CHAPTER VII

ORIENT DURING THE MIDDLE AGES

SARACENIC, CHINESE AND JAPANESE

"Beauty is nature's coin, must not be hoarded
But must be current, and the good thereof
Consists in mutual partaken bliss,
Unsavoury in the enjoyment of itself:
If you let slip time, like a neglected rose
It withers on the stalk with languished head." — Milton.

The arts of the Christian and the Pagan worlds were united at Byzantium, and there again they separated, not according to geographical divisions but according to differences in style. Each of these divisions left its imprint on the other, and each profited by the experiences of the other, but after a certain period of development, one was destined to continue its rapid growth, while the other was to remain the same or to deteriorate. For a time the widespread appreciation and the liberal patronage of the arts by the Khalifs made the Oriental the most prominent and influential style. Neither before nor since has it shown such originality in its decorative arts. It seemed to give the world the best it could produce in the Middle Ages and the years since that time have only shown copies of the wonderful patterns thought out and executed then. The Orient having had the classic art as a foundation for its civilization, produced articles of rare beauty but did not have the material with which to build as great a work in the future as the Occident, for the people lacked the independence, the sincerity and the energy that builds up a progressive nation. A spirit of superstition, of fear, and of deception, together with the corroding effect of indolence was destined to destroy the individuality of this people.
To avoid confusion, we will divide the Orient into three great sections; that controlled by the Japanese, that by the Chinese, and that controlled by the Mahometans.

**Saracenic.** As the followers of the great prophet Mahomet were the most powerful and produced the best art, the prevailing style became known as Saracenic; after the many wandering tribes of Saracens or Mahometans. This subdivision includes the Arabian, Mosesque, Persian, Indian and Sicilian art, all of which have the same characteristics yet differ somewhat in detail. It was during the Mameluk dynasty, A. D. 1250-1516, when the Mosque of Cordova and the Alhambra were built, that the Mahometan art reached its culmination so during this period, the textile fabrics, the illuminated books, the ivories, the arms and armor, the architectural decorations and the costumes are the most interesting ones to study.

A typical Saracen, made a most attractive figure in his long loose garments as the movements changed from a quick, light step to a slower, almost steady tread. The Saracen was tall and well proportioned with a sinewy body, and with a complexion, not exactly swarthy, but full of the rich brown color found in a parched coffee berry. His hair was dark, his eyes deep-set and either black or dark brown, ever piercing and full of meaning. Though the draperies were sometimes heavy, they were always soft and took on the lines of the figure. There was nothing clumsy or stiff about the appearance of the people, for the garments were always skilfully carried. It is interesting to contrast these figures to the knight encased in his armor, or the Elizabethan lady in her stiff costume of the Occident.

The clothing of the legal wives was usually of the finest material adorned with the finest jewels the country could produce, but the raiment of those in the harem varied according to the wealth of the master, and according to the impression the woman's beauty made upon the master's critical eye. The bride's wedding garments were provided by the groom's father, and their value depended upon his generosity.
The garments of the men were similar to that of the women but no attention being paid to the children, a straight piece of cloth was considered sufficient to throw around the little body.

**Saracenic Costume. Veils.** The under-clothing consisted of loose, one-piece slips, some long, others short, of linen or of silk. The outer garment was a straight gown similar to, though not so full as the Byzantine dress. The sleeves, however, were frequently cut to fit the arm, instead of being a loose part of the cloth tied at the waist. A long sash of very soft and beautifully woven material girdled the waist and hung in long folds at the side of the figure, the ends often being tied into a shape similar to a tassel. The women wore beautiful veils which covered the head and a part or all of the gown. For a bride the above mentioned costume was enhanced by a scarlet or some very bright colored veil, which only the oriental people could weave and dye successfully. This covered the figure from the top of the head to the ground and in some cases was allowed to sweep the ground. This left unconcealed, the lower part of the face and portions of the hair, which was braided and entwined with strings of pearls, turquoise beads or gold ornaments. A beautiful white veil was drawn across the face just below the eyes. Thus all was hidden from the bridegroom and his family, except the eyes and the faint glimmer of the bride's jewels through the tissue covering them. This same form of dress, though not quite so gay, was worn by the women after their first wedding.

