



## Welcome - Tibet Textile Imports and Trades with China

Hello My name is Isabel Chueh - Curator of the Mactaggart Art Collection and of this exhibition. Welcome to an audio tour of the University of Alberta Museums exhibition, **Dragons on the Tibetan Plateau: Selected Textiles from the Mactaggart Art Collection**.

All textiles featured in this exhibition are from the University of Alberta Museums' Mactaggart Art Collection. The Mactaggart Art Collection contains more than 1,000 works of art, textiles, handscrolls, albums, and more from ancient and modern East Asia.

Tibetan textiles in **Dragons on the Tibetan Plateau** include robes and textiles made of Chinese silks and decorated with variations on Chinese dragon patterns. The textiles in this exhibition feature dragons with claws, horns, and tails in a variety of colours, and they were produced using different weaving and embroidery techniques. Silk was one of the most important trade commodities in the cultural exchange between Tibet and China during the Ming and Qing dynasties. Chinese emperors often gifted silk to foreign ambassadors and visitors to help build the diplomatic relationships with other territories. Tibetan aristocrats such as the Dalai Lama, the spiritual leader of the Tibetan people, and other ambassadors to and from Tibet highly valued the Chinese dragon-patterned silk and sought it as gifts when offering tributes or trading with China. To them, the dragon-patterned silk was not only an important Buddhist symbol, but also represented privilege and a higher social status.

This beautiful Tibetan robe is made using a Chinese tapestry method, called Ke-si, which means carved silk.

The textile was initially a wall hanging woven using gold and colourful silk threads. This design of a dragon walking through flowers was a popular design after the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The dragon in this pattern has five claws, which signifies the high status of its owner. In Tibet, this wall-hanging textile was remade into a chuba (or robe) - which you see here. This is my favourite textile in the exhibition because of the dynamic dragons and brilliant colours.