

Stencil making and application

(or how to turn a piece of fabric into textile suitable for 4th to 8th century persona

Alessandra Salviati Crespelle

(*mka* Kasia Gromek)

Introduction

- It is not clear where or exactly when the stencil was invented.
- Most theories point to China.
- First stencils were probably made of thin pieces of wood. Later it may have been replaced with thick paper or cardboard.
- Stencils were used to apply surface decoration to walls, furniture, textiles and other common objects.
- In fabric decoration, stencils were used not only to cover large surfaces with uniform pattern, but also to decorate borders of clothing. The Chinese Tang artisans used stenciling together with gold leafing, embroidery and fabric painting to make decorative borders that replaced the trim.
- The use of stencils today continues, what has changed are the stenciling material and paints.
- Stencils can be used to paint the basic pattern outline and fabric can be then further decorate with hand painted details.

The basic supplies needed for stenciling:

- **Blank stencils**

Usually made of thin sheets of plastic, come in different thickness range and sizes, plastic dividers for binders can be also used.

Stencils should be cleaned before storing; storage preferably in flat position to prevent ripping and bending.

- **Cutting mat**

Self-healing cutting mat, can be also replaced with stone slab or with wood cutting board.

- **Craft knife**

The best is the craft knife with #11 blade (fine). It is worth to invest in electric stencil cutter (sometimes called hot knife) as it speeds the cutting process.

- **Paints**

All kinds of paints can be used on textiles and can be made permanent by heat or time curing. Acrylic paints thinned with so called 'textile medium' work great after heat treatment and are easily available from chain and local craft stores (we will be using acrylic paints today).

For more interested users, there are also block print inks (both oil and water based), special fabric paints (like dimensional Tulip paint), Jacquard silk textile paints, screen printing inks, colored gutta water-based resist ink (for fine borders between colors).



The basic supplies needed for stenciling:

- **Brushes and sponges**

The choice of using a brush or sponge depends mostly on the comfort of the user. It is worth to invest in brushes that are good quality and have waterproof handles so they can be washed.

The main secret lies in using nearly dry brush or sponge. Remove excess paint with paper towel from the brush or squeeze it from the sponge applicator with your fingers. Always use a new brush/sponge for each color. With brushes you usually stipple the paint, starting from the middle of pattern towards the edges. With sponge applicator, you dab the paint onto fabric.

In case of heavily napped fabrics, you have to work the paint into the textile (covering only the surface does not help).

- **Paper towels and wetted wipes for cleaning stencils and fingers**

If paint gets underneath the stencil, it has to be removed before stencil can be re-used.

- **Sharpie or other marker to transfer the design to the stencil**

Choose a marker that dries fast and does not smear.

- **Stencil or painter tape or washable fabric glue**

Special stencil tape is needed to keep the stencil in position on the fabric. The blue masking tape is a perfect and cheaper substitute. The stencil should be left in place until the paint dries.

- **Small containers for mixing paints with thinners and utensils to mix**

I have found that the microwave egg poachers from Dollar Store serve as perfect trays with 3 individual containers for mixing. Also the craft wooden sticks are great for mixing (and cheap enough to be single use).

- **Check www.dharmatrading.com for more stenciling supplies (especially paints and inks).**

Other stencil uses:

- **Freezer paper**

Freezer paper is a great solution for natural fabric with loose weave like silk and woolen gauze.

Large designs can be transferred to the paper and cut with scissors. Then the stencil is ironed on to the fabric and only removed after the paint or ink dries. The freezer paper stencil can be re-used a few times before losing the ability to adhere to fabric.

- **Gold leaf/imitation gold leaf and foil**

Stencils are a perfect way to prepare the adhesive for the gold leaf and foil.

Start with a thicker stencil, tape it to the fabric and paint using the recommended glue or adhesive. Let it dry according to the manufacturer's directions.

Remove the stencil and apply gold leaf or foil. To ensure enough pressure, it is recommended to use your fingers for smoothing (there are special cotton gloves for 'gliding'). Then remove the pieces of leaf or foil that did not have the contact with adhesive.



General guidance for stenciling a historical pattern

- **Colors**

The palette of colors available in late antiquity and early medieval ages is quite wide. From mass spectrometry analysis of dyes, we know that among most common colors were red, yellow, green and blue (Perin, 2009).



(Croom, 2010)

- **Stenciling can be enhanced with other techniques!**

Tiny details or highlights of metallic paint can be used to enhanced basic patterns.
Gemstones (artificial or real) can sewn to add extra sparkle.

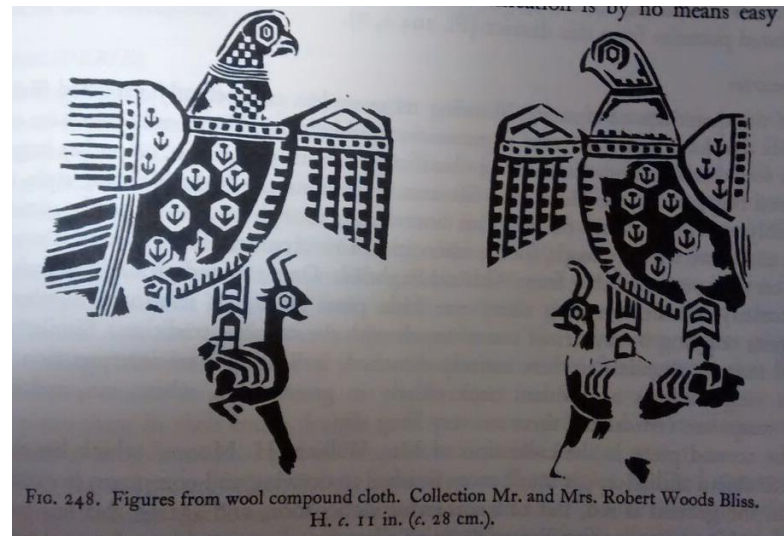
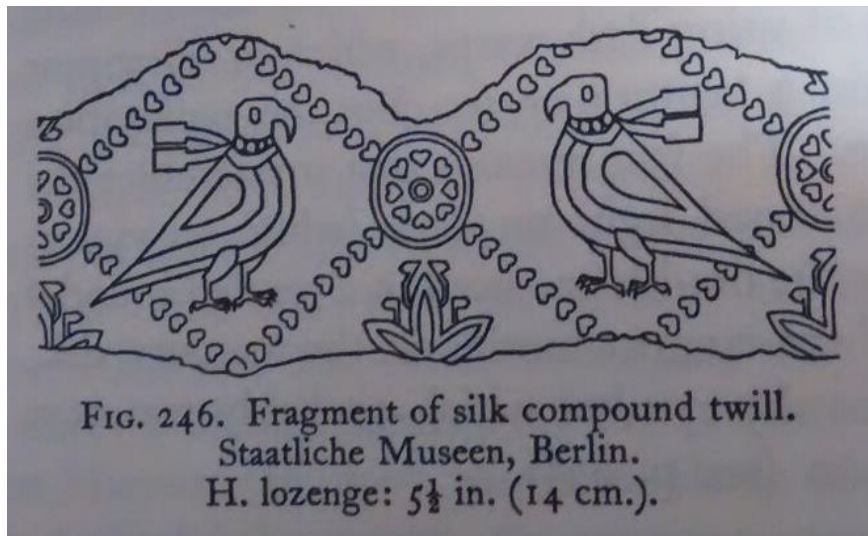
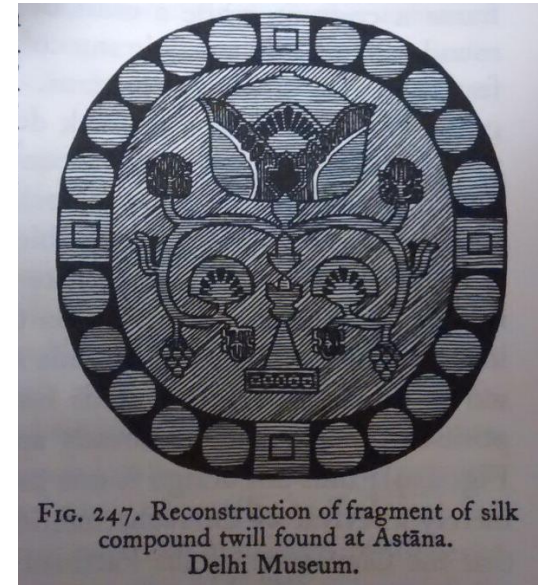
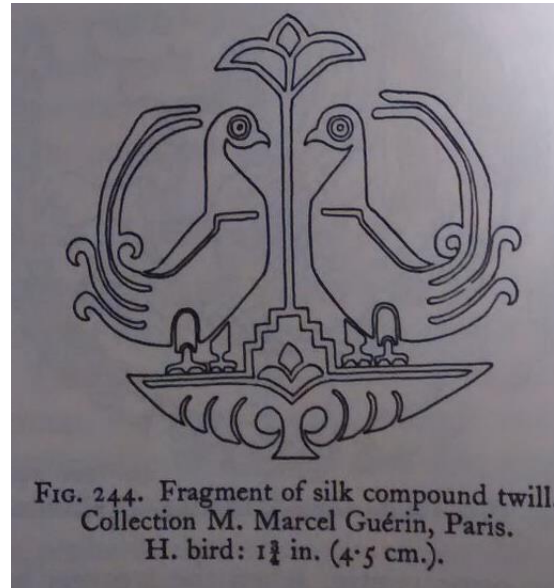
- **The examples of textiles shown in this presentation are from Euroasia.**

It is nearly impossible to determine the origin of textiles as raw yarn, ideas, motifs and textiles were traded and moved throughout this territory.
(Beckwith, 2004; Lui, 1996; Meister, 1970)

