

Fig. 1. — Indo-Portuguese embroidered wall hanging. Bengal, early seventeenth century. *Museo Nazionale (Bargello)*, *Inv. no. C 2255*.

AN INDO-PORTUGUESE EMBROIDERY IN THE BARGELLO

By

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IN the Museo Nazionale (Bargello), Florence, there is an interesting early seventeenth-century Indo-Portuguese embroidered wall hanging which hitherto has remained unpublished (Fig. 1). This embroidery (inventory no. 2255) belongs to the Louis Carrand Collection, donated to the Museum in 1888; its previous history is unknown.

Executed in yellowish-white Tussur silk in chain-stitch on a purplish-blue cotton ground, the piece measures H. 2.33 x W. 2.00 meters.¹ The yellowish-white Tussur silk, the embroidery technique, the motives, as well as the composition of the hanging show affinities with the group of embroideries attributed formerly to the Goa region and more recently to the Bengal region.² Other hangings with such a composition embroidered on a dark ground fabric as the purplish-blue ground of the Bargello hanging, although they may exist, have not as yet been documented.

The characteristic motives of the Bargello hanging, as well as of the group of Indo-Portuguese embroideries to which it belongs; consist in the following: hunt and marine scenes, representations from Hindu, Graeco-Roman, and Old Testament stories, heraldic symbols, and renaissance "grotesque" ornamentation. The sources of these motives are numerous and traceable in both European and Eastern decorative arts.

The dating of this hanging may be generally established by historical fact and by stylistic details as between 1600-1635. For, since the Portuguese conquest of India by Alphonso da Albuquerque in 1501, the influence of Portuguese taste was brought to bear upon the arts and handicrafts of India. Much colonial art in India was produced primarily for exportation to European markets. Around 1600 were founded the powerful mercantile societies of the East India Trading Companies vying for commercial control of the Indies; the Portuguese society was founded in 1600, the English in 1600, and the Dutch in 1602. However, after the Mughal conquest in 1632 of the old Portuguese commercial settlement of Satgaon in Bengal, founded in 1579, production and trade with Europe was somewhat cut off, and new trends in keeping with Indo-Persian Mughal taste set in.

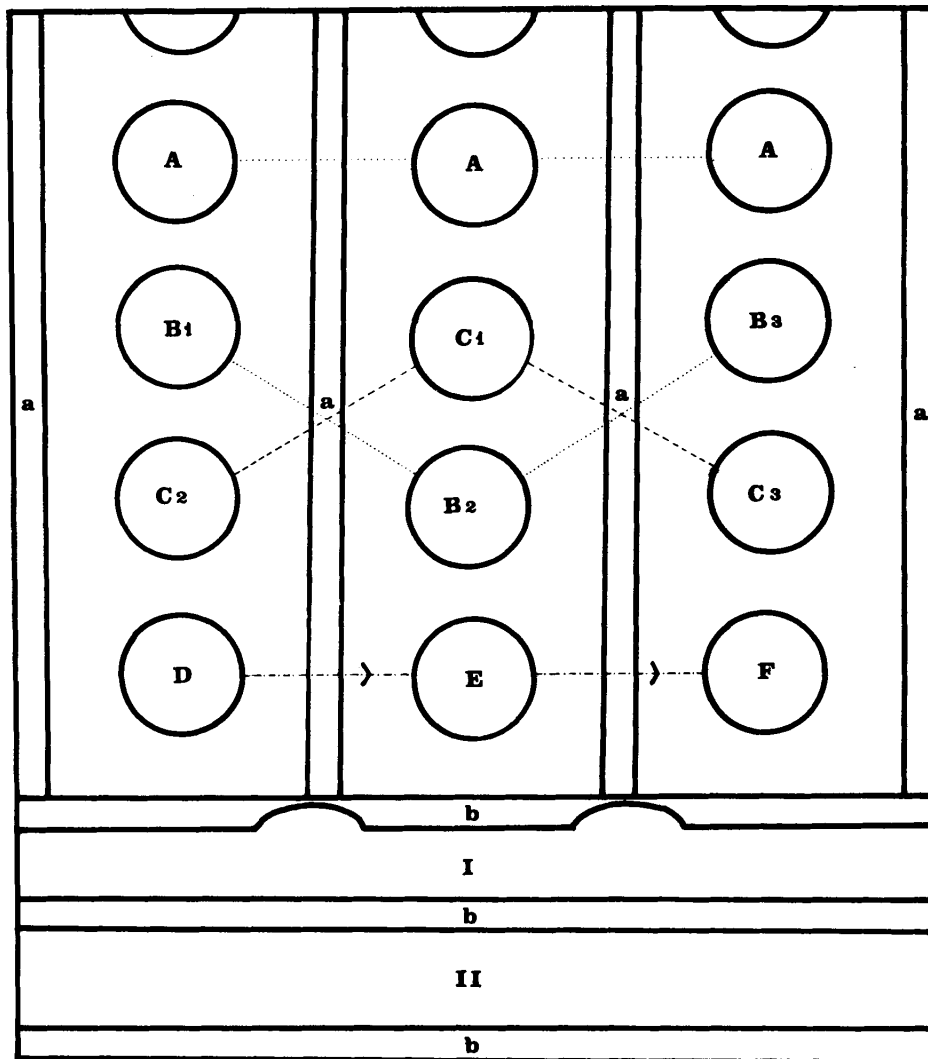


Fig. 2. — Diagram: The organization of the motives in the Bargello hanging.

A change in subject matter also helps in determining the date of manufacture. Whereas in the early sixteenth-century examples the motives are predominantly Indian, from Hindu symbolism, the seventeenth-century embroideries appear to increase in Portuguese or European motives.³

The costumes depicted in the hanging also give a clue to the dating of the work: similar armor and dress may be seen in colonial engravings. Baggy breeches gathered in at the knees with ribbon loops, small-brimmed and high-crowned hats, stiff neck ruffs, and short-cropped hair were popular male fashions between 1570 and 1630.

This study, rather than looking into the regional provenance or dating of this particular hanging, plans to proceed first by an analysis of the structure and motives of the composition and then by showing its stylistic relationship to some similar Indo-Portuguese embroideries and to Eastern and Western decorative arts of the times.

