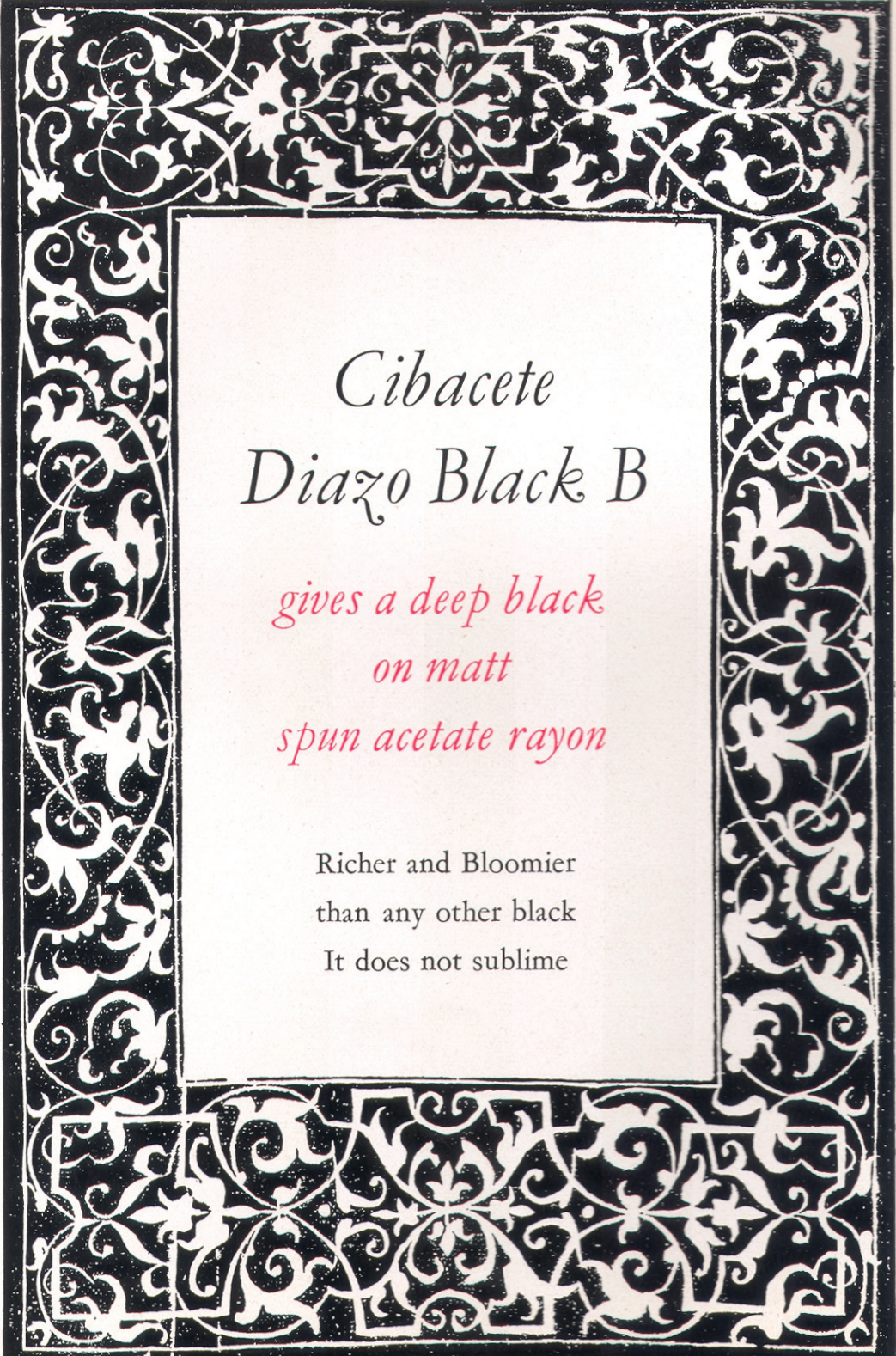




*St. Augustine
being consecrated bishop.
Painting by Jaume Huguet
(1448-1488). Gremio de los
Curtidores, Barcelona.
This work, painted between
1486 and 1488, shows what
profuse use was made of silk
and embroidery for the vest-
ments of the Spanish clergy.*

The Development of the Textile Crafts in Spain



Cibacete
Diazo Black B

gives a deep black
on matt
spun acetate rayon

Richer and Bloomier
than any other black
It does not sublime

Basle . April 1939

The Development of the Textile Crafts in Spain

Contents : **Outstanding Dates in Spanish History . . .** page 698

Europe and Spain

By A. Wittlin „ 699

The Development of Wool Weaving in Spain

By A. Wittlin „ 701

The Development of Silk Weaving in Spain

By A. Wittlin „ 707

Tapestry Weaving and Carpet Knotting in Spain

By A. Wittlin „ 722

Historical Gleanings „ 727

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Outstanding Dates in Spanish History

Pre-Christian Era

The Iberians, coming probably from Western Asia via North Africa, settle in Spain. The Basque idiom is probably derived from their language.

Immigration of Celtic tribes from Central Europe, probably in the 7th century B.C.

Foundation of Phoenician and Greek colonies on the Spanish coast.

3rd Century B.C. After the First Punic War (264–241) a large part of the Spanish peninsula came under the rule of Carthage.

201 B.C. Defeat of Carthage; during the following century Spain became a Roman province.

Middle Ages

A.D. 605–711 Kingdom of the Western Goths in Spain.

711 Battle of Jerez de la Frontera. Fall of the Visigoth kingdom. The greater part of Spain subjected by the Arabs.

711–1492 Mohammedan rule in Spain, which, in course of time, by the rise of Christian states (Asturias, Castile, León, Navarre, Aragon, and Catalonia) is more and more restricted to the South. Arts (architecture), sciences, handicrafts (silk-weaving), and commerce, flourish under Moorish rule. Sancho III of Navarre (died 1035) unites for the first time the Christian states of Spain.

1479 Ferdinand of Aragon (1479–1516) becomes king. His marriage to Isabella of Castile (1474–1504) brought about the union of the two countries, and marked the beginning of the kingdom of Spain.

1492 Fall of the Mohammedan kingdom of Granada. Columbus sails for the West Indies.

Modern Age

1519–1556 Charles V, German Emperor and King of Spain, rules over Germany, the Netherlands, Burgundy, Spain and the American colonies, Sicily, and Naples. Height of Spanish power.

1519–1521 Conquest of Mexico by Cortez.

1556–1598 Philip II. Subjection and oppression of the Moriscos (Moors who had become Christians) in Southern Spain. Wars in the Netherlands.

