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PLATE II (FRONTISPIECE)  
THE COPE OF ARCHBISHOP NILS ALLESON, DATING FROM 1295.

MEDIEVAL TEXTILES  
IN THE CATHEDRAL OF UPPSALA, SWEDEN

by

DR. AGNES GEIJER

*The following article is essentially part of a lecture on Medieval Textiles in Sweden given to the Needle and Bobbin Club on February 18, 1954 by Dr. Agnes Geijer, who is the Curator of Textiles, Statens Historiska Museum in Stockholm, Sweden. Asked to write an article on that subject, the writer has preferred to concentrate her attention upon the Uppsala treasury. Apart from the fact that many of the individual textiles are particularly interesting in themselves, their presentation as a textile ensemble may also reveal valuable aspects of the art of liturgical ornaments.*

IT IS A FACT, though one that is probably not widely known, that Sweden possesses a quite remarkably large number of medieval textiles, even compared with the great European countries.<sup>1</sup> These comprise several hundred ecclesiastical ornaments or vestments, each one composed of different fabrics or embroideries, representing a period from about 1200 to 1525, the year of the Protestant Reformation. Until fairly recently these garments were preserved in churches, where indeed many of them are still to be found.

A considerable proportion of these extant garments are made of imported materials as a result of Sweden's commercial relations with the Hanseatic League during the XV century. Silks and brocades from Italian looms are numerous, but there is also a small quantity of Far Eastern products. The art of needlework is represented by some outstanding pieces dating from the XIII and XIV centuries, made in France, England, or Italy. From the XV and the early XVI centuries we have a large number of embroideries, for the most part of Flemish and German workmanship, as well as some very interesting Bohemian or East German "needle painted" panels and a few English vestments. In addition to these classes, we have also examples of Swedish productions meriting the interest of an international public.

These treasures were saved through a series of fortunate circumstances. One reason was, of course, that Sweden was never seriously

exposed to the ravages of war. But even more fortunate than this was another factor. During the Middle Ages, in Sweden as well as in other European countries, the churches and convents owned great quantities of vestments and other liturgical objects. At the time of the Protestant Reformation in 1525, most of the ecclesiastical property, including silver and golden vessels, was confiscated by the Crown; the textiles were left untouched. Moreover, the Swedish Protestant (Lutheran) church — being very indulgent towards the Catholic liturgy, in contrast to the Calvinistic churches in the other Scandinavian countries — retained the use of copes, chasubles and altar frontals, a practice that was explicitly recommended by the Liturgical Law of 1576.

After the Reformation the churches were poor and could only rarely afford to buy new vestments. The rich and splendid materials inherited from the old churches and often of great value, were now appreciated and cared for to a much greater extent than in the wealthy southern countries, where new fabrics were easily procured. We can indeed say that the poverty of the country saved many of our textile treasures.

Apart from the *Statens Historiska Museum* (the Museum of National Antiquities) in Stockholm the largest collection of medieval vestments in Sweden belongs to the Cathedral of Uppsala. During the Middle Ages this Archbishopric Church was no doubt very rich. Though brief and incomplete, its inventory lists from the XVII and XVIII centuries give us an idea of the contents of the medieval treasury. By 1652, one hundred and twenty-seven years after the Reformation, several of the medieval vestments may naturally be assumed to have disappeared. But the inventory from that year still mentions seventeen copes, twenty-six chasubles and forty-four dalmatics as well as forty-four “bands, stoles and maniples,” all of which seem to have been of medieval origin. The present number of medieval textiles is only thirty-two: five copes, ten chasubles and seventeen miscellaneous items. Not a single dalmatic is left — apparently they had been used as mending or lining material (cf. fig. 1 and Plate XIII). We may be grateful that the great fire which ravaged the Cathedral in 1702 spared that much. Apart from the brilliant baroque vestments of the XVII century, the remaining medieval objects still constitute a representative and very interesting collection.<sup>2</sup> A survey of some outstanding pieces in the medieval collection of the Uppsala Cathedral follows here.

One of the copes is widely known and has been the object of much discussion (Plate I). Although similar to the *opus anglicanum* embroider-

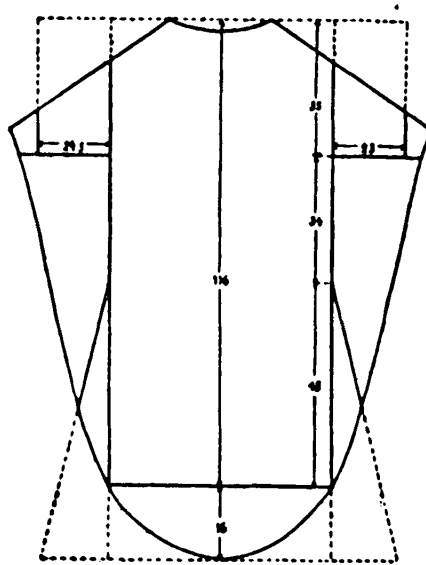


FIG. I

DIAGRAM SHOWING THE ORIGINAL SHAPE  
OF A XIV CENTURY *tunica* ADAPTED AS  
LINING OF A CHASUBLE.

ies, it must be a French work because of the style and iconography; some of the saints are exclusively French. It is supposed to have been brought to Sweden about 1270 when Uppsala Cathedral was founded and when cultural contacts with France were especially frequent.<sup>3</sup> Of the same date and origin is without any doubt a so-called maniple, an embroidered band which was worn by the bishop over his left hand. This piece is embroidered all over, showing bishops and a crowned saint who can be identified as the national saint, King Erik the Holy. It may be of interest to mention here that the style of the figures and their Gothic arcades resemble closely those in the stole of Judge Irwin Untermyer, New York.<sup>4</sup>

The cope shown on Plate II (Frontispiece) has received less attention but is not of less interest, indeed, from different points of view. It is directly connected with a special event. The Archbishop of Uppsala, Nils Alleson, went in 1295 to Rome and to Anagni, where as a symbol of his ordination he received the *pallium* from Pope Boniface VIII himself. The records tell us that on July 29th in that same year Archbishop Alleson celebrated mass in Uppsala Cathedral "wearing his superb papal garment." This is a fairly apt description of this once resplendent gold brocade



PLATE I  
DETAIL OF AN EMBROIDERED COPE. FRENCH WORK, 1250-1275.

and the embroidered orphreys resembling richly coloured enamels (Plate III). A beautiful needlework border for a chasuble showing the same pseudo-Byzantine style probably belonged to the same set. Both embroideries resemble the vestments of Pope Benedict XI (1303-1304) in the Cathedral of Bologna.

The woven material of our cope is, however, perhaps even more interesting. But it has never received the attention which it deserves. The cope contains two fabrics (Plates IV and V) each quite different in design but both so similar in technique that they may have issued from the same loom or at least the same workshop.

Plate IV shows the brocade which forms the small bottom segment of the cope (cf. Plate II). It is carefully pieced together from eight similar portions of the same fabric, cut out of one loom-width and placed in the same weaving direction as the main stuff. Thus the gold threads laid parallel throughout the entire surface of the cope were an important feature to effect the uniform appearance of the garment. Though the height of the repeat is incomplete, there is no doubt that the design belongs to the well-known type built up from pairs of two different animals and a bulb-shaped palmette, with a slight variation repeated diagonally. Otto von Falke gives five examples of this kind, of which a *diasprum* in Aachen with peacocks and griffons provides the closest analogy.<sup>5</sup> Another silk in the Cleveland Museum with nearly identical parrots is of the same high standard.<sup>6</sup> To judge from the many varied designs still in existence, this scheme of design seems to have been very long-lived. The manner of drawing and the technical execution illustrate, however, very different degrees of stylistic degeneration or deviation from the primary composition. A careful study of the beautiful green silk in the Metropolitan Museum in New York reveals a unique and rather burlesque variation of the original design; for instance, the outermost "layer of the bulb" is converted into a row of small birds.<sup>7</sup>

Through a strange coincidence our Cathedral houses one more example of this type, also dated. Plate VI shows a portion of a cover preserved in the silver reliquary which enshrines the remains of St. Erik, the martyr king who in 1166 was killed near the site of the present church. The *Miraculi S. Eriki Rege et Martyris*, written down in the XIII century, describes the pilgrimage made by Magnus Johanni Angelus to St. Erik's shrine in 1293. As a thank-offering for a miraculous cure, this magnate presented a precious shroud to the holy shrine: *unum baldakinum*, especially described as *pretiosum*.<sup>8</sup> There are several reasons for identifying





PLATE III  
DETAIL OF PLATE II. ITALIAN EMBROIDERY.



PLATE IV  
DETAIL OF PLATE II, LOWER EDGE; WHITE AND GOLD.

