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The Use of Islamic-inspired Fabrics in the Virgin with Child and Saint John by Joan de Borgonya at the Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to reflect about the uses of Islamic-inspired textiles in the production of the painter Joan de Borgonya through one of his most relevant altarpieces. We analyze the model that he followed, and we insert it in the Hispanic context, in which these textiles were usually represented as an image of magnificence and wealth. At the same time, his production is analyzed in comparison with that of other Hispanic artists who, like Borgonya, took Andalusí and Ottoman manufactures as a source of inspiration and used them as a language of power, in order to illustrate how the use of these textiles in painting is a constant in Hispanic visual culture from the late Middle Ages to the Early Modern Era.

L'obiettivo di questo articolo è discutere la presenza di tessuti di ispirazione islamica nella produzione del pittore Joan de Borgonya, attraverso una delle sue pale d'altare più rilevanti. Si analizza il modello da lui seguito e lo si inserisce nel contesto ispanico, ove questi tessuti erano solitamente rappresentati come immagine di magnificenza e ricchezza. Allo stesso

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tempo, la produzione del pittore viene posta in rapporto a quella di altri artisti ispanici che, come Borgonya, presero le manifatture andaluse e ottomane come fonte di ispirazione e le usarono come linguaggio di potere, al fine di illustrare come l'uso di questi tessuti nella pittura sia una costante della cultura visiva ispanica dal tardo Medioevo alla prima Età moderna.

1. *Introduction*

The Mediterranean was a fluid space for commercial and artistic interactions between East and West. Many kinds of objects were transported from one side of the old Roman *Mare Nostrum* to the other because the upper classes were interested in collecting them as tokens of social distinction. Textiles such as curtains, carpets or silk for weaving were central to these commercial relationships and their possession was essential for any display of grandeur[1]. The visual culture of the pivotal period between the medieval and early modern worlds exemplifies this fact well, and it is common to find textiles represented in numerous works of art for the reasons just mentioned[2]. In this study, we are going to look at how Joan de Borgonya used not one, but two different fabrics in his work *Virgin with Child and Saint John* (1515-1525, Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, cat. 005690-000, fig. 1), one as a canopy, and another under the figure of the Madonna, each of which had a symbolic function. We will first provide some notes about how historiography has treated these elements of material culture, especially in the Italian case. We will then extrapolate these insights to what was happening in the Iberian Peninsula. Once this methodological framework has been established, we will focus on the models that Joan de Borgonya used to create his work.

2. *Toward a categorization of textile patterns in painting: the Italian case*

It is impossible to summarize the several research projects that have analyzed the representation of carpets or draperies in late medieval and early modern Italian painting. However, it is necessary to point out that, taking as a reference the late-nineteenth-century work of Julius Lessing[3], these studies were ground-breaking in their field, and the way in which the artifacts were analyzed served as the model for work carried out in other Mediterranean areas. These

[1] See, among others, Mühlemann 2023; Fábregas 2022, pp. 395-396; Fábregas 2012-2014; Shalem 1998.

[2] See, among others, Marín-Aguilera, Hanß 2022.

[3] Lessing 1879.

first approximations tried to justify the appearance of such objects in the context of commercial exchanges, between, for the most part, Venice and the Sublime Porte. In the same way, they reflected on the Christians' "appropriation"[4] of Islamic decorative motifs and production models that were greatly admired at that time for their beauty and intricacy. Not surprisingly, their price, between six and eight ducats in Venice, was equal to that of an altarpiece executed by a first-rate painter[5]. These early historiographic studies were also focused on creating classificatory frameworks for a decorative typology of the textiles that were reproduced in the paintings, taking the name of a tapestry or carpet from the artist who depicted them most assiduously. Thus, people began to talk about Holbein, Bellini, Lotto, Crivelli or Memling type rugs, to name just a few examples[6].

These textiles usually show up in three different contexts: at the feet of the Virgin or of the highest political leader (in the case of Venice, the Doge); as a kind of throne upholstery (on the back of the seat where the pictured sacred person or politician is sitting); or simply hanging on the walls or folded over balconies, "dressing" the architecture. The symbolic objective of such a location is multiple: to demonstrate the power of the personages represented there, to show their magnificence and social position, to create a semblance of how such objects were used in the palaces of contemporary nobles or, finally, to demonstrate how theorists, Leon Battista Alberti, among others, recommended that domestic interiors should be portrayed[7].

These distinctions and classifications are of great interest at the first stage of our investigation, as we approach our study of the panel in question, but we should make a few clarifications. First, as previously noted, we should not create hermetic categories. The artist did not always have the textile he was reproducing in front of him; rather, he would copy other paintings in which it was represented, mainly in the Hispanic context. The scarcity of postmortem inventories prevents us from knowing for sure whether they were in possession of the textiles or, if not, how they accessed them[8]. Secondly, the use of elements

[4] We wrote this term in quotation marks since we believe that it should be used with caution. The ways in which Christian workshops reproduced Islamic weaving and decorative patterns, whether Nasrid or Turkish-Ottoman, were not the same, nor were their processes of assimilation. Each territory and textile typology must be analyzed individually, taking into account the native tradition itself. In many cases, it is not possible to speak of actual "appropriation" but rather of the existence of shared aesthetic tastes, or of reciprocal transfers between the various production centers. See: Feliciano 2017.