1588 Defeat of the Spanish Armada.

1598–1621 Philip III. The Northern Netherlands become independent. About 800 000 Moriscos are driven from Spain. Economic and political decline begins in Spain.

1621–1665 Philip IV. During the Thirty Years War Spain is again at war with the Netherlands, which are declared independent in 1648.

1640 Portugal becomes independent of Spain.

1659 Treaty of the Pyrenees with France. Unfavourable to Spain.

1600–1680 The poets Calderon and Cervantes, the painters Velazquez and Murillo.

1701–1713 The death of Charles II (1665–1700), the last of the Spanish Habsburgs, led to the War of the Spanish Succession between France and Austria. The Bourbons held the throne of Spain.

1808 Spain occupied by the French. Joseph Bonaparte King of Spain. Guerilla war against France.

1814 The French leave Spain.

1808 et seq. The Spanish colonies in America secede from the mother country.

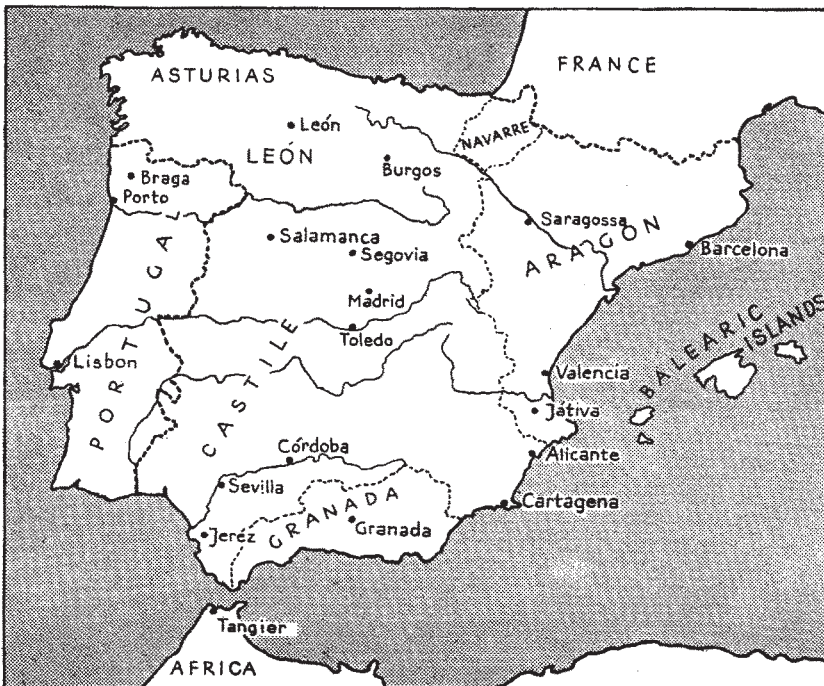
1898 War between Spain and the United States of America. Loss of Cuba.

European civilization is based on that of the Graeco-Roman world, a rich heritage, and one which has bred not a little prejudice. It is part of this prejudice for the European to regard Europe as the heart of the world, and to judge accordingly. That is a survival of the Greek tradition, which regarded all non-Greeks as barbarians. Thus Europe's opinion of Spain was favourable, when the fate of the peninsula in the West was linked with that of the rest of the continent; when Spain went her own way, the opinion changed to pity or contempt. There have been periods in the history of Europe when the Pyrenees, the natural boundary between Spain and the rest of Europe, appeared to lose their significance; once, in the days when Spain became a province of the Roman Empire, and again in the 16th century, when the peninsula became the mother country of an empire which comprised in Europe the countries of the German Empire, the Netherlands, Burgundy, and a considerable portion of Italy. During the first half of the century, the centre of gravity in Europe was shifted to Spain. There was, however, also a period during which the mountain

barrier of the Pyrenees played an important part, a time when the fate of Spain was entirely different from that of the rest of Europe. This was the period of the Moorish—and Mohammedan—kingdom in the south of the peninsula. The final union of Spain under a Christian king, under the ruling house of the central province of Castile, and the overthrow of the Moorish kingdom were celebrated as European victories, European at that time being synonymous with Christian.

With the passing of the centuries, the European opinion of the Spanish Moors became more detached and just. Some merits of the Moors in Spain had always been too outstanding to admit of denial. Especially with regard to the textile crafts, weaving, carpet-making, and embroidery, the Moorish period brought considerable achievements, which formed the basis of the crafts throughout the Iberian peninsula.

Seen from the European point of view, Spain is a spur jutting out from the main body of the continent, a peripheric figure. Seen in the light of its situation with regard to other continents, it assumes a different aspect. The



The Spanish peninsula at the end of the 14th century, showing the several states. In the South the Moorish kingdom of Granada.

peninsula becomes a focal point, a bridge between the continents. Gibraltar and its narrow seas bring Spain so close to Africa that it can scarcely be said to belong exclusively to Europe. In such close proximity to Africa Spain is linked with Asia by way of the African north-east coast. The history of several thousand years has shown the importance of the road from the interior of Asia westward through North Africa, and of the close affinity of the countries which surround the shores of the Mediterranean. Migrating peoples and caravans used this route. The merchandise and the ideas of the East poured from India, Persia, Syria, and Asia Minor via North Africa to Spain, and from there were frequently transmitted to the rest of Europe:

silks and carpets of the Orient, the religion of Islam, and the science of the Arabs.

Spain was, moreover, not only a bridge to the South-East, but also to the West, to the Americas. It was from Sevilla that the Genoese seaman Christopher Columbus, scorned by many as a fantastic dreamer, sailed out to find a shorter, westerly route to India. This voyage, made possible by Queen Isabella of Castile, led to the discovery of America.

A mediator between four continents, Europe, Africa, Asia, and America, Spain was at different times subjected to their varying influences. These influences made themselves felt in every manifestation of Spanish life, in language, in the people themselves, their customs, arts, and not least, in their textile crafts.



