

NORWEGIAN TEXTILE LETTER

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TRANSLATIONS ADDED TO VESTERHEIM'S ARCHIVES

by Lila Nelson

Two translated articles on traditional Norwegian weaving have recently been added to Vesterheim's archives: "Weaving From West Norway" by Emily Mohr (from Vestland Husflidslag, Bergen, Norway 1940. Trans. Judit Backlund, Eds. Marion and Lila Nelson) and "Square Weave" by Einar Lexow (Bergens Museums Aarbok, N. 2, 1914. Trans. John Gundersen, Ed. Lila Nelson).

The first article begins with a brief speculation of a connection between medieval and contemporary Norwegian weaving, admitting that documentation is not easy to find. (It does not mention double weave as a notable exception.)

Mohr then deals with the traditional preparation of materials in west Norway, stressing the importance of wool in particular because of favorable climate and grazing conditions for the raising of "stutrova" or "spælsauen", a primitive breed of sheep that provided a coarse outer layer ("tog") and a fine underlayer ("tel") of wool. Sorted with the fingers or a wide-toothed comb, the wool did not require carding before wheel or spindle spinning. These sheep predominated in west Norway until around the 1830s, when spinning mills called for a controlled, consistent product.

Mohr underlines problems which followed mechanization and change in textile

processes from the mid 19th century. For example, when imported cotton began replacing home produced linen and hemp, the beauty of early patterned linen weaving was lost as well as some types of thread-count embroideries. A color sense attuned to natural dyes and a limited but satisfying palette was weakened with the influx of chemical colors.

The old rhythm of tasks was broken. Traditionally, women started carding and spinning after fall outdoor jobs were done, with the goal of completing warp preparations by Christmas. Children helped card and make spools until old enough to spin by themselves. At the end of February the loom was brought out, and the wife and daughters wove all the cloth needed by the family: vadmæl, blankets coverlets, muslin, and various belts and bands.

Mohr indicates how the machine age and growing free enterprise introduced country stores at which farmers could sell their products. The importance of handmade objects diminished even in the eyes of weavers themselves, who lost confidence in the value of their skills as machines took over spinning and later weaving.

The last section of Mohr's article deals with a description of early weaving techniques: square weave, krokbragd, rya christening blanket weaves, and pillow cover and apron

weaving. Since square weave is discussed in detail in Lexow's article, I will ignore it here. Krokbragd is described as known throughout Norway and used for anything requiring thickness and warmth, such as horse blankets and sleigh, boat, or carriage covers as well as bed coverlets. Mohr indicates that these coverlets appeared superficially similar but minute details identified their source. In Hardanger and surrounding areas, for example, krokbragd had a white ground and wide bands of similar patterns in various colors. In Hordaland, bands of krokbragd alternated with inlay, square weave, and other techniques. Redesigned patterns and varied materials make krokbragd useful for twentieth century upholstery, pillows, table runners, and rugs.

Though rya was mostly known as a bed cover, it was first used in fishing boats along the coast. Mohr describes the technique as rows of giordes knots on one side with the knot hidden in the ground weave on the reverse. Warp and weft were always wool with some linen or hemp and the ground weave two harness, three or four harness twill or four harness "ringweave" (the term "ringweave" is not defined). The pile, also called "nop" or "nokk", was cut in equal lengths and knotted at regular intervals. Common rya were those with pile of rags; the more special were of yarns; and a mixture in alternating rows was not uncommon.

Mohr states that old rya were well preserved in Sogn and Fjordane and that rya weaving continues (her article is written in 1940) in different areas including Hordaland but with the exception of Voss, where for some reason rya was almost unknown.

Mohr refers to various terms which she applies to west coast christening blankets:

"kristnaplagg", "bruråkle", "henta", or "spelåkle". She states that these were traditionally woven on a two harness floor loom with pattern pick-up with sticks behind the reed, a new stick for each pattern change, but were later produced on a drawloom. She describes blankets from Hardanger and Sunnhordland as having green and blue eight-petal flowers in bands, which would seem to indicate an interlock technique. And she uses the term "skillbragd" as referring only to a coverlet type from Nordfjord.

According to Mohr, west coast pillow covers ("hogjende") common to Sunnfjord and Nordfjord consisted of bands of fine wool in stripes, hag's teeth ("kjerringtenner") or flames ("flemminger") woven on sticks or picked up. The backs were of tabby with linen or hemp weft. On the island a twill called "olmervev" was popular when woven in varicolored bands. In Sogn and Hardanger pillow covers were woven without pattern in linen or hemp.

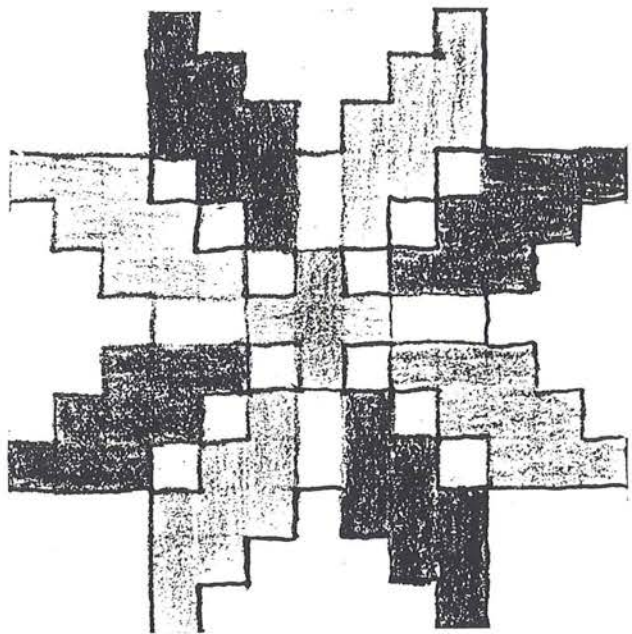
Mohr indicates that aprons with patterns like those of the pillow covers were worn with the costumes of Sogn, Fjordane, and Nordhordland. She mentions as unusual an early apron from Finneloftet in Moss with two dark blue colors in band or varying widths alternating with flames and eight-petal flowers in red and white (one would assume the latter is picked up).

