

NORWEGIAN BREAKFAST CLUB NEWSLETTER

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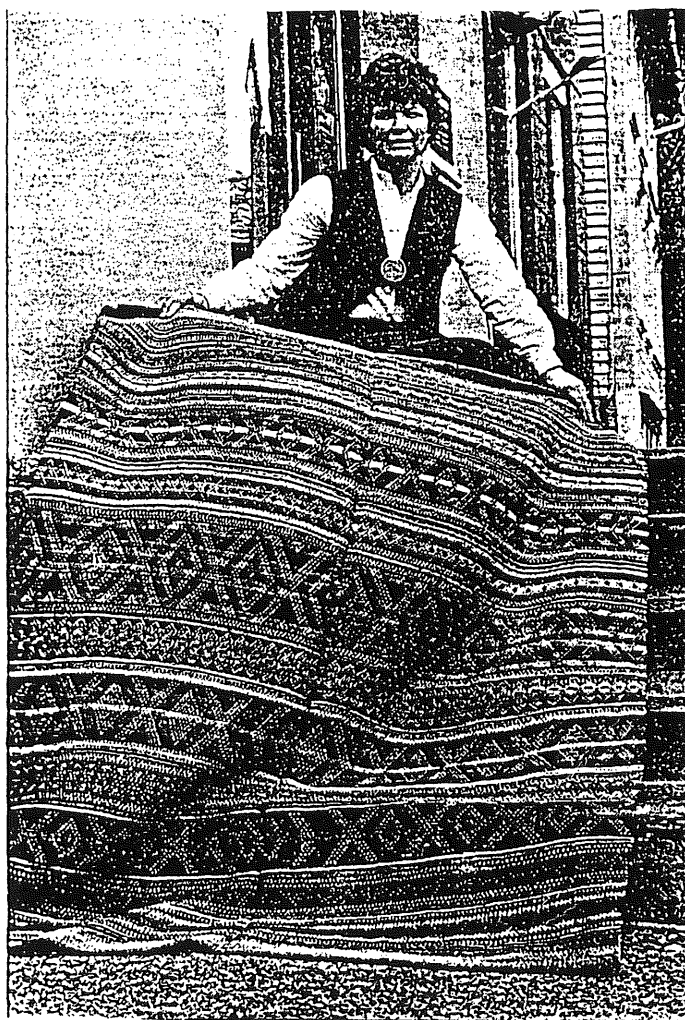
AN INTRODUCTION TO THE DANSK BROGD TRADITION

by Lila Nelson

My introduction to dansk brogd¹ bed covers was an intriguing photograph in an unidentified newsclipping from the files of Vesterheim, Norwegian American Museum, in Decorah, Iowa. Dated April 23, 1983, it showed a uniquely patterned coverlet being held by Katherine Holmegard Bringsdal, curator for an exhibition at the historical museum in Kristiansand, West Agder, Norway. The object appeared to have large bold diamond and x-shaped motifs floating in light colored threads on a darker striped background. The accompanying article made brief reference to the coverlet, saying the patterns were picked up on an open shed of krokbragd² and that, while pick-up techniques ("smetteteknikken") were used throughout Norway, their application to krokbragd was unique.

Dansk brogd interested me for a number of reasons. It was unlike any other type of krokbragd I had seen, and my exposure had been considerable because of the many krokbragd coverlets in Vesterheim's collection. These especially warm and functional bed covers were brought to America in large numbers during the immigration period. I knew of none varying to any extent from the standard shuttle-woven single and double point motifs³. I also recognized a need for more research on krokbragd, a bound weave particularly Scandinavian and found throughout much of Norway but a subject of very little study.