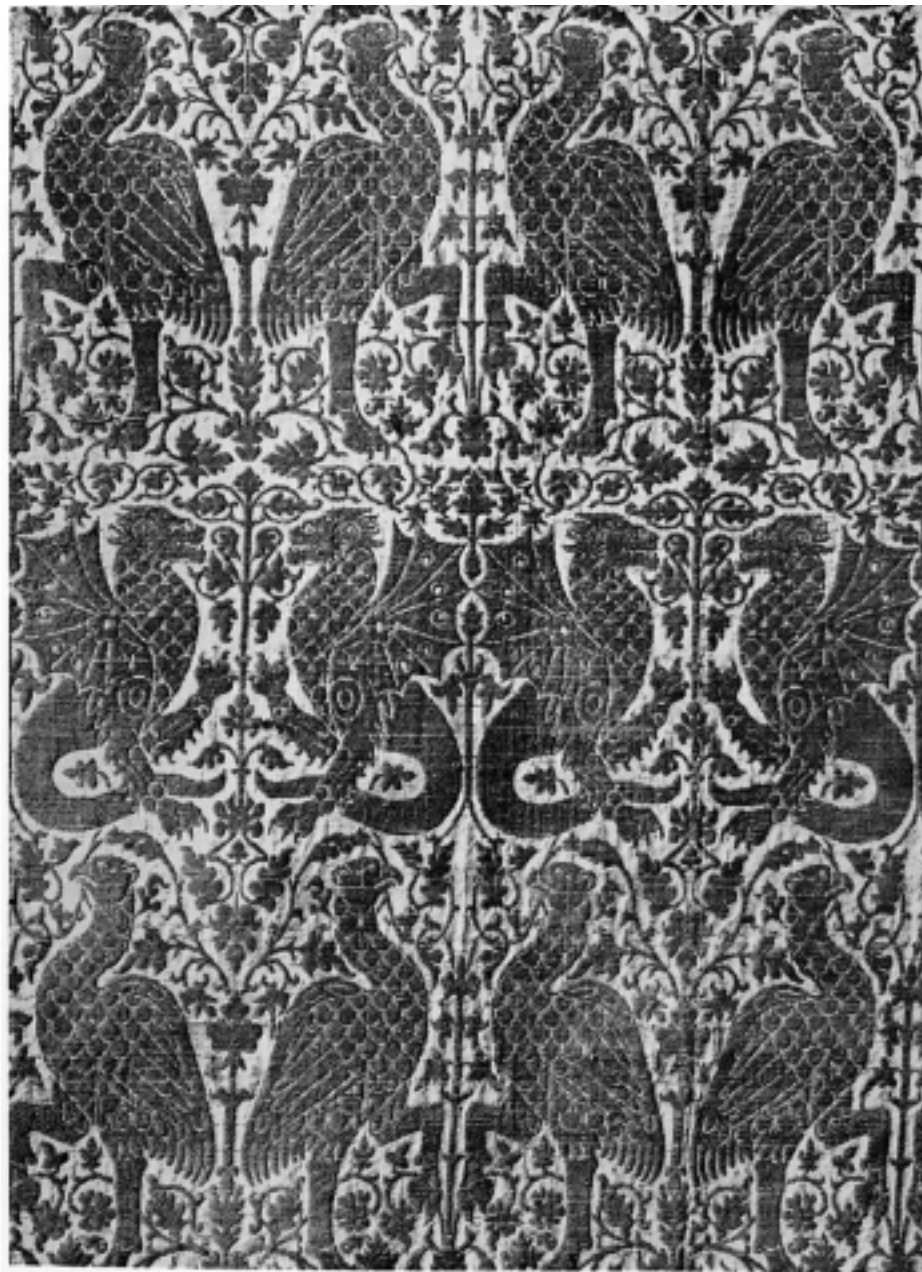


PLATE V  
DETAIL OF PLATE II; WHITE AND GOLD.



PLATE VI  
DETAIL FROM THE SHROUD OF ST. ERIK; TAN AND SILVER.



PLATE VII  
DETAIL OF A COPE; TAN AND GOLD.

this treasure with the cover existing in our Cathedral which may formerly have been laid upon the rich medieval shrine destroyed at the Reformation. The shroud was made of a magnificent brocade in silver and red, framed with green silk and lined with a brilliant yellow silk, of the kind probably called *cendal*, *sindel*, etc., in medieval texts.<sup>9</sup>

Let us, however, return to the cope shown on Plate II. The material mainly used in this garment (Plate V) is indeed a remarkable creation. Though the relationship to the type of pattern alluded to above is not to be denied, this design is nevertheless outstanding from several points of view. These species of animals were never met with in any silk textile. Similar dragons, it is true, occur in the art of this period, but as far as I am able to judge, the ostrich is without any contemporary parallel. It is possible that the prototype belonged to a considerably earlier period. The accentuation of the horizontals and verticals gives the composition an archaistic character which is still further emphasized by the heraldic animals and the ornamental foliage. The pose with the lifted leg reminds us, it is true, of the gazelle on some of the above-mentioned silks, but the attitude of this giant bird expresses a solemnity which the other animals always lack. A detail of fine artistry may be noted, the repetition of the scale-shaped pattern (ornamental feathers?) on both the animals. As a whole, the design, even in its smallest details, is so well balanced and so perfectly drawn that it must be regarded as the creation of an outstanding artist. Was he a sculptor or a goldsmith? Does not this textile call to mind a plastic work? The translation of the artist's creation into textile material and technique shows a master's hand, for no line could be better drawn and there is no fault or unintended irregularity. This magnificent *bal-dacchino* must be considered as an artist's original creation. It is indeed one of the major achievements of the silk art, conceived in the spirit of the Byzantine school, while still undisturbed by the invasion of "wild" Eastern motifs.

In addition to the beauty of the precious weaves and the quality of the embroideries, one more feature should be noticed, the careful and perfect tailoring of the garment, which is rather unusual.<sup>10</sup> All this testifies to its origin from a first-class workshop — undoubtedly the actual papal "court-manufacture." No doubt the archbishop from "Ultima Thule" had to pay a good price for this superb vestment as well as for all the other marks of his high office. We know that in this period liturgical vestments still remained the personal property of the bishops.

The question of origin has not yet been discussed here. Otto von Falke was certainly right when, basing his opinion on the inventories of the Roman Curia in 1295 and other records often describing *diasprum* (mostly originating from Lucca), he identified this term with a specific group of silks (cf. above, page 7, footnote 5). All these silks are self-patterned weaves, resembling damask (though technically made quite otherwise) with details brocaded in gold or silver thread. But von Falke's general attribution to Lucca of all the silks he calls "diasprum" is certainly too inclusive. The decline in style in the late specimens discussed above certainly indicates that this type of fabric also was woven elsewhere in Italy and continued during the XIV century. On the other hand, our three fabrics, Plates IV-VI, all dated accurately as before 1295, all entirely "brocades," not *diaspri* in the Falke meaning, may certainly be considered as Lucchesian because of their style and first-rank design.<sup>11</sup> Before 1300 Lucca is generally considered to have held the leading position in the Italian silk manufacture. The writer is anxious to emphasize at this point — we will return to it later on — that both kinds of weaves are technically identical (the Von Falke *diasprum* and the *brocade* gold-woven throughout). It is quite natural that both kinds were woven at the same place and in the same type of loom.

The Far East is also represented in our treasury. As the specimens in question have recently been published by the present writer, they only need a brief mention here.<sup>12</sup> They include a beautiful brocade with an asymmetrical design of flame-shaped palmettes woven with flat strings of gilded leather on a dark blue satin ground. Less ostentatious but not less interesting are two other Chinese brocades with respectively a blue and a red (now faded to tan) twill ground, originally made up into a *tunica* or dalmatic, fortunately preserved as the lining of a XV-century chasuble (cf. fig. 1).

The greater part of our material, however, issued from North Italian looms. The characteristic asymmetrical style of the *trecento* is beautifully exemplified by three complete vestments in their original condition: two copes and one chasuble. The rich and intricate design of Plate VII represents this style at its most brilliant. The enigmatic ornament of pseudo-Cufic letters and the Chinese dog provide an effective contrast to the elegant flying crane. The pattern is almost identical with a large piece belonging to the Museum of Art in Cleveland.<sup>13</sup>

This silk, like virtually every silk weave of this kind, has lost its original brilliance of colour and material: the membrane-gold (gilded

membrane wound round a linen thread) has tarnished and the red silk has faded to that toneless brownish shade called "tan," which may be taken as a certain testimony of an original red colour. The cope has a small triangular hood in silver and blue (originally contrasting with the ground colour of the cope itself) and a woven orphrey of Cologne make.

The material of the cope on Plates VIII-IX is of a rare type, revealing a trend of fresh naturalism. It consists of a single motif, a silver bird on its branch and a white crescent, all standing out against a deep blue ground. What a charming poem in silk! The orphrey was made of the transverse border of a brocade with pseudo-Cufic letters, etc., originally gold on a red ground. This hood was also blue, with a symmetrical pattern.

The chasuble on Plate X has the medieval bell-shaped form, unaltered. The material was primarily red and gold with no other trimming than the blue linen visible around the edges, the classical lining material all through the Middle Ages. The fantastic and rather unskilful mixture of heterogeneous motifs indicates a decline in style: a *hortus conclusus* with a recumbent deer and a hunting dog are western motives, while the crowned crane and the radiant cloud motif are of oriental inspiration. This fabric may not have left the loom much before 1400, and perhaps later.

An interesting fabric was saved when adapted as the lining of a chasuble. This silk shown on Plate XI is decorated with membrane gold and multicoloured silk — green, violet, and tan (originally red) — standing out on a white ground. The writer is not able to show any presumable prototype for the dragon-shaped bird or the bear-like dog with its fluttering mantle; but they seem to be most at home in Persian art, even if the palmette foliage and the whole composition directly suggest a Chinese influence. This piece may belong to the early XIV century.

For quite other reasons the silk shown on Plate XII is hardly likely to be much older, even though its type of design suggests the XIII century. The awkwardness in drawing the animals may, however, assign this very interesting fabric to a more or less provincial manufacture.

The following observations on the subject of technique may now be appropriately made. (Cf. also the additional plate text on page 27.) Based on the weaving technique (the binding system of the warp and the weft), all fabrics here described are to be termed *diasprum weaves*, i.e., a weave composed of two different warps and two different wefts. All except the last one are brocades (in the illogical sense which this word now has in





PLATE VIII  
DETAIL OF A COPE; BLUE AND SILVER.

most languages), i.e., silks with a pattern weft of so-called Cyprian gold or silver, consisting of a strip of membrane or fine leather gilded or silvered, wound around a linen core. The S-twist seems to have been the rule for silk as well as linen. The loom-width is always large, being about 115-125 cm. The weave is even, and the repeats are generally quite regular. The selvages always consist of two or three very coarse linen cords. As plain silk from this period is of rare occurrence, it may be of interest in this connection to note that such a material is used as the lining of the St. Erik cover; it has the same sort of selvage, and the loom-width is as much as 145 cm.

