1. Torah Ark curtain made from a wrapper and two cushion covers
Dedicated in 1902
L. 205 W. 130
Israel Museum Collection
152/172; 3011.80

Textiles for the Home and Synagogue

Esther Juhasz

Introduction

Ottoman culture attached great importance to textiles. Apart from serving a useful purpose in daily domestic use, on festive occasions and in places of prayer, textiles were also symbols of social and economic status.

The textile industry was one of the more prosperous branches of the Ottoman economy.[1] Turkey, and especially the town of Bursa, was an important crossroads on the silk route between East and West. Among the main centers of the weaving industry were the sultan's factories at Istanbul and Bursa, which in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries produced luxurious fabrics – brocades and velvets of high technical quality (*kemha, çatma, seraser*). In the same period, the best-known wool-weaving industry was in the hands of the Sephardi Jews of Salonika, who had brought advanced techniques with them from Spain. Among other things, Salonika supplied cloth for the Janissaries' uniforms.[2]

The Turkish carpet-weaving industry has been famous since the sixteenth century. There were flourishing centers at the sultan's workshops at Istanbul, and also in other towns. Carpets were made for the use of the local population as well as for export to Europe, where they were in great demand.[3]

In the nineteenth century there was a noticeable decline in the quality of the fabrics produced in Turkish centers. At this time Turkey was exporting raw materials to European manufacturers, and its own markets were flooded with fabrics from Austria, France, England and Italy. These imported fabrics were sold at low prices in the Turkish market and carried European fashions and tastes into the Ottoman Empire.[4] At the same time, efforts were made to revive and develop the local textile industry, sometimes with the help of modern machinery. Its products were designed to imitate the older local fabrics and also showed the influence of European goods (such as the silks of Lyon).[5] Apart from the main textile production centers, home industries existed in various parts of Anatolia, producing cotton, silk and linen fabrics.[6]

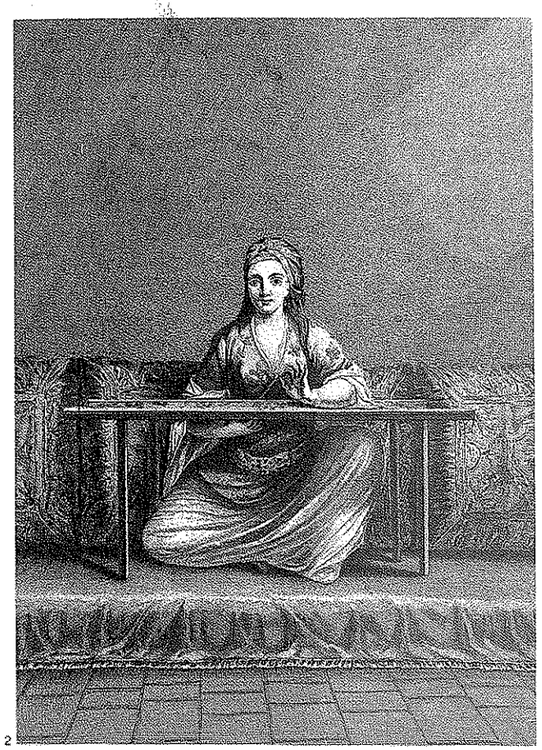
To a great extent, the range of fabrics and embroidery in Jewish use reflects the variety known in Ottoman society. Most of the material we shall discuss here originated or is located in Sephardi synagogues.[7] The Ark curtains (*parokhot*), Torah mantles, Torah binders, and reader desk-covers, provided our starting-point in acquiring a knowledge of Ottoman textiles that had a particularly Jewish application. The study of embroideries and fabrics in private houses expanded and filled out the picture and enabled us to examine the cultural context of the objects, as well as the close connections between domestic and ritual fabrics, and the process of transition of fabrics and embroideries from domestic to ritual use.[8]

Most of the textiles that we shall deal with were produced in the second half of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, and some of them still fulfill their original functions. Through interviews undertaken in the course of our fieldwork, we amassed a fairly large body of information about the uses to which they were put and their social context.[9]

We shall also discuss a limited number of textiles from earlier periods, most of them now preserved in museums.[10] These are obviously far removed from their original contexts, and information about their use, conditions of production and ritual purpose is comparatively slight.[11] The scarcity of early fabrics is the consequence, among other factors, of the many great fires that ravaged Turkey over the centuries, sometimes destroying entire towns.

A great deal of information about the part played by Jews in the textile industry and subsidiary occupations, especially in commerce and as middlemen, is available. Such information can be gleaned from traveller's accounts,[12] from rabbinical literature, books of regulations, court documents and also from studies of the craft guilds, both Jewish and non-Jewish.[13]

The participation of Jews in the guilds associated with the textile industry was thus summed up: "The most important and widespread occupation of Jews in the Ottoman Empire, within the guild organizations, was in the field of cloth production and the accompanying crafts, such as dyeing, button-making and selling. There was a conspicuous decline in Ottoman textile commerce and industry beginning from the seventeenth century as a result of the growth of the European industry. However, textiles still provided widespread employment for Jews in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and many guilds were engaged in trade and manufacture in various Turkish towns. For instance, in Istanbul, at the end of the eighteenth century, there were guilds for selling silk, for producing silk threads and buttons, and, at the beginning of



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the nineteenth century, guilds that made decorated trimmings and guilds of cloth dyers. At Izmir there were at this period cloth dyers, and makers of silk thread and of ornamental trimmings."[14]

At the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, Jews also played a part in the industrialization of the textile manufacture. Some Jews owned spinning mills and factories for making cloth, and others were employed in the industry. Different kinds of silk were produced in Bursa,[15] and in Salonika and the surrounding area, while in the Izmir region cotton and other fabrics were woven. Nevertheless we have little or no information about the makers of the textiles which have come down to us.[16]

This survey obviously cannot cover the entire range of textile products used by Jews in the home and in the synagogue. We shall concentrate on the more luxurious, usually embroidered, fabrics used for ceremonial purposes. These textiles were obviously better preserved and looked after than ordinary fabrics, which were allowed to wear out and were then discarded.

The fabrics and embroideries are grouped here according to materials and techniques. Their usages are described in comparison with their use among non-Jews. While some of the objects had an identical function among the different ethnic groups, with others the different customs led to variations in use.

We shall divide our discussion into a number of sections: The first is that of the heavy, gold-couched embroideries, of extremely wide distribution, that were most characteristic of the Jews of the Ottoman Empire during the period we are concerned with, in both the home and the synagogue. In this section, we shall also discuss the uses of textiles in the synagogue.

The second group is the so-called "light multi-colored embroideries," mostly known as "Turkish towels," also very widespread, mostly in domestic use. The patterns and types of embroidery reflect characteristic elements of Ottoman culture during many centuries. Within this group a sub-group of chain – stitch embroideries can be distinguished, which by the end of the nineteenth century had become the most conspicuous expression of the commercialization that marked the decline in the quality of Ottoman embroidery.

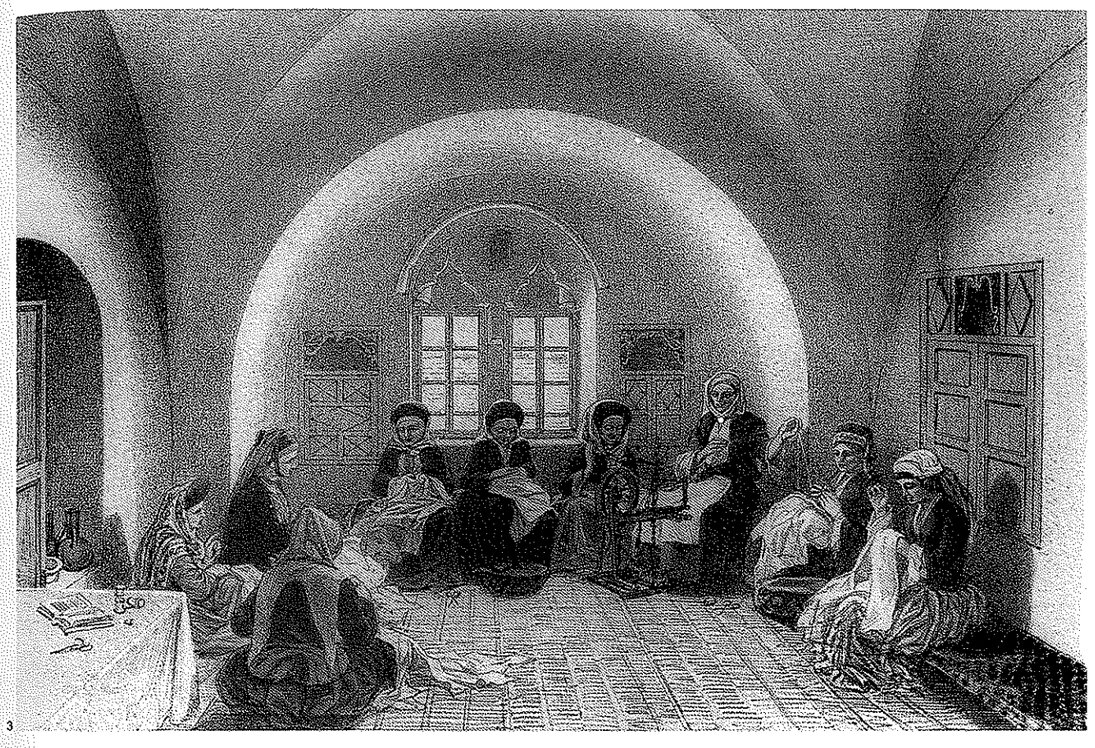
A special group, representing a link between textiles and metalwork, uses metal pieces for decoration. This kind of work was well-known in the synagogues of certain regions.

Two other groups, which we shall discuss only briefly, are patterned fabrics and carpets. Of these, only those with a specifically Jewish application or characteristics, such as Hebrew inscriptions, will be looked at.

The craft of embroidery

Much has been written on embroidery and its place in Ottoman culture. According to D'Ohsson: "Almost all women produce innumerable embroidered objects destined not only for their toilette, but also for everyday household uses: Muslin kerchiefs, towels, table napkins; in fact, everything from sashes to shoes and drawers."[17]

Various kinds of embroidered objects were, then, in general use. Much time was devoted to making them and much value was attached to them. Girls learned to embroider in childhood, and began to prepare their trousseau – garments, sheets, napkins and tablecloths, gifts for the bridegroom, and so on – at an early age. In the case of daughters of wealthy families, professional embroideresses were engaged to work in the home, and embroidered goods were also bought in fashion centers. The importance of embroidery in Turkish society at the turn of the century is thus described by Garnett: "Needle-



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work especially is held in great estimation, and for many years before marriage a girl finds occupation for her leisure hours in embroidering the sheets, towels, quilts, napkins and other articles which will later on figure in her trousseau and deck the bridal chamber."[18]

Apart from the articles for personal use, there were domestic workshops which produced embroideries for sale. Greek, Armenian and Jewish women embroidered for a livelihood. Even in Muslim households, where women were not supposed to work for wages, embroideries were made for sale to supplement the family income.[19] In addition to domestic enterprise, there were, in the nineteenth century, commercially-run workshops in the larger towns employing hundreds of workers carrying out specific commissions. Le Comte mentions a workshop in Istanbul, with about six hundred employees, that belonged to Abdullah Robert Levi. In such workshops embroidery was done on fabrics with a printed pattern, or after a design on paper accompanied by

2. Turkish woman embroidering
Early 18th century
Etching after a drawing of Jean-Baptiste Vanmour
From: Ferriol, no. 52

3. Sephardi women sewing
Jerusalem, 19th century
From: L.M. Cubly, *The Hills and Plains of Palestine*, 1855
Courtesy of Nathan Shorr

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instructions concerning colors and materials.[20] There were also workshops specializing in embroidery articles for the trousseau. Several such places in Izmir were run by Jewish women. According to testimonies dating from the beginning of the twentieth century, Jewish women were engaged in a wide range of decorative crafts, from heavy embroidery in metal thread to delicate work in colored silks, as well as cord embroidery for men's clothes.[21]

During the nineteenth century Ottoman embroidery knew vicissitudes, both in quality and in style. Expanding commercial production led to a decline of materials. The establishment of modern educational systems, Christian and Jewish, where embroidery was taught as a profession, influenced the styles.[22] The schools inculcated European – French or Italian, rather than the traditional Turkish – designs. Foreign fashion magazines were studied and copied, and their influence was especially apparent in the fine embroidery of white goods for the household which included lace and crochet work (fig. 4). However, together with European styles of embroidery, the traditional crafts and designs continued to be practiced, and the value placed on the craft of embroidery remained high.

Couched gold embroidery[23]

Heavy gold couching, worked on leather and on velvet and satin fabrics, was one of the most important types of Ottoman embroidery. It evolved from the regional Byzantine tradition and was widespread among the Turks from their nomadic days and until the twentieth century.[24]

Turkish gold-thread embroidery underwent a process of popularization. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries it was favored especially by the sultans and their courtiers, to decorate splendid saddles, quivers, boots, trays and tents.

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4. Embroiderers' workshop
White embroidery on Singer sewing machine
Tekirdag, 1931
Photo. Arch. 5976
Courtesy of Mrs. Pins, Benei Brak

5. Torah Ark curtain made from a bedspread
Dedicated in Izmir, 1900
Velvet, couched metal-thread embroidery on cardboard cut-outs
L. 205 W. 150
Israel Museum Collection
152/208; 574.86

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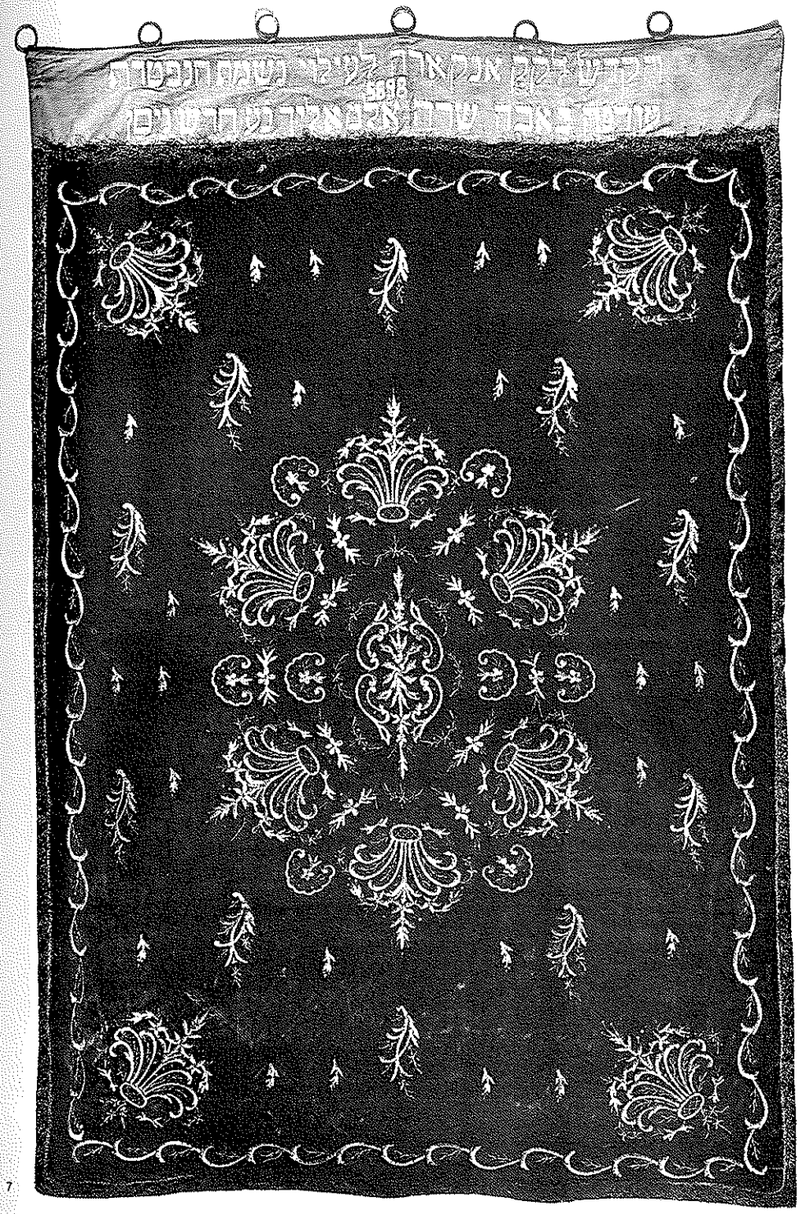

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6. Torah Ark curtain made from a bedspread
Dedicated in 1935
Velvet, couched metal-thread embroidery on cardboard cut-outs
L. 173 W. 142
Israel Museum Collection
152/225; 583.86

7. Torah Ark curtain made from a bedspread
Dedicated in Ankara, 1938
Velvet, couched metal-thread embroidery on cardboard cut-outs
L. 196 W. 129
Israel Museum Collection
152/131; 450.69

8

However, at the end of the eighteenth century and especially during the nineteenth, this embroidery was widely used among the middle-classes, especially in Istanbul, to embellish ceremonies and festive occasions. Most of the embroidered objects were part of the bride's trousseau, and acquired in this context. In private houses embroidery figured as covers of sofas (*divan*) arranged around the walls of the room for receiving guests, and on cushions, bedcovers, screens, tablecloths and wrapping cloths.