Cibacete Orange

4 R

**Excellent as a self shade
or as a basis
for fast to light browns
on acetate rayon**

Note: Spain is rich in textiles. This wealth finds expression in the quantity, variety, and quality of the products. Wool-weaving flourished in Roman Spain, in Christian Spain of the 15th and 16th centuries, and in the 19th century. The 16th century also saw the zenith of Spanish silk-weaving. Carpets and the tapestries of the 17th and 18th centuries occupy a position apart in the history of Spanish textiles. In wool-weaving alone it is possible to trace the development from its beginnings to the height of individual craftsmanship and to the mechanically made product of modern industry. The beginnings of silk-weaving are obscured to us. It was introduced into Spain by the Moors, and from the beginning of its recorded history it appears as a highly developed craft. Mural tapestries were also made in Spain after the pattern of those of Flanders and France. This development of the textile crafts was made possible by the clemency of the Spanish climate, in which the mulberry-tree flourished excellently, by the abundance of grazing land in the mountains, and of running water, which is necessary to the dyer. Spain is a country which combines the warm climate of the Mediterranean with that of a mountainous country, thus it is simultaneously a land of silk and wool. This close proximity of contrasts is characteristic of Spain in general; it makes the country all the more attractive, but at the same time increases the difficulties of the foreign observer. It would go far beyond the bounds of a single number of this journal to give an account of the Spanish textile crafts in their entirety. Certain aspects of the subjects will be treated at a later date.

A.W.

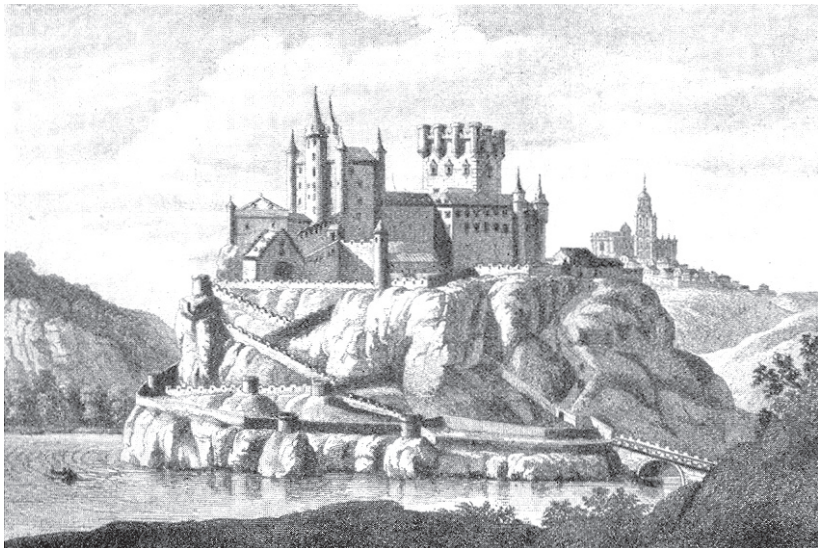
The Development of Wool Weaving in Spain

By A. Wittlin

The earliest reports of woven fabrics in Spain give wool as a material. The woman with spindle in hand is to this day a familiar figure of the Spanish village street (see ill. p. 704). The Spanish peasant-woman spins whether seated or walking, in the morning, in the evening; it seems as natural to her as breathing. This habit may be traced back 4,000 years. In prehistoric times already, woollen fabrics are said to have been made in the district of Sagunto and Játiva. With the conquest of Spain by Rome the records become more definite (cf. Ciba Review No. 9, p. 292). The Romans of Augustus' day (from 31 B.C. to A.D. 14) imported woollen textiles

from Catalonia. Especially in demand were the red woollen cloths of the Catalan towns of Tarragona and Merida; they were exported to Rome to be made into robes of office. The exports of Catalan textiles entailed comparatively little trouble and expense, as the neighbouring town of Barcelona was an important sea-port even in those early days.

Catalan weaving survived the collapse of the Roman Empire. In the Middle Ages, e.g. during the 13th century, the production of woollen cloth in Catalonia was so considerable that it led to close commercial relations with Constantinople, Alexandria, and other towns of North Africa. Wherever there was

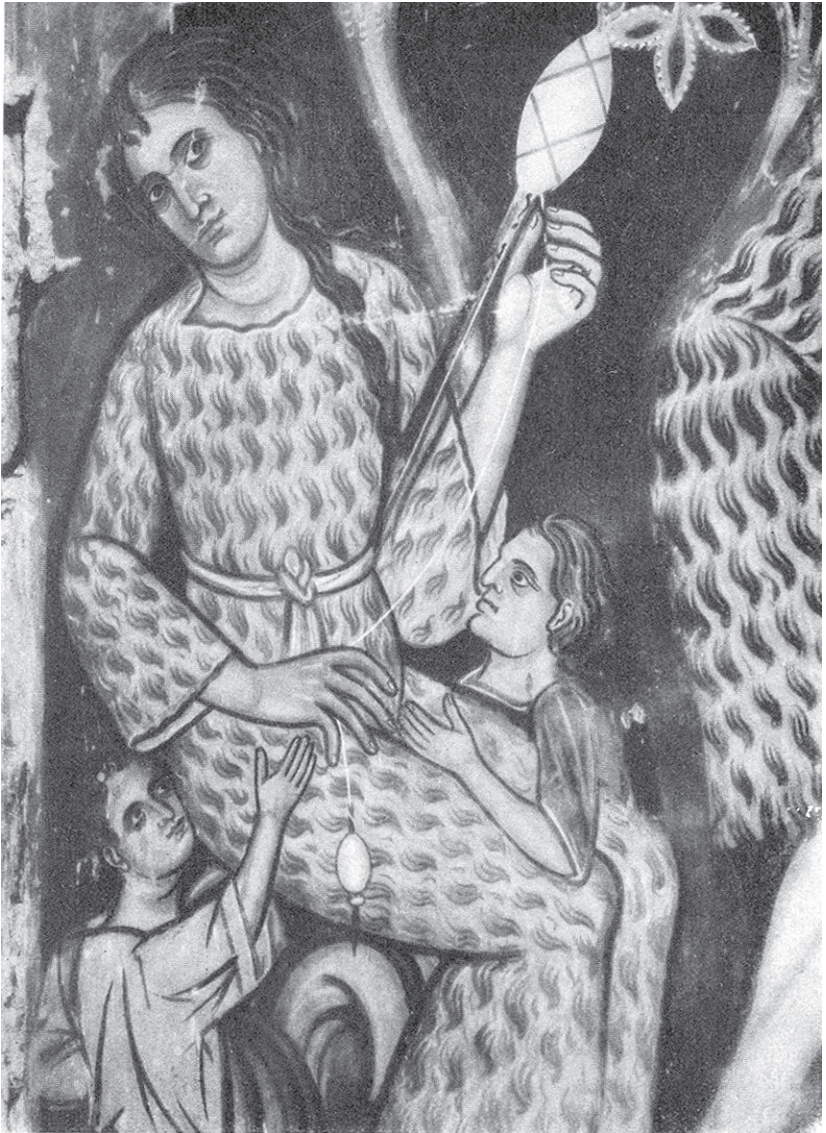


The castle of Segovia. In the 15th century Segovia was a centre of Spanish wool-weaving. Engraving from Breton "Spain", 1818.

money or commercial enterprise on the Mediterranean coasts, Catalans would settle. They founded colonies abroad, and Catalonia even appointed its own consuls. In the Middle Ages the craftsmen were often merchants, too, and the Catalan weavers not only sold their own goods, but frequently owned the vessels in which they were transported. Judged by modern standards, their undertakings had, however, a very limited scope. In the 14th century, for instance, the company of wool merchants in Tarrasa, Catalonia, were proud of owning two sailing ships, which carried on

their trade with Greece and Egypt. At the same time woollen textiles were imported into Spain from the Netherlands and from France.

