

## ON A MEDIEVAL EMBROIDERY BELONGING TO THE HISTORY MUSEUM OF TRANSYLVANIA

Striving after a reconstitution, as complete and nuanced as possible, of the medieval society, the historian has to take into account the evidence quality of the applied art products, which enable him to pursue through the medium of different manifestations — material as well as spiritual — the process of the historical development.

Among the applied arts, it is perhaps the textile craft which shows the largest and most varied field<sup>1</sup>, enjoying at the same time millenary traditions. The clothing pieces ornamented by means of the needle range with the first twin destined products — artistic and utilitarian — of the primitive man<sup>2</sup>.

The embroidery craft, this very ancient technique of decorating the textile wares occupies an important place in the civilization of every people. Embodying different features of the material and spiritual culture, the embroidery materializes the artistic taste of a people, his aspirations, his creative capability, but also the knowledge stored throughout his history<sup>3</sup>. Unlike the art proper, the embroidery allows of a broader scope needed by the man as a manifestation field for his talent, taste and grounding. The embroiderer enjoys the liberty of choosing among a great many motifs, different materials and techniques, having to obey fewer rules and principles, and consequently the limits required by them. Thus, the embroidery appears as perhaps the most true embodiment of the artistic sense of the peoples<sup>4</sup>. Actually, each piece of embroidery is unique of its kind, as regards the material and the technique used, as well as the way of approaching motifs, if we take into account that there was no serial production, not even during the last development stage of the feudal society<sup>5</sup>. The lack of any compelling standards from the embroidery craft makes it possible for the embroiderer to approach certain motifs and schemes in a personal way, individualizing them. Consequently, the embroidery opens a wide field for the artistic choice as well as for man's creative capability<sup>6</sup>.

The artistico-aesthetic quality of the embroidery is accompanied by its remarkable value as a historical evidence. Among all the applied arts, the embroidery proves to be the ablest to express and to evoke the daily life of the different social classes of the medieval society, giving evidence about certain aspects of the economic, social and — it goes without saying — artistic life. Thus, it helps reconstituting a truthful historical image of the past

<sup>1</sup> P. Petrescu — C. Irimie, *Meșteșuguri artistice în România*, București, 1967, p. 10.

<sup>2</sup> *La grande encyclopédie*, Paris, VIII, p. 95; I. Katona, *Cél és megvalósulás. Fejezetek az Iparművészeti Múzeum 100 éves történetéből*, in *Múzeumi közlemények*, Budapest, 1972, № 2—3, p. 35.

<sup>3</sup> M. A. Muzicescu, *Broderia medievală românească* (hereinafter: Muzicescu), București, 1969, p. 5.

<sup>4</sup> M. Varjú-Ember, *A 17. századi magyar himzések motívumkincse*, in *Folia Historica*, I, 1972 (hereinafter: Varjú-Ember) (1972), p. 45.

<sup>5</sup> P. Petrescu — C. Irimie, *Meșteșuguri artistice în România*, București, 1967, p. 6, 7; Muzicescu, p. 5.

<sup>6</sup> *La grande encyclopédie*, Paris, VIII, p. 95; Varjú-Ember (1972), p. 45.

centuries<sup>7</sup>. In this respect, the study of the embroidery pieces, as well as that of other art or applied art products, proves necessary, the more so as the documentary sources giving evidence about the daily life of the Romanian feudal society emerge relatively later than in western Europe<sup>8</sup>.

The medieval history section of the History Museum of Transylvania offers, by its ample collection of lay and church embroideries, a rich research material. The here studied embroidery piece<sup>9</sup> has been chosen by virtue of its being datable, an all important argument since the utilization of many unchanged, or very slightly changed, ornamental motifs through more than a century rises serious difficulties as to the dating of the embroideries. When the embroidery does not bear on it the production year or an other helping clue, it is difficult to determine its precise date<sup>10</sup>.

The embroidery piece under discussion, a liturgical cover, belongs to the category of those bearing the embroiderer's and giver's name, sewn with blue silk thread in letters of 0,5—1 cm. high in the middle of the embroidery field:

BETLEN JANOSNE FEKETE CLARA (fig. 1). It is the second wife of John Bethlen, born Fekete, who is concerned. By briefly surveying the genealogy of the Beclan branch of this family we find out that John<sup>11</sup> died in 1678, whereas their son Samuel, father of 8 children, deceased in 1708<sup>12</sup>. Considering this piece of information as a starting point, we can ascribe this embroidery to the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Taking into account the absence from this text of any indication pointing to the widow state of the giver — often specified if the situation were so — we assume that this embroidery was made during the third quarter of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, that is to say before 1678. As a matter of fact, the study of the composition, of the motifs and the analysis of the materials and techniques here used do not fail to strengthen the proposed dating.

It is a 73 cm<sup>2</sup> embroidery, made on a silk thread non-bleached ground<sup>13</sup>. Against such a ground, an exquisite chromatic scale of pastel shades (beige, light blue, greenish-blue, pale red) is enriched by the shine of the golden and silver threads. For this work, the embroiderer made use of unspun coloured silk threads, thin wire-drawn gold and silver wire. The embroidery is hemmed by means of a golden string, made by the winding of a metallic wire on a yellow silken thread lace<sup>14</sup>. The string is set in such a way, that it coils in a row of elongated loops, placed at a distance of 2 cm. from one another, in order to get an increased ornamental effect. As regards the sewing technique, the embroiderer chose two kinds of satin stitches: the stem stitch — for the details worked in gold and silver thread

<sup>7</sup> C. Nicolescu, *Istoria costumului de curte în ţările române. Secolele XIV—XVIII*, Bucureşti, 1970 (hereinafter: Nicolescu), p. 6, 17; Muzicescu, p. 5, 23.