Items of festive attire were also adorned with gold embroidery – the dress, shoes and clogs of the bride, and the watch-cases, comb-holders and Koran-covers which were given as wedding gifts to the bridegroom. Embroidered hangings decorated the bridal bed, and later, the lying-in bed and the circumcision-bed.[25]

Apart from ceremonial domestic uses, gold embroidery also appeared in association with religion and ritual. Verses from the Koran were embroidered in gold on amulets suspended in the home. In the mosques, gold embroidery was seen on the pulpit (*mimbar*) curtain, on partitions, prayer rugs, reading stands for the Koran, and Koran cases and leather bindings. There were also other religious uses, such as covers for the tombs of sultans and saints.[26] This splendid embroidery, that had at first embellished the courts of kings and had later spread to the urban middle-classes, can still be found on village wedding dresses in Anatolia and on the costumes of folklore ensembles.

In the second half of the nineteenth and the early decades of the twentieth century, gold embroidery was widely used also among the Sephardi Jews of the Ottoman Empire (figs. 5-25, pls. 9, 11a-c), who, like Muslims, Greeks and Armenians formed part of the urban bourgeoisie. Jews used gold embroidery in a manner similar to that of their neighbors, but also for specific purposes associated with Jewish custom and tradition. Gold-embroidered draperies were used, for instance, for the bridal canopy, and for bringing the baby to the circumcision chair.

During the same period, or somewhat later, however, people began to donate embroideries to the synagogue, and finally almost all the gold work vanished from the houses, its original use forgotten. To this day, gold embroidered articles are specifically associated in people's minds with the synagogue.

The wide distribution of gold embroideries in the Sephardi communities, from the Balkans to Jerusalem, and their similar use everywhere made them a distinctive and identifying characteristic of these communities. At the same time, despite the wide uniformity of application, local customs can also be distinguished, specific to a group or a region. Most gold embroidered objects were bought, as we have indicated, for the trousseau. The trousseau included a set of bedcovers,

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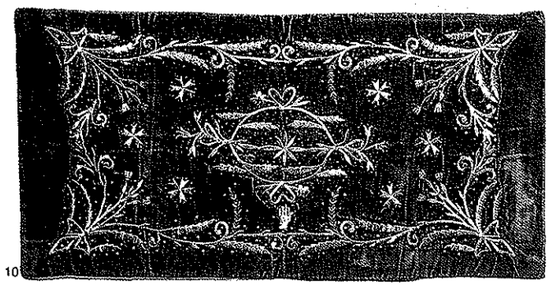

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8. *Shivviti* Torah Ark curtain
Dedicated in Izmir, 1879
Velvet, couched metal-thread embroidery on cardboard cut-outs
L. 180 W. 148
Israel Museum Collection
152/226; 584.86

9. Wrapper, tablecloth (*bógo*)
Velvet, couched metal-thread embroidery on cardboard cut-outs
L. 87 W. 83
Israel Museum Collection, 1263.81
Gift, courtesy of D. Recanati

10. Cushion cover
Velvet, couched metal-thread embroidery on cardboard cut-outs
L. 85 W. 42
Israel Museum Collection, 539.76
Gift of Mathilda Arditti, Barcelona

cushions of different sizes, wrapping cloths and tablecloths.[27] The quality and quantity of the pieces were determined by the family's financial means. Sometimes highly valued objects were preserved in a family for several generations, a mother giving her daughter items from her trousseau or from her own mother's trousseau. An air of family sentiment thus clung to these articles, so that in addition to their functional and fashionable qualities, they became identified with a tradition.

An embroidered textile was often a multi-purpose object. A square piece of cloth, for instance, could be used to wrap things carried to the *hammam* and as a tablecloth for the Sabbath, while in later metamorphoses it might become a mantle for the Torah or part of an Ark curtain.

At first the gold-embroidered objects were used in ceremonies connected with marriage, as among Muslims. Wrapping cloths, for instance, were used by both Jewish and Muslim brides for going to the *hammam* on the evening before the wedding. Jewish and Muslim brides and their companions wore their festive clothes for all the ceremonies connected with the wedding (see "Marriage").[28] Large hangings and cushions covers decorated the bridal bed in both communities. The same set of embroideries later adorned the lying-in bed, where the mother reposed under an embroidered coverlet, leaning on cushions, and received visitors. But there were some differences in the Jewish ceremonies. The wedding was held under a *huppah* (canopy) called *talamó* - a *sukkah*-like structure, made of large hangings or Ark curtains set up in the house or synagogue where the bridal pair sat on the day of the wedding. The newborn infant was carried to the circumcision ceremony on a gold-embroidered cushion, and the godfather's chair was covered with the same kind of embroidery.

Embroidered pieces were also used on festivals and the Sabbath. The cushions for the Passover *seder*, the cloth that covered the *seder* plate, the hangings that decorated the sides of the *sukkah*, covers for the Esther scroll, and cases for the *tallit* (prayer shawl) and *tefillin* (phylacteries), (*taléga, koráča*) – were all gold-embroidered. Embroidered objects originally bought for personal use, according to custom and fashion, were often donated later to the synagogue, and there became Ark curtains, Torah mantles and reader-desk covers and were used in various ceremonies.[29] Together with the shift from private use to the synagogue, there was also a certain amount of borrowing from the synagogue for domestic use, such as that of *parokhot*, for setting up a *huppah* or decorating a *sukkah*. Most of the gold work in the synagogues represents conversion from domestic use, and only a few pieces were originally made specifically for their religious functions. The close connection between these embroideries and the synagogue is expressed in the term *parokhiyot*, which among Turkish Sephardi Jews has come to mean all textiles

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decorated with gold embroidery.

Yehoshua describes this phenomenon in his memoirs: "In the old synagogues of the Sephardim are preserved to this day fine silk Ark curtains embroidered in heavy gold thread, sometimes sparkling, sometimes having lost their brilliance, and in the middle of the Ark curtain, words to uplift the souls of those who had departed from the world in fullness of years or in the flower of their youth. These Ark curtains were the same few splendid *kaveseras* that were spread on the beds of women lying-in, and that after many years were taken out of their wooden chests and hung up before the Ark of the Holy One...."[30]

Ark curtains (*parokhot*) In Sephardi synagogues it was customary to hang an outer curtain (*parokhet*) in front of the Ark of the Covenant – the *heikhal* – and an additional curtain inside, behind the door (fig. 17). The cupboards or the recesses on either side of the ark, where the *sifrei Torah*, (Books of the Law), other sacred books and ritual objects were stored, might also be hung with *parokhot*. The ark curtains were usually made out of large hangings that had been covers for the bridal or lying-in bed (figs. 5-8, 15), but they might also be sewn together out of tablecloths, cushion covers and parts of garments (figs. 1, 14, pl. 9). However, there were also gold-embroidered curtains designed as such from the first (figs. 51, 53).

Torah mantles (*vestído*) The custom of wrapping the *sefer Torah* in a fabric "coat" seems to have been already current in Spain, and it can be seen to this day in the entire Spanish dispersion, with local differences in form and material. The custom was also perpetuated in Sephardi communities in Turkey and Greece, until the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, in spite of their encounter with the Romaniote communities who used cases (*tikim*) of wood or metal.

The Ottoman Sephardi mantle is cylindrical in shape. At the top is a round wooden tablet covered in cloth, with two holes for the "trees of life" (*aẓei ḥayyim*). This round tablet is attached to a piece of cloth, square or rectangular, the edges remaining open at the back. A dedicatory inscription is usually embroidered in the center of the mantle (figs. 11-13, 21). A large number of them are reused home fabrics, especially square wrappers or cushion covers. It is not known how this specific form of mantle developed, as so little early material has survived and research thus becomes problematic.

Torah binders (*fáša, mitpaḥat*) The Torah binder, which the Sephardim call *mitpaḥat* or *fáša*,[31] is of two kinds: one, a long, narrow strip of fabric, used for wrapping and holding the closed Torah Scrolls (pl. 10), the second, a larger piece of cloth the width of the scroll, used in rolling up the Torah scroll. Only the narrow binders holding the closed scrolls were gold-embroidered and these were also not common, as the stiffness of the embroidery made the rolling difficult. Many of

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13

11. Torah mantle
Velvet, couched metal-thread embroidery on cardboard cut-outs
L. 89 D. 22
Israel Museum Collection
151/114; 267.78

12. Torah mantle
Dedicated in 1945
Velvet, couched metal-thread embroidery on cardboard cut-outs
L. 86 D. 26.5
Israel Museum Collection
151/170

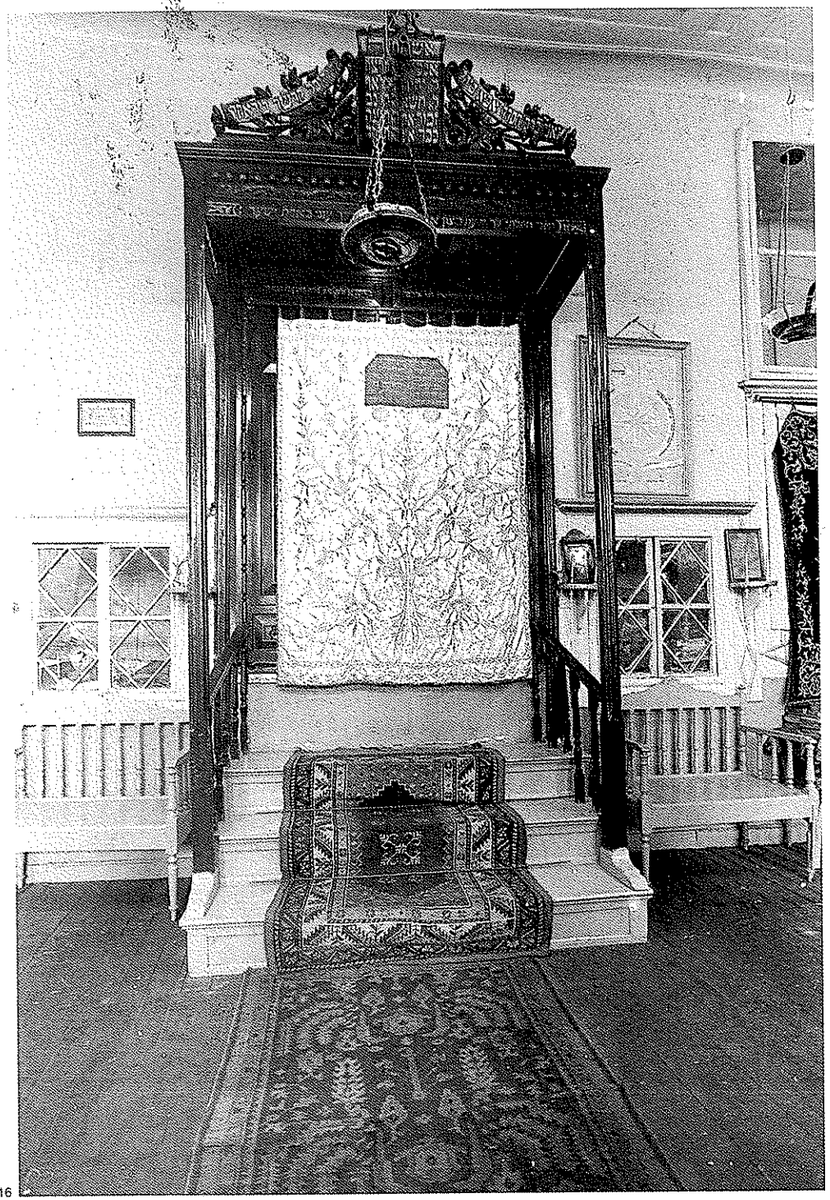
13. Torah mantle
Dedicated in 1945
Silk and velvet, metal-thread embroidery on cardboard cut-outs
L. 90.5 D. 29.5
Israel Museum Collection
151/146; 402.81

14

14. Torah Ark curtain made from a wrapper and two cushion covers
Dedicated in Izmir, 1909
Velvet, couched metal-thread embroidery on cardboard cut-outs
L. 220 W. 139
Israel Museum Collection
152/164; 3003.80

15. Torah Ark curtain
Dedicated in 1920
Velvet, couched metal-thread embroidery on cardboard cut-outs
L. 203 W. 139
Israel Museum Collection
152/205; 571.86

15



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16. Torah Ark curtain on the *hekhal* of Algazi synagogue, Izmir
Photo: 1983, Photo Arch. 5909

17. Inner and outer Torah Ark curtain
Hekhal of Ez Hayyim synagogue, Izmir
Photo: 1977, Photo. Arch. 3057

17

the bindings were donated to the synagogue in conjunction with childbirth. For example, mothers of newborn babies, coming to the synagogue for the first time after childbirth purification, would bring a binder to the synagogue (see "Childbirth").[32]

Various cloths and covers Gold embroideries were also used to cover the *tevah*, entirely or in part (fig. 25). On special occasions gold-embroidered fabrics were used to cover other pieces of furniture in the synagogue, such as "Elijah's Chair" and the bridegroom's seat, and they were also borrowed to decorate the *sukkah*, or to serve for a *huppah* in the house. R. Ya'akov Shaul Eliashar (1817-1906), once Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem, was asked if it was permitted to take an Ark curtain away from sanctified use and put it to a lower kind of use, like decorating a domestic *sukkah*. He said, "And my evidence is trustworthy, since for more than fifty years I have seen this custom, that the *parokhiyot* are spread out for bridegrooms and for the *sandak*, and on the walls of the *sukkah*, in time of our very old teachers, and nobody opened his mouth to protest."[33] And on the basis of this time-hallowed custom, the rabbi, after much debate, decided to permit its continuance.

Materials and techniques

The fabrics used as backgrounds for couched metal-thread embroidery were principally velvet and satin, sometimes also wool, felted or woven. The embroidery was done in metallic thread in shades of gold or silver. There were several kinds of thread: wrapped round a silk core (*kilaptan*), coiled thread and tinsel (*tel* and *sim*). They all existed in various qualities. The most luxurious type was gilt silver thread.

These threads were applied by a couching technique (*dival işi*); that is, the metallic thread was laid on the right side of the fabric and attached with cotton thread that was seen only on the back. The embroidery was therefore one-sided. The patterns themselves were for the most part created from cutout designs prepared in leather or cardboard, laid or

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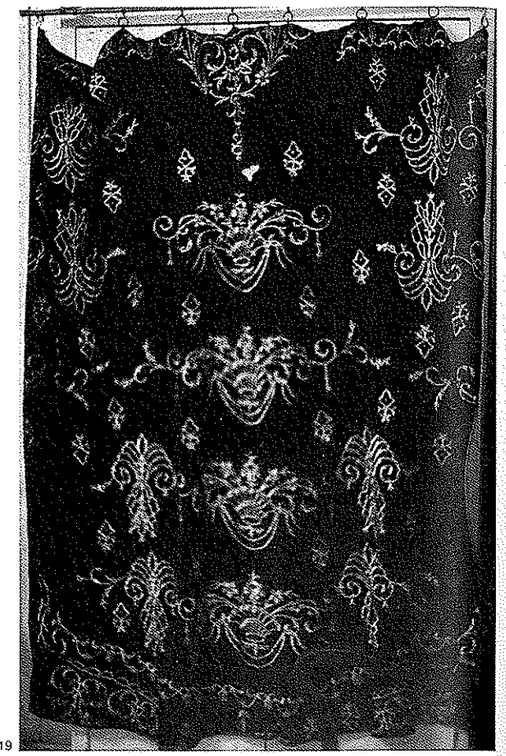

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pasted on the background fabric, and covered by the metallic thread. If the pattern was to be raised in a higher relief, cotton thread padding was used instead of the cutout.

In earlier embroideries, which were of finer quality, a complete cutout pattern was composed, containing a number of integrated motifs, but by the end of the nineteenth century, when gold embroidery was being produced in commercial quantities, the cutouts were divided into smaller separate motifs, and laid on the fabric in conventional combinations.[34]

Compositions

One widely prevalent composition consists of a central medallion, a border and corner motifs, resembling the usual design of Turkish book bindings (figs. 1, 5-10, 14).[35] Another kind is found in "Bursa embroidery." Here two motifs occur alternately along the length of the fabric, at regular intervals, sometimes in parallel lines (fig. 17).[36] A third composition is based on the *bindal* (a thousand branches) motif. It consists of a central jar or flower stalk out of which spring branches that spread over the entire surface of the fabric. The insistence on precise symmetry notwithstanding, the branches create an impression of natural growth (figs. 15, 16).[37]

Another typical composition is made up of a kind of portal or gate pattern of various shapes; the architectural construction is usually only alluded to, often by plant forms; and there is sometimes a vase or bouquet of flowers in the lower part of the design (figs. 49-53). The source of this composition is the Muslim prayer rug. (The portal motif and the Jewish iconographical tradition associated with it in the Ottoman Empire will be discussed later.)

