

ARIA'S STATEMENT FOR AWLA

I was born in Shenzhen and moved to Auckland with my family when I was three years old, but my heritage traces back to Sichuan, China – the ancient Shu kingdom from *The Tale of Three Kingdoms*, home of the giant pandas and the birthplace of Taoism. I am lucky enough to have lived in Chengdu as a young teenager and am deeply proud to share my Chinese heritage with everyone.

Owing to its extensive and rich history, there are a variety of clothing that may be considered traditionally Chinese. The most famous one likely being the Qipao (also known as the *cheongsam*), which was popular in the 20th century. For the AWLA event, I chose to wear a mamianqun instead.

The mamianqun originated in the Song dynasty (approx. 960-1270) and reached the height of its popularity in the Ming dynasty (approx. 1368-1644). The mamianqun is enjoying a revival in style and becoming a popular choice for ceremonious occasions (e.g. weddings, graduations and award ceremonies). It has a unique construction with overlapping flat panels and special pleats. The mamianqun is often decorated with intricate woven patterns and gold/silver thread embroidery. The design of my mamianqun was inspired by a traditional folk story called the Legend of the White Snake, in which a white snake falls in love with a monk that saves it from being slaughtered. The white snake transforms itself into a beautiful woman and, on one rainy day, she finds the reincarnated monk at Xi Lake of Hangzhou and asks to share his umbrella. The mamianqun is adorned with lotus flowers, waves, boats, clouds, lovebirds and bridges to tell this tale of love and regret, courage and sacrifice.





1 The Golden Sun Bird Ornament was unearthed in Chengdu, Sichuan in 2001 and is the symbol of Ancient Shu culture from the Sichuan region. The ornament dates to 2000-1100 B.C. and is the official city logo of Chengdu.



2 Chengdu is the capital of Sichuan province, and it is located in the centre of an alluvial plain surrounded by the many mountains of the Sichuan region. Many poems have been written about the treacherous mountain roads of Sichuan, but equally about the abundance of the Chengdu plain, leading to Chengdu's nickname as the Country of Heaven (天府之国).