<sup>8</sup> Nicolescu, p. 6.

<sup>9</sup> The History Museum of Transylvania, inv. № F 6626; purchased in 1914 by the exlate Transylvanian Museum; the seller was the reformed church of Odorheiu Secuiesc.

<sup>10</sup> A. J. B. Wace, *Burlington Fine Arts Club Catalogue*, London, 1914, p. XXIV; K. Divald, *A magyar iparművészeti története*, Budapest, 1929 (hereinafter: Divald), p. 197; G. Tápay-Szabó, *Magyar úri hímzés*, Budapest, 1941 (hereinafter: Tápay-Szabó), p. 10.

<sup>11</sup> It is the well-known historian, author of two valuable works: *Rerum Transylvanicarum libri quattuor* and *Historia rerum Transylvanicarum*. See L. Kővári, *Erdély nevezeteseiből családai*, Cluj, 1854 (hereinafter: Kővári), p. 42, 43—44; I. Nagy, *Magyarország családai címerekkel és nemzedékrendi táblákkal*, Budapest, II, 1858 (hereinafter: Nagy), p. 83—84; *IstRom*, III, p. 308.

<sup>12</sup> Kővári, p. 45; Nagy, p. 88.

<sup>13</sup> Analysis bulletin № 23 from May the 4th 1978.

<sup>14</sup> According to the analysis bulletin № 1 from March the 20<sup>th</sup> 1978, the „gold” wire was in fact a gold and silver alloy; the „silver” wire was a silver and gold alloy; also, the wire used to make the string was a gold and silver alloy.



Fig. 1 — The name of the embroiderer-donor.

— and the split stitch — for the coloured portions. Here and there, the outline stitch emerges; it served to sew the tendrils, the frame of the stem and the borders of its branches (fig. 2). All these stitches are identical on both sides (front and back) of the embroidery<sup>15</sup>.

The decoration consists of twelve motifs, placed round the border of the embroidery, letting its field without ornaments, only bearing the wording presented above. The motifs, identically drawn, are set vertically, without finding the proper means of arranging them in the corners (fig. 3).

The motifs, occupying a surface of 12 (height) × 10 (breadth) cm., belong to the „bunch“ type, consisting of a principal stem, with several branches; three on the left, one on the right (fig. 4). Since all the twelve motifs are identically drawn, differing solely in colour, we shall present but one of them.

Starting from a stylized heart, the main stem arches to the right and bears the central ornamental element: a pomegranate. The pomegranate leans on a spot flanked by two pointed small leaves, which, together with the two ones set on the top of the spot, suggest the form of the calyx. The three-sliced pomegranate is not compact but as put in motion through the medium of spacing out the slices and by abandoning the rigidity of the contour lines. The central slice is like a slender mandorla; the lateral slices detach themselves from it and their internal contour takes the shape of a serrated line. In the spaces between the three slices there are spots set by four. The pomegranate is topped by a tulip with three petals and two stamens, showing a remarkable chromatic effect.

On the left of the pomegranate there is another motif of a particular ornamental value, as much in regard of its fantasy shape as by the colours chosen: a would-be „acanthus flower“. In order to fill the empty spaces and to balance the motif, two more branches detach themselves from the main stem to the left: one bearing a small three-petalled tulip and the other one a

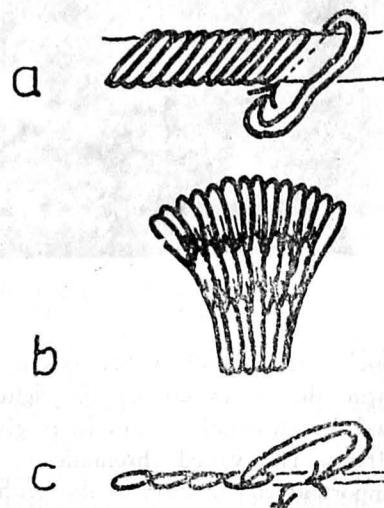


Fig. 2 — Stitches used on the embroidery: a) stem stitch; b) split stitch; c) outline stitch.

<sup>15</sup> M. Undi, *Magyar himvarró művészeti*, Budapest (hereinafter: Undi), p. 77, fig. 19, 25, 11, p. 79, 80, 82; *La grande encyclopédie*, VIII, p. 97; *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Chicago, 1972, XVI, p. 183, 184, fig. 1; Varjú-Ember (1972), p. 71, 72; A. Vona, *Olasz korsós minta egy magyar úrhímzésén*, in *Folia Historica*, IV, 1976 (hereinafter: Vona), p. 151.



Fig. 3 — The embroidery made by the wife of John Bethlen.

double tulip, both richly coloured. In the space delimited by the curvature of the main stem, that is to say on the right, there is a stylized pomegranate; both the dynamic shape and its chromatic composition give it an important role in the realization of the aesthetic effects. The varied chromatic solutions used for the realization of the motifs constitute an important contribution to the aesthetico-artistic quality of the embroidery<sup>16</sup>.