Finally, Mohr mentions narrower objects woven on a rigid heddle and including distinctly local laid-in ("smettevev") patterns. Diaper covers ("barnelinner") and belts often had designs known from the coverlets: triangles, "timeglass" and "samrosen" (the latter two terms unidentified).

The second, considerably longer, article, "Square Weave" by Einar Lexow (from Bergens Museums Aarbok, No 2, 1914) opens with the plaint that only two earlier books had dealt with square weave. Professor Lexow would find the situation little changed as the century nears its close, the only additional study being Marit Wang's Ruteaklaer (Universitetsforlaget, Oslo, 1983. 183 pages). Lexow based his study primarily on the same collection as Wang, the coverlets in Bergen's Historical Museum. Both then and now the largest single collection, only around 130 of the 280 pieces in the museum in 1914 had sufficient information available to use them as a basis for study; so Lexow included in his investigation coverlets from the Kristiania Museum of Industrial Arts, the Norwegian Fold Museum, and Maihaugen as well as a few from some communities in Telemark, Numedal, upper Hallingdal, and Gudbrandsdal. Marit Wang in 1983 had 346 coverlets in the Bergen collection and limited her study to that number. She has attempted to broaden understanding of square weaving by a careful and detailed analysis of each coverlet on the basis of origin, size, weight, warp and weft materials, techniques, and inscriptions or marks. Lexow covers these areas in a less formalized manner and is very careful to preface generalizations with reference to the limited examples on which they are of necessity based.

Lexow concludes that square weave was a product of west Norway which was not woven north of Dovre Mountains and which was limited to southern Norway and to eastern mountain communities adjoining west Norway. He sees the early generic square weave as a coverlet with the eight-petalled flower motif done in a limited color range in single interlock, with variations developing later in local areas. It is

described as a flower with two dark colors (reddish-violet and a green or brown) alternating in adjoining petals surrounded by yellow and split by white blocks. An octagonal frame of the darker color surrounds the flower. Even the earliest flowers revealed variations: some completely covered a surface with small diamond motif dividers and others placed the flowers between different horizontal and vertical borders. That forms of the eight-petalled flower appeared in both Telemark and Hallingdal would indicate the presence of the motif beyond the coastal areas.



8 petal flower

Speculating a time span for the flower, Lexow thinks the present examples probably are from the 18th century though the motif had its origin in the Gothic period. Only two are dated, one 1775 and a later 1836. He characterizes the 19th century work as decadent.

Lexow assumes that other simple patterns probably occurred at the same time as the eight-petalled flower though he has found none with the early west coast color palette.

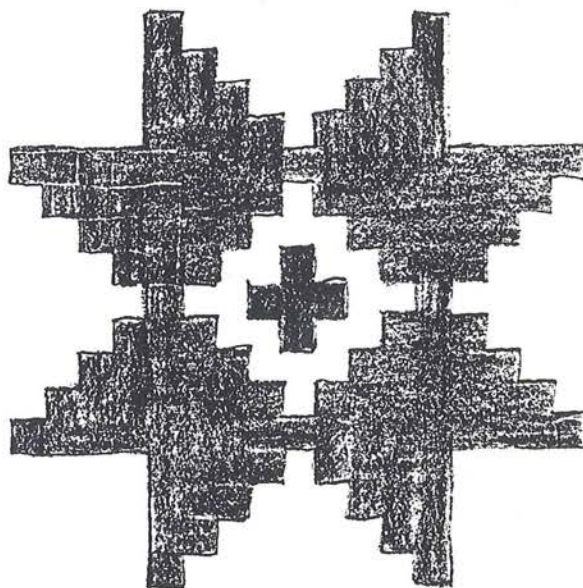
Lexow calls attention to a coverlet unusual in that it includes two male figures dressed in wide pants and smoking pipes, the latter indicating the coverlet cannot be much older than 1700. For the remainder, he judges they belong to a later age, probably from the 19th and the first half of the 20th centuries.

Turning to local characteristics of coverlets, he cites those of Hardanger, where the eight-petalled flower is made up of smaller and individual squares and is repeated as often as twenty-four times. Instead of alternating colors, the petals are often completely white and are divided by a system of diamonds called "hodnrose" (horn shaped flower). Some further variations make it difficult to discern the flower among other diamond and cross motifs.

Lexow finds no distinct type for the area of Voss, attributing this to the district's geographically and politically intermediate position between Sogn and Hardanger. He also finds no distinct Nordfjord type, but this is because of the dearth of examples in the Bergen Museum.

He speaks, however, of a characteristic Sogn-Sunnfjord type, where the flower motif is much bigger, stronger, and coarser than the Hardanger version, appearing sometimes only four times on an object. Though it could also appear as often as sixteen times, its divisions comprised broader areas and rarely included the many individual blocks of Hardanger pieces. While the color scheme was similar -- the red, black, yellow, and white so typical throughout west Norway -- the red was a lighter, more brick red, than

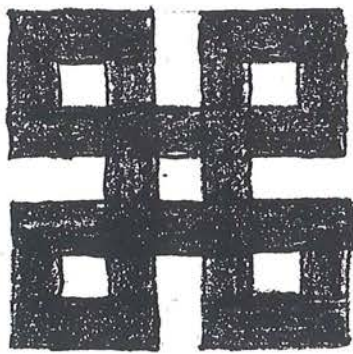
that of Hardanger. Blue was also more often used while green was rare.



