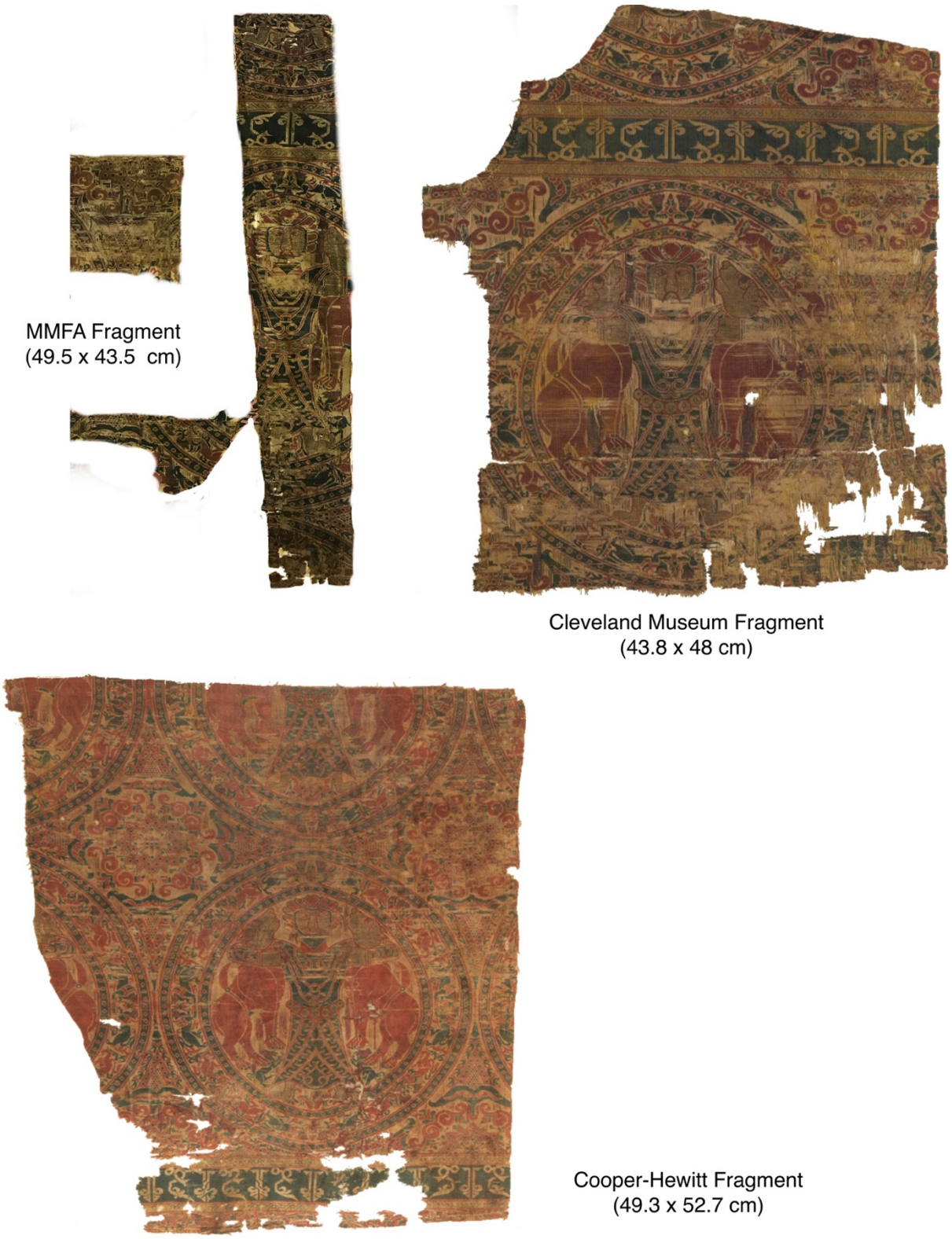

Figure 9. A digital reassembly of the known North American fragments of the Lion Strangler.