<sup>16</sup> Constant identical colours for all the twelve motifs: golden stem and branches, framed by a greenish-blue; golden tendrils; the pomegranate calyx: silver spot and two golden leaves; golden mandorla framed by blue; the eight spots placed in the spaces between the slices of the pomegranate are golden and silver.

The colours of the other ornamental components change. The heart (the starting point), is either red or blue; the lateral slices of the pomegranate are either beige or light blue; the two leaflets of the calyx are either red or blue; the top of the pomegranate has two golden external leaves and the central one is either blue or beige (alternating with the colours

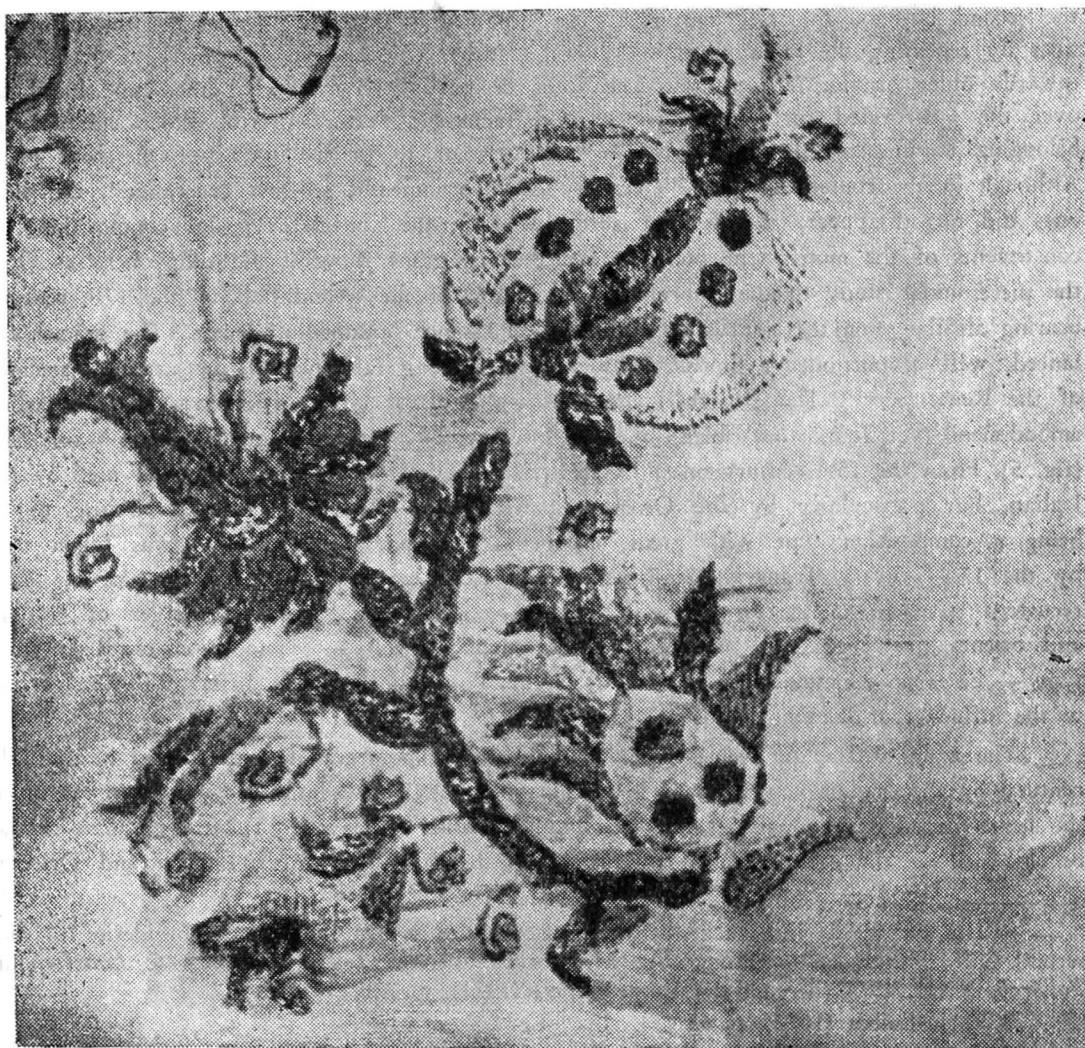


Fig. 4 — One of the component motifs.

The pastel shades combined with the gold and silver of the metallic threads embody one of the characteristic features of the central European embroidery belonging to the cultured social environment of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. These embroideries, produced at the crossing point of the West and the East<sup>17</sup>, took over the warm pastel colours of the western Renaissance stuffs, enriching them with golden and silver threads, following the oriental influence<sup>18</sup>. The interference of the western and eastern influences, their creative implementation, will determine in the 17<sup>th</sup> century the appearance of many late Renaissance embroidery masterpieces. As a matter of fact, the stitches used by John Bethlen's wife point too to

of the lateral slices with which it is never identical). The „acanthus flower“ has a red and golden-petalled corolla, the bud being greenish-blue and silver. The small tulip is sewn in a combination of light blue and gold, the double one combines the gold with beige and pale red, alternatingly from motif to motif. The stylized pomegranate is made by combining gold, silver, beige and light blue.

