

# NORWEGIAN TEXTILE LETTER

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## NORWEGIAN KORKJE: MYTH AND REALITY

*By Karen Diadick Casselman*

Dagmar Lunde was (and may still be) a Norwegian writer whose specialty is natural dyes. That is all I know about her except for two other details: one is that she lived in Oslo; the other is that in 1976 she published a study on korkje (pronounced *core' -sha*)<sup>1</sup> Korkje is an ammonia-method (often abbreviated as AM) vat lichen dye based on *Ochrolechia tartarea* (Och'-ro-leck-e-ah tar-tear'-e-ah) and, in some cases, on lesser amounts of related lichens. Korkje was an important economic commodity from the 14<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, more recently korkje has acquired a reputation for poor lightfastness. My research shows that there is reason to question the myth that korkje is an inferior dye, an assumption that can be traced directly to Lunde's work. One might suppose that Lunde did her korkje study, and then moved on; but the impact of korkje's reputation for fading has lingered for twenty years. It has affected how non-dyers perceive all lichen dyes and how dyers evaluate AM dyes; but more to the point, Lunde's opinion of korkje raises problems of veracity for authors who must include korkje in their own textile studies.

I used to wonder why people sought *me* for answers about a Norwegian dye. True I am a dyer and a researcher, yes; but a Nova Scotian, thousands of miles from Norway and for that matter, from other centres of Norwegian textile activity. At first I assumed it was due to my work with Celtic lichen dyes that contain the same lichens.<sup>2</sup> But after five years of study and a trip to Norway I discovered another reason why so many questions came to me. There appears to be a conspicuous lack of analysis on the subject of korkje, and *apparently* there are few practitioners in Norway today.<sup>3</sup> Textile curators, authors and conservators often need