Figure 10. Fragment of Lion Strangler, first half of the 12th century, Almoravid period, Almeria, Spain, lampas, taqueté, and plain-weave variant, silk and gold thread, 43.8 x 48 cm. Cleveland Museum of Art.

Figure 11. “Cloth of Sphinxes”, first half of the 12th century, Almoravid period, Almeria, Spain, silk and gold thread, lampas, taqueté, and plain-weave variant, 54.6 x 65.4 cm, Cleveland Museum of Art.

Figure 12. "Cloth of Eagles", first half of the 12th century, Almoravid period, Almeria, Spain, silk and gold thread, 118 x 165 cm, Cleveland Museum of Art.

Figure 13. Pontifical ornaments of Bernard Calvó from Museu Episcopal de Vic, from the first half of the 12th to the 18th century, Al-Andalus, Byzantium, and Catalonia, Museu Episcopal de Vic, Barcelona.

Figure 14. Fragment of the Lion Strangler, early-mid 12th century, Almoravid period, Almeria, Spain, lampas, taqueté, and plain-weave variant: silk and gold thread, Museu Episcopal de Vic, Barcelona.

Figure 15. Fragment of shroud of San Pedro de Osma, early 12th century, Almoravid period, silk and gold thread, 50 x 43cm, Museum of Fine Arts Boston.

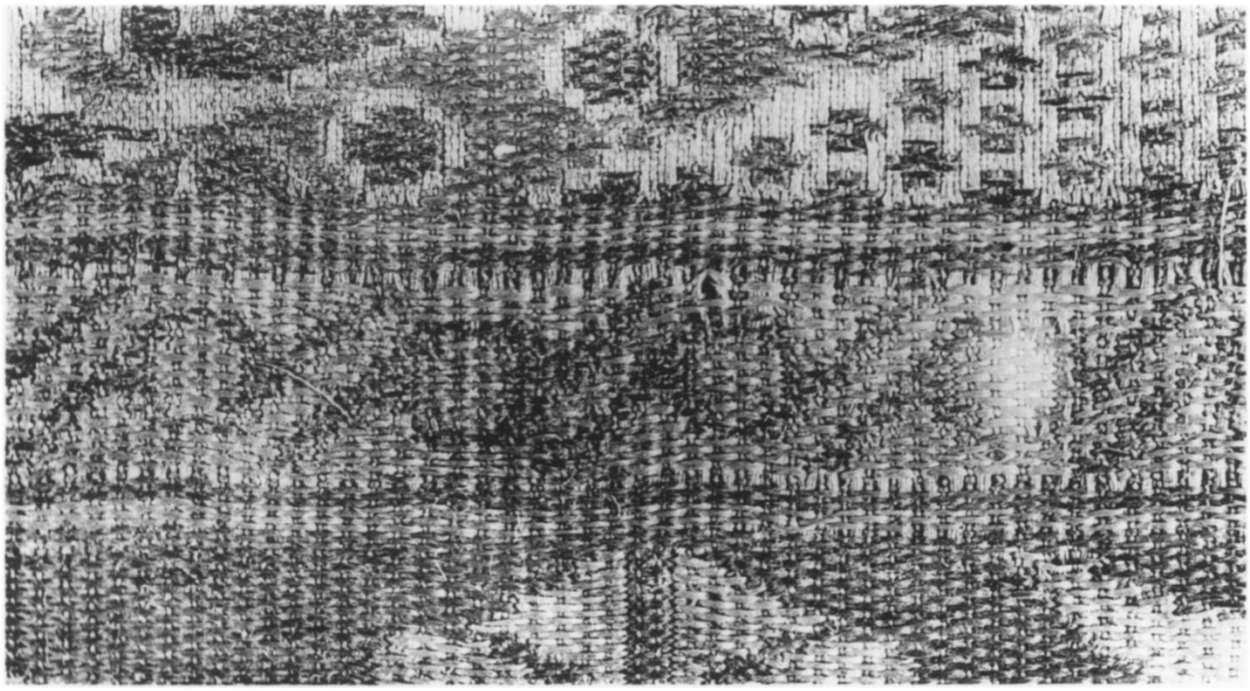

Figure 16. Enlarged detail showcasing the distinct diasper weave from the ground of the Lion Strangler, Cleveland Museum of Art.