My only other source of information on dansk brogd was a photograph with detail of a coverlet in Torbjorg Gauslaa's booklet "Anna Grostol Pa Lista" taken in Konsmo, West Agder, in 1941 by



Katherine Holmegard Bringsdal holds a uniquely patterned dansk brogd coverlet, West Agder, Norway

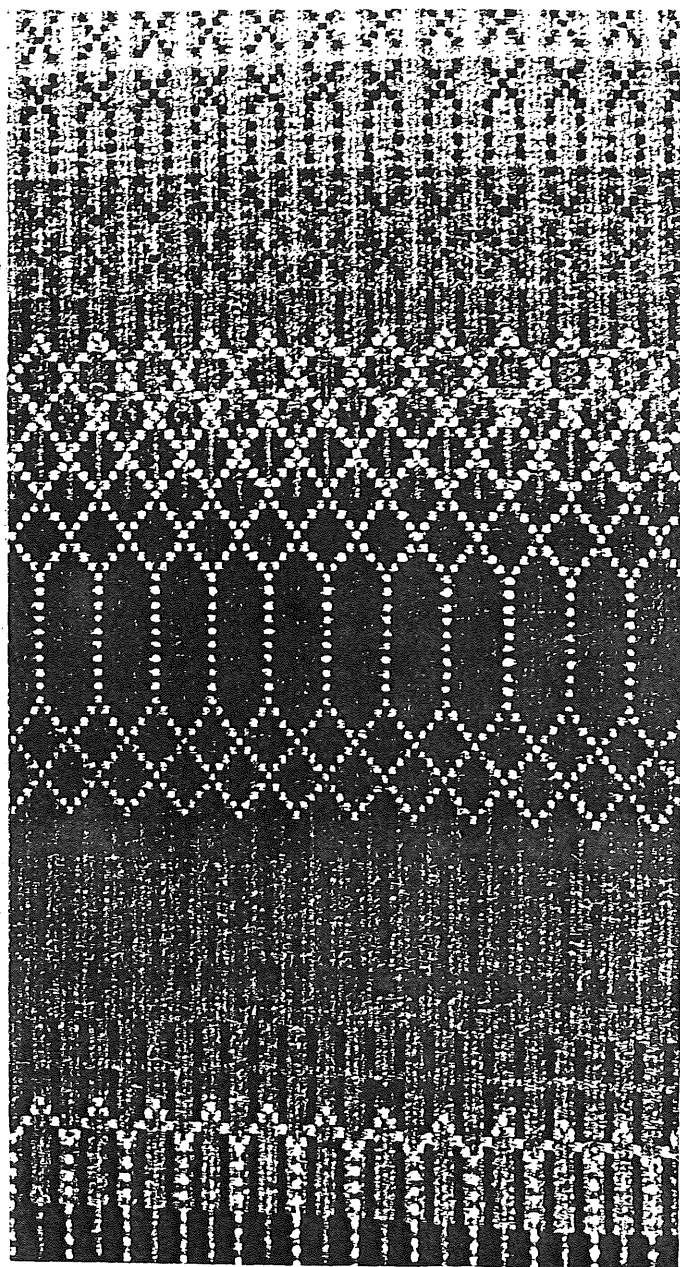
textile historian Anna Gristle. No details were given.

A year after the exhibition of West Agder coverlets, I was able to correspond with Katherine Bringsdal, who provided me with information available at that time and who also generously sent a sample of dansk brogd which she had woven. According to Bringsdal, the characteristic geometric patterns in a light color on a dark ground were most commonly picked up in the standard krokbragd shed. Backgrounds were in bands of one color at a time rather than in the standard blends of various colors. Patterns were woven by picking up chosen warp threads from the lower layer of each open krokbragd shed, weaving a shot of the pattern color, and then in the same open shed picking up the remaining lower warps and weaving the background color. The same wool was used for pattern and ground, thus maintaining the characteristic smooth weft-faced krokbragd surface.

Bringsdal indicated that, while dansk brogd on three shaft krokbragd was most typical, she has seen four examples of the technique on two-shaft coverlets.⁴ She did not go into further detail on differences in the two types, and the sample she sent was based on the three-shaft structure.

In June of 1986, my husband and I visited the fylkesmuseum in Kristiansand, West Agder, and with the help of curator Kristen Noklemost were able to study the catalogue and actually see some of the dansk brogd in that collection. While most of the pieces exhibited in the 1984 show belonged to private individuals and were therefore not available for study, we were able to see the records of the exhibition by staff from the Folk Museum in Oslo. We noticed that a number of photographs of objects in the collection revealed bands of dansk brogd which were not labeled as such in the catalogue, indicating that even in its home area dansk brogd was not always recognized.