Spanish wool-weaving received a fresh impetus towards the end of the 14th century. Again, the impulse to this new development was imparted by a political event: the marriage of Henry III of Castile (1390-1406) and Catherine of Lancaster. Among the dowry of the English princess there was one peculiar item: a flock of sheep. According to an unsubstantiated tradition the breed known as "Merino sheep" are descended from this flock (cf.



*Woman spinning.
Section of a
Catalan mural of
the 13th century.*

p. 732). The Castilian town of Segovia became the centre of a textile industry so flourishing that it provided work for 34,000 men. The number of sheep in Spain was estimated at several millions, but they were not sufficient to supply the needs of the native industry, and wool had to be imported from England. Cloth woven in Castile from English wool was sold back to England, an eloquent proof of the quality of Castilian weaving. Woollen textiles from certain Spanish workshops appear—as was the case in Roman times—to have been considered costly enough to be sent as presents to foreign princes. Early in the 17th century the Spanish court sent a quantity of cloth from Guadalajara as a token of esteem to the Sultan of Turkey, and England began to fear that the Spaniards might become a menace to the monopoly held by the English wool trade in the Orient.

However, when these fears began to be felt in England, the Spanish wool industry had already passed the peak of its prosperity. Spain had the most favourable conditions imaginable for a flourishing wool industry with a wide range of potential markets, but it failed to profit by them. There were large and rich pastures, abundance of water, skilled workmen, and eager customers, but in the

middle of the 16th century already the government began to impose heavy taxes on the manufacturers of woollen goods.

The reasons for this policy were as follows. The King of Spain, who ruled over a large part of the earth's surface, was "His Catholic Majesty", and regarded it as his duty to restore the undisputed sovereignty of the Catholic Church, which had lost much ground through the Reformation. To carry out this task immense sums of money were required. It is true that in the 16th century Spain possessed a vast colonial empire (South and Central America, a large part of what is now the United States of America, the Philippine Islands, Madeira, the Azores, Guinea, the Congo, Angola, Ceylon, Borneo, Sumatra, the Moluccas) and drew enormous quantities of gold from America, but it was not enough, and the Spanish kings were always in need of money. Furthermore, the influx of gold from the colonies led to a devaluation of the currency, a fact which in itself made an increase of taxes necessary. The administration of the Netherlands, small though they were as compared with the empire as a whole, swallowed up enormous sums of money and a vast amount of energy. Charles V (1519-1556), however, who in 1521 had left the rule of the

Man of the district of Segovia. The tartan of his waistcoat is as native to Spain as it is to Scotland. Photo: Patronato Nacional del Turismo.



Spanish woman with the characteristic woollen cloak. Such cloaks have been worn in Spain since Moorish times. Photo: Andrada.





Shepherds of Merino sheep. Engraving from Breton "Spain", 1819.

Austrian Crown-lands to his brother Ferdinand, chained the Netherlands to Spain, instead of joining them to Germany, because he wished to "heal the wounds of the Reformation in the Netherlands". His son and successor, Philip II (1556-1598), carried on the struggle to bring back the Protestants to the fold of the Church with increased fanaticism; in 1588 he sent his ill-fated Armada to England; he ravaged the Netherlands, which Spain was to lose altogether in 1648, and in Spain itself the Inquisition was set up to hunt out and suppress anything which might seem like heresy. The disastrous venture of the Armada was scarcely over, when Spain received another unpleasant surprise from England. On the death of Elizabeth, James I (1603-1625) had succeeded to the throne of England. A son of Mary Queen of Scots, he abandoned the policy of Elizabeth, sought a union between the courts of England and Spain, and avoided all conflict with that country. It was this friendly attitude which induced him to send to the king of Spain a bundle of letters which he had found among other documents belonging to Elizabeth. These were letters from Moriscos (Spanish Moors) promising the Queen of England their aid in an attack on her arch-enemy Philip II of Spain. The Moriscos were Mohammedans who had become Christians after the overthrow of the Moorish kingdom in southern Spain at the end of the 15th century. Their conversion had, however, only been an act of expediency, in order to evade persecution and to secure advantages; at heart they remained Mohammedans and enemies of his Catholic Majesty, their legitimate sovereign. Rumours of the intention to

drive the Moriscos out of Spain had been current for some time, but it was only in 1609, when he gained possession of the letters of the Moriscos to Elizabeth, that Philip III issued a decree banishing them from his dominions. The estimates of the number of Moors driven from the country range from three hundred thousand to one million. However that may be, Spain was deprived of a large number of its most able subjects, experienced agriculturists, craftsmen, textile manufacturers, weavers, and dyers. In many respects Spain was wealthy, but it now became poorer in skilled workmen, in artisans, and merchants.

Through the long wars military talent and the spirit of adventure had become characteristic of Spain. America acted like a magnet on the most enterprising spirits of the country, and in this way Spain lost the services of many able men. When therefore in 1636 war broke out between Spain and France, many Spanish factories closed down; but even after the war the position of the Spanish wool industry did not improve.