Meriting special note in the layout of the Bargello hanging is the fact that the proportions of all elements and sections of this piece are calculated according to a precise scale. This is not always true of other similar embroideries (at least those available for comparative study) where the placement of motives and sense of proportion are more casual. The major elements of the design are twelve medallions set in an intricately filled background; the minor elements, two border strips. The twelve medallions, formed of interlaced dotted bands, are situated in three vertical panels which are circumscribed by a narrow border with a bird and grapevine motif. In contrast to the vertical division of the actual surface is the horizontal alignment in four rows, each composed of three medallions, spaced from left to right across the surface according to the narrative sequence of the motives (Fig. 2):

Row 1 – A A A

The triple repetition of a symmetric, balanced form. An heraldic symbol.

Fig. A – crowned double-headed imperial eagle.

Row 2 – B1 C1 B3

Figures oriented towards the right. Three hunt scenes.

Figs. B1 – hunter on horseback carrying a large sword; C1 – hunter on foot fighting a lion; B3 – hunter on horseback with lance.

Row 3 – C2 B2 C3

Figures oriented towards the right. Three hunt scenes.

Figs. C2 – hunter on foot thrusting a spear at a boar; B2 – hunter

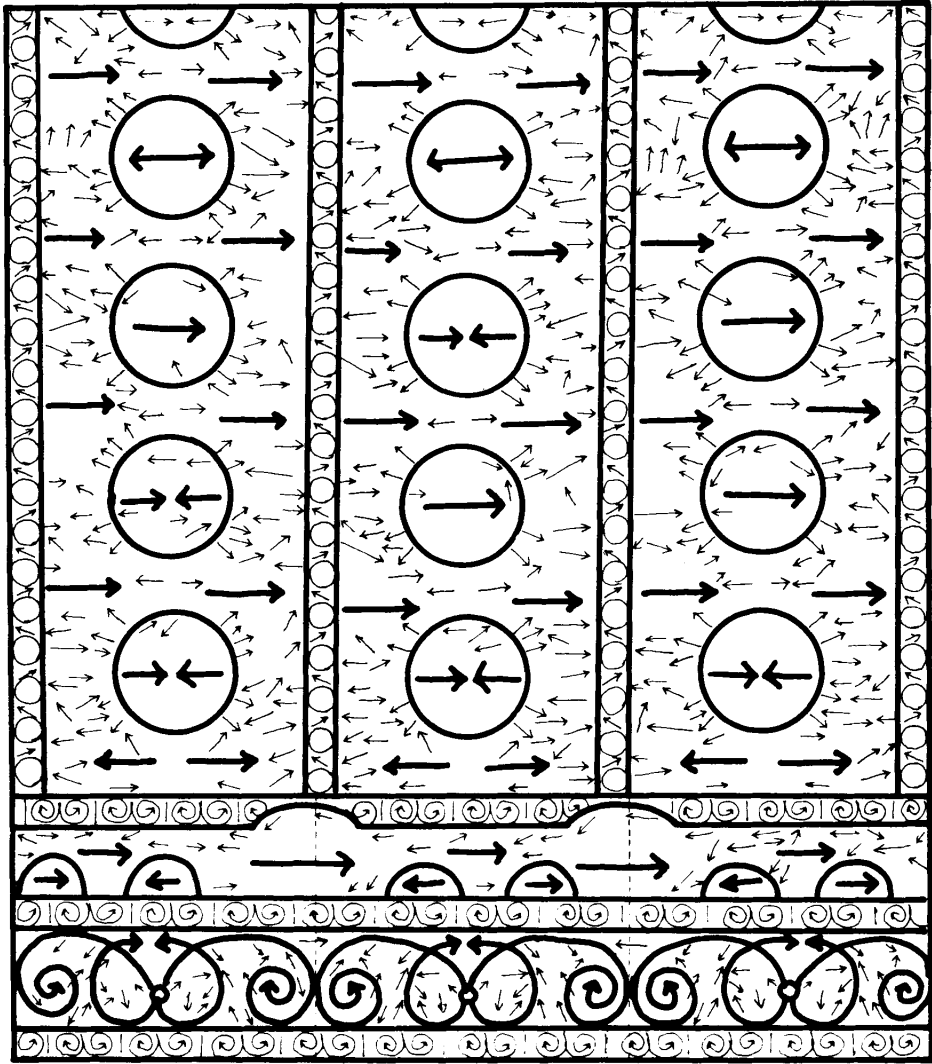


Fig. 3 – Diagram: The structural layout of the design in the Bargello hanging.

on horseback slaying a dragon; C3 – hunter on foot carrying a stag. (Notable in C3 is that the twisting figure of the hunter as he bears the stag upon his shoulders sets up a circular movement within the medallion frame).

Row 4 – D E F

Three scenes, read left to right, narrating the combat between David and Goliath.

Figs. D – David preparing to strike Goliath with the slingshot; E – David cutting off Goliath's head with a sword; F – David presenting the head to the king. In D E F there is also a relative temporal sequence understood visibly in the horizontal succession of scenes from left to right: the prologue, the deed, the epilogue.

The medallions, besides being grouped horizontally according to the superficial arrangement and narrative sequence (A-A-A / B1-C1-B3 / C2-B2-C3 / D-E-F), are also grouped according to similarities in the internal compositions (A-A-A / B1-B2-B3 / C1-C2-C3 / D-E-F) (Fig. 3). Internal continuity and balance are discernible in the composition created first by the horizontal repetition of the crowned double-headed eagles (A-A-A), then by the “v” of the three related motives of mounted hunters (B1-B2-B3) and the inverted “v” of the hunters on foot striking their prey (C1-C2-C3). In both “v”-groupings the directional forces lead towards the right. Finally, the three scenes of the story of David and Goliath (D-E-F) move in temporal and compositional succession horizontally also from left to right. Internally, the dramatic emphasis is placed on the two protagonists of the story by means of the spatial division of each medallion: D – David separated from Goliath by the slanted halberd; E – David cutting off the head of Goliath, where the rhythmic curve of the sword and the grasping hand of David enframe and concentrate attention upon Goliath's gigantic head; F – David before the king, seated on a raised dais, separated above by the canopy of the throne and below by the centrally-placed head of Goliath.

