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THE POMEGRANATE PATTERN IN ITALIAN RENAISSANCE TEXTILES: ORIGINS AND INFLUENCE ¹

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THE NINETEENTH CENTURY TRADITION

The term "pomegranate motif" includes a series of vegetal patterns - the pine cone, the artichoke, the thistle, variants of the tree-of-life motif, and, in particular, the lotus and the palmette. These last two patterns were closely studied by Alois Riegl in his 1893 work, Stilfragen (Problems of Style). The term itself came into use during the period of historic revivalism in the latter half of the nineteenth century. At that time important design theorists and practitioners such as Owen Jones, William Morris, and Walter Crane dedicated space in their writings with accompanying plates to the reconstruction of Renaissance pomegranate patterns. The textile sources could be seen at first-hand in the collections of the then recently-created decorative arts museums beginning with the South Kensington Museum (1862) in London. These Italian Renaissance textiles originated in church vestments and ecclesiastical furnishings and were either donated to the museum or bought from antique dealers, among whom the ubiquitous Canon Bock.²

The study of historical pattern design played an important role in the didactic programs of the new design schools annexed to the decorative arts museums both in Europe and in the United States. To achieve good design through study of past styles was the philosophy of design education for industry.³ The pomegranate motif, in its various compositional structures, was analyzed in pattern-design textbooks prepared by authoritative instructors who were also practicing designers. The textbooks by Lewis F. Day⁴, an "Arts and Crafts" designer and teacher who was contemporaneously involved in industry as artistic director of the Turnbull & Stockdale textile firm, became standard works in textile design education and went through numerous editions.

Contemporaneously, a philological interest in the evolutionary development of ornament was occurring in the Viennese school represented by Strzygowski, Dvorak and Riegl. Riegl left his mark both on museum studies as curator of textiles and carpets in the Österreichisches Museum für Angewandte Kunst in Vienna and on university research with such pioneering studies as Late Roman Industrial Arts (1901) while professor at the University of Vienna. His fundamental work on the "contact-cross over-continuity" of the lotus and palmette motifs was extremely influential in various fields.

THE CLASSIFICATION OF COMPOSITIONAL STRUCTURES

In more recent times, one aspect of pattern design - the reference to repetition of pattern as deduced from mathematics and crystallography and subsequent applications was studied by Dorothy Washburn and Donald Crowe in their 1988 book, Symmetries of Culture.⁵ Another aspect, pertinent to the technical elements in textile patterning, was covered by Milton Sondag in his 1987 essay on patterns and weaves in Safavid velvets and lampas: there he gave a precise explanation accompanied by clear drawings concerning the technical process underlying both the construction of the continuous pattern as well as the derivation from a minimum technical repeat.⁶

My own particular interest lies in the stylistic development of taste and visual perception which occur in pattern design in a given society over a given period of time. As some of you may recall, I have been gathering information on the pomegranate pattern in Italian Renaissance textiles and the representation in European Renaissance paintings and sculpture for some twenty-five years now. I was, and still am, fascinated by the fact that this one motif could have held its own for over a century and a half as the most important textile design in production - naturally, though, with variations. This is an extraordinary record considering changing fashion, social taste and commercial exigencies. In fact, even today, this pattern is still being produced, especially for furnishing textiles.

After gathering examples of pomegranate-patterned textiles in museum and church collections and compiling art references I observed three fundamental compositional structures and formulated the following scheme.⁷ Just as then, I still find that the pomegranate pattern can be reduced to these three fundamental compositional structures (fig.1):

- 1) An ogival network.
- 2) Horizontal rows of lobate palmettes on bifurcated stems.
- 3) Vertical serpentine compositions.

In the first group, the pomegranates, small in size, are situated either at the four tangential points of the symmetrical ogival network or in the central area of each ogive in a larger-sized motif (fig.2).

In the second, the pomegranates dominate and are aligned in horizontal rows with connecting bifurcated stems which are a development of the first, network structure (fig.3).