**Harem Costume.** The other decided form of women's dress, the harem costume, was somewhat different. The upper part was a short loose waist with large sleeves drawn in at the wrist and partly covered by a sleeveless waist known as the baleria jacket. The skirt was very full and was divided part of the way up from the center of the bottom, and gathered in at the ankle. Very sheer veils of many colors were used with these costumes and were most gracefully handled by the women in their dances.
NO. 20. SARACENIC COSTUMES AND ORNAMENT

1. The Mosque
2. Conventional Designs
3. Horse-Shoe Arch
4. Palm Leaf
5. Pomegranate Design
6. Costumes
Jewels. The men's costumes were similar to the women's but were made of heavier material, the mantle hanging from the shoulders and a square piece of cloth fastened on the head with a coil of wool rope or a turban taking the place of the woman's veil. Splendid jewels of every description were an important part of the personal decoration and the wealthy presented them to their friends on every occasion. Many an interesting story has been woven about a lost pearl, an unlucky opal, or a sparkling diamond. It was not uncommon for one of high rank to own a chest of jewels of as great value as a modern commercial man would have invested in his business. If the father of a bridegroom elect went to invite a friend to the wedding, he took a gift with him, often a jewel. As errands varied in importance and meaning, so the jewels varied and soon the different jewels each took a fixed significance for all the people, and thus the symbolic meanings of the various stones have come down to the present day. The sapphire became the sacred stone; the diamond, the symbol of pride; the crystal, of truthfulness; the garnet, of deep affection; the agate, of long life and the coral, signifying the anticipation of marriage.

There was a certain mystery about these gems. The lights in the crystal which seemed to take on definite shapes, thus foretelling the future; the changing of the colors of numerous stones when surrounded by cloths of contrasting colors, and the way in which a diamond seems to give off light rather than reflect it in the dark, seemed almost supernatural and appealed especially to the imaginative oriental people.

Colors. Many of the beautiful color combinations in the silks, embroideries, rugs and hangings were no doubt selected from or influenced by the color of these stones which held such a charm over the minds of the people.

The Orient was divided into provinces and the people, with the exception of the rulers and those selected to take part in war-like expeditions, were kept in their own district all their lives and were not even allowed to marry an outsider or to participate in any
occupation not practiced by their ancestors. Each of these provinces had its own occupation. For instance, in one province the people would weave a certain kind of cloth, in another a particular style of rug, while in another the people might work on jewelry of a certain pattern. This accounts for the similarity in the work and for the variations of detail peculiar to a specified design. The modern idea of the factory in which different men fashion different pieces of wood which are put together by one, polished by another and packed by a third, and each becoming proficient in his own special kind of work, is not so vastly different from the old oriental province plan. The modern man, however, may select his own trade and change at will. The old system had one great advantage in that when the race was capable of planning its best designs, the workmen were able to execute them in the best possible way.

The Koran. The Koran, the Mahometan Bible, was the law and all the followers of the Prophet abided by its teachings. Its teaching was that all were ruled by an unchangeable fate and that any effort on the part of the individual to change his station in life would only add to his discomfort and cause a greater calamity to fall upon him. This accounts for the indolent spirit of the nation, for why should a man endeavor to plan anything for himself, if in doing so he is only displeasing the one Divine God and thus causing himself great unhappiness? Or, again, if prosperity and all to be gained by his ambitious efforts were not intended for him, why should he struggle to attain them? It was folly even to think of it. The Mahometan’s religious ceremonies were seldom, if ever, neglected but they had little or no influence on his social or domestic life, in tending to make it sweeter or better. Religion was for men alone, and was not in the least essential for the women, as it was considered impossible for a woman ever to enter the gates of the Celestial world or to share in any measure in the good fortunes of the men in the future world. The entire thought of the men was centered on themselves, and anything that did not add to their comforts or their pleasures was deliberately put out of mind. A man and his whole family lived by deception
to gain the end for which they were working. While the wife was trying in every way to cheat her lord, he was practicing the same scheme on those with whom he traded. The children were trained to be cunning and quick, and by the time they were grown, they were excellent students of human nature. As a race, they have been called a race of mind readers, for they could often read a western man's mind with greater insight than was shown by the man himself.

A Mahometan was allowed to marry four wives, to each of whom he was supposed to show an equal amount of affection and to adorn each equally well. He could divorce any of them at pleasure; could take them back three times if he so desired; but after the fourth divorce, a wife must have become a wife of another man and then divorced, before her first lord could marry her again. The number of women in his harem was unlimited by law; only by the wealth of the man himself.