Examples of the patterns – textiles from Eurasia

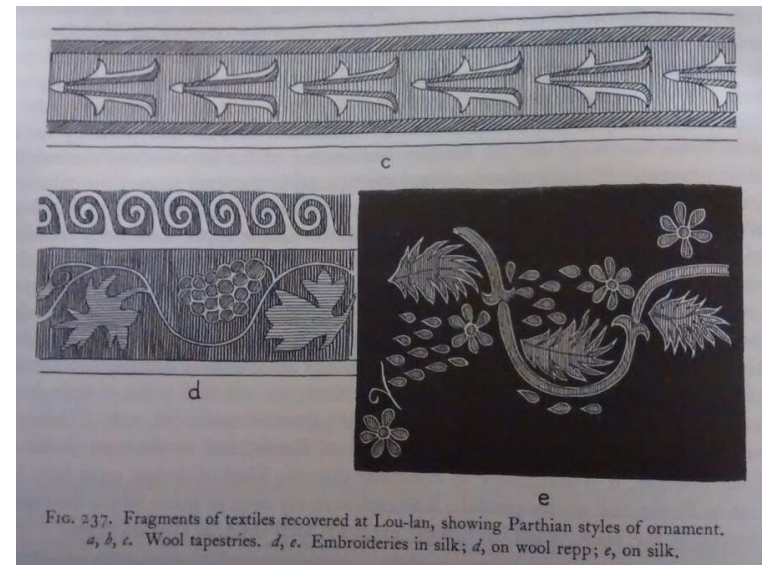
Sassanian

(Pope, 1964)

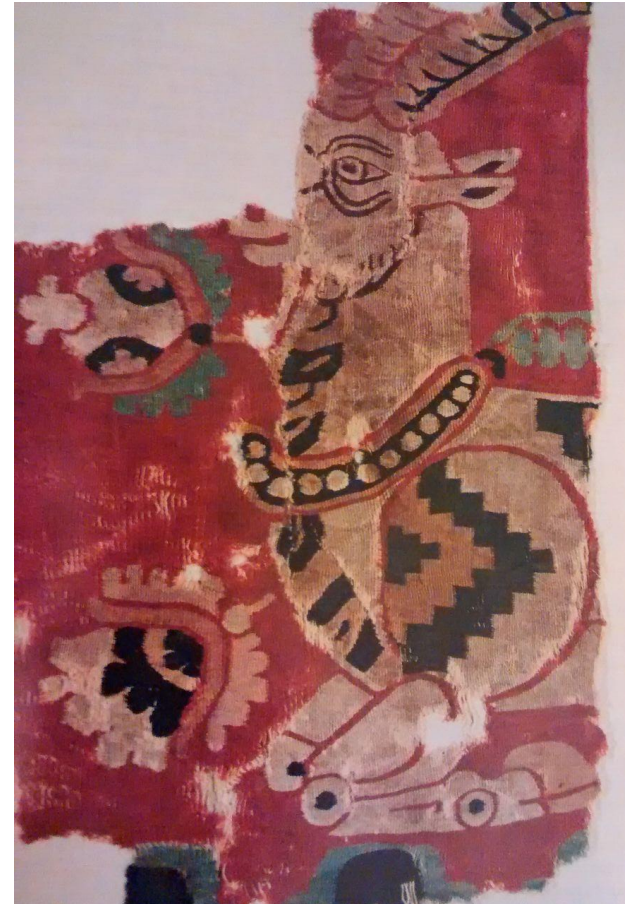
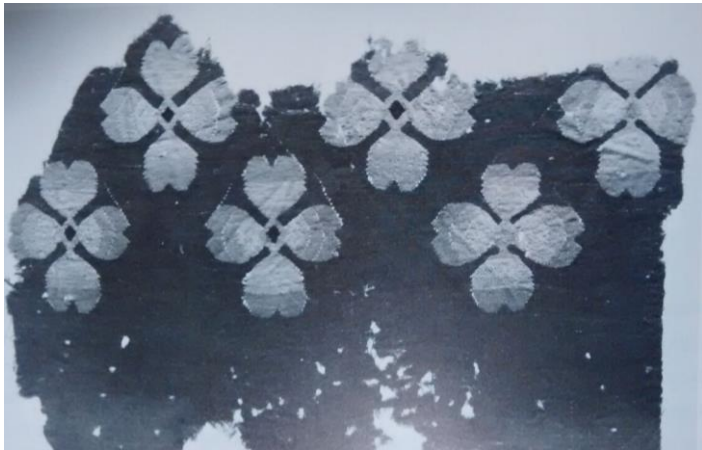


Sassanian

(Pope, 1964)
(Harper, 1978)



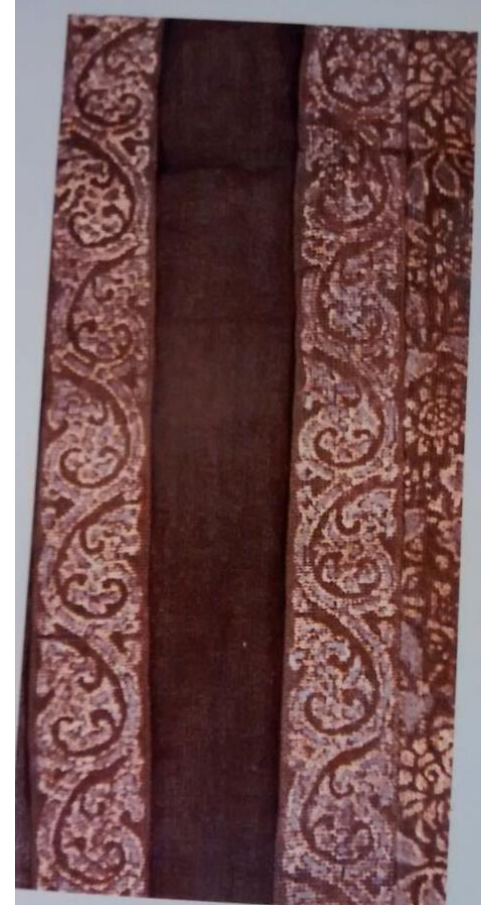
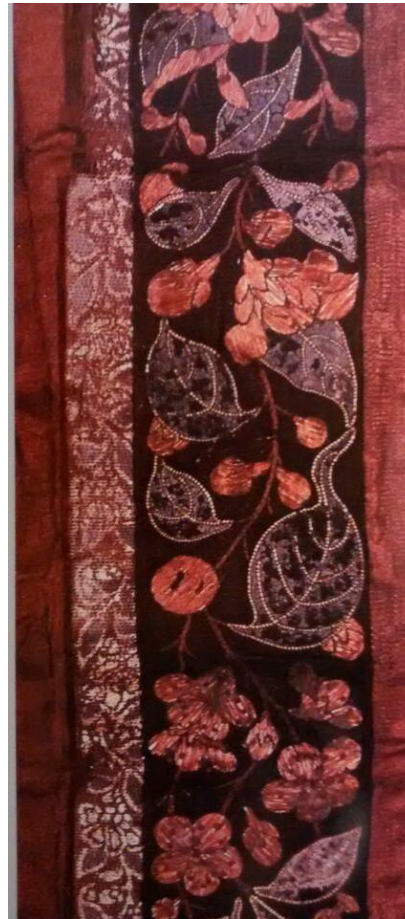
Sassanian



(Harper, 1978)

Chinese (Sui, Tang, Song)

(Kuhn, 2012; Hanyu, 1992; Vainker, 2004; Whitfield, 1995)



Chinese (Sui, Tang, Song)



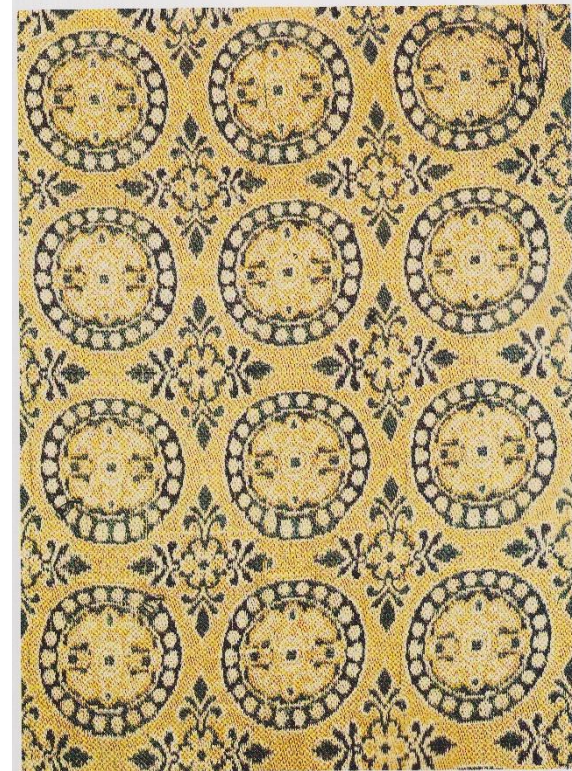
216. Tie-dyed cloth with fish-roe design Northern Dynasties