When domestic articles were donated to the synagogue, they underwent certain changes to adapt them to their new functions, and thus new compositions were produced. The most usual alteration was to sew several small pieces

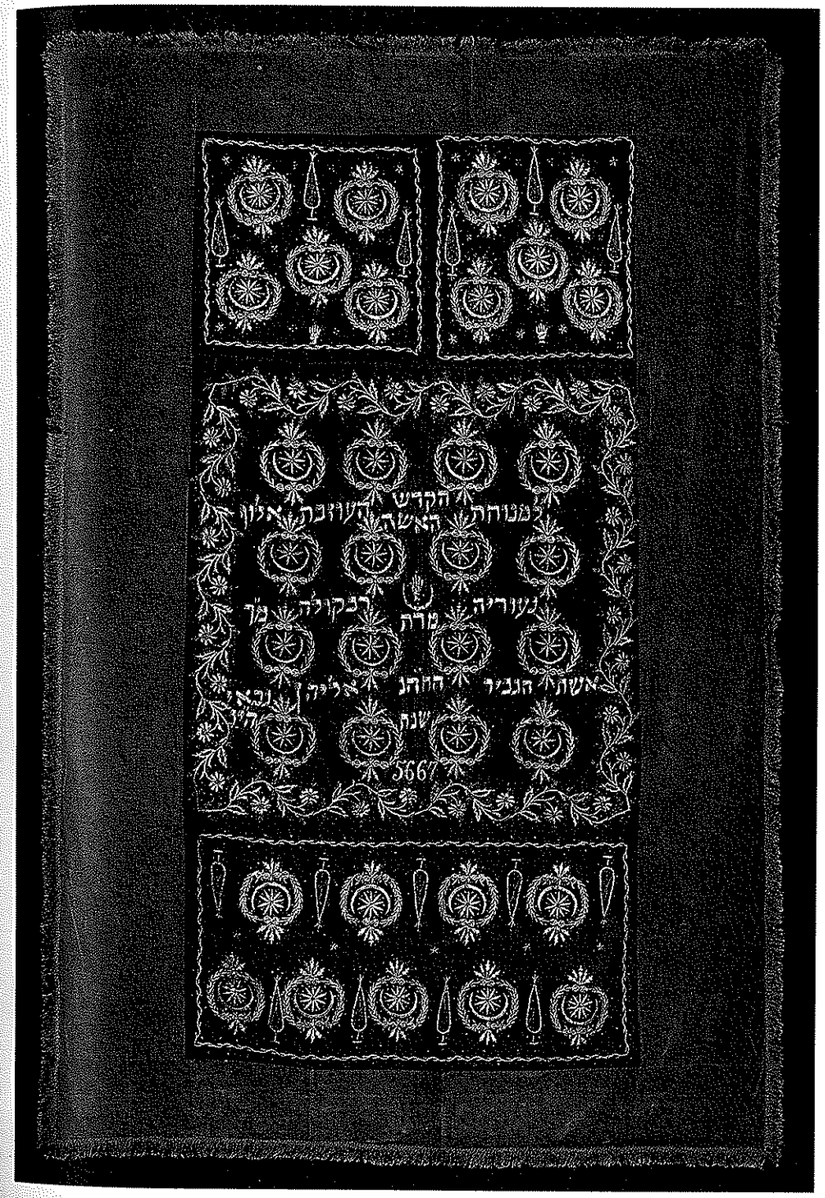
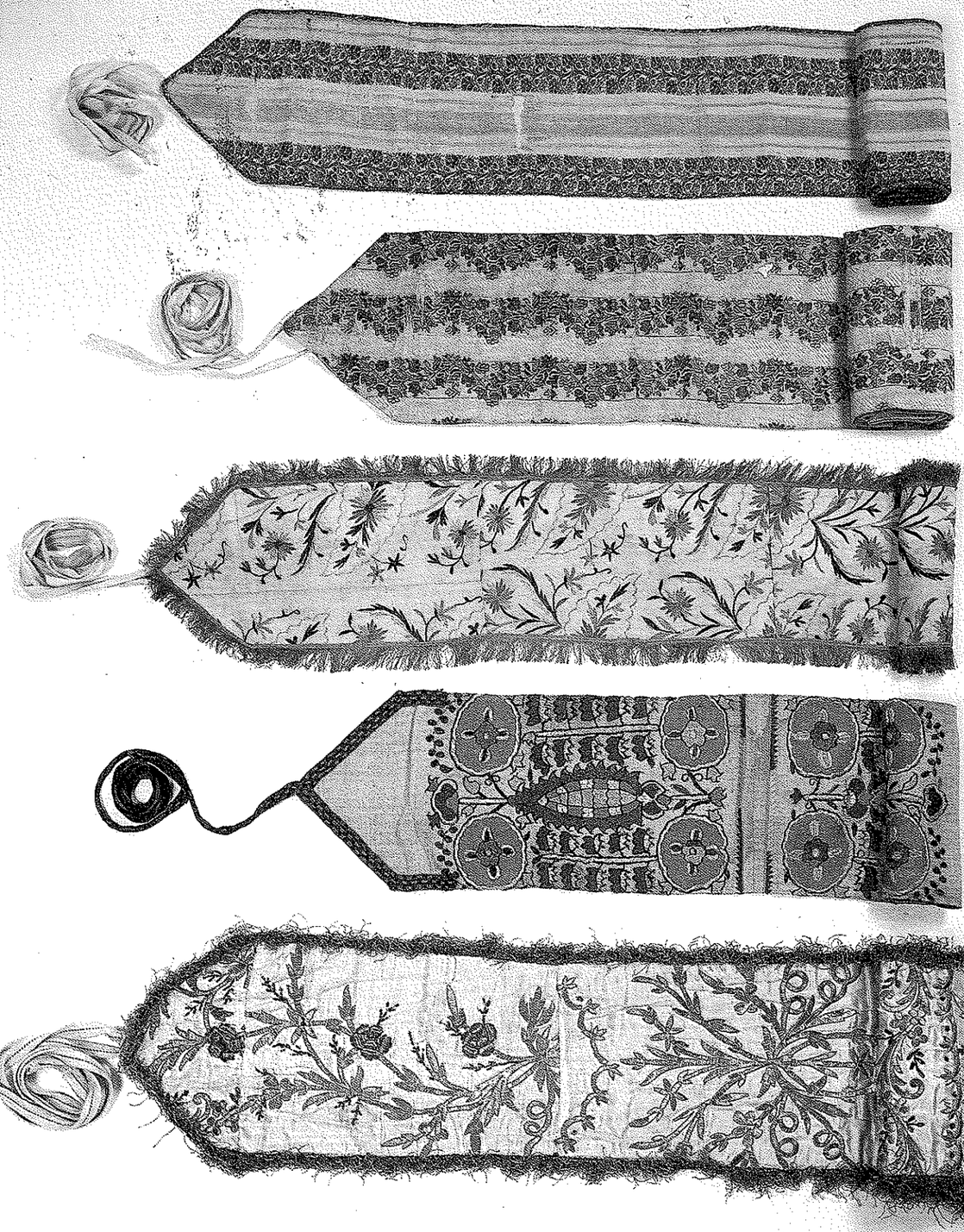


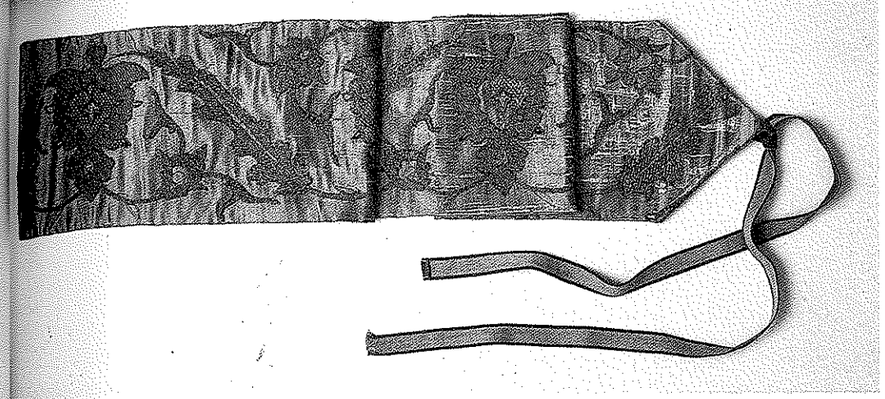
Plate 9

18. Ceremonial dress
Velvet, couched metal-thread embroidery on cardboard cut-outs
L. 148
Israel Museum Collection
293.67

19. Torah Ark curtain made from a dress
Synagogue in Old-Age Home, Hasköy, Istanbul
Photo: 1977, Photo. Arch. 3071

Pl. 9.
Torah Ark curtain made from a wrapper and three cushion covers
Dedicated in Izmir, 1907
Velvet, couched metal-thread embroidery on cardboard cut-outs
L. 208 W. 142
Israel Museum Collection
152/170; 3309.80





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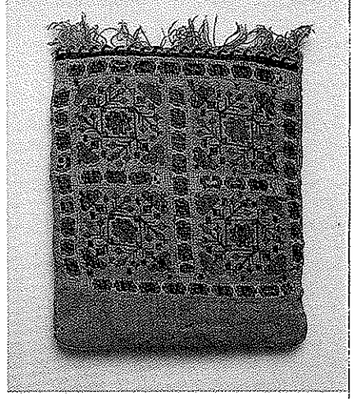

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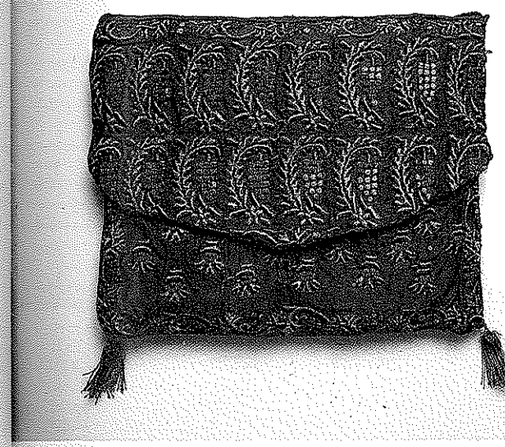
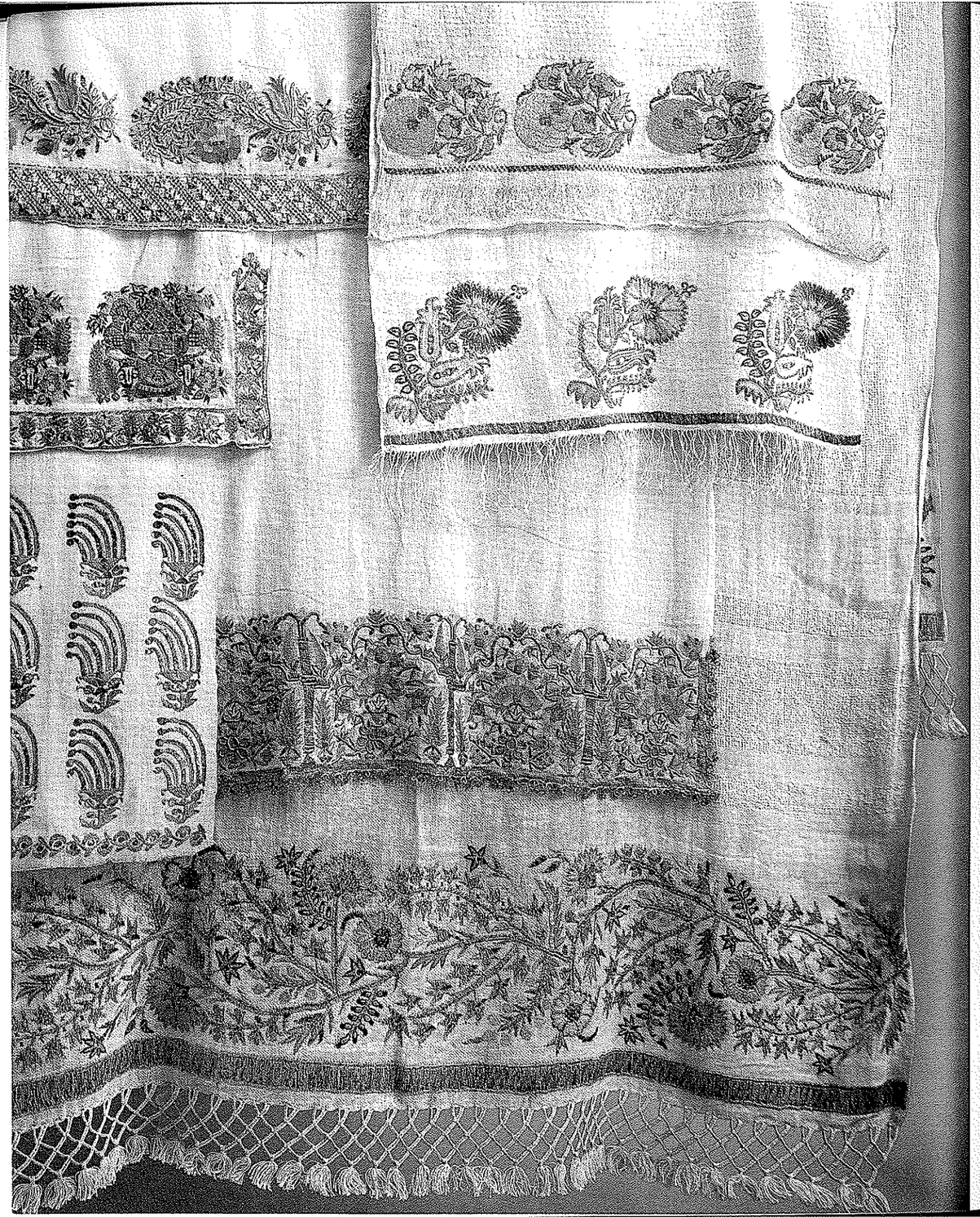


c

Pl. 10.
Torah binders (*faša*)
From top to bottom:
Brocade, L. 164.5 W. 17
Israel Museum Collection
150/128; 437.69
Brocade, L. 152 W. 19
Israel Museum Collection
150/219; 669.86
Silk, multicolored silk-thread embroidery, chain stitch
L. 113 W. l5.5
Israel Museum Collection
150/l95; 3044.80
Linen, reversible multicolored silk-thread embroidery
L. 86 W. 18
Israel Museum Collection
150/213; 663.86
Satin, couched metal-thread embroidery
L. 117.5 W. 19
Israel Museum Collection
150/141; 3043.80

Pl. 11.
a. Torah binder
Silk satin, metal- and silk-thread embroidery on cut-outs, and linen thread padding
L. 122 W. 20
Israel Museum Collection
150/22; 670.86
b. Prayer shawl bag (*talégа koráča*)
Secondary use
Satin, couched metal-thread embroidery on cut-outs and linen thread padding
L. 20 W. 25
Israel Museum Collection
1039.80
c. Prayer shawl bag (*talégа koráča*)
Rhodes
Silk velvet, couched metal-thread embroidery on cotton thread padding
L. 32 W. 24
Israel Museum Collection
1117.85
Gift of Clara Menasce, Brussels
d. Prayer shawl or phylacteries bag
Secondary use
Linen, reversible silk- and metal-thread embroidery
L. 22 W. 19
Israel Museum Collection
604.84

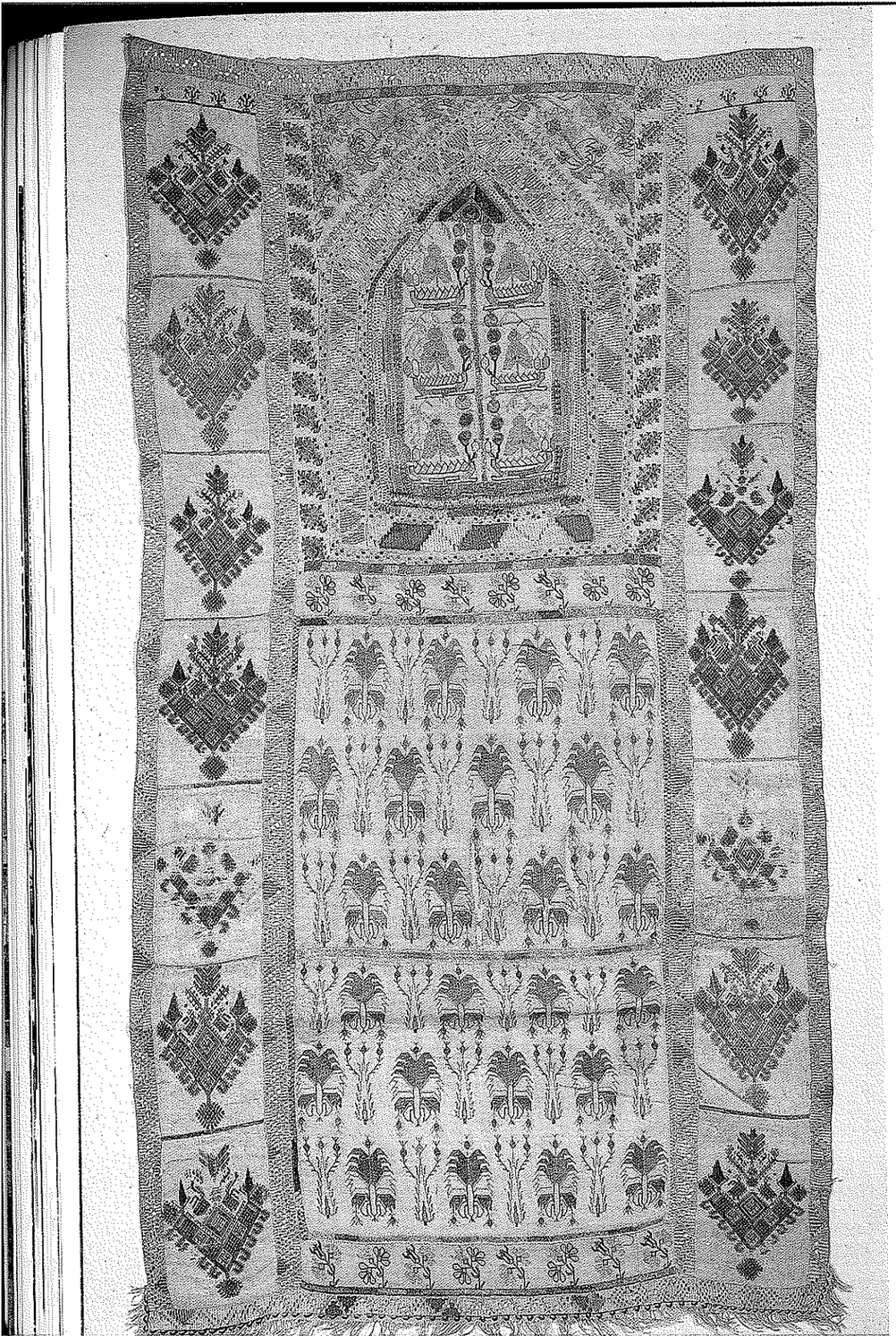


a

b

Pl. 12.
Reversible multicolored silk- and metal-thread embroideries
Hand towel, linen, L. 175 W.51
Israel Museum Collection, 480.69
Kerchief, linen, L. 125 W. 60
Israel Museum Collection, 288.75
Hand towel, linen, L. 120 W. 50
Israel Museum Collection, M 3734-9-55
Kerchief, cotton, L. 112 W. 60
Israel Museum Collection, 284.75
Kerchief, linen, L. 146 W. 52
Israel Museum Collection, 332.67
Sash, linen, L. 240 W. 21
Israel Museum Collection, 639.84
Gift of Martin Chasin, Princeton
Bath towel, linen, L. 170 W. 95
Lent by Yossi Benyaminoff, New York, L. 80.191