Only one of the brocades, Plate X, is woven together throughout; all the others have a "pocket" under the background weave, which is either in 2-heddle or 3-heddle "binding," the latter always with a close warp and more or less resembling a satin. The three dated XIII-century fabrics on Plates IV-VI have the 2-heddle system — tabby or rep — while the weaves of Plates VII, IX and XI have the 3-heddle warp twill.

For the present, the author prefers not to discuss the local attributions, for instance, to Lucca and Venice. She believes that definite criteria for such a discussion are still lacking. There is no doubt, however, that we are dealing here with some of the very best products of the North Italian silk manufacture. The slight variations within the groups may testify to different workshops, while the transition from two heddles to three may be a matter of age and indicate a technical evolution. The large loom-widths indicate that two persons generally worked side by side at the loom, as was no doubt the case in the contemporary wool manufacture. The regular width of the repeat in all these silks compared with many of the older silks<sup>14</sup> may be explained by the introduction of some new implement in the loom, perhaps a better reed.

During the last century of the Middle Ages in all European countries, in Sweden until about 1525, there was a great importation of Italian silks. The dominating motif was the so-called pomegranate, which appeared in different stylizations and designs adapted to the typical *quattrocento* techniques: damask, velvet and metallic brocade with velvet pattern. Our treasury contains several vestments made of such material, still resplendent in their original colours and golden brilliance but displaying hardly anything extraordinary in their design. In this period instead we have to pay more attention to the art of needlework.

The term "needle-painting," *acu pingere*, expresses the character of



PLATE IX  
HOOD AND BORDER OF COPE, PLATE VIII.

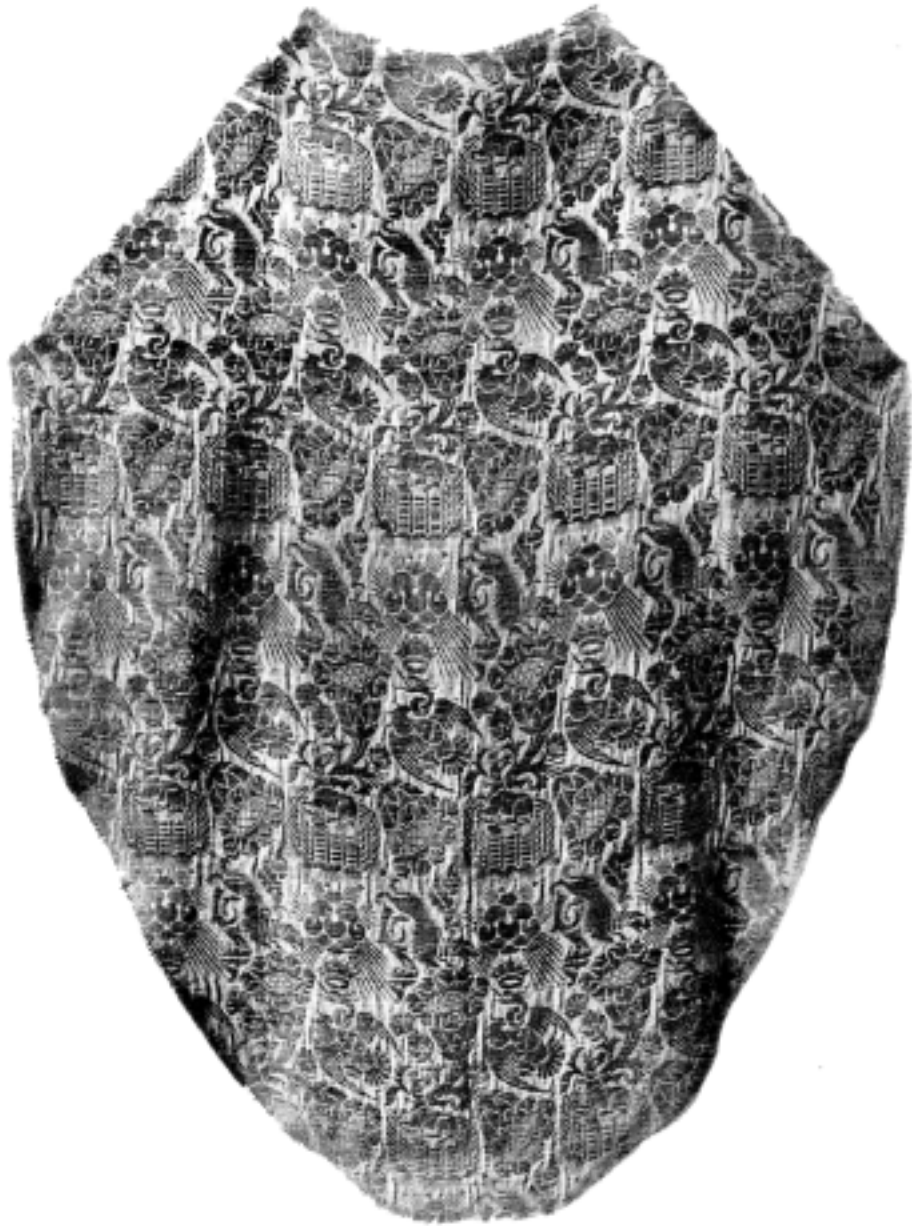


PLATE X  
CHASUBLE IN TAN AND GOLD.



PLATE XI  
MULTICOLOURED SILK USED AS LINING.

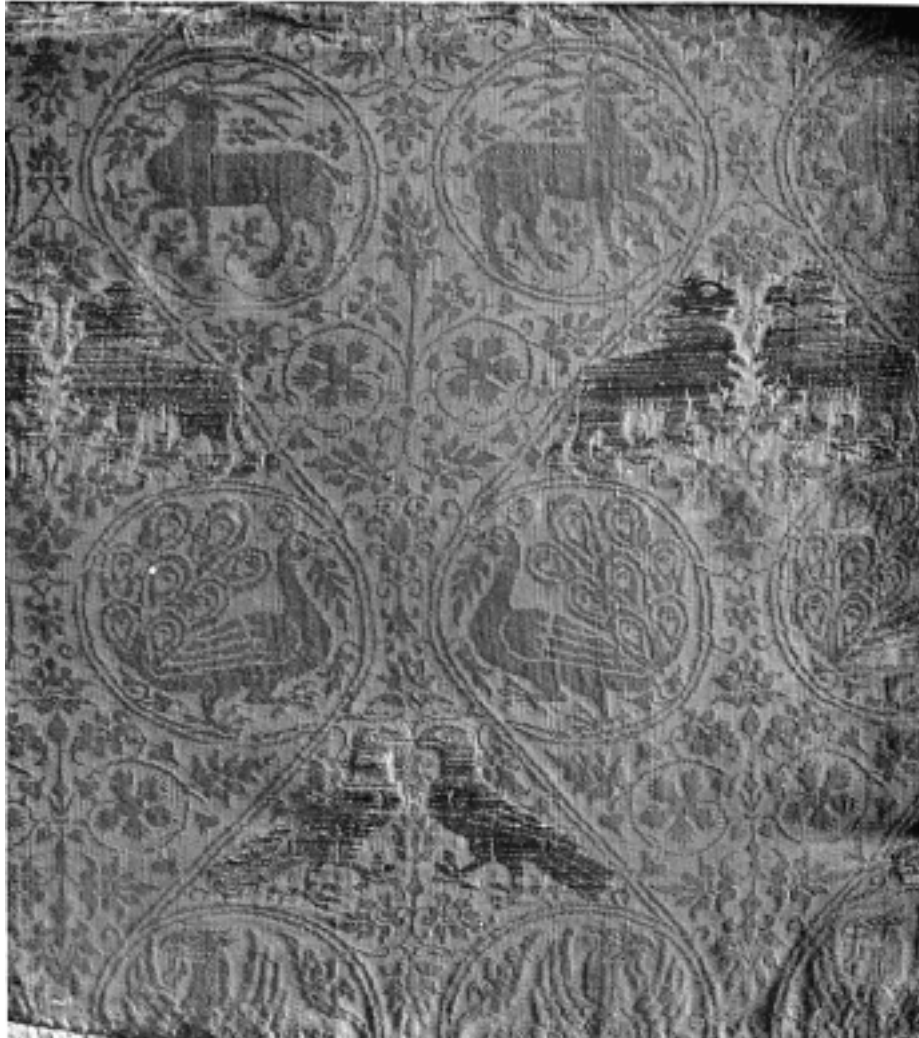


PLATE XII  
YELLOW-ROSE SILK WITH BROCADED ANIMALS; FRAGMENT.

the skilled translation of real paintings into textile form which took place during this period in numerous workshops in Flanders and the Rhinelands. A fine cross-shaped panel representing the Holy Family and the orphrey and hood of a cope portraying the history of the Virgin exemplify these geographical areas. Andreas Lindblom ascribes them to Albert Bouts or his school and to the Meister der heiligen Sippe.<sup>15</sup> A beautiful crucifix embroidery represents the relatively rare Danzig or East German production, which seems to have been of great importance to Swedish art. Some vestments issued from a Stockholm workshop are noteworthy, *inter alia* because this production is unusually well documented.<sup>16</sup> During the last quarter of the XV century the Stockholm city records tell us about an artist-craftsman named Albert, variously referred to as a painter and a pearl-stitcher. During the Middle Ages this was the professional term for an embroiderer and denoted the most precious material used. This Albert was the famous master of the mural decorations of some twenty churches which were occasionally signed by his Latinized name *Albertus Pictor*, "Albert the Painter." We can also point to a large number of embroideries — nearly 30 pieces — which probably issued from his workshop. In the murals he shows himself as a brilliant painter with an exuberant and expressive style, and many of the embroidered figures show a strong resemblance to the painted ones. In addition, the mode of drawing and the compositions display a feeling for long-distance effects which is quite rare in needlework but is precisely what one might expect from a monumental artist such as a church painter. The five Albert chasubles belonging to Uppsala Cathedral differ in their technical standard, being more or less richly worked. Outstanding is the chasuble portraying the history of the Virgin; Plate XIII. This is embroidered over the entire surface in elaborate raised work with a lavish use of real pearls and vies in richness with the famous vestments of the Golden Fleece. The resemblance to the figure style of the anonymous German artist, Master E.S., tells us that Albert, for his textile compositions, drew inspiration from graphic prints, as we know he did for his church paintings. Another chasuble, Plate XIV, originating from the Albert workshop was made of a magnificent golden-green Italian velvet; the orphrey shows the portrait of the donor, Archbishop Jacob Ulfsson, known to be the founder of the University of Uppsala in 1477.