217. Resist-dyed cloth with design of scrolling plants and small flowers Northern Dynasties



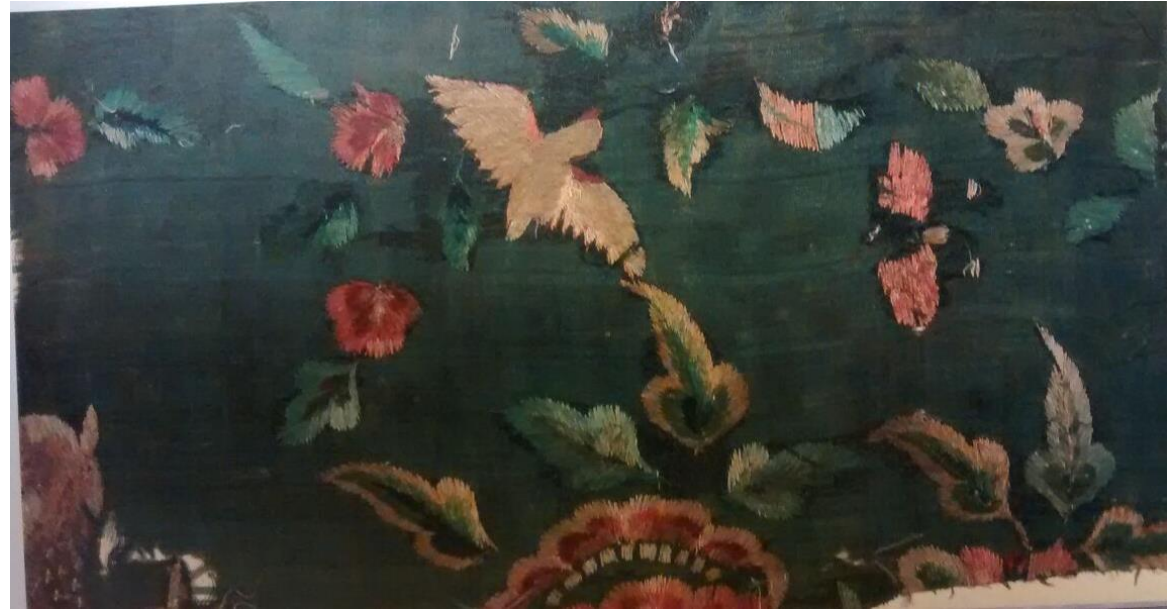
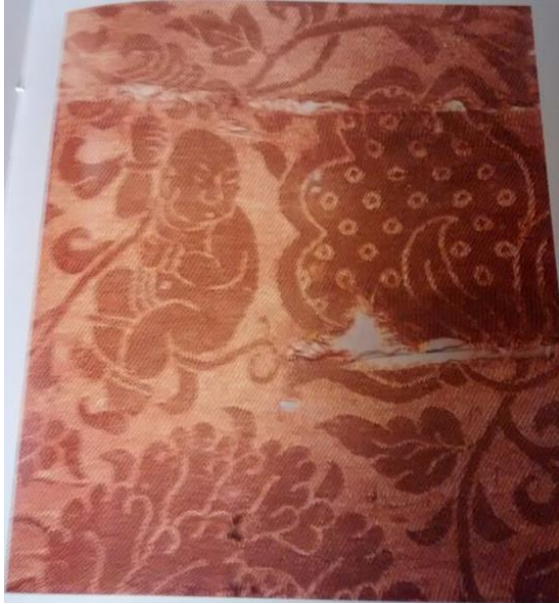
37. Jin with design of paired horses encircled by pearls Tang



35. Jin with design of flower clusters Tang

(Kuhn, 2012; Hanyu, 1992; Vainker, 2004; Whitfield, 1995)

Chinese (Sui, Tang, Song)



28. *lin* with lozenge and honeysuckle design. Northern Dynasties

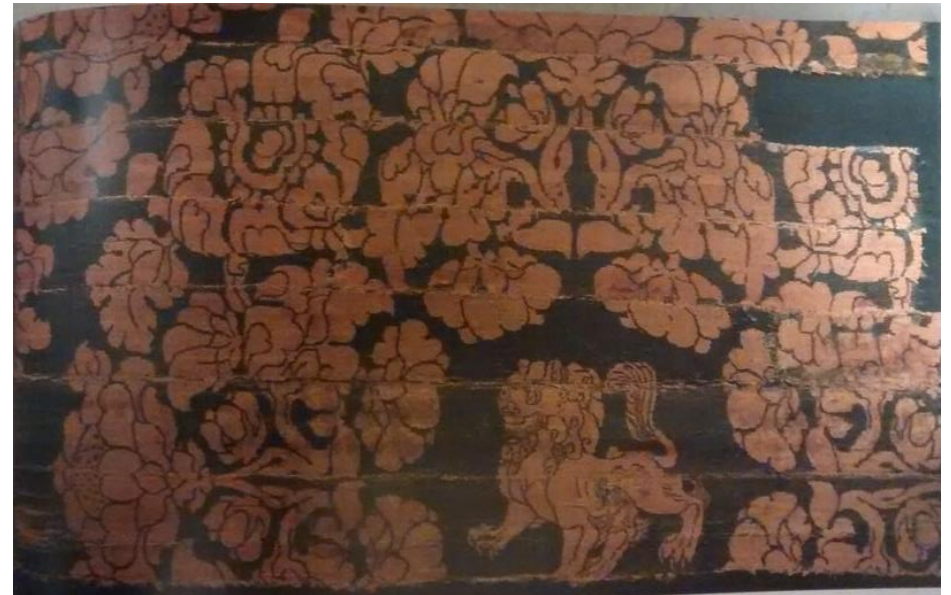


221. *lin* with design of boar's head encircled by linked pearls. Tang



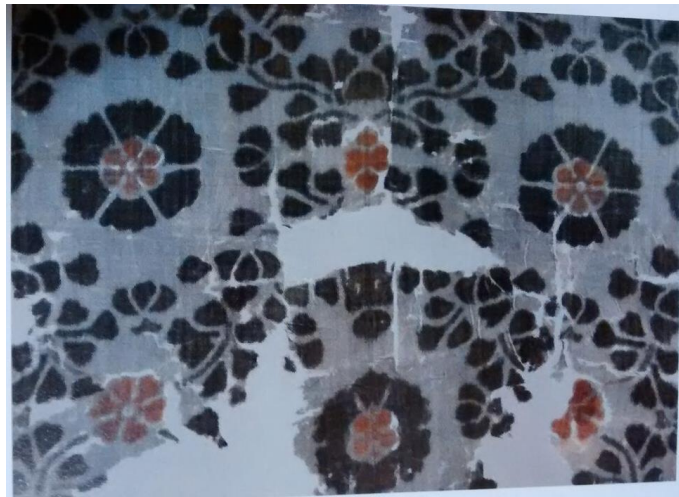
(Kuhn, 2012; Hanyu, 1992; Vainker, 2004; Whitfield, 1995)

Chinese (Sui, Tang, Song)

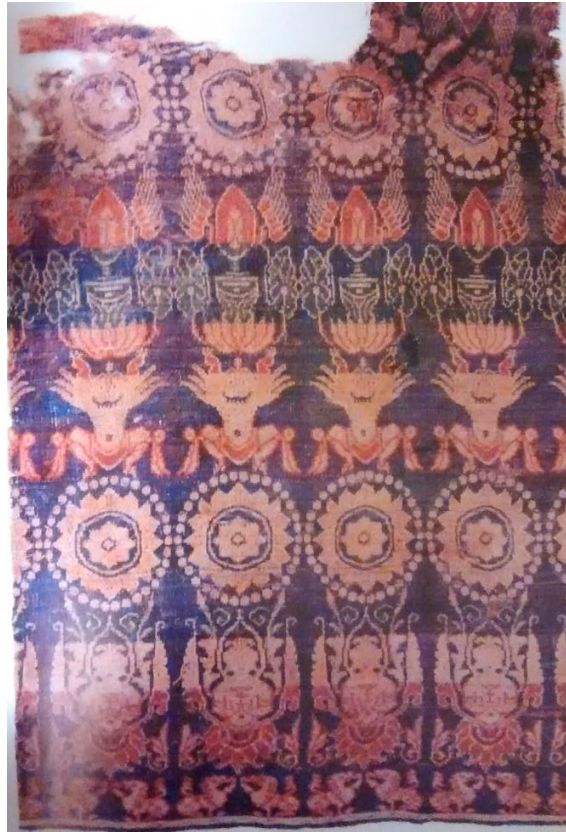
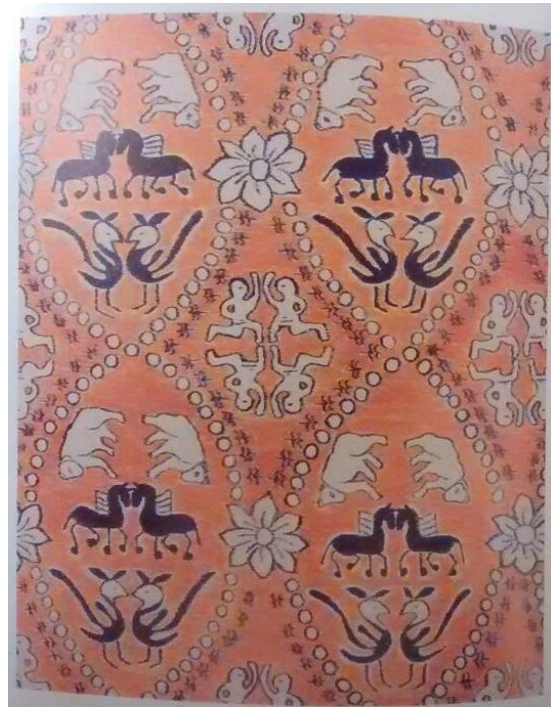


(Kuhn, 2012; Hanyu, 1992; Vainker, 2004; Whitfield, 1995)

Chinese (Sui, Tang, Song)