Equilibrium is also created by opposing movements within the individual motives; – as in A-A-A the directional force is ex-centric, pointed outwards towards the medallion frame (the heads of the eagle face outwards and the solid embroidered area of the wings emphasize the peripheral space), and in D-E-F the directional force is con-centric, pointed inwards towards the center of the medallion (the figures engaged in each of these events face inwards).

European-dressed hunters, showing the various modes of hunting, and a rich repertory of animals, birds, flowers, trees, vines and foliage fill the entire

background of the three vertical panels. Again, in counterdistinction to the vertical layout of the panels, the hunters are placed in horizontal rows with movement from left to right. Nevertheless, though the horizontal alignment of the hunters underlines the effect of movement to the right, a sense of dynamism and continual movement in all directions is set up by the smaller motives – animals, flowers, and vegetation – which complete the remainder of the background space. Counterbalancing the dynamism and movement in design in the background is the geometrical regularity of the overall structure. The alternation of human and animal figures creates a surface rhythm that gives an active vitality to the whole compositional design. Groups of figures, visually emphasized by areas of solid embroidery, are assigned to the interstices between the medallions in an horizontal ordering, whereas the pairs of Hindu woodland sprites, cavorting in the intertwined ribbons, set up a vertical connection between the medallions. To stabilize the movement to the right the field finishes with paired flanking lions under the last row of concentrically oriented medallions (D-E-F); the position of the lions echoes the ex-centric and symmetric scheme of the crowned double-headed imperial eagles above (A-A-A).

Two wide borders in the lower part of the hanging further enhance the structural composition of the main field. Both borders by their horizontal placement reiterate the left-to-right directional movement of the figures in the area above. Border I illustrates a marine scene: two Portuguese ships in a sea inhabited by Indians, Vaishnava, marine spirits compactly fill the space. The two ships of exactly the same form, directed rightwards, are placed exactly beneath the two central narrow, upward-spiraling, vertical borders of birds and grapevines (a). Because of their large size in relation to the surrounding objects, these boats also break the horizontal line of the bird and foliage band (b) by the introduction of two semicircles. Echoing these arcs, but on a smaller scale, are six marine grottoes from which sea nymphs are emerging. Three “nagini” (Hindu female marine sprites) and a “naga” (Hindu male marine sprite), facing right, alternate between these grottoes: one plays a stringed instrument, another casts a fish net, and another shoots a bow and arrow, while the naga raises a club to strike a fish. To the solid field of embroidery which composes their figures the negative space of the grottoes contrasts in a rhythmic surface pattern. Balancing the movement right of these female sea sprites is the movement left of the “makara” (Hindu half-fish, half-beast spirits). Myriads of small fish fill the rest of the space and further heighten the dynamic vitality of the scene by the interplay of variously directioned movements, while the two ships, in contrast, serve as fixed points. Border II completes the lower section of the hanging in a rhythmic repeat design which produces an active and yet stabilizing conclusion. The thrice-repeated scroll motif follows the tripartite division of border I and of the

main section of the hanging. This decorative border of vegetation and grotesque figures is based on an Italianate renaissance decorative scheme with a spiral repetition whose motives consolidate easily with those of Indian decoration. The scroll-like design, though filled with much movement, is balanced and symmetrical; its horizontal unfolding underlines the same aspect of the more agitated motives in the upper part of the hanging.

Because of the vivacious animation and movement in the representations, at first glance it is difficult to discern an order in the design. However, after analyzing the structure and the directional forces the underlying pattern is then seen.

The design elements in this embroidered hanging come from a variety of sources and yet are placed harmoniously. Especially interesting is the conversion of Indian motives into European ones and the interpretation of European forms in an Indian manner. A number of sources in near-contemporary European and Eastern art for the structure of this hanging exist. The overall structure resembles the serrated medallion pattern found in Italian and Spanish brocaded velvets, brocatelles, and damasks of the sixteenth century.⁴ The closest parallel, however, is Eastern; for, the general layout follows that of contemporary Persian medallion rugs. Even the major direction of figures rightwards in horizontal registers resembles the figural distribution typical of some Persian hunt rugs.⁵ This horizontal disposition of motives can also be related to Indian temple decoration.⁶

The complete filling-in of space has a double derivation too. Traditionally, in Indian temple decoration the entire surface space was covered with figures and ornamental elements. Sometimes the Hindu legends were represented in framed spaces set into a field intricately filled with figures and foliage. This is to be seen, for example, in the Sūrya temple, Modherā, eleventh century, or in the more contemporary Mīnāksi temple, Madura, seventeenth century.⁷ A European indication of the same desire to cover surfaces completely with decoration is found in fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century Portuguese Manueline architecture. The Christ Convent at Thomar, or the Royal Cloister of the monastery at Batalha, or the Jeronimos monastery at Belém, for example, are just as laden with ornamentation as the Indian temples.

Much of European influence on Indo-Portuguese crafts may be attributed to the Portuguese Jesuit missionaries who, arriving in 1542, set up convent-schools and not only gave religious instruction, but also posed an opportunity for the Indians to see European decorative arts at firsthand. The missionaries arrived in India with small Italian inlaid travelling chests whose designs were then interpreted in the marquetry done in the Mughal court workshops.⁸



Fig. 4. — Medallion A — Imperial eagle. Detail from the Bargello hanging.

In fact, the negative-positive aspect of the design in the Bargello hanging is closely akin to this effect created by the dark wood with light ivory inlay of the furniture, chests, and other inlaid objects done in the Indo-Portuguese colonies. This style of marquetry fusing Italianate decorative motives with Indian ones is seen especially in the inlaid Indo-Portuguese furniture made for European export.⁹

The missionaries also brought to the colonies books such as the Bible illustrated with vignettes and engravings and other works which would have contained Biblical stories, Graeco-Roman classical legends and ornate decorative borders. In addition, the altar cloths and ecclesiastical garments with embroidery and lace which they brought along from Portugal would have had Italianate decorative motives of scrolling plant decoration terminating in the heads of animals, monsters, sirens – motives in many respects duplicating the indigenous Indian decoration.¹⁰ Patterning their works after European prototypes, the native craftsmen met the demand for additional ecclesiastical furnishings.