Last but not least, there is one other textile that merits mention here: the golden robe of Queen Margaret.<sup>17</sup> Margaret, Waldemar's daughter,



PLATE XIII

CHASUBLE, ALL-OVER EMBROIDERY IN SILK, GOLD AND PEARLS. STOCKHOLM, ABOUT 1485-95.





PLATE XIV

CHASUBLE, ITALIAN VELVET AND STOCKHOLM EMBROIDERY, DATED 1482.

who was born in 1353 and died in 1412, was the famous Queen of the United Kingdoms of Denmark, Norway and Sweden. Her magnificent costume, in accordance with contemporary custom, once was exhibited near her tomb in the Cathedral of Roskilde in Denmark; thence it was taken as booty in the Swedish-Danish war of 1659 and brought to Uppsala. This precious garment is, however, another story in itself. With such a magnificent piece there are many problems, and of such number and import that it would not be expedient to deal with them here.

### FOOTNOTES

1. Agnes Branting and Andreas Lindblom, *Medieval Embroideries and Textiles in Sweden*. Two volumes text and plates. Uppsala and Stockholm, 1932. (Swedish edition 1928 and 1929.)
2. A. Geyer, Catalogue; cf. p. 27.
3. A. G. F. Christie, *England Medieval Embroidery*, Oxford, 1938, Plates XXXII-XXXV. Branting-Lindblom, *op. cit.* pp. 89-95.
4. Arts of the Middle Ages. A Loan Exhibition. Museum of Fine Arts. Boston, 1940, No. 99.
5. Otto von Falke. *Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei*, Berlin, 1913, Abb. 275-279.
6. Adèle Coulin Weibel. *Two Thousand Years of Textiles*, New York, 1952, Pl. 170.
7. Weibel, *op. cit.* Pl. 171.
8. The word "baldachin" here probably means a certain kind of precious material. The original meaning was "from Bagdad," the famous Syrian town, in Italian language called *Baldacco*. But this word soon acquired a wider sense; a precious fabric made even elsewhere. The actual signification, in many languages, of the word "baldachin"—synonym for "canopy"—is much later.
9. Cf. Francisque-Michel. *Recherches sur le commerce, la fabrication et l'usage des étoffes de soie d'or et d'argent*, I-II (Paris, 1852). K. F. Söderwall, *Ordbok öfver svenska medeltids-språket*, 1884-1918. The St. Erik relics have been extensively published in a recent teamwork, edited by B. Thordeman: *Erik den Helige*, Historia, Kult. Reliker, Stockholm, 1954. With a German summary.
10. Compare, for instance, with the vestments belonging to the great Danzig collection. W. Mannowsky, *Der Danziger Paramenten-Schatz*, 1931-1938.
11. This writer is quite conscious that some English-writing scholars object to the substantive "brocade" used in a sense not according with the verb "to brocade," which has a very precise technical meaning (synonymous with the French *brocher*). Needing a word for a fabric woven throughout with gold and silver threads, without paying any regard to the technique of the weave, I allow myself to use the word "brocade" in that

sense which is the general sense in most other European languages, for instance the French *brocart* and the German *Brokate*, both derived from the Italian *broccato*. It may be mentioned here that the origin of this is the late Latin “*brocca*” (spike or pointed instrument) giving the French term *brocha*, i.e., the instrument used when brocading. By brocading is meant the introduction by means of a pointed bobbin or *broche* at intervals during the weaving of the fabric, of additional weft threads which are only used where needed and do not run straight from selvage to selvage. Cf. Nancy Andrews Reath. *The Weaves of Hand-Loom Fabrics*, The Pennsylvania Museum, 1927.

12. Branting-Lindblom, *op. cit.*, p. 146. Agnes Geijer, *Oriental Textiles in Sweden*, Copenhagen, 1951, Nos. 4-5 and 7, Pl. 1-3.
13. Weibel, *op. cit.*, Pl. 195.
14. For instance: Falke, *op. cit.*, Abb. 139, 213, 249, 253 or Weibel, *op. cit.* 59, 60, 102.
15. Branting-Lindblom, *op. cit.* Pl. 150 and 189, resp. p. 106 f. and 129 f.
16. Branting-Lindblom, *op. cit.* p. 65 f., and A. Geijer, *Albertus Pictor, målare och pärlstickare*, Stockholm 1949.
17. Agnes Branting, *Das Goldene Gewand der Königin Margareta in der Domkirche zu Uppsala*, Stockholm 1911.

## NOTES ON PLATES

The numbers between brackets refer to the Catalogue of the Uppsala treasury. (*Katalog över Uppsala domkyrkas skrudkammare*, by A. Geijer, 1st ed. 1932.)

- Pl. I (No. 25) Crimson silk, thin 4-heddled twill, strengthened with linen. Embroidered with gold (gilded silver strips, wound round a silk core) and multicoloured silk, mostly in split-stick. All over the surface cherubs and medallions with figures. The detail reproduced shows the martyrdom of Saint John the Baptist and Saint Barnabas.
- Pl. II, III, IV, V. (No. 26) Cope brought from Italy to Uppsala in 1295 by Archbishop Nils Alleson. The careful and precise tailoring of the whole vestment is noticeable. Under the small original hood, representing Jesus Christ, was placed on a later occasion another hood, of coarse embroidery dating from the early 16th century. Edge portion, Pl. IV. Design of bulb-shaped palmettes and parrots, in gold on white ground. Diasprum-weave: in the pattern areas the weave is solidly woven together ("compound"), whereas in the intermediate areas there is a "pocket" under the visible tabby-weave of paired S-twisted warp and untwisted weft; the golden pattern-weft (gilded membrane wound round a linen core) is tied by a sparse red warp. Width of repeat 21.5 cm. The ostrich and dragon brocade, Pl. V. Technique and material as above. Width of repeat 17.5 cm. Loom-width c. 124 cm. The warp cords which have supported the selvage have been taken away — in order to make the seams as supple as possible — leaving the weft-threads forming a fringe of loops.
- Pl. VI. Detail from the shroud still enclosed in the shrine of Saint Erik. Silver on tan, originally red. Diasprum-weave: ground weave rep, paired warp, very close. Width of repeat c. 20 cm. Selvage of three linen cords. The whole cover (size 96 x 136 cm.; the brocade panel 73 x 105 cm.) is lined with a thin yellow silk.
- Pl. VII. (No. 28) Cope. Brocade in gold and tan, originally red. Diasprum-weave: between the ornaments 3-heddled twill ground, made of a close paired warp and an untwisted weft, forming "pocket"; pattern-weft of membrane-gold tied with an uncoloured silk warp. Width of repeat 15 cm. Loom-width 114 cm.
- Pl. VIII, IX. (No. 27) Cope. Membrane-silver on blue ground. Technique similar to the above, only single ground warp and closer weft. Partially an extra pattern weft of white silk. Width of repeat 13 cm. Loom-width 117 cm. Hood and border of tan (faded red) silk with pattern in gold.
- Pl. X. (No. 35) Chasuble in gold and tan (faded red). Diasprum-weave: throughout solid weave (forming no pocket); the ground weave has an irregular (4-heddled) texture, which was hard to determine. Width of repeat 19 cm. Loom-width c. 116 cm. The selvage consists of three coarse linen cords, the outermost very thick.
- Pl. XI. (No. 37) Multicoloured silk with dragon-birds and bears (used as lining). Diasprum-weave: the white ground weave in 3-heddled warp-twill (paired twisted warp and untwisted weft), forming pocket: the pattern-weft of green, violet and tan (once red) silk and membrane-gold thread. Width of repeat 13.5 cm. Loom-width incomplete, probably 110 cm. Selvage of two linen cords. Above checkered beginning border.
- Pl. XII. Fragment (No. 87). Yellow-rose silk with brocaded animals. A kind of diasprum-weave: the warp and weft effects reversible, both following the tabby-weave system: warps of paired twisted yellow silk, wefts yellow and reddish tan, untwisted. Gilded membrane on a linen core. The pattern repeat width varies between 19-20 cm.
- Pl. XIII. (No. 41) Chasuble. All-over embroidery in silk, gold and pearls, partly raised work and appliqué, representing the Virgin surrounded by seven scenes from the history of Saint Mary. Like the orphrey below from the workshop of Albertus Pictor in Stockholm. About 1485-1495. At a more recent time the cope was re-lined with a *tunica* of Chinese silk (cf. p. 5, Fig. 1).
- Pl. XIV. (No. 39) Chasuble of rich Italian velvet in green and gold, pile on pile and *or bouclé*. The orphrey — portraying St. Anne, St. Henrik, St. Bridget, St. Martin, St. Eskil and the Donor, Archbishop Jacob Ulfsson, with his coat of arms and the year 1482.