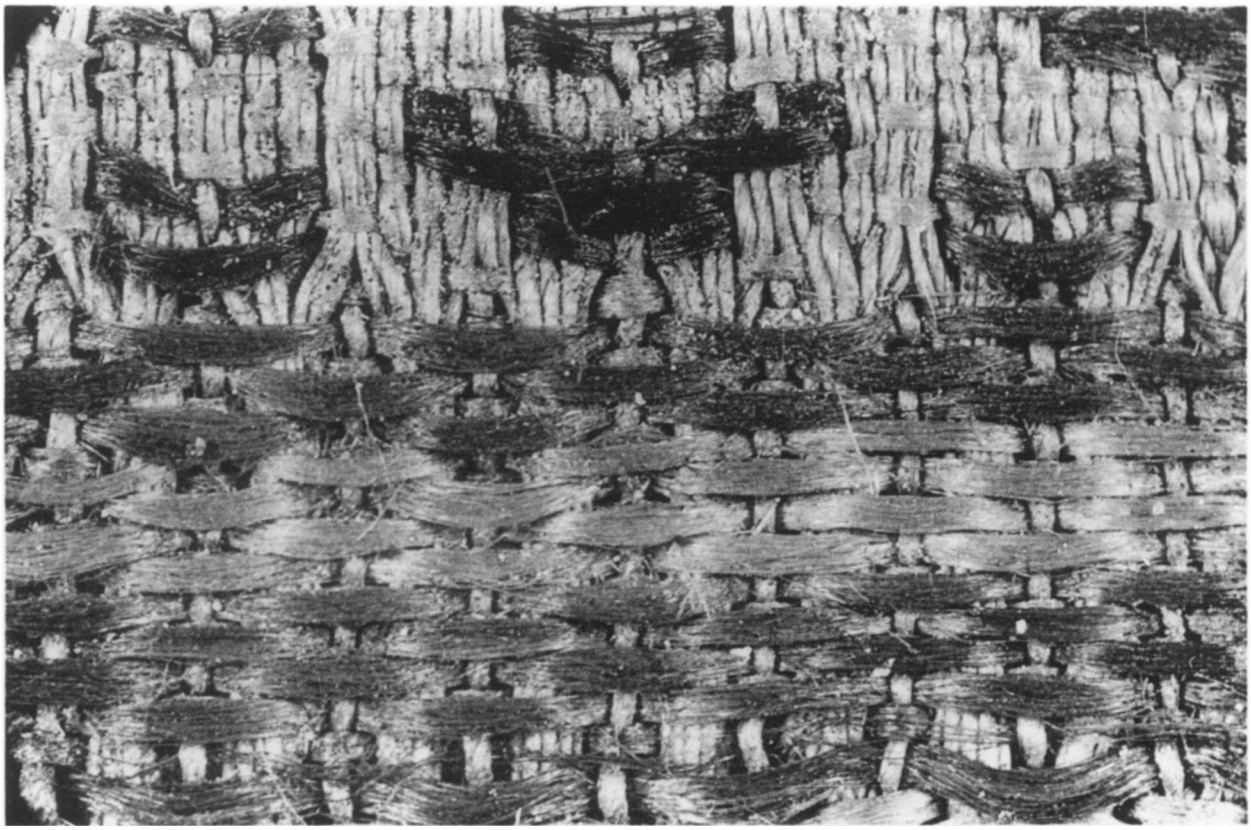

Figure 17. Enlarged detail showcasing the distinct diasper weave from the ground of the Lion Strangler, Cleveland Museum of Art.