[5] For great state of art could about this issue see: Čapeta Rakić 2019.

[6] These standardized typologies were also progressively divided into subcategories, focused on the small variations that occurred within the same model, depending on decorative modifications of the predominant pattern. See, for example: Nejad 2012.

[7] Nejad 2012, p. 4.

[8] In the last years, some Spanish researchers started to reflect about their presence in Iberian inventories, see: Moreno Díaz del Campo 2023; Díez Jorge 2023.

that historiography has defined as "Oriental" did not always come from the copying of Ottoman or Egyptian textiles, but also from the local tradition itself or from the export of Andalusí textiles across the Mediterranean, a point that we will return to later. In other words, these classificatory patterns can serve as a starting point, but they are not an end in themselves, since, in the study that concerns us here, multiple special cases and combinations can present themselves[9].

3. *The textile trade and its appearance in medieval and early modern Hispanic painting: brief reflections*

Beginning in the Middle Ages, Iberian Christians were strongly attracted to textiles with an Islamic aesthetic character, as evidenced by both the documentation and the material remains that have come down to us, whether they be small textile fragments or religious ornaments[10]. Catalogued most of the time as made of fabrics or "Moorish" work, they were sometimes decorated with Arabic inscriptions, which did not matter to their Old Christian owners. Their value consisted in their materials and in the complex techniques used in their manufacture[11]. These are fabrics that came into Christian hands in different ways, including as donations, as purchases or as the result of looting after the bloody battles that were fought in the Iberian Peninsula and in the rest of the Mediterranean[12]. These textiles were used both to decorate different rooms in homes as well as for wrapping sacred relics[13]. They were artworks that, because of their quality, were comparable in value to other sumptuary objects and considered signs of magnificence and social distinction among their owners[14]; hence, as in the Italian case, it is not surprising that they were repeatedly represented in various works of art.

During the Middle Ages, textiles made with metallic threads can be seen in many altarpieces[15]. With this choice, not only were the aesthetic parameters of the painting presented in relation to the objects of material culture owned by the highest levels of society, but also, the work was endowed with great wealth, since parts of these textiles were decorated with gold, conferring not

[9] We have reflected about this issue in: Moreno Coll 2025. We have created a catalogue of the most common textiles used by Iberian painters in the late medieval and early modern periods.

[10] Moreno Coll 2023a.

[11] Feliciano 2019.

[12] Ruiz Souza 2001; Feliciano 2005.

[13] Feliciano 2019.

[14] Martin 2020.

[15] Rodríguez Peinado 2017.

only a symbolic value to their inclusion but also a material one. The designs inspiring these works were repeated over and over and transcended space and time. For example, there was a Mamluk textile from Egypt which was represented in several pieces among the collections of various museums, the most important being the one used to make the mantle of a dressed Virgin Mary (CMA 1939.40), which belonged to a parish near Valencia[16]. This fabric, decorated with lotus flowers and lanceolate medallions surrounding Arabic inscriptions, was used on various occasions by important artists who worked in the old Kingdom of Valencia, such as Gherardo Starnina (second half of the fourteenth century-beginning of the fifteenth century) and Miquel Alcanyís (doc. 1407-1447) in many artworks (fig. 2). The repetition of these patterns could be explained by a significant trade of textile manufactures or by some contact that may have existed between the two painters, since the Florentine artist can be placed working in Valencia between the same dates, 1395-1401, that Alcanyís began his professional career, so Starnina's painting could have served as a model for the local artist. Although numerous religious works that use the Arabic script or pseudo-script are documented first in Italy, this trend also occurred in Spanish territory at a very early date[17].

To understand how these textiles circulated and what they meant, we must refer, first of all, to the existing border trade between the Christian and Al Andalus populations, which we know about thanks to the tax records pertaining to these articles. Garments such as hoods, dressing gowns, sashes or headdresses arrived in the Christian kingdoms, as did cloth, linen and silk[18]. It should not be forgotten that kings were in the habit of buying these luxury goods ever since the beginning of the Middle Ages[19]. In this sense, it is very important to emphasize the production of fabrics such as the "septa espagnola" or "septa de Yspania" (Spanish silk), manufactured in the Kingdom of Granada, and shipped to Almería and Málaga in route to Genoa[20]. However, before arriving there, a layover in Valencia afforded an opportunity to its inhabitants to buy it there also. Specifically, in El Grao, one of the most important fourteenth-century European ports, hundreds of fabrics from the south had to be unloaded[21]. And so, all these products were Nasrid creations developed for export to the Christian kingdoms and not always for the use of the producers themselves. Another route taken by these textiles of Islamic provenance coming to the Levant was through Valencian Mudéjares (Islamic population under the Christian rule), who were part in these trade routes and wanted to

[16] Mackie 2015, pp. 270-273.
[17] Napolitano 2019.
[18] Porras 1984, p. 248; Fábregas 2017; Jaspert 2019.
[19] López de Coca 2009, pp. 375-376.
[20] Navarro 1999.
[21] Hinojosa Montalvo 1978.

buy fabrics they could religiously identify with and be, in turn, distinguished for the beauty of their materials and colors[22]. Eventually, in fact, they commissioned Valencian silk-makers to reproduce these models in their workshops. To all this we must add how, during the fifteenth century, the members of delegations also encouraged the transfer and sale of luxury objects, including these fabrics[23]. Even as late as the seventeenth century, the Moors, up until the time of their expulsion, continued to own garments made out of rich fabrics, clothing that was bought by Christians in the port of El Grao itself before they embarked, as recounted by Father Fonseca (1573-1627)[24].