The oriental woman's position in the world was as different from that of the occidental as day is different from night. Roman companionship and freedom she never knew. She was a slave to her lord, married when a child of twelve or thirteen, to anyone whom her parents chose, divorced when her husband so desired it, or she might be reared for life in a harem. She concealed all her feminine beauty, veiling her head and most of her face. She was not permitted a voice in the affairs of either her own or her husband's life. Thus it is no wonder that those who naturally resented such laws and customs should develop characters so full of cunning and deceit that they often caused the ruin of men. Those of lesser will-power submitted to a life destined to decrease the mental powers and check the progress of all the work requiring individuality and thought.

Saracenic Designs. The Saracenic ornament is most formal in design and arrangement; marked by its geometrical forms, interlacing and symmetrical lines; its many inscriptions or texts from the Koran, and its absence of natural forms. The religion forbid the
naturalistic representation of animal life, so the interest in the fine arts, painting and sculpture was replaced by a liberal production of architecture and decorative art. As the Arabs were a powerful and wealthy tribe, they conquered many countries, during the Middle Ages and exerted powerful influence over the art of those countries. For instance, in Spain, though not of the Orient, in the decoration of the Alhambra built by Mohammed ben Alhamar, are found some of the most beautiful Saracenic designs.

See illustration No. 21.—Textile of Saracenic Design. (Original in Hispano-Mauresque, New York City. This piece of cloth shows the geometric designs, good space division, interlacing bands, conventional units and variety of forms all so characteristic of the Saracenic ornament. Notice the balance of design and color.

Oriental Rugs. The best known product of industrial art, so full of beautiful ornament and color is the Oriental rug. The patterns originated in the Middle Ages, have been copied generation after generation until many of the modern rugs show the ancient designs. These old rugs, though soiled and worn in holes are to be found in art museums. The remarkable coloring and detail of ornament is as charming now as in the days when the weavers first produced the finished article.

The rugs were not only used as floor coverings but they served as ornamental panels for the walls, couch covers and other furniture coverings. Pieces woven of the same material, similar colors and designs but lighter in weight and finer in texture were used as shawls.

The progress of weaving and dyeing of the various makes of rugs is most interesting and the study of the colors and designs most instructive. The subject is too large to discuss at any length in this small volume, but a few of the most familiar units of design and various makes are mentioned.

The rugs from Ispahan, Khorassan and Shuster, Persia, were distinguished for their velvet-like finish, beauty of design and durability. The best rugs were closely woven. In a Khorassan a long palm, herati or floral design and the color magenta are to be found.

The Turkish rugs are not so finely woven as the Persian; they are soft and thick, but usually have a looser texture. The goat’s
hair is extensively used. The Smyrna rugs are produced by weaving the hair of the goat into the mohair. The Ladik prayer rugs are small but most interesting in design, often showing forms representing the entrance to a Mosque with a field of a solid color, such as a rich wine-red. The Mohair rugs are made of the soft, silky hair of the Angora goat, beautiful but not so durable.

The Beluchistan and Afghanistan rugs of India are thick and heavy, the wool is soft and the pile left rather long. An abundance of goat’s hair and camel’s hair is woven into the wool. The colors are usually of rich dull tones of blue, red and brown with markings of white or ivory. The designs are generally geometric and bold in effect, showing that they were woven by tribes who combined strength with skill.

**Palm Leaf.** The palm leaf is found in Saracenic ornament with regular contour, plain or small floral design as center, or composed of a floral branch without distinct outline. (Illustration 20—No. 4.)

**Henna.** Henna, a shrub that grew in Arabia and Persia, was a popular plant with the Oriental people. It furnished a wonderful coloring matter for various purposes; its leaves were used as motifs in numerous designs and its white blossoms were used as decorations, though not so often copied in the ornament. A paste made from the powdered leaves, water and catechu was employed by the women to stain their nails and the tips of the fingers; the men also used it as a hair dye.

**Pomegranate.** The design copied after the form of the fruit of the pomegranate is circular in shape and divided into small sections representing the many seeds. The tree is a native of the Orient, the fruit about the size of an orange, shows very interesting coloring and spacing when cut into sections. The seeds are separately covered with a crimson pulp. (Illustration 20—No. 5.)