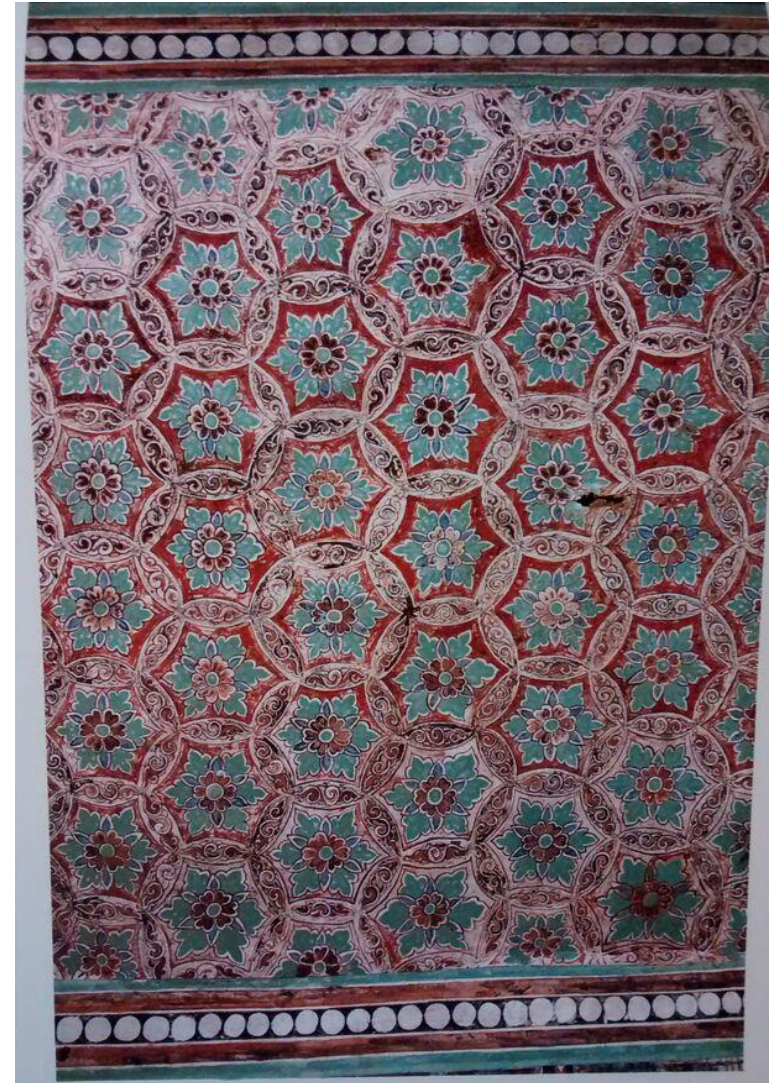


Chinese (Sui, Tang, Song)



(Kuhn, 2012; Hanyu, 1992; Vainker, 2004; Whitfield, 1995)

Chinese (Sui, Tang, Song)



(Kuhn, 2012; Hanyu, 1992; Vainker, 2004; Whitfield, 1995)

Chinese (Sui, Tang, Song)

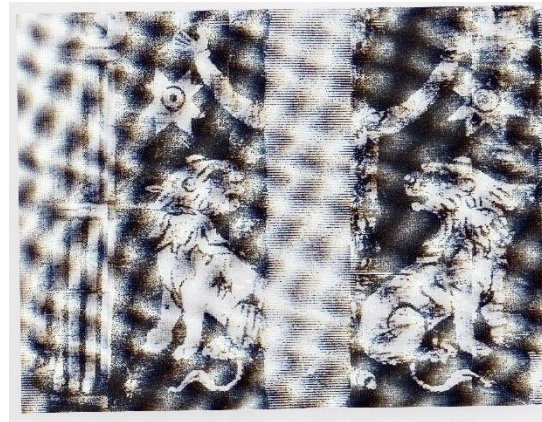
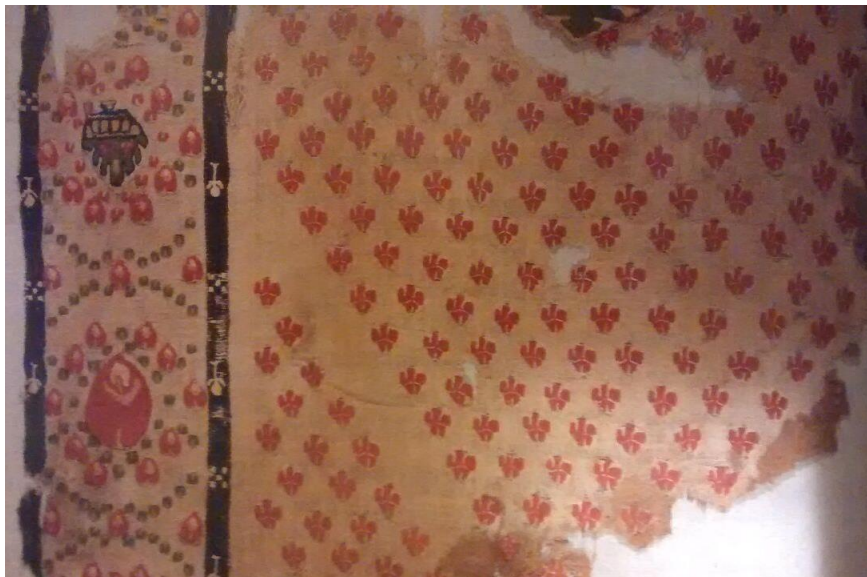


(Kuhn, 2012; Hanyu, 1992; Vainker, 2004; Whitfield, 1995)

Byzantine and Coptic



Byzantine and Coptic



Byzantine and Coptic

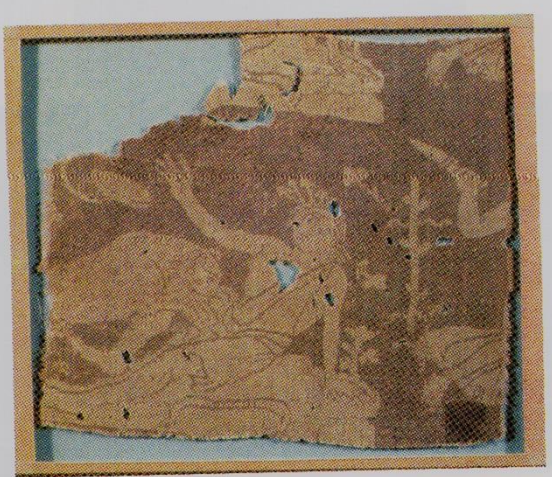


A24 • Roundel with bird in vinestock
OS 6 5/8" x 7 1/4" — 13.8 x 18.6 cm

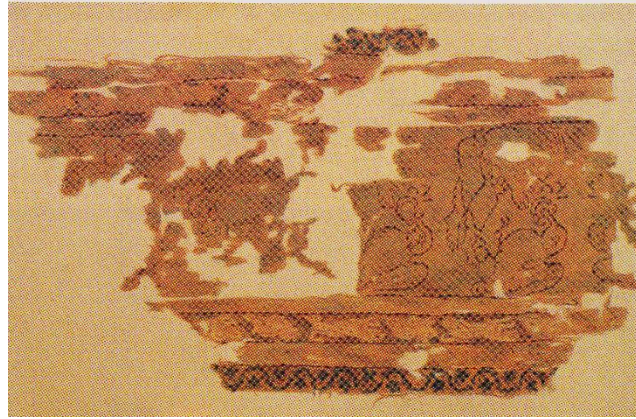


(Muthesius, 1997; Noever, 2006; Harris, 2011; Maguire, 1999; Volbach, 1969; Trilling, 1982; Carroll, 1988)

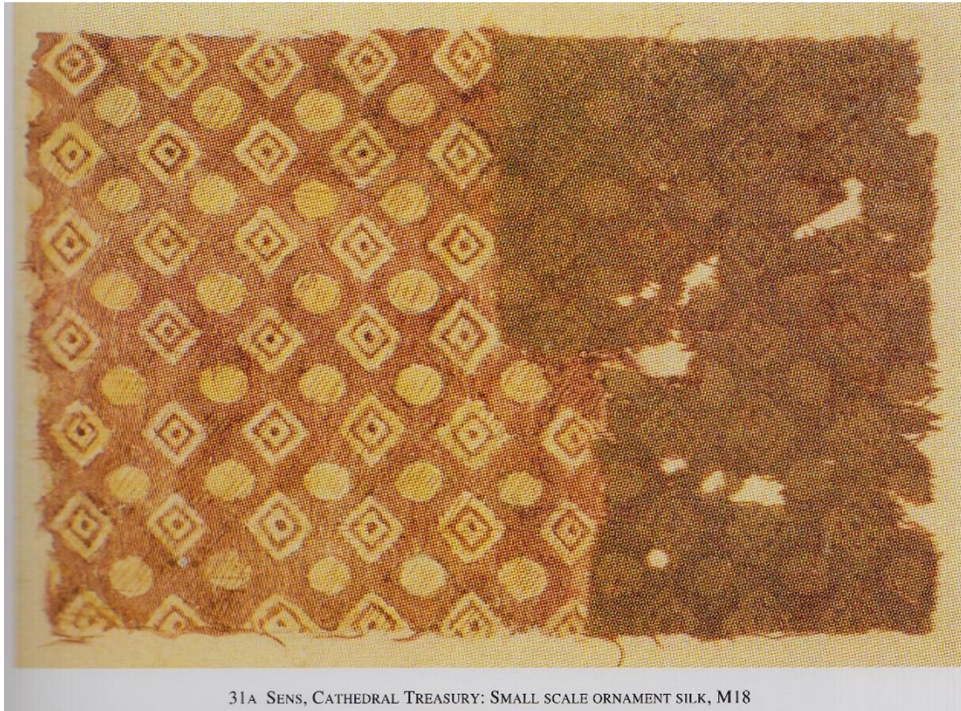
Byzantine and Coptic



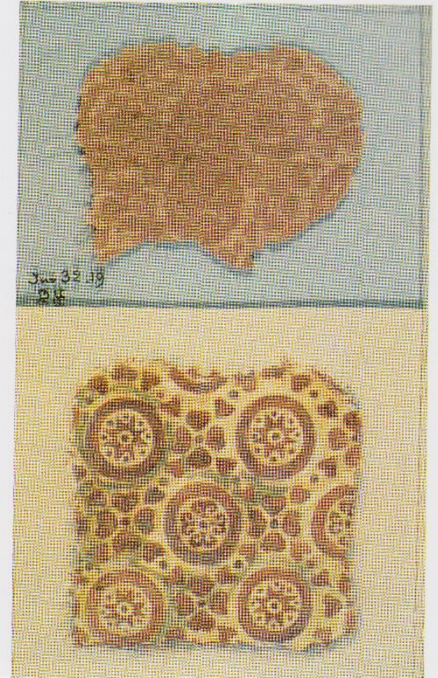
54B SENS, CATHEDRAL TREASURY: HUNTER WITH CHEETAH SILK, M5