8 pointed star

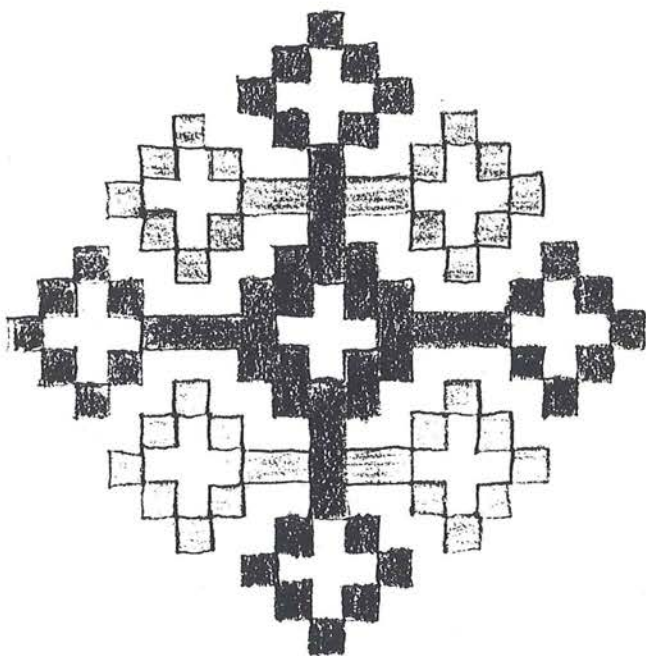
A flower with simplified inner divisions which gives rise to the term "eight-pointed star" is another characteristic Sogn coverlet. Lexow indicates that in the oral tradition the star continues to be called the eight-petal flower. Other patterns found in Sogn include the hodnrose previously mentioned, which becomes a separating pattern for the "kolleroose" or hornless flower. Still another motif is the virgin lily, a stylized treatment sometimes formed into a lily cross and seen on the borders of picture tapestries.

The Celtic knot, an old magic sign frequently carved on boxes and doors as a protection from evil spirits, also appears on Sogn coverlets, but its typical curvilinear loops become squared in its adaptation to the loom. It occurs within the center of the eight-pointed star, as a double knotted form, and in other complex knotted variations. It



Celtic Knot

also is combined with the lily cross to become a so-called nine crosses and a nine flowers motif. It was also found as one large motif in the center of a coverlet.



9-Crosses

Nordhordland coverlets distinguish themselves in two ways, a predominance of reddish-violet and blue colors, and variously woven motifs arranged in horizontal bands. The weaving techniques often included a treadled border ("trobraut" or

"skjirteknabraut"), half-diamond repeats in square weave ("krokarand") or checkered diamond bands ("dobbelt krokarand"), the star motif in square weave, an inlay border ("insmettede") in an inlay technique called "spilebraut", a scissors-like motif done in a tapestry weave ("saksebraut"), and so on. A few coverlets showing primitive figures are judged by Lexow to be from the mid-19th century.

A number of coverlets could not be definitely identified as to time and place. A very simple square pattern was found in Sunnhordland, Nordhordland, Hardanger, Sogn, Sunnfjord, and Sunnmore. A simple triangular pattern as well as a type with a lightning pattern ("lynildteppe") also occurs. He associates with Sunnhordland an eight petal flower coverlet made of coarse material and rather strong colors in which the petals have been flattened at the ends.

Going south, Lexow finds in Ryfylke in Rogaland a predominance of blue and brown and, more distinctive, four-sided borders rather than the top and bottom borders typical farther north. He cites a rosette motif with four triangles and a diagonal cross which he says may be peculiar to Ryfylke. Continuing south to Mandal and Setesdal, he notes coverlets on the whole larger than those in west Norway and made up of two sections woven separately and joined down the center. In addition there are four-sided borders -- or none at all. Colors, he finds, are more varied and of darker shades.

Unlike Wang and Mohr, Lexow devotes some attention to picture tapestries ("billedvev") from western Norway though he recognizes Gudbrandsdal as the original center for these coverlets. He speculates that this technique was introduced earlier by the upper classes but became in the 18th

century a craft of the farmers, where figurative elements gradually turn into stylized decorative motifs; and he uses the Wise and Foolish Virgin coverlets to illustrate this development.

Lexow concludes his article with what he calls a rough attempt at an evaluation of the coverlets from an aesthetic viewpoint. He dismisses the early eight-petalled flower coverlets as too regular and lacking in imagination. He considers the fading of the original colors perhaps fortunate because of the undesirable combination of reddish-violet and yellow. He is less critical of the design and colors used in Hardanger, where he feels both have an excellent effect. He also feels that the later designs from Sogn, including the large star pattern, lily cross, the Celtic knot and its variations, have on the whole a satisfactory decorative appearance. The banded Nordhordland coverlets are rather uniform in design, but he considers the colors their strong point.

Neither Wang nor Lexow make reference to a method of interlock newly discovered in Vest-Agder square weave coverlets by Anne Kjellberg and discussed by her in a By og Bygd article. This is being translated now; we will keep you informed when it becomes available.

VIKING SHIP "KNARR"

A Viking ship "Knarr" is being built in Maine. A peaceful, quiet, out of the way place in "Small Point" at the very tip of "Hermit Isle".

In close proximity to Bath, where state of the art military ships are being built today, the combination of past and future

shipbuilding exists. Each construction crew a master in their field.

Hearing rumors from friends and reading local newspaper articles of a ship to be totally hand made, my husband and I visited this small yard Sunday, excited to see a Viking ship in the making. We talked to the boat builder Robert Stevens, who told us he and his crew started to build the boat in July this past year. He said the completion date will be close to April 25th and when I asked why that particular date he said because that is when the original Viking ship was launched. The wood is still green, some only 3 weeks cut so he was anxious to complete the ship and get it into the water before it starts to check. We asked about the sails, who was making them and mentioned the article in the "Norwegian Textile Letter" the story of the "Square Sails of Wool" and "The story of a woollen sail" by Amy Lightfoot. He was very interested in hearing more about the woollen sails and asked if I might get him a copy of this article.

