



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*

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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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