Not only are the interchange and intermingling of forms important in considering the compositional structure of the Bargello hanging, but also in studying the subject matter showing Indian interpretations of Portuguese or, rather, European themes. The crowned double-headed eagle (A), although in its earliest form an Eastern symbol, here stands for the Holy Roman Empire (Fig. 4). Portugal was united to Spain under Philip II in 1580 and remained so until 1640. The paired lions with smaller peacocks, also used as Eastern heraldic symbols, here are included for decorative purposes. Figures B1, C1, B3 portray bearded Portuguese warriors in armor whom the Indian embroiderers would have seen in reality in the colonies. Figures C2 and C3 represent two of the labors of the Graeco-Roman classical hero Hercules visualized in an Indian manner. This classical hero was long taken by the Christian church as symbolic of the Christian virtue of fortitude, so too for the Hindu mind the immediate association of Hercules with Hindu mythological heroes such as the incarnation of Vishnu in the hero Krishna can be easily understood.

The identification of Classical-Christian hero with Indian brings about the interesting transformations in the depictions in the coverlet. Figure C2 pictures Hercules fighting the Eurymanthean boar as a young native boy in typical early seventeenth-century European dress. The Eastern attitude in visual representation is discernible, for instance, in the way that the legs of Hercules and the back half of the boar are cut off by the medallion frame. Dissection of figures by the framework occurs likewise in other episodes in the hanging. Figure C3 shows Hercules carrying the gold-horned stag,

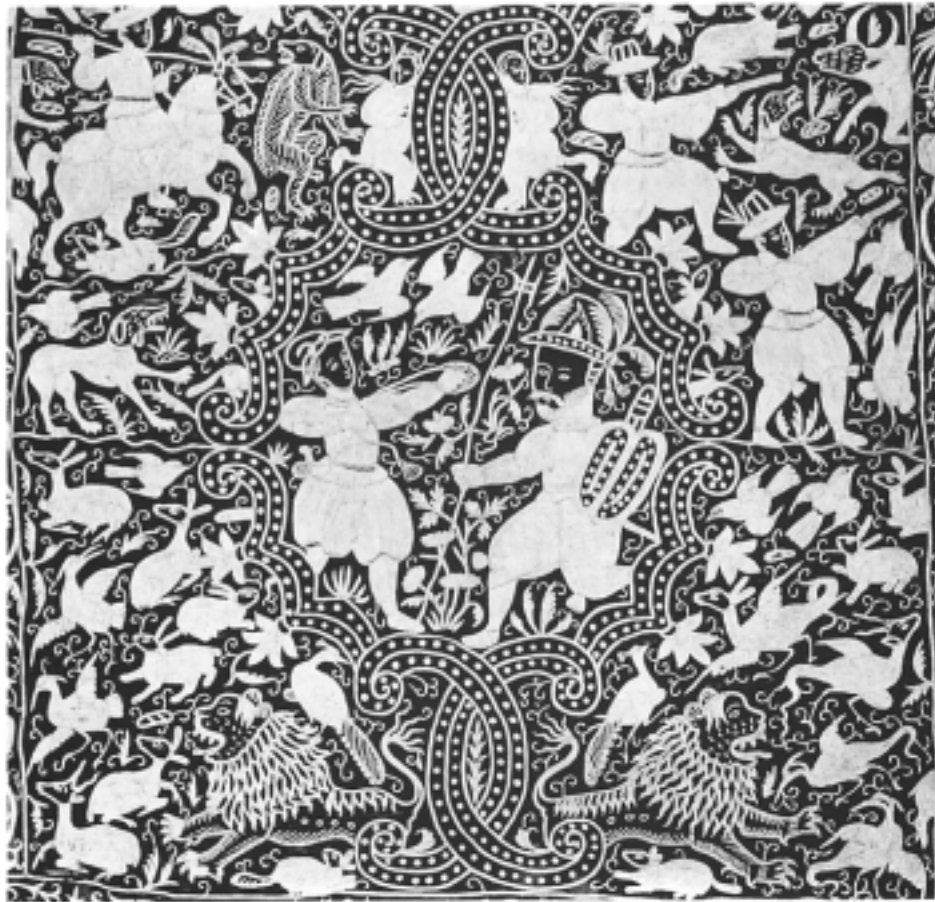


Fig. 5. — Medallion D — David encounters the giant Goliath. Detail from the Bargello hanging.

Kerynitis, upon his shoulders. The classical hero is here translated into or fused with a Persian prototype. In the Persian manner Hercules is moustached, barefooted, and wearing baggy trousers; the only trace of the classical tradition is his lion's pelt headgear. The representation of a Persian hunter who carries bagged game on his shoulders recurs commonly in Persian hunt rugs, Persian and Mughal miniatures, and even in Safavid brocades and velvets.¹¹ In Figure C1, this time armored as a conquistador, this warrior may be another transformation of Hercules in the act of slaying the Nemean lion. It is extremely possible that the structural continuity in medallions C1, C2, C3 – a hunter on foot on the left and a hunted animal on the right – and the linking of these medallions in an inverted “v” were for the purpose of pointing up the thematic continuity.

In row 3, between Figures C2 and C3 is placed Figure B2 where St. George envisaged as a young armored conquistador on horseback slays a demon-dragon. St. George overcoming the dragon was often used as a Christian symbol of good overcoming evil. In the Hindu legends where Vishnu in one of his heroic avatars slays the serpent-dragon is to be found the Indian counterpart of this. This suggests a fusion of Christian and Hindu personages in the mind of the Indian artist. Thus, from a reading of the motives horizontally in this row is found a point of continuity: the mutual thematic reference to good vanquishing evil.