Last spring he visited Norway and Denmark studying the ships in museums along the coasts and brought back many books and articles on Scandinavian shipbuilding. His only drawback is that he can't read the books and using a dictionary was useless because the terminology used in those days has changed significantly today.

We left feeling real excited that a Viking ship was being built in Maine and said we would return with information on the woollen sails. We hope to see it launched in April and will send you a conclusion of this marvelous adventure.

Esther Sharrigan

Vesterheim Museum Bibliography - Marta Hoffmann

Marta Hoffmann. **ROKK OG SPINNING I TUKT- OG MANUFAKTURHUSENE.** By og Bygd 1943, pp. 9-26. Spinning wheels and spinning in prisons. DL421 .N67 B9

Marta Hoffmann. **OM DYMAGERE OG TØYMAGERE OG REDSKAPENE DERES.** By og Bygd 1945, pp. 113-134. Fabric manufacturing equipment and processes. DL421 .N67 B9

Marta Hoffmann. **EN GRUPPE VEVSTOLER PA VESTLANDET.** Oslo: Norsk Folkemuseum. 1958. 185 pp. Discussion of early west coast Norwegian upright looms. TT850 .H6G78

Marta Hoffmann. **FRØKEN KRISTIANE FRISAKS PATENTEREDE OPSTADVÆV OG ANDRE BILLEDVEVSTOLER FRA TIDEN FØR SISTE ÅRHUNDREDSKIFTE.** By og Bygd 1962, pp. 123-132. Kristiane Frisaks's patented vertical tapestry looms. DL421 .N67 B9

Marta Hoffmann. **9000 ÅR GAMMEL VEV-TYPE I BRUK I NORGE.** Forskningsnytt 1963, pp. 7-11. General article on warp weighted looms. TT848 .G6 A8

Marta Hoffmann. **1880-ÅRENES NYE BILLEDVEV I NORGE.** Vestlandske Kunstindustrimuseums Årbok offprint 1963-1968. 39 pp. Revival of 17th c. tapestry tradition in the 20th c. NK3060 .H647

Marta Hoffmann. **TEKSTILARBEID.** Oslo: University of Oslo. 1972. 15 pp. Drawings of textile tools and brief explanations of basic textile techniques. NK3260 .H634 T44

Marta Hoffmann and Harold B. Burnham. **PREHISTORY OF TEXTILES IN THE OLD WORLD.** Viking 1973, pp. 49-76. Includes fibers, weave structures, and looms. NK8998 .H63 P73

Marta Hoffmann. **EN NORDLANDSK RYE FRA 1681.** By og Bygd 1973, pp. 9-16. Rya from Nordland with a date of 1681 woven in. DL421 .N67 B9

Marta Hoffmann. **THE WARP-WEIGHTED LOOM.** Oslo: Universitetsforlaget. 1974. 425 pp. The loom in classical antiquity, northern and western Europe, and as it survives in Scandinavia today. TS1493 .H64

Marta Hoffmann. **GRENEVEVING I MANNDALLEN: EN LEVENDE TRADISJON MED RØTTER I FORHISTORISK TID.** By og Bygd 1977, pp. 123-140. Sami *grener* on warp-weighted looms. German summary. DL421 .N67 B9

Irene Emery, ed. **LOOMS AND THEIR PRODUCTS.** Washington, D.C.: The Textile Museum. 1977. 314 pp. Proceedings of a roundtable held at The Textile Museum. Includes two papers by Marta Hoffmann: "Looms of the Old World" pp. 13-18 and "Old European Looms" pp. 19-26. TT848 .I66

Mary Mikelsen. **GRENEVEVING: EN LEVENDE TRADISJON I MANNDALLEN.** By og Bygd, 1983-1984, pp. 179-184. Marta Hoffmann's work in Troms with *grene* weavers. Engl. summ. DL421 .N67 B9

Vesterheim Museum Bibliography - Scandinavian Bandweaving

BAND PÅ MÅNGA SÄTT. Västerås, Sweden: ICA. 1980. 108 pp. Traditional and contemporary inkle, rigid heddle, card, and plaited bands. Drafts and color photos. Swedish. TT848 .B36

Torbjörg Bitustøl. **VÄVA I BANDGRIND.** Stockholm: LTs. 1968. 63 pp. Band weaving with rigid heddles. Swedish. TT848 .B58

Torbjörg Bitustøl. **VI VEVER BAND.** Oslo: Ernst Mortensens. 1966. 51 pp. Band weaving with rigid heddles. TT848 .B58

Inger Lise Christie. **DÅPSLINDER FRA ØSTERDALEN.** By og Bygd 1979-80, pp. 115-149. Ten swaddling bands from Østerdalen, some with woven initials and dates. Engl. summ. DL421 .N67 B9

Inger Lise Christie. **SPEBARN I "LINDE OG REIV."** By og Bygd 1981-82, pp. 5-42. Babies in swaddling clothes - comparison of European and Norwegian traditions. Discussion of woven bands and how they were used. Engl. summ. DL421 .N67 B9

Inger Lise Christie. **BRIKKEVEVDE BÅND I NORGE.** By og Bygd 1983-4, pp. 55-94. A comprehensive history of Norwegian card weaving. Engl. summ. DL421 .N67 B9

Torbjörg Gauslaa. **EIN TEKSTILSKATT I NORD-ØSTERDALEN.** Nord-Østerdalen Årbok 1985, pp. 7-33. Historic examples of pillow covers and coverlets made of pattern-woven bands sewn together. DL576 .N77 O8

Torbjörg Gauslaa. **GAMLE BANDGRINDER MED TO OG TRE HOLRADER.** Nord-Østerdalen Årbok 1985, pp. 34-38. Old rigid heddles with two or three sets of holes. DL576 .N77 O8

Margrethe Hald. **BRIKVÆVNING.** Copenhagen: Gyldendal. 1932. 42 pp. Complete coverage of the Scandinavian method of card weaving with descriptions of several variations. Danish. TT848 .H34 B745