We have mentioned Italy as the final destination of these manufactures. This was due to mercantile policies between Granada and the Republic of Genoa, Venice, and Florence[25]. The latter, under the Medici government, became one of the most important cultural centers in Europe between fifteenth and sixteenth centuries[26]. Islamic textiles were highly regarded by the great families, and among those, the Anatolian rugs were the most appreciated at that period[27]. Diplomatic and commercial relations with the Mamluk Empire were strengthened, especially in Syria and Egypt, and multiple oriental motifs were included by artists in their paintings[28]. It is significant to point out that in Italy the appreciation of this industry went one step further, promoting the creation of manufactures with patterns that combined fantastic animal figures and phylacteries or medallions surrounding inscriptions reminiscent of Arabic calligraphy[29]. The painters, in addition to representing these manufactures in their works, were involved in designing them as well. Such is the case of Jacopo Bellini (1400-1470/71) or Pisanello (1395-1455), and their motifs were still used in modern paintings, as we will see later[30].

During the sixteenth century, silks continued to circulate, including Nasrid ones, throughout the Mediterranean. This fact is substantiated, once again, by their presence in pictorial art. There are many artists – Hispanic, Flemish, and Italian – who used them as inspiration to finish interior spaces, as well as to dress the main personages depicted in their works. After the conquest of Granada in 1492, these fabrics were no longer made in Nasrid workshops, but rather in local Christian workshops reproducing Nasrid models. One of the most often repeated models are those made up of vertical lines, often sur-

[22] Navarro 1999, p. 84.
[23] Martínez 2011-2012, pp. 201-202; García Marsilla 2022.
[24] Fonseca 1612, book V, chapter II, p. 81. See also: Irigoyen-García 2017.
[25] Navarro 1997, pp. 477-483; Fábregas 2010, pp. 643-664; González 2011.
[26] Cerrato 2000, pp. 451-495.
[27] Schmidt 2018, pp. 47-63.
[28] Schulz 2016.
[29] Nagel 2011.
[30] Monnas 2008, pp. 49-53.

rounding epigraphy; however, these designs became rarer during the sixteenth century and finally fell into disuse.

It is precisely this banded design that was seen in the painting of great masters in the Iberian Peninsula. Among those who liked to use it were the Osona workshop (active in the pivotal period between the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries)[31], the Hernandos (Hernando de Llanos and Fernando Yáñez de Almedina, active in Hispanic territory during the first thirty years of the fifteen hundreds), as well as other artists whose works we know less about, such as the Master of Alzira (active in the second quarter of the sixteenth century), Francisco de Comontes (active in Toledo between 1524 and 1565) or Joan de Borgonya, on whom we are focused here[32]. It should be noted that not all of them represented these designs in the same way. While some copied the fabrics with such attention to detail that we can read even the inscriptions, as happens in the case of the Hernandos, others only used them as an inspiring visual model and were less careful with the epigraphic aspects (fig. 3). We find these textiles decorating altar cloths, seats of honor, dressing the Magi or other sacred personages. These are fabrics that could be seen as exotic to foreign eyes, but which were fully integrated into the daily life of Spanish Christians as part of their culture, after years of religious coexistence.

4. *The use of Islamic-inspired fabrics in the Virgin with Child and Saint John by Joan de Borgonya*

We will now focus in more detail on showing how the painter in question, also known for a time as the Master of Saint Felix[33], used textile pieces in his work that demonstrate the appreciation for fabrics of Islamic or Andalusian provenance in the Iberian Peninsula. Little is known about the origin and training of this artist beyond the fact that he was the son of a silversmith from Strasbourg[34]. The first work about which there is evidence is a portrait that includes the inscription "Johannes Burgundi" (Keresztény Muzeum Esztergom, Hungary). After a possible travel to Italy[35], in 1496 he would have been

[31] They were used as decoration of the Palace of Pontius Pilate in some paintings preserved at the Museo del Prado, Madrid (inv. P6897 and P6898).

[32] About these artists see: Moreno Coll 2018; Moreno Coll 2023.

[33] He has been known by this title since 1941 for the main altarpiece of the church of Saint Félix in Gerona (Catalonia, Spain).

[34] Regarding the confusion about his place of origin, since there are several cities with the same name, see Ruiz, Yeguas 2016, p. 120.