In 1700 Charles II died, the last of the Spanish branch of the Habsburgs, and nearly all Europe blazed up in war over the succession. After thirteen years of war, a

Peasant woman spinning on the road in Asturias. Photo: Patronato Nacional del Turismo.



prince of the house of Bourbon, a grandson of Louis XIV, became King of Spain as Philip V. The new king took great interest in the wool industry; he reduced the taxes, imported foreign workmen, and forbade the imports of foreign textiles. Spanish officials and officers were ordered to wear Spanish cloth; men who decided to engage in the textile industry were exempt from military service. So prudent a policy was unusual in Spain at that time, and one might be tempted to expect a rise in the wool industry as a result. This is, however, not supported by the report of an Englishman named Townsend who was travelling in Spain in 1787: ... If the sovereign of a country makes a monopoly of any matter (as the King of Spain did of the wool industry), he exerts a harmful influence on his country. What private individual may venture to compete with his sovereign? Where the Crown holds a monopoly, no trade can flourish... The zeal of the new Government went so far that the king himself became the textile manufacturer of Spain. The wool industry was but one monopoly of the Crown, and represented one of many attempts to avert the economic collapse of the country. In the 15th century the town of Segovia had been a flourishing community with thousands of looms; at the end of the 18th century only two hundred and fifty remained. Philip IV (1621-1665) already had founded at Ortiz, not far from Segovia, a new centre of the textile industry. The factory was known as the "Real Fábrica" (Royal Factory) and employed 3,000 workmen. Unfortunately the quality of the goods was not on a level with their quantity. The cloth of the royal factory found unwilling purchasers; it was uneven in texture, badly washed, and therefore badly dyed, as wool which has not been properly cleansed of grease does not dye well. There were, however, still customers who were not over-fastidious and who were practically obliged to buy from the royal factories: the people of the colonies. Whereas Portuguese textiles, especially embroidery, show patterns inspired by Indian motifs, there is very little trace of American influence in Spanish textiles of the period. The Spanish weavers regarded America solely as a market



Peasant woman of the Madrid district spinning. Photo: Andrada.

for cloth of inferior quality; this attitude was one reason for the decline of Spanish weaving.

When in 1808 Napoleon Bonaparte led his armies into Spain, that country once more became open to foreign textiles. This time it was not only foreign textiles, but also modern looms which found their way to Spain, and in Catalonia, the old home of Spanish wool-weaving, a new industry operating on modern lines soon grew up. A temporary law forbidding the export of looms from England impeded the progress of the young Catalan industry for a short time, but it soon recovered, and has held its own until the present day. The textile industry of Catalonia is an important factor in Spanish policy. The textiles of Catalonia link the fate of the province with that of the rest of Spain. In a country where there are so many divergences between the provinces, so many varying interests, and such conflicting individualities, a common interest is of great importance. Catalonia is Spain's best source of textile goods, and Spain is the best customer of the Catalan manufacturers.

Albater. PO levels and softens simultaneously

Cibacete Navy Blue BN
green shade

*For bright and delustered spun
acetate rayon*

Level dyeing

Solid shades

Excellent color value

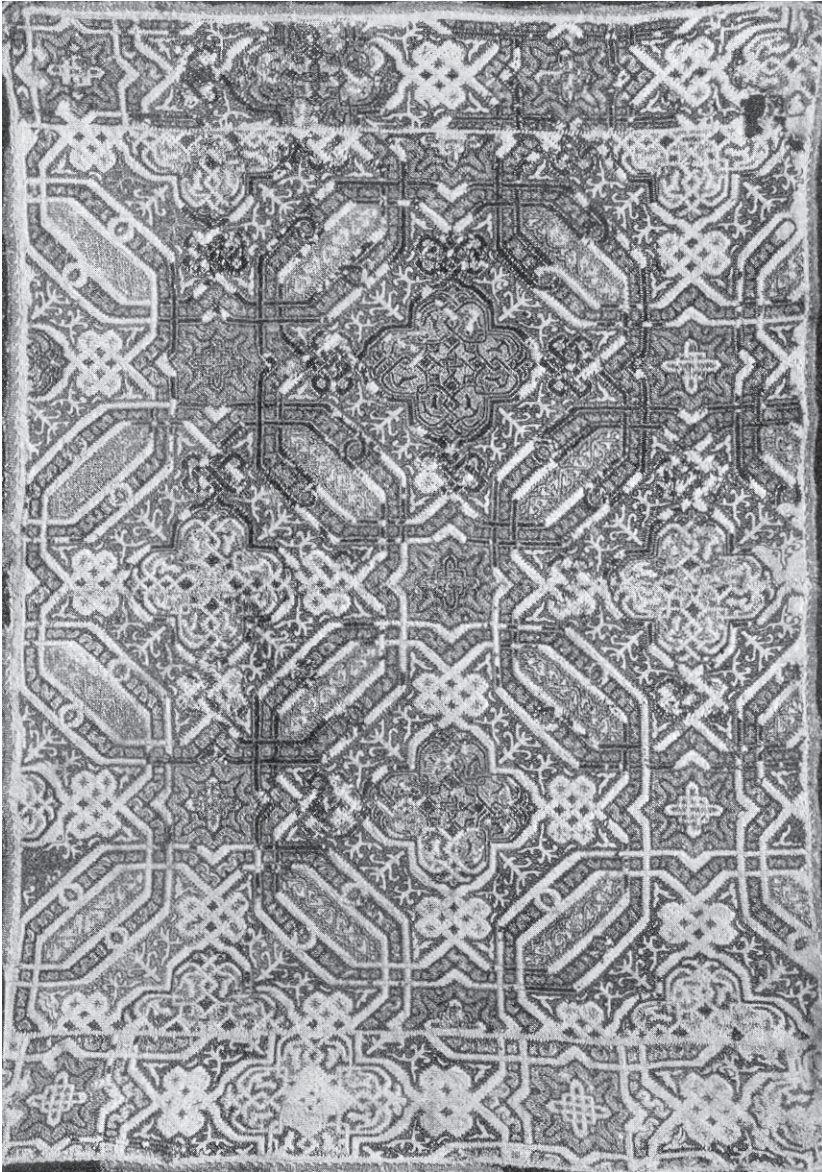
The Development of Silk Weaving in Spain

By A. Wittlin

Moorish-Spanish Silk Weaving

It is not possible to trace the beginnings of silk-weaving in Spain in every detail. Presumably the first silk-weavers in Spain were Moors, that is to say that silk-weaving was unknown till the 8th century. Already in the 9th century, however, the craft appears to have reached a high standard. It is to be assumed that the Moors were highly skilled in silk-

weaving before they gained a footing in Spain. The term "Moorish" is generally used to designate the more westerly of the territories devoted to Islam, and therefore includes the Mohammedan kingdom which existed in southern Spain from the 8th to the 15th century. The terms "Mohammedan" and "Islamic" best express the contrast to the Christian states in Spain. Few among the inhabitants of



*Hispano-Moorish
silk embroidery
from Granada.
Typical endless
geometrical
pattern.
Victoria and
Albert Museum,
London.*

