

Path of renunciation:
clothing as symbol of ascetic life



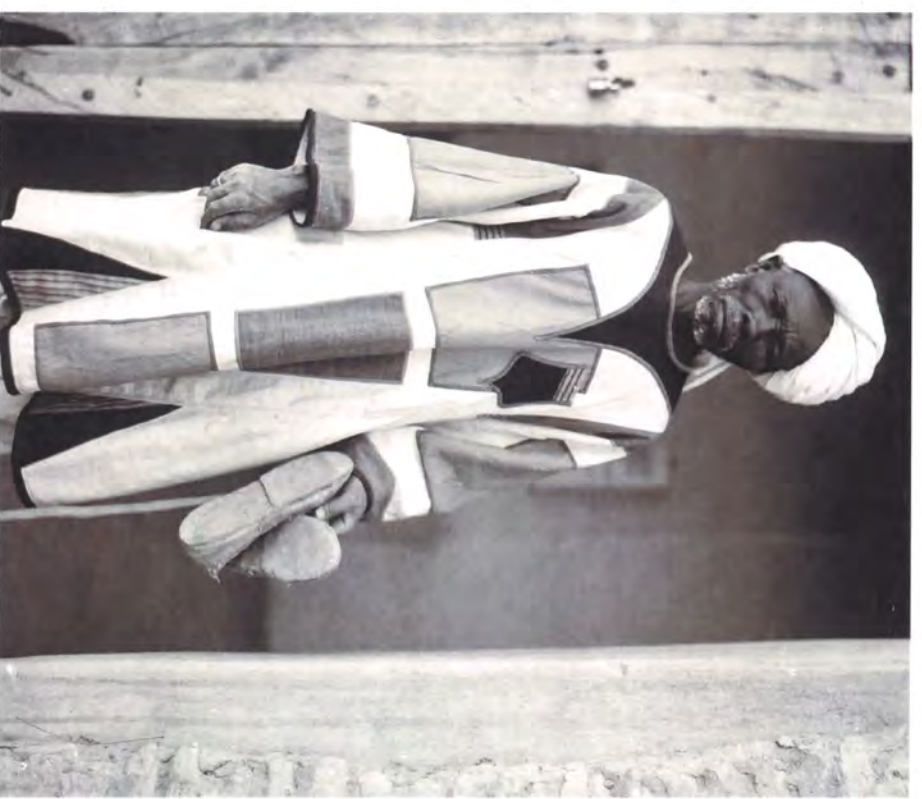
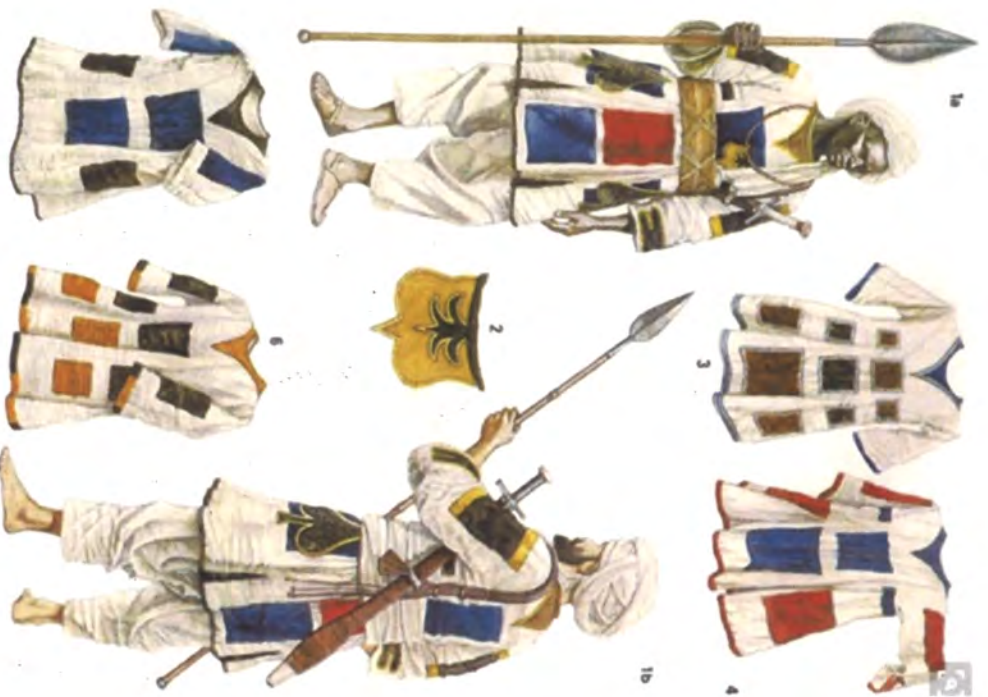
Asahi Shimbun Display
Room 3



Rangoon Wala Foundation



Different groups within the Sufism have their own patterns of colour. For example the colour of Alrifaiya is black, for Qadiriya is green, the Ahmadiyya is red and Alburhani has several colours.



The Mahdist War (1881-1898) was a war between the leader Mohammed Ahmed bin Abd-Allah, the self-proclaimed Mahdi of Sudan, and the forces of the Khedivate of Egypt, later joined by the forces of Britain. The Mahdi had an army of 50.000 soldiers belonging to the Sufi Islam fighting with him. These people, called the Ansar (the followers), wore jibba tunics with trousers as they also believed in Sufism.



Part of the meditating is an ecstatic dance to reach God. For this dance the lower part of the clothing flares out and was decorated with patches in different colours.



The Sufis are members of an Islamic religious group that try to become united with God by living a simple life in poverty and austerity and by praying and meditating. The movement of Sufism in the Islamic world started in the seventh century AD.



Some of them have a specific meaning. According to the Sufi beliefs the Prophet Muhammad went to the seventh Sky and met God in the form of multiple colours. Those colours represented the souls of the future Sufi sheiks and they became the symbol of Sufism.

The Buddha was first represented wearing a very flimsy robe because of the hot temperatures in the Ganges Valley.



Seated Buddha, Mathura Museum, India

When Buddhism spread to the north-western parts of South Asia, where the climate is colder than in the Ganges Valley, the Buddha robe was depicted as heavy drapery, with many folds and covering both shoulders, just like this sculpture from Jamalgarhi.

The Buddhist *keshaya* (robe) was originally composed of scraps of fabric cut outs, easily available, such as discarded rags and shrouds. These pieces were sewn together in a patchwork fashion, reminiscent of the Buddha's robe.



Fragment of a *keshaya* (Dunhuang, China, AD 800-900, Asia MAS.856)



In this painting Kshitigarbha, a Bodhisattva ('a being set upon enlightenment'), is shown as a monk wearing a *keshaya*. This patched robe illustrates the continuity of the symbol of the Buddha robe in 9th century Central Asia.

(Dunhuang, China, AD 900, Asia 1919,0101,0.118)

Standing Buddha, Jamalgarhi (Pakistan)

Gandhara Art

AD 200 -300

Schist

This standing Buddha, originally in 'abhaya-mudra'– a gesture of reassurance – was discovered at the Buddhist site of Jamalgarhi. Jamalgarhi Sangharama ranks among the earliest in Western Gandhara. The sculpture is carved out of locally available schist stone with very fine details of the drapery folds on the robe portraying one gesture of Buddha's life after renunciation.

Asia 1880.189



