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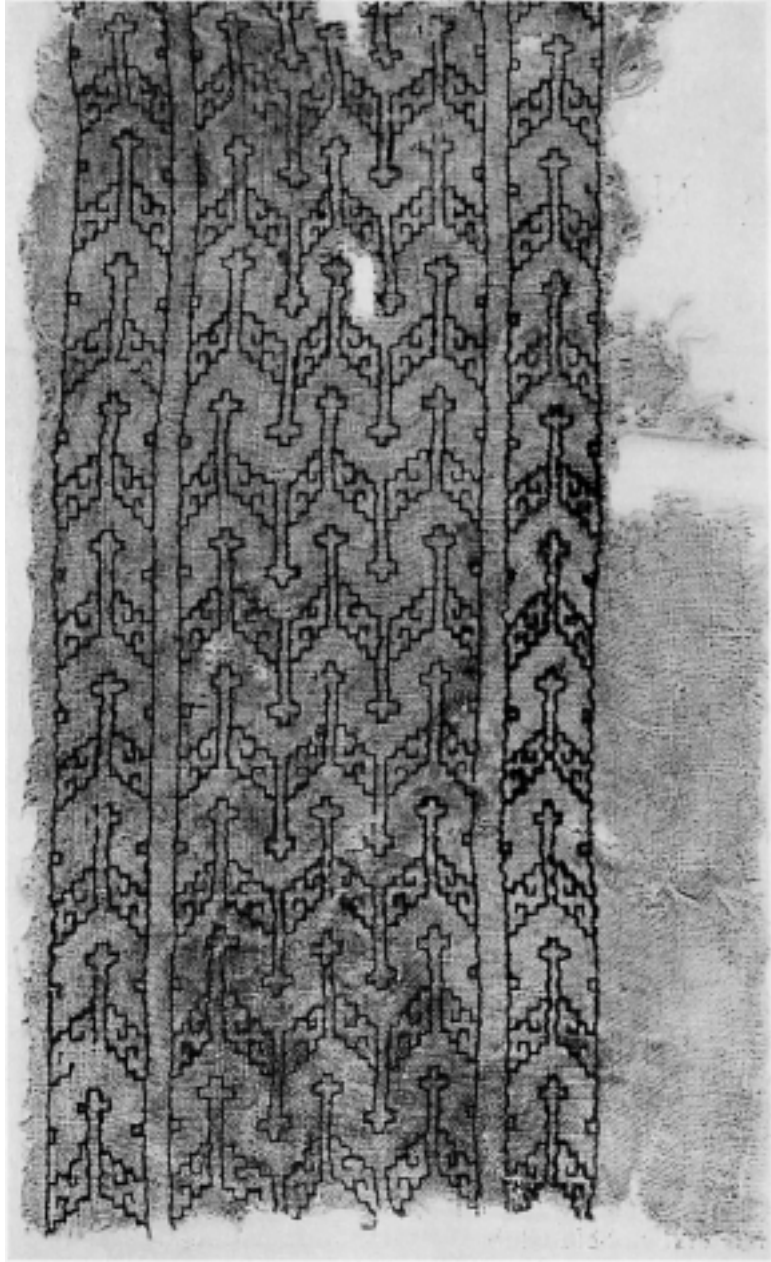
BULLETIN OF THE NEEDLE AND BOBBIN CLUB

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NO. 16

THE GROUP OF EGYPTO-ARABIC EMBROIDERIES OF THE ELSBERG COLLECTION

BY GERMAINE MERLANGE

IT IS hardly to be believed that studying a few pieces of embroidery excavated in Egypt would lead inevitably to a research into the most brilliant period of Mohammedan history. This is however a fact when one makes a careful analysis of the style and technique of the pieces in the collection of Mr. H. A. Elsberg. The question of dating the pieces is the first to arise, and this question brings with it many more to be solved. Some of them can be, others cannot, for one has to deal with periods in which history and legend are often mingled.

Most of the examples shown are embroidered in silk and this in itself helps to prove their date, though many other factors enter. It will be remembered that the making of silk tapestry and embroidery began in Egypt with the arrival of the Arabs in the seventh century, though silk weaving began earlier. History records that Parthian traders brought plain woven silks to Egypt from China in the first four centuries of the Christian era, and from these woven silks the first silk threads for reweaving were obtained, but some raw silk must have been imported even before silk culture began during the reign of Justinian.

The first attempt at Mohammedan conquest came in the seventh century, and the completeness of this conquest was immediately apparent. The Arab rule in Egypt can be divided into several periods, beginning when the capital of the Caliphate was at Damascus (661-750); next, when Egypt was virtually ruled from Bagdad (750-968). In both cases the governors were almost independent rulers.

In 969, the Fatimites conquered lower Egypt and held control until 1171. They were followed by the Ayubites (1171-1252).

After them came the Mamelukes, who remained in power until the beginning of the sixteenth century.

This brief glance at the periods of Mohammedan rule in Egypt shows how strong the hand of the Arabs must have lain on the land and how much credit is to be given to them for their inspiration to any form of art, and yet Mohammedan art in itself remains a problem, for, as A. F. Kendrick says¹ "It is an art of many lands, fused, though not perfectly, by the conquest of the Arabs, extending in the course of a single century after the death of the Prophet over wide regions in Western and Central Asia, over Egypt and the whole of the North African coast, and across the Mediterranean into Sicily and Spain."

The group of embroideries in this collection shows that in the early periods the workers under the Arabs probably used wool as well as silk, but their real skill is shown in the extremely fine tapestries and embroideries in silk and linen, which often bear Kufic inscriptions of great historic and philological value. An effort has been made to point out all that could be safely assumed as to the period of the fabrics, based on the technique of the stitchery and the type of ornament employed; the chief interest in the group however is due to the fact that these pieces not only confirm popular tradition, but add as well an interesting chapter in the history of Mohammedan Art.

Among them, an outstanding group of five pieces requires and deserves special attention. They are from the Fayoum, and while the others are woven and embroidered in silk on linen, these five pieces are on black or purple wool gauze. As far as is known, they are the first pieces of this character brought to light² unless certain pieces in the Kaiser Friederich Museum illustrated and described in the Kühnel catalogue are also the same.

In their designs the Coptic influence is not apparent, though one has an impression of such tradition. But a marked Sassanian influence can

¹Catalogue of Muhammedan Textiles of the Medieval Period.

²Kühnel, E., *Islamische Stoffe aus Ägyptischen Gräbern*, Berlin, 1927.

Nos. 3187, 1034 (Tafel 40)

Nos. 3149, 1039 (Tafel 20)

be recognized in each one of them, as for example, piece No. 3, i.e., the one with a crudely drawn horseman. It is needless to recall how often this motif is met with in Sassanian designs. This applies as well to the surprising border, with its frieze of elephants (No. 4). In both, the borders contain the small round figures known as Sassanian beads.

When it comes to the scarf, No. 5, with its border of birds, one cannot help thinking of the famous low-relief at Taq-i-Bustan. In these birds we have the same bold design, the squat shape and short legs, and the small apparently floating scarf. None of the parts of the design have any relation to the well known Coptic duck, and the floating scarf is probably a brief indication of what originally was a wavy Sassanian ribbon.

Some day, more may be known of the history of such pieces.

The first attack of the Arabs against Egypt was made toward the end of the year 639, shortly after they had overthrown the Sassanian dynasty of Persia. They reached the Nile, some sixty miles above, (south of) what is now known as Cairo. From there they crossed into the Fayoum, and as they remained there for some time, it is quite possible that the Sassanian influence came into the Fayoum with them. It is known that, even in olden times, the Fayoum was noted for its manufactures of wool and woollen cloths, and this may explain the fact that the pieces excavated there are on a woollen gauze ground.

The Mohammedan influence must have been immediately felt in the Fayoum, which had become Christian later than other parts of Egypt, and this may partly explain why there is no Christian (Coptic) influence in these pieces. The fact that the inscription on No. 1 is apparently in a Greek Coptic dialect does not necessarily imply that the workmanship is that of the Copts, for it is possible that the Egyptian dialect used by the weavers employed by the Moslems was written in Greek characters.

None of the five Fayoum pieces have been dated earlier than the 9th century, though it is possible that they are earlier, for all of Egypt was actually in the possession of the Arabs in 640. It is true that Alexandria was not surrendered to them by treaty until November, 641, with the provision that they were to occupy the city by the end of September, 642. During this wait they occupied their time by building Fostat, which brings us down to the other pieces of the exhibition, which were all excavated there. It may be pertinent to say here that after all, Fostat

is nothing more than Old Cairo, as on the seizure of Egypt by the Fatimites, they constructed their new city next to and partly on the same ground as the old.