On the basis of 15 photographs from the exhibition, together with the slides we took of 6 coverlets in the museum collection, two pattern types emerged. In one the patterns were much more bold and sweeping, comprising large



Detail from dansk brogd panel by Lila Nelson. Elongated krokbragd designs are carried along in the ground along with the laid-in dansk brogd patterns.

diamonds or Xs with small bands of standard krokbragd or "kjerringtenner" (two-shuttle, two-color, weft-faced plain weave) between. An example from Oyslebo, probably the major source of dansk brogd, was composed of large patterns throughout, which alternated in dark and light bands to give a negative/positive effect. It was this type of pattern that appeared to have been picked on a two-shaft ground. In the other, small bands of dansk brogd broke up what was primarily a krokbragd coverlet.

continued to page 5

SNEAK PREVIEW - NEW 'SPELSAU LITE' YARN FOR WEAVERS

Norsk Fjord Fibers now offers a Norwegian yarn which is 50/50 blend of Spelsau and wool, and which features the best of both worlds. It retains much of the famous luster and color intensity of the Spelsau, but features the loftiness of fine wool tapestry yarns and a lower price. This new Vevgarn (weaving yarn) is available in two weights and 112 colors. The Thin Vevgarn weighs in at 328 yards per 100g skein while the Thick offers 191 yards per 100 g skein. While prices are still tentative, we anticipate that this Vevgarn will be priced around \$6.50 per 100 g skein. These high quality Norwegian yarns from HIFA are moth-proof and colorfast. As a special introductory offer, we will send free color sample cards for this new yarn to any Hagen Loom owner who requests them. Just drop us a note if these "spelsau-lite" yarns tempt your palette!

For more information about this new product, contact NBC member Noel Thurner at Norsk Fjord Fiber, P.O.Box 271, Route 2, Box 2486, Lexington, GA 30648 or Telephone (706) 743-5102

THE NORWEGIAN BREAKFAST CLUB AT FRONTIERS OF FIBRE, July 13-15, 1995

The Norwegian Breakfast Club met from 7:00 to 8:00 am, Friday, July 14, 1995 at the Simon Fraser Inn in Prince George, British Columbia, Canada, during *Frontiers of Fibre*, the biennial conference of the Association of Northwest Weavers Guilds. This event, sponsored by the Prince George Weavers & Spinners Guild (and friends), had as its theme "Reach for the Stars!" The special hospitality accorded to the thirty three interested participants in the Norwegian Breakfast Club was much appreciated. Delicious homemade muffins (baked by the families of the conference planners!) and hot coffee served with the compliments of the Simon Fraser Inn were provided. Due to the good planning of the program committee, the Breakfast was held in the same room as Lila Nelson's seminar, "Woven Bedcovers on Old Norwegian Farms". On display were five or six early

authentic coverlets and smaller contemporary hangings as well as two rigid heddle looms, one to demonstrate Vestfold pick-up and the other, single interlock tapestry.

Plans were discussed for a future conference to be held at Vesterheim Museum which would include a day of shorter presentations as well as a day for getting acquainted with the Museum and its facilities. The suggestion was made that for those who must travel a great distance, the conference should consider having pre- and post-conference workshops in addition to the general meeting.

Karen Casselman recommended that the name of the newsletter be changed so that it could more accurately convey the nature of the contents rather than appear as a collection of good Norwegian lefse recipes!

Karen Casselman also noted that to help publicize the group, people might like to take out an extra subscription for their local library. Both Karen Casselman and Pirkko Karvonen have done just that!

At the meeting there was a good exchange of thoughts and a sharing of interests. The excellent response indicated a desire on the part of all who came to learn more about the Norwegian weaving tradition!