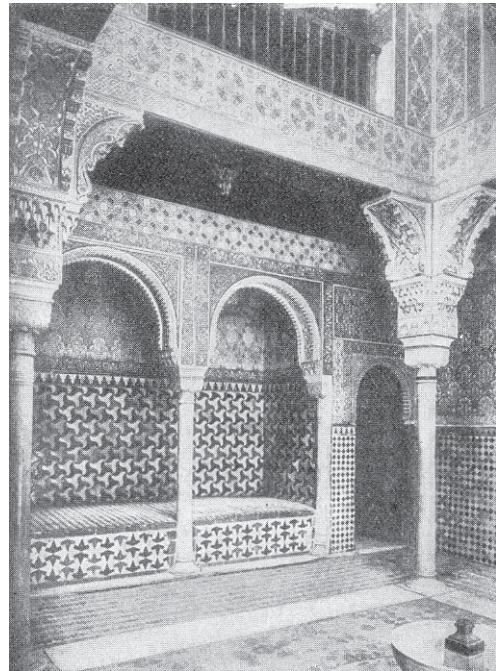


Fragment of an Hispamo-Moorish silk. Probably 12th century. The pattern shows the ancient motif of the tree of life between two peacocks. Below it, an inscription in Cufic characters. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

the Hispamo-Mohammedan kingdom were Arabs; the majority of those who crossed the narrow sea in the early 8th century to raise the standard of Allah and Mohammed against the Goths who ruled in Spain were Berbers from North Africa. In the Mohammedan world race and nationality were less important than religion; the spirit of Islam, which created a vast new spiritual entity, embraced Asia Minor, Syria, Mesopotamia, Persia, Egypt, North Africa, and southern Spain. Ancient Oriental civilization was carried through this vast area to Spain, and from there frequently passed on to the rest of Europe. The technical process of silk-weaving in the Orient is of very ancient origin (cf. Ciba Review No. 11, "The Early History of Silk"), and most of the motives and patterns of Moorish silk-weaving in southern Spain are Oriental. At the beginning of the 13th century Al Shakandi of Cordoba wrote: "The town of Malaga is famous for the manufacture of silk textiles. Silks of all colours and patterns are made there, some of them of such quality that a robe made of them costs thousands of maravedi..." Al Shakandi is particularly enamoured of a purple silk, "isakolato", and of a striped silk called "lolol". Long after the fall of the

Moorish kingdom in Spain the Moorish historian Al Makkari (1591(?)–1632) wrote: "What makes the town of Almeria superior to any other are its various silks. There is for example the "dibaj", which surpasses in quality and durability any dress material made in other countries. The "tiraz" is another famous silk fabric on which the names of sultans, princes, and great nobles are wrought in gold. In Almeria there are eight hundred looms for Tiraz fabrics and 100 looms for cheaper silks. Gaily coloured damasks for curtains and women's turbans keep many hands busy..." The many names of fabrics recorded by old chronicles bear witness to the high standard of silk-weaving in Moorish Spain. Some of these names have not yet been adequately explained. The fabric known as "samit" is said to have been used for massage by people of wealth. A silk of particularly strong texture was "ciclato", which was used for mural hangings; others were "camelote", black or white in colour, "tabis", a taffeta-like silk, "zazahan", "cendal", and many others, all differing in quality, pattern, and shade. As mentioned above, tiraz fabrics with their gold and silver-wrought in-

Sleeping apartment in the Alhambra, the Moorish palace at Granada. The niches and other parts of the walls are covered with glazed, coloured tiles in different geometrical patterns, similar to those frequently seen in Moorish silks.





*Hispano-Moorish
silke fabric,
so-called "tiraz",
14th century.
Arabic characters
and garlands form
the pattern.
Victoria and
Albert Museum,
London.*

scriptions were very popular (see ill. above). The inscriptions were usually religious texts such as: "There is no God but Allah, and Mohammed is his prophet." These tiraz strips were made in special workshops, sometimes in the palaces of princes, which explains the fact that the name of a prince was sometimes interwoven. The inscriptions gave a religious significance to the fabrics, so gold and silver threads were not spared. Costly material was, however, not only used for tiraz fabrics; silk, gold, and silver became inseparable terms. The Moors who settled in Spain, and whose rulers held their magnificent court at Granada, preferred the splendour and luxury displayed particularly in Persia to the severe code prescribed by Mohammed; furthermore, the first enthusiastic period of Islam was over when the Moors founded their kingdom in Spain. At any rate, the words of the Prophet that those who wear silk on earth shall be punished for doing so after death were disregarded at the court of Granada. Not only in this respect was Moorish Spain the home of refinement and culture. The Moors built magnificent palaces and baths, they also possessed the finest libraries, frequented by scholars of such repute that students of all the countries of Europe flocked to those seats of learning. The revival of Greek and Roman literature, which had been almost forgotten during the early Middle Ages, is due to Mohammedan scholars. Mathematicians, physicians, and philosophers achieved fame in the small but

very wealthy Moorish kingdom in Spain. The wealth of the country was maintained by agriculture; the Moors were more skilled in irrigation than any of their successors on Spanish soil to this day. Moorish merchants had trade connections stretching very far afield, and there is no doubt that silks of various kinds were among the best of their exported goods.

Patterns of Hispano-Moorish Silks

Like the technique of silk-weaving, the ornaments and designs of Spanish silks are of Oriental origin. A characteristic feature of these ornaments is their geometrical style. The Koran, the Mohammedans' Bible, forbids the pictorial reproduction of living creatures, and on the other hand, geometrical patterns are eminently suited to the textile technique. Wherever weaving is carried on in a primitive manner, and the weaver is not content to confine himself to plain fabrics, the simple geometrical pattern invariably appears: stripes, squares, and the combination of the two usually known as "tartan". In all primitive weaving we find these tartan patterns, and in Spain they have remained to this day a characteristic feature of wool-weaving (see ill. p. 703). Silk-weaving in Spain produced an unending variety of geometrical motives, polygons, stripes, stars, etc. The famous "endless pattern", with which the Mohammedans cover surfaces, e.g. stuccoed walls, walls with glazed tiles, carved doors, window-frames,

etc., also prevailed in silk-weaving (see ill. p. 708). Even the innumerable possibilities of combining geometrical figures to form new patterns, did not satisfy the Moorish craftsmen indefinitely. To the purely geometrical patterns were added plant and animal motives, very occasionally human figures, all of which were conventionalized to ornamental designs. Natural proportions were secondary to decorative effect; the principle of symmetry, the desire for equal distribution of the pattern, were the paramount considerations in the designer's mind.

One figural motive seen frequently on Moorish silks is worthy of special mention; it is a design representing a plant or tree placed between two stylized animal figures, usually lions or peacocks. The animals are exactly symmetrical, and face each other on either side of the tree. This motive was very popular in the East, both in Byzantium and Persia. The tree, known as the "Tree of Life" was a symbol of fertility in Western Asia. The motive of the "Tree of Life between two Genii" was copied by the Mohammedans from Sassanid

Persia. To the weavers of southern Spain this was only one motive among many, the lines of which were suitable for reproduction in bright colours. It had, however, no longer any symbolic significance for them.