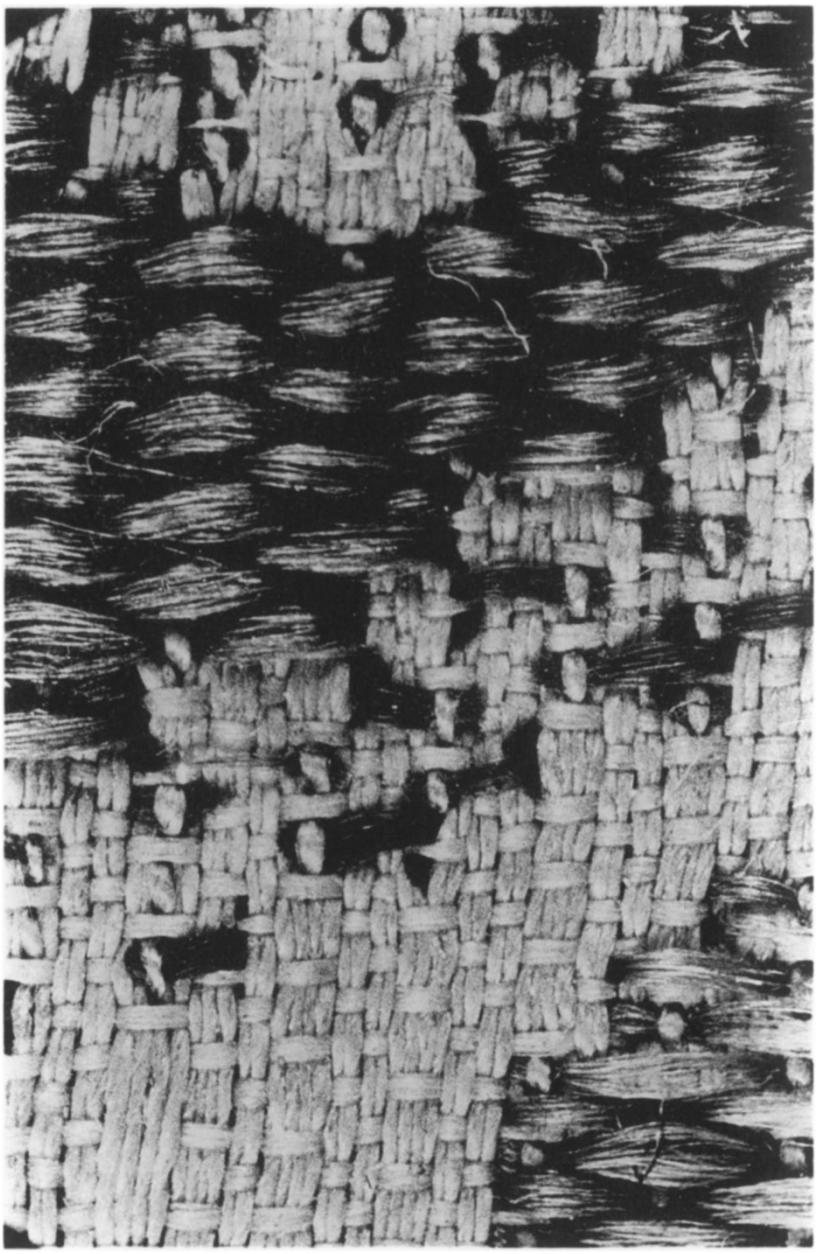

Figure 18. Enlarged detail showcasing the distinct compound weave from the band of the Lion Strangler, Cleveland Museum of Art.