Lastly, in the third group, the primary motif consists of large pomegranates which are aligned diagonally or vertically and embellished with fruits, flowers, buds and foliage. This pattern is counterbalanced in the opposite direction by a secondary, less-accentuated, design which resembles the first, but in a smaller scale (fig.4). The desire for balance, order and symmetry in this pattern reflects the Italian Renaissance aesthetic prevalent in all the major and minor arts of the period. But also the technical necessity for balanced physical weight in the pattern over the material surface of the textile, especially for brocaded pile on pile velvets.

One of the few written indications concerning this pattern is the rather simplistic description of the two last-mentioned

structures in an anonymous fifteenth-century Florentine manual on silk weaving and dyeing, Il trattato dell'Arte della Seta; the pattern types are called "de' cammini" and "delle gricce".⁸

Stylistically the early Renaissance patterns had a clarity and symmetry of design while those at the end of the fifteenth century had sinuous naturalism and intricacy of detail. An important change occurs in the chromatic aesthetics of pattern designing, especially for velvets, between the first and second halves of the fifteenth century. At first the patterned velvets are polychrome, with brilliant hues; then there is a preference for monochromatic tone-on-tone effects (crimson, blue, green, violet, yellow) and accent on plasticity of surface with effects of light and shade (pile-on-pile velvet, or "ad inferriata" style). Gold became important for surface illumination using cloth-of-gold background and highlighting with gold brocading and bouclé.

To determine a chronology or provenance for the extant examples of these textiles our chief source of comparison is the representation of similar ones in European Renaissance art. Documents, such as ecclesiastical inventories, royal household account books, commercial ledgers, notarized testaments, dowry contracts, and sumptuary laws give us, save for exceptional cases, only generic descriptions of the textiles. As a consequence it is very difficult to pinpoint the provenance or the date of individual textiles. One rare example of a "textile design", albeit very hastily sketched, is found in a job order sent by a Datini agent to the home office in Florence, dated 1408.

Throughout Europe and Asia Minor, during the entire Renaissance period and even for some time beyond, the sumptuous Italian gold-brocaded red velvets with the pomegranate motif, the "zetani vellutati alluccioliati" recorded in contemporary documents, were an indication of high social status: luxury, power, and sacredness. The excellence of the Italian weavers and the virtuosity of the Italian goldbeaters and jewelers made these fabrics emblems of artistic taste and wealth. Textiles woven with the costliest materials (silk, gold and crimson color) in the most intricate of weaving techniques (velvets in two or three heights of pile, cut and uncut 'ciselé' velvets further enhanced by gold brocading and bouclé) and dyed with the costliest of colorants (kermes, cochineal red, and its exorbitantly-expensive mordant, allum) were keenly sought after by popes and emperors, by cardinals and kings, by the ecclesiastical and the political elite alike.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE POMEGRANATE PATTERN

What the pomegranate motif signified to these elite buyers of Italian silk velvets can be comprehended better if we first look briefly at the earlier symbolism of this fruit.

The pomegranate, which signified fertility and immortality in Eastern religions, was absorbed into Christian symbolism. Jungian psychology, however, helps to provide an even more primordial significance. The round fruit with a fissure from which the seeds burst forth is a symbol of fertility just as the "fruit" issues from the female womb. Consciously or unconsciously this fruit motif has been used in ancient cultures as a fertility

symbol with the consequential signification of regeneration and immortality. The ovoid form alludes to the tantric mandala, but again also to the womb. The fruit within a palmette on a bifurcating stem is similar to the "Great Mother" symbol - that of the Greek Cybele or of the Roman "Magna Mater" - found, for instance, in Anatolian kilims.

The pomegranate fruit originated in the desert regions of the Middle East, Persia and Palestine; it is a "life-giving" fruit because it thrives in arid areas. Friedrich Muthmann in his study of the pomegranate motif in the ancient world proposes Elam, Sumeria, and Akkadia as the original home of the pomegranate symbology (3000 B.C.).⁹ The fruit is represented, for instance, in the alabaster relief from the Northwest palace of Assurnasirpal II (883-859 B.C.), Nimrud; (London, British Museum).