30A SENS, CATHEDRAL TREASURY: SMALL SCALE ORNAMENT SILK, M493

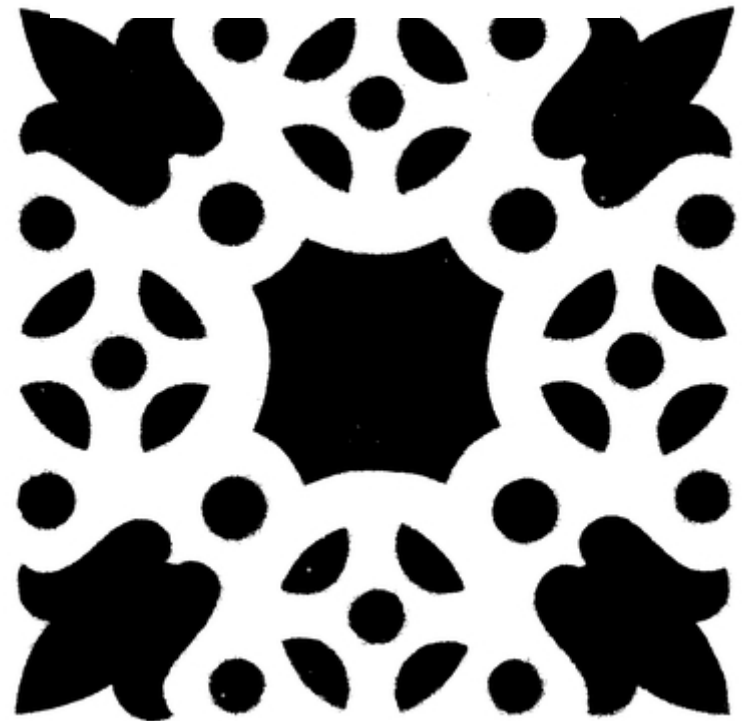
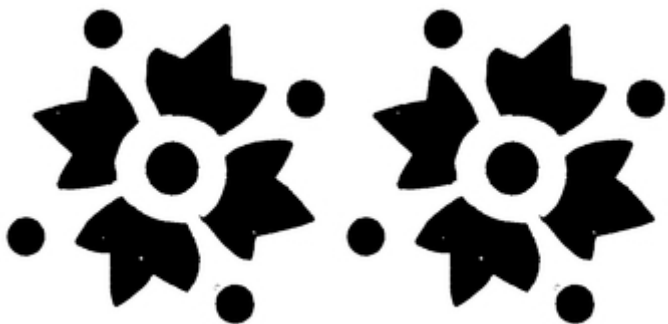
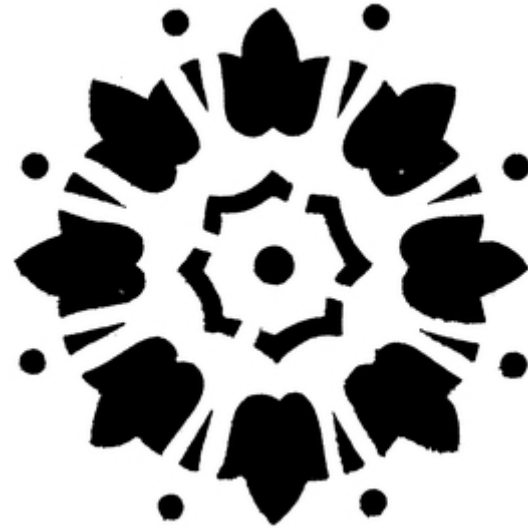
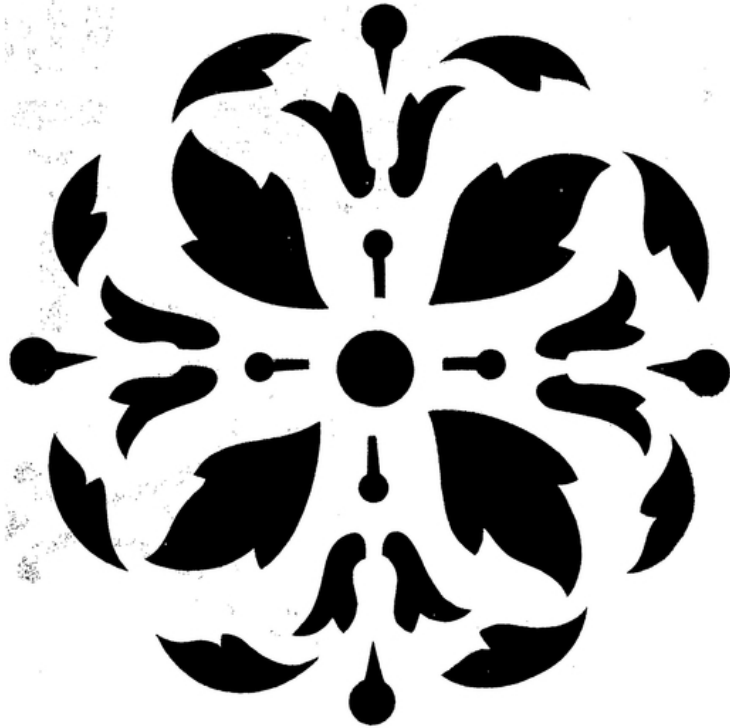