[35] Authors, such as Garriga (1998) and Velasco (2023), considering his style, have suggested a possible trip to Venice, but there is not documentation to prove it.

living in Orihuela (Alicante, Spain), where he was married[36]. There is evidence that he lived in Valencia between 1502 and 1509, where he signed a contract in 1503 to paint the altarpiece of the Gunsmiths Guild, although he never actually completed the work[37]. There were other, subsequent commissions and attributions that we know about, such as the six panels with scenes of Saint Andrew that are preserved in the Chapel of the Pilar in the Cathedral of that city[38]. This period in Valencia is significant, since he must have been in contact there with the Osona and Hernandos workshops, which, as we mentioned, liked to incorporate fabrics with an Islamic aesthetic into their paintings. In addition, as it was aforementioned, Valencia was an important harbor where these kinds of objects were constantly arriving. After a brief period in the capital of Turia, he went to work in Catalonia, mostly in Barcelona and Girona[39].

The work that is the object of this essay has been held at the Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya since 1906 and is unique in that it contains an extremely complex iconography for having been conceived by a single artist. As Santiago Sebastián has indicated, there is no known composition that could have inspired the work as a whole, so it must be assumed that there was some patron behind the scenes who stipulated the multitude of iconographic motifs that should be included[40]. Although there is no single source that could have served as a model, some scenes are certainly, at least in part, the result of copying or reworking elements from other artists whose work was well known, due to the trafficking in engravings that was common in the early modern period. Such is the case of the anonymous print of *Saint Augustine and the Child on the Seashore* from 1518 (Bibliothèque Nationale de France) or *The Virgin and the Monkey* (1496) by Albrecht Dürer, which survive in many reproductions.

The panel is divided into two areas, one earthly and the other heavenly, with the axis of the composition being the Virgin seated on a throne, holding her son with her right hand and an open book with her left. The pages are illustrated with a scene of the Dormition, and a Latin text taken from Ecclesiastes, specifically a eulogy of Wisdom[41], a common subject in Marian iconography. The main figures are on a rug where an ape is on display, an influence, as has been said, from the work of Dürer; Saint John with the lamb, one of his attributes, and a little white dog. The central figure is surrounded by different

[36] Nieto 1984, p. 67.

[37] Gómez-Ferrer Lozano 2011, pp. 74-78.

[38] The altarpiece belonged to the parish of Saint Andrew. The panels were later moved to the church of the Madre de Dios del Milagro and finally to the cathedral. See: Ruiz, Yeguas 2016, p. 24.

[39] Garriga 2001, pp. 121-180.

[40] Sebastián 1988, pp. 108-112.

[41] "Ego in altissimis habito, et thronus meus in columna nubis. Gyrum caeli circuivi sola, et profundum abyssi penetravi; et in fluctibus maris ambulavi, et in omni terra steti": *Ecclesiasticus* (24:7-9).

biblical scenes. To the viewer's left, we find the Annunciation, the Nativity, the Massacre of the Innocents, as well as the four great doctors of the Latin Church: Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine, and Gregory the Great. Meanwhile, on the opposite side have been arranged the Adoration of the Magi, the Flight into Egypt and the Holy Family's sojourn. The rest of the scenes are full of anecdotal details, among which is the Flemish-inspired fly perched on a lamb. In the upper part of the work, the mother of Jesus is depicted with the dove of the Holy Spirit hovering just above her head, and above them the artist has placed a canopy carried by angels. These are not the only figures in the scene; we can see others holding musical instruments, phylacteries and the *Arma Christi* (cross, holy spear, Veronica's veil), symbols of Christ's suffering. Finally, at the zenith, God the Father emerges inside a mandorla (lentiform cartouche) formed out of winged heads.

Returning to the canopy that shelters the main figures – the object of this study – it is made of an ornate fabric with horizontal registers between which smooth bands containing written characters are interspersed, a design typical of Islamic textiles[42]. These characters are illegible and cannot be assigned to a particular language (fig. 4)[43]. Rather, they seem to imitate inscriptions once used as ornamentation and treated in a non-archaeological way, as if they followed pre-established patterns not copied from nature, which was different from what other contemporary painters such as the Hernandos were doing. There are many fragments of which we have evidence with a very similar formal and decorative structure. Some of them are preserved in the Iberian Peninsula, such as the medieval fabrics decorating various tombs in the Monastery of Santa María la Real de las Huelgas (Burgos), patterns that were reproduced by different Nasrid manufacturers[44]. The one depicted by Borgonya is similar to a fabric belonging to the collection of the Valencia Institute of Don Juan (Madrid, 2084) made by Nasrid workshops around the fourteenth century with the *lampás* technique (interweave of unanchored wefts) (fig. 5)[45]. This has a colorful design made from smooth bands interspersed with others decorated with Kufic inscriptions (in which the word "salvation" seems to be repeated), octagonal embroidery, cross motifs, and lanceolate botanical ornamentation[46].

The painter must have been inspired by these kinds of silks in his depiction, since, as it was mentioned earlier, it was a common practice to copy them,

[42] Belger 2015, pp. 32-33.

[43] According to Torras 2014, p. 105 note n. 7, could be identified "...ORGUNIA".

[44] An example is the lining of Alfonso de la Cerda's coffin (1270-1335), made in Central Asia. It bears an inked stamp, which makes clear the importance of trade routes during the Middle Ages. See Rodríguez Peinado 2019, pp. 5-6.

[45] Borrego *et al.* 2017, p. 18.