The Bible gives early mention of the pomegranate, called in Hebrew "rimmon", in the "Songs of Solomon" and in the description of the priestly garment or "ephod" which the Lord commands Moses to have made, "colored blue and scarlet and purple and adorned about its hem with golden bells and pomegranates." ¹⁰

Hence it is not by chance that in Piero della Francesca's portrayal of the biblical "Meeting between King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba" in Jerusalem (fresco cycle "The Legend of the True Cross", Arezzo, Church of St. Francis, 1452-58) both of the royal personages are dressed in gold brocaded garments having the pomegranate pattern (type III): regality and sacredness are alluded to in this important event through the symbolic use of the golden pomegranate.

The pomegranate motif is widespread in Middle Eastern Islamic architectural decoration. It also appears in garments as is seen in this eleventh-century Persian ivory plaque (type III) (Florence, Museo Nazionale del Bargello). In this culture where abstraction and stylization in pattern design is prevalent we find the segmented palmette motif.

The pattern is seen in the decoration of Moorish Spain, such as the stuccoes of the Alhambra. The city of Granada, in fact, takes its name and symbol from this fruit.

In ancient times the pomegranate fruit passed from the East into the Graeco-Roman world. Called "granata punicum" by the Romans because they considered the fruit to be of Carthaginian origin, it was probably brought to Carthage by the Phoenicians who used the flowered branches in their religious ceremonies. It became an important element in classical decoration.

The pomegranate implicates several overlapping symbolic meanings in the classical Graeco-Roman myth of Persephone: Persephone (Proserpina), the daughter of Demeter (Ceres) who was the goddess of abundance and often represented enthroned holding a pomegranate fruit, was abducted by Hades-Pluto into the underworld. Because she had eaten a pomegranate seed while there, even though she was liberated through the intervention of her mother, Persephone was forced to live part of the year in Hades and part on earth - the pomegranate here alludes to the vegetative cycle of nature and is symbolic of fertility and regeneration, resurrection and immortality. Also in terms of ornamental decoration the Graeco-Roman repertoire abounds in

vegetal motifs, including many variants on the palmette, acanthus and pomegranate. 11

THE POMEGRANATE MOTIF PORTRAYED IN ITALIAN RENAISSANCE ART WORKS

What more fitting symbol for Christian interpretation by the Renaissance humanists. The classical pagan significance was transformed into a Christian concept of spiritual regeneration, resurrection, and immortality. For this reason we then find these textiles evidenced in particular types of representations: 1) as bier cloths and drapery in tombal sculpture, 2) in baldacchins and throne hangings in religious representations, in particular, the Madonna and Child enthroned and 3) in the robes and throne hangings in representations of high prelates and kings - ecclesiastical and secular power.

ITALIAN RENAISSANCE TOMBAL SCULPTURE

Let us examine some examples of these representations. Pomegranate-patterned textiles in bier cloths or palls are represented in Italian Renaissance tombal sculpture from the early fourteenth century (fig.6): an allusion to hoped-for resurrection and immortality. The immediate derivation of this usage may be from Islamic countries where pall-cloths were traditionally draped over the tombs of important personages. The most important being the annual donation of the "kiswa" for Mohamet's tomb in Mecca.

This might give special significance to the fact that the first Italian Renaissance tombs portraying pomegranate-patterned biercloths which I have been able to trace are Venetian. The Mocenigo tomb by Pietro di Niccolò Lamberti (1423) in the church of San Giovanni e Paolo, Venice is one of the earliest. In Florence the Baptistery tomb of Baldessare Coscia, the anti-pope John XXIII, by Donatello and Michelozzo (1425) has a bier cloth (type II) and an overhead pavilion (type III) of pomegranate-patterned cloth. Traces of coloring are still present on the white marble on the central flowerlets, red and black.¹² The majority of extant examples of similar figured velvets have a green background, the Islamic sacred color. Stylistically the serrated edges of palmettes and leaves in the type III pattern are distinctly Persian.

In the mid-century tombs of the Florentine humanists and statesmen, Leonardo Bruni by Bernardo Rossellino (1446-50) and Carlo Marsuppini by Desiderio da Settignano (1453-55) in Santa Croce Church, are visible traces of blue and gold color in the one and red and gold in the other on the incised marble of the type III pomegranate-patterned palls. The two patterns represented, however, differ stylistically from one another because of the change in taste towards greater naturalism just after the mid-century. The later motif is more naturalistically portrayed with entwining branches and classical Graeco-Roman decorative elements such as the anthemion and the acanthus are incorporated. A transition in style which parallels what was occurring in Florence at that same time in the major arts of painting, sculpture and architecture.