**Mosque.** The form of the mosque and the horse-shoe arch are often seen in the ornament. This style of arch, supported by pillars, was
copied after the Byzantine style. Its naturalistic ornament was replaced by Arabic letters and conventional designs, and its shape slightly changed. (Illustration 20—No. 3.)

**Chinese.** The Chinese people of the northern realm also had strong, lean bodies but they were not so tall or so graceful as the Saracens. Their hair was black and shiny, their skin yellow, their eyes small and dark but not so piercing in their gaze as the southerners. Their character, as is true of all nations, was displayed in the selection of the dress. The Chinese tastes were almost child-like in their simplicity, the patterns being of a more naturalistic effect, delicate and retiring, rather than forceful and strong. A maiden on being spoken to, always drooped her head, for to look another straight in the eyes showed a lack of refinement. The garments and the designs on them took on this same meek spirit of surrender. The soft silks were not draped, but were cut to form a straight garment which seemed to be arranged in certain decorative shapes with each move of the body. The patterns were of flowers with flexible stems and so designed as to be most pleasing in arrangement. The whole effect was very different from the strong, beautiful Saracenic costumes and designs, yet each was charming in itself, as becoming to the wearer and as characteristic of the life of the people.

**Chinese Costume.** Men, women and children wore garments of the same shape. The under garment was a short coat of cotton or linen and in shape like that of the Saracens. The outer garment was of similar shape, and was fastened about the neck and made double breasted with one part fastening on the shoulder and another part fastening under the arm. The sleeves of this outer garment or gwadza, were slightly looser than the under garment and were made long enough to drop below the hips. The skirts of the common people were made of cotton or linen and were in the shape of straight loose trousers but their more festive gowns had skirts slit at front and back and hung in many plaits. This skirt was worn over the trousers. (Illustration 22.)
NO. 22. CHINESE COSTUMES AND DESIGNS
1. Costume
2. Dragon
3. Pagoda
4. Peony
5. Chrysanthemum
Shoes. The feet of the wealthy women were bound when they were children to prevent them from growing, thus rendering the women absolutely helpless. Their very small shoes were worn only as bits of ornament. The men and women of the lower classes wore sandals and in cold weather a coarse cloth stocking cut in the shape of a shoe with a slit between the first two toes for the sandal strap. Wooden clogs were worn in rainy weather. These gave height to the figure and made it appear as though the wearer was on stilts.

Both sexes wore the hair in long braids which were sometimes coiled on top of the head.

The Chinese did not travel, as it was considered a crime to leave the graves of one's ancestors. Certain gifts had to be placed on the graves a given number of times a year, and should the departed one's relatives move from the locality, and this ceremony be omitted, — the Gods, who kept the evil spirits pacified by the gifts, could no longer do so, and the dead would be left unprotected. The dead were buried in a sitting posture, and the funeral services were similar to those of the early Egyptians with their paid mourners. As in Egypt the mourning color was white and the family attending the funeral services removed the elaborate bands from their dresses and substituted plain white ones.

The most elaborate gown owned by the family was put on the deceased for the funeral ceremony, but after the service it was removed and a plain one substituted for burial. This expensive dress was kept by the family for future use, or was sold by the undertaker to help defray the funeral expenses.

Colors. The Chinese ornament was distinguished by its beautiful floral patterns, perfect in technique, simple in arrangement and pleasing in color; the many forms of the pagoda, quaint bridges and costume figures. The characteristic color combinations are those found in flowers.

Chrysanthemum. The Chrysanthemum was of Chinese origin, though introduced into Japan, and as frequently used in Japanese
ornament. It was grown in abundance and its beautiful blossoms admired by all classes. (Illustration 22—No. 5.)

**Peony.** The peony, of Chinese origin, was the emblem of womanhood and spoken of as the flower of the rich, emblem of prosperity; the king of flowers. The lion and peacock of the animal world were its companions in art. It was introduced into Japan about the eighth century. (Illustration 22—No. 4.)

**Dragon.** The dragon often formed vigorous lines in a composition or was combined with flowing, circular lines representing clouds and waves of water. It was the symbol of power. (Illustration 22—No. 2.)

**Pheasant.** Many Chinese designs show the Golden Pheasant, a bird native of China, of splendid plumage, short wings, long graceful tail feathers and beautifully colored.