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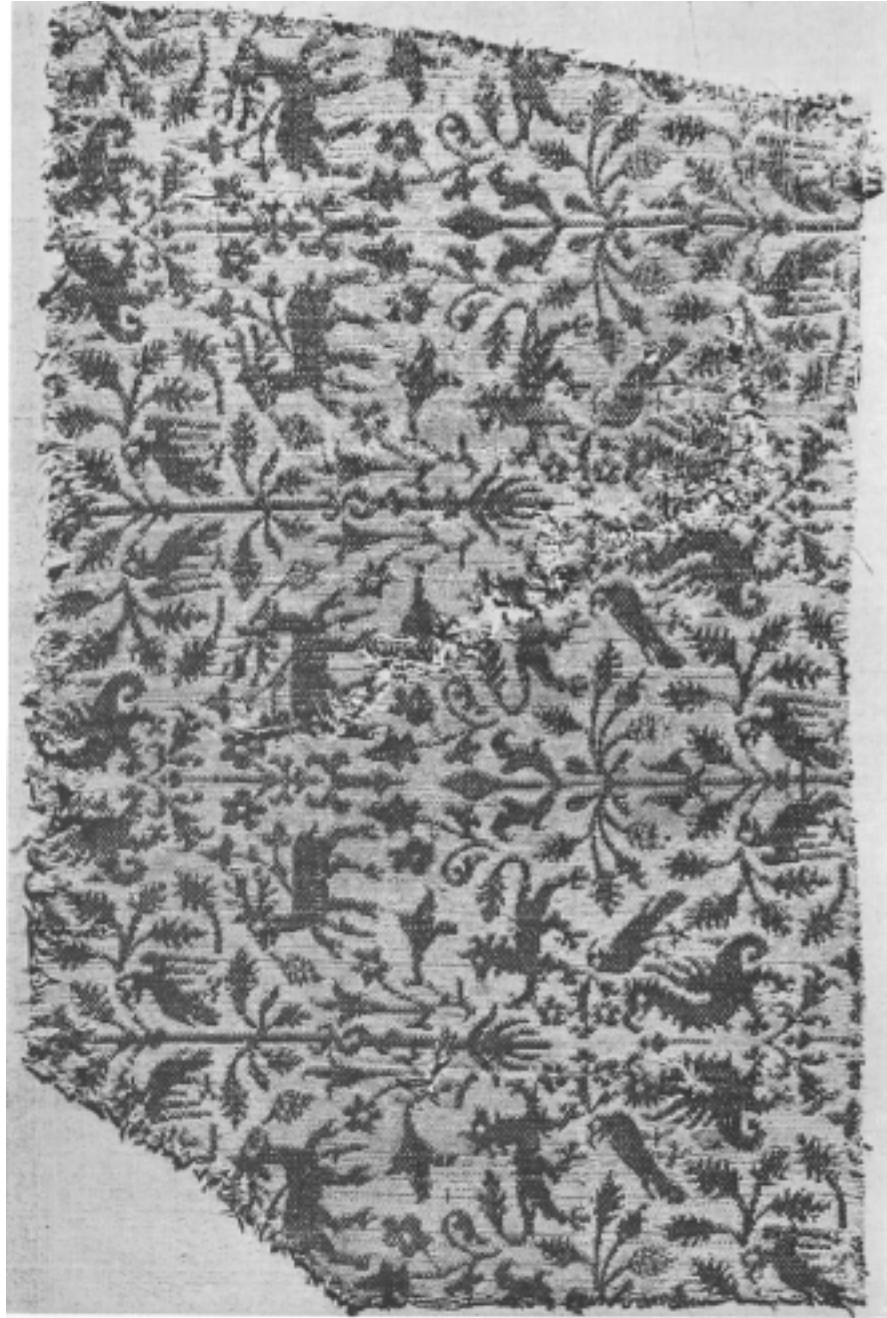


PLATE I

PLAIN COMPOUND SILK CLOTH WITH THICK GLOSSY FIGURE WEFTS. THE STATIC QUALITY OF DESIGN IS REDUCED BY VARIETY IN THE PAIRING OF BIRDS AND ANIMALS AND BY INFREQUENCY OF THE REPEATS. LUCCA, FIRST HALF (?), XIV CENTURY. MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, BOSTON.

## THE SILK TRADE OF LUCCA

*by*

FLORENCE EDLER DE ROOVER, PH.D.

A GOOD DEAL has been written by historians of textiles about the designs used in the medieval silks of Lucca but very little has been published that explains how the lovely rich silk fabrics were produced and how they were marketed. Lucchese silks became justly famous throughout western Europe: that fame was the result of the skill and fine craftsmanship of generations of artisans — not only weavers but throwsters, dyers, and designers as well. The Lucchese merchants, also, played a very important role in the development and success of the silk industry: they furnished the costly raw materials, they financed the industry at every step, and they found a market for the finished fabrics. Through the collaboration of merchants and artisans, Lucca produced rich textiles with some of the most charming patterns of all times.

As is true of most medieval industries, the origins of the Lucchese silk industry are obscure. By the twelfth century Lucca was exporting considerable quantities of silk cloth. Since it must have taken several decades to develop enough skilled workers for the industry to reach the exporting stage, it is likely that the art of silk weaving was introduced into Lucca in the eleventh century through the efforts of one of her rulers.

Lucca was the capital of the County of Tuscany and one of the foremost cities of Italy. The main pilgrim route from northwestern Europe to Rome passed through the city, and her miracle-working crucifix, the *Volto Santo* (Holy Countenance), made Lucca second only to Rome as an important Italian pilgrim center. The eleventh century was a period of artistic activity in Lucca: the cathedral and other churches were rebuilt or embellished. The minor arts were fostered.

Rulers have always regarded the silk industry as a cultural art which adds luster to a capital city. Tedaldo, Count of Tuscany at the beginning of the eleventh century, or his son Boniface, may have brought weavers and dyers from southern Italy, perhaps Jews from Amalfi and Gaeta where they were producing silk fabrics. From 1000 A.D. onward Lucca was the most important Jewish center north of Rome.

If the industry was fostered at first by rulers, it soon became independent of them, as did the city of Lucca, which became an independent republic soon after the death of Countess Matilda in 1115. By the time of her political independence, Lucca had all the prerequisites for a successful luxury industry: skilled and inventive artisans, high artistic standards, considerable capital, and a well-developed commercial organization for the importing of raw materials and the exporting of the finished product. The expensiveness of the raw materials — silk which came chiefly from the Levant, gold and silver for metal thread, and dyestuffs — would suggest the intervention of capitalists from the very beginning or from an early phase in the development of the industry.

Because of the high cost of the raw materials and the fairly elaborate manufacturing process, the finished silk product was an expensive luxury article which only the upper classes could afford to purchase. The local market would be very limited, so that outlets abroad became essential as soon as the industry achieved size and importance. Doubtless wealthy pilgrims carried home silken treasures, and churchmen on their way home from missions to Rome stopped in Lucca to purchase costly vestments, altar cloths, or hangings. Such purchases helped to establish the renown of Lucchese fabrics abroad. A few foreign merchants — especially French and German — came to Lucca to buy silk fabrics. But the expansion of the Lucchese silk industry largely depended upon the native merchants' building up of a sales organization in foreign markets.

Even though Lucca and other medieval Italian centers of the silk industry encouraged sericulture, silk from cocoons produced in Italy represented only a very small percentage of that needed. For centuries the Caspian Sea region led as a source of supply of raw silk for Lucca. This silk was transported to the Genoese colonies on the Black Sea and then to Genoa by ship. Syrian silk was plentiful in Lucca during the thirteenth century, when Genoa had colonies in Syria. A good deal of silk reached Lucca from the Persian silk emporium, Sultaniyeh, and from Sogdiana in Turkestan.

Greece and Spain were the principal regions in medieval Europe where sericulture was sufficiently extensive to permit the export of large quantities of raw silk. From Greece, Lucca received silk throughout the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. From southern Spain considerable quantities arrived beginning in the late fourteenth century. Lucchese merchants traveled to Genoa to purchase silk from all these regions.

The silk that reached Lucca during the Middle Ages had already been reeled from the cocoons. Silk comes off the cocoons in long filaments or threads, which are so fine that those from four to eight cocoons are reeled together to form the strand which is called raw silk. The natural gum of the silk, plus a slight twist given the threads in the reeling process, holds the filaments together in the strand. The strands are formed into skeins.

After the reeling from cocoons to get raw silk, the major steps in the manufacture of silk cloth are throwing, boiling, dyeing, warping, and weaving. These steps were carried on in medieval Lucca. Before throwing and warping, silk needed to be wound from skeins onto spools by means of reels. The winding of silk was a part-time occupation of hundreds of Lucchese housewives.

The Lucchese merchants importing silk were usually manufacturers or industrial entrepreneurs as well. They retained ownership of the silk throughout the manufacturing process and tried to find a market for the finished product. The silk workers performed their various tasks either in small workshops or in their homes and were paid by the piece or by the pound. This is called the putting-out system, because the manufacturer put out the raw materials to workers and the materials were returned to him after each successive stage in the manufacturing process. Keeping track of the materials given out to throwsters, boilers, dyers, warpers, weavers, etc., was not a simple task and involved an elaborate system of records to prevent pilfering and to figure out the wages earned by the workers.

Of the steps in manufacturing, throwing and weaving were probably the most important for the establishment and maintenance of the fame of Lucchese silks. The strands in the skeins of raw silk are not yet ready for use as thread. Additional twisting or "throwing" in at least one direction for weft threads and in two, that is, in opposite directions for warp threads is usually necessary. Also several strands may be twisted together to form the thickness of thread needed for heavy silks. The evenness and tightness of the throwing are very important for the quality of the thread. In the Orient and in Europe throwing was done with the use of a simple hand wheel. Considerable skill was required of the throwster to produce an evenly twisted thread.

In the thirteenth century the Lucchese invented a rather elaborate twisting- or throwing-mill, which could be run by water power. These



mills were places situated along canals within the town walls through which water from the neighboring Serchio River flowed. Medieval contracts for the lease or sale of throwing-mills reveal that some had 240 spindles, others as many as 480. As each spindle represented the work of one throwster using a simple hand wheel, it is apparent that, in addition to producing uniformly even thread, the throwing-mill was a labor-saving device which did the work of several hundred throwsters.

After throwing, silk thread was boiled to remove the natural gum which would interfere with dyeing. After boiling, the silk was soft, lustrous, and pearly white. Silk that was to be used as white thread was next bleached in a closed chamber by being exposed to the fumes of sulphurous acid.

Most silk in Lucca was dyed in the thread. Even monochrome fabrics were seldom dyed in the cloth. The dyeing establishments, like the throwing-mills, were located along the canals. The statute of the dyers' guild for 1255 lists 86 master dyers.