Another figural motive of Moorish silk-weaving is that of an animal in a circle, which is usually repeated in rows. The most usual animals in these motives are the lion and the eagle, well-known figures of ancient Oriental symbolism, now devoid of their original significance, and merely conventional ornaments. The lion was originally a symbol of strength, the eagle a symbol of the sun.

In all branches of applied art in Moorish Spain we find a typical plant ornament, the natural forms of which are greatly conventionalized. Very little remains to recall the organic composition of root, stem, leaves, and flower; as the name "arabesque" denotes, this pattern is regarded as typically Arabian.

Christian Spain and Silk Weaving

The records do not show beyond doubt at what period precisely silk fabrics became com-

Moorish silk from the end of the 10th century. So-called veil of Hixem II. The central portion shows medallions with animal figures. The Cufic inscription reads: "In the name of God, the Gracious, the Merciful. God's blessing, happiness and eternity be with the Caliph, the servant of God, Hixem, Al-Mu'yyed-bil-lab, the Prince of all the Faithful." Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



mon in Christian Spain. There are inventories of silk fabrics owned by Christians, and records of Hispano-Moorish silks bought by Christian Spaniards. In addition there are records of laws governing the use of silks. Among the confiscated property of a minister of king Peter the Cruel of Castile (1350–1369) were 125 chests filled with silk fabrics. For his daughter's dowry John I of Aragon (1387 to 1395) ordered "silk cloths with circle-patterns and twelve silk rugs of different colours, red blue, green, as well as others agreeable to the eye". This order was sent to markets in the neighbouring Moorish kingdom in the South. These two instances show that silk fabrics were considered part of the household appointments of Christian Spaniards of high rank, signs of an extravagant mode of life which persisted in spite of numerous interdicts. The earliest law passed by a Christian king in Spain against extravagance in dress, especially against the use of too much silk, dates from 1234. Throughout the following centuries similar decrees were issued repeatedly, which indicates how little they were regarded. During the 13th and 14th centuries the struggle against the Moorish kingdom in the South began to turn in favour of the Christians. Times of war are usually favourable to a Puritan outlook, but when in 1234 James I of Aragon (1213–1276) passed a law permitting the use of gold and silver only as a trimming for cloaks and hoods, the Oriental liking for rich, gold-wrought silks must already have been acquired by the Christian neighbours of the Moors. On the other hand we learn that in 1273 the King of Aragon conferred upon the Moor Ali and his sons the right to open a workshop for the manufacture of silk and gold fabrics at Játiva, near Valencia. Such contradictory measures, the decree against luxurious gold-embroidered silks and the permission to manufacture such fabrics on Aragonese territory, are not easy to reconcile. Probably the Christian Spaniards found themselves unable to resist the charms of the rich Moorish silks.

In the Ancient World and in the Middle Ages silk had a significance different from that which it holds today; it was exotic, very costly, and distinguished the wearer. The Castilian king Alphonso XI (1312–1350) declared in 1348 that only he and his sons were entitled to wear silk. Even those of high rank, the ricos hombres (= rich men) were allowed to wear gold-embroidered dress only on their

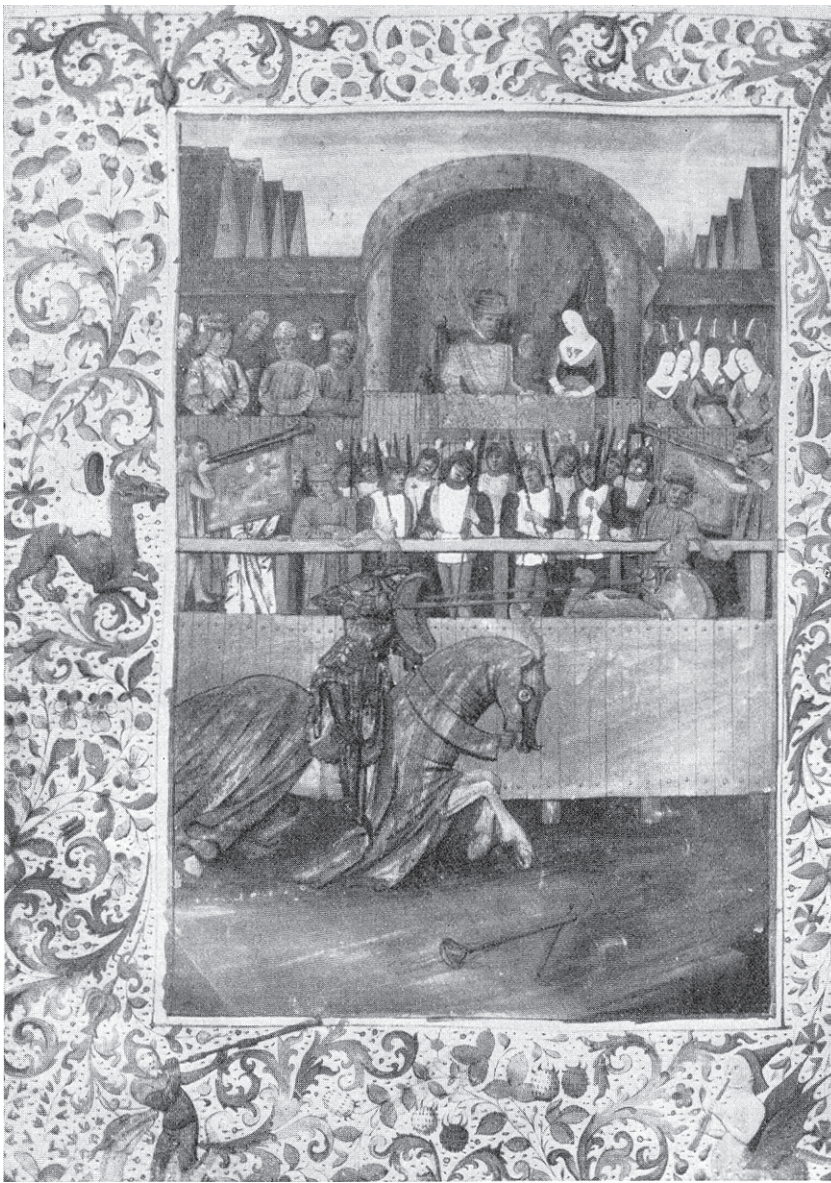


Late 15th century silk. The ancient Oriental motive of the Tree of Life is here shown in a less stylized manner than usual. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

wedding-day; with this single exception silk was forbidden to them. There was probably some reason for this decree, for the ricos hombres appear to have been very extravagant in dress: the graceful, effeminate style of men's fashions, with long, close-fitting hose and brocaded doublets, exotic turban head-dress and voluminous cloaks, required the use of silk. In their presents to their wives the ricos hombres appear to have shown the same liking for silks, for the king decreed that no noble should give his wife more than three silks in the first four months after his wedding, and only one of these was to be embroidered with gold thread.