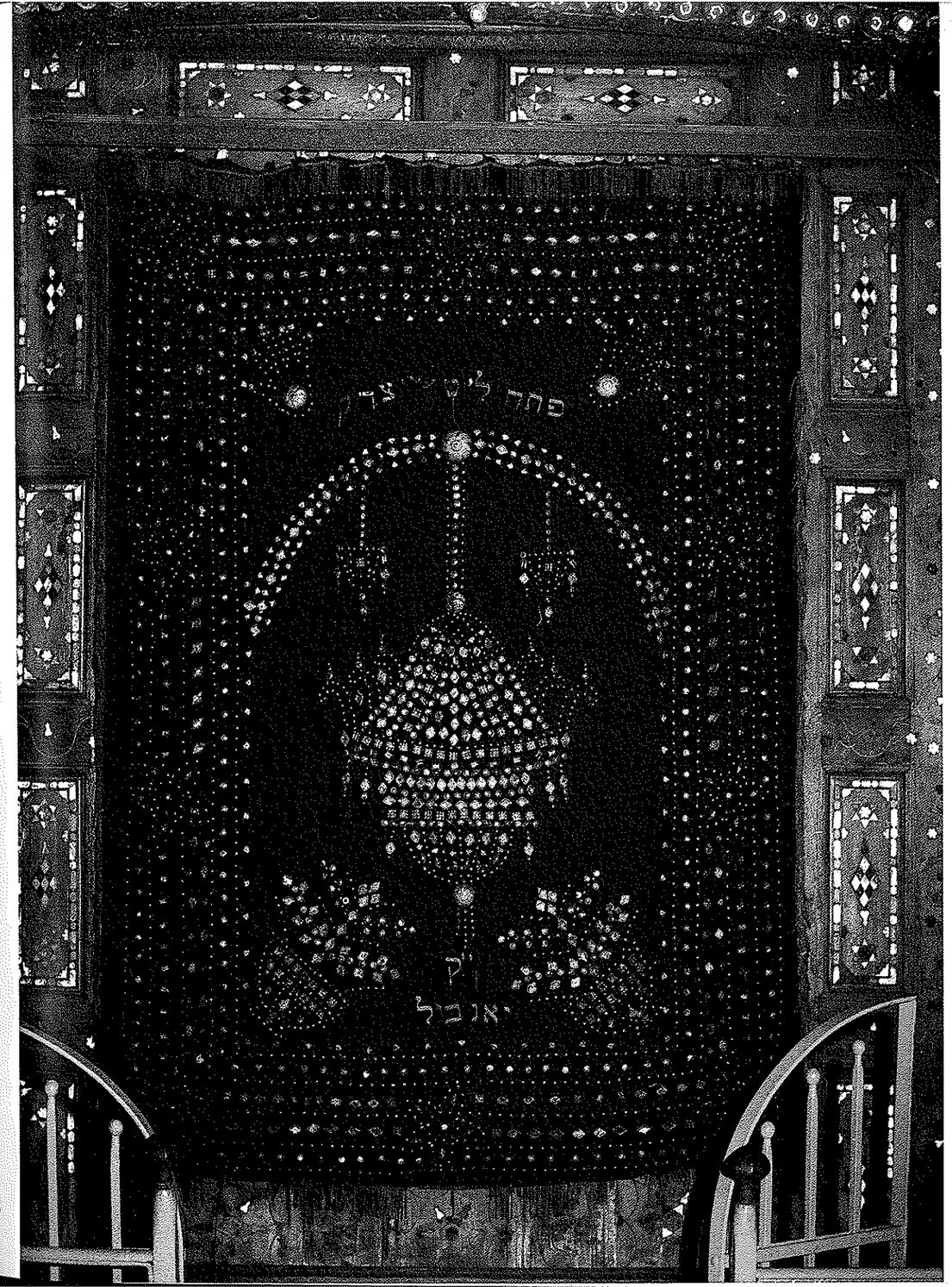
Pl. 13.
a. Detail of hanging (sheet?)
18th century(?)
Linen and silk, reversible silk-thread embroidery
L. 170 W. 150
Israel Museum Collection 351.77
Purchased by courtesy of Youssef Khakshouri, Zurich
b. Detail of Torah Ark curtain, "Textiles," fig. 39

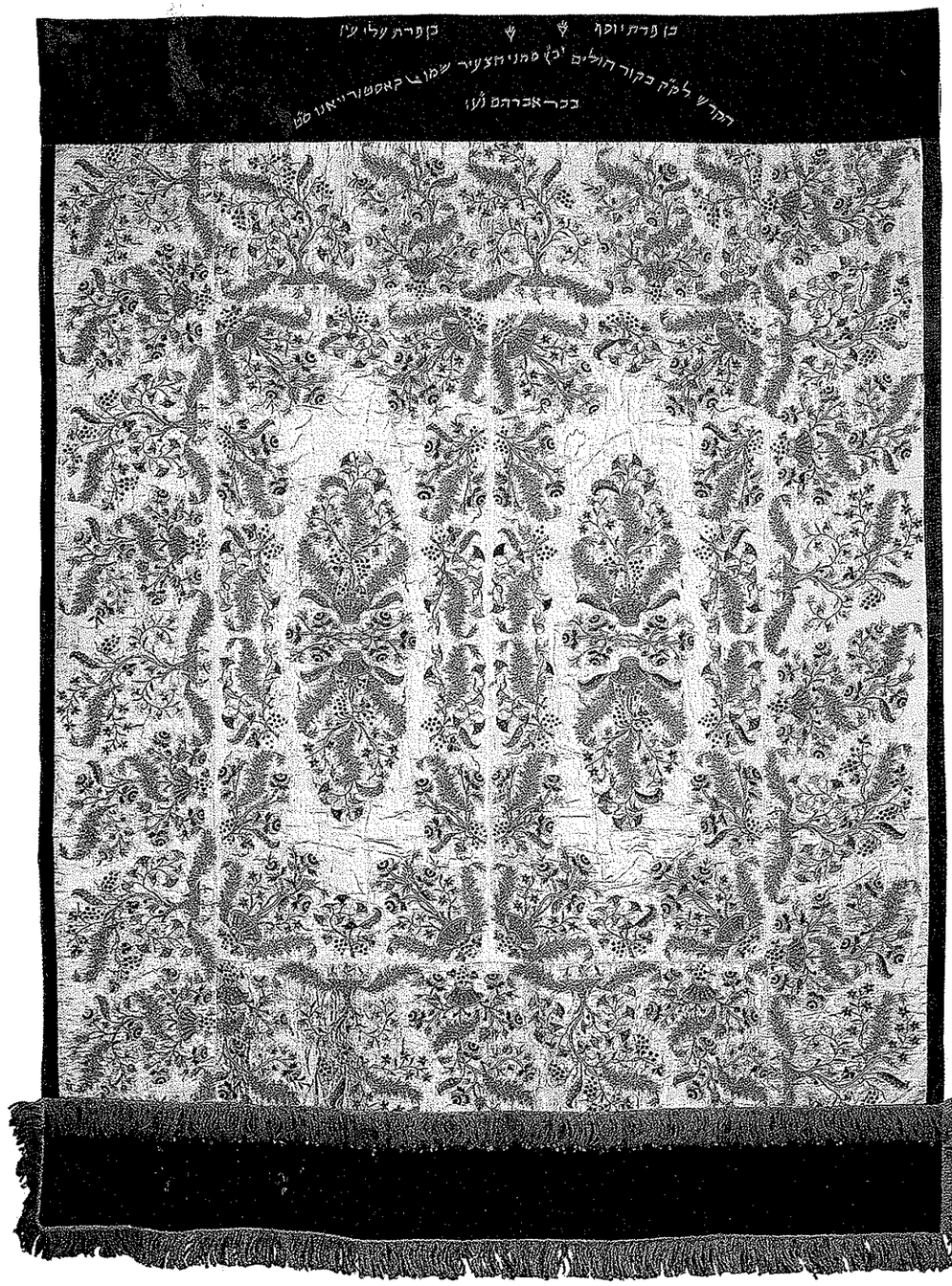


Pl. 14
Torah Ark curtain made from scraps of embroidered fabrics
Linen, reversible silk-thread embroidery
L. 151 W. 81
Israel Museum Collection
152/121; 177.68
Gift of Jakob Michael, New York, in memory of his wife, Erna Michael

Pl. 15
Torah Ark curtain
Yambol synagogue, Istanbul
Metal studs and plaques appliqué
Photo: 1983, Photo. Arch. 5901

Pl. 16.
Torah Ark curtain made from a bedspread and cushion covers
Satin and velvet, multicolored chenille and metal-thread embroidery
L. 203 W. 147
Israel Museum Collection, 152.212; 577.86





together, such as wrapping cloths and cushion covers, to make an Ark curtain or Torah mantle (figs. 1, 14, pl. 9). Sometimes the old pieces were sewn onto a new background. Articles of clothing were usually cut up and restitched to make the desired ceremonial object. The composition of the new piece was thus based on the motifs that had been used on the old dress, kerchief or cushion, sometimes in an effort to achieve symmetry or a specific design, and sometimes with an apparently arbitrary result. In most of the remade pieces one can identify parts of the original items, such as the collar or sleeves of a dress (figs. 18-22, 24, 25). Not only objects destined for the synagogue were reused in this way. When the fabric background of an embroidered piece disintegrated, the embroidered parts which were still in good condition might be preserved to make new small articles of personal use, such as a bag for the *tallit* or *tefillin* (pl. 11b).

Style and motifs

The influence of European styles is manifest in all spheres of Turkish art especially from the eighteenth century on. In couched gold embroidery, for example, it consists of borrowing baroque, rococo and neo-classicist elements and motifs,[38] and combining them with traditional Ottoman motifs to create an Ottoman-European style.

The motifs of the gold embroidery were drawn especially from the plant world: buds, leaves and tendrils, in various combinations, all in vases, baskets, cornucopias, ribbons and bows. Unlike the classical Ottoman style, which favored carnations and tulips, in gold embroidery the flowers can seldom be identified, except for the ubiquitous rose. Indeed, the rose, though associated with traditional Ottoman ornament, seems to have reached gold embroidery through the influence of European textiles.[39]

Hebrew inscriptions Very often, when the embroidered article was consecrated to the synagogue, an inscription was added to it, with the name of the donor and of the person honored or in whose name the item was presented, and sometimes also the occasion leading to the gift, and the date. This date is of course that of the gift and is not a guide to the production of the piece. Some inscriptions were embroidered directly on the fabric and are intentionally emphasized (figs. 6, 8) while others merge with the embroidered motifs and almost disappear from view (fig. 15). In many cases the dedicatory inscriptions were embroidered on a separate piece of fabric and sewn on to the Ark curtain or Torah mantle, usually in its upper third. Such an arrangement, of course, affected the original composition, and drew attention to the inscription (figs. 16, 17). Inscriptions on domestic articles are mainly of

20

21

20. Reader's desk cover made from parts of a dress
Velvet, couched metal-thread embroidery on cardboard cut-outs
L. 92 W. 88
Israel Museum Collection, 908.82

21. Torah mantle made from parts of a dress
Velvet, metal-thread embroidery cardboard cut-outs
L. 85 D. 23
Israel Museum Collection
151/136; 3033.80

22

22. Torah Ark curtain made from parts of a dress
Dedicated in 1902
Velvet, couched metal-thread embroidery on cardboard cut-outs
L. 174 W. 135
Israel Museum Collection
152/156; 769.39

23. Esther scroll
Izmir
Parchment, ink, water colors, silver partially gilt, repoussé and cast, coral
The cover: velvet couched metal-thread embroidery on cardboard cut-outs
H. 41 D. 4
Joseph Pardo Collection, Tel Aviv

23

24

25

two kinds: European style monograms on articles of the bride's trousseau (fig. 9) and Hebrew amuletic inscriptions on childbirth amulets (see "Childbirth").

Colored embroidery

The following group comprises for the most part the well known embroideries popularly called "Turkish Towels." Most of them are rectangular and square pieces of cloth colorfully embroidered with reversible stitches at the borders. They can be considered a hallmark of Turkish embroidery.[40] These embroideries appear in paintings and are described in travellers' accounts as an inseparable part of daily life and of

24. Torah Ark curtain made from parts of a dress
Late 19th century
Velvet, couched metal-thread embroidery on cardboard cut-outs
L. 194 W. 154
Israel Museum Collection
152/165; 3044.80

25. Reader's desk cover made from parts of a dress
Geveret (*Senyora*) synagogue
Izmir
Photo: 1977, Photo. Arch. 3054

ceremonial occasions. They were, on the whole, made for home use, both everyday and festive, rather than for religious ritual purposes, among Jews as well as Muslims (figs. 26, 27, pls. 10d, 11d, 12a, 13, 14).[41]

Among Jews these pieces of embroidery were known by the generic name of *çévres* (from the Turkish name *çevre* for a square piece of fabric with an embroidered border), or *antikas* when it was an antique object of some value. Colored embroideries also formed part of the bride's trousseau, and were embroidered by the bride or by a professional embroideress. They could also be bought from professional workshops and were sometimes transmitted as family heirlooms. The most common functions of these embroidered pieces were as towels, napkins, fine sheets and wrappers. They were also used as parts of clothing, such as sashes (*uçkur* and *kuşak*), scarves and shawls, and as turban covers.

In ceremonial use these embroidered pieces formed the set of towels to wrap the bride after the ritual bath at the party held in her honor in the *hammam* before the wedding. Embroidered hangings were suspended from the ceiling and others, shaped like bows were pinned on the walls to decorate the bridal chamber and the chamber of childbirth (among Muslims, also the bed of the circumcised child).

Among Jews, certain embroideries were specific to the *seder* night, for ablutions, or for covering the *mazzot* or wrapping the *afikoman* (it was customary for a member of the family to circle the table, carrying the bundle of *mazzot* on his back to symbolize the sufferings of the Israelites in Egypt). At Sukkot, embroideries decorated the walls of the *sukkah*. In the synagogue these colored embroideries might be found in reuse, mostly as Torah binders, and, less commonly, as Torah mantles or as kerchiefs laid over the Torah mantle. However, Ark curtains with this kind of embroidery were rare.

Materials and techniques

The background fabric for the colored embroidery was usually undyed cotton or linen, sometimes with an admixture of silk thread. Some of these fabrics were extremely fine and delicate; others were heavier; some were in twill, others in plain weave, sometimes patterned by different thicknesses of thread.

Some scholars have tried to date the embroideries according to material and technique.[42] In the seventeenth century thin linen was most commonly used, and in the eighteenth century very fine cotton. In the nineteenth century a silk and linen mixture of threads of various thicknesses was in popular use. A special group was made of looped cotton pile, a towelling fabric, which appeared, it seems, in the early part of the century.[43]

In the earlier period, loosely spun silk thread (*ibrişim*) was dyed with vegetable coloring. Later, mercerized cotton dyed with ready-made powder dyes replaced the silk thread.[44]

From the eighteenth century onward, metallic threads in gold and silver colors were also used, sometimes wrapped around a silk core. Also popular was tinsel (*tel*), applied without a needle and fastened with a special hammer.

The most prominent characteristic of this embroidery is its reversibility. To achieve this two-sided effect it was done in several stages, sometimes four or six, that covered the joins and knots and produced a unified surface on both sides of the fabric. The stitches were worked partly by counting the threads, giving rise to geometric patterns, or by following designs drawn on the fabric, allowing a freer movement.[45]

It is difficult to classify the embroideries by pattern and thus only a very general distinction can be made between Istanbul work, noted for its quality and the richness of its motifs, and Anatolian, which was coarser in design.

Some scholars claim to recognize different local schools of Anatolian embroidery, for instance, that of the Aegean coast region, where vine-leaf and fruit motifs occur on a red ground, and Konya work, which uses a profusion of satin stitch.[46]

Colored embroidery throughout draws on a range of motifs from the plant world, especially flowers, such as roses, hyacinths, etc., and in the large hangings of earlier periods, tulips, carnations and pine-cones, hallmarks of Ottoman art, are frequently found.