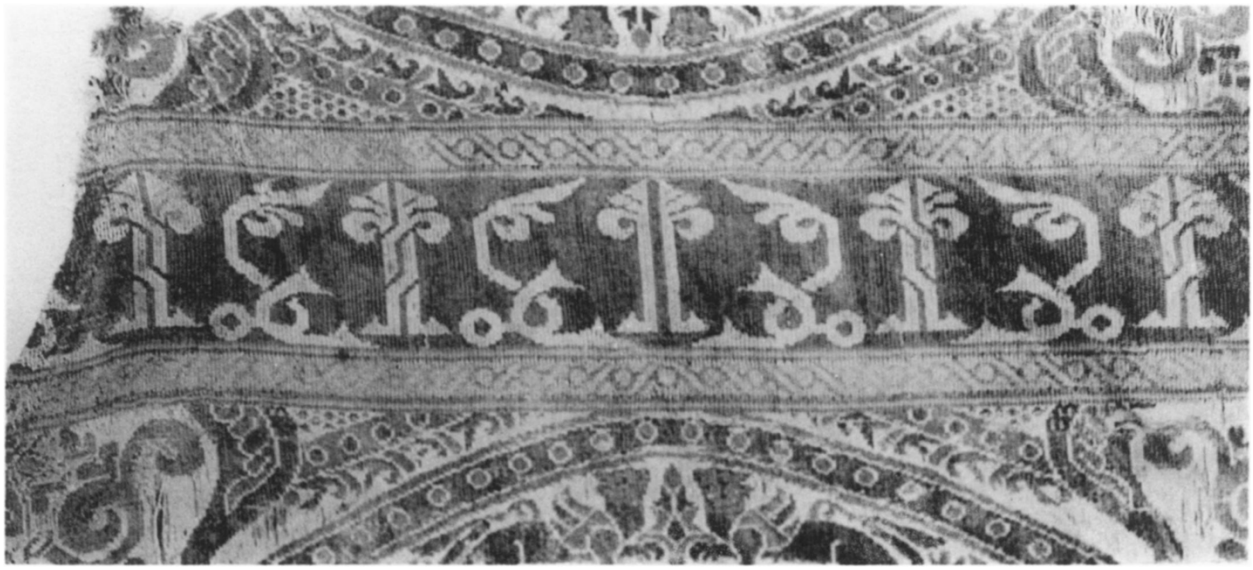

Figure 19. Detail of the Lion Strangler's band of Kufic inscription featuring the phrase “al-‘amr”, Cleveland Museum of Art.

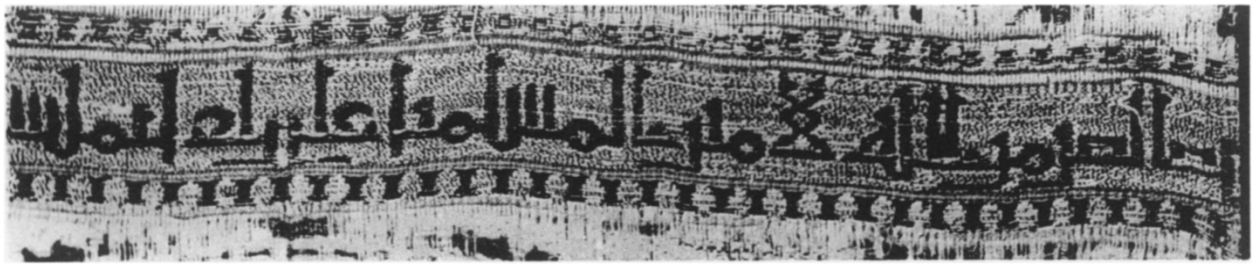

Figure 20. Detail of the chasuble of San Juan de Ortega's band of Kufic inscription, featuring the name of Ali ibn Yusuf, Cleveland Museum of Art.