<sup>17</sup> Muzicescu, p. 23.

<sup>18</sup> Divald, p. 194; Tápay-Szabó, p. 7; Nicolescu, p. 83; Vona, p. 147.

the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century<sup>19</sup>. The ornamental structure — the decoration of the sides by repeating the same motif — shows a rather conservative propensity, a predilection towards older ornamental textures. The total or partial reiteration of the same motif all over the decorated surface constitutes a characteristic feature of the older embroideries, belonging to the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century or to the beginning of the next one<sup>20</sup>. Although in the course of the 17<sup>th</sup> century other ornamental schemes generalize<sup>21</sup>, the older ones did not disappear, at least not abruptly. Also, the „bunch“ type of composition, the constituents of the motifs (the pomegranate, the „acanthus flower“, the tulip) help ascribing the piece under study to the embroidery production of the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century; bearing all the same the imprint of the late Renaissance ornamental devices. The spaced, balanced, well proportioned composition, witnesses a strong influence of the artistic principles of the Renaissance<sup>22</sup>. The „bunch“ ranges with the oldest types of composition, its earliest embodiment (yet found out) being the silk stuffs woven at Achmim in the 6<sup>th</sup> century<sup>23</sup> (fig. 5). From the 15<sup>th</sup> century on it has been one of the compositions frequently used by the Italian, but particularly by the Oriental (Turkish and Persian) weavers<sup>24</sup>. Owing to its being a composition type with great ornamental attributes, the „bunch“ was taken over by the 17<sup>th</sup> century Transylvanian and central European embroidery, as one of its most recurrent patterns<sup>24a</sup> (fig. 6). In this case too, one can find out the merger of western and oriental influences: the balanced, proportioned „bunch“ — composition of Renaissance type — bears on its main stem, as well as on the four branches, five different flowers, owing to the influence of Iranian „hom“<sup>25</sup>.

The main ornamental element of the „bunch“, the pomegranate was created in the 15<sup>th</sup> century by the Italian velvet weavers. It came of the Chinese lotus, by modifying as much the heart-shaped middle part as the surrounding corolla of leaves<sup>26</sup>. The pomegranate would become one of the most frequent ornaments of the Italian, Spanish, English and Oriental

<sup>19</sup> The on front and back identical stitches are typical for the embroideries of the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. See M. Varjú-Ember, *A textilgyűjtemény új hímzései*, in *Fol. Arch.*, XXII, 1971 (hereinafter: Varjú-Ember) (1971), p. 226.

<sup>20</sup> Varjú-Ember (1972), p. 65.

<sup>21</sup> One of the preferred ornamental structures consists of four identical motifs set in the corners, combined with other motifs, differing from those in the corners, placed on the sides.

<sup>22</sup> Varjú-Ember (1971), p. 226; Varjú-Ember (1972), p. 46; Vona, p. 147.

<sup>23</sup> O. Falke, *Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei*, Berlin, 1921 (hereinafter: Falke), p. 6, fig. 31; E. Flemming, *Das Textilwerk. Gewebeornamente und Stoffmuster vom Altertum bis zum Anfang des 19. Jahrhunderts*, Berlin, 1927 (hereinafter: Flemming), p. 13, fig. 1; Vona, p. 148, 154.

<sup>24</sup> Falke, fig. 524, 525; Flemming, p. 291, 292, 293, fig. 2, 295, 304, 305, 310.

<sup>24a</sup> Tápay-Szabó, p. 11, 15, 22, 25, 29, 30, 31; fig. 1, 9, 18, 21; Nicolescu, p. 140, 156, 157, 248, 249; pl. CXXXVIII, CXXXIX, CLXXIX, CLXXXIa, CCII; Varjú-Ember (1972), p. 76, 140; fig. 34—37, 46; Vona, p. 148, 154.

<sup>25</sup> The „hom“, or „tree of life“, as an ornamental motif was taken over by western Europe as early as the Early Middle Ages. See G. Migeon, *Manuel d'art musulman*, Paris, 1907, II (hereinafter: Migeon), p. 461; P. Petrescu, *Motive decorative celebre*, Bucureşti, 1971, p. 43; Vona, p. 147.

<sup>26</sup> J. Huszka, *Magyarische Ornamentik*, Budapest, 1900 (hereinafter: Huszka), p. 5; Falke, p. 40, 41; fig. 422; Flemming, p. XVI, p. 54, fig. 1; p. 75, fig. 2; R. Reichelt, *Das Granatapfelmotiv in der Textilkunst*, Berlin, 1956 (hereinafter: Reichelt), p. 9.



Fig. 5 — Silk stuff. Achimim,  
6<sup>th</sup>—7<sup>th</sup> centuries.