The most characteristic motifs are a curved branch surrounding a flower; flowers in vases; bouquets of flowers and bowls of fruit; boats and swords. Beginning with the eighteenth century a picture of a whole landscape may appear, with cypress trees and *kösk* buildings.

These pieces were embroidered in a repeated pattern, usually along the side edges, in two strips of varying height. In the case of square pieces the embroidery creates a frame around the borders. Sometimes the motifs are dispersed over the entire surface, and occasionally various trimmings are added, especially crochet with metal thread.

Chain-stitch tambour embroidery

Tambour embroidery should be given special mention, as it was rather popular in both Turkish and Jewish needlework. It was used to embroider large pieces like prayer rugs, bedcovers and cushion covers, and also for small pieces like sheaths, napkins, and parts of garments (figs. 28-31, pl. 21a).

Background fabrics for chain-stitch embroidery were varied: silk, satin, cotton, linen and fine wool. The thread was also not uniform: fine silk, wool, metallic thread, and metallic thread spun together with colored thread. The early embroidery, done with a needle or tambour hook, is very delicate and of very fine quality. However, in the nineteenth century, machines began to be used for tambour embroidery, allowing it to be produced in large quantities.

26

27

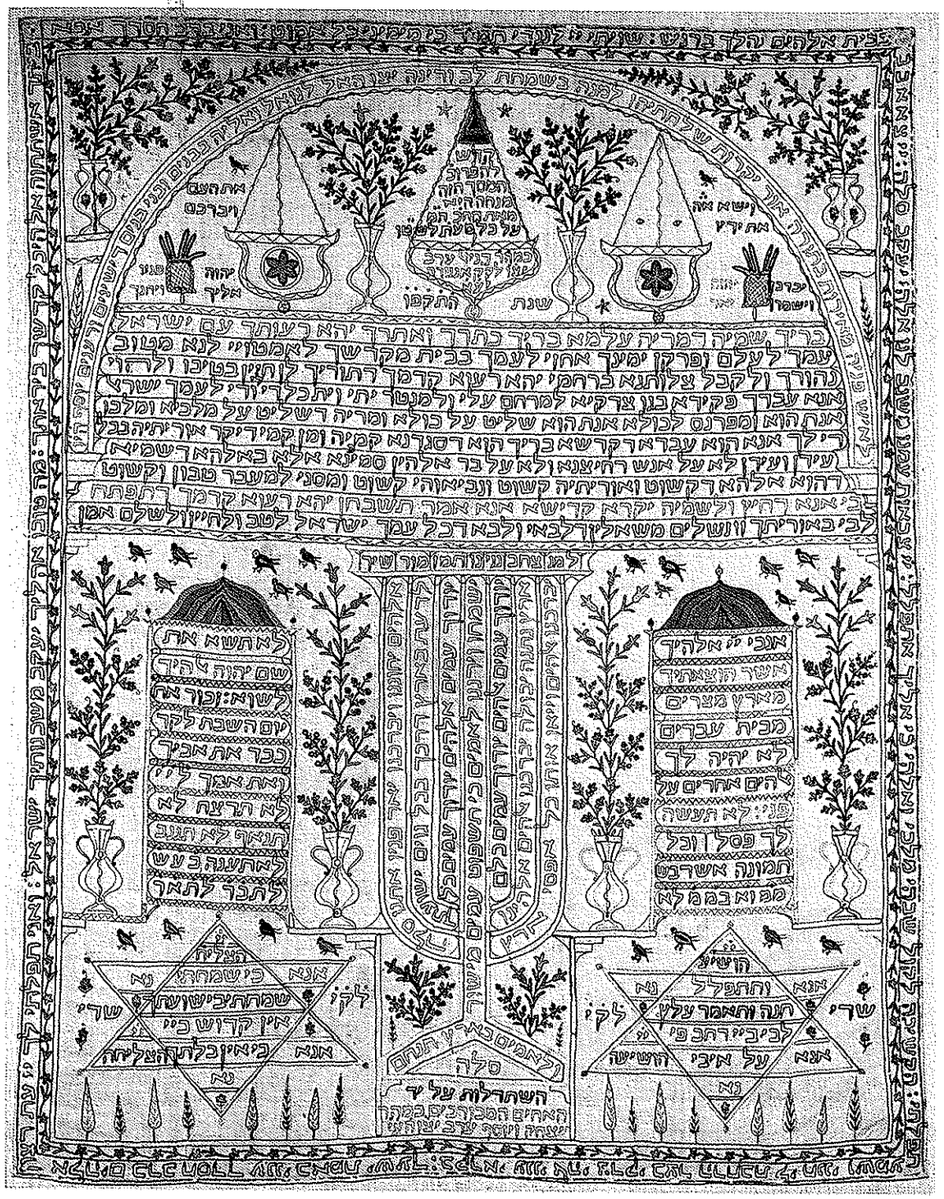
As the quality declined and the traditional Ottoman designs degenerated,[47] chain-stitch embroidery captured the local and especially the export markets. Ottoman symbols were added to the designs – the crescent, star, the *tughra* or sultan's signature, and inscriptions in Turkish (then in Arabic script), intended to identify the articles as Ottoman.

A similar process of insertion of symbols, here Jewish, appeared on Ark curtains, Torah mantles and other pieces embroidered in chain-stitch. Earlier pieces rarely carried this type of symbol. Among the more common motifs of this kind are the Magen David with the word "Zion," the Tablets of the Law and the seven-branched *menorah* made up of the text of Psalm 67.

We do not know the early tradition of chain-stitch among Jews in Turkey, although from the very few pieces which have survived, we assume that it existed.[48] In the first decades of

26. Embroidered towel with Hebrew inscription, used in the synagogue
Dedicated in Ankara, 1951
Linen, looped pile weave, reversible tinsel and silk-thread embroidery
L. 135 W. 37
Israel Museum Collection
154.8

27. Kerchiefs
Cotton, reversible tinsel and silk-thread embroidery
Israel Museum Collection
4173.12.64; 1300.79, anonymous gift;
638.82, gift of Rose Devidas



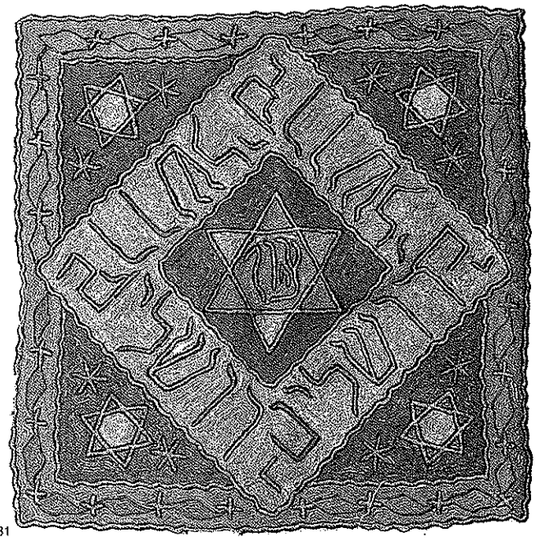
28

29

28. *Shivviti* Torah Ark curtain
Dedicated in Ankara, 1826
Linen(?), wool- and silk-thread embroidery, chain stitch
L. 208 W. 166
Israel Museum Collection
152/129; 448.69

29. *Shivviti* Torah Ark curtain and valance
Istanbul, early 20th century
Wool, wool-thread embroidery, chain stitch
L. 208 W. 162
Israel Museum Collection
152/241; 598.85

30



31

the twentieth century a number of Jews worked in the Kuzguncuk quarter of Istanbul, machine-embroidering Ark curtains and Torah mantles in chain-stitch. One of them, Izhak Rofe, perpetuated his name on a Torah mantle (pl. 21a).

Metal appliqué decoration

Another technique to create Ark curtains and Torah mantles is the application of metal elements on textile (figs. 32-37, pl. 15). It is not known when this kind of Ark curtain and Torah mantle began to be made, but it was found mostly in the Istanbul area, in Edirne, and further north, and the source seems to be Yugoslavia or Bulgaria. Turkish saddles and other objects of the eighteenth century are known to have been decorated in this technique[49] and there were certainly other objects of the same kind in Turkish use.

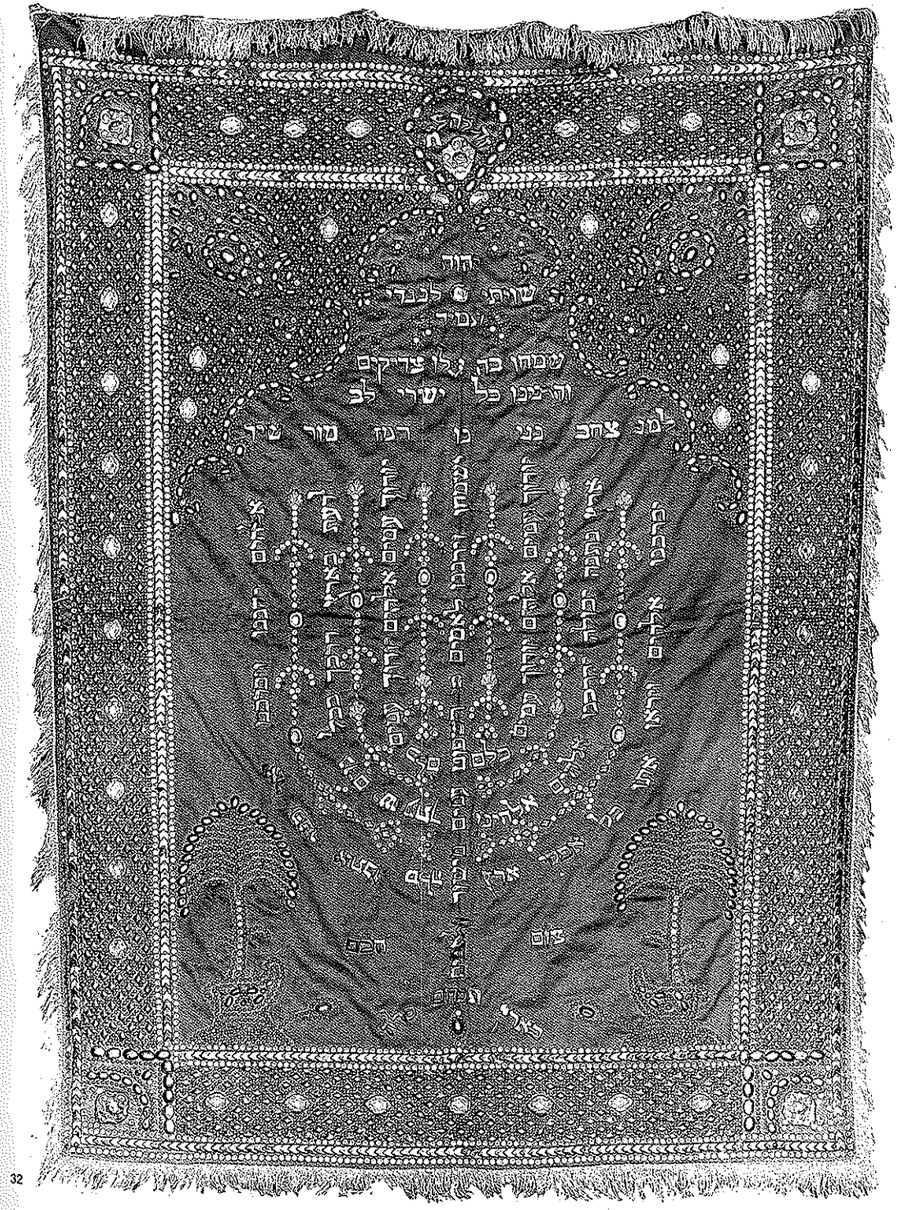
The background material is usually made of felted wool, and the stamped or engraved metal pieces are of two main types: small, homogeneous pieces, such as half-circles, rhomboids, stars and crescents, combined to make the desired pattern, or bigger pieces of metal, themselves decorated with repoussé patterns or dedicatory inscriptions.

A composition often found on these Ark curtains is that of the portal, sometimes with the addition of a suspended lamp or the seven-branched *menorah* (fig. 32). There are also bordered and centered compositions (figs. 34, 37). The inscriptions engraved on the metal pieces and the Jewish motifs such as the *menorah* and the Magen David, suggest that these items were from the first intended for their present use.

The metal appliqué technique may be seen as a connecting link between objects embroidered in metallic thread and the metalwork found in synagogues, such as Torah breastplates, crowns and *rimmonim* (Torah finials). On the one hand the appliqué of metal pieces seems to be an imitation of gold embroidery, and on the other, the repoussé work of the appliqué pieces is clearly of the same style and technique as other silver work in the synagogue. In this context we should mention another kind of Torah cover made as a case (*tik*) but in fact imitating the fabric mantle in shape. It is found in two forms: one of wood covered in velvet and decorated with pieces of silver that in fact form the crown and breastplate (pl. 21b), and the other of repoussé silver in high relief, close in style to silver ritual objects and the patterns of couched gold embroidery (fig. 29 in "Synagogues").

Patterned fabrics

The decorative fabrics, velvets of different kinds, brocades and various compound weaves (*kemha*, *çatma*, *seraser*),



32

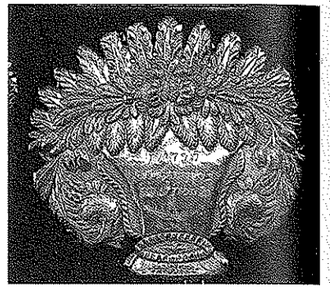
30. Napkin
Linen, metal-thread intertwined with cotton, chain stitch
L. 40 W. 40
Israel Museum Collection
1313/79
Anonymous gift

31. Napkin
Linen, metal-thread intertwined with cotton, chain stitch
L. 49 W. 49
Israel Museum Collection
161/14; 1712-2-50
Gift of the Jewish Cultural Reconstruction, 1952

32. *Shivviti* Torah Ark curtain
19th century
Velvet, silver studs and plaques
L. 188 W. 132
Musée de Cluny Collection, Paris, CL 18800, Camondo Collection, 1912