Margrethe Hald. **FLETTEDE BAAND OG SNORE.** Copenhagen: Glydendal. 1975. 51 pp. Ten types of non-woven (plaited, twined, knotted) bands. Good illustrations. Danish. TT848 .H342 F53

Anny Haugen. **SAMISK BÅNDVEVNAD FRA FINNMARK.** Stavanger: Dreyers Grafiske Anstalt. 1946. 10 pp. Packet with 8 Sami (Lápp) band weaving patterns. Large color photos. TT848 .H38

Lila Nelson. **USING THE NORWEGIAN CRADLE LOOM.** Decorah, IA: Vesterheim Museum. On using this loom from southern Norway for geometric tapestry bands. Includes information for picture tapestry, monk's belt, and soumak bands. TT848 .N44

Aagot Noss. **BANDLAGING.** By og Bygd 1966, pp. 111-142. Thorough discussion of band making in Norway on: cards, rigid heddle looms, cradle looms, upright looms. Engl. summary. DL421 .N67 B9

Liv Trotzig and Astrid Axelsson. **BAND.** Västerås, Sweden: ICA. 1958. 147 pp. Rigid heddle, card, and inkle loom weaving plus several plaited bands. Swedish. TT848 .T733

CONFERENCE UPDATE - A to Z

Laurann Gilbertson, Vesterheim

Accommodations A block of rooms is reserved at the Super 8 Motel. Rooms start at \$32 for a single and include a continental breakfast. Call them at (319)283-8771 and be sure to tell them that you are with the weaving conference. Other motels in Decorah: Heartland Inn 382-2269, Villager Lodge (formerly Cliff House) 382-4241. Bed & Breakfasts: Broadway B & B 382-2329, Montgomery Mansion 382-5088. Campground 382-4518. If you have trouble finding housing, please call Vesterheim at (319)382-9681 for assistance.

Conference Registration In May you will receive the form to register for the conference. The fee will be about \$60 for Norwegian Breakfast Club members. The fee includes a gallery reception on Thursday evening; two lunches; four refreshment breaks; a guided tour of Vesterheim's exhibits, conservation lab, and storage; and a packet with summaries of the days' presentations. The cost for the breakfast banquet will be separate so you may feel free to invite your spouse or friends to join you for the traditional Norwegian buffet.

Meals Lunch on Friday and Saturday is included in your conference fee. You are on your own for supper. There are several restaurants near the museum including a 1950s-style diner and an Italian restaurant that serves Decorah's favorite pizza. There is a Chinese restaurant and an American restaurant next to the Super 8 Motel.

Natural Beauty Decorah is located in the only part of Iowa that was not touched by glaciers. Rolling, wooded hills and limestone cliffs characterize the landscape. You'll find some gorgeous views from Phelps's Park and Palisade Park. It is a short walk from the museum to Phelps's Park (although it is all up-hill) or to Dunning's Spring Park (no hills) to see the lovely waterfall.

Shopping Vesterheim Museum has a large gift shop with a nice selection of textile books, jewelry, sweaters, and gifts. You'll find the weaving exhibition catalog here too. A coupon for 10% off the price of the catalog (for non-members of the museum) will be tucked into your registration packet. Down the street, Vanberia has European gifts, china, and needlework supplies. Stop into Agora for prints, pottery, and jewelry made by local artists.

Transportation If you are planning to fly to the conference, the closest airports are Rochester, Minnesota (be sure to specify Minnesota), and LaCrosse, Wisconsin. You can rent a car for your 1 1/2 hour drive to Decorah. There is a shuttle service to Decorah that leaves the Rochester airport at 9:45 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. The cost is \$16 and reservations are required. The shuttle also goes from the Minneapolis airport to Decorah for \$31. For more information on the shuttle call 1-800-479-7824.

Weather In late October, the weather may be warm and sunny or cool and rainy. Be prepared for anything from 65° to 45° F by dressing in layers. A minimal amount of walking will be required.

Workshops Sign up at any time for one of the seven workshops offered by Vesterheim Museum. There is still room in all of the classes. Looms are provided. Betty Nelson's double weave pick-up class and Betty Johannesen's *dansk brogd* class will be using Macomber jack looms. Syvilla Bolson and Jan Mostrom's *rutevev* class and Lila Nelson's class on Vestfold technique will use tapestry looms.

BOOK REVIEW

From Fiber to Cloth, Textile Tools and Implements and their Use in Norwegian Tradition is the translation of the title of Marta Hoffman's book, *Fra fiber til toy* (Lanbruksforlaget A/S, 1991). When I first heard about it, I wondered if I should invest in a book in a language I could not read. But in the end I decided that the pictures would probably make it worth while. To my delight the book has English captions on the many photographs and an English summary at the end.

My first reaction was to hunt up a Norwegian dictionary at the library. But I found that with the English captions I could make intuitive guesses about the meaning of words. Once I figured out that **hjulrokk** or **rokkehjui** is a spinning wheel, things became fairly straightforward. An **oppstadrokk** is a vertical spinning wheel used on the farms, which dates from later than horizontal wheels with slanted tables (p. 89). A beautiful vertical wheel made of mahogany with brass details is shown. On the facing page is a photograph from the 1860s showing an old woman spinning on a similar, even more ornately decorated, wheel. She died in 1867 (pp.90-91). **Dobbeltrokk** is clearly a double wheel or one with two bobbin/flyer units (p.93).

The English captions are not always as detailed as the Norwegian, but you can easily work out some of what is missing. For one thing, they do not repeat the location of the wheels, such as the Norsk Folkemuseum. Sometimes you gain more information. On page 81 is a picture of the popular double-table wheel. The Norwegian tells us that this is a spinning wheel from Ostfold dated 1827. The English tells us that it seems to have its origin and distribution in the North around 1800, perhaps invented in Denmark.

Ironically, of the numerous examples of double-table wheels in the book, the fanciest version, with the upper table slanted, is in a picture illustrating a bobbin holder (p.171).