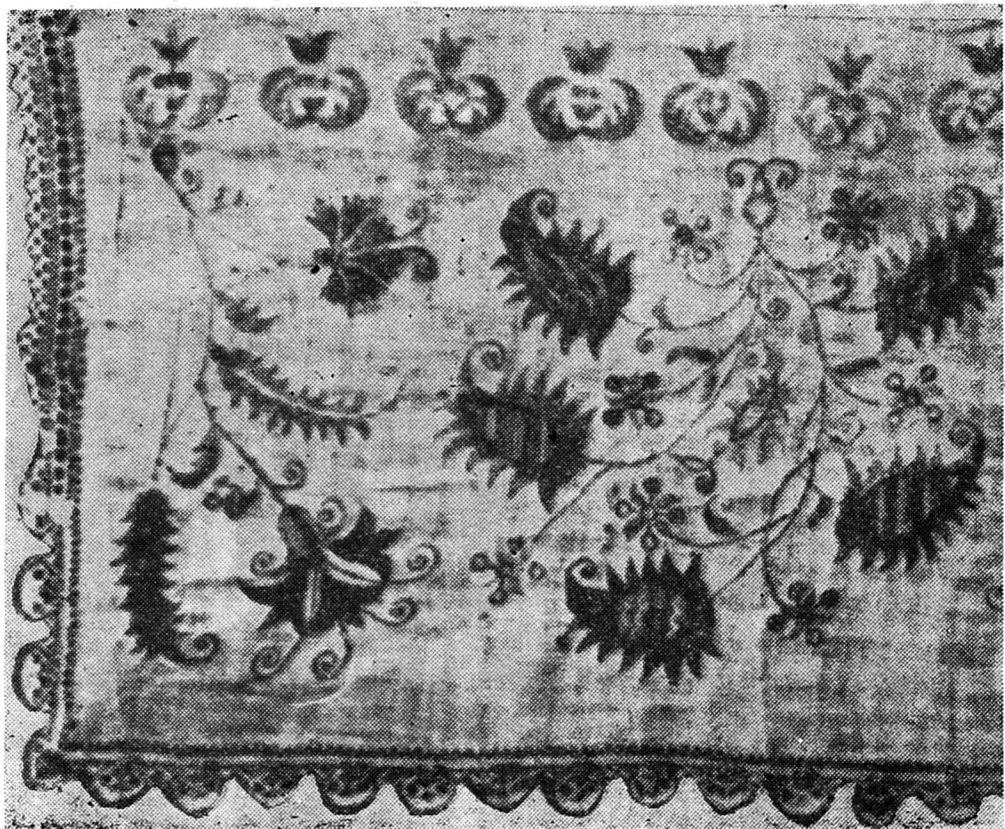


Fig. 6. — Embroidery with a „bunch” type motif.

stuffs, and will remain as such many centuries long<sup>27</sup>. As an embroidery ornament, the pomegranate went through a long evolution, giving birth in the course of it to countless variants, many of them strongly individualized. Consequently, our attempt to outline the evolution stages of the pomegranate cannot and does not claim to be exhaustive.

The starting point is the simple, closed pomegranate, very close to its natural shape<sup>28</sup> (fig. 7), small-sided, found either on the borders or filling the empty small surfaces. During the next stage the surface is divided by different means. In the beginning, the surface remains closed; one tries to suggest the pips either by technical solutions (by sewing the core in other stitches than the rest of the fruit), or by chromatic effects (by embroidering the core in gold or silver thread, or in silk thread in a colour which contrasts with that of the lateral slices)<sup>29</sup>. The next move brings the dissolution of the rigid contours and of the closed surfaces. At first, a distance appears between the slices of the pomegranate: a central slice emerges — almond-shaped or round — flanked by two, four or more lateral slices, having between them an unembroidered space. Quite often, this space is decorated with spots<sup>30</sup>. Once again, the model of the sliced pomegranate and of its spotted variants is constituted by the ornaments of the Italian and Spanish tissues, produced in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries<sup>30a</sup> (fig. 8). The last modification intended to dissolve the rigidity of the motif is made by drawing the contours, either internal or external, or both, in a dynamic way. Sometimes, the central slice is even-framed, whereas the lateral ones have a serrated or a lobate contour, other times all the contours are as put into motion, giving birth to a great aesthetic effect<sup>31</sup> (fig. 9). The development stages of this motif cannot be strictly delimited. Very often, the former solutions appear alongside of the interpretations produced by the new development stage. This is precisely the case of the embroidery under study. Here, the moving off of the slices, beside the row of spots, combines with lateral slices strongly serrated on their inside. As to the second pomegranate — placed inside the curvature of the main stem — it is sharply stylized, showing an attempt to render the very essence of the motif: the pulp consisting of many pips. This kind of stylizing allies to an interpretation from the last development stage of the motif: the transformation of the teeth of the lateral slices into independent leaflets.

<sup>27</sup> Falke, fig. 423—430, 432—433, 443—450, 467—472, 478, 479, 482, 492, 493, 517, 518; Flemming, p. 76, 79, fig. 1, 80, 81, 86, fig. 2, 90—93, 101, 102, 104, 108, 109, 111, 121, 122, fig. 2, 123, fig. 2, 132, fig. 2, 134, fig. 1, 135, 138, 274, 275, 277, fig. 1, 279, 298, 299, 318; J. Balogh, *Kolozsvári reneszánsz láda 1776-ból*, Emkel (hereinafter: Balogh), p. 12; Nicolescu, p. 182—184, 185—186, 187, 190—192, 194, 197—199, 200—201, 202—203, 209, 210—211; pl. 1, 2, IIa-b, IIIa-b, IVa-b, VI, VII, X, XIII, XV—XVI, XXI, XXIV—XXVII, XXIX, XXXIV, XXXVIII, XLVI, XLVIII, XLIX, LI, LV, LXI, CXXa—b; Varjú-Ember (1972), p. 51, 73; Vona, p. 148, 154.