In medieval Lucca the throwsters, silk-boilers, and dyers were generally small masters who owned relatively expensive equipment and employed a few workers—probably apprentices and journeymen—in their small establishments. They usually worked for several manufacturers and were paid so much per pound weight of silk.

Before warping the silk thread was again sent to women reelers to be wound on spools. Both men and women measured the warp by using a warp-frame.

Although the preliminary steps were important, it was the weaver who created the work of art. Because so much depended on their skill, the Lucchese weavers, like the dyers, commanded social prestige and had their own guild. The weavers were highly specialized. Those who worked at simple looms might weave sendal, taffeta, and other plain lightweight silks. Other weavers used complicated draw-looms and produced only one kind of cloth. This specialization was probably due to the fact that greater skill and efficiency could be achieved if the weaver worked on only one kind of loom and one kind of cloth. There was a special type of draw-loom for almost every different kind of patterned cloth: for baldachin, brocade, camoca, damask, diasper, samite, and velvet. Most of these fabrics required two warps. Some of the more elaborate looms could be operated only with the aid of a draw-boy who was perched precariously on top of the loom in order to pull the cords that controlled the pattern.

There were some women weavers in Lucca. They used the simpler looms and wove such silks as satin, sendal, and taffeta.

Draw-loom were expensive pieces of equipment, costing as much as, or more than, a throwing-mill. Most weavers owned their looms, but some leased them from merchant-entrepreneurs. Unlike the throwsters, boilers, and dyers, weavers could work for only one manufacturer at a time. However, they were free to change employment, provided they were not in debt to an entrepreneur.

Who prepared the designs that the weavers so admirably reproduced on their looms? The earliest known examples of Lucchese silk fabrics show ability on the part of the twelfth-century designers to interpret the Byzantine and Saracen motives in a free way, giving them new vigor. During the thirteenth and especially the fourteenth centuries, Lucca took the lead in creating new patterns and in producing materials hitherto unknown in Europe, and — in the case of her pile-on-pile velvets — unknown in Asia as well.

At first weavers may have done all the designing. We simply do not know because there is no evidence. By the second half of the fourteenth century the notarial records mention special designers of silk cloths. How numerous they were and whether some devoted all of their time to silk designing, or like one of them, Benedetto di Giovanni, also painted statues, pictures, and chests, the records do not reveal.

These fourteenth-century designers certainly showed originality. They took elements from older styles — Byzantine, Sassanian, and West Saracen — and combined them with contemporary Chinese, Persian, and Gothic motives. By adding original touches they produced patterns that are distinctly Lucchese (Plate I). Even when one element predominates — for example, the Chinese — it is never to the point of exact imitation. Unlike the Venetians, who boasted of their ability to imitate Oriental silks so closely that the copies might be mistaken for the originals, the Lucchese preferred to modify Oriental designs, frequently adding elements of humor, which lend considerable charm to a number of patterns<sup>1</sup> (Plate II).

Lucchese weavers produced almost every kind of silk fabric known in the Middle Ages, but Lucca was especially famous for her resplendent silks rich in gold and silver (Plate III). This emphasis on sumptuous fabrics is easily explained: during the eleventh to thirteenth centuries

<sup>1</sup> Cf. my article, "Lucchese Silks," *Ciba Review*, No. 80 (June 1950), pp. 2926 ff.



PLATE II

A LUCCHESI DESIGNER COMBINES CHINESE MOTIVES AND SWEEPING  
MOVEMENT WITH AN AMUSING ELEPHANT OF HIS OWN CREATION. XIV  
CENTURY. TEXTILE SCHOOL, CREFELD.



PLATE III

GOLD BROCADED SILK WITH GRACEFULLY CURVING FLORAL DESIGN SHOWING CHINESE INFLUENCE.  
LUCCA, XIV CENTURY. THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART.

when the Lucchese industry developed, the chief consumer of silk cloth was the Church, which demanded heavy materials rich in gold, silver, and embroidery. Quantities of heavy silks were used for hangings and altar paraments, and richly embroidered or brocaded silks, for vestments. The walls of chapels were covered with silk hangings. Columns and pillars were draped in silks. Silk canopies were used inside the churches and in processions.

From the thirteenth-century church inventories it appears that the Lucchese silks most in demand for hangings were baldachin, samite, and sendal. Baldachin or baudekin was a heavy, rich cloth with a warp of gold or silver thread and a weft of silk, which might be of any color including white and black. Some Lucchese baldachin was brocaded with gold in addition to the gold of the warp. Besides hangings, baldachin was so frequently used for canopies, that it has become a synonym for a church canopy.

Samite was a thick, rather heavy silk in a combination of satin and twill weaves, sometimes interwoven with gold, when it was figured. Plain monochrome samites, in the usual liturgical colors — white, yellow, green, red, violet, and black — are frequently mentioned for hangings, altar cloths, and vestments.

Sendal was a thin silk, usually monochrome, so light in weight that it was sold by the pound. It was draped around columns, used for banner and wall hangings, and for the linings of most vestments.

For altar decorations samite, sendal, "purple," and camoca are most frequently mentioned. "Purple" is a silk cloth about which little is known. Genoa and Venice, as well as Lucca, produced and exported "purples." The cloth came in different colors, such as white, blue, and red.

Camoca or camaka, of East Indian origin, was almost as expensive as cloth of gold. It contained a considerable amount of gold thread worked into raised figures upon a checkered satin ground.

The greatest variety of silks that Lucca produced for the ecclesiastical market went into vestments. During Church festivals bishops, priests, deacons, and other assistants wore resplendent costumes. For ordinary services less costly vestments of silk were used. Chasubles, copes, dalmatics, and tunics, in all the liturgical colors, are listed as Lucchese in the church inventories. Diasper and samite were the most popular silks for vestments, followed by ciclatoun, "purple," camoca, and *catrasciamito*.

Diasper was apparently a creation of Antioch which was imitated in

Palermo and became very popular in the West as a product of Lucca. A figured silk, usually monochrome, it had two warps and two wefts. The ground weft was of fine, often untwisted thread and the figure weft of thick, glossy untwisted silk. Both the main and the secondary warps had tightly twisted thread. The favorite motives were rows of affronted birds, especially eagles or peacocks, alternating with rows of affronted animals, often gazelles or griffons. A palmette usually appeared between the groups of animals and birds as a centralizing motive. Most pieces of diasper had the heads and feet of the birds and animals and the round shields, invariably placed on the wings of the birds, brocaded in gold. The favorite color for diasper was white, but some red, green, and blue diaspers, and some in two colors (besides the metal thread) are mentioned in inventories and are extant today in church treasuries and in museums.

Ciclatoun or sigleton was a heavy damasked cloth, woven of silk and an inferior quality of gold thread. It could have a linen warp.

*Catrasciamito* was a very fine quality of samite with gold and silver thread worked into it. Five copes of this costly fabric from Lucca are mentioned in the 1361 inventory of St. Peter's treasury in Rome. Two were red and the others, green, yellow, and black.

By the fourteenth century royalty and nobility were using a greater variety of Lucchese silk fabrics than the Church: from the sheerest veil to the most magnificent and costly of medieval fabrics, imperial, a silk cloth very heavy with gold or silver and especially difficult to weave. Brocades, cloth of gold and of silver, damasks, satins, velvets, taffeta, sarsenet, tabby, and tercelin from Lucca appear repeatedly in the wardrobe accounts of England, France, and Burgundy, together with the kinds of silk already mentioned as used by the Church.

Wall hangings in French and Flemish castles and palaces were of baldachin, camoca, and sendal. In 1364 Charles V of France purchased twenty-five pieces of Lucchese baldachin to decorate one room. The first two fabrics were also used for the canopies above thrones and beds and for the curtains around beds of state. Less luxurious bed hangings and covers were of sendal or taffeta.

Cushions were very popular because seats had no padding and no covering. Therefore, many cushions were placed on them. Some cushions were covered with very expensive silks from Lucca: baldachin, brocades, cloth of gold, samite, and velvet; others with satin, sendal, or taffeta.

Tablecloths might be of silk damask or of gold-enriched silk fabrics.

Books, especially those presented as gifts, were covered with baldachin, camoca, samite, or velvet. Some had slip covers of taffeta.

Pavilions and tents were made of silk for use in gardens, in hunting preserves, and at tournaments and other outdoor festivities. The queen of France purchased from Edward Tadolini of Lucca in 1342 four pieces of blue satin for the ceiling of a pavilion, crimson-striped velvet to cover the poles, and taffeta for the side curtains. Banners of sendal or taffeta waved above celebrations, tournaments, and real battles.

Almost every silk fabric was used for clothing. Some doublets, pourpoints, and tabards for the French kings and the dukes of Burgundy were of Lucchese baldachin. Ciclatoun was used frequently for the long, sleeveless gown slit up almost to the waist which knights wore over their armor. Footwear was sometimes of ciclatoun. Cloth of gold, which varied considerably in weight, was used by kings and queens for sumptuous glistening costumes. Richard II of England left twenty-five cloths of gold at Haverford Castle. Four were from Cyprus and twenty-one from Lucca. Further evidence of Richard II's fondness for costly fabrics is his portrait on the Wilton Diptych, in the National Gallery in London. He is wearing a brocaded robe which, because of its design, has been attributed to Lucca, as has the richly patterned brocade worn by King Edmund the Martyr in the same painting by an unknown French artist.<sup>2</sup>

Damask was used for houppelandes for both men and women, as were satin and velvet. Royalty and nobility were occasionally attired in diasper. Charles V of France procured three pieces of Lucchese imperial for a mantle for the queen. A vermilion imperial from Lucca, brocaded with large gold leaves, was purchased by Duke John the Fearless of Burgundy for a mantle for the statue of the Madonna of Tournay. White samite from Lucca was favored by King Philip the Long of France and his queen for costumes in 1317. Persons of quality were often buried in samite.