Such decrees were probably dictated by economic as well as moral considerations. The incessant wars and dangers of wars frequently made it necessary for the kings to neglect more profitable economic undertakings, and resulted in acute financial embarrassment. For that reason they could not remain indifferent when the nobles squandered their money on costly silks which, moreover, frequently came from Moorish workshops, thus constituting an indirect support of the enemy.

Frequently the wearing of silk was permitted only to such people as possessed horses.



*Medieval
tournament.
The horses are
draped with
fine fabrics,
the box of the
honoured guests
is hung with silk.
From an
illuminated
manuscript
in the Escorial.
Photo: Moreno,
Madrid.*

Christian Spain required reserves of cavalry for the war against the Moors. The law appealed to the vanity of the women, who were expected to induce their husbands to keep horses that they might wear silk dresses. According to a decree of 1395, anyone dressing in silk without being the possessor of a horse was to be subjected to a fine of 600 maravedi. In 1477, shortly before the final overthrow of the Moorish kingdom, Queen Isabella I wrote a letter to her confessor, Hernandez de Talavera, which gives interesting

information on the prevailing views regarding luxury of dress. Isabella, one of the greatest figures of Spanish history, who raised a small, impoverished, divided country to the rank of a world-power, was not gifted with physical beauty, and sought to make up for this disadvantage by means of rich and costly clothes. The costume worn by the queen at a reception of a French ambassador had roused the ire of her confessor, who sent her a letter of reprimand. The great queen replied humbly, albeit not quite truthfully: "Neither I nor my

ladies wore new dresses. We had already worn these dresses in Aragon, and the French had already seen us in these robes. I myself used on this occasion but one single dress: a robe of silk with three gold stripes, the plainest that I could find.”

In Granada in 1499, Queen Isabella, who herself was very fond of fine silk fabrics, issued the following decree: “No person shall wear silk, still less cloth of gold. Gold in any form is forbidden in dress, either woven, embroidered, hammered, or painted.” This decree shows how many ways there were of adorning the dress with gold. The date and place of the decree make it easy for us to understand its causes. Granada was the capital of the Moorish kingdom in Spain, which had only recently, in 1492, been taken by the Christians. Luxury of dress was doubtless very great in Granada; the former Moorish capital had been the centre of the silk industry and the home of a decadent, luxurious aristocracy. Boabdil, the last of the Hispano-Moorish princes, was a young man who appreciated verses and costly robes more than government and war. He was wont to express his moods by the choice of a robe, or of a certain colour. When he appeared

Charles V's sister, Catherine. Portrait by Antonio Moro (Middle of 16th century). Over a dress of heavy brocade, the princess is wearing an embroidered velvet robe. Photo: Anderson.



Mary (1512-1575), second wife of Philip II. Painted by Antonio Moro. Beneath the heavy velvet robe, a large-patterned dress is seen. Photo: Hanfstaengl.

before Isabella and Ferdinand, his victorious enemies, Boabdil was clad in black robes richly embroidered.

The victory of Isabella over Granada, the overthrow of the Moorish kingdom and the union of the entire peninsula (with the exception of Portugal) by no means brought about the decline of silk-weaving in Spain. On the contrary, the silk industry increased; it not only flourished in Granada, but also in the centre of the new kingdom. Toledo became a great industrial town, the number of looms there in the middle of the 16th century was estimated at between five and six thousand. The silk industry experienced a decisive change, partly in the organisation of the trade, partly in the style and pattern of the fabrics.

The Organisation of the Silk Industry in Christian Spain

Until the end of the 16th century silk-weaving was primarily a home industry or the business of small craftsmen. After the union of the Iberian states into one kingdom which possessed vast colonial territories, the demand for silk fabrics increased enormously. The period of the struggle against the Moors was



Toledo, one of the most important centres for the manufacture of silks in 16th century Christian Spain. Engraving from Breton "Spain", 1819.

over, and men turned once more to the amenities of life. This general trend was strengthened by the fact that the "Conquistadores", the men who had emigrated from Spain to the newly acquired overseas possessions, soon became possessed of untold wealth, of gold-mines and huge estates. The first Spanish colonists of America sent an incessant stream of orders to the mother country, and among the articles especially in demand were textiles, particularly silk fabrics. Between 1525 and 1550 the number of industrial workers in Spain increased fivefold. In some districts the authorities forced beggars and vagabonds to work in the factories. Peasants migrated to the towns, to find more lucrative employment as industrial workers. In 1492 already, Queen Isabella had issued a decree which aimed at increasing the reserves of labour in the silk industry. Any man wishing to work in the industry was exempted from the entrance examination by the guild. It is not to be assumed that this facility tempted lazy or unskilful workers to take up the trade, for those who did become members of the silk-weavers' guild were subjected to strict supervision. A weaver who wished to become a master of silk or taffeta-weaving had to serve three years' apprenticeship; and for the would-be master of damask-weaving five years were prescribed. The state or municipal authorities frequently exercised a furthering or supervisory influence on the industry. A municipal

official, the "Motalefe" was responsible for collecting the finished fabrics from the workshops of the silk-weaver. He in his turn passed it on to the "Xeliz", the superintendent of the silk market, who was responsible for the sale. In the province of Granada alone there were three such markets. Sales were usually made by auction. The silk was knocked down to the highest bidder, who was pledged to pay for it on the following day. The Xeliz deducted a small percentage of the price as payment for his share in effecting the sale, and forwarded the remainder to the manufacturer through the Motalefe. Both Motalefe and Xeliz tested the quality of the silk. They themselves were required to be men of unimpeachable integrity, and as an additional security they had to deposit a sum of money with the provincial Government. They were not allowed to engage in the silk trade as principals. If they committed a breach of this law—the temptation to do so was doubtless very great—they were liable to heavy fines, up to 6,000 maravedi. If the offence was repeated, the offender was banished from the province, thus being deprived of his livelihood. Motalefe and Xeliz were respected as critics, it was in their power to exclude badly woven silk from sale. A person held in still greater awe was the "Veedor", the Examiner. It was his task to test the quality and origin of the silk, and to examine the mixture of threads. The law governing these matters changed repeatedly; frequently the