[46] In the Lázaro Galdiano Museum in Madrid (1736) there is a piece of cloth that may belong to the same garment. See: López 2012, p. 78.

especially the tones that included epigraphy. The artists did not hesitate to repeat these models repeatedly in their works. In addition to Spanish artists, there were several Italian masters who did the same. Luca Signorelli (1441-1523), for example, used a similar cloth to cover the shoulders of the Virgin and Saint Joseph, the "perizonium" (loincloth) of Christ or as a costume of one of the floggers at the crucifixion. Another painter that can be mentioned is Domenico Bigordi (Ghirlandaio, 1448-1494), who painted the *Adoration of the Magi* (1488-1489, Museo degli Innocenti, Florence) for the main altarpiece of the church of Santa Maria degli Innocenti. In it, there is a prominent figure wearing a brightly colored headdress (red, blue, green) and an inscription, apparently in Arabic, in golden letters.

Borgonya's work follows similar patterns but is different from other cases in that its epigraphic decoration is illegible, which leads us to believe that it does not directly copy the textile, but rather reworks it based on other decorative patterns set by contemporary artists working in Valencia and Catalonia. This is a habitual practice of the Burgundian painter, as can be seen from other works that we will deal with below. What is important here is the use of a fabric of Andalusian provenance[47], although without the usual inscriptions, serving as a canopy for the Virgin, in order to give her a more magnificent appearance, fitting for the Mother of God.

In other paintings, this canopy becomes a covering with an architectural structure, a continuation of the place where she is seated. However, in this case, to showcase the landscape in the background, the artist prefers to place it above, upheld by angels, who are also dressed in rich fabrics, and their movements give greater freedom, elasticity, and beauty to the fabric. It is not, therefore, only the fabric itself, its material and decorative richness, which gives the Marian figure greater magnanimity, but also the spectacular way in which it is displayed above her head.

This is not the only fabric that appears in this painting. The central scene is developed on a richly decorated carpet (fig. 6). As it has been previously said, this type of fabric was widely used in Marian scenes, to the point that types were created that were associated with the artists who used them most. Here, the Burgundian master represented a Holbein-type wall-to-wall carpet, named for the repeated use that Hans Holbein the Younger (1497–1543) made of them in his works[48]. This type of rug, for some authors[49], would be based on manufactures from the mid-fifteen century produced in Asia Minor, which were distributed throughout the Mediterranean. It was precisely their wide

[47] Partearroyo 2007.

[48] Grant 1988, pp. 12-24. According to Sánchez Ferrer, this denomination is not completely accurate, since the technique would have been used previously by other painters. Sánchez Ferrer 1986, p. 204.

[49] Ferrandis 1933, pp. 39-42; Franses 2008, p. 70.

diffusion which caused them to be quickly copied by weavers throughout the Mediterranean, the Iberian Peninsula being no exception. In any case, there is an ample historiographical discussion about how this exchange of influences came about. Scholars such as Dorothy Shepherd and Cristina Partearroyo consider that the path was the other way around: from Spain to the East[50]. For them, the Alcaraz rugs were the ones that served as a model for Turkish manufactures. However, the Spanish ones preserved today are different from those executed by Holbein and the one observed in Borgonya's work, characterized by showing the field surface with large octagons outlined by knots and eight-pointed stars. A similar decoration can be seen in the carpet that Ghirlandaio arranged under the feet of his *Madonna enthroned with two angels, Saint Denis, Saint Dominic, Pope Saint Clement and Saint Thomas Aquinas* (1480-1485, Uffizi Gallery, Florence, fig. 7). This ornamentation is common in preserved textile specimens from Anatolia. A good example can be found at the Franchetti collection (Venice, t. 21, fig. 8), dating from the second half of the fifteenth century. Most of these are framed by a border with Kufic script that does not appear in the Catalan panel; here, the text has been replaced by various edgings that have nothing to do with Islamic epigraphy.

As previously indicated, the pictorial representation of these carpets served to exalt personages and religious acts. Therefore, this was the reason why artists included them in spaces in which the Eucharist is represented and in others in which the Virgin appears, as well as members of the bourgeoisie or royalty. Among the works that include characters from these latter estates are portraits of the German merchant Georg Gisze (1497-1562) painted in 1532 by Hans Holbein (Gemäldegalerie in Berlin, 586) and of Edward VI of England (1537-1553) made around 1547 in the workshop of Master Joan (National Portrait Gallery, London, 5511)[51]. Edward forcefully grasps an eared dagger, a luxury object of Nasrid origin. This weapon could have been made in a Nasrid workshop or by Diego de Çaias, a master swordsmith of Spanish origin who worked for some houses of European royalty[52]. We see here the value acquired not only by textile manufactures, but also by other objects that were able to be reproduced by Christian artisans in the sixteenth century and that followed the same models used by Islamic society. It must also be remembered that many weapons traveled along the same routes as the fabrics we are studying, with the latter sometimes even serving as beautiful packaging for such objects.

[50] Shepherd 1954, p. 189; Partearroyo 2003.

[51] Walker 1988, p. 8.