Over the years I have heard of Marta Hoffman's book about warp-weighted looms. It is considered the definitive work on this ancient form of loom that was used by Scandinavian women into this century. In this new book, interspersed between descriptions of wheels and looms are sections labeled by location and date with photographs showing women spinning or weaving. Over a forty year period Hoffman looked for old people, usually in rural areas, who still knew how to operate "the mute tools in the museums". In several cases she was able to find women who still worked in the old tradition or had done so when they were young. "They taught me their skills and let me document the work in photos and partly on films" (p. 205). The aim of her book is to communicate this information. This is exactly the kind of thing I love -- the anthropology of textiles.

Because these old techniques were carried on as "home crafts", the photographs show the women working in their home, reeling yarn from a wheel next to a bed, sitting and spinning in front of a sink. These were real people.

The photographs that fascinated me the most are the ones showing a woman spinning on a great wheel, **skottrokk**, while sitting down. The photos were taken in 1942 on a farm near Oslo. The Norwegian tells us that her name was Anne Grimsrud and she lived in Ski i Akershus. The English says that she "had always used this wheel. She had learned spinning from her mother who had learned it from **her** mother" (p.71). This horizontal spindle wheel has legs and the

table is not that long. The drive wheel consists of two thin parallel rims laced together. What is really neat is that this wheel is identical to the one in the painting of a Swedish lady by Pehr Hillestrom from about 1775 (p.74)! It is also shown in Baines's book on page 52.

There is a tantalizing comment in the caption under the double bobbin/flyer wheel. It says that this wheel was invented by a German, Alois Mager, and introduced into Norway from Sweden around 1850. Here is yet another subject to explore.

I would love to see this book fully translated into English. But I don't know how soon this is likely to happen. Although it is somewhat frustrating, I still think one can learn a lot from it, especially if you are also a weaver.

Fra fiber til toy is available from Norsk Fjord Fiber, P.O. Box 271, Lexington, GA 30648. 706-743-5120. \$49 + \$3.

This review first appeared in **The Spinning Wheel Sleuth** #14 October 1996. Reprinted with permission of the author.

RAGNA BREIVIK TAPESTRIES

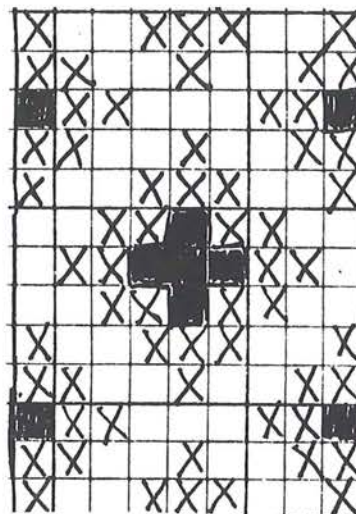
Several years ago I saw the wonderful Ragna Breivik tapestries Jan Mostrom wrote about. Although the subject matter is very Norwegian, they are quite different from the Norwegian tapestry tradition on two counts. Breivik used cheviot fleece instead of spælsau so she got a more matte effect, and she dyed in the fleece and could card more subtle color blendings into her yarn than is possible when the yarn is dyed after spinning. These factors combined to make a much softer, more muted effect in her tapestries. Also she used an interlock (slynge)

technique, rather than slit tapestry or hakke technique, to get softer lines.

Norma Smayda

FOR THE LOOM

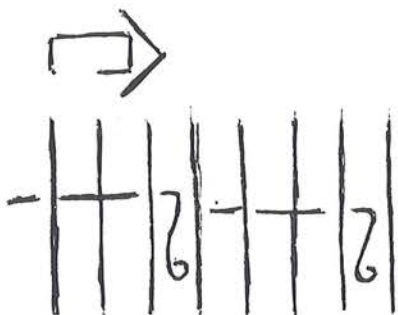
RUTEÅKLE (Square weave coverlet) The technique RUTEVEV is a geometric weft-faced tapestry technique traditionally used on the west coast of Norway to weave coverlets.



Suggested warp: 12/6 cotton fiskgarn set at 7.5 epi. Weft: Rauma Prydvevgarn Spælsau, 2 tr., 3 colors made into butterflies. Use tapestry frame or two shaft loom. Directions can be adapted for either. Design shown has 36 warp ends, 9 blocks with 4 warp ends to equal one block.

Row 1: Make five butterflies in colors chosen to represent the design. Begin on the left with the left end warp in the UP position. each butterfly is woven across the loom from left to right in the order dictated by the graph. When starting a new block, always start from left to right (the non-interlocking row). When doing the first row of a new block, be sure to count warp ends so that one color is not carried over too many warps. It is easy to carry threads too

far because at the point of color change, it always appears as if 2 warp threads are left uncovered by the weft. This gets taken care of in the next row (the interlocking row).



Row 2: Begin at the right. The first color is woven and twisted around the new color. Pull towards the new block when coming from right to left. This helps to keep the point of interlocking straight and in a vertical line. The actual interlocking takes place BETWEEN TWO WARP ENDS.

The procedure of left to right and right to left is repeated until an entire square of color has been formed. When the blocks are squared, break off the butterflies and leave an end long enough to be threaded into a tapestry needle for the finishing work when the åkle is woven.

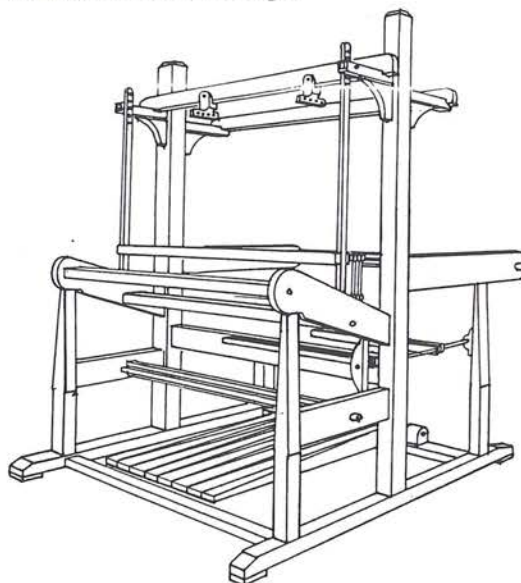
Follow the design and use new butterflies for each block. This single interlocking method makes the tapestry reversible.