<sup>28</sup> Similar shapes can be seen in: Falke, fig. 174, 391, 395; Flemming, p. 10, fig. 2, p. 37, 62, 64; Tápay-Szabó, p. 17—18, 30—31; fig. 13; Nicolescu, p. 187, pl. XXI; Varjú-Ember (1972), p. 50; fig. 27, 33.

<sup>29</sup> Huszka, pl. IV, XXX, fig. 1; Tápay-Szabó, p. 14, 17—18, 20, 22, 25—26, 30—31; fig. 13, 17, 18 (by technique), fig. 6, 15, 22 (by colouring); Varjú-Ember (1972), p. 50; fig. 26, 27, 39 (by colouring).

<sup>30</sup> Huszka, pl. IV; Varjú-Ember (1971), p. 225; Varjú-Ember (1972), p. 51, 139, 140; fig. 20, 21, 25, 27; Vona, p. 148, 159, fig. 1.

<sup>30a</sup> Falke, fig. 425; Flemming, p. 83, 90, 121, fig. 2, 132, fig. 2, 134, fig. 1.

<sup>31</sup> Huszka, pl. IV, XIX, fig. 3, XXX, fig. 4, XLVIII, fig. 2, 3; Divald, p. 194, 195, fig. 34, p. 198, pl. XI; Undi, fig. 15, 19, 53, 54, 55, 68, 70, 72; Tápay-Szabó, p. 14, 15, 17—18, 25, 26, 29, 30, 31; fig. 6, 8, 11—13, 15, 21, 22; Varjú-Ember (1971), p. 227, fig. 3, p. 228, 229, fig. 5; Varjú-Ember (1972), p. 51, 139, 140; fig. 15, 17, 20, 21, 23, 26—29, 38, 40, 46; Vona, p. 148, 159, fig. 1.

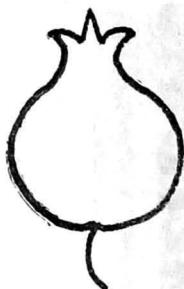


Fig. 7 — Small, closed pomegranate, close to the natural shape.

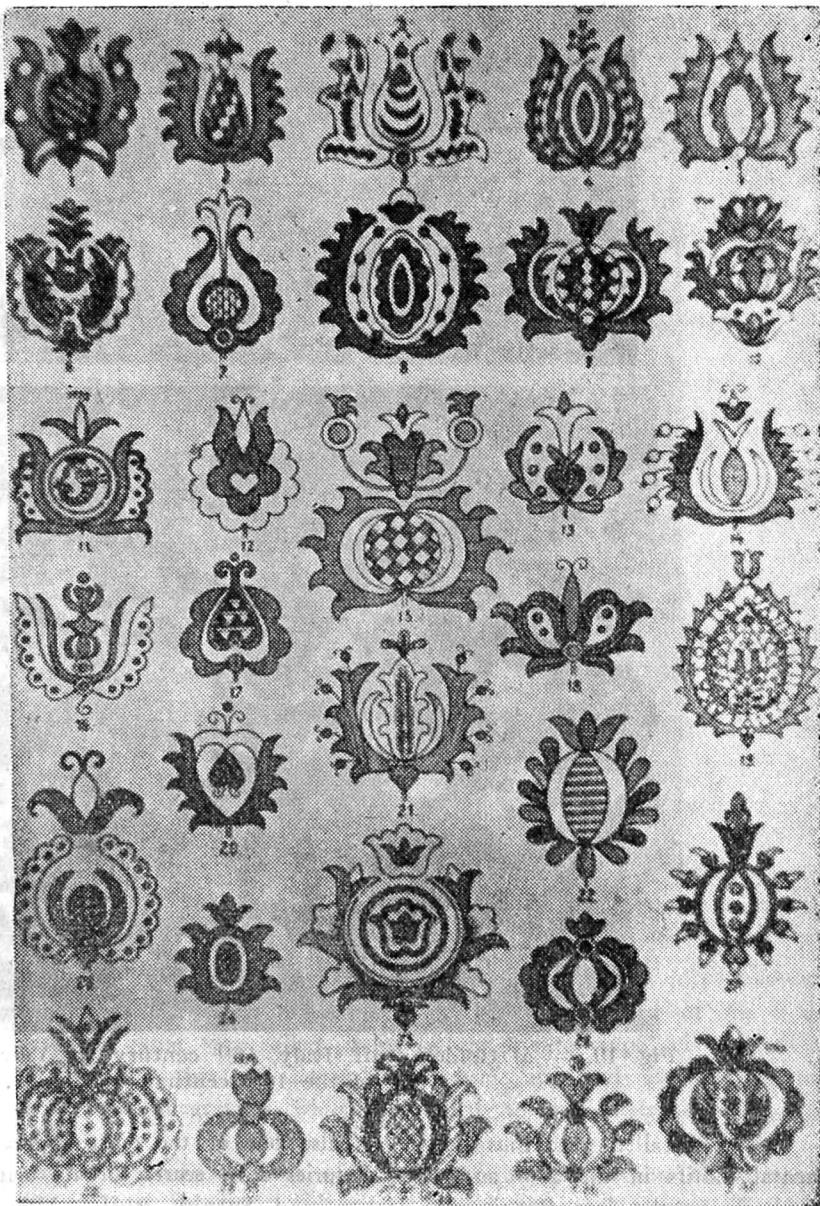


Fig. 9 — Pomegranate variants.