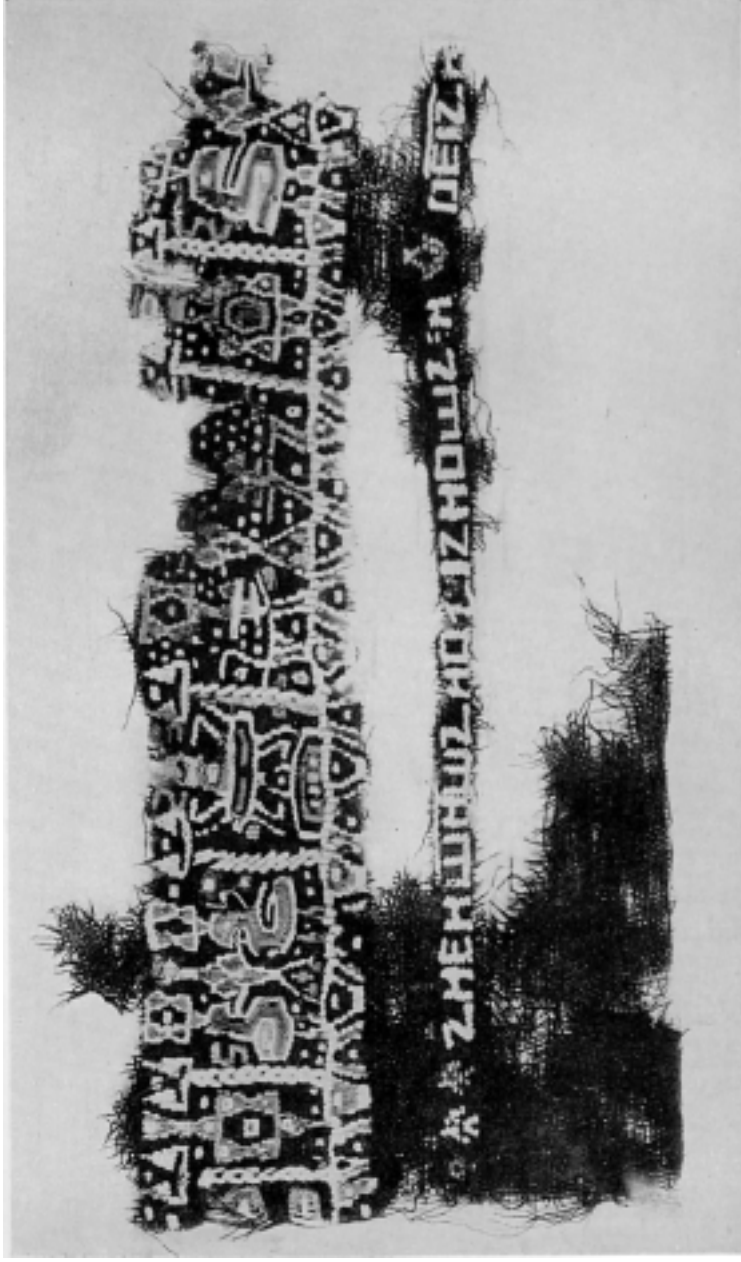
The stitches used in this group of embroideries have been studied with care, and an effort has been made to re-construct some of them, especially those that do not seem to have been analyzed in previous studies.

Especially in No. 7, which shows a fine Kufic inscription, it is entertaining to work out the idea of its particular stitch. In order to make the writing as neat as possible, at least in the long stems of the letters, a basic line was necessary and a clever hand found the way, as is shown in the illustration attached. In order to allow the needle to play a new part with skill and variety, very often one or more weft threads were drawn out of the linen ground. (Fig. No. 7-A.)

These embroideries are the ancestors of those produced in the Greek Islands, in the 16th and 17th centuries, where no doubt a similar tradition was kept up, and most of the stitches are still used to this very day in the Near East and in the Greek Islands. (For proof of this, see Miss Pesel's work, "Stitches of Near Eastern Embroideries.")

The dating of some of the pieces of this exhibition is open to discussion, though a reasonable effort has been made to avoid being vague. On others, the date is reasonably certain to be correct, especially where the name of a Caliph absolutely determines the period, or where comparison with other pieces and research by scholars has fixed the date.

A careful and full description and photographs of all the pieces will be found in the catalogue, which follows. In the preparation of it and of this article, the help of Mr. Elsberg was of inestimable value.

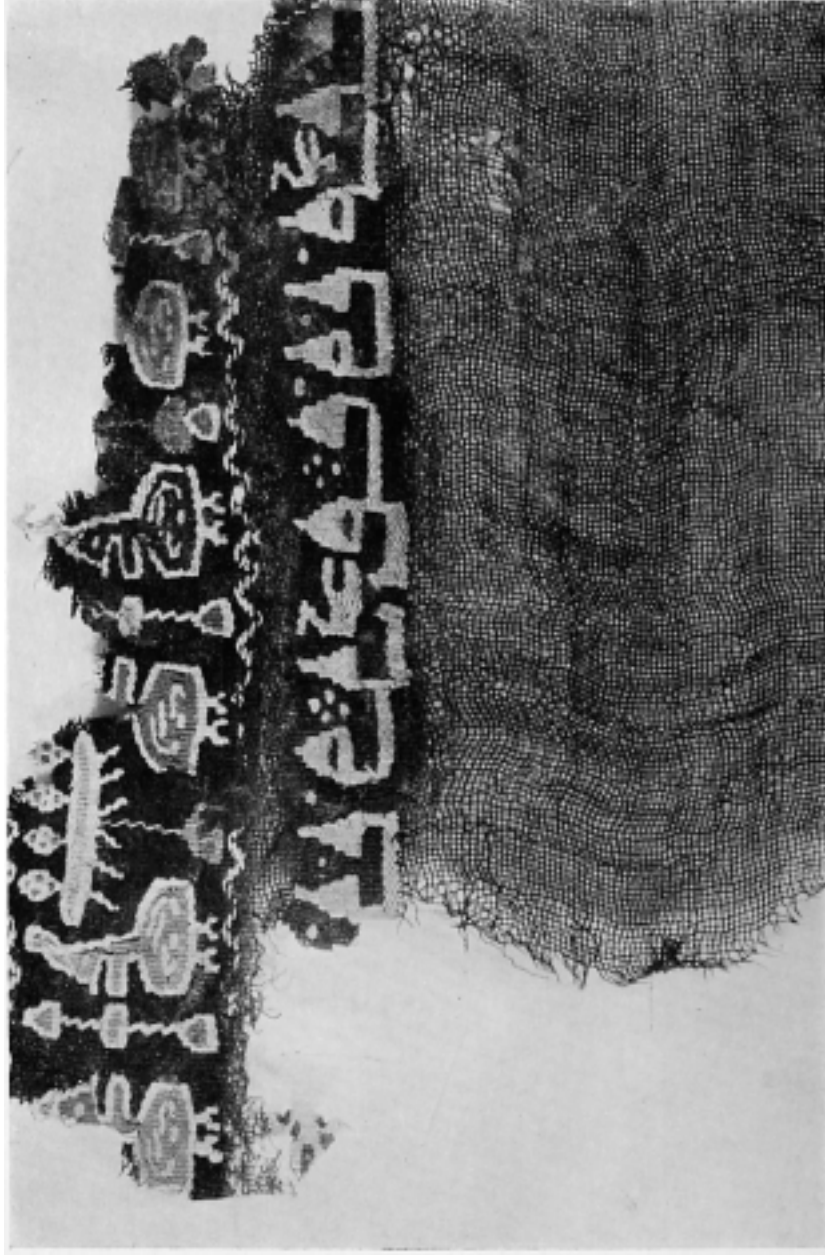


NO. 1

CATALOGUE OF THE ELSBERG COLLECTION
OF
EGYPTO-ARABIC EMBROIDERIES
OF THE MEDIÆVAL PERIOD

No. 1

FRAGMENT OF A TAPESTRY BORDER, with embroidery added in wool, on loosely woven black wool gauze. The design is of Eastern origin, and is formed by compartments separated from each other by what appear to be simulated Kufic letters. The compartments contain alternately geometrical six-pointed stars in brown, red and tan; confronted birds with star shaped crests in green, red, tan and brown, separated by a form apparently of the "hom," which appears to be a fire altar, and two confronted animals, possibly meant for lions, in the same colors, also with star-like crests, separated by a form of the "hom," similar to that which separates the confronted birds. The tapestry ground of all the compartments is in black. The simulated letters are in three-ply overcast stitches, as is also the line below, connecting them. Below these compartments, and separated from them by what originally must have been about one inch of the gauze ground, is an inscription embroidered in overcast stitch, each word, or sequence of letters, separated from the other, by a small dotted figure, embroidered in darning stitch. The inscription, which has not yet been translated, is probably an Egyptian dialect, written in Greek letters. This does not mean that



DETAIL

NO. 2

the group of pieces, numbered from one to five, found in the Fayoum, is to be attributed to Coptic (Christian) weavers, but more likely to Egyptian weavers working under the Arab conquerors, who had brought Sassanian and Eastern influences with them. These weavers probably used, in their written intercourse with each other, the Egyptian language written in Greek characters.

Egypto-Arabic, 9th century or earlier. Found in the Fayoum.

Size 5 x $9\frac{1}{4}$ in.

No. 2

FRAGMENT OF A TAPESTRY BORDER, with embroidery in wool added, on loosely woven purple wool gauze, similar in workmanship to No. 1, though without any Coptic suggestion in the design. The tapestry band consists of confronted human figures, rather difficult to recognize in red, tan and brown, separated by a geometrical motif in the same colors, doubtlessly meant for a "hom." Each pair of confronted human figures is separated from the next by a motif, which recalls one form of the "fire altar" with leaping flames. Both sides of the band are bordered by a small zig-zag line, embroidered in darning stitch. Above and under the band there is a fine inscription in Kufic, on purple tapestry ground, repeating the word "Strength."

