

Exhibition  
22.8.2014 - 22.3.2015

# FROM PATCHWORK TO ENLIGHTENMENT

The Buddhist Monk's Robe



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To mark the anniversary "150 Years of Diplomatic Relations between Japan and Switzerland", the Museum der Kulturen Basel is presenting the exhibition "From Patchwork to Enlightenment - The Buddhist Monk's Robe".

Over the centuries, Japanese Buddhism has seen the emergence of different types of monk's robes, so-called *kesa*. The garment consists of rectangular pieces of cloth sewn together by hand. The "patchwork" forms a communication system in its own right, with a grammar and a symbolic language of its own. It stands for non-adherence to worldly things and for poverty. The *kesa* is also regarded as a symbol of Buddhist teaching and is bestowed by a master upon his pupil to mark that the student has attained full understanding of the doctrine. Creating a *kesa* is part of Buddhist practice up to this day. Last but not least, *kesa* are a testimony to the country's historical opening and the start of economic and cultural exchange between Japan and the West.

On display in the exhibition are roughly forty *kesa* of different shape, make and quality - from simple linen to precious silk. Among others, it includes unique items from the museum's own collections, for example, a mysterious, very rare *yamabushi* figure (mountain warrior), an elaborately restored *kesa* from the eighteenth century and various other Buddhist textiles and sculptures. Extraordinary loans from the Musée Guimet Paris, the Textile Museum St. Gallen, the MCH-Stiftung Collection Hammonds and various private collections complement this fascinating exhibition.

Visitors to the exhibition get the chance to lend a hand in sewing the first Basel *kesa*!

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Opening Hours  
Tue - Sun: 10.00 - 17.00  
First Wednesday of  
the month: 10.00 - 20.00.