Fig. 8. — Velvet border. Genoa, end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

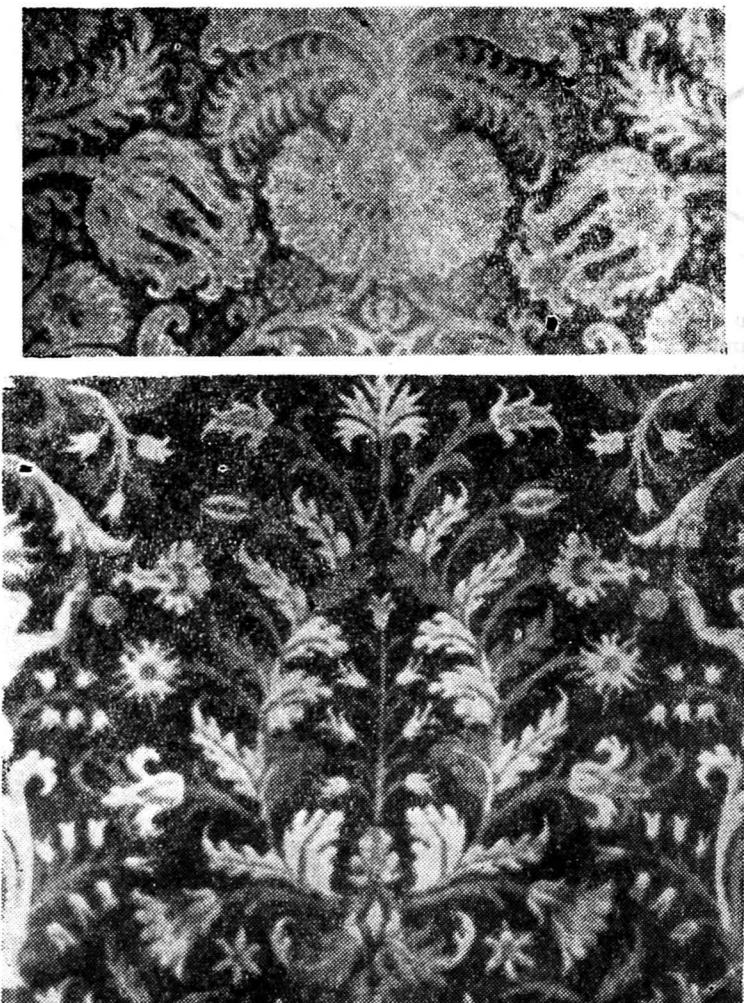


Fig. 10. — a) Golden stuff. Italy, 16<sup>th</sup> century; b) Velvet. Spain, end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

The so-called „acanthus flower“ is also one of the most appreciated embroidery ornamental motifs in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries<sup>32</sup>. In search of its origin, we have again to go back to the late Renaissance Italian and Spanish stuffs. After late Renaissance and nascent Baroque took over the pomegranate motif, which adapted itself to the new taste it turned into an „acanthus palmette“, with countless variants. Therefore, it cannot be actually question of the acanthus flower proper. Usually, some rounded or pointed leaves, even-edged or serrated, draw the contour of a kind of calyx, from which an elongated bud rises<sup>33</sup> (fig. 10). The „acanthus flower“ on the embroidery under question fully proves the

<sup>32</sup> Huszka, pl. XXIX, fig. 1, 2, XXXI, fig. 4, XLVIII, fig. 1, 2, 4; Divald, p. 194, 195, fig. 34, pl. XI; Undi, fig. 19, 132; Tápay-Szabó, p. 11—12, 18, 25—26, 27, 29, 30, 31; fig. 1, 14, 22, 25; Balogh, p. 17, 18; Varjú-Ember (1972), p. 139, 140; fig. 15, 19, 20, 22, 24, 25, 36, 37.

<sup>33</sup> Migeon, p. 53, fig. 47, p. 413, fig. 351; Falke, p. 43; fig. 478, 483, 484; Flemming, p. XXIX, 13, 83, 94, 95, 102, 118, 119, 133, fig. 1, p. 300; Nicolescu, p. 185—186, pl. VI, VII.



Fig. 11. Embroidery with „acanthus flower”. 17th century.

ornamental quality of this motif. Thus, the calyx shape suggested by five vividly coloured petals is underlined by means of six golden sepals and by the silver stand of the bud. In its rendering the influence of what was called „tulip of an oriental type“, is obvious<sup>34</sup>. Besides, there are scholars thinking that the „acanthus flower“ appeared as such during the transformation process of the pomegranate, which gave birth to two independent motifs: the tulip and the carnation<sup>35</sup>.

The tulip, element which contributes most of all to the implementation of a motif with a particularly rich ornamental repertory, belongs to the decoration treasures of many centuries. Its first appearances are shown by the tissues of Alexandria, about the year 600<sup>36</sup>. From the 16th century on, the tulip will be increasingly present on the Italian, Spanish, German, but above all oriental tissues<sup>37</sup>, getting a protracted existence through the next cen-

<sup>34</sup> Balogh, p. 20, 21.