33

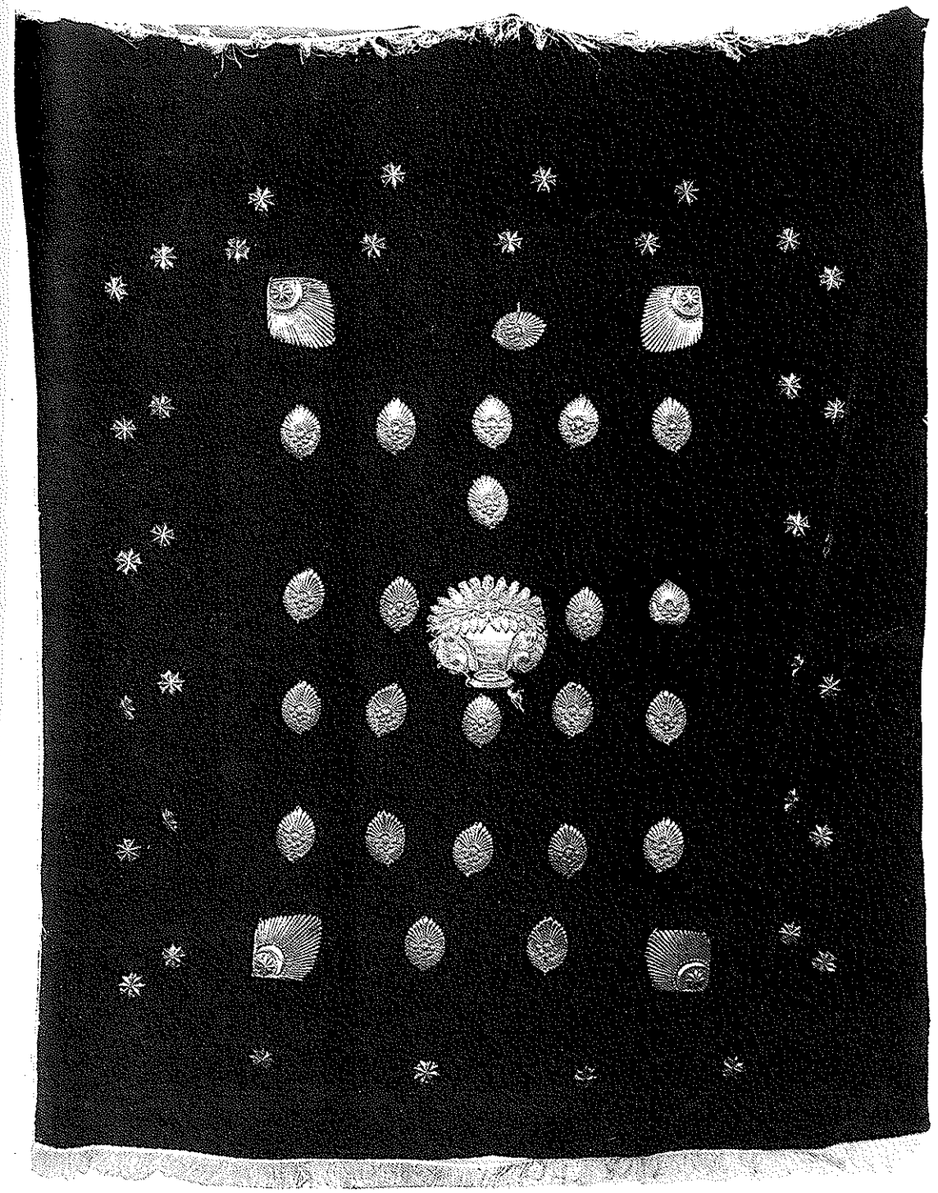
a



b

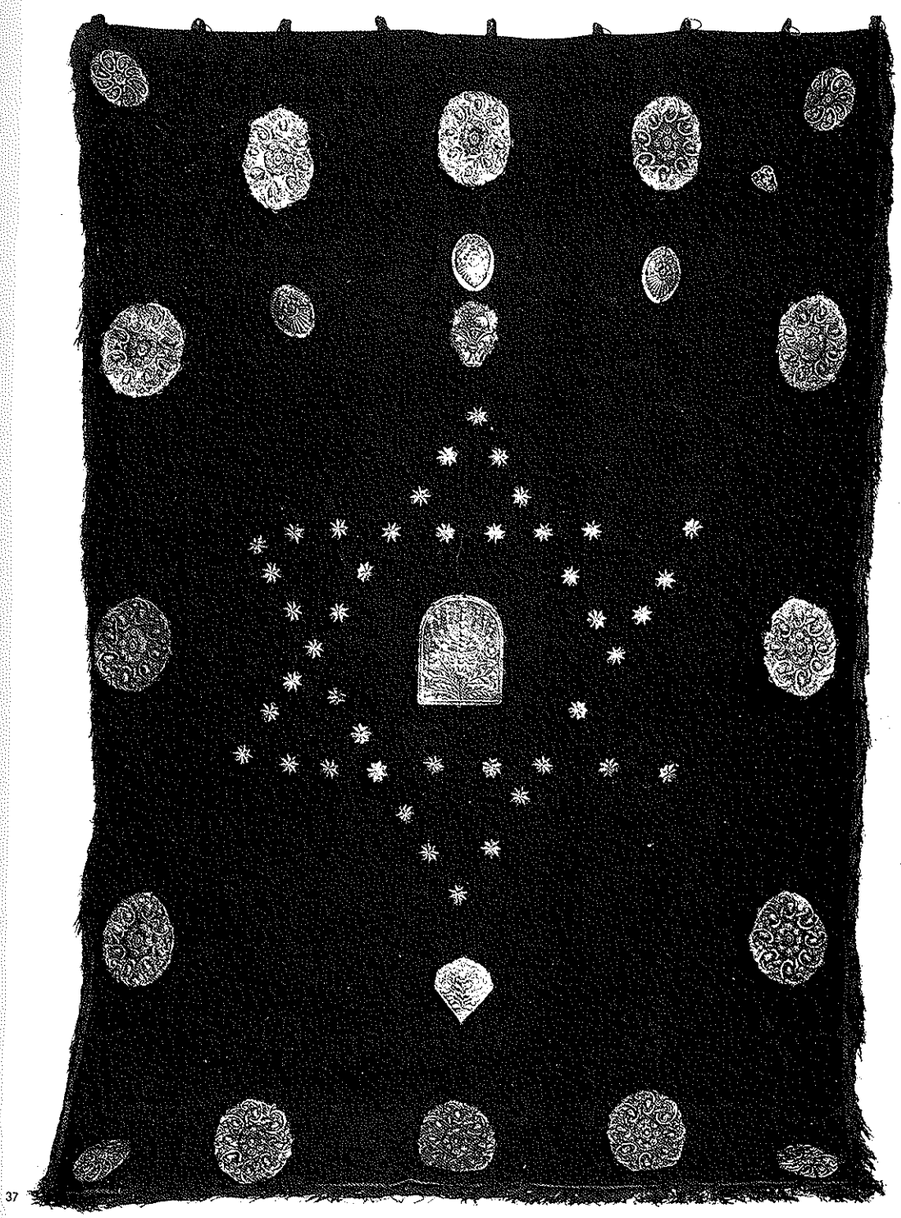
33. Torah Ark curtain
Felted wool, machine-made ribbon, appliqué of silver and gilt-silver studs and plaques with sewn parchment bands
L. 200 W. 126
Israel Museum Collection
152/252
Purchased by courtesy of Jerome L. Stern, New York

34. Torah Ark curtain
Hamizrah synagogue of the Edirne community, Tel-Aviv
Dedicated in 1897
Wool, silver plaques
Courtesy of the Center for Jewish Art, the Hebrew University, Jerusalem
a. b. Details of the Torah Ark curtain



35

36



37

35. *Hekhal* of Ez Ḥayyim synagogue with Torah scrolls
Ortaköy, Istanbul
Photo: 1983, Photo. Arch. 5914

36. Torah mantle
Edirne
Velvet, repoussé metal plaques sewn with parchment bands
L. 94 D. 89
Israel Museum Collection
151/122; 758.71

37. Torah Ark curtain
Edirne
Felted wool, silver plaques
L. 202 W. 135
Israel Museum Collection
152/151; 746.79

Porte de Réception faite par la Nation Israélite de **Monastir**
à l'Arrivée de S. M. I. LE SULTAN

38

38. Archway made from Torah Ark curtains for the reception of the sultan by the Jews of Monastir
Postcard
Courtesy of Gérard Silvain, Paris

produced in the sultan's factories were among the greatest achievements of classic Ottoman art in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[50] They were used in making clothes for the sultan, his family and courtiers, and were also exported to Europe. With the decline in output of these workshops at the end of the eighteenth and during the nineteenth century, patterned fabrics, especially brocades imported from Europe and Syria but also some local varieties, became popular. When local production was revived, the attempt to resuscitate traditional Turkish patterns went hand-in-hand with the adoption of European designs. Especially widely-known were the fabrics called *sevayi* and *selimiye* made in the Selimiye quarter of Istanbul, which were characterized by patterns of colored stripes interwoven with flowering branches or small scattered motifs.[51] Imitating patterned fabrics, lengths of fabrics were sometimes decorated with recurring embroidery motifs (pl. 12b). These fabrics were used for men's and women's clothes, particularly *entari* dresses, and also for wrappers, curtains and other home textiles. Ark curtains, Torah mantles and especially Torah binders made of these fabrics, often reused, are found in synagogues (figs. 39, 40).

In Ark curtains, the decorative fabric is placed at the center, while ordinary fabric is used for the borders. The custom of using expensive fabrics as centerpieces and surrounding them by a border with an embroidered inscription or a set of motifs was current in many communities, for instance in Bohemia and Moravia, Italy and Poland.[52] The few surviving examples, which probably date to an early period, suggest that this particular type of Ark curtain was probably prevalent among Turkish Jewish communities before the nineteenth century. As the curtains were usually made either of the same type of fabric as was used for clothes or from actual garments, they also serve as our sole evidence of the kinds of textiles used in the costume of earlier periods.

Carpets and rugs

The Turkish carpet industry was very highly developed. It was known in Turkey and throughout Europe beginning with the early Konya carpets, through the Ushaks and on to the workshops of Cairo and Istanbul where carpets for the court were woven in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[53] Until the nineteenth and twentieth centuries knotted carpets continued to be produced following the local traditions of the various centers, such as Ladiq, Kula, Ghiordes, Milas, Bergama and Hereke. Like the rest of the population, Jews used local carpets in their houses, as far as their means allowed. The carpets covering the floors were an important part of the furnishings of every house, and carpets were obligatory in every trousseau.

We shall discuss here only a very limited group of synagogue rugs – those with Hebrew inscriptions used as reader's desk covers and Ark curtains figs. 41, 42, pls. 17, 18).

As far as composition, style and motifs are concerned, most of these rugs or carpets belong to the group of Turkish Muslim prayer rugs which display a portal design and a hanging lamp[54] (for these motifs see below). The Jewish examples, of which only a few have survived, are distinguishable from the Muslim rugs only by the various Hebrew inscriptions woven into them. Some of them have been attributed to Ottoman workshops in Cairo in the seventeenth century, and some to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Among the later examples are copies of older pieces.[55]

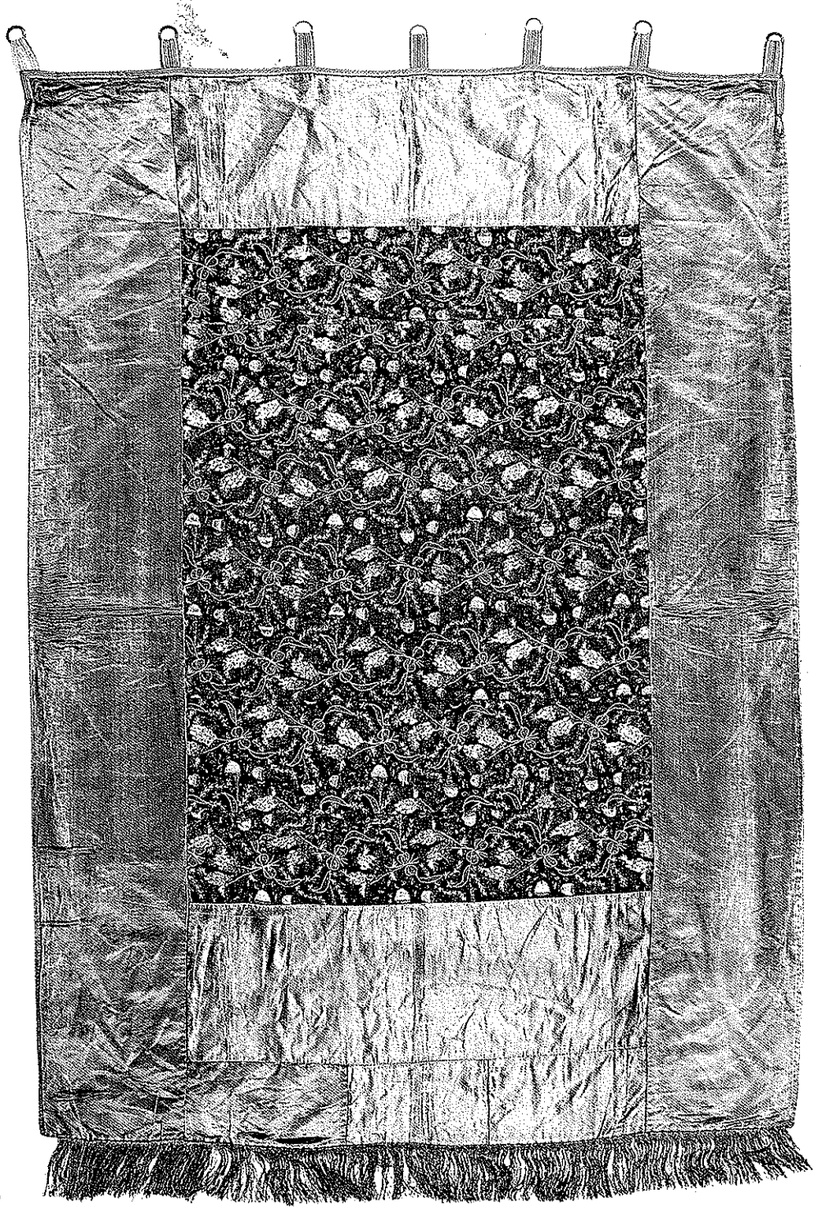
The use in synagogues of rugs similar in appearance to Muslim prayer rugs and the halakhic problems arising from this custom were discussed in the responsa literature as early as the fourteenth century in Spain and were still being considered in the nineteenth, in Izmir. In the responsum given by R. Asher ben Yehiel (*ha-Rosh*) of Spain, in the fourteenth century, the use of such rugs was totally forbidden, but the recurrence of the question at various periods and places suggests that they were not unanimously renounced. The halakhic questions do not directly refer to the prayer rug with a Hebrew inscription, but rather to the use by Jews of a Muslim prayer rug and the significance of its design. "The *sijade* (prayer rug), that some have the custom of spreading out in the synagogue on the *bemah* where the reading of the *sefer Torah* takes place ... if it is forbidden because there is drawn on it the shape of the opening where the Ishmaelites pray."[56]

It seems that the group of rugs with Hebrew inscriptions, which include sainted names and verses from the Bible, were intended from the first to hang in the synagogue as Ark curtains or to spread over the reader's desk (*tevah*), in contrast to the Muslim prayer rugs which were laid on the floor.

The iconographical tradition

In this attempt to present the range of fabrics and embroideries we have mainly discussed their use in Ottoman and Jewish culture. We shall now point out several recurring motifs which can perhaps be seen to represent a Jewish iconographical tradition: the portal, the hanging lamp[57] and the hand. These motifs, which appear on textiles from the seventeenth to the twentieth century, are not exclusively Jewish, but in this context were adapted from Muslim iconography and adopted to suit Jewish concepts.

During the later part of this long period, other motifs, such as the Tablets of the Law, the Magen David, and crowns and



39

39. Torah Ark curtain made from parts of a dress (one of a pair)
Embroidered fabric imitating patterned fabrics
Wool, silk-thread embroidery, chain stitch, tinsel and spangles
L. 170 W. 124
Israel Museum Collection
152/206; 572.86

40

40. Torah Ark curtain
Dedicated in 1923
Silk, brocade
L. 176 W. 115
Israel Museum Collection
152/221; 579.86

41

42

41.Synagogue rug
Made in the Ottoman
workshops in Cairo,
17th century
Wool, Senneh knot
L. 186 W. 155
Textile Museum Collection
Washington, D.C., R. 16.4.4

42. Synagogue rug
Chalcis, 17th century
Wool and cotton
L. 151 W. 94.5
Israel Museum Collection
152/141; 352.73
Weaver: Moshe ben Costa
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Robert
Frances and sons, London, to
British Friends of the Art
Museums of Israel

43. Reader's desk rug
Shalom (*Aydinlis*) synagogue
Izmir
Photo: 1983, Photo. Arch. 5897

44. Reader's desk rug
Dedicated in 1910
Beit Israel synagogue, Izmir
Photo: 1977, Photo. Arch. 3055

44

lions also appeared, probably under the influence of other Jewish iconographic traditions.

The portal

The portal motif as an architectural element first appears on Ark curtains and reader's desk covers in knotted rugs ascribed to the seventeenth century. As mentioned earlier, the curtain is no different from the Muslim prayer rugs made in the same workshops and at the same period, and is distinguished only by the woven Hebrew inscription. Most of these inscriptions include biblical verses that contain the word *sha'ar* (gate), such as Psalms 118:19: "Open to me the gates of righteousness: I will go into them, and I will praise the Lord"; or 118:20: "This gate of the Lord, into which the righteous shall enter." We thus see a decidedly Muslim iconographic motif – the "gate" of a prayer rug, symbolizing the *mihrab*, acquiring a Jewish iconographic meaning.[58]

The gate pattern on the Ark curtains is not exclusive to the Ottoman Jewish tradition. Its origins are earlier, and it is known as well in the Ashkenazi Ark curtain tradition where the two columns topped by vases become the basic element and the connecting arch almost disappears.[59]

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Turkish prayer rugs were made in a wide variety of techniques and styles: embroidery in different stitches, in metallic or colored thread, on a woolen, satin or velvet ground, in patchwork or even printing.[60] The Jews continued to use all these kinds of rugs (pl. 20a), sometimes embroidering the Hebrew inscription at a later date when the rug was "converted."

We would like to point out a specific group of silk Ark curtains ascribed chiefly to the eighteenth century, embroidered in colored silks and metallic threads[61] and characterized by a pair of spiral columns with entwined flowers joined by a suggested arch consisting of bouquets of flowers and volutes. A hanging lamp is sometimes placed in the middle, between the columns (figs. 45, 46, pls. 19, 20b).

What we know about the making and use of these Ark curtains suggests two possible origins – Italy and Turkey. Style, repertory and disposition of motifs, the shape of the columns and the vases above them and the embroidery technique itself, all indicate a European origin, or even more specifically, an Italian one. And, in fact, certain of these Ark curtains are known to have been used in Italy.[62] From the iconographic point of view this group could well be rooted in Jewish-Italian tradition, perhaps influenced at first by the title pages of sixteenth-century Hebrew books printed in Italy which are based on an arch with spiral columns, sometimes accompanied by the verse from Psalm 118 – "This gate of the Lord...."[63] On the other hand, in the eighteenth-century prayer rugs of a decidedly European style, motif and character were made in Turkey and our curtains may belong in this group.[64] Furthermore, separate elements that figure on some of the Ark curtains associate them with Ottoman culture. Among these the most interesting is the mosque that appears on one of the Ark curtains (fig. 20b) which has even been identified with the Blue Mosque of Istanbul.[65] In other examples, the lamp hanging in the doorway is associated, it would seem, with the tradition of Muslim prayer rugs and the lamp hanging in the mosque.