POMEGRANATE-PATTERNED TEXTILES AND THE MIDDLE EAST

During this same period - the first half of the fifteenth century there are written records of trade contacts between the major Italian and Middle Eastern mercantile cities. In 1422 is noted the first voyage of Florentine galleys to Alexandria, Egypt, bearing among other things textiles worth the huge sum of 4000 florins. The Florentine Republic sent two ambassadors on that voyage, Carlo di Francesco Federighi and Felice Brancacci, who were to negotiate trading-rights with the sultan.¹³ Brancacci was a prosperous cloth merchant who carefully noted in his diary the textile gifts offered to the ruler: two pieces of (pezze) gold brocaded pile on pile velvet and two other pieces of unspecified velvet as well as woolen cloth.¹⁴ The gifts would have been perceived and appreciated by the sultan as a "khila" donation according to Islamic custom, whereas the Florentine merchants were really looking out for future commercial venues.

The Brancacci were wealthy enough to commission the sought-after painter Masolino and his assistant, Masaccio, to fresco the family chapel in the Carmine Church, Florence. Tempting it is to think that the elegant Florentine gentleman in the fresco could be wearing a fabric with a type I pomegranate pattern made in the Brancacci family-controlled silk workshops or perhaps even imported from Egypt.

We have documentable exportation of Italian textiles to the North of Europe and extant examples, especially in church treasuries. But we do not have extant recognizable examples of fifteenth-century Italian textiles sent to the Middle East, despite the fact of mention of business transactions in contemporary commercial documents. Furthermore there are no distinguishable nor documentable examples of Middle Eastern textiles of the same period.

Constantinople, Adrianopolis and Bursa for more than a century, from the mid-fourteenth century onwards received Florentine silk textiles. And galleys from Beirut took on board in Venice 95 chests, "casse", of silks in 1404. According to Eliyahu Ashtor, Venetian silks were exported in the fifteenth century to Alexandria, Aleppo, Acri, Constantinople, Damascus, Tripoli, Beirut, Ammon, and Trebizond: velvets, cloth of gold, brocades, samites, baldacchins.¹⁵ The big mystery is where are the traces of these textiles now?

The Venetian artists, Vittore Carpaccio in the "Story of St. Ursula" (1495) for the Scuola di Carità and Gentile Bellini in the "Corpus Christi procession in St. Mark's Square" (1496) or the "Miracle of the Holy Cross" (1500) (Venice, Accademia Gallery), give a detailed panorama of Venetian life. Both these artists pay special attention to clothing details and fabrics. The "Turks" are dressed in textile patterns which must indicate that nation; for, similar textiles do not exist in any other European sources.

THE MADONNA OF THE POMEGRANATE

But let us return now to the second example of representation of the pomegranate pattern: the iconography of the Madonna of the Pomegranate. The color of this fruit also had

symbolic import: the red juice of its seeds signified the blood and sacrifice of Christ. Mary, the Queen, is the symbol of life and fertility as indicated in the title "Virginitas fecunda" of the collect for the octave of Christmas. The "Madonna and Child with a pomegranate" appears in the paintings of important Florentine Renaissance artists such as Fra Angelico, Botticelli, or Filippo Lippi.

In this fifteenth-century Florentine woven border with the "Enthroned Madonna and Child with a pomegranate" (Prato, Museo del Tessuto) (fig.5), a unique extant piece of a rare theme for woven borders, the composition resembles that of the Donatellian bronze statue in the Basilica of St. Anthony in Padua. The position is similar to the hieratic pose of the ancient Cybele enthroned holding a pomegranate or pear. Furthermore, the shape of the pomegranate fruit resembles that of the royal orb, a sphere surmounted by a cross, symbol of royal power and justice. In the right hand of Christ enthroned the orb is the symbol of divine power and universal justice; in the right hand of an earthly monarch, by analogy, it endows him with these divinely-bestowed powers. Thus, in symbolic terms, to be clothed in robes decorated with the pomegranate motif confers both divine power and royal dignity upon the wearer.

