

altars or image bases is made perfectly clear by certain of the Paradise and other large paintings which show draperies made up exactly after this fashion round the altars in front of the presiding divinities.¹⁴ Our extant valances, of which Ch. 00278 measures not less than 26 feet in length and Ch. 00279 over 9 feet, consist principally of a long band of silk fabric to the lower edge of which are attached, first a series of triangular tabs, and next at intervals a row of streamers hung against a short plain silk curtain as a background. The tabs and streamers are made of small pieces cut from ornamented silk fabrics, such as embroideries, figured silks, damasks, gauzes, or prints, used in great variety and without any scheme of arrangement. The streamers, as Plates CIX, CX show, are themselves often composite, and both they and the tabs are frequently finished off with knots or with little tassels and bag-like scraps of other figured silks which may be intended to mark their original use as ex-votos.¹⁵ Different in shape but similar in make-up, as far as the origin of the different materials used is concerned, is the large votive patchwork, Ch. lv. 0028 (Plates CVII, CVIII), composed of rectangular pieces of embroideries, figured silks, damasks, and printed silks, and made striking by the richness of their colours and variety of their ornamental designs. A votive character may safely be assumed also for such minor textile relics as miniature canopies in silk or linen, Ch. 00442, and flowers made of silk gauze, like Ch. 00438.

Silk fabrics
in manu-
script-roll
covers.

Quite distinct in character but, having regard to the limited number of specimens, relatively just as rich a source of fine textile remains are the manuscript-roll covers worked in silk fabrics. The complete specimen Ch. xlvi. 001 (Plate CVI, CXI) is remarkable both for the figured silk of striking 'Sassanian' design used for the borders and bands and for the extremely fine strips of silk tapestry applied for decorative purposes. In shape and construction this manuscript cover and the remains of others less completely preserved¹⁶ show the closest agreement with a specimen of early T'ang origin preserved in the Shōsōin collection of Japan. The same holds good also of the manuscript-roll cover, Ch. xx. 006 (Plate CVI), made of bamboo slips and decorated with delicately woven bands of silk.¹⁷ As a particularly interesting textile object, but one of uncertain use, may be finally mentioned the beautifully embroidered cover, Ch. xxii. 0019 (Plate CVI), which shows floral decoration of most graceful design enriched with silver and gold.

Methods of
decoration
in textiles.

As might be expected of these varied products of a textile industry which in China, as plentiful records prove, had already attained full development in very early times, we find represented among them almost all essential methods of decoration, as known at the present day in Far-Eastern silk manufacture, the specimens showing a high degree of technical perfection. With the styles displayed in the designs of this decoration and the questions of artistic and archaeological interest raised by them we shall concern ourselves in the next section. Here brief statements as to the several techniques employed, together with references to the principal specimens, will suffice. It is scarcely necessary to add that, though many of these specimens are likely to date from T'ang times and some possibly even earlier, they cannot be expected to throw much new light on the technical development of an industry which on Chinese ground reaches back so much further into past ages.

Patterned
silk damasks
and gauzes.

The simplest methods of decoration applied to the texture of the fabrics themselves are illustrated by the very numerous silk damasks and gauzes which show patterns executed in monochrome, but with great wealth of varying design.¹⁸ No safe conclusion can be drawn from the

¹⁴ See particularly Ch. lviii. 0011 (*Thousand B.*, Pl. VIII), Ch. 00167 (Pl. LXI).

¹⁵ This intention explains best the tiny human figures represented by some of these knotted ends in Ch. 00279 (q.v.), obviously ex-votos offered in the hope of securing children.

¹⁶ See Ch. 00382; liv. 005 (Pl. CVI); also 00173 (border), and 00298-99, 00443. b (ties for covers).

¹⁷ That decorated silk fabrics were occasionally used also for 'binding' after the fashion common in the case of Western manuscripts and books is shown by the strip of figured silk found as backing on the Chinese devotional handbook Ch. 0026, printed A. D. 949.

¹⁸ For silk damasks see, e.g., Ch. 0086, 00232-6, 00238-52, 00293-4, 00338, 00482-6, 00488-508, 00513,