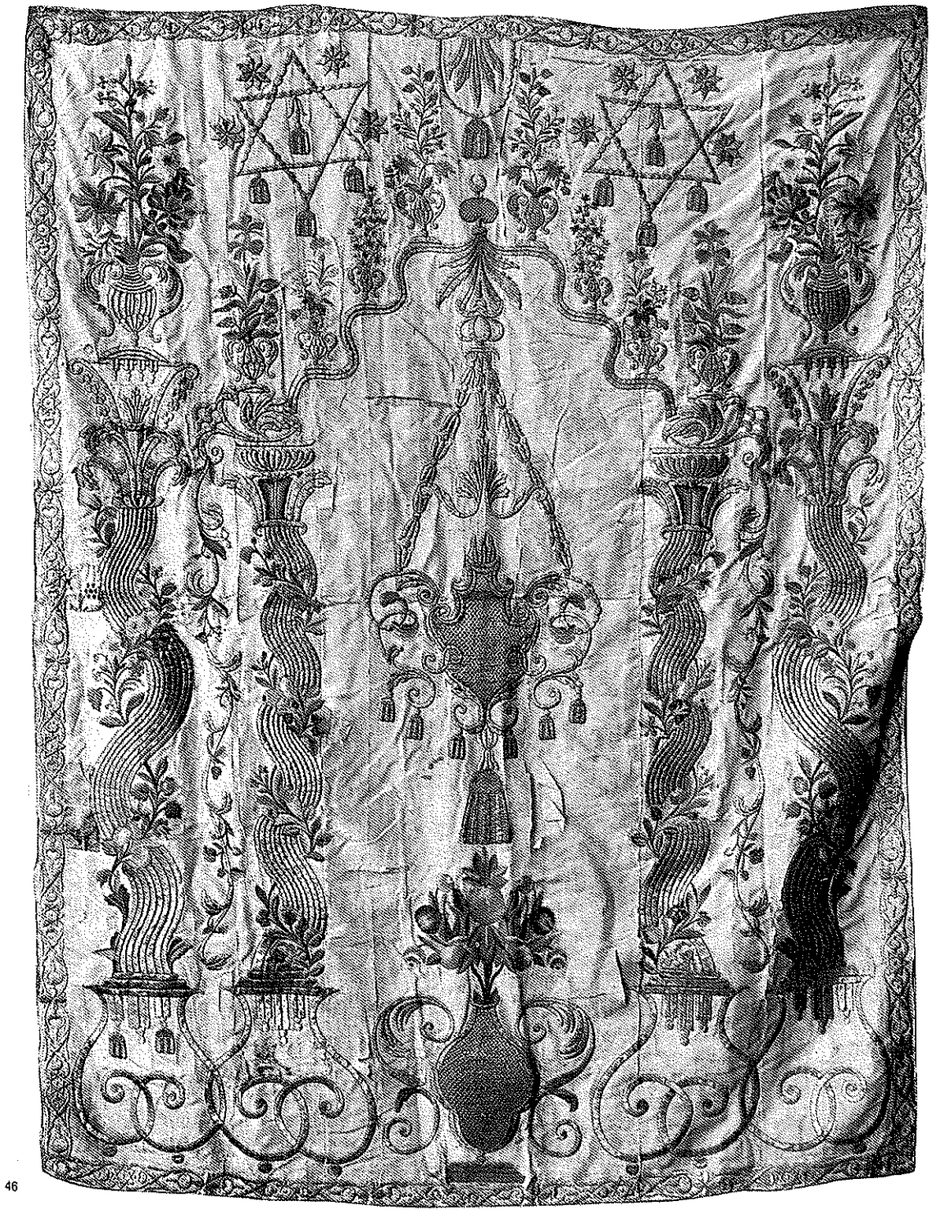
Both the history and the fate of the Ark curtains of this group, then, indicate the two earlier mentioned possible sources – Turkey and Italy. Two of them were in possession of the Benguiat family of collectors from Izmir who lived in Italy for some years.[66]

This group can be regarded as an example of mutual influences and of the close connections between Italian and Turkish Jews, known in other spheres of life, and as testimony to the European influence that penetrated the Sephardi synagogue.[67] This type of Ark curtain may have been ordered from Italy, or may alternatively have reached Turkey through the community of the "Frankos," who lived in various Turkish towns. However, to reach a definite conclusion, a more extensive investigation would have to be undertaken.

The hanging lamp

This motif is widespread in Ottoman Ark curtains of all periods. In the early stages it always appears together with the portal pattern, and the source of both is the Muslim prayer rug (figs. 41, 42, 45-48, 53, 54, pls. 15, 17-20a). The lamp is also a Jewish iconographic motif, and it apparently symbolizes the eternal light that hangs in the synagogue, in front of the *heikhal*. The importance of the lamp in the Ark curtain is emphasized by placing the tetragrammaton in it, and also by the size, centrality and wide distribution of the motif.

45



46

47

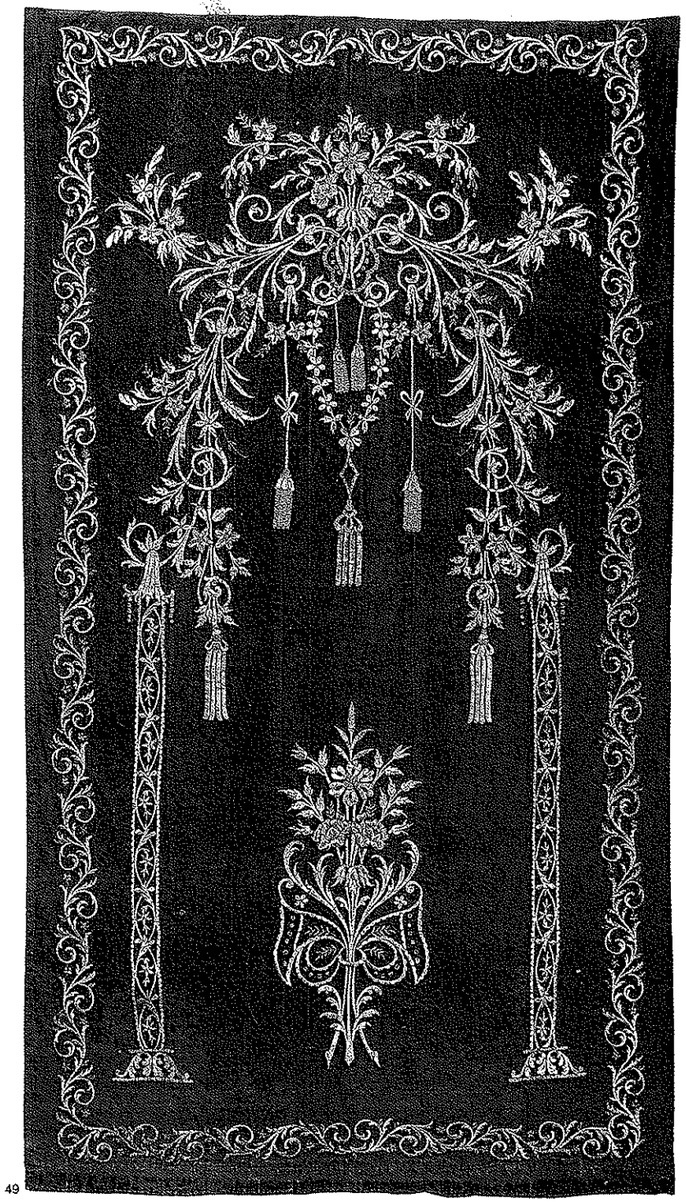
45. Torah Ark curtain
Salonika(?), 18th century(?)
Ribbed silk, couched metal-thread embroidery, silk-thread, satin stitch
L. 166 W. 144
Israel Museum Collection
152/57; 689-9-48
Gift of Jakob Michael, New York, in memory of his wife, Erna Michael

46. Torah Ark curtain
Alsheikh synagogue, Safed, 19th century
Silk, couched metal- and silk-thread embroidery
L. 185 W. 150
Courtesy of Center for Jewish Art, Hebrew University, Jerusalem

47. Torah Ark curtain
19th century(?)
Satin, applique, couched metal-thread embroidery
L. 191 W. 119
Israel Museum Collection
152/144; 258.76
Gift of Olga Weintraub Schlosser, New Jersey, to American Friends of the Israel Museum

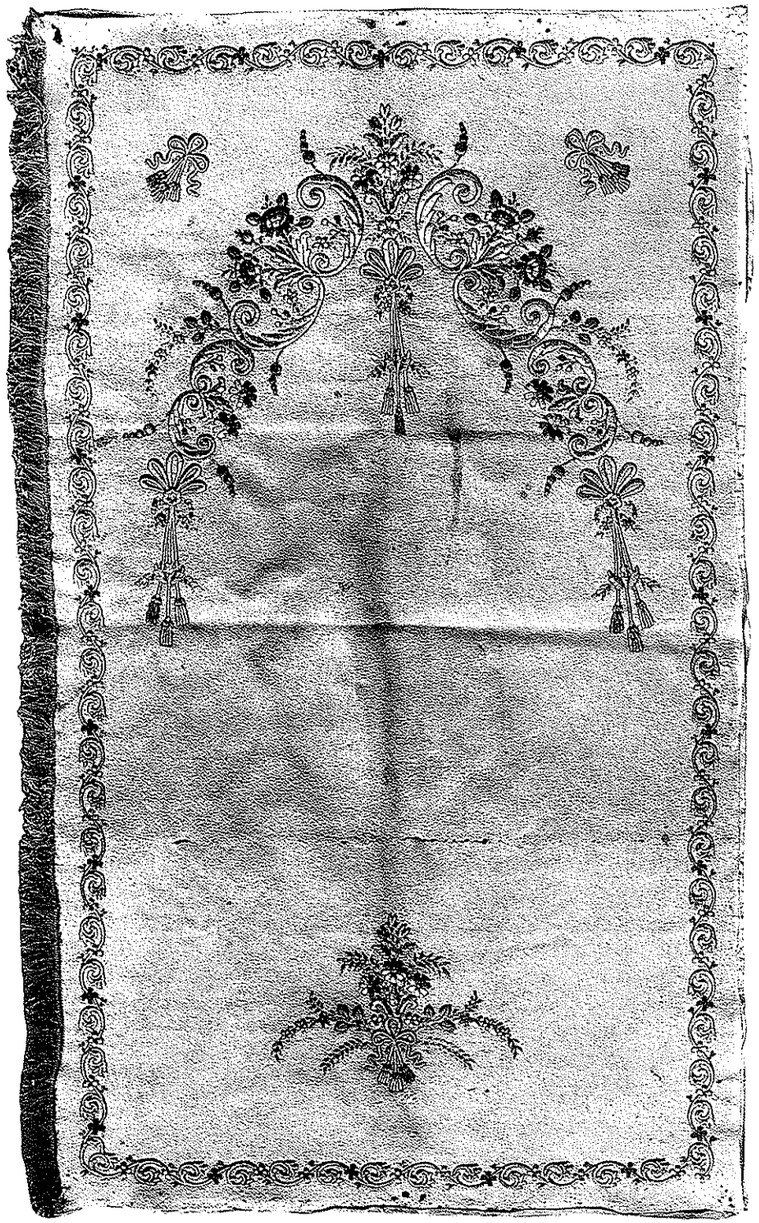
48. Torah Ark curtain
Dedicated in 1909
Satin, couched metal-thread embroidery
L. 175 W. 127
Israel Museum Collection
152/221; 579.86

48



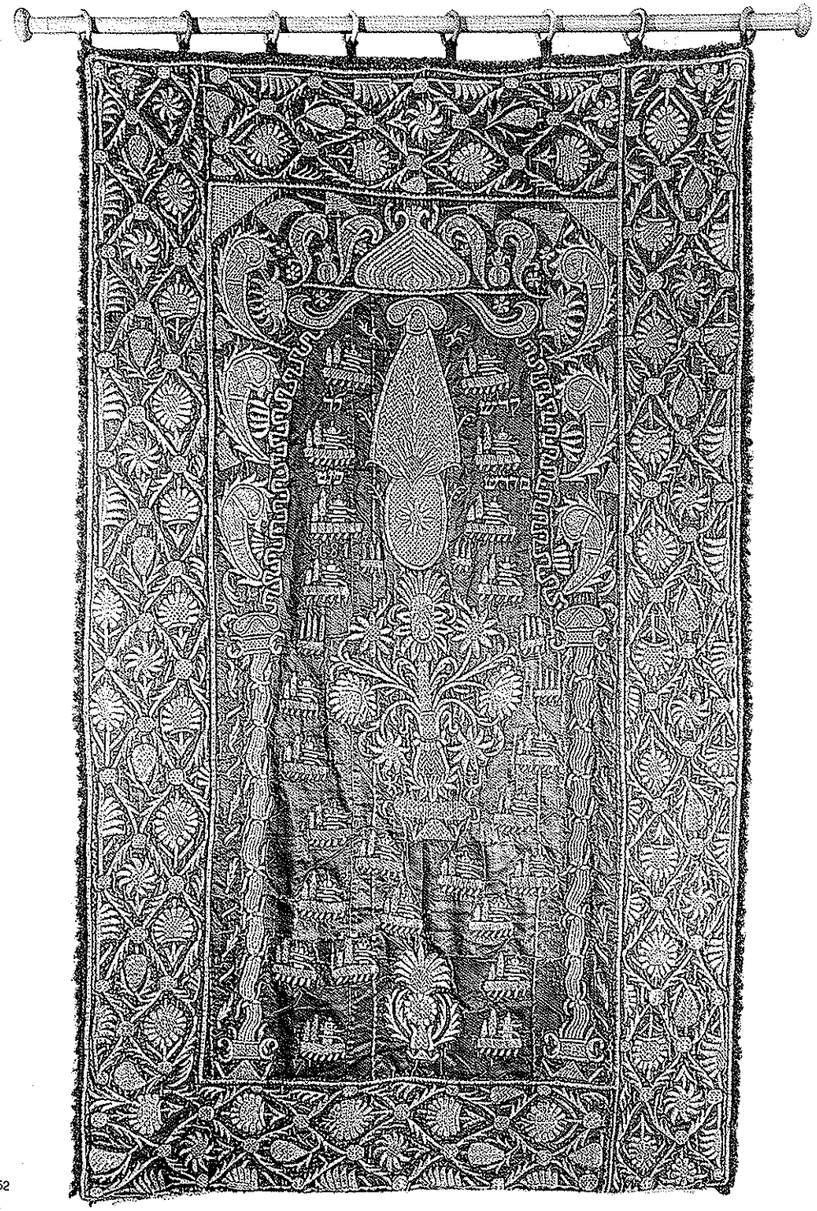
49

49. Torah Ark curtain
20th century
Velvet, couched metal-thread embroidery on cardboard cut-outs
L. 188 W. 106
Israel Museum Collection
152/224; 582.86



50. Torah Ark curtain
19th century
Felted wool, couchec
and cotton-thread em
L. 147 W. 89
Israel Museum Collec
152/130; 449.69

51



52

51. Torah Ark curtain
20th century
Satin, couched metal-thread embroidery on cardboard cut-outs
L. 184 W. 145
Israel Museum Collection
152/220; 578.86

52. Torah Ark curtain
Dedicated in Salonika, 1921
Satin, couched metal-thread embroidery
L. 195 W.117
Courtesy of the Ethnography and Folklore Pavilion, Eretz Israel Museum, Tel Aviv, MHE 791
Gift of the Pinto Family, Tel Aviv

53

53. Torah Ark curtain
Istanbul, 19th century
Velvet, satin, couched metal-thread embroidery
L. 287 W. 190
Photo: courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., no. 81-5002

54. Hanging lamp motif taken from embroidered textiles

55. Examples of hand motif taken from embroidered textiles

The design of the lamp is based on contemporary style. It may range from the typical glass mosque lamp of the seventeenth century, borrowed from the Muslim prayer rug,[68] to the heavy, fringed, baroque lamp.

In late Ark curtains, especially those embroidered in couched gold thread, the hanging lamp is rare, and, when present, appears as part of the dedicatory inscription, reduced in size (pl. 20a). From this one can learn that even when lamps ceased to be central motifs on Ark curtains, their Jewish iconographic significance was not lost, and embroiderers of inscriptions went on inserting them. In the long process of stylization that these lamps underwent, their shape became distorted to such an extent that in late curtains the motif can hardly be identified.

The hand

A pair of hands, or a single hand, may appear on Ark curtains and early synagogue carpets and is frequently found on the gold-embroidered curtains of the end of the nineteenth century (fig. 55). The hand motif, called *ḥamsa* in Islamic art, and regarded as an amulet, was very widespread in North Africa among Muslims as well as Jews,[69] but appears much less often in Turkish Islam. It is sometimes placed on prayer rugs to show the worshipper where he should rest his hands in the act of kneeling. In Jewish art a motif of two hands with spread-out fingers representing the priestly blessing occurs. In Ark curtains made on the model of prayer rugs, the motif of the two hands is often found in the lower center, between the gate-posts, and its importance is reinforced by the name *Shaddai* written on them. In later gold embroidery the hand is drawn naturalistically, up to the base of the palm. The nails are sometimes outlined and a ring with a blue bead may be added.

In household textiles, such as cushion covers, wrapping-cloths or covers for the Scroll of Esther, and especially amulets for protecting women in childbirth, a single hand may appear in the center of the piece. In Ark curtains and other synagogue embroideries, the hand or pair of hands is often found beside a dedicatory inscription, as with the lamp, demonstrating the iconographic and traditional importance assigned to this motif. The hand motif also appears on *ketubbot* and other articles, including ritual objects, amulets, etc.

Hands made of repoussé silver, of natural dimensions, with a handle at the back are sometimes found in synagogues (fig. 39 in "Synagogues"). Their function is not clear. The frequency of the hand in amulets for mother and baby illustrates its magical function, as a means of defense against evil. From this one may perhaps infer that on Ark curtains, too, placed near dedicatory inscriptions, this motif had the magical function of guarding the person whose name is mentioned in the inscription. It seems that the source of the hand motif, unlike the motifs of lamp and portal, lies in more popular strata of tradition.