[52] Hernández 2018, pp. 577-578. Not much information is available regarding this master, who has been phonetically associated with Zayas, a neighboring town of Soria (Castile). Records indicate the existence of an influential family named Çaias in Écija (Andalusia) since the fifteenth century, renowned for its expertise in metal arts. For further information on this matter, see: Blair 1970, p. 149.

Starting from this idea, the panel that concerns us serves to illustrate the great esteem that such fabrics enjoyed in Hispanic society, as well as their symbolic function. Borgonya combines the Holbein rug with the canopy fabric, based on a different model, which coexisted with the former, demonstrating the permeability of designs to the elements of material culture that swarmed throughout the Mediterranean and their importance in decorating the religious scenes in panels produced in Spain.

5. *Borgonya and the use of fabrics in his pictorial works*

This artwork is not the only one painting by Borgonya in which this type of product was included. The fabric of the canopy was again used by the master in other works. A similar cloth based on horizontal registers, although without written characters, covers the panel of the *Annunciation of the Virgin*, a work that is also in the Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya (254234-000, fig. 9). There are further examples where we can see the attraction he must have felt for the rich fabrics. In the altarpiece of Saint Félix (1519-1520, Museu d'Art de Girona), in the scene in which the saint is imprisoned, he dressed Rufino with a luxurious garment in which the white fur collar and trim combine to perfection with the fabric of the garment itself. In this painting, there are plant motifs, ribbons and what appears to be some type of calligraphy, again illegible, which leads us, to wonder if he copied it from life. It must be borne in mind that these silks were represented for their sumptuousness. That is why we find the same decorative pattern repeated in the clothing of different personages. Thus, he depicted a fabric with geometric motifs – poly-lobed medallions surrounding stars, figures joined by small circles and, in the space left between these motifs, eight-pointed stars – both in the prefect of Dacia (who was a high magistrate) as in the dalmatic of the Christian martyr[53]. At this point, it is interesting to highlight the alb that the latter wears in the preaching scene (fig. 10). The floor-length clothing exhibits a fabric decorated with fantastic animals and inscriptions that simulate Arabic on the lower edge and on the cuffs of the sleeves, a design similar to those made by the Mamluks of Egypt or Syria[54], although, as we already mentioned, the Italians soon copied these textile models, seduced by their decorative richness[55]. There are numerous examples made in Lucca in the fourteenth century in which an epigraphic register (simulating Arabic calligraphy) is combined inside medallions or cartouches with birds and other animals,

[53] It is similar to a fragment in the Cleveland Museum of Art (1946.417).
[54] Shea 2018.
[55] Blair 2021, pp. 201-202.

as well as plant motifs based on the lotus[56]. Perhaps Borgonya's attraction to the use of this type of silk was due to his brief stay in Italy, although we could also point to the period of time he was in Valencia, since, again, he must have been in contact with the work of masters who liked to incorporate these elements into their work, such as the Hernandos or the Master of Alzira. Be that as it may, in these pages we show the repeated use of certain models on which this artist based his work, following certain ornamental patterns similar to those used by other contemporary artists, as well as their symbolic value. Knowledge of the Mediterranean trade routes helps us to understand the exchange of objects of material culture and their value as tokens of magnificence. Following the pictorial fashions and sartorial usage, examples of the kinds of exchanges taking place between the East and the West, early sixteenth-century painters used such fabrics to exalt, on the one hand, the noble characters represented and, on the other, to hint at the economic value of these objects, thereby enriching the iconographic and formal apparatus of the composition.

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[56] Some examples of Italian fabrics that copy Islamic models in Punta 2010.

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Appendix

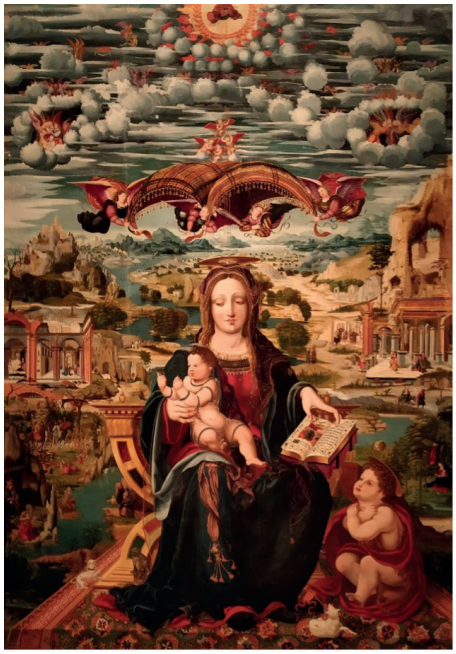

Fig. 1. Joan de Borgonya, *Virgin with Child and Saint John*, 1515-1525, Barcelona, Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, inv. 005690-000 (© Photo authors)