**Pagoda or Temple.** The Pagoda or sections of it was often introduced into the ornament of this time. The roof of each story curved outward and upward; the general architectural shape was hexagon, octagon, or circular. These quaint forms, more complex than beautiful, were combined with bells and queer images and other ornament relative to the religious life of the people. (Illustration 22—No. 3.)

**Japanese.** Between the two extreme styles just mentioned, comes that of the Japanese which has some of the characteristics of both.

In appearance the Japanese were similar to the Chinese, having yellow skins and black hair, but they were as quick in manner as the Saracens.

The Japanese women gave their faces a much more picturesque appearance by dressing their hair in a different manner from the Chinese women. They oiled their hair and fastened it on the top of the head in a very fastidious way, using long pins to hold it. The young women were very proud of their hair and would keep it in the
same knot for a week at a time, not taking out a pin for fear the coils would change shape. To assist in this a very hard pillow was used at night, one just large enough to keep the hair from touching the bed and spoiling the efforts of the hair dresser.

**Kimono.** The garments were very simple and often cut after one design. The one dress for all occasions, work, play, wedding or funeral, day or night and for young and old, was the well-known kimono. One kimono was worn over another to give the effect of many bands crossing at the throat. The common dress was of cotton or linen, the better ones of fine silk or soft crepe. (Illustration 23—No. 8.)

The men's clothes were made of materials of a more subdued color, were heavier in texture and had a plaited skirt worn over the kimono. Fine checks were very popular for the silk designs used in men's clothing.

The children wore the largest designs and the showiest colors. What seemed very peculiar to other nations in style for children, was deemed the most pleasing for the Japanese. Their infants wore large plaits or what might be better called the latticed patterns.

It was the custom of the dancing girls to wear gowns of bright hues, bright reds, yellows or greens embroidered all over with gold or fancy silks. This being the case, the best families did not dress their daughters in bright colors after they were five years old.

The older girls might wear a delicately colored kimono with a bright colored sash or an embroidered band, but a married woman, especially one with a family, would wear only the somber colored kimonos with bits of color about the neck or sleeves and an elderly lady would wear black or blue. As cloth dyed in blue could be made more cheaply than any other, this became the common color for the poorer people. Purple was the most expensive color and as it was usually used in silks, it became the color for the wealthy or royalty. Of this, many tints and shades found in the iris were much used.
NO. 23. JAPANESE COSTUMES AND DESIGNS

1. Mon of the House of Minamoto Ashikaya
2. Kiki-non-hana-mon, State of Japan
3. Kiri-mon, Mon of the Mikado
4. Toyomote, Mon of the House of Arina
5. Awi-mon, Mon of the House of Minamoto Tokugawa

6. Crane
7. Floral
8. Kimona-Cherry Blossom Design
9. Iris
10. Clogs and Sandles
In Japan, as in other oriental countries, the people worked in their native provinces and produced their own kind of silk, linen, leather or what not. Each province had its crest or seal which were known as "Mons" and were used on every article made in that province. Five of these designs were placed on a kimono, one on each side in front, one on each shoulder and one in the middle of the back. The coolie laborers were an exception to this, however, for they wore only one, and that in the middle of the back. Sometimes this was on the clothing, but often it was on a large card suspended by a cord about the neck, for the upper part of the coolie's body was often nude.

**Mon.** These Mons or crests, often found combined with other forms of decoration, are very interesting in design and color. They were originally used as family or state marks similar to the Heraldic designs so popular in the Occident. They were used as decorations of shields and armor, as well as on clothing, furniture, etc. (Illustration 23.)

Figure 1 shows the mon of the House of Minamoto Ashikaya. It is a simple design, well balanced and attractively spaced. Figure 2, Kiki-non-hana-mon is the mon of the state, composed of the conventionalized blooms (hana) of the chrysanthemum. Sixteen petals arranged in a circle with edges connected by small curves.

Figure 3, Kiri-mon was the personal mon of the Mikado or Emperor. It is formed of the Paulowna imperialis, treated conventionally.

Figure 4, Toymote, the second mon of the house of Arina, was also used as a sign of luck throughout Japan.

Figure 5, Awi-mon, the mon of the house of Minamoto Tokugawa, is composed of three sea leaves.