JANET MEANY

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Janet Meany - Co-author of the *Rag Rug Handbook* and editor/publisher of *The weavers Friend*, a newsletter for rag rug weavers. With *Historic looms of America* co-founder, Theresa Trebon, she is assembling a Loom Manual Library where instruction books and loom histories may be obtained.

"My interest is in documenting old looms, learning their histories and that of the people who wove on them. I would be grateful if NBC members would write and tell me about the horizontal, handmade or factory-built Norwegian floor looms which they have encountered either in this country or abroad I am anxious to record the particularly Norwegian characteristics which each of these old looms presents. A listing of locations and, if possible, photographs would be would be very much appreciated."

News from Vesterheim Museum

Laurann Figg, Curator of Textile

Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum, 502 W. Water, Decorah, IA 52101

(319)382-9681 Fax (319)382-8828

Lichen-Dyed Textiles at Vesterheim

Karen Casselman presented a lecture on "Norse and Celtic Dye Traditions" on June 12. The audience included eleven NBC members who met informally over dinner before the lecture.

"The identification of dyestuffs is essential if we are to better understand textile history. As lichen dyes are one category that is often overlooked, I was excited to learn there might be lichen-dyed textiles at Vesterheim; we came to this conclusion when a small sample of my lichen-dyed fibers appeared to match colors in a Norwegian rya coverlet. Laurann suggested I visit Vesterheim en route to Interweave's NATURAL DYES conference in Colorado, and examine some of these textiles first hand. The visual identification of dyestuffs is not entirely reliable; however, rather than submit fibers to expensive lab procedures, visual identification does provide a starting point to search for "likely" candidates for further testing.

For example, the Norwegian lichen dye "korkje" produces distinctive shades of pink, rose, red, and purple. Thus I brought along a range of korkje samples, as well as samples dyed using North American lichens. To my surprise, my samples appeared to "match" colors in fourteen Vesterheim textiles (and they came close to various purples in another nine textiles). This was more than I had hoped for. Past trips to various museums abroad had not produced any textiles that compared with my dyed samples. The results of this "visual appraisal" are truly significant, for I have been trying to establish that a certain lichen (Lasallia pustulata) was used for dyeing in Norway. Without textile evidence, however, my theory remained just that. To discover that one of the Norwegian-made textiles at Vesterheim clearly matches my dyed sample of Lasallia pustulata (a dye I made using lichens collected in Norway), represents the research "breakthrough" I have been waiting for.

I want to thank Lila Nelson for introducing me to Laurann Figg, whose enthusiasm and expert assistance provided me with a unique opportunity that has added immeasurably to my determination to continue my Norse lichen dye research. Every aspect of Vesterheim - from the museum and the collections, to the gift shop and the church - delighted me. I look forward to a return visit." *Karen Casselman*

Congratulations

Betty Johannesen is Vesterheim's newest Gold Medalist after red (double *krokbragd* hanging) and white (*krokbragd* with *rya* hanging) ribbons in this year's National Exhibition of Weaving in the Norwegian Tradition. Other NBC winners: John Skare, Best of Show for "Segalstad #1" coat/hanging; and Norma Smayda, Honorable Mention for "Stars of the North" runner.

Translator Found

Aileen Runde is available for small translating jobs. A guide and translator at Norsk Folkemuseum, she is also working on a master's degree in ethnology from the University of Oslo. While in Decorah doing field research on "symbols in Norwegian America," she translated a portion of Inger Lise Christie's Dåpsdrakter for our library. Aileen grew up in Minnesota and has been living in Norway for five years. She is interested in translating for NBC members but requests shorter projects at first. Her fee is \$10 per page of Norwegian text. Contact her after October 1 at Hekkveien 7, 0571 Oslo, Norway (phone 22 38 16 53).

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Where dansk brogd originated is, according to Bringsdal, not known. Neither are its dates of origin, but she indicates it is mentioned in a property transfer in Oyslebo as early as 1758.