THE POMEGRANATE PATTERN AS SYMBOL OF SACRED AND TEMPORAL POWER

And thus we arrive at the third category where the pomegranate pattern refers to temporal power. Divine sanction was conferred on earthly power by the symbolic use of crimson in royal ceremonial regalia. Descriptions of royal processions and celebrations in medieval and Renaissance chronicles stressed the use of red both in the clothing and in the decorations: a sacred aura was bestowed upon political power.¹⁶ Missier Marco Dandolo, as the head of the Venetian envoys sent to pay homage to the newly-elected pope Adrian VI, wore for the formal entry of the entourage into Rome a "vesta" with very wide sleeves made of cloth of gold "tirado". The gown, which reached the ground, was of a gold and crimson textile with a design of pomegranates and was lined with miniver.¹⁷

Red in the Renaissance denoted sacredness, regality, and great luxury. The same gold-brocaded red silk velvets, used for sacred objects such as ecclesiastical vestments, altar frontals, and throne-hangings were also used for royal court robes and palatial interiors.

A comparison to Byzantine regalia can be found in the Benozzo Gozzoli fresco commissioned in 1459. The presence of Byzantine clergy and royalty in Florence in 1439 at the Great Council, an attempt to reconcile and unite the Eastern Orthodox and the Western Catholic Churches against the inroads of the Islamic Ottomans, may have had repercussions on fashion and taste, and even on textile design. Benozzo Gozzoli's fresco of the "Journey of the Magi" in the Medici Palace chapel fittingly commemorates this event with the portrayal of the Byzantine Emperor John VIII Paleologus, indicated by his foreign regal dress, and of the Patriarch Joseph of Constantinople in two personages of the Magi. The emperor wears a gold-brocaded and

bouclé green velvet with a type II pomegranate pattern. In fact, this pattern type appears in Italian textiles slightly before the mid-century. Could this be an indication of the importation of Byzantine textiles or of an influence on pattern tastes?

WHERE ARE THE VELVETS OF MIDDLE EASTERN PRODUCTION?

Not even the Turkish conquest of Constantinople (1453) seemed to stop trade relations between Italy and the Middle East. The Florentine merchant Giovanni di Marco Salviati recorded in the company ledgers for the period 1492-94 sales of woolen cloth and silk textiles in Constantinople, Adrianopolis and Bursa, where he procured, in return, enough Persian silk to cover one-third of the Florentine silk weaving production.¹⁸

This late fifteenth-century royal Roumanian kaftan has a gold-brocaded and bouclé dark blue velvet textile with type I pomegranate pattern and is attributed to late fifteenth- or early sixteenth-century Venetian manufacture. Previous to its entry into the Bucarest National Museum of Art the textile had been preserved in the Monastery of Bistritza (Vilcea) as a rectangular cover for the relics of St. Gregory the Decapitated. In 1965, the original kaftan was re-assembled from the cover by Corinna Nicolescu. Similar textile panels are in the Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire, Brussels, and in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. The internal pomegranate motif, though, is totally un-Italian in its configuration. And yet other design elements are very similar. This is an example of the hybrid, "crossover" pomegranate patterns which are so enigmatic. They could have been woven in Venice for the Middle Eastern market, or woven in Venice by Middle-Eastern craftsmen; or they could have been woven in Turkey by Venetian weavers in a royal workshop or by Turkish weavers in a "Venetian" manner.

Not even the palatial collection of kaftans in the Topkapi Museum, Istanbul, have verifiable provenances for the garments with pomegranate patterns from this period.