**Japanese Designs.** The art of Japan no doubt owed its origin to China but showed a more literal treatment of natural forms. The technique was marvelous and the detail of design most beautiful.
Both Japanese and Chinese art are known for their attractive brushwork. Since the writing in these countries was accomplished by means of a brush in place of a pen, the artists were trained from childhood to use the brush.

**Cherry.** The Cherry tree was loved by all Japanese, not for its fruit, but for its blossoms so beautiful in color and artistic in arrangement. The Spring, when one could sit or walk under the trees pink with blossoms, was the happiest time of the year. "The Emperor Saga, as early as the ninth century, inaugurated the Imperial garden parties to the cherry blossoms, which still take place annually at the old summer place of the Shoguns, Shiba Rikyu." (Flowers and Gardens of Japan by Florence Du Cane.) Numerous stories have been written about the cherry. The physical phenomena exercised considerable influence upon the Japanese mind and the cherry blossoms in all their beauty were ever thought of as an emblem of purity.

**Plum.** Many attractive arrangements of the fruit and leaves of the plum tree were used in decorations. The broad circular shapes of the fruit and the carefully drawn leaves, reproduced in simple, flat colors, formed compositions characteristic of the Japanese art. The plum, as well as the cherry, was a favorite with the Japanese. Old and young, rich and poor, went miles through rain or hot sunshine to view these trees when in full bloom. The plum bloomed early in the spring.

"While Spring was still cold I knew it was at hand by your flowering. You are not Spring, but the prophet of Spring. The cherry blossoms in Spring, the iris and the wistaria; but, as each of these has its own season, the gods sent you to keep green our hope of Spring." — Kango Uchimura.

**Wistaria.** The wistaria, a flower so full of grace and charm, was the emblem of the ideal woman; gentleness and obedience.
Iris. The Iris has ever been a source of inspiration to artists. Many of the textiles are dyed to match its colors and many patterns copied from it. (Illustration 23—No. 9.)

Bamboo. The bamboo, the Japanese regarded as a giant grass rather than a tree. There are species for almost every purpose, and the Chinese or Japanese would not know how to do construction or decorative work without it. It has been in use for centuries and is still indispensable. One of the earliest stories in Japanese literature is about the tenth century, “Taketori Monogatari,” the story of an old bamboo gatherer, and the earliest art shows sketches of it.

Birds. The peacock, the crane, duck, pheasant and many small birds and insects are found in both Japanese and Chinese art. These are often combined with floral decorations as the people always associated some special bird or animal with each flower, for instance, the nightingale and the plum.

“Cettria’s (the nightingale) fancy, too,
Finds his cup of flowers,
Seeks his peaceful hiding-place,
In the plum’s sweet bowers.”

—Pigott’s Garden of Japan.

Fujiyama. Fujiyama, the sacred mountain of Japan, an enormous, symmetrical cone, clad with snow, was often pictured in Japanese art. It is shown in black and white or beautiful colors, with pilgrims wending their way up the steep sides to worship at its summit.

Through these periods we have traced the development of the loose garment and search as we may, or do with it what we will, its origin and construction ever goes back to these earlier ages. The loose drapery and costumes of the later years are only variations of the classic, or oriental styles. Cut off the long sleeves of the kimono and you will have the garb of the Saracen; add a little fullness to the sleeves, split the skirt, confine it at the waist with a sash, at the ankles and wrists with a band and you see the harem costume. Narrow
this in the skirt, let the trousers and sleeves hang loose, cut it below the waist line so that the lower part may be raised part way beneath the upper part, and there is the Chinese raiment. With each backward step, simplify the garment, and you soon come to the straight piece of cloth used by the Egyptians. Starting forward from the oriental style, you come to an entirely new style with its many variations, the fitted garment.

LESSON VII.

Make a sheet of sketches showing one Oriental Costume and three or more Oriental designs. Color at least three designs.
Notice the wonderful geometric construction in the Saracenic designs.
Make an original design for a lounging robe, using ideas suggested by oriental costumes.
Make an all-over stencil, batik or block print pattern suitable for such a garment. (A)
Make a Kimono or Oriental Costume out of paper or cloth. Stencil the design. (C)
Arrange, on a sheet, bits of modern trimmings, cloth or prints of costumes and oriental rugs which resemble the Oriental designs of the middle ages.