The spaces between the letters, which are in tan colored tapestry, are filled by birds, or small embroidered dots of the same color. The design, by its confronted human figures the "hom" (tree of life), the fire altar, and the birds, shows strong Sassanian or other Eastern influences, which connects it with the other four pieces in the group.

Egypto-Arabic, 9th-10th century, or earlier. Found in the Fayoum.

Size 6 x 7 in.

No. 3

FRAGMENT OF A TAPESTRY BORDER in wool and linen, on a ground of loosely woven black wool gauze, with part of the outline embroidered in three-ply linen thread. The design consists of a series of compartments, set next to each other and forming a band, each compartment containing



NO. 3

a motif or device, no two alike. The centre one shows the figure of a man on a horse, bearing on his right wrist what apparently is a bird,—possibly a crude representation of a falcon; another man, with both arms lifted, is leading the horse; the group appears to represent a hunting scene. The two human figures are grotesquely drawn and have the appearance of caricatures. The incomplete compartment to the left shows a heraldic bird. The one on the right contains an all-over pattern of small geometrical rhombs, filled in with small squares, and is plainly Eastern in drawing, as are the two narrow borders of the band, which contain the Sassanian beads. The compartments are separated by two embroidered lines of overcast stitches, between them a small geometrical pattern in tapestry. The heraldic bird is also framed in a double line of embroidered stitches, with small bird motives between them. The colors are two shades of brown, tan, green and black. The design clearly shows Sassanian or other Eastern influences and must be Pre-Fatimite, or of the period when Coptic traditions had not been entirely forgotten. It is interesting to note that this piece shows the selvedge of the tapestry work, and also the selvedge of the gauze ground.

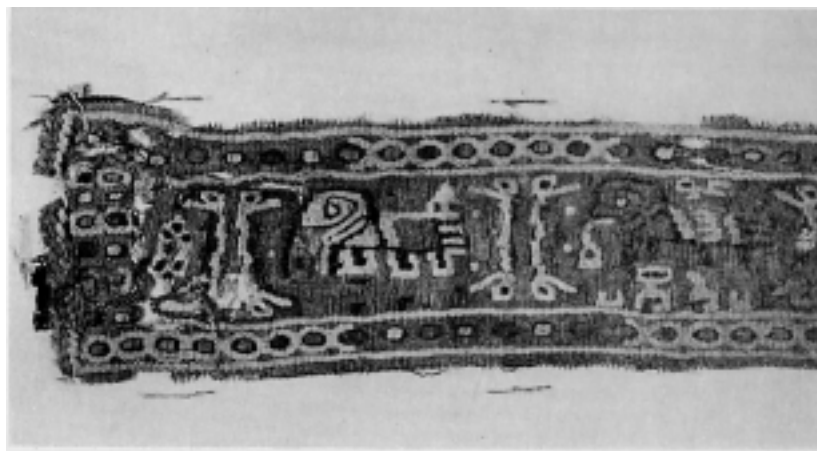
Egypto-Arabic, 9th–10th century or earlier. Found in the Fayoum.
Size 6 x $7\frac{1}{4}$ in.

No. 4

FRAGMENT OF A TAPESTRY BORDER, with embroidery in wool added, on loosely woven black wool gauze. There are only vestiges of the gauze left. The design is a band of elephants, all facing to the left, each one in a separate compartment, over the back of each a small bird in flight. They alternate in color, though the prevailing colors in each are tan, brown and black; the difference is made by the way in which the colors are placed. The elephants are separated by a symmetrical motif in tan, green and black, which may be simulated letters. The whole design is framed in double lines containing small round figures (Sassanian beads). The end of the border is indicated by a double line of beads and by a double row of overcast stitches in two colors of tan and brown. The Sassanian influence in this fragment is quite definite.

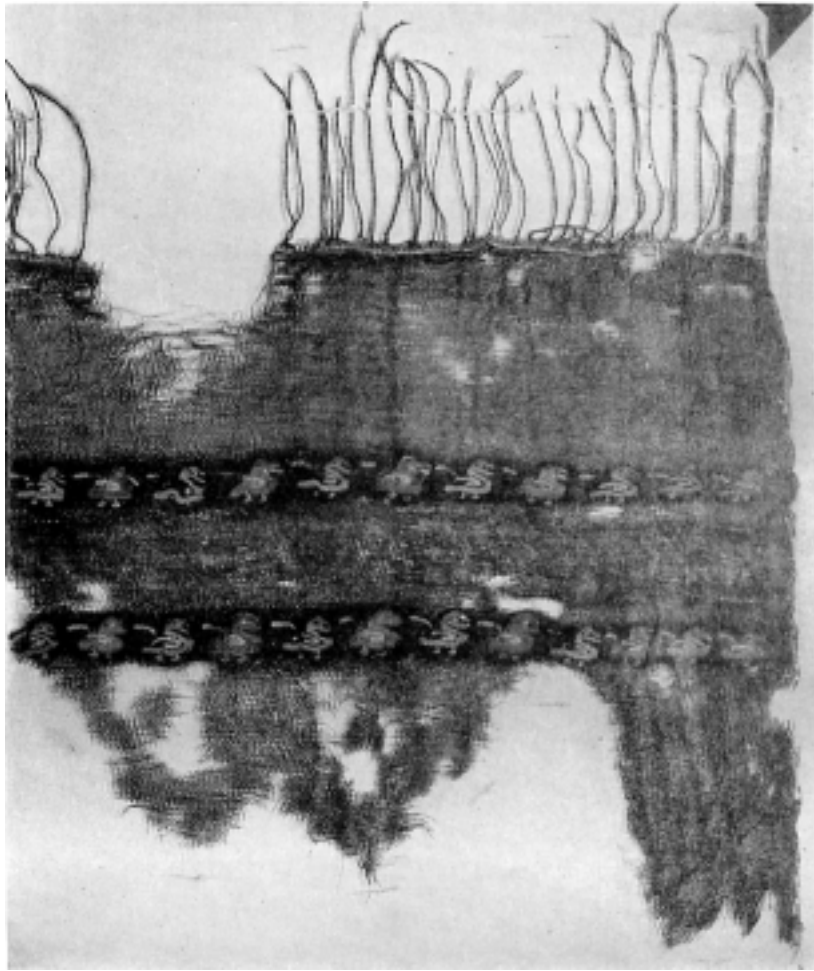
Egypto-Arabic, 9th century(?) Found in the Fayoum.

Size 2 x 11 $\frac{1}{4}$ in.



NO. 4

DETAIL.



NO. 5

DETAIL

No. 5

FRAGMENT AND END OF A FRINGED SCARF, decorated with two tapestry bands, each about $\frac{5}{8}$ inches wide, crossing the loosely woven black wool gauze ground, from selvedge to selvedge. The ornaments of the tapestry bands are birds following each other, i.e., arranged in file and facing to the right; they alternate in color, the first bird being in orange and tan, the next in red, green and yellow. The birds are on a black tapestry ground. Between the two rows of birds, there is a band of geometrical figures embroidered in yellow wool in running stitch. The birds with their floating scarfs are Sassanian in drawing, and between the gauze and the actual fringe there is a red woven line to which the fringe is attached. The design shows a markedly Eastern influence, as do the four others of this group excavated in the Fayoum. Apparently no pieces of the same category have been described and they appear to be the first found unless the pieces already mentioned as illustrated in the Kühnel catalogue are the same.

Early Fatimite period, 10th century(?) Found in the Fayoum.
Size 13 x 20 $\frac{1}{2}$ in.

No 6

FRAGMENT OF A LINEN GARMENT, embroidered in dark blue silk, in couched stem stitch as shown in illustration (Fig. No. 6-A). The upper inscription in small Kufic letters repeats the one word "God" (Allah!) many times. The lower in large Kufic letters, is apparently only decorative and without meaning, though the letters may be the monogram of a Caliph. The rather coarse linen appears to have been glazed.