It has been traditionally repeated that the Italians, in particular the Venetians, were the inventors of the velvet technique.¹⁹ But it seems to me that the cultural continuity of pile fabrics and metalwork (bear in mind the high precision required in the fabrication of the minute velvet rods) is, rather, in the Middle East and Central Asia. Hence it seems to me that Byzantine weavers probably may have introduced the technique into Venice. Not only technically, but also for artistic reasons - because the palmette and the pomegranate pattern were indigenous ornament for the Byzantines, called "Rumi" or "Rom" by the Arabs. This culture was a meeting point of Persian and Greek heritages. In addition, Byzantine Jews were an important group both as weavers and as merchants. The diaspora of both Jews and Christians, including weavers, from Byzantium after the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 1453 could account in part for the advances in technique and style of Venetian, Genoese, and Florentine textiles, in particular cloth-of-gold and gold-brocaded velvets after that date. Significant as well is the politically-programmed introduction in Milan of gold-brocaded velvet weaving by the Sforza just about that time.

Perhaps the key could come from Turkish archives? Let's hope that the combined efforts of Nurhan Atanasoy and Louise Mackie and their équipe will be able to shed more light on these problems and will be able to continue the next chapter in the story of the development of the pomegranate pattern.

NOTES

¹ Various aspects of this subject have been treated by the author in several recent symposia: in the Convegno di Studi "Il mondo delle piante. Cultura, rappresentazioni ed usi sociali dal XIII al XVII secolo". The Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies. Villa I Tatti. Florence. May 1989 and in the "Symposium on Velvet". AEDTA (Association pour l'Etude et la Documentation des Textiles d'Asie). Paris, November 1990. See also, R. Bonito Fanelli, "The pomegranate motif in Italian Renaissance silks: a semiological interpretation of pattern and color", in La Seta in Europa sec. XIII-XX, Atti della 24^a settimana di studi dell'Istituto Internazionale di Storia Economica "F.Datini", Prato 1992, pp. 507-530.

² For one of the earliest catalogues of this collection see Rev. Daniel Rock, Textile Fabrics in the South Kensington Museum; a Descriptive Catalogue of the Collection of Church-vestments, Dresses, Silk Stuffs, Needlework and Tapestries, London 1870.

³ See Giovanni and Rosalia Fanelli, Il Tessuto Moderno, Firenze 1976 and Il Tessuto Art Nouveau, Firenze 1986.

⁴ Among Lewis F. Day's textbooks are The Anatomy of Pattern (1887), The Planning of Ornament (1887), and The Application of Ornament (1888).

⁵ The extensive work of 1988, Symmetries of Culture: Theory and Practice of Plane Pattern Analysis, stemming from the collaboration between the anthropologist, Dorothy K. Washburn, and the mathematician, Donald W. Crowe, has contributed enormously to our knowledge of these matters. Then in 1992 the Textile Institute of Manchester issued a special number of its magazine Textile Progress treating "The Geometry of Regular Repeating Patterns", authored by M.A.Hann and G.M.Thomson of the Department of Textile Industries, University of Leeds. Therein was given a critical summary of the developments and the literature pertinent to these studies. In their conclusion, citing Washburn and Crowe, Hann and Thomson pointed out, in terms of the application of these classifications to archeological and anthropological studies in particular, that "a given cultural group will consistently use only several specific symmetries in their design systems" (Washburne and Crowe 1988, p.24) and they then conclude: "It demonstrates that design structure can be used as a useful indicator of cultural adherence, continuity and change (italics mine). Why this is the case, is not as yet fully understood. There is an obvious requirement for further research if our understanding of design, and its wider cultural significance, is to be enhanced." Hann and Thomson, 1992, p. 52.

⁶ Milton Sonday, "Pattern and Weaves: Safavid Lampas and Velvet", in Woven from the Soul, Spun from the Heart: Textile Arts of Safavid and Qajar Iran 16th-19th Centuries, ed. by Carol Bier, The Textile Museum, Washington, D.C., 1987, pp.57-83.

⁷ R. Bonito Fanelli, "Il disegno della melagrana nei tessuti del Rinascimento in Italia", in Rassegna della Istruzione Artistica, III, 3, 1968; R. Bonito Fanelli, Five Centuries of Italian Textiles: 1300-1800, Firenze 1981, pp. 35-79; R. Bonito Fanelli, Tessuti italiani al tempo di Piero della Francesca, Sansepolcro 1992. All graphics and pattern reconstructions were drawn by Giovanni Fanelli.