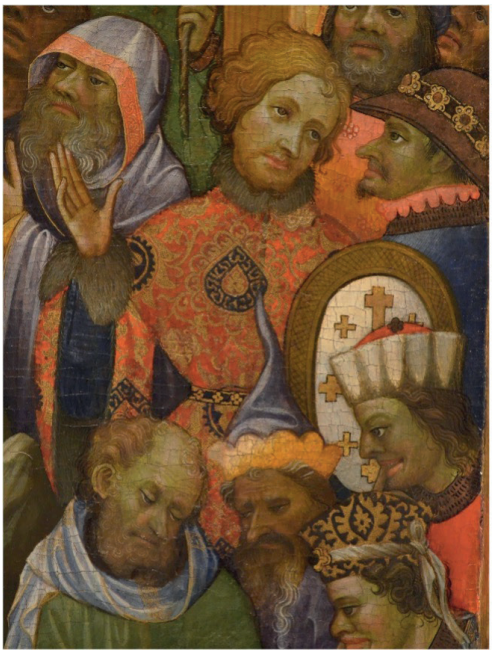

Fig. 2. Miquel Alcanyís, *Altarpiece of the Holy Cross*, c. 1410, Museo de Bellas Artes de Valencia, inv. 254. Detail (© Photo authors)

Fig. 3. Rodrigo de Osona and workshop, *Saint Denis enthroned*, 1501-1502, Museo de la catedral de Valencia. Detail (© Photo authors)

Fig. 4. Joan de Borgonya, *Virgin with Child and Saint John*, 1515-1525, Barcelona, Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, inv. 005690-000, Detail (© Photo authors)

Fig. 5. *Nasrid textile*, fourteenth century, Madrid, Instituto Valencia de Don Juan, inv. 2084 (© Photo authors)

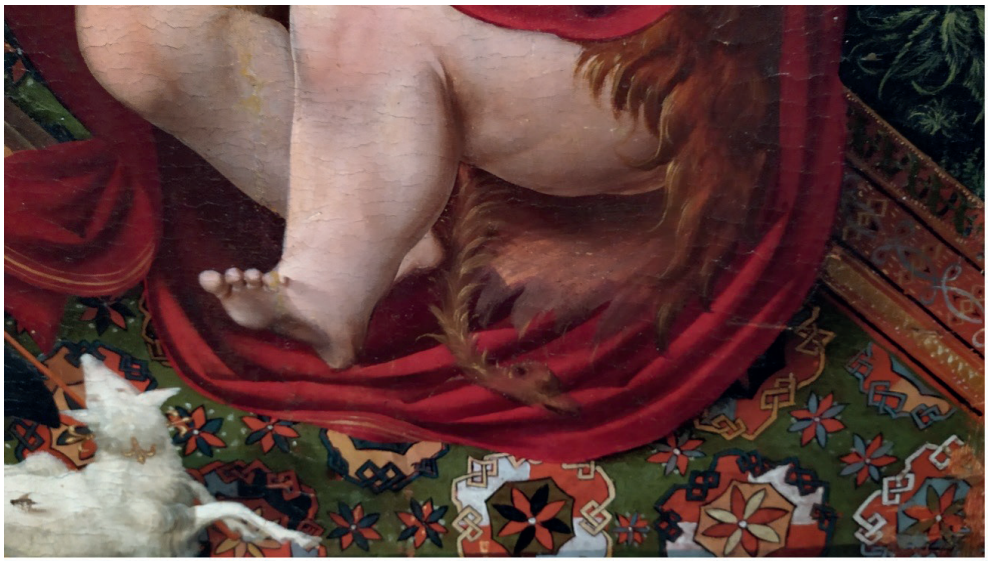

Fig. 6. Joan de Borgonya, *Virgin with Child and Saint John*, 1515-1525, Barcelona, Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, inv. 005690-000, Carpet detail (© Photo authors)

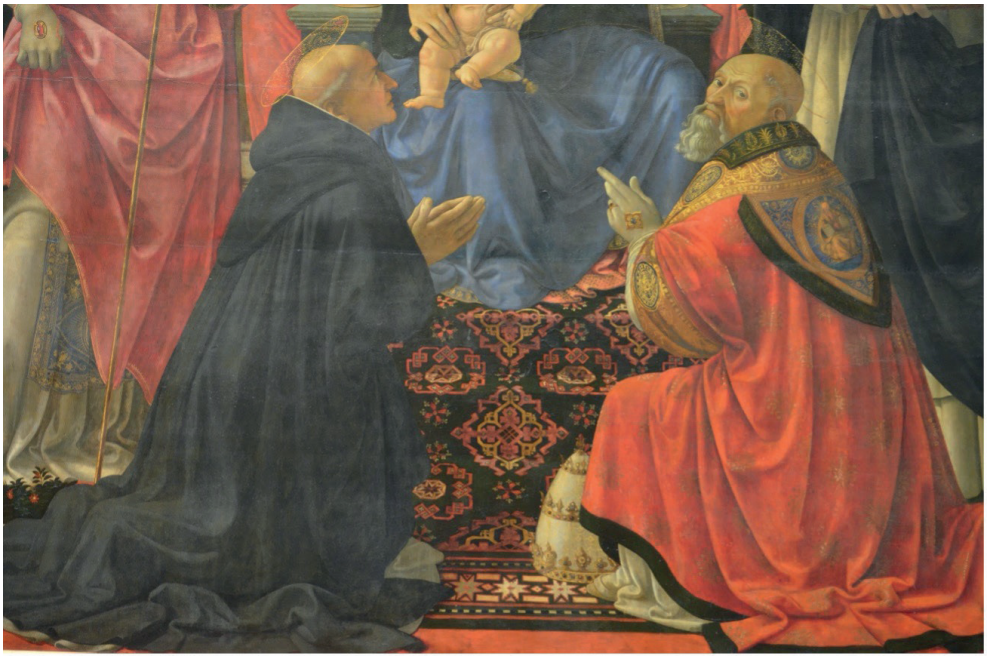

Fig. 7. Domenico Bigordi (Ghirlandaio), *Madonna enthroned with two angels, Saint Denis, Saint Dominic, Pope Saint Clement and Saint Thomas Aquinas*, 1480-1485, Florence, Uffizi Gallery, inv. 8388, Detail (© Photo authors)