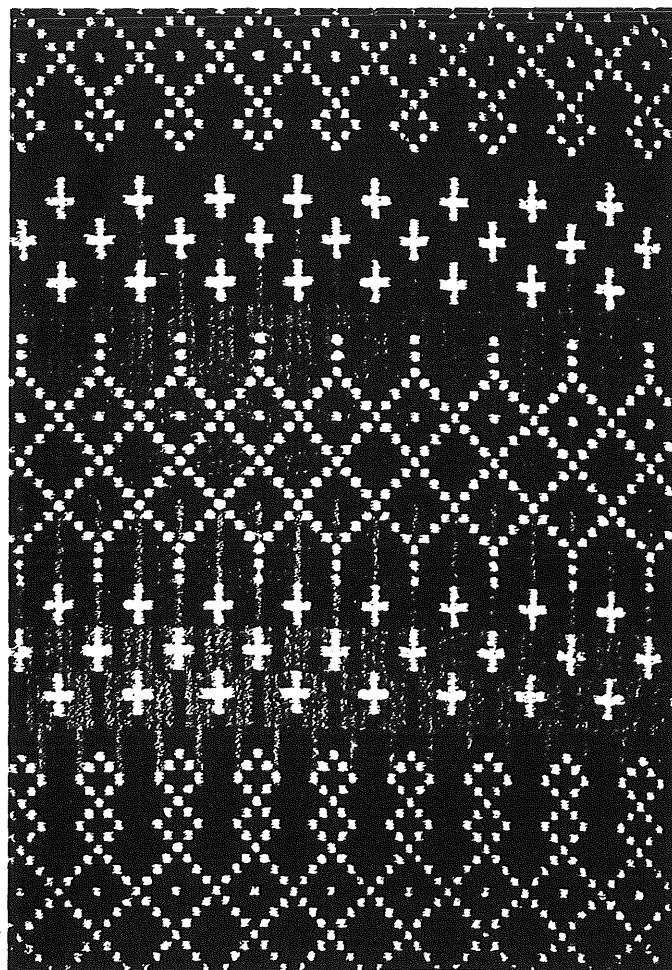
My experiments with dansk brogd have been with color, design, material, and threading. Instead of having solid color background bands, I have carried elongated krokbragd motifs in dark tones in the background on which the lighter colored dansk brogd motifs have been picked. The resulting varied and complex combinations of design and colors have been unexpected and interesting. I have attempted small rugs using narrow cut rag strips for weft but the results have been dubious. The structure is firm and heavy, but the back floats result in a non-reversible object. I have also tried to enlarge pattern possibilities and at the same time minimize the amount of pick-up by weaving dansk brogd on a five-shaft, point twill threading⁵; but problems with selvages and borders have led me back to the traditional three-shaft. Ahead are further explorations of pick-up on double point krokbragd and two-shaft weaving.

FOOTNOTES

¹ Varied spellings of "dansk brogd" include "danskbrogd" and danskbragd". None seems to indicate a connection with the Danish.

² I use the term "krokbragd" as limited to the traditional Norwegian three-harness, point twill in which each weft pick covers only one surface warp and floats under the other two on the reverse, giving a surface appearance of weft-faced plain weave.

³ A small weaving from Telemark in the Vesterheim collection, which may have been one panel of a bed cover, includes narrow bands of laid-in diamonds between krokbragd sections. Two drafts for "Nordmorsaklae" from the "husflidsskule" (craft school) in More/Romsdal include bands of laid-in designs on tabby within broader areas of bound weave done on a four-shaft straight twill draft.



Detail from dansk brogd panel by Lila Nelson. Elongated krokbragd designs are carried along in the ground along with the laid-in dansk brogd patterns.

⁴ Letter dated 9 March, 1984, in files of author.

⁵ A five-harness point twill draft was suggested by Myrna Golay. Mary Temple has worked with a six-harness threading.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

LORRAINE LEFTWICH - Lorraine has had a long term interest in Norwegian textiles and states the following goals and interests: a network of like individuals with whom I can share information, ideas, and other resources, aklae of Norway, particularly of the Nordfjord region, Norwegian tapestry weaving, regional folk costumes (I am also an embroiderer).