Syvilla Tweed Bolson

BUILDING A SKILLBRAGD LOOM

Betty's first post retirement request was for a loom suitable for Skillbragd. It sounded like an excellent way to break the ties to my 38 year career at Bendix / Allied Signal.

For a starting point I used the plans for the Danish loom from Weaving with Foot Powered Looms by Edward F. Worst, Dover Publications. I built it fairly close to those plans, with exceptions to accommodate my inability to do large turnings and in the use of parts on hand. I made provision for the four front shafts, but added a bracket for the two tabby shafts to the back of the castle. I also made pulleys and "horses" (balance levers) for the front shafts expecting it to be a counterbalanced design.



When the loom was completed the first attempt to treadle, without a warp in place, showed that the shafts were totally unstable. They would find equilibrium with the shafts pulled down to any crazy angle that was comfortable for them. Betty then explained that skillbragd requires elastic suspended shafts anyway, so I abandoned any efforts to get the counterbalance to work. The shafts must be able to be lowered independently for skillbragd. The elastic suspension was the configuration on which she had learned skillbragd in Voss, Norway..

It took six months to complete the loom to this first design level. The first warp was really scary. The tabby worked fine, but

when the front shafts with long-eyed heddles were lowered, the shed collapsed. The tension from the reverse action of the long eye heddles pulled down the back shafts and all the threads went slack. The first experiments didn't help at all and we really wondered what monster we had created. We finally realized it was a matter of raising the back shafts to keep enough tension to maintain stability.

Another six months passed before Betty had the courage to complete her first piece of skillbragd at home. Although the first piece was a handsome success, the shed was pretty skimpy requiring a careful shuttle pass for each weft thread. This resulted in the next revision to the loom. I made longer back beam side rails, to position the back / warp beam 6 inches further to the rear.

Material used for the loom was a mix of hardwoods. I used poplar for the 2x2 members of the side frame and the treadles, and birch and maple for cross-members and the wide side pieces. I had a ratchet for the warp beam, a friction brake for the cloth beam, the cloth beam, knee beam, breast beam and other hardware salvaged from looms that had outlived their usefulness. The back / warp beam I built up as three layers to replicate the octagonal cross-section of the cloth beam.

Don Johannesen

CLASSIFIEDS

A set of plans has been created for the skillbragd loom. They are available to anyone interested for a \$3.00 mailing and handling charge. Contact: Don Johannesen 51577 Bridgewater Ct So Bend, IN 46637

USED LOOM WANTED Would like to buy a 54" to 60" 8-shaft Glimåkra loom

together with bench, reeds etc. Contact: Judy Lien, Rt 1 Box 364, Portugal Cove NF. CANADA A0A 3K0

FOR SALE "Norwegian Princess" spinning wheel Contact: Mary Skoy, 7200 York Ave. So. #316, Edina MN 55435

TWEEDS and FLEECE features Norwegian yarns including Raumagarn Spælsau in several weights, Roros-Tweed Billedvevgarn, Strikkegarn and knitting patterns. For more information contact Syvilla Tweed Bolson, 512 Locust Rd., Decorah IA 52101-1002, 319-382-3711. e-mail smtweed@salamander.com.

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Fiber Arts Workshops 1997

**Vesterheim Handverk Skole
& Akedemi**

(Vesterheim Handwork School and Academy)

Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum
Decorah, Iowa

*With special workshops for
the Norwegian Breakfast Club's
Conference on Norwegian Woven Textiles
October 24-25, 1997

VESTERHEIM HANDVERK SKOLE & AKEDEMI

(Vesterheim Handwork School and Academy)

Workshops held before the Conference on Norwegian Woven Textiles

SYVILLA TWEED BOLSON and JAN MOSTROM. **RUTEVEV**. Tues., Oct. 21, 8:30 a.m. through Thurs., Oct. 23, 4:00 p.m. Rutevev is a geometric tapestry technique traditionally used for coverlets on the west coast of Norway. Students will learn the basic weave and several border techniques. Bolson, who runs a Norwegian yarn business in Decorah, Iowa, has taught classes on Norwegian weaving techniques at the Midwest Weavers Conference. Mostrom has taught weaving and fiber arts at the Minnetonka Center for the Arts. One of her rutevev wall hangings is traveling with the exhibit, "Norwegian Folk Art: The Migration of a Tradition." (Materials fee: \$20). \$70.00. Vesterheim Members: \$66.50.

KAREN CASSELMAN. **LICHEN DYES**. Tues., Oct. 21, 8:30 a.m. through Thurs., Oct. 23, 4:00 p.m. Casselman is a dyer, weaver, and researcher from Nova Scotia, Canada. She has lectured and published extensively on Norwegian dyes made from lichens. Dye-making sessions will alternate with slides and discussions that explore the famous Norwegian lichen dye, *korkje*; medieval *orchil*; and an obscure 18th century Scandinavian dye that yields an ephemeral blue. The class is designed for intermediate to advanced fiber workers who desire an historical context for lichen dyes. Held at Jacobson Farmstead. (Materials fee: approx. \$20). \$70.00. Vesterheim Members: \$66.50.

INGE DAM. **TABLET WEAVING AND BROCADING**. Tues., Oct. 21, 8:30 a.m. through Thurs., Oct. 23, 4:00 p.m. Dam, a native of Denmark, has a special interest in Iron Age textiles. She holds Master Weaver status with the Ontario Handweavers and Spinners and has most recently taught at Convergence '96. This intermediate class will explore the tablet woven bands used as decorative borders in northern Europe as far back as the Viking period. After learning two basic ground weaves, students will learn to design and execute brocading patterns. (Materials fee: approx. \$10). \$70.00 Vesterheim Members: \$66.50.