Tabby, a watered silk, was used for houppelandes and surcoats for men and women. Taffeta was used for dresses and linings. Summer clothing was often made of sendal, which was also used extensively for linings of furs and silks. Sarsenet, a fine thin silk, sometimes striped, and tercelin, made from an inferior grade of silk, were used chiefly for linings. Nevertheless, the queen of France had a surcoat made of two pieces of blue

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Martin Weinberger, "Silk Weaves of Lucca and Venice in Contemporary Painting and Sculpture," *The Bulletin of the Needle and Bobbin Club*, Vol. 25 (1941).



PLATE IV

COMPOUND SATIN WITH REALISTIC BIRDS, ANIMALS AND FLOWERS. ATTRIBUTED TO  
LUCCA, XV-XVI CENTURY. CASTELLO SFORZESCO, MILAN.



tercelin from Lucca in 1343. Other Lucchese tercelin was purchased by the French court for banners and curtains.

Already in the fourteenth century Lucca was manufacturing a great variety of velvets for which other Italian cities became renowned in later centuries. Prior to the 1360's wardrobe accounts and inventories list only plain velvets, striped velvets, and monochrome velvets semé with bezants. In 1363 a blue velvet with gold fleurs-de-lis is mentioned and the Duke of Burgundy possessed two green velvets patterned with golden trees. Later Lucca was producing velvets in varying heights of pile, voided satin velvets, and polychrome figured velvets, some brocaded with gold and silver. One Lucchese velvet of the late fourteenth century was apparently a pile-on-pile velvet with a crimson velvet design on a dark red satin ground and with leaves and flowers in green and white pile of a different height. A polychrome velvet in three heights of pile had a black field on which green leaves and white flowers appeared amid crimson tracery.<sup>3</sup> John the Fearless, Duke of Burgundy, purchased from a Lucchese merchant two and a half pieces of polychrome brocaded velvet. The black ground was patterned with large foliage — part in crimson and part in green pile — strewn with small white blossoms brocaded in gold. The velvet was made into a tunic and headdress which the Duke wore on Easter Sunday in 1412 (Plate V). Another Lucchese brocaded velvet purchased by the Duke was crimson brocaded in gold and with silver flowers. The beauty and richness of such elaborate and sumptuous velvets as Lucca was producing from the late fourteenth century onward have been vividly portrayed by the Flemish and Italian artists of the fifteenth century.

At the courts a luxurious and ceremonial display of costly silks began with childbirth. For the birth of the first child of Anthony, second son of Philip the Bold of Burgundy, and his wife, Jeanne of Luxemburg, in 1403, Margaret of Flanders, Duchess of Burgundy, gave a large order to the Lucchese merchant, Guglielmo Cenami, who resided in Paris. He was the father of Giovanna, wife of Giovanni Arnolfini, who is portrayed with her husband in the famous painting by Jan van Eyck. Cenami supplied 148 pieces of vermilion sendal, at  $6\frac{1}{3}$  écus the piece, which were used for a large curtain hung in the middle of the lying-in chamber, for

<sup>3</sup> These two velvets were still on the looms when the Lucchese merchant, Giovanni Moriconi, died. They and other velvets are described in the inventory of the stock of the deceased merchant, dated November 14, 1397. In the Datini Archives in Prato are letters from the Lucchese silk merchant, Bartolomeo Balbani, describing the elaborate velvets he was producing in the 1390's. I shall soon publish the text of the letters and the inventory.



PLATE V

PART OF A VELVET CHASUBLE WHICH IS SIMILAR IN DESIGN TO THE LUCCHESI SILK PURCHASED BY JOHN THE FEARLESS IN 1412. LUCCA (?), XV CENTURY. MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, BOSTON.

two square pavilions placed around the beds, two counterpanes, and six cushions on which were embroidered the arms of Anthony, Count of Rethel, and of Jeanne, his wife. Two gold-brocaded silk cloths, dyed in "grain," which cost 80 écus apiece were to serve as border around the ermine blanket made for the state cradle out of 1,200 small skins. Also for the cradle, Cenami supplied four ells of vermilion velvet on which a saint was to be embroidered. Two vermilion silk cloths, at 30 écus each, were for the church where the baptism was to take place: one to cover the baptismal font and the other a gift to the church.

Death required a lavish display as well as birth. A pompous funeral procession accompanied the mortal remains of Philip the Bold from Hal near Brussels all the way to Dijon, where the Duke was buried in a Carthusian chapel which he had built. The hearse was decorated with coats of arms. On it lay the embalmed body, clad in the cowl of a Carthusian monk, under a cover of gold brocade on which was sewn a cross of purple velvet — a strange contrast: the simple habit of a monk beneath gold-enriched silk and velvet. Lucchese cloth of gold for decorations was supplied to all the churches along the route in which the corpse was to lie in state. One may say that the products of Lucchese looms surrounded kings and nobles from the cradle to the tomb.

During the Renaissance the families of wealthy merchants became important customers for silk fabrics, and lesser merchants and master artisans possessed a few items of silk in their home furnishings and in their wardrobes. Sumptuary laws were passed in an attempt to restrict the use of jewels, silks, and costly furs by the middle classes, but they were usually evaded, especially by the women.

We have dealt with the production of Lucchese silks, the kinds of fabrics woven and their uses. How were the silks of Lucca marketed?

During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the fairs of Champagne were the chief trading centers of western Europe. Six fairs were held annually, each one lasting a little over six weeks. Goods from all parts of the known world found their way to the fair stalls. To these fairs the Lucchese merchants brought silks which they sold to merchants from France, Flanders, England, and Germany. They brought back to Italy French and Flemish cloths, Baltic furs, and many other products.

The fairs of Champagne began to decline in the second half of the thirteenth century. This was largely because the Italian merchants, including the Lucchese, established permanent branches — first in England, and

later in Bruges, Paris, Avignon, Montpellier, Barcelona, and other cities.

The Lucchese companies were chiefly family partnerships, in which each partner assumed joint and unlimited liability for the debts of the firm. Outsiders with funds or business experience were taken into the firms as partners, but the controlling interest in each partnership usually remained in the hands of the family group. The funds with which the companies operated were provided from two sources: the capital supplied by the partners and the deposits made by the partners themselves, in addition to their share in the capital, and by outsiders having no share in the capital. Usually a fixed interest was paid on such deposits. For example, in a partnership of 1332, each of four partners contributed £3,000 Lucchese to the capital. On deposits ten per cent interest was to be paid annually. Ten deposits by outsiders totaled £8,500. These included money belonging to widows and minors. This example gives an idea of how working capital was obtained by medieval firms.

The Lucchese companies did not specialize in the sale of silk to the exclusion of other commodities. Diversification was characteristic of medieval international trade. In England, France, and the Low Countries, the Lucchese sold spices, fruits, sugar, jewels, gold- and silverware. From England they imported wool, sheepskins, and cloth. From Bruges they shipped to Lucca Flemish woolen cloth, Dutch linen, leather, dyestuffs, tapestries, books of hours and other manuscript books illuminated by Flemish artists.

The larger companies combined international trade with foreign banking, that is, with dealings in bills of exchange. The Ricciardi and some of the other Lucchese companies served as papal bankers. The papal collectors in England and elsewhere turned over funds to the merchant-bankers, who transmitted the funds to the papal treasury in Rome or Avignon or made payments abroad according to the instructions of the papal treasurer.

The Ricciardi Company, perhaps the wealthiest mercantile and banking firm in Europe in the last decades of the thirteenth century, lent money to Henry III of England, to Philip IV of France, and to important nobles and churchmen. In the fourteenth century other Lucchese companies made loans to princes and nobles in France and the Low Countries, and to cities, notably Bruges.

At the fairs of Champagne the Lucchese sold their silk cloth to other merchants. After they established themselves in capital cities, they tried to sell much of their silks directly to the chief consumers: the royal courts,

the nobility, and the clergy. How successful they were in establishing direct contact with royal and princely households is shown by the innumerable entries for such transactions found in the English and French wardrobe accounts, in those of the counts of Artois, Flanders, and Hainaut, and of the Dukes of Burgundy. Peter IV of Aragon (1336-1387) was another good customer, favoring Lucchese silks more than those of the Moorish kingdom in southern Spain.

Of course, the Lucchese in London, Bruges, Paris, and other cities did not sell exclusively to princes and great nobles. They sold also to native merchants — the mercers — and to foreign merchants. After the decline of the fairs of Champagne, Bruges was the emporium where the Hanseatic merchants exchanged furs, Baltic amber, salted herring, and other northern commodities for Mediterranean and Oriental wares. Italian and western European merchants were not usually admitted to the German cities of the Hansa, or Hanseatic League, nor to the vast non-German territories of the Baltic region economically dominated by the Hansa. Merchants from Bremen, Hamburg, Lübeck, Rostock, and Stralsund purchased Lucchese silks in Bruges and carried them to their home cities and to other cities within the Hansa area — to Danzig and Stockholm certainly and perhaps to Königsberg, Riga, and into Russia. This Hanseatic trade accounts for small collections of Lucchese silks in Hamburg, Lübeck, Stralsund, Stockholm and Uppsala, for single examples of Lucchese brocaded silks scattered throughout Sweden — in churches at Hed, Hesselby, Skara, and Skeppas — and for the presence of a large collection of fourteenth-century vestments, made from Lucchese silks, in the Treasury of St. Mary's Church in Danzig. Locked up in chests, the keys to which had been lost, these splendid examples of Lucca's finest textiles were discovered only a century ago. Alas, they have apparently been dispersed and perhaps many destroyed.<sup>4</sup>

Although most of her silks were woven from designs created in Lucca, special orders for fabrics were occasionally received. These usually called for the weaving of a special design, most frequently a coat of arms. Such orders came from popes, kings, and princes of the blood. Pope Honorius IV (1285-1287) owned Lucchese silks with the arms of his family, the Savelli. Boniface VIII, elected pope on Christmas Eve of 1294, promptly

<sup>4</sup> So Dr. Walter Mannowsky told me in Frankfort two years ago. Fortunately he has published handsome volumes containing photos and descriptions of this unique collection of Lucca silks: *Der Danziger Paramentenschatz, Kirchliche Gewänder und Stickereien aus der Marienkirche* (Berlin and Leipzig, 1931-1937), 5 vols.

ordered in Lucca silks representing his coat of arms, that of the Gaetani family. By the time that the Inventory of the Papal Treasury was made in 1295 there were twenty-nine pieces of Lucchese silk with the Gaetani arms.