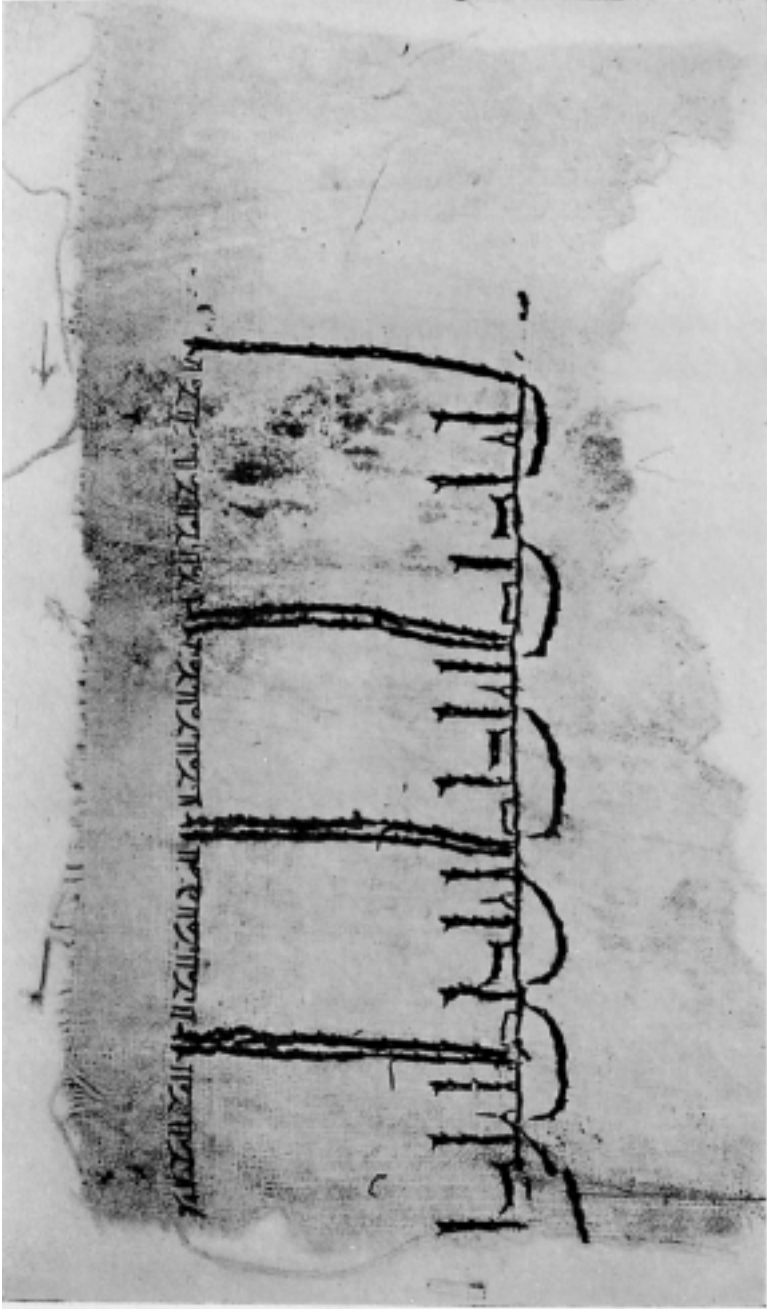
There is a piece similar in type in the Victoria and Albert Museum, No. 947 Kendrick¹ catalogue, classified as 10th century or earlier; also one in Berlin, Kühnel² catalogue No. 3278, Plate 25, as 9th-10th century.

Fatimite period, 10th century or earlier. Found at Fostat.

Size 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ in.

¹ Kendrick, Catalogue of Muhammedan Textiles of the Mediaeval Period.

² Kühnel, E. Islamische Stoffe aus Ägyptischen Gräbern, Berlin, 1927



NO. 6



NO. 6A

STITCH USED IN NO. 6

No. 7

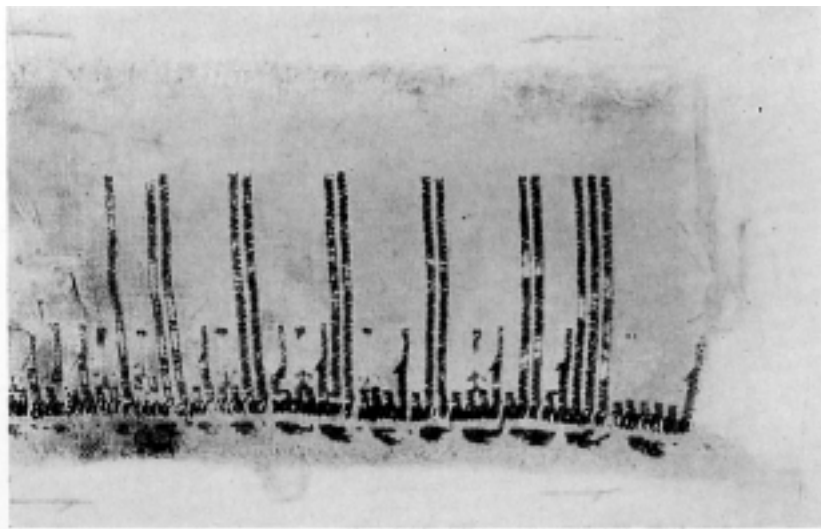
FRAGMENT OF A BORDER, PROBABLY PART OF A GARMENT, embroidered in red silk on rather fine linen, with a Kufic (Arabic) inscription, containing the words:

“In the name of God (Allah!), the Merciful, the Compassionate! Praise be to God, the Lord of the worlds . . . of (from) God . . . perpetual . . . after the days . . .”

The breaks in the inscription are caused by mutilated letters. When the fragment was first found and the inscription deciphered, it apparently contained the words:

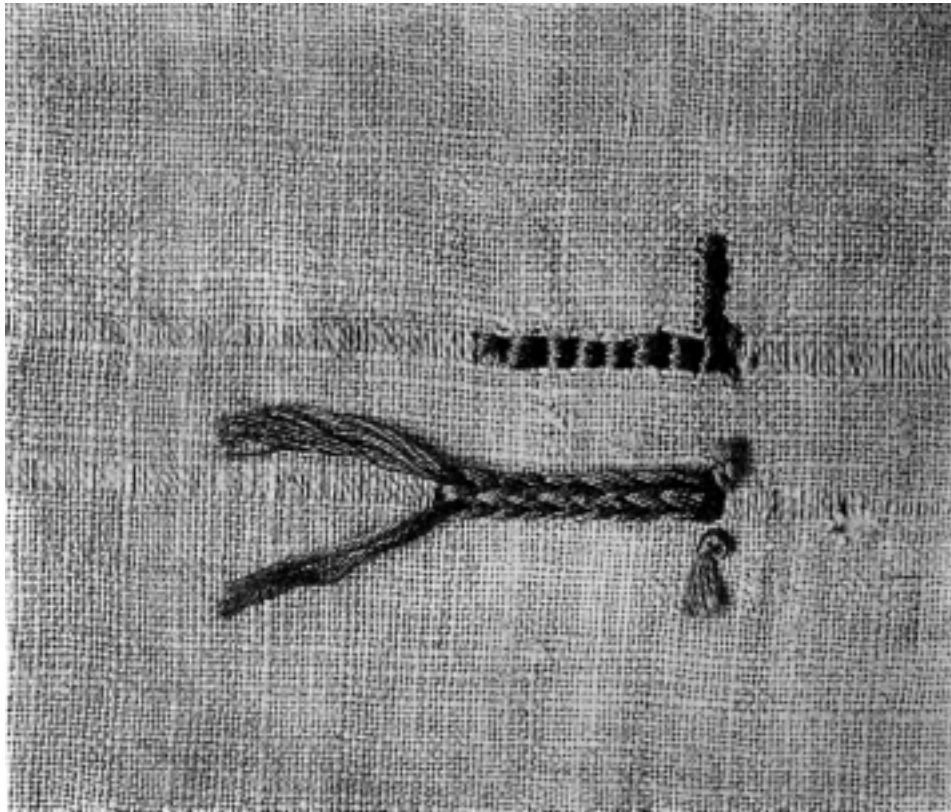
“El Hakim bi'allah (bi' amr' allah) commander by the grace of God.”

This was the third Fatimite Caliph of Egypt, Abu Ali al-Mansur, who reigned under the name of El Hakim bi' amr' allah from 996 to 1020 A.D. (A.H. 386-411). In this fragment the embroidery stitches are of excep-



NO. 7

DETAIL



NO. 7A

STITCH USED IN NO. 7

tional interest. The letters are embroidered in an overcast stitch, both sides alike; the heaviest line at the bottom is a variation of a chain stitch, made over warp threads, remaining after the filling threads were drawn out. This chain stitch is made on the wrong side, giving an entirely different effect on the right side. An illustration of this stitch, both on the right and wrong sides, and the manner of making, is shown. It recalls closely the needlework of Soumak carpets. (Fig. No. 7-A).

Fatimite period, 10th–early 11th century. Found at Fostat.

Size $2\frac{1}{4}$ x $7\frac{3}{4}$ in.

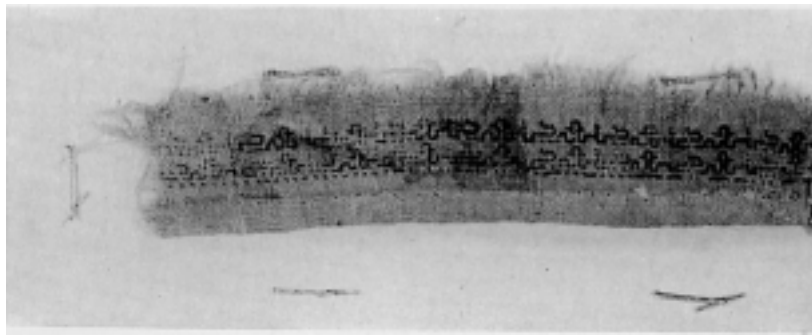
No. 8

FRAGMENT OF A BORDER, embroidered in red silk on fine linen, in two lines of a Kufic inscription, repeating the stylized word "Blessing."

The inscription is embroidered in back stitch regularly made over two threads of the linen.

Egypto-Arabic, 9th century(?) Found at Fostat.

Size $1\frac{1}{4}$ x 8 in.