Row four (D-E-F) shows successive moments in the Old Testament story of David and Goliath presented as an event from contemporary life. The two principal actors as well as the onlookers are in European dress: David dressed as a young boy with a soft folded hat; Goliath as a bearded cuirassed old soldier (Fig. 5). Sacred legend portrayed as contemporary experience is found both in Indian and European art of the times. Though the relative size of the figures – the gigantic Goliath, the large king, the smaller David, and the even smaller onlookers – is more typical of Eastern art, this dimensional difference can be found as well in sixteenth-century European embroidery dealing with similar Old Testament legends. Since the Old Testament themes were also popular in European embroidery and tapestry of the times, there was added reason for the use of the same subjects in colonial embroidery designs for Europe.¹² These stories, – of David and Goliath, Judith and Holofernes, the Judgement of Solomon and so forth, served as moral lessons demonstrating that good vanquishes evil. Furthermore, being melodramatic (favored in particular were stories including – sometimes erroneously – decapitations!), these stories easily lent themselves to being fused in the Indian imagination with their native legends. The Old Testament episodes recalled parallel adventures of Indian heroes recounted in the Purānas, including the Mahabhārāta and the Rāmāyana. In substance, the tales of the Rāmāyana

are emblematic of the virtues of the Hindu hero Rama conquering in the service of Vishnu just as the Old Testament stories of David, or Judith, or Solomon demonstrate the Christian hero conquering in the service of Jehovah or his terrestrial representative, the king. These subjects contributed popular motives for the group of Indo-Portuguese embroideries to which the Bargello hanging belongs.

The two-dimensional and at the same time plastic rendering of figures as in Indian relief sculpture also characterizes the mode of representation in this hanging. The body of each figure is executed as a solid area of chain-stitch embroidery while the faces are delineated in a consistently three-quarter view with a single row of chain-stitch outlining the stereotyped features.

The marine border scene (I) with Portuguese ships in a sea filled with Indian mythological water spirits is also found in the so-called Indo-Portuguese rugs which were produced in Central Persia (Isfahan or Kashan), and then afterwards in Shiraz.¹³ These marine depictions have been referred both to the Biblical story of Noah's ark and to the Indian legend of Vishnu in his fish incarnation, Matsya, leading the ark of Manu out of the Great Flood.

The decorative border (II) of grotesque motives and the refined smaller borders (a) birds and grapevines and (b) birds and tendrils share the same ornamentation as found in the ivory inlay on small chests, boxes, and furniture of colonial workmanship. These borders have a dual origin in both the European and indigenous Indian vocabularies of decorative motives. Easily individualized as Hindu mythological motives are such figures as the "kinnaras", half-man, half-bird celestial musicians, or the "kirttimukha", the mask-like face of glory, protector of sacred places. Borders similar to border II are also found repeated in the Persian hunt rugs.

Some interesting points come to light through a comparison of the Bargello hanging to some other coverlets or hangings of the same group. Like the Bargello hanging, two panels in the Cooper Union Museum textile collection, inv. nos. 1947-50-1 and 1951-22-1, have a compositional layout of linked, serrated medallions in vertical panels framed by narrow decorative borders, though the subordinate marine (I) and grotesque (II) decorative borders are lacking.¹⁴ A striking similarity exists in the layout of the motives in the medallions and background as well as in the placement of the various kinds of subject matter: Row 1 — repetition of a symmetrical, emblematic motif (the tree of life); Row 2 — hunt scenes; Row 3 — hunt scenes; Row 4 — European narratives (the Old Testament story of Judith and Holofernes in one, and a Portuguese colonial melodrama in the other). Also in these embroideries the background is filled with hunt scenes. But where the Bargello

hanging depicts solely European hunters in the background, the Cooper Union hangings include hunters in Indian, Mughal, and European dress alike. In the medallion scenes the Cooper Union examples seem to have motives that are more Indian in their association, e.g., elephant riders, Mughal hunters, Hindu mythological figures — one scene almost literally repeated in both pieces shows an avatar of Vishnu. The medallion scenes of the Bargello hanging, on the other hand, despite the externally Indian character of some motives, are more European in connotation. The narrow bands have the same pattern (birds and grapevines) save that the designs of the Cooper Union panels are less skillfully drawn. The yellow embroidery on the light ground of these panels is less emphasized than the highly contrasting yellowish-white embroidery on the dark ground of the Bargello hanging. Although the elements of the composition are the same, the quality of the drawing of the design seems less refined and almost awkward in comparison to the notable craftsmanship of the Bargello hanging.

Among a number of Indo-Portuguese coverlets repeating the same Old Testament themes and border decorations as in the Bargello hanging, though having a more usual layout for this group of embroideries, four might be mentioned: those from the A. L. Davison Collection, Pennsylvania, the J. B. Wilbur Collection, Vermont, the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and the Museu de Arte Antiga, Lisbon.¹⁵ In the motives are such subjects as the Old Testament stories of David and Goliath, David and Solomon, David and Abigail, Judith and Holofernes, and the Judgement of Solomon; St. George and the dragon; the labors of Hercules; and so forth. For example, like the Bargello hanging, the Wilbur embroidery presents the same three episodes of the story of David and Goliath. While these events take on primary importance in the Bargello hanging by being situated in the principal medallions, in the Wilbur coverlet they are given less importance by being placed in the small lateral lunettes.

It is interesting to note that in all the above-mentioned examples and in the Bargello hanging, the poses of the figures in relation to the subject represented may be considered variations of a fixed vocabulary. Such figures occur also in Western lace and embroidery and in contemporary pattern books. Perhaps these embroideries came from the same workshop or a group of regional workshops employing a repertoire of set patterns oriented towards European taste. These patterns of stereotyped forms were utilized repeatedly even for the portrayal of diverse subjects. Certain compositions of figures recur consistently, though the quality of draftsmanship may differ from one hanging to another. For example, the composition of medallion F of the Bargello hanging, David presenting the head of Goliath to the king (Fig. 6), appears in these other embroideries, where it is used to represent other Old Testament

