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Preface - Contact, Crossover, Continuity - 1994

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The Fourth Biennial Symposium of the Textile Society of America, Inc. was hosted by
the Fowler Museum of Cultural History, University of California, Los Angeles, California, on
September 22-24, 1994. The papers addressed a broad theme which was chosen in order to
accommodate the diverse interests of members. The Proceedings contains the thirty papers and
two abstracts of papers presented at the symposium, plus a video script, and a list of the two
hundred and forty participants.

Contact, Crossover, Continuity highlights the causes and effects of change on textiles
around the world. The Proceedings provides an opportunity to identify and evaluate numerous
external influences which cause textiles to change. Subsequently, these textiles continue in an
altered form, usually with new significance. The transformation process often features creativity
which, therefore, becomes an additional theme.

The papers address cultures around the world and extend in time from the fourth century
B.C. into the future. They include a wide variety of artistic styles, technical structures, and
cultural significance.

The most common thread in addressing the theme is the role of cloth as communicator.
Cloth serves to communicate ethnic identity, personal status and legitimacy as well as personal
and political power. Cloth also functions as a visual marker of historical traditions, and even
assumes magical qualities. The fabrics and costume items, whether imported or indigenous,
undergo change that endows them with a new cultural significance and meaning and affects their
appearance, production, or function. Altogether, the variety of factors affecting change, the
varied means of and reasons for their assimilation, and their subsequent significance underscore
the fundamental importance of cloth.

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