NO. 8

DETAIL

No. 9

FRAGMENT OF A BORDER, embroidered in silk on a very fine linen gauze, in three horizontal stripes. The middle one consists of small interlaced medallions, in red and green with yellow ground, containing alternately a bird outlined in red, and a Kufic inscription, either in red or blue, reading:

“The Power (belongs) to God (Allah!)”

The upper and lower stripes are scroll ornaments, of fine quality, and design of Eastern origin, outlined in red on yellow ground. All the outlines, as well as the inscription, are an unusual chain-like stitch, akin to a split stitch on the wrong side. The spaces between the outlines, and the ground are filled in with what is apparently a closely worked back stitch, made on the right side over very few threads, thus giving the effect of a looped stitch.

Egypto-Arabic, 9th century. Found at Fostat.

Size 4 x 5½ in.

No. 10

FRAGMENT OF A BORDER, embroidered in brown silk on fine linen, with a Kufic inscription not yet translated, but probably the name of a Caliph. The letters are embroidered in couched stitch and the small decorative rondels between are in long chain and back stitch. The two simple lines bordering the inscription are threads of silk substituted for linen threads drawn out.

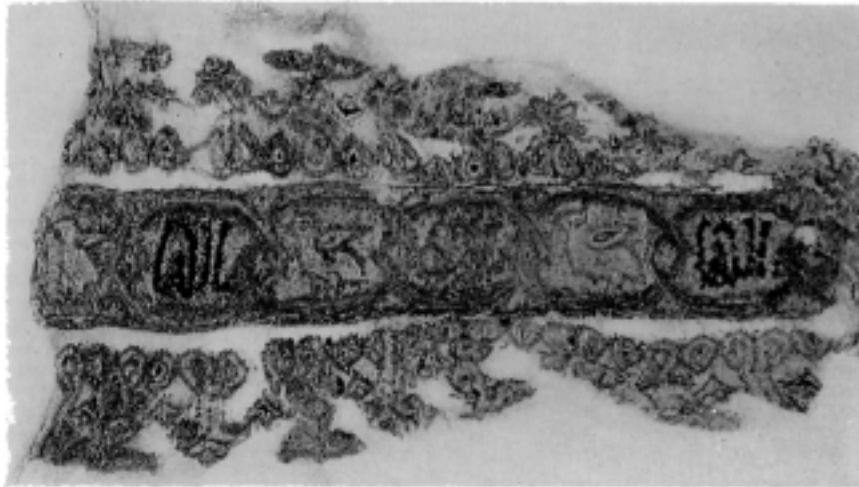
Kühnel³ illustrates some pieces similar in stitch on Plate No. 26, Nos. 3256 and 3257 of his catalogue, and says their inscriptions are in Nashki and 12th-13th century(?).

The inscription on the piece appears to be in Kufic and the linen finer and of an earlier period.

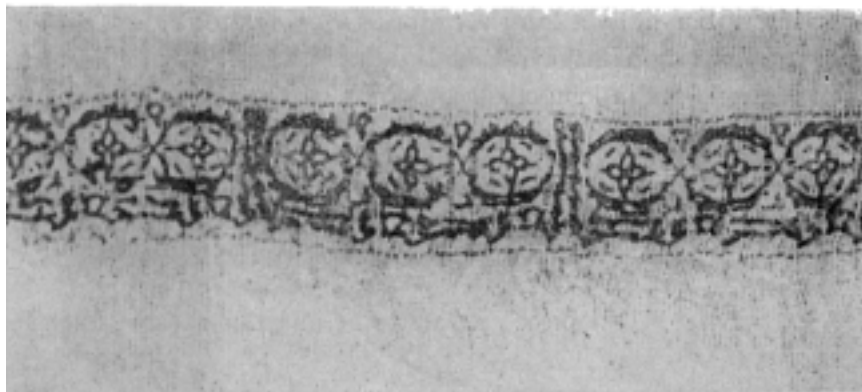
Fatimite period, 10th century (?). Found at Fostat.

Size 3½ x 17 in.

³ op. cit.



NO. 9



NO. 10

DETAIL

No. 11

FRAGMENT OF AN EMBROIDERED INSCRIPTION, in red wool on coarse linen, in darning stitch, and overcast stitch for the heaviest lines. The inscription consists of a mutilated word in Kufic used as decoration.

Kühnel mentions a similar piece embroidered in dyed linen thread, Plate 39, No. 3165 of his catalogue, and calls it part of a towel and Fatimite, 12th century(?). This piece is probably earlier.

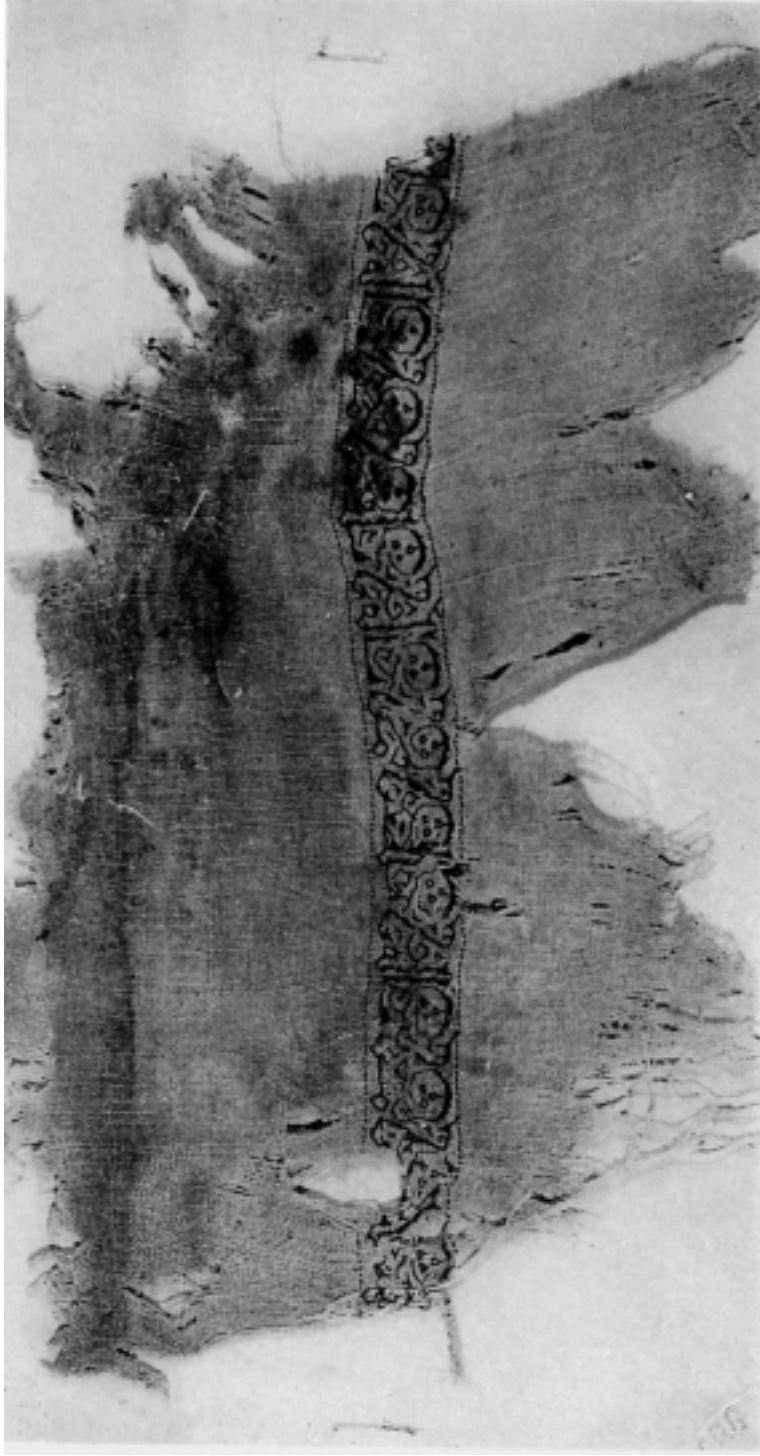
Fatimite period, 11th–12th century(?). Found at Fostat.

Size $3\frac{1}{2}$ x 13 in.



NO. 11

DETAIL



NO. 12

No. 12

FRAGMENT OF A BORDER, embroidered in brown silk on rather fine linen, in what appears to be a Kufic inscription; it is however, only ornamental and simulates letters, which are outlined with a couched thread. The scroll ornaments are in long chain stitch for the heaviest lines, and back stitch for the light ones. The two lines bordering the embroidered band are threads of silk substituted for linen threads drawn out. The linen appears to have been glazed. Kühnel describes similar pieces (Plate No. 26, Nos. 3256 and 3257) in his catalogue, and calls them 12th–13th century (?).

It would appear that such embroideries are earlier, based on similar stitching and ornament found in pieces with inscriptions that are dated.

Fatimite period, 11th–early 12th century. Found at Fostat.