French royalty and princes of the blood ordered bed hangings and bedspreads with fleurs-de-lis as the principal motive. Royal chapels were decorated with silks and velvets brocaded with the same motive. The Duke of Orleans had chair covers of satin woven in Lucca with his arms. Such orders were probably given to the Paris branch of a Lucchese firm and sent by the branch manager to the home office.

Throughout the fourteenth century Lucca remained the leading silk textile center in Europe but during that century the Lucchese themselves prepared the way for the later decline of the industry. Lucca was not spared the kind of civil strife that afflicted other Italian cities in the early fourteenth century. Between 1307 and 1314 a number of Lucchese went into political exile. Most of them sought refuge in Venice. Some were silk merchants and artisans who were persuaded to divulge their superior technics and thus aided in building up the Venetian silk industry. In 1342 Pisa captured Lucca and ruled the city for twenty-seven years: a period of oppression and heavy taxes. By the middle of the century thousands of Lucchese had emigrated. Silk workers and merchant-entrepreneurs were welcomed by Florence, Bologna, and Genoa, where their skills helped in developing competing silk industries.

When Lucca recovered her independence in 1370, emigrants were urged to return. Most silk merchants did return, but many artisans remained in the other silk-weaving centers. Although silk production revived in Lucca, she could not recover her former dominance of the market.

The superior technics of the Lucchese industry had been learned by the Florentines, Venetians, Bolognese, and Genoese. Their merchants were energetic in competing with Lucca for sales in foreign markets. Furthermore, the newer centers were more adaptable to change in fashion and tastes. In the fifteenth and later centuries the bourgeoisie became more and more important as customers for silks. They desired less heavy and less costly fabrics. The Lucchese prided themselves on high quality, which meant high cost. It was hard for them to adapt themselves to the changing fashions, so the other centers catered to the new consumers. The royal and ducal courts remained more or less faithful customers. With them



PLATE VI

SILK WALL COVERING SHOWING PERSIAN INFLUENCE IN THE REALISTIC BIRDS AND FLOWERS. THE DESIGNER HAS ADDED FRUITS AND ACANTHUS LEAVES CURVING WITH THE GRACE OF PLUMES. XVII CENTURY, PALAZZO MANSI, LUCCA.

Lucca's reputation for quality and beauty outweighed the factor of high prices. The Church still purchased some Lucchese fabrics but it also acquired those of the rival Italian centers of production.

The Lucchese were less reluctant to follow a new trend in patterns than in quality. Descriptions of Lucchese silks in accounts and inventories of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries reveal that Lucca was using the same type of design as the other Italian cities. The "pomegranate" was the dominant motive in almost all figured silks of the Renaissance, with the acanthus motive gradually replacing the pomegranate in the sixteenth century. As there was no longer any distinctively Lucchese style of design, it is extremely difficult to identify Lucca silks of later centuries. However, some Lucchese palaces possess locally produced fabrics of the seventeenth century. Walls of rooms are covered with silks containing motives of realistic flowers and birds, which show Persian influence (Plate VI).

Lucca was still producing silks in appreciable quantities in the first half of the eighteenth century, when the various princely courts of Germany were her chief customers. But in 1756, Frederick II of Prussia, eager to develop a silk industry in his kingdom, issued an edict forbidding the import of silk fabrics. Other German princes followed his example. Attempts to find new markets were unsuccessful. In 1785 the last silk firm in Lucca went out of business. The Republic came to an end in 1799. Thus the loss of Lucca's liberty and the end of the industry that had brought her prosperity and fame were almost contemporaneous events.

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Mrs. Raymond de Roover holds three degrees from the University of Chicago. She spent a year at the University of Toulouse, followed by a year at the University of Florence, where her interest in the richness of the State Archives of Lucca led her to the preparation of the thesis entitled "The Silk Trade of Lucca During the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries" which she presented to the University of Chicago for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.



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## CLUB NOTES

*The January meeting* of the Needle and Bobbin Club was held, through the courtesy on the New York Historical Society, on Thursday, January twenty-first, 1954, where from three to five o'clock Club members viewed at the Society's galleries at 170 Central Park West, its collection of Costume Portraits, Costume Laces, Textiles and Period Rooms, with the pleasure, later, of a tour through these interesting exhibits.

*On February eighteenth*, at three o'clock, Club members, through the generosity of Miss Susan Dwight Bliss, were invited to meet at the New York Academy of Sciences, 2 East 63rd Street, where Dr. Agnes Geijer, Curator of Textiles at the Museum of National Antiquities in Stockholm, Sweden, spoke on the subject "Medieval Textiles Preserved in Sweden."

*In March*, Mrs. Huntington Babcock kindly invited the members of the Club to hold their annual meeting in the private dining room of the Colony Club, 564 Park Avenue on Thursday afternoon, March fourth, at three o'clock. After a brief business meeting, Miss Margaret Babington, O.B.E., spoke on "The Adornment of Canterbury Cathedral."

*The April meeting*, through the courtesy of Miss Marian Hague, was held at her apartment, 333 East 68th Street, on Thursday afternoon, April the twenty-second, where Miss Hague exhibited her Study Collection, illustrating the history of lace from the XVI to the XIX century.

*For the first meeting of the autumn*, the Metropolitan Museum, which has many times offered hospitality to the Club, invited members to meet at the 83rd Street entrance of the Museum on Thursday afternoon, November eighteenth, at three o'clock, where they were met by Miss Edith A. Standen, Associate Curator in charge of the Textile Study Room, who showed them the Costume Institute Exhibition, displayed recent accessions, and later reported on the International Centre for the Study of Ancient Textiles, recently established at the Conference held in Lyons, France.

*The last meeting of the year* was held, through the kindness of Mrs. John Williams Morgan, at her apartment, 1060 Fifth Avenue, on Tuesday afternoon, December fourteenth, where at three o'clock, Miss Marian Powys gave an illustrated lecture on "Lace and How to Know It."

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As this BULLETIN goes to press the sad news is received of the death of Miss Frances Morris, to whose unbounded energy and enthusiasm for her chosen profession we owe the foundation and building up of this Club.

Its initial impetus was given by Miss Gertrude Whiting who had studied lace-making in Europe and on her return had hoped to gather around her a group of friends interested in the same and related subjects. In the spring of 1916 she came to the Metropolitan Museum to Miss Morris who at once sent out letters to many of the persons with whom she had become acquainted through her Museum work. Numbers of these responded with enthusiasm to her appeal, and a meeting was called on February the eighth, 1916, at the Metropolitan Museum where a name was chosen, officers elected, and the publication of a BULLETIN proposed.

By the time that the first copy was published, December the first, 1916, the membership list numbered one hundred and forty-four names, which included all the important lace collectors of the day.

All through the life of the Club during the many years since 1916 Miss Morris was the instigator of every important activity, among which was the publication of the magnificent folio volume, *Laces of American Collectors*, with one hundred and four full-page plates showing laces of a quality not surpassed by any of the European collections. Her interest in the Club during her lifetime was unending. In the early days of the Club she was ready at all times, did circumstances arise, to take over the duties of secretaries, exhibition committees, installment of galleries or tasks of publications.

She was one of those rare beings possessed of a boundless generosity, selfless in her devotion to any in need and beloved by all who had the rare good fortune to know her.

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## THE INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF ANCIENT TEXTILES

(CENTRE INTERNATIONAL D'ÉTUDE DES TEXTILES ANCIENS)

Everyone who is interested in the history of textiles may rejoice that there is now in existence an organization that will aid immeasurably in textile study. The International Centre for the Study of Ancient Textiles, which was brought into being at an international congress held in Lyons from the twentieth to the twenty-third of September, 1954, with twenty-nine delegates in attendance, including six from American museums, possesses Constitution and By-laws, a program, officers, quarters (provided generously by the Musée Historique des Tissus), and the beginning of an impressive list of members.

The aims of the Centre, as stated in its Constitution, are:

1. to coordinate, in order to make an inventory of ancient textiles, action carried out in the various countries;
2. to collect the technical material connected with these textiles;
3. to undertake the practical circulation of the data obtained and arrange for it to be at the disposal of members;
4. in general, to promote any form of action that may lead to a better knowledge of ancient textiles.

The officers elected at the Congress in Lyons are:

*President*

MONSIEUR ROBERT DE MICHEAUX (Conservateur, Musée Historique des Tissus, Lyons)

*Vice-Presidents*

MR. RENÉ BATIGNE (Director, The Textile Museum, Washington, D. C.)

DR. GIAN PIERO BOGNETTI (Professor, University of Milan)

DR. AGNES GEIJER (Assistant Curator, Medieval Department, Statens Historiska Museet, Stockholm)

DR. FRITZ VOLBACH (Director, Römisch-Germanisches Zentral Museum, Mainz)

*Secretary-General for Technical Matters*

MONSIEUR FÉLIX GUICHERD (Assistant, Musée Historique des Tissus, Lyons)

*Secretary-General for Administrative Matters*

MONSIEUR CHARLES LACROIX (Executive Secretary, La Fédération de la Soierie, Lyons)

Institutional membership dues have been set at twenty dollars a year, individual dues at ten dollars. Applications for membership are to be addressed to the President of the Centre.

An English translation of the Constitution and By-laws of the Centre may be examined at the Textile Study Rooms of the Metropolitan Museum and the Cooper Union Museum.

It is proposed that the Centre will serve only its own members, who are forbidden to make use of the Centre for commercial purposes.

*C. S. H.*

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\* *Died January 26, 1955.*