8 "When you have the cloth pressed flat in front of you, look hard for where the ("cammini") pattern begins. and you will find that in one course first there is a pinecone from which bursts out encircling foliage, and over this foliage is a large elongated leaf similar to the form of a pinecone; and it follows this same way all of the time: first the pinecone then the leaf and there is nothing else to it And if I should desire to know the 'griccia', press flat the cloth and concentrate to find where the pattern begins. and you will find first a pinecone and under this comes a trunk which goes from one selvedge to the other. twisting for about one "braccia" in the manner of a serpent; and after twisting then comes the usual pinecone and then the usual trunk and this comes from this selvedge to the other side. which is the opposite direction to the first; and it continues along like that for all the length of the cloth; and if it is in two 'gricce' it still goes the same way." (translation mine); Giuseppe Gargioli, L'Arte della Seta in Firenze. Trattato del secolo XV, Firenze, 1868; ristampa anastatica Firenze 1981, pp. 90-91.

9 Friedrich Muthmann. Der Granatapfel: Symbol des Lebens in der Alten Welt, Schriften der Abegg-Stiftung VI. Bern 1982, investigates the origin and the development of this theme in Asia Minor and in classical antiquity.

10 "Exodus" XXXIX - Ernst Gombrich suggests that this biblical passage "may well be the earliest detailed description of a design", A Sense of Order, a study in the psychology of decorative art, Oxford 1979, p. 225.

11 See for example Henri Focillon, L'Art des sculpteurs romans, Paris 1931.

12 Similar to the coeval descriptions of the textiles sold to the court of Burgundy by the Lucchese merchant Giovanni Arnolfini.

13 Biblioteca Nazionale.Firenze.Carte Passerini, n.187, inserto 51, f.2r-2v.

14 Heinrich Schmidt, Alte Seidenstoffe, Braunschweig 1958, p. 324.

15 Eliyahu Ashtor, "L'exportation de textiles occidentaux dans le Proche Orient musulman au bas Moyen Age (1370-1517)", in Studi in memoria di Federico Melis, II, 1978, pp. 362-367.

16 Teofilo F. Ruiz, "Festivités, Couleurs et Symboles du Pouvoir en Castille au XVe Siècle: Les Célébrations de Mai 1428", in Annales ESC, mai-juin 1991, n° 3, pp. 521-546. See also, Françoise Pipponier, Costume et vie sociale. La cour d'Anjou. XVe-XVe siècle, Paris 1970.

17 The "Diarii" of Marino Sanudo (XXXIV, coll. 208, 215 -" Sumarro di lettere di Roma"), from Stella Mary Newton, The Dress of the Venetians: 1495-1525, Pasold Studies in Textile History 7, Aldershot 1988, pp. 77-79.

Both Rosita Levi Pisetzky, La Storia del Costume in Italia, vol. II, Milan 1964, and Jacqueline Herald, Renaissance Dress in Italy 1400-1500, London 1981, include documentary descriptions of dress in Italy on ceremonial occasions where crimson and gold pomegranate-patterned textiles are noted.

18 Bruno Dini, "Aspetti del commercio di esportazione dei panni di lana e dei drappi di seta fiorentini" in Studi in memoria di Federico Melis, IV, pp. 48-9.

19 The historiographic bibliography seems to date from the end of the nineteenth century. Otto von Falke in his influential Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei (Berlin 1913) was an early proponent of this view.

ILLUSTRATIONS

fig. 1 - Diagram of the three basic compositional structures of the pomegranate pattern:

Structure I (ogival network)

Structure II (horizontal rows of lobate palmettes on bifurcated stems)

Structure III (vertical serpentine compositions)

Fig. 2 - Rectangular panel. reconstructed from three pieces. Crimson and yellow silk and gold metal thread. Cut voided velvet, brocaded. Florence, about 1480. Structure III. (Prato. Museo del Tessuto)

Fig. 3 - Border. School of Donatello. "Madonna of the pomegranate". Crimson and yellow silk and beige linen. Brocatelle. Florence, third quarter of 15th century. (Prato. Museo del Tessuto)

Fig. 4 - Desiderio da Settignano. Tomb of Gimignano Inghirami. 1460. Detail of the pomegranate pattern sculpted on the pall cloth. (Prato. Church of San Francesco)