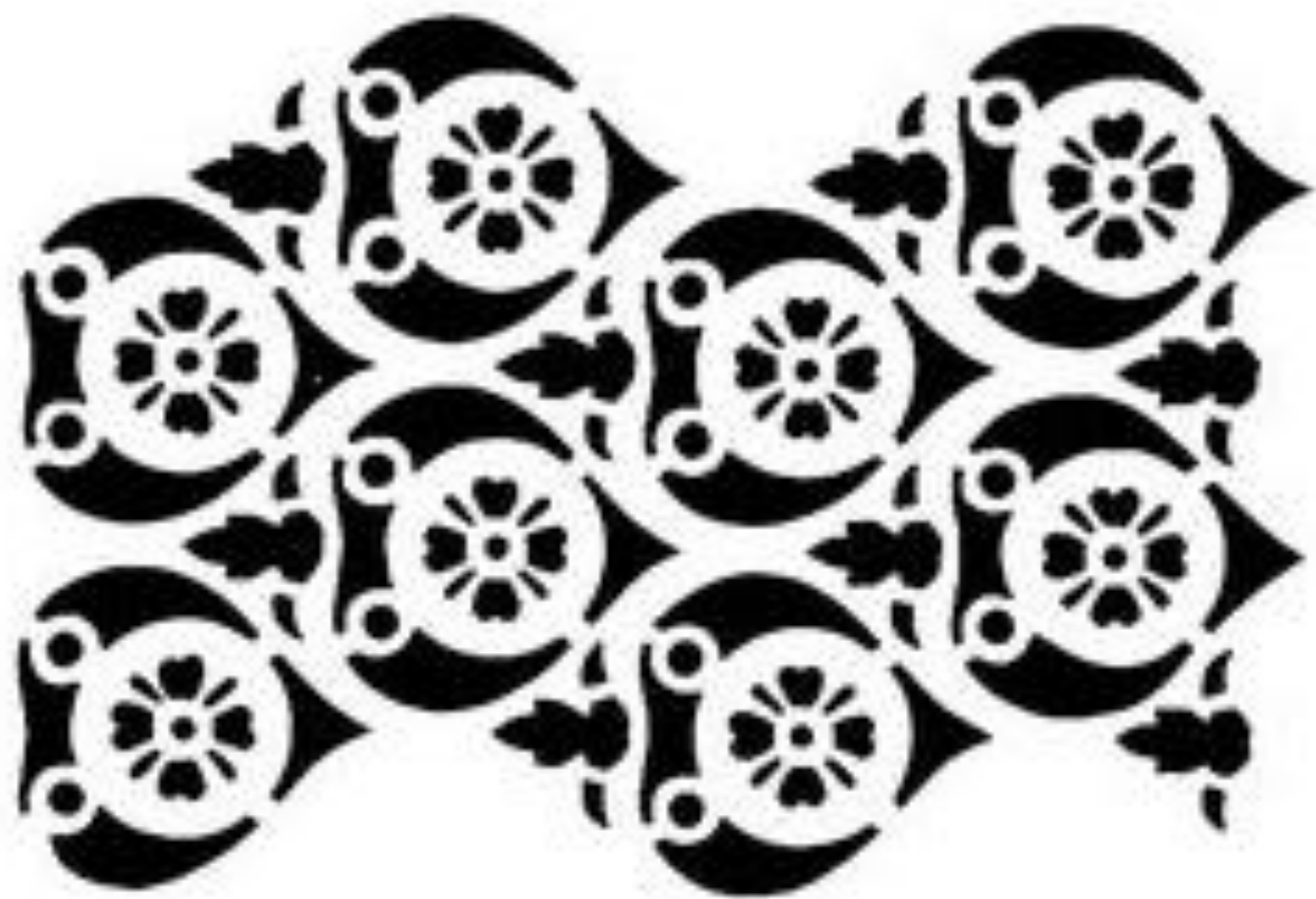
31A SENS, CATHEDRAL TREASURY: SMALL SCALE ORNAMENT SILK, M18

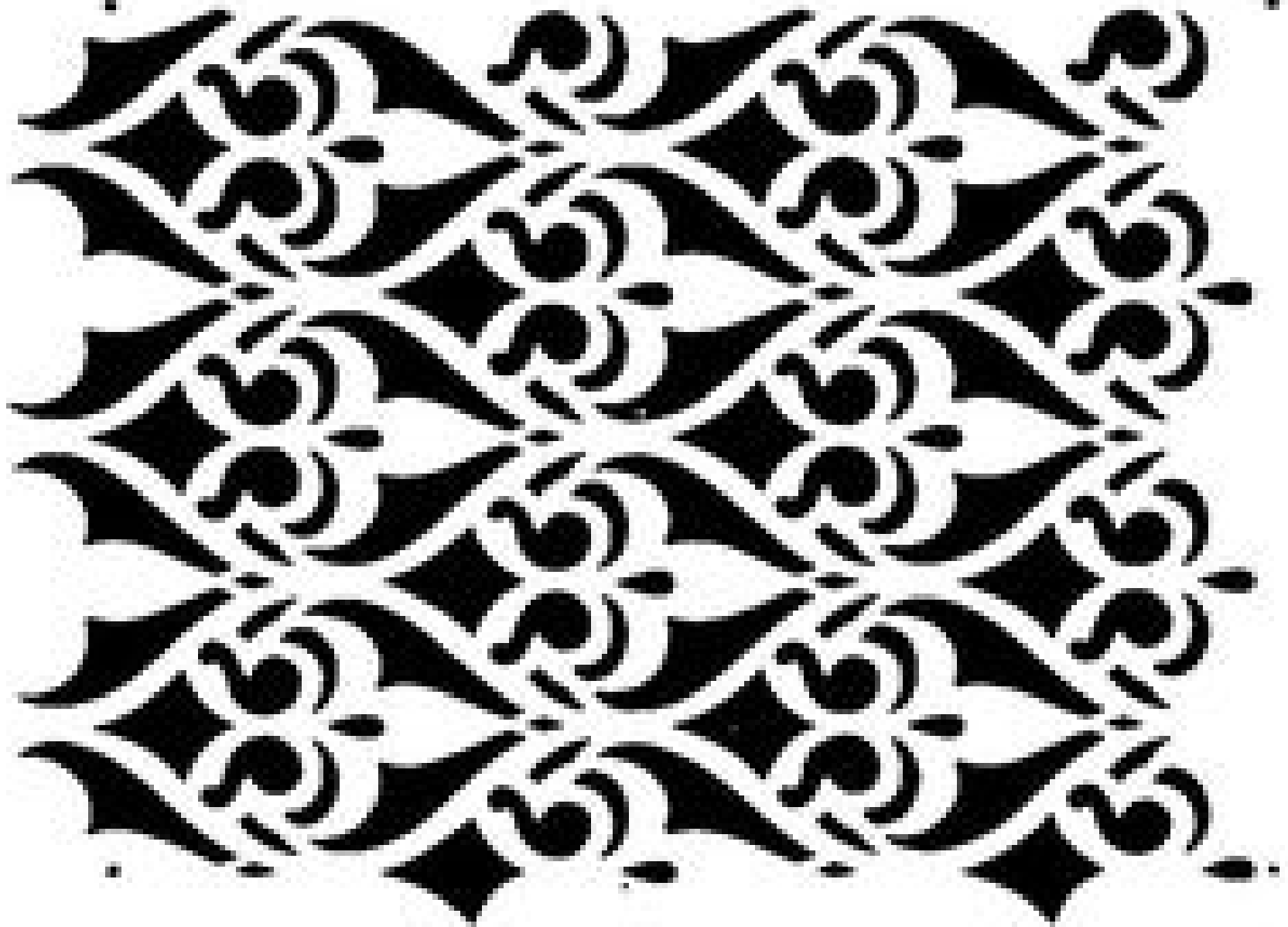


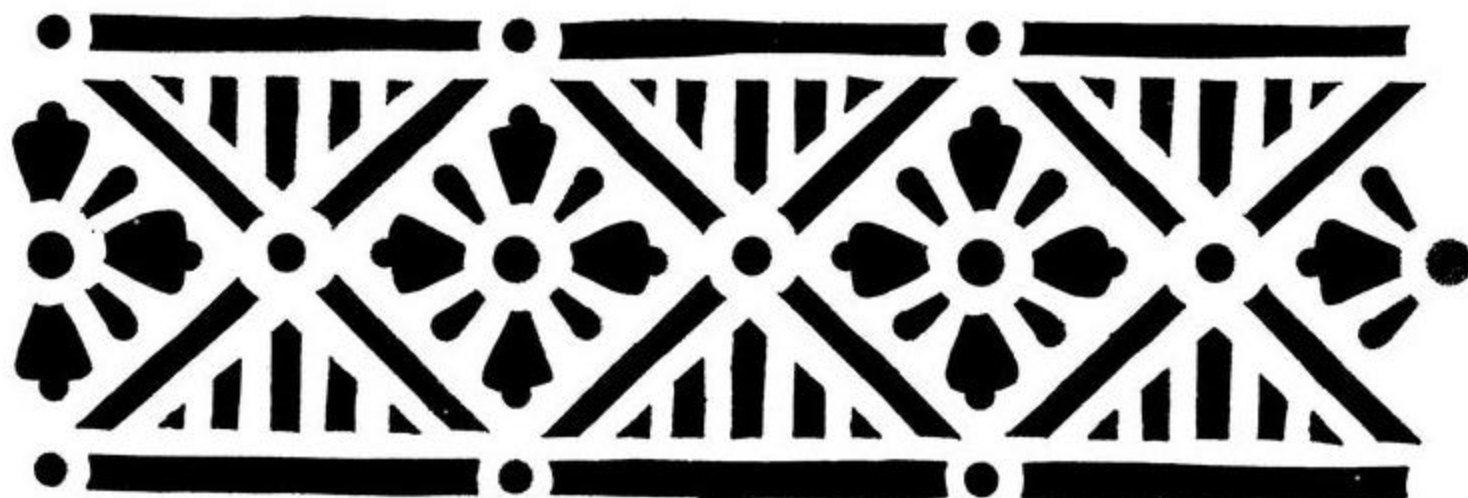
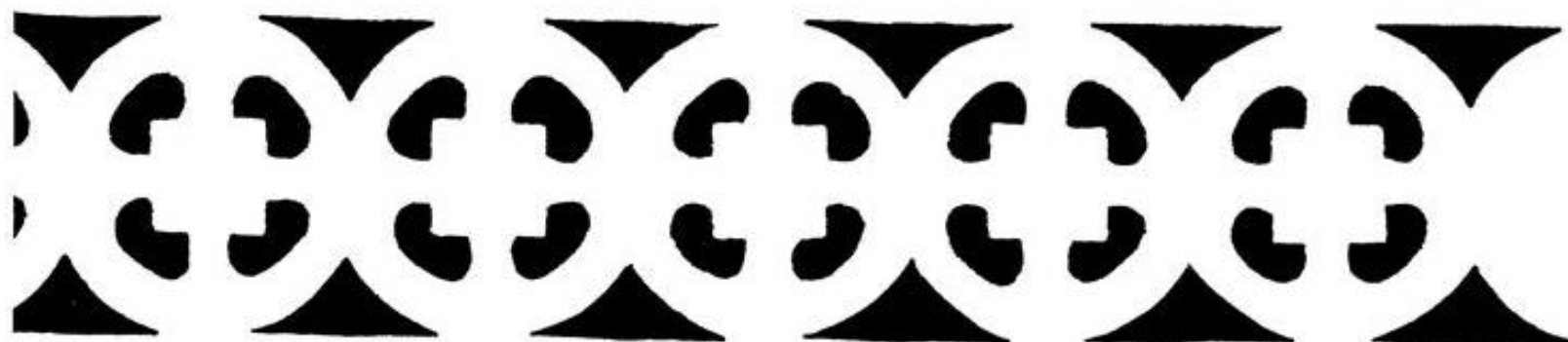
30B SENS, CATHEDRAL TREASURY: SMALL SCALE ORNAMENT SILKS, M17

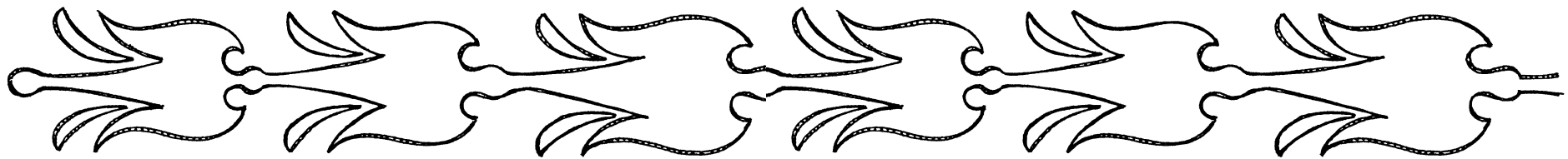
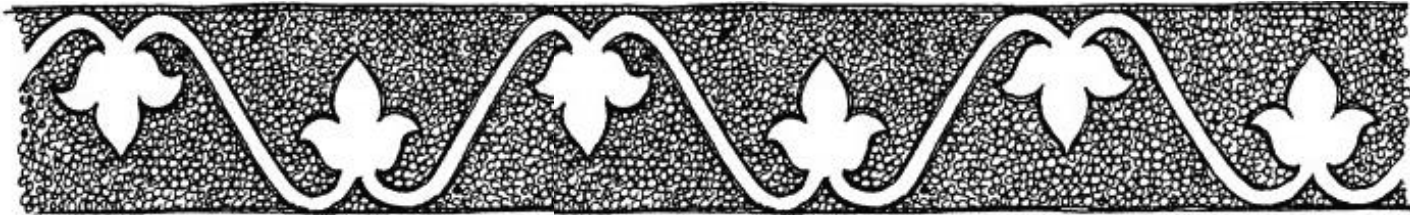
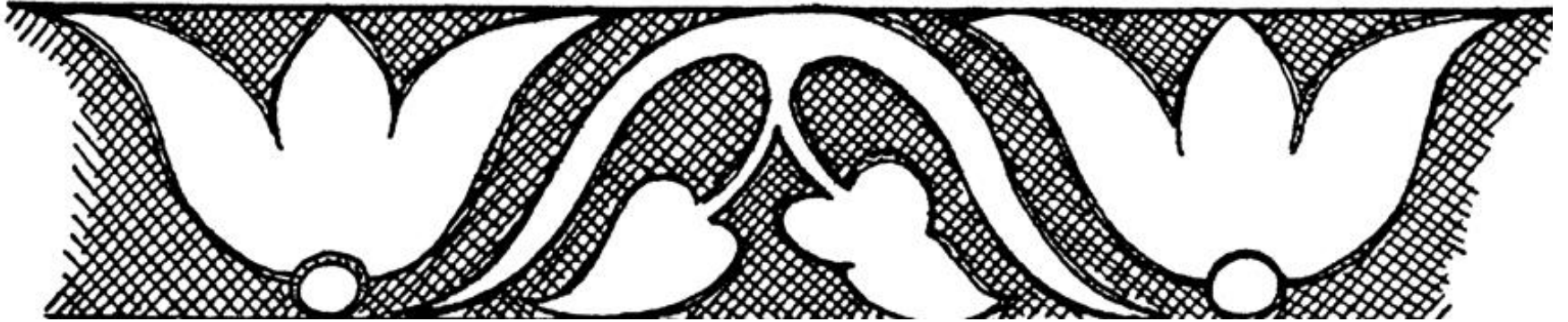
Examples of stencils (ready to use)