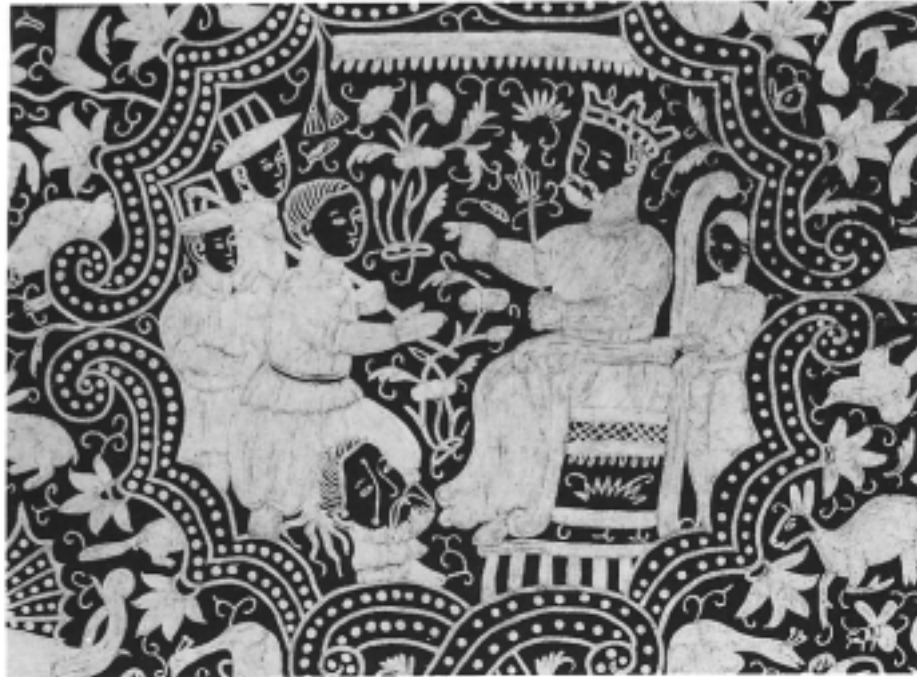


Fig. 6. — Medallion F — David presenting the head of Goliath to the King.
Detail from the Bargello hanging.

stories. The scene consists of a group of three persons before a king with an attendant. The king, dressed in a long robe and low crown and seated on a raised canopied throne (resembling the contemporary Indo-Portuguese chairs), appears more in the Indian tradition of royalty than in the European. Noticeable, too, is the stylized gesture of his hands with two fingers of the right hand extended in royal benediction and a mace held in the left — equally interpretable as a Christian or Hindu benediction. This treatment shows a close similarity to the figural groups in some Indian miniatures which represent kings or Hindu gods giving their blessings. This same composition appears in other contemporary Indo-Portuguese decorative arts as well, — for instance, an Indo-Portuguese ivory-decorated writing box (Fig. 7).¹⁶

This composition in the other Indo-Portuguese embroideries shows exactly the same representation of the king enthroned (be it Saul, David, or Solomon): The group before the king, whether consisting of men or women, contains three figures placed in the same positional relationship one to another. Abigail and female companions before King David (Davison) is

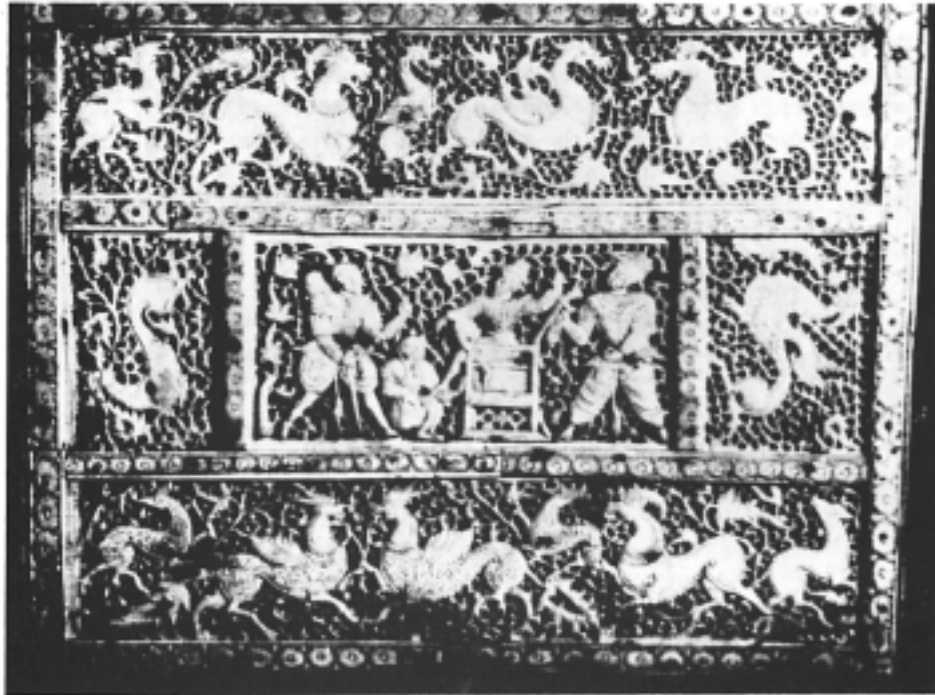


Fig. 7. — Indo-Portuguese ivory-decorated writing box. Ca. 1600. *Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Lisbon.*

The same pattern of group arrangement as in Fig. 7 is seen here applied to carved ivory filigree.

interchangeable with that of Judith and female companions before Holofernes or Judith presenting the head of Holofernes to the king (Davison, Boston, Lisbon) or even of young David and male companions presenting the head of Goliath to the king (Bargello, Wilbur) or again the judgment of King Solomon (Davison, Boston, Lisbon). This repetition is seen even in details — e.g., the decapitated head of Goliath or Holofernes or Sheba the Benjamite rebel in precisely the same typology, finishing with a long lock of hair.

Not only in the major scenes but also in the secondary motives of the background, that is, hunter and quarry and floral motives, the repetition of fixed patterns is clearly evident. Included among these set figures are the mounted hunter holding a lance, the hunter bending in shooting position, the hunter carrying bagged game, as well as repetitive depictions of animals, birds, and vegetation; it is interesting to note the stylized motif of lotus flowers and geese near a pond — a Buddhist symbol of the celestial region

which becomes purely an ornamental motif. Whereas the Bargello hanging has these motives scattered throughout the background field of the vertical panels, the Davison, Wilbur, Boston, and Lisbon examples feature these hunting scenes strictly in the borders. The marine scene as well as the grotesque decorative border in these other embroideries repeat the same forms (Portuguese ships, Hindu mythological sea sprites, etc.) seen in the Bargello hanging.