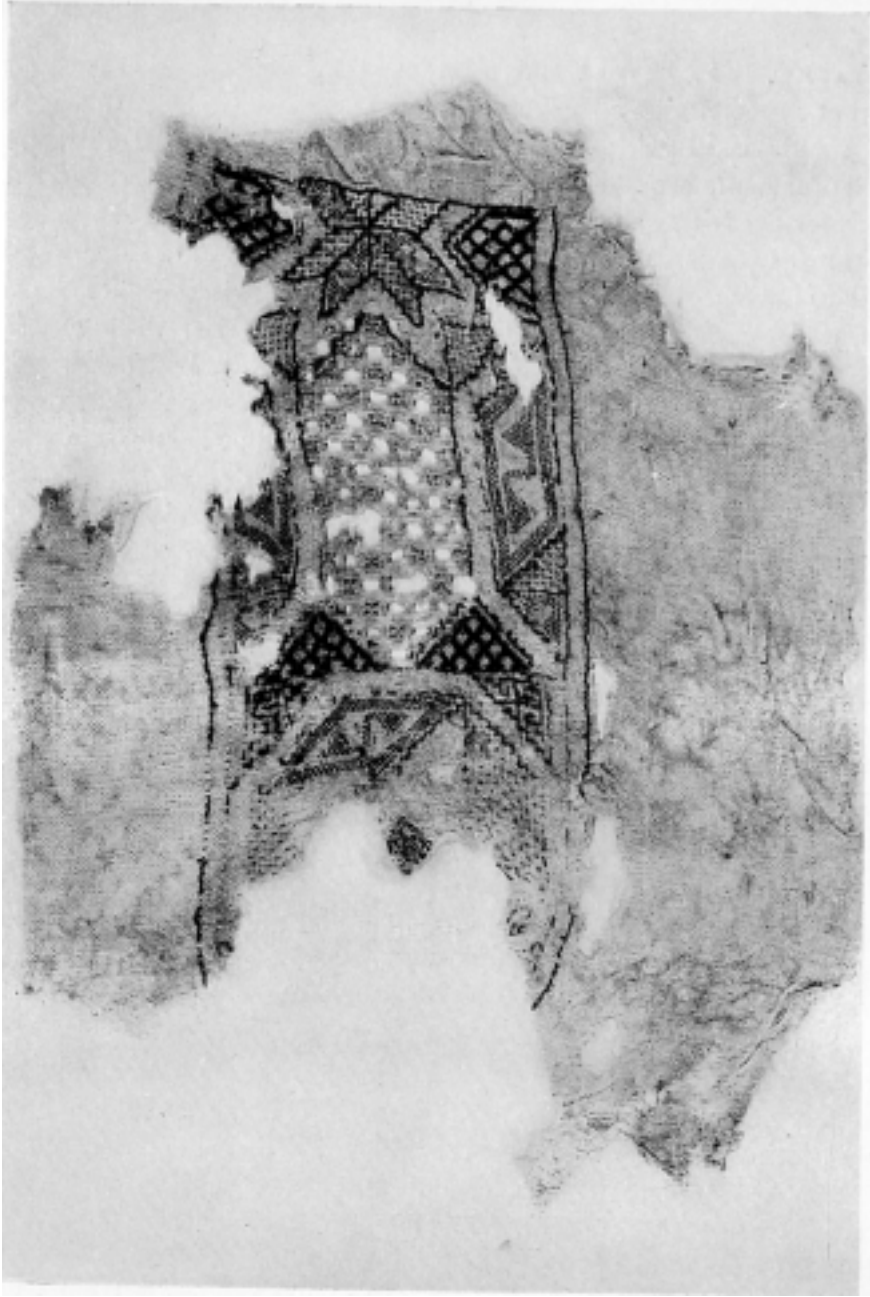
Size $5\frac{1}{2}$ x 7 in.

No. 13

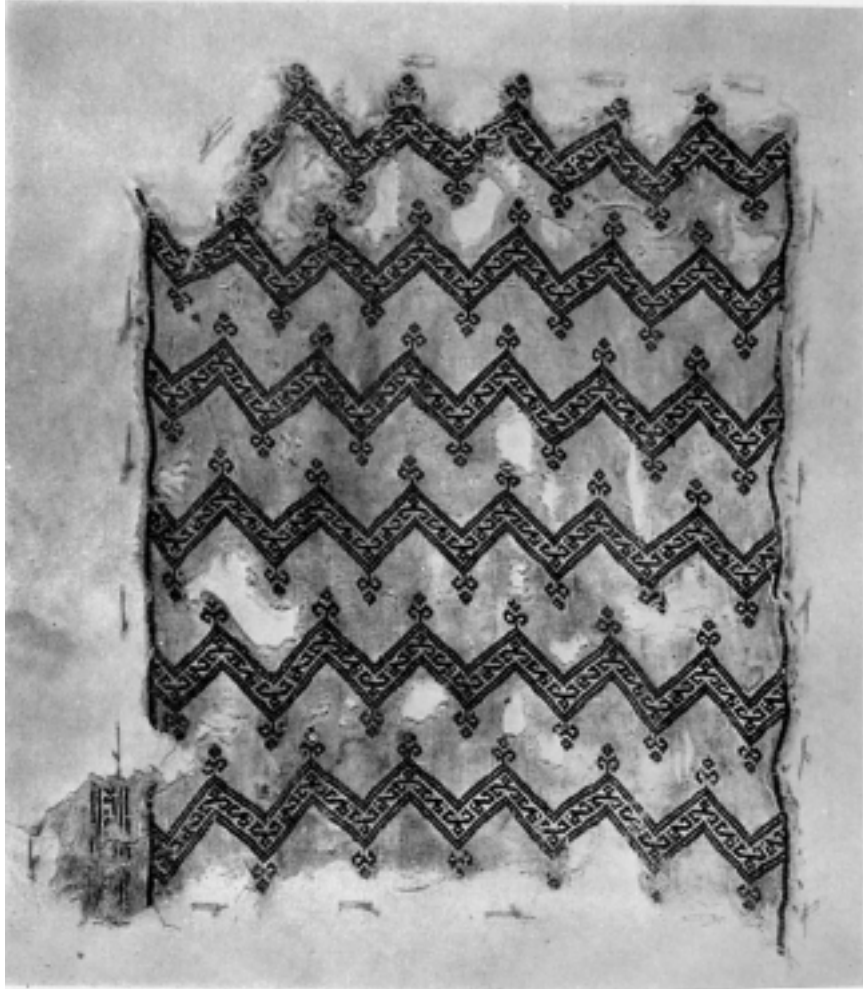
FRAGMENT OF A BORDER, of embroidery and drawn work on fine linen, in a geometrical pattern of alternate stars and arabesques. The careful symmetrical arrangement of the blue silk embroidery and of the drawn work, showing star and "S" motives, point to an Eastern origin of the design. Several stitches are employed; in the drawn work, binding overhand stitch and twisted double running stitch; for the embroidery in two shades of blue, regular surface darning stitch, double running stitch and darning stitch. The workmanship is of the best. Kühnel describes similar pieces in his catalogue (Plates 37 and 38, Nos. 3272, 3273, and 3240), and calls them 13th–14th century. There is a piece in the Victoria and Albert Museum, No. 1320, which is simpler in design.

Ayubite period, 13th century. Found at Fostat.

Size $5\frac{1}{2}$ x 7 in.



NO. 13



NO. 14

No. 14

FRAGMENT OF A BORDER, embroidered in blue silk on very fine linen. The design is a horizontal double line zig-zag, giving the effect of chevrons, embroidered in darning stitch with epigraphic ornaments between the lines. The angle or point of each zig-zag or chevron is crowned with a motif resembling the fleur-de-lis. The sides of the border appear to have been ornamented with a straight double line band enclosing an inscription. There is only a fragment of this left. The workmanship is of the best.

Fatimite period, 12th century. Found at Fostat.

Size $7\frac{1}{4}$ x $8\frac{1}{2}$ in.

No. 15

FRAGMENT OF A LINEN TUNIC, embroidered in silk in an all-over pattern of squares enclosing geometrical eight-pointed stars in cross stitch, alternately in red and green. The outlines of the squares are in a closely set herringbone stitch in green. The squares are separated by lines of small double cruciform motives in red.

Late Fatimite or early Ayubite period, 12th-13th century. Found at Fostat.

Size $7\frac{1}{2}$ x 10 in.