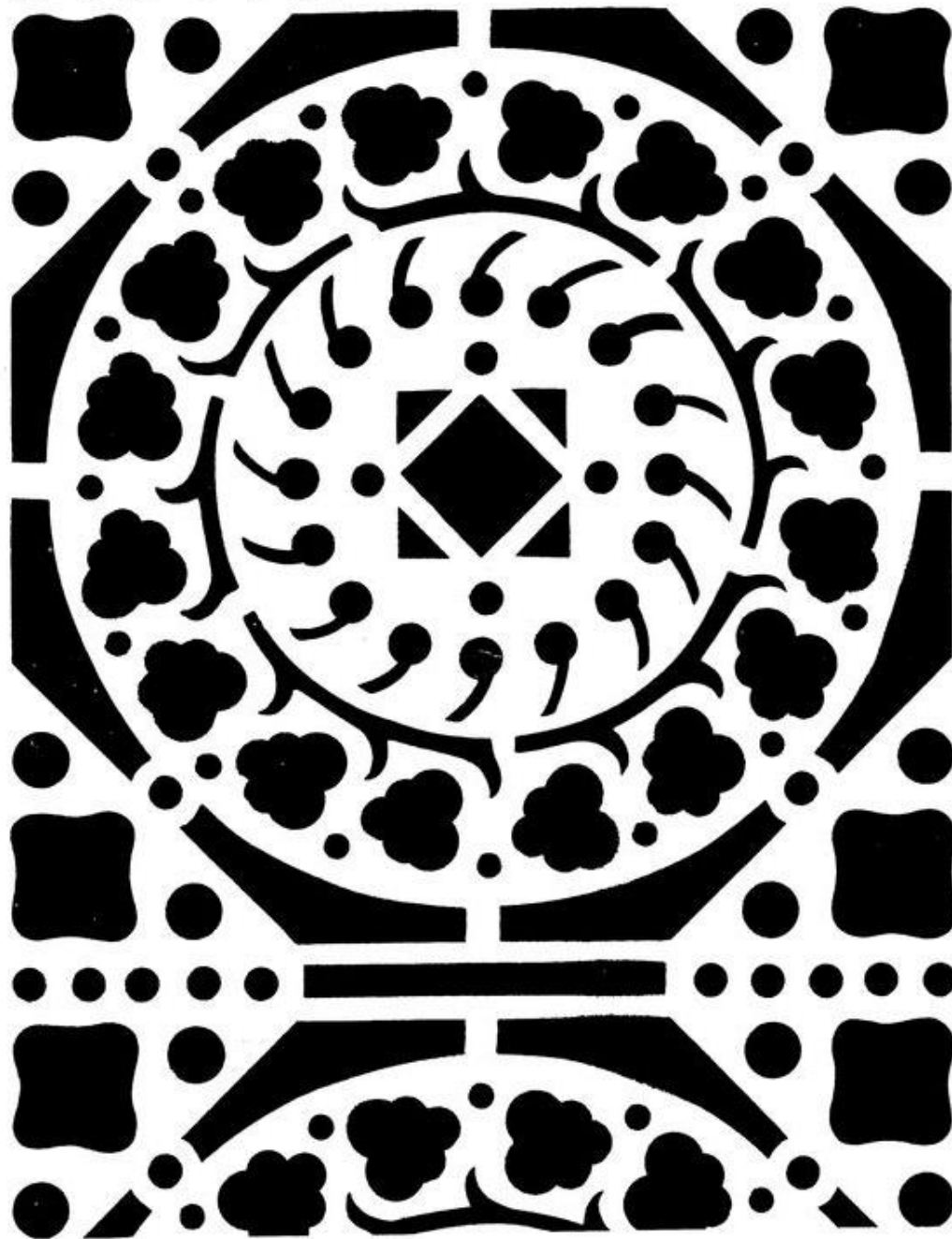




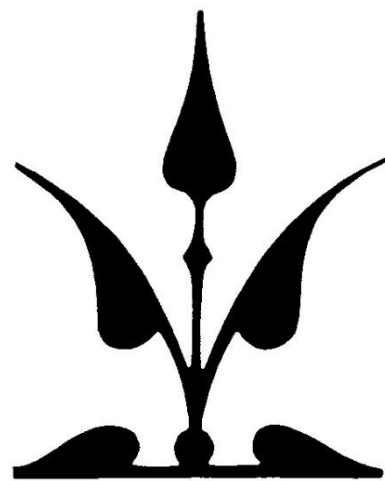
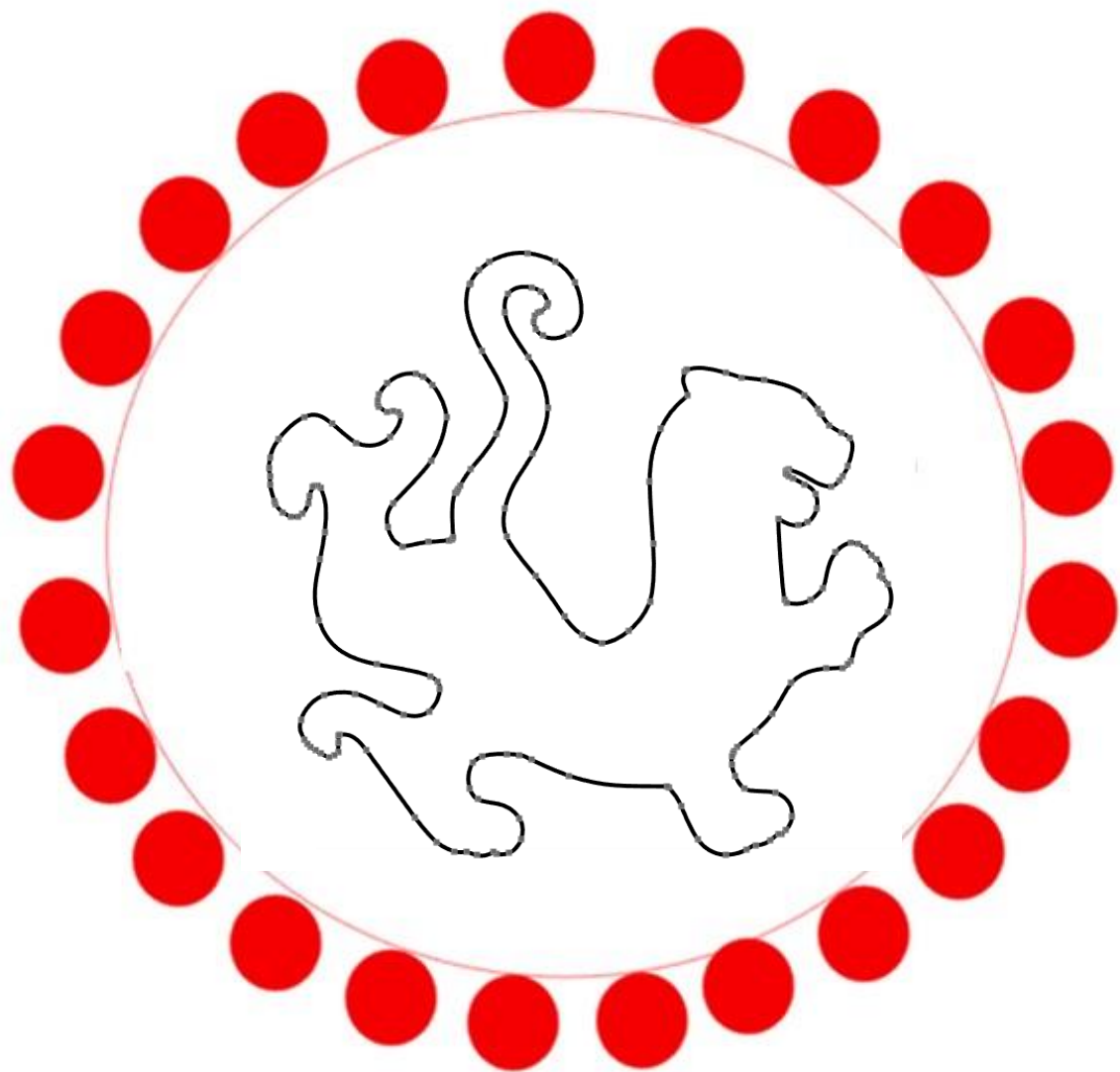