Translated by Mira Reich

Notes

1. For surveys of the textile industry and of the types of cloth produced in Turkey at various periods, see Inalcik, *Harir*; Inalcik, *Kutn*; Öz; *Gürsü:* Rogers *Textiles*; Arseven, pp. 227-36; Denny, *Textiles*; Mackie, *Rugs and Textiles*, pp. 344-71; and also Mackie, *Turkish Weaving* and King and Goedhuis. For the textile industry in Bursa, see Çizakca; Quataert.

2. Much has been written about the Salonikan wool weaving industry; see, for example, Emmanuel; Avitzur; Shohat; and Braude.

3. For the Turkish carpet industry, see, for example, Mackie, *Rugs and Textiles*, pp. 301-43.

4. See Issawi, pp. 298-300. A good survey of Ottoman Empire textile commerce and industry in the nineteenth century may be found in Micklewright, pp. 76-95. Some of the fabrics imported from Europe were produced especially for the Turkish market and suited local tastes and requirements. Most imported textiles came from England, and included, for instance, a cloth called *serbetie* which was an imitation of Indian cotton, and *mahut*, a type of broadcloth. A cloth called *demie caton* was imported from Germany; this was an imitation of Bursa silk which used to be much in demand in Turkey. Various silks were also imported from Italy.

5. See, for example, Tezçan; Clark; Gürsü, pp. 156-59.

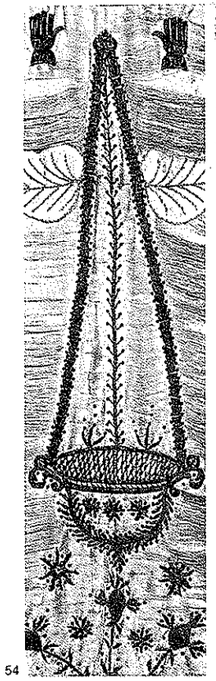
6. For the local textile industry, see Issawi, pp. 309-11; and also Dumont, *Classe ouvrière*, pp. 231-36.

7. This survey is based principally on the Israel Museum's *Survey of Sephardi Communities*, and also on part of the findings of the survey of synagogues conducted by the Center for Jewish Art of the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, for whose cooperation we are grateful.

8. The procedure of modifying the function of objects in general, and of textiles and embroideries in particular, of consecrating them to synagogue use, or transplanting them from the synagogue to other capacities, was known in different variations among many Jewish communities. For examples and a discussion of the halakhic problems involved, see *From the Secular to the Sacred*.

9. Although we have some information concerning the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, we are still lacking many background facts. For earlier periods we lack not only the objects themselves, but also contextual information that may lie concealed in the various kinds of Jewish literature and in Turkish State archives, in the form of documents concerning textile production, commerce and use.

10. Important Turkish Jewish collections are to be found in the Jewish Museum in New York, especially that of an Izmir Jewish collector, Benguiat, who brought



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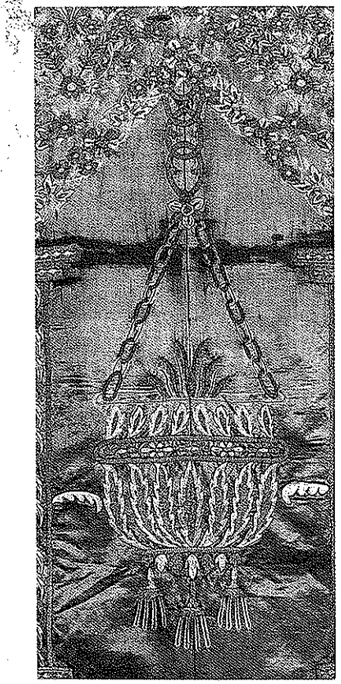

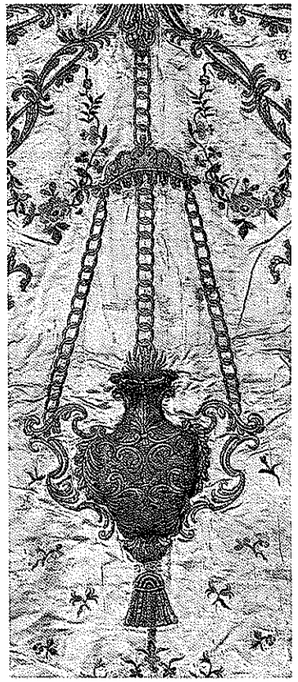

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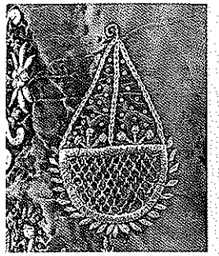


his collection to the United States in the 1880s. For this collection, see Kirschenblatt- Gimbelt, p. 30. The Jewish Museum of Greece in Athens also has a collection of early and late period Ottoman textiles, some from Sephardi and some from Romaniote communities. The Jewish Museum in Belgrade also possesses many Ottoman textiles, from Yugoslav synagogues. For this collection, see Nedomački.

11. One cannot make a clear distinction between Ottoman textiles used by Sephardi and non-Sephardi communities. Sometimes the association of a textile with a specific community is based solely on the fact that it was found in a particular synagogue. All the communities used contemporaneous textiles and the attribution can be made only on the basis of the rite.

12. See, for example, Frankl, p. 141. For a list of Jewish artisans in Istanbul, see list quoted on p. ---. A survey of Jewish occupations according to travellers' accounts can be found in Bashan, especially pp. 58-62.

13. For instance, Gerber, *Jews*, esp. pp. 248-51; Barnai, *Guilds*, pp. 133-47; Barnai and Gerber, *Guilds in Istanbul*, for example, Documents 2 and 4; Barnai, *Izmir*, pp. 72-73; Gerber and Barnai, *Jews in Izmir*, Documents 3, 40; Nestoros, p. 18.

14. Barnai, *Guilds*, pp. 140-41.

15. *Salonique: ville-mère en Israel*, p. 237; Galantè, *Izmir*, p. 134.

16. For example, the Palit family, silk weavers of Bursa, used to make prayer shawls: *Survey of Sephardi Communities*.

17. D'Ohsson, 2, p. 148. Other examples: Thevenot, p. 108; Pardoe, vol. 1, p. 17, and vol. 3, p. 172.

18. Lucy Garnett, *The Turkish People*, London, 1909, p. 269 (quoted in Johnstone, *Turkish Embroidery*, p. 9, n. 12).

19. Dietrich, pp. 5-6; 8; White, vol. 2, pp. 102, 103; vol. 3, p. 165; Lęcomte, p. 104.

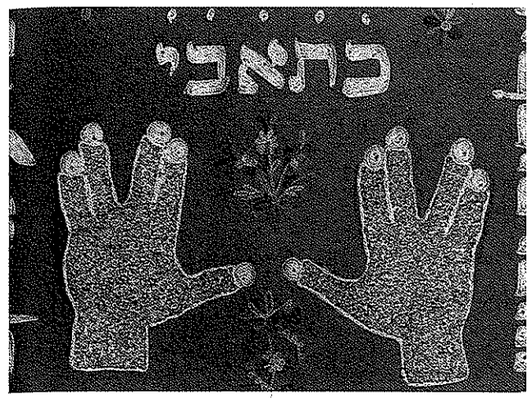
20. Dietrich, pp. 8-9; Lécomte, p. 104.

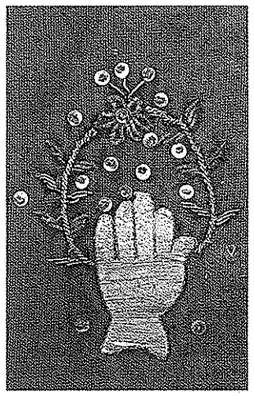
21. Information on Jewish embroideresses' workshops in Izmir (Abulafia, Bar-Yosef and Karo) was found in *Survey of Sephardi Communities*; for Istanbul, see White, vol. 2, pp. 102-3.

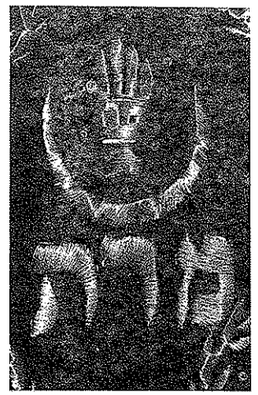
22. Rodrigue, *French Jews*, p. 192; Dietrich, pp.14-17.

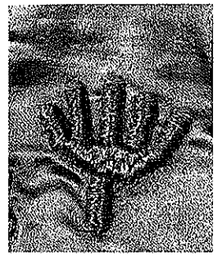
23. The term "gold embroidery" used here is not accurate. We are using it as a shorter term for all kinds of metal thread embroidery, not necessarily gold.

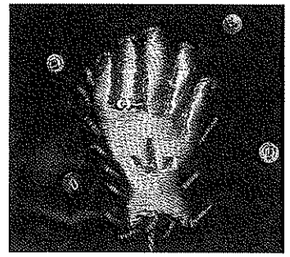
24. For Byzantine gold embroidery and its tradition, see Hatjinikolau; Stojanovic and Johnstone, *Byzantine*; for metal thread embroidery among the Ottomans

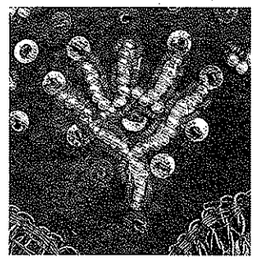












see Palotay; Geijer, pp. 67-76; Chruszczyńska, figs. 57, 59, 63, 65, 68-70, 114-15, Sürür, *Işleme*.

25. The use of embroidered hangings among the Turks was illustrated in the reconstructions of the marriage ceremony, the conjugal chamber and the circumcision beds which were displayed at the exhibitions of Anatolian Civilizations held in Istanbul in 1984, at the Sadberg Hanim Müzesi and the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts. Many descriptions of such ceremonies can be found in travellers' accounts in chapters on marriage and childbirth. For example, Pardoe, vol. 2, p. 96; Blunt, vol. 2, p. 2; Garnett, vol. 2, p. 227; and others.

26. For a mosque curtain, see Erdogan, fig. 6; for Koran binding and bag and prayer rug, see Arseven, figs. 695, 696; for an embroidered tomb cover, see Grosvenor, vol. 2, p. 707.

27. In dowry lists from Izmir, these embroideries appear under the following names: *bógo sirmalí*, *kolča de teli*, *kaveséra klavidón and bril*, *kaveséra išleme klavidón* (*Ashkenazi Collection* dowry lists). Ya'akov Yehoshua, in his childhood memories, says: "The most precious and important object that adorned the *ašugar* was the *kaveséra* – a silk cover of two sections, embroidered in *klavidón* gold thread which was ordered from Istanbul," *Yehoshua*, vol. 3, pp. 65-66. In Sephardi romances gold embroideries are frequently mentioned in connection with the trousseau. See, for example, Benvenisti, *Romanza*, no. 2; Levi, *Chants*, vol. 3, p. 96, which associated the embroidery with the childbirth bed: "Yo le do cama de sirma que se eche de buen parida."

28. For the prohibition against wearing a garment embroidered in gold, see "Marriage,". The question is discussed in Palaggi, *Hayyim beyad*, par. 51, and also in Israel, *Ugat Eliyahu*, par. 26. Neither specifically mentions a wedding dress, and it is not clear what kind of dress they mean. However, what is clear is that these dresses aroused antagonism because of their exaggerated richness. At all events, the findings of the survey in synagogues show that the prohibition was apparently not observed, and a great many Ark curtains made out of such luxurious garments are to be found.

29. See, for example, the list of objects from the Talmud Torah Hagadol of Salonika in 1795, in Amarilio, p. 295. Among other things mentioned are an Ark curtain embroidered in gold thread and five *mapot* embroidered in gold and silver thread.

30. Yehoshua, vol. 3, p. 66.

31. See Argueti, *Yerekh Ya'akov*, par. 55, p. 140: "The Rabbi called the *mitpahat faša* as we do..."

32. See Molkho, *Orhot Yosher*, chapter 15, pp. 194-95.

33. Elyashar, *Benei Binyamin*, par. 39. For the prohibition against the reduction of the sacred, for instance, turning the Torah mantle into a case for *tefillin*, see

Avraham b. Ezra, *Batei Kenesiyyot*, part 1, par. 154; Argueti, *Yerekh Ya'akov*, par. 55.

34. Lecomte (p. 108) describes a workshop in Istanbul, where a chisel was used to cut a pile of about seven cardboard cutouts.

35. See Çig.

36. See Sürür, *Bursa*.

37. This pattern is seen in other crafts as well. It is common in ceramic tiles. See, for example, Arseven, pl. 6, fig. 409.

38. For Turkish art under baroque and rococo influence and its expressions in various arts, see Arseven, especially pp. 94-97.

39. For tulips and roses in Turkish art, see Carswell; for flowers in vases and their stylization in Turkish art, see Ünver.

40. For bibliography on colored Turkish embroidery, see Berry; Wace; Geijer; Gentles; Johnstone, *Turkish Embroidery*, Günül; Berker; Sürür, *Işleme*.

41. Information on Jewish use of colored embroidery was chiefly obtained orally from informants and is brought together in the *Survey of Sephardi Communities*.

42. Berry, I, pp. 347-49.

43. Berry, II, p. 254.

44. Johnstone, *Turkish Embroidery*, p. 20.

45. For a detailed explanation of the different kinds of stitches, see Günül; Sürür, *Işleme*, pp. 36-43.

46. Sürür, *Işleme*, pp. 58-62.

47. Johnstone, *Turkish Embroidery*, pp. 17-18.

48. We assume that an earlier tradition of tambour embroidery on Ark curtains and Torah mantles with Jewish iconography existed. The earliest representative known to us is the Ark curtain no. 152/129; 448.69 in the Israel Museum Collection (fig. 28), dedicated to the community of Ankara. This Ark curtain is clearly connected to the Sabbath cloths attributed to Simche Janiwer (see Barnett). On the other hand we can see connections to a later group of *Shivviti* Ark curtains such as fig. 29 (no. 152/241, Israel Museum Collection), which were very common in Turkey in the twentieth century and which also include as a central motif the seven branched *menorah* embroidered with Psalm 67 and hands raised in priestly blessing.

49. Chruszczyńska, fig. 58, Arseven, fig. 706. Uniforms of soldiers in the Ottoman army were also made in this technique; see Tansuğ, p. 18.

50. For the textile industry in the early Ottoman period, see Bibliography, n. 1.

51. Tezçan, p. 58; Gürsü, pp. 153-59.

52. For Moravia and Bohemia, see Volavkova.

53. The literature on the Turkish carpet industry is very rich. See, for example, a general survey in Mackie, *Rugs and Textiles*, pp. 301-44; Denny, *Carpets*.

54. For the Muslim prayer rug in general, see Ettinghausen, and for Turkish prayer rugs see, for example, Ellis.

55. The example in the Jewish Museum, New York, no. F518A (pl. 17), for instance, is thought to be a copy of an early carpet; cf. Mann and Kleeblatt, p. 44; Mann, *Two Cities*, p. 159.

56. In *Einei David*, par. 77, Amado refers *inter alia*, to the responsum of ha-Rosh (Rabbi Yehiel ben Asher), *Responsa*, par. 2. For a discussion of this question, see Kahana, pp. 259-60, ns. 48, 49.

57. For the development and significance of these motifs on Ottoman Ark curtains, see Fine. For the portal motif, its sources in Jewish art and its appearance on *parokhot*, see Yaniv, vol. 1, chapter 3.

58. See Boralevi, *Tappeto*, and also Boralevi, *Three Carpets*, p. 216, where he even suggests: "We can put forward the hypothesis that the architectural layout in Ottoman prayer rugs may not have originated in Islamic tradition, but rather stemmed from a Western influence, possibly through the Jewish Ark curtains commissioned in Egypt."

59. For the development of this motif in the Jewish tradition and associations with the title pages of Jewish books printed in Italy, see Landsberger, p. 151; Boralevi, *Tappeto*, pp. 40-41; Yaniv, vol. 1, pp. 92ff.

60. For embroidered Turkish prayer rugs, see Kerametly, figs. 21, 24-27. A variety of prayer rugs was shown in an exhibition of prayer accessories held at the Topkapi Museum in Istanbul in 1984; unfortunately, no catalogue was published.

61. This group includes four Ark curtains from the Israel Museum Collection: nos. 152/57, 689.9.48 (fig. 45); 152/110, 59.68; 152/127, 201.69; 152/251 (pl. 19); an Ark curtain from the Jewish Museum, New York, Benguiat collection, No. S4 (pl. 20b), and a reader's desk cover, Benguiat collection S36; and an Ark curtain from the Alsheikh synagogue in Safed, documented in a synagogue survey carried out by the Center for Jewish Art at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (fig. 46).

62. For example the one in the Israel Museum, No. 152/110.

63. See Landsberger, pp. 151-52; Boralevi, *Tappeto*, p. 10.

64. Examples were shown in the exhibition of prayer accessories referred to in n. 60.

65. Mann, *Two Cities*, p. 158.

66. Jewish Museum, New York, No. S4 and S36; also probably an Ark curtain no. 152/127, 201.69 in the Israel Museum.

67. For the trade in Hebrew books and the interchange of books printed in Italy and the Ottoman Empire, see, for example Baruchson. (My thanks are due to Professor Hacker who drew my attention to this article.) On the transposition of motifs in textiles, see, for example, Mackie, *Rugs and Textiles*, p. 354.

68. See Kühnel and Bellinger, p. 53.

69. See Champault.

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