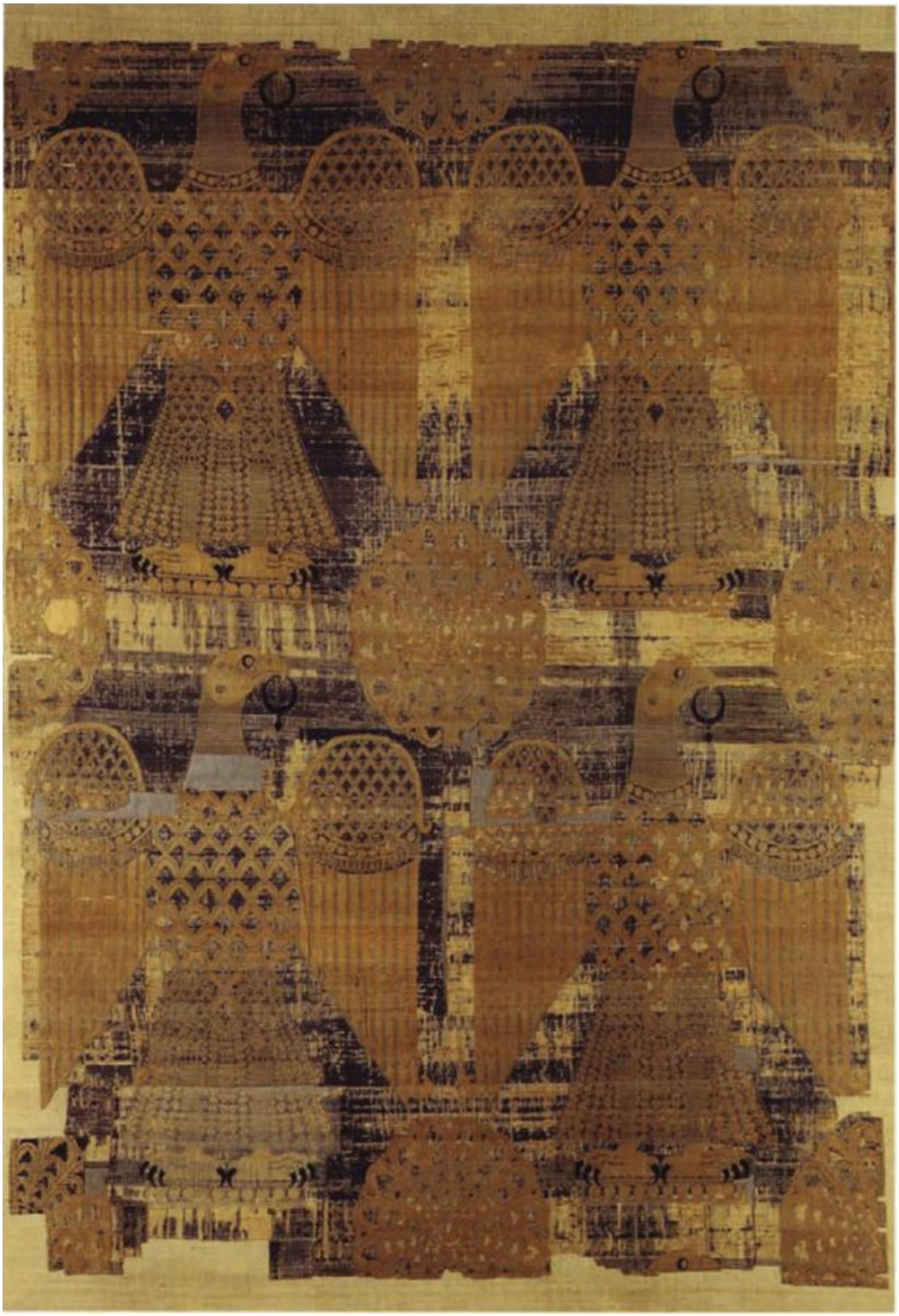

Figure 21. Auxerre textile fragment from the Reliquary of Saint Germanus, ca. 1000, silk, 170 x 120 cm, Musée Saint-Germain, Auxerre, France.

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