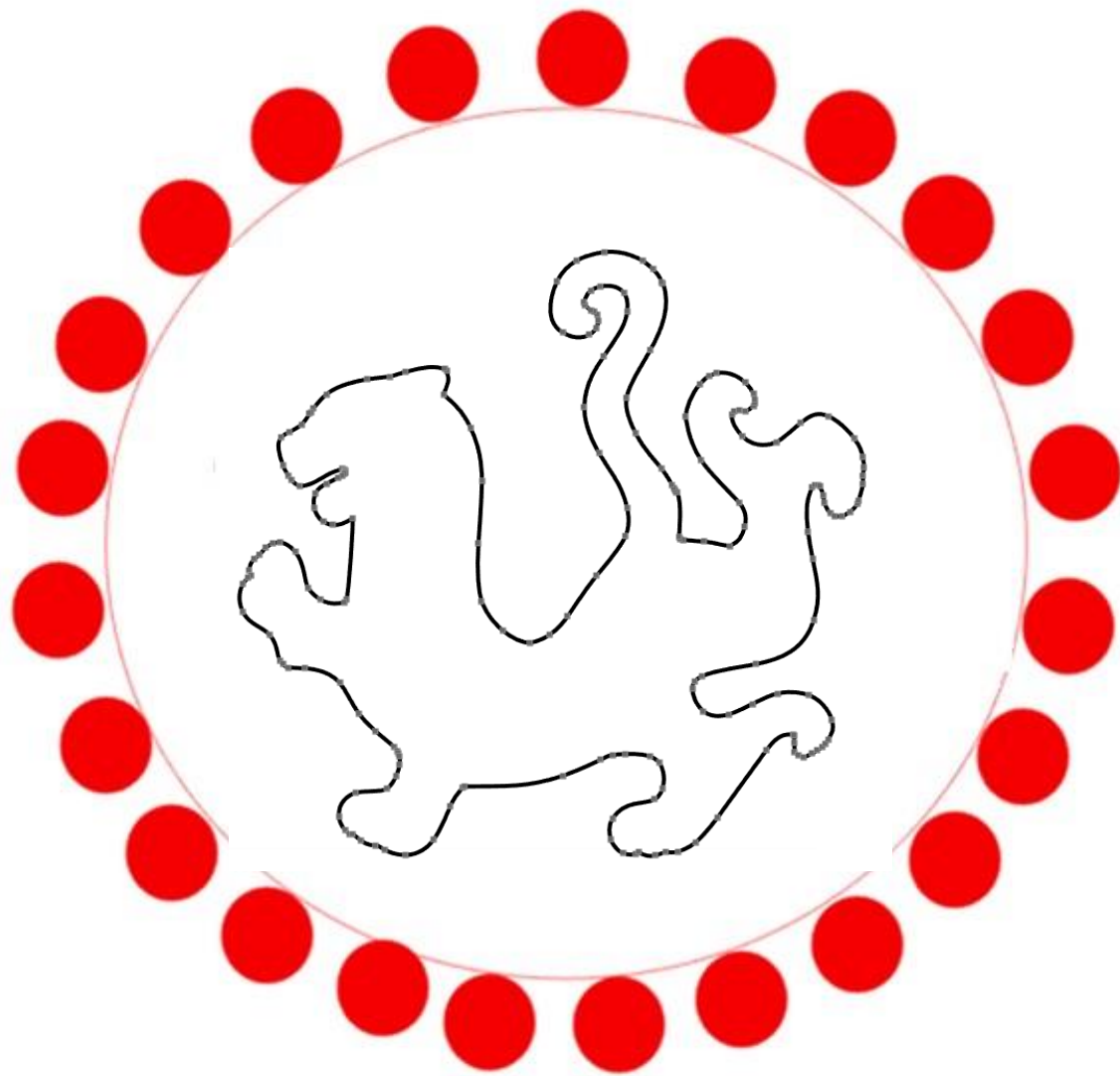


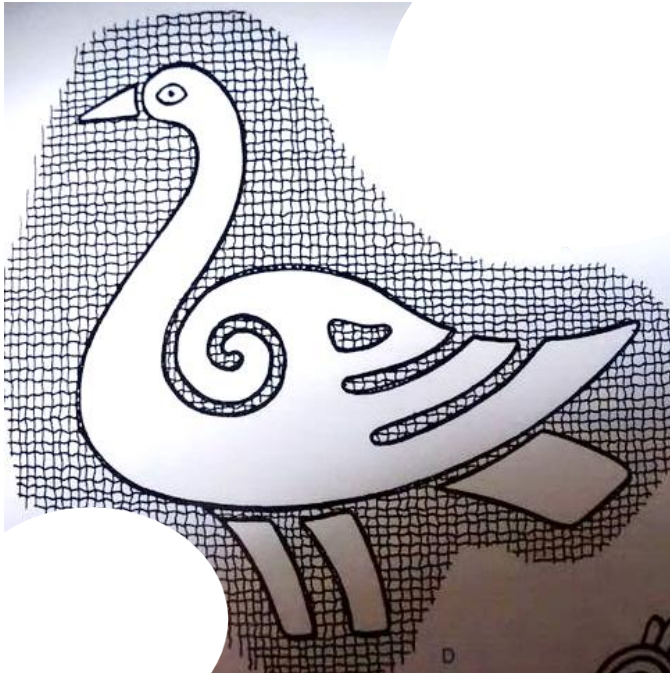


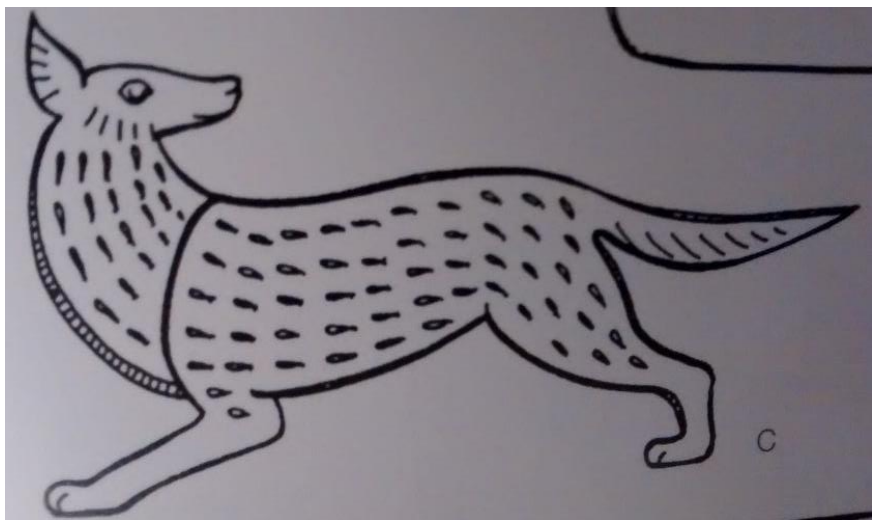














Bibliography

Introduction

Cheryl Rezendes, *Fabric Surface Design*, 2013.

Alexandra Croom, *Roman Clothing and Fashion*, Kindle (Stroud: Amberley, 2010).

Christopher Beckwith, *Empires of the Silk Road : A History of Central Eurasia from the Bronze Age to the Present* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009).

Hsin-ju Lui, *Silk and Religion : An Exploration of Material Life and the Thought of People, AD 600-1200* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996).

Patrick Perin, 'LA RECONSTITUTION DU COSTUME D'ARÉGONDE NOUVELLES PROPOSITIONS', *Revue Archéologique de Picardie*, 2009, 69–75
<<http://cat.inist.fr/?aModele=afficheN&cpsidt=22261656>> [accessed 10 July 2015].

Michael Meister, 'The Pearl Roundel in Chinese Textile Design', *Ars Orientalis*, 8 (1970), 255–67.

Sassanian

Prudence Harper, *The Royal Hunter : Art of the Sasanian Empire* ([New York]: Asia Society, 1978).

Arthur Pope, *A Survey of Persian Art : From Prehistoric Times to the Present* (Tokyo ;New-York ;;London ;Téhéran: Meiji-Shobo ;;Oxford university press ;;Manafzadeh group, 1964).

Chinese

Dieter Kuhn, *Chinese Silks*, 2012.

Gao Hanyu, *Chinese Textile Designs* (Viking, 1992) <<https://books.google.com/books?id=7TfrAAAAMAAJ&pgis=1>> [accessed 10 July 2015].

S Vainker, *Chinese Silk : A Cultural History* (London ;New Brunswick N.J.: British Museum Press ;;in association with Rutgers University Press, 2004).

Roderick Whitfield, *Dunhuang : Caves of the Singing Sands : Buddhist Art from the Silk Road* (London: Textile & Art Publications, 1995).

Byzantine

Anna Muthesius, *Byzantine Silk Weaving: AD 400 to AD 1200* (Verlag Fassbaender, 1997) <<https://books.google.com/books?id=2GvWAAAAMAAJ&pgis=1>> [accessed 10 July 2015].

Peter Noever, *Fragile Remnants : Egyptian Textiles of Late Antiquity and Early Islam* (Ostfildern ;Maidstone: Hatje Cantz ;;Amalgamated Book Services [distributor], 2006).

Jennifer (ed) Harris, *5000 Years of Textiles* (SMITHSONIAN INST Press, 2011) <<http://books.google.com/books?id=pXimSQAACAAJ&pgis=1>> [accessed 9 June 2014].

Eunice Dauterman Maguire, *Weavings From Roman, Byzantine And Islamic Egypt: The Rich Life And The Dance* (Krannert Art Museum + Kinkead Pavilion, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1999) <<https://books.google.com/books?id=XmrccnZ--EUC&pgis=1>> [accessed 10 July 2015].

Wolfgang Volbach, *Early Decorative Textiles* (London ;;New York: Hamlyn, 1969).

James Trilling, *The Roman Heritage : Textiles from Egypt and the Eastern Mediterranean, 300 to 600 AD* (Washington: Textile Museum, 1982).

Diane Carroll, *Looms and Textiles of the Copts : First Millennium Egyptian Textiles in the Carl Austin Rietz Collection of the California Academy of Sciences* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1988).

Stencil patterns

Ali Dowlatshahi, *Persian Designs and Motifs : CD-ROM & Book* (Mineola N.Y.: Dover Publications, 2007).

W M Hawley and Frances Hawley Seyssel, *Chinese Folk Designs; a Collection of 300 Cut-Paper Designs Used for Embroidery Together with 160 Chinese Art Symbols and Their Meanings, Dover Pictorial Archive Series* (New York,: Dover Publications, 1971) <Publisher description <http://www.loc.gov/catdir/description/dover033/77179790.html>>.

Graham McCallum, *400 Chinese Motifs* (London: Batsford, 2010).

Joseph D'Addetta, *Chinese Motifs & Designs : CD-ROM & Book* (Mineola N.Y.: Dover Publications, 2007).

Graham McCallum, *4000 Animal, Bird and Fish Motifs : A Sourcebook* (London: Batsford, 2005).

JoAnne Day, *The Complete Book of Stencilcraft* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974).