Unique in the Bargello hanging is the decided thematic continuity in the medallion scenes, whereas, in the other Indo-Portuguese coverlets noted here, the same subject matter appears less ordered. The typical coverlet has a *mélange* of Old Testament, Graeco-Roman classical, and Indian figures. Rather, in the Bargello hanging is seen an iconographic program which revolves around the theme equally applicable to all its constituent elements, namely, the theme of good overcoming evil by means of the virtues of valor, courage, and prowess — Christian as well as pagan, ancient Greek and Roman as well as Hindu virtues. The chivalric moral virtues from Eastern and European legends are alike: good overcoming evil signified by man overcoming beast (St. George, or his Hindu equivalent in Vishnu, and the dragon, Hercules and the stag, boar, or lion)¹⁷; man overcoming human evil (David and Goliath); all good occurring under the aegis of the Portuguese rule symbolized by the crowned double-headed imperial eagle.

In addition, in some Indian temple decoration such as the reliefs on the Hoysalesvara temple, Halebid, 1141-82, the subject matter is stratified according to a fixed cosmic order.¹⁸ Often, at the base the figures are portrayed with much animation but grow gradually less so until arriving at the uppermost stratum with the hieratic representation of the deities. Perhaps in the Bargello hanging, too, the structure of the design may be related to these ideas; thus pointing to an Indian interpretation of the European elements: the borders represent the vegetative and marine worlds; the background represents the world of animals; the medallions, the world of mankind where good overcomes evil under the good government of the imperial eagle, — hence the creation of a continuity both on grounds of structure as well as of subject matter.¹⁹

Perhaps there exist more hangings with the same compositional structure and the same motives as of the Bargello hanging in other museums and collections, but no study has as yet been made to bring them together. Here is only a single contribution to these possibilities. The Bargello hanging exemplifies a less common type of Indo-Portuguese hanging composition, a relative thematic unity, a distinctive positive-negative effect of light-colored

embroidery on a dark ground similar to that of the inlaid objects from the other Indo-Portuguese decorative arts, and a high quality of design as well as of execution. In this harmonizing of European and Indian elements a work of exceptional craftsmanship and artistic value is created.



Fig. 8. — Section of border from similar Indo-Portuguese hanging embroidered in undyed cotton chain-stitch on pale yellow silk tabby backed with coarse undyed cotton tabby. Ca. 6" h. Property of Mrs. Howard Sachs.

FOOTNOTES:

1. Technical summary:
LOCATION: Florence, Museo Nazionale (Bargello), Carrand Collection n. 2255.
OBJECT: Embroidered wall hanging.
ATTRIBUTION: Indo-Portuguese, Bengal; first third of seventeenth century.
PROVENANCE: Donated to the Museum in the Louis Carrand Collection in 1888; previous history unknown.
DIMENSIONS: H. 2.33 x W. 2.00 meters. According to the dimensions of the motives and in comparison with other hangings having a similar layout, it is possible that a cut strip of about 40 cm. would complete the upper part of the hanging.
EXECUTION: Yellowish-white Tussur silk thread embroidered in chain-stitch on a purplish-blue cotton ground (violet-red warp, dark blue weft) composed of three vertical strips, each about 67 cm. wide, sewn together. Coarse jute back facing. Remnants of fringe surround three sides of hanging: alternated red and white (*bombyx mori*) silk thread. Silk analysis confirmed by Dr. Raffaella Rossi, Scientific Faculty, University of Pisa.
2. In her article, "An Indo-Portuguese embroidery from Goa", *Gazette des Beaux Arts*, XXXIV (Aug., 1948), pp. 117-132, Marian Estabrook Moeller attributed these embroideries to the Goa region, since this city was the capitol of Portugal's eastern colonial trade and the center of commercial exchange between East and West, and dated them between 1575-1630. More recently John Irwin ("Indo-Portuguese embroideries of Bengal", *Indian Art and Letters, Journal of the Royal India, Pakistan and Ceylon Society*, XXVI, n.2, 1952, pp. 65-73; and "Indian textile trade in the seventeenth century: III — Bengal", *Journal of Indian Textile History*, III, 1957, pp. 59-72) demonstrated that these embroideries come instead from the Bengal region. In concurrence with documentary and stylistic evidence Irwin, by a scientific analysis of the silk thread from ten Indo-Portuguese embroideries having more or less similar designs and embroidery technique (chain-stitch), found that the thread was wild Tussur silk which was produced in that period especially in the Bengal region and that the ground fabric was coarse cotton or jute. Bengal, furthermore, was an important center of Indian embroidery even before the advent of the Portuguese. He dates these works from 1550 to 1650.
3. Reynaldo Dos Santos, *Historia del Arte Portugués* (Barcelona, 1960), "Tejidos y colchas", p. 362. For examples of some of the various types of Indo-Portuguese embroidered coverlets, quilts, and hangings see Maria José de Mendonça, "Alguns tipos de colchas indo-portuguesas no coleção do Museu de Arte Antiga," *Boletim do Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga*, Lisboa, II, n. 2, 1951, pp. 1-21. See also exhibition catalogue: *5a Exposição Temporária — Colchas Bordados dos Séculos XVII e XVIII*, Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Lisboa, 1945.
4. See illustrations in G. F. Wingfield Digby, "Sixteenth-Century Silk Damasks: a Spanish Group," *Burl. Mag.*, LXXIV (1939), May, pp. 222-228.
5. For example see Wilhelm Bode and Ernst Kühnel, *Vorderasiatische Knüpfteppiche aus alter Zeit* (Braunschweig, 1955) 4th ed., fig. 76: medallion rug with hunt scenes, Central Persia (Kashan), first half of sixteenth century, (Vienna, Osterreichisches Museum); fig. 94: compartment rug with personages, Kirman, or Kashan, late sixteenth century. (England, Duke of Buccleuch Collection); fig. 119: Indian rug, India, seventeenth century, (Boston, Museum of Fine Arts). Cf. Arthur Upham Pope and Phyllis Ackerman, *A Survey of Persian art from prehistoric times to the present* (London, 1938-39), vol. XII, pl. 1072B: silk compound cloth, Kashan, seventeenth century, (Lyons, Musée des Tissus); pl. 1092: silk tapestry, Kashan?, middle sixteenth century, (England, Mrs. W. H. Moore Collection). Kashan was the second most important center, after Tabriz, of the Safavid silk industry.
6. For example, the Késava temple, Somnāthpur, 1268, shows the well-defined horizontal tiers of sculptured decoration. Reproduced in Benjamin Rowland, *The Art and Architecture of India* (Middlesex, 1956, 2nd ed.), pl. 124.