No. 16

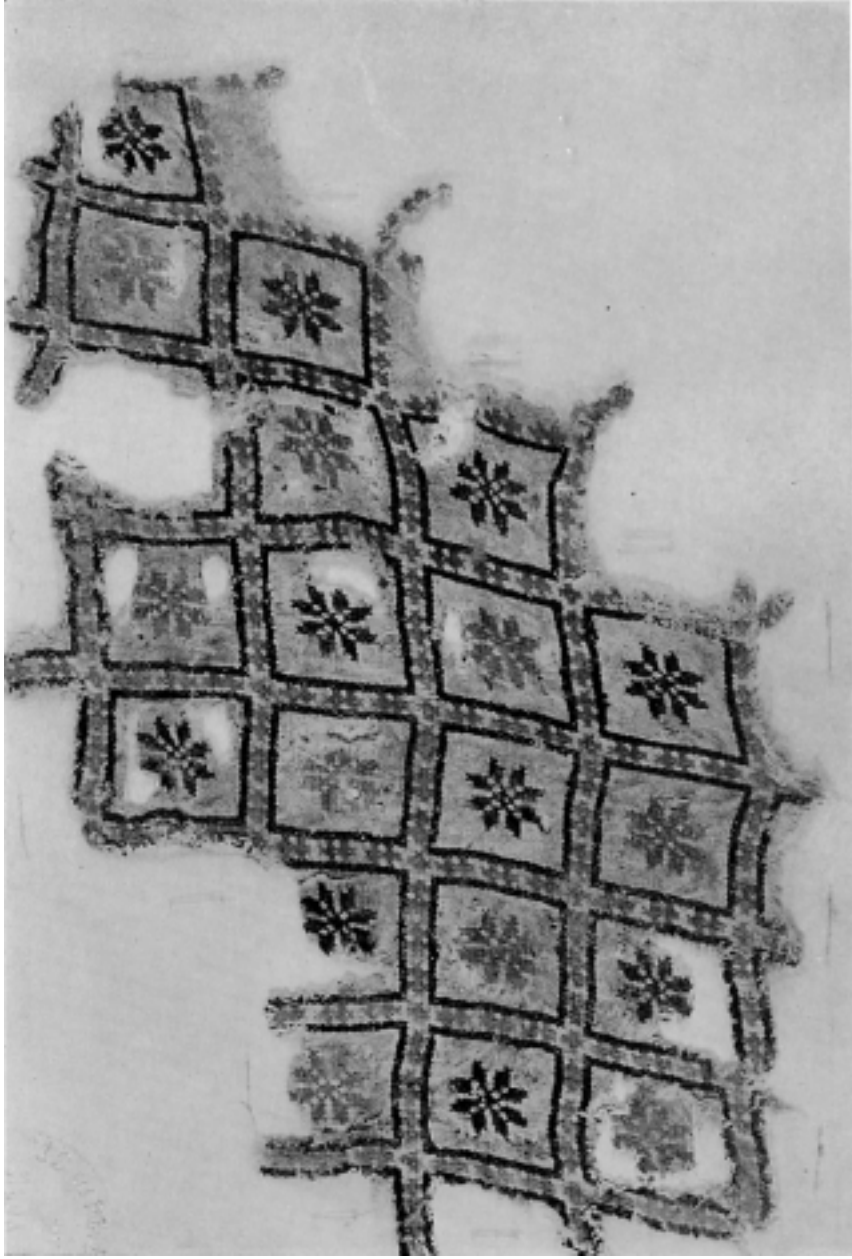
FRAGMENT OF A BORDER, (frontispiece) embroidered in blue silk on rather coarse linen, in double running (Holbein [Kühnel]) stitch, which stitch permits the embroidery to be alike on both sides. The design is a "motif chevronné" surmounted by a cross at the end of each point or angle of the chevrons.

The design while geometrical seems to show upon the Moslem embroiderers of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the influence of the architectural details of the crusaders' chapels.

Early Mameluke period, 13th century. Found at Fostat.

Size 6 x $12\frac{1}{4}$ in.

The inscriptions were deciphered with the aid of Prof. N. N. Martynovitch, of Columbia University.



NO. 15



BROCADE WITH MEDICI CROWN. ITALIAN, XVII CENTURY. METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

AN INTERESTING BROCADE

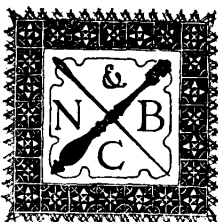
THE Metropolitan Museum possesses a certain brocade, the unique interest of which has but recently come to light. It is unusual in collections and museums to come upon fabrics which show evidence of having been made for particular persons or for particular occasions. The brocade in question appears to be one of this rare and interesting class. The pattern, an ogival framework, is composed of oak leaves in green silk and acorns worked in metal thread on a white satin ground (now yellow) with a large crown and a bow knot introduced alternately at the finial of the ogive.

It is the crown which gave the first hint as to the unusual character of the piece. Whereas crowns are often met with in XVI century fabrics, this seemed more specific in type and upon observation proved to be the Medici crown worn when they became the Grand Dukes of Tuscany. It will be remembered that not long after the death in 1492 of Lorenzo the Magnificent the younger branch of the family came into power, and in 1637 Cosimo, afterward the first Grand Duke, was asked by the Florentine Council to assume the rule of the city. In 1569 Pope Pius V published a bull creating Cosimo Grand Duke of Tuscany and in 1570 he was crowned in Rome. The shape of the crown was laid down in the Pope's bull; it was to be radiated like that of Eastern kings alternate with the Florentine lily.* The actual crown as it appears in portraits of the grand

*Col. C. F. Young, *The Medici*, Vol. II, pp. 297-298.

Dukes was a royal crown with points curving outward, like blades of the iris, and in the center was a large red Florentine lily usually heavily jeweled. The crown represented in the brocade is certainly the Medici crown as the careful rendering (in metal thread) of the peculiar features of the Florentine lily can leave no room for doubt.

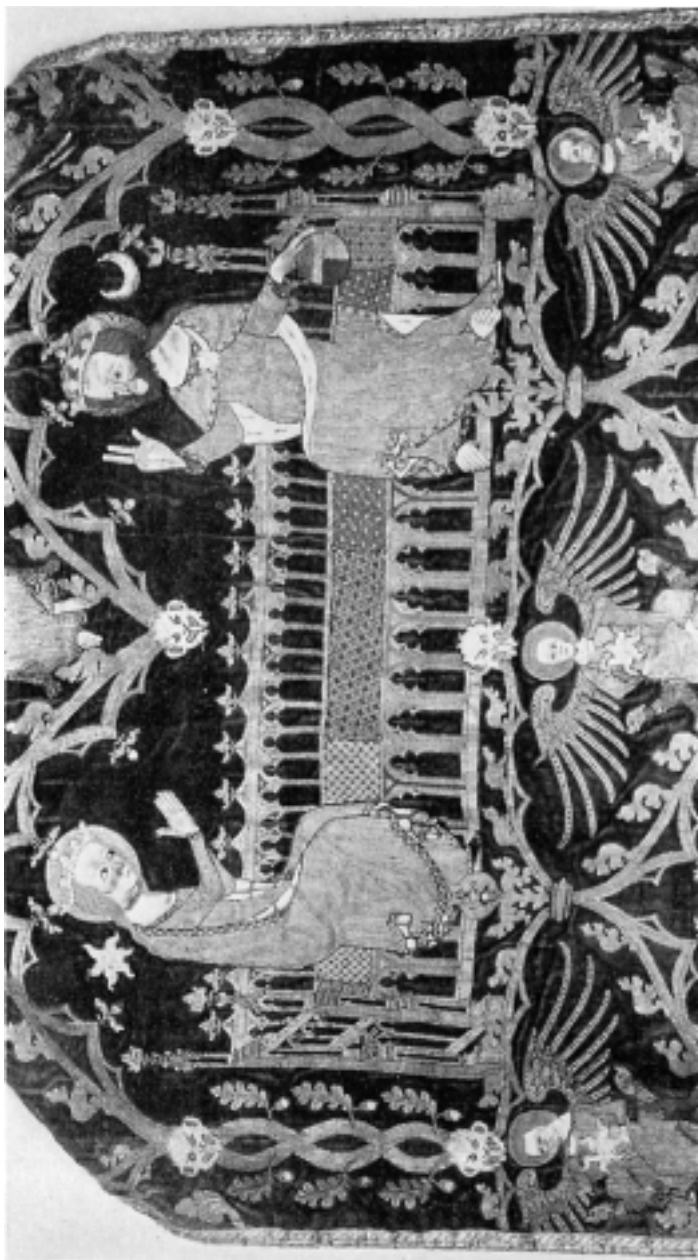
The crown is, however, only half the story. It remains to determine the significance of the oak leaves and acorns. The character of the brocade as to design and weave would lead one to assume that it dated from the XVII century. With this in view, an examination of the Medici genealogy reveals the secret. For, in 1634, Ferdinand II dei Medici, whose great-grandfather was Cosimo I, married Vittoria, the last of the della Rovere, the badge of whose family was the oak. The bow knot in the design may signify that the fabric was made for their wedding. At any rate, it was in the early part of Ferdinand's reign that the ducal palace (now known as the Pitti Palace) was enlarged to its present size by the addition of two large wings which doubled the size of the palace and gave ample space for the splendid court entertainments which Vittoria, who was of a frivolous disposition, desired. The state apartments, numbering about sixty, were decorated with ceiling paintings to commemorate the astronomical discoveries of Galileo. Among the private apartments upstairs were the rooms of Vittoria the ceilings of which were decorated with her motto and family arms. It seems reasonable to assume that the brocade of which the museum has a piece, if not made at the time of the wedding, was ordered when the palace was enlarged and the many apartments so handsomely redecored.



CLUB NOTES

ON FEBRUARY twenty-first, 1928, the Annual Meeting of the Needle and Bobbin Club was held at the house of Mrs. Edward Robinson. After the usual business meeting the Club and their guests were very fortunate in hearing a most interesting and enlightening talk on Ancient English Embroidery by Mr. Eric R. D. Maclagan, C.B.E., the learned Director of the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, who was on a trip in this country.