BETTY NELSON. **DOUBLE WEAVE PICK-UP**. Tues., Oct. 21, 8:30 a.m. through Thurs., Oct. 23, 4:00 p.m. Nelson has studied both reversible and non-reversible double weave pick-up techniques with several teachers from Norway. Her reversible double weave hangings have been published in several magazines and one piece is currently touring with "The Migration of a Tradition" exhibit. In this class, she will teach the reversible double weave technique with an emphasis on pattern design. (Materials fee: approx. \$15). \$70.00. Vesterheim Members: \$66.50.

Workshops held after the Conference on Norwegian Woven Textiles

SARA KADOLPH. TEXTILE CONSERVATION. Sun., Oct. 26, 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. An associate professor of textiles and clothing at Iowa State University, Kadolph teaches conservation, textile science, and quality assurance. In this hands-on workshop, students will learn how to evaluate, clean, and store their own heirloom textiles. Also included are discussions of the two major approaches to conservation: intervention and prevention, and a tour of Vesterheim's conservation facilities. (Materials fee: \$5). \$23.00. Vesterheim Members: \$21.75.

BETTY JOHANNESSEN. DANSK BROGD. Sun., Oct. 26, 8:30 a.m. through Tues., Oct. 28, 4:00 p.m. Johannesen is a 1995 Vesterheim Gold Medal winner and has studied with many teachers in Norway and the U.S. She is currently teaching weaving at the South Bend Regional Museum of Art in Indiana. Working from photographs of Norwegian museum examples, students will design and weave a piece using *dansk brogd*, or bound weave pick-up. Students should have a working knowledge of *krokbragd*. (Materials fee: \$5). \$70.00. Vesterheim Members: \$66.50.

LILA NELSON. VESTFOLD TECHNIQUE. Sun., Oct. 26, 8:30 a.m. through Tues., Oct. 28, 4:00 p.m. Nelson has long specialized in Norwegian weaving techniques and has taught extensively throughout the country. She is recently retired as curator of textiles and registrar at Vesterheim. This technique, from the southern coast of Norway, is characterized by colorful patterns that are laid-in over tabby weave. (Materials fee: approx. \$10). \$70.00. Vesterheim Members: \$66.50.

Additional Fiber Arts Workshops In 1997

ANNE HOLDEN. TAPESTRY WEAVING. Sat., July 19, 8:30 a.m. through Wed., July 23, 4:30 p.m. Born in Scotland, but living in Valdres, Norway for over 20 years, Holden has been a professional weaver for many years. She returns to Vesterheim for the second time and her expertise and excellent command of English make her a popular teacher among students. At Jacobson Farmstead. \$130.00. Vesterheim Members: \$123.50.

ANNE HOLDEN. TRADITIONAL NORWEGIAN FLOOR LOOM WEAVES. Mon., July 28, 8:30 a.m. through Fri., Aug. 1, 4:30 p.m. In addition to weaving on the small jack looms, this course will also show students how to set up the big, old looms to weave the Valdres *kristentepp*e (christening blanket). At Jacobson Farmstead. \$130.00. Vesterheim Members: \$123.50.

GRACE RIKANSRUD. INSTRUCTION IN HARDANGERSØM. Sat., Aug. 2, 8:30 a.m. through Mon., Aug. 4, 4:00 p.m. Rikansrud is established as a major authority in America on traditional Norwegian embroidery techniques. She has taught and demonstrated throughout the United States and Norway. \$50.00. Vesterheim Members: \$47.50.

ARNHILD HILLESLAND. KNITTING A SWEATER. Sat., Sept. 20, 8:30 a.m. through Sun., Sept. 21, 4:00 p.m. Born and raised in Oslo, and now living in Ames, Iowa, Hillesland has a Ph.D. in Norwegian Language. In the past decade, she has turned to her lifelong love of knitting for her livelihood. She has taught and demonstrated knitting both in the U.S. and Norway. \$45.00. Vesterheim Members: \$42.50.

REGISTRATION: A \$40 reservation deposit is required for each class. Members of Vesterheim Museum receive a 5% discount on classes. THE BALANCE OF TUITION MUST BE PAID TWO WEEKS PRIOR TO THE FIRST DAY OF CLASS. The materials fee will be paid directly to the teacher at the end of class. Payment can be made by Visa, Mastercard, Discover, personal check, cash, or postal money order. Payments must be made in U.S. funds. Make checks payable to Vesterheim. All reservations are confirmed by mail and handled on a first-come, first-served basis. RESERVATIONS ARE NOT FIRM UNTIL THE DEPOSIT HAS BEEN MADE. Send registration to Vesterheim, 501 W. Water St., Decorah, IA 52101. Vesterheim also offers classes in rosemaling, woodcarving, knifemaking, and rug hooking. For more information call the main office at (319)382-9681.

CANCELLATION: Fifty percent of each deposit will be refunded for cancellations made 45 days prior to the beginning of class. No refund for later cancellations. If a class is canceled by the museum, a full refund will be made.

CLASS REGISTRATION

Name _____ Address _____

City, State, Zip _____ Phone (Day) _____

Vesterheim member? yes no

Please enroll me in the following class(es):

Name of Class	Date	Teacher	Fee	Deposit
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Name of Class	Date	Teacher	Fee	Deposit
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Name of Class	Date	Teacher	Fee	Deposit
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Amount paid now for deposit \$ _____

*Amount remaining \$ _____

*This amount is due two weeks prior to the start of class.

Charge my credit card # _____ Exp. date _____

Checks payable to Vesterheim Museum.

Register by phone with a credit card: (319)382-9681

Mail form to: Handverk Skole, Vesterheim Museum, 502 W. Water St., Decorah, IA 52101