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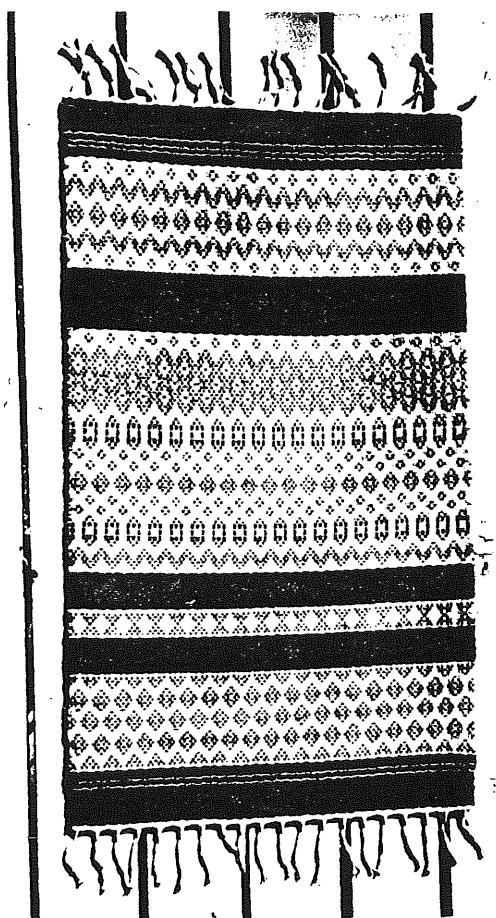
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2	2	2	2	
1	1	1	1	

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The figure consists of two vertical rectangular frames. Frame 'a' contains three circles: one near the top, one near the bottom, and one in the middle-right position. Frame 'b' contains four circles at similar relative positions to those in frame 'a', but each circle is preceded by a capital letter 'P'.

The figure consists of two vertical rectangular frames. Frame 'a' contains three circles at different vertical positions. Frame 'b' contains four circles at different vertical positions, each preceded by a capital letter 'P'. The circles in frame 'b' are aligned horizontally with the circles in frame 'a'.


The figure consists of two vertical rectangular frames. Frame 'a' contains three circles at different vertical positions. Frame 'b' contains four circles at different vertical positions, each preceded by a capital letter 'P'. The circles in frame 'b' are aligned horizontally with the circles in frame 'a'.

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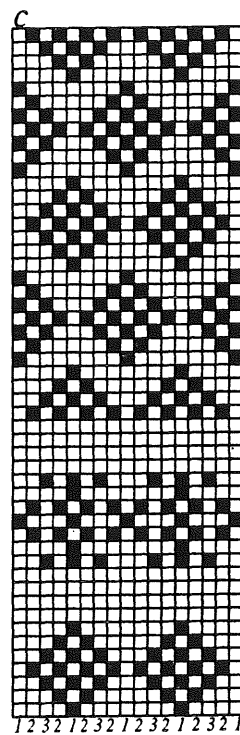
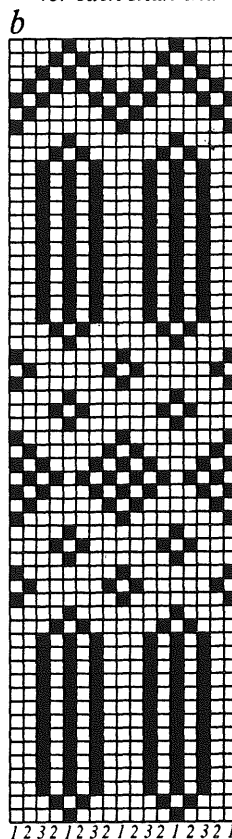
by Betty Johannesen

a

b



square. The wett colors for pattern or background can be changed at any time.



During an informal breakfast meeting at the Midwest Weavers Conference in Milwaukee, WI, June 21-25, 1995, Jan Mostrom suggested that NBC members might be interested in forming study groups similar to those organized by Complex Weavers. The groups would keep in touch with other interested members by mail, sharing problems and progress. Jan would like to study dansk brogd. If you are interested in dansk brogd or any of the other Norwegian techniques, contact Jan Mostrom, 183 Cascade Ct., Chanhassen, MN 55317.