IN discussing English mediaeval embroidery, Mr. Maclagan said that there had been four great periods of English art before the Renaissance; the Anglian art of the Ruthwell and Bewcastle crosses in the late seventh century, terminated by the Danish invasions; the later Anglo-Saxon art of about the year 1000, terminated by the Norman conquest; the great early mediaeval period from about 1150-1350, terminated by the Black Death; and the later art of the fifteenth century, terminated or at least modified by the Reformation. The second, third and fourth periods were represented by noble examples of embroidery. For the second we have the stole and maniple at Durham, made by order of Queen Ælffleda for Bishop Friedstan of Winchester between 905-916 A.D. and soon after dedicated to Saint Cuthbert; almost certainly the finest example of needlework of this date to be found in any country in Europe. In the third period English embroidery reached its highest point in the numerous copes and other vestments made shortly before or after the year 1300, and highly valued at that date by the Popes, a fact which accounts for the preservation of a relatively large number of examples



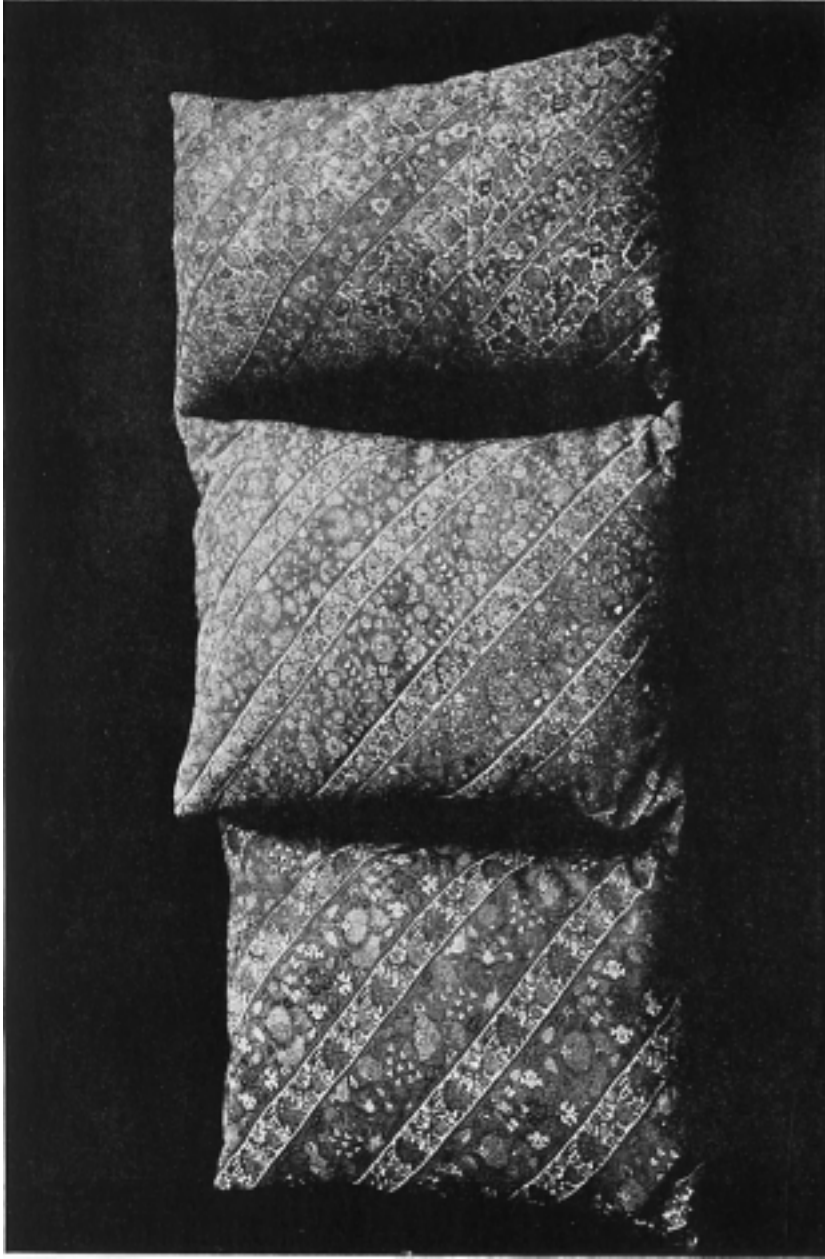
DETAIL OF CHASUBLE, OPUS ANGLICANUM, FIRST THIRD
OF XIV CENTURY. METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

and for the fact that several of these can be accurately dated; e.g. the Ascoli cope (once the property of the late Mr. Pierpont Morgan, and afterwards returned by him to Italy), certainly made between 1265 and 1288; the vestments at Anagni, made before 1295; and those at St. Bertrand-de-Comminges, made before 1309. After describing the characteristics of this *opus Anglicanum* the speaker showed several slides of the red velvet chasuble of this type (formerly at Burton Constable in Yorkshire) which was acquired recently for the Metropolitan Museum, and pointed out its close relationship with the cope at Vich in Spain (first mentioned in 1353), the cope belonging to the Butler-Bowden family, and two or three smaller pieces, all worked on crimson velvet early in the fourteenth century. The work of the last period, after the recovery of the country from the Black Death, was relatively poor in quality but had for various reasons been preserved in considerable quantities. The great glory of English needlework was however the *opus Anglicanum* of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, as exemplified by the Syon cope and other vestments at South Kensington and by the chasuble at the Metropolitan Museum. This "English needlework" was an instance *par excellence* of the mediæval tendency to localization (just as the main production of ivories seems to have been localized about the same period in Paris, and of enamels both earlier and later in Limoges); and its value as a witness to the high achievement of English art was all the greater because so much of what had been wrought in apparently more permanent materials, stone and wood and glass, had been destroyed during the religious storms of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries which the frailer work of the needle had almost miraculously survived.

A number of slides lent by the Metropolitan Museum of Art were shown by Mr. Maclagan to illustrate his talk.

At the home of Mrs. P. Chalmers Jameson, on March 15, 1928, was shown a collection of Swiss peasant embroideries and textiles of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries chiefly from the Engadine. Many of them have been exhibited at museums in Switzerland where a lively interest is being taken in reviving the native industries.

These Engadine embroideries show very definite Italian influence with the special local characteristic of adapting the Swiss wild flowers to nearly all their designs. One very early altar piece, probably done in the seven-



PERSIAN EMBROIDERY FROM COLLECTION OF MRS. FREDERIC B. PRATT

teenth century by nuns, with a remarkable variety of stitches giving great richness of design, displays columbines, strawberry blossoms, wild pinks, and forget-me-nots. Besides white stitching, the eighteenth century pieces are done in coral red which has withstood endless washings, and in blues and blacks. The spreads and table covers are embroidered on quite elaborate diapered linens bordered and joined with lace. The lace presents varieties of pattern, the border of the four sides of each cloth often being different.

The colored textiles are peculiar to the Engadine in that they were not done by housewives in the villages, but by families of professional weavers. It was the custom for one family to go about in several villages, and do the work of the village to order. These families were weavers for generations, and certain patterns can be identified as only being done by one family in one district. These designs are particularly rare and of great charm.

The collection as a whole is of interest, in that the pieces are not old pieces of lace and embroidery put together later, but, because they are as originally made with original borders and edgings. Such pieces are, unfortunately, becoming increasingly difficult to find in Switzerland.

Mrs. Frederic B. Pratt's invitation for May 15th was to show "Near East Embroideries," and those indeed were varied and beautiful, but in addition to those, Mrs. Pratt's visitors were delighted by the beautiful French and Burgundian Gothic tapestries hanging on the walls and the evidences of a well-developed love of ancient textiles in the examples of precious velvets and brocades of Italian and Near Eastern origin of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

The gardens with their lovely display of spring bulbs and flowering shrubs added much to the pleasure of the afternoon.

BOOK NOTES

LES ACCESOIRES DU COSTUME ET DU MOBILIER. By Henry René D'Allemagne. Paris, Schemit, 1928. 3 Vols. 393 Illus.

The notes and illustrations of accessories of costume and furnishings cover a period beginning with the XIII century and ending with the middle of the XIX century. Such things as jewels, canes, fans, mirrors, bags, buttons, hair ornaments, watches, lamps, clocks and caskets are among those included.

HISTOIRE DE LA MANUFACTURE DE JOUY ET DE LA TOILE IMPRIMÉE EN FRANCE. By Henri Clouzot, Vol. I, 207 pp. and 10 plates and map; Vol. II, 87 plates including one in colors. Paris and Brussels, Van Oest, 1928.

The text of this latest work of Clouzot has been already translated and forms the first part of *Painted and Printed Fabrics* by Clouzot and Morris. The French edition has, of course, different plates from the American publication.

WANDTEPPICHE, DIE ROMANISCHEN LÄNDER. By Heinrich Göbel, Klinkhardt and Bierman, Leipzig, 1928. II Teil. Band I, 644 pages. Band II, 552 plates. Frontispiece in color.

This is the second part of Göbel's monumental work on tapestries of which the two volumes on Flemish tapestries was the first. It covers the history of French, Spanish, and Italian tapestries. It is to be earnestly hoped that it will be translated into English in full and not uselessly condensed as was the first part. Its importance merits this, for there exists nothing in English comparable to it. The most obviously unfortunate feature is the lack of an index to the volume of plates.

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