7. The interior corridor ceiling of the Mināksi temple, Madura, seventeenth century, is divided into rectangular compartments containing single or pairs of Hindu figures in hieratic poses. Reproduced in *The Encyclopedia of World Art* (New York, Toronto, London, (1963), vol. VII, pls. 493-494. Interesting to note is that—like the Bargello hanging this ceiling decoration makes effective use of a dotted band motif to frame the various sections.
8. For further discussion of this subject and illustrated examples see K. De B. Codrington, "Mughal marquetry," *Burl. Mag.*, LVIII (1931), pp. 79-85.
9. See the examples in Wilhelm Slomann, "The Indian Period of European Furniture: I, II, III," *Burl. Mag.*, LXV (1934), pp. 113-126, 157-171, 201-214.
10. The similarity in decorative elements is clearly evident in a comparison of a detail of the carving of the Dhāmekh stupa, Sārṇāth, Gupta period, (Rowland, *op. cit.*, pl. 78a) with the motives embroidered in silk on linen, Italy, mid-sixteenth century — Marie Schuette and Sigrid Müller-Christensen, *Il ricamo nella storia e nell'arte* (Ital. ed., Roma, 1963), fig. 327 : Firenze, Museo Nazionale, Carrand Collection n. 2250; fig. 328 : Firenze, Museo Nazionale, Carrand Collection, n. 2248.
11. See above note 5.
12. Examples of European embroideries with Old Testament themes are included in Yvonne Hackenbroch, *English and other Needlework in the Irwin Untermyer Collection* (London, 1960), fig. 208 — scenes from the story of David and Goliath, Italy, first half of seventeenth century; Schuette-Müller, *op. cit.*, fig. 329 — scenes from the story of Judith and Holofernes, silk embroidered on linen, Italy, second half of sixteenth century, (Firenze, Museo Nazionale, Carrand Collection, n. 2253).
13. For a discussion of "Portuguese" rug motives see Friedrich Sarre, "A 'Portuguese' carpet from Knole," *Burl. Mag.*, LVIII (1931), pp. 214-19.
14. Cooper Hewitt Museum, New York: n. 1947-50-1, cotton hanging embroidered with yellow Tussur silk in chain-stitch, Bengal, early seventeenth century; n. 1951-22-1, cotton hanging embroidered with yellow Tussur silk in chain-stitch, Bengal, early seventeenth century (given to the Museum by Miss Alice B. Beer, Curator of Textiles, Cooper Hewitt Museum). These hangings were briefly mentioned in Jean Mailey, "Indian textiles in the Museum's Collection," *Cooper Union Museum Chronicle*, II (1953), n. 5, p. 134. N. 1951-22-1 appears to be the same hanging reproduced in Irwin, *op. cit.*, 1952, in fig. 7, stating "present whereabouts unknown".
15. Austin L. Davison Collection, Pennsylvania: hanging of brown cotton embroidered with yellowish-brown Tussur silk in chain-stitch; chain-stitch motives are appliquéd upon the ground. 10½ ft. x 8 ft. Bengal, early seventeenth century. Discussed in detail in Moeller, *op. cit.*, 1948, figs. 1, 2, 4, 6-8. See also Irwin, *op. cit.*, 1952, fig. 3.

James B. Wilbur Collection, Vermont: coverlet with yellow silk chain-stitch embroidery. 7 ft. x 6 ft. 11 in., (Bengal, early seventeenth century). *Sale Catalogue N. 4051: Furniture and Decorations*, American Art Association, Anderson Galleries, Inc., New York, Oct. 14, 1933, lot n. 404 (from the collection of the late James B. Wilbur, Manchester, Vermont) with illustration.

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston: n. 46.421, coverlet embroidered with yellow Tussur silk in chain-stitch. Bengal, early seventeenth century. Reproduced in Irwin, *op. cit.*, 1952, fig. 2.

Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Lisbon: quilt of two layers of cotton embroidered with yellow Tussur silk in chain-stitch. 3.30 x 2.80 m., Bengal, first third of seventeenth century. Discussed in Maria José Mendonça, "Bordados Indo-Portugueses: Novas aquisições do Museu de Lisboa," *Boletim do Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga*, III, n. 1, 1953, pp. 34-39, fig. 1.

16. See exhibition catalogue: *Influências do Oriente na Arte Portuguesa Continental/A Arte nas Províncias Portuguesas do Ultramar*, Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Lisboa, 1957; Sala II, n. 53 — Writing box, 185 x 195 x 238 mm., Indo-Portuguese end of sixteenth — beginning of seventeenth century. In the center of each side, in a field of grotesque and foliage decoration, are narrative scenes. On the two shorter sides are represented events from Hindu mythology; on the two longer sides and the cover are depicted figures in Portuguese dress of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries in a hunting scene, a tourney, and what is possibly a scene showing the liberation of a captive (illustrated). Carved ivory lattice-work on top of gold-leaf covered wood. The subject matter and the layout are the same as in the Indo-Portuguese embroideries.
17. The labors of Hercules were employed in European art in the late sixteenth century, especially in the decoration of public buildings where they signified the triumph of good government. The idea of civic valor was also attached to the figure of David in his vanquishing of Goliath. In Piazza Signoria, Florence, for example, statues representing both Hercules and David were placed in front of Palazzo Vecchio, the governmental building, during the sixteenth century.
18. The Hoysálesvara temple, Halebid, 1141-82, (Rowland, *op. cit.*, pl. 125b) is a notable example where the tiers of decoration are subject to a predetermined iconographic plan.
19. Considering that the two previously mentioned hangings having the same medallion layout present an upper row of medallions containing the tree of life, an hypothesis might be that in the Bargello hanging the incomplete row of medallions, of which paired animals are visible, could have contained the tree of life motif. This would also be in accord with the iconographic program by relating all the strata of earthly life to the eternal, the tree of life.