<sup>35</sup> Falke, p. 48; Tápay-Szabó, p. 11: „so far a pomegranate-like tulip“ says the author about one of the motifs presented in her work, a motif almost identical with the „acanthus flower“ described by us (fig. 11).

<sup>36</sup> Falke, fig. 46, 60, 90, 199; Flemming, pl. I, fig. 2, 5, p. 15, fig. 3; Varjú-Ember (1972), p. 52, 74; Vona, p. 148, 154.

<sup>37</sup> Migeon, p. 406, 408, 409, fig. 348, p. 411, fig. 349, p. 413, fig. 351; Falke, fig. 486, 517—520; Flemming, p. 97, 98, 99, fig. 2, 102, 120, 122, fig. 2, 123, fig. 1, 128, fig. 1, 129, 135, 149, 154, 155, fig. 1, 156, fig. 1, 276—279, 281, fig. 1, 282, 303, 306, fig. 1, 314, fig. 3, 315, 318, fig. 2; Varjú-Ember (1972), p. 52, 74; Vona, p. 148, 154.



Fig. 12 — Three-petaled „oriental tulip” (simple „lyre”).



Fig. 13 — Many-petaled „oriental tulip” (multiplication of the curvature of the „lyre”).

turies. Taken over from the tissues, the tulip of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries' embroideries appears in many variants, some of them ranging with the „oriental type”, other ones with the „western type”<sup>38</sup>. The seventeenth century Transylvanian embroideries are mainly decorated with the three-petaled, so-called „oriental tulip”<sup>39</sup> (fig. 12). Letting its shape more or less unchanged, the embroiderer try to enrich the ornamental effect by combining the parts sewn in gold and silver wire with those worked in coloured silk thread. On the embroidery here studied, there are two variants of the three-petaled tulip. The second branch (on the left) of the stem bears a tulip with two lateral petals, one blue and the other one silver; the central petal changed into a golden tendril, giving the whole motif a smart note of suppleness. On the third branch (on the left) there is a double-tulip, formed by the superposition of two three-petaled tulips. Here the embroiderer laid stress on the chromatic effect: the first tulip has golden lateral petals and a central one varying in colour from motif to motif; the second tulip has a golden central petal, whereas the colour of the lateral petals changes. The presence of this „two-storeyed” tulip helps the historian with the dating of the embroidery; it is known that the tulips of the „oriental type”, with many petals rendered by multiplying the curvatures of its lyre only appear towards the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, becoming general in the course of the following one<sup>40</sup> (fig. 13). Thus, the superposition of two three-petaled tulips in order to render an ampler tulip indicate the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century as the time when the embroidery here under analysis was produced.

<sup>38</sup> The „oriental tulip” is more stylized, rendering its essence: an elongated lyre, lateral petals and a central petal, worked in very different forms. The „western type” appears more naturalistic, as much in the contours of the petals as in colouring. See Balogh, p. 20, 21, 22; Varjú-Ember (1972), p. 51, 52.

<sup>39</sup> Huszka, p. 11, pl. XI, fig. 29, XXX, fig. 2—4, XLVIII, fig. 3, XXXI, fig. 3; Divald, p. 194, 195, fig. 34, p. 198, pl. XI, XIII; Undi, fig. 15, 20, 33, 65, 130; Tápay-Szabó, p. 14, 15, 16, 17—18, 25—26, 29, 30, 31; fig. 5—8, 10, 11, 13, 22; Balogh, p. 20, 21, Varjú-Ember (1971), p. 220, fig. 1, p. 221, fig. 2, p. 228, fig. 4; Varjú-Ember (1972), p. 51, 139, 140; fig. 15, 17, 18, 20, 21, 24, 26, 29, 31, 33, 42, 45; Vona, p. 148, 154, 159, fig. 1.

<sup>40</sup> Huszka, pl. XI, fig. 41, XXX, fig. 3, XXXI, fig. 3; Divald, p. 194, 195, fig. 34, pl. XI, XIII; Undi, fig. 5, 6, 19, 33, 49, 53, 54, 69, 72, 130, 131; Tápay-Szabó, p. 12—13, 14—15, 18, 20—21, 25—27, 29, 30, 31; fig. 3, 6, 14, 17, 22, 23, 24; Balogh, p. 20, 21; Varjú-Ember (1971), p. 227, fig. 3, p. 228, fig. 5; Varjú-Ember (1972), p. 52, 139, 140; fig. 16, 21, 23, 24, 27, 28, 30; Vona, p. 148, 154, 159, fig. 1, p. 162, fig. 5.

Summing up what it was said so far, one can remark that the decorative structure, the composition solutions, the ornamental motifs, the chromatic scale used by the embroiderer of the liturgical cover under analysis had a wide circulation, belonging to the common patrimony of Renaissance European repertory of ornaments<sup>41</sup>. The presence of all these elements places the embroidery here presented in the wider area of the central European and — in our opinion — European applied arts.

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<sup>41</sup> All these constituents of the ornamental repertory do not confine themselves to the textile craft. They can be found on many other applied art products (ceramics, jewels, furniture etc), but also on stone and wooden sculptures. We did not intend to extend the scope of our study to applied arts other than the textiles.