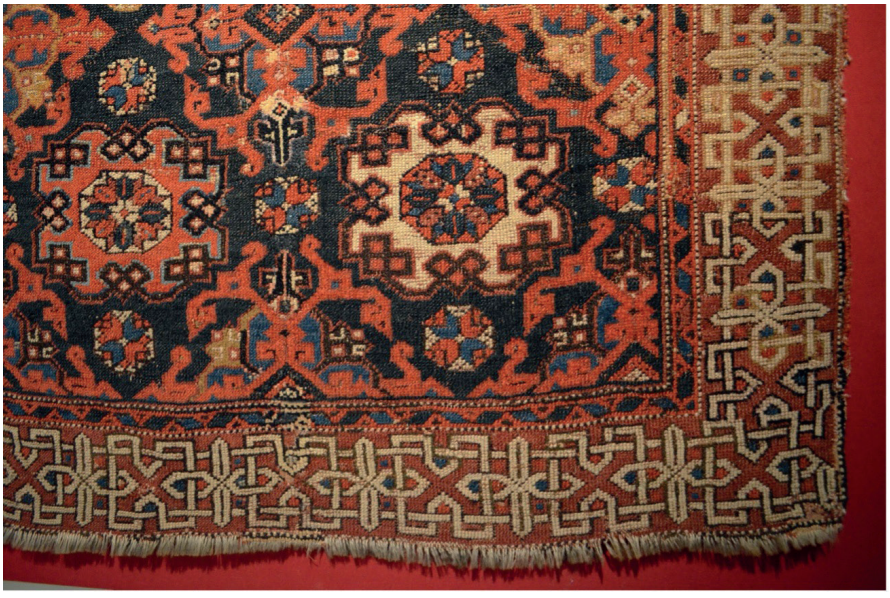

Fig. 8. *Holbein-type carpet*, western Anatolia, second half of the fifteenth century, Venice, Franchetti Collection, inv. 21, Detail (© Photo authors)

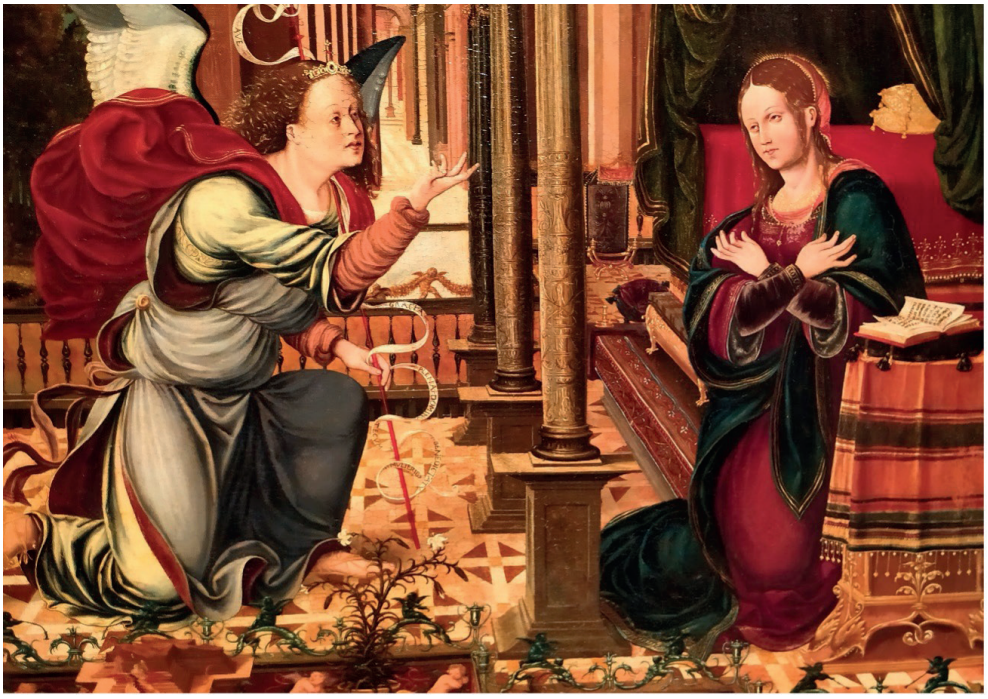

Fig. 9. Joan de Borgonya, *Annunciation of the Virgin*, 1510-1525, Barcelona, Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, inv. 254234-000, Detail (© Photo authors)

Fig. 10. Joan de Borgonya, *Sermon of Saint Felix in Girona*, 1519-1520, Girona, Museu d'Art de Girona, inv. MDG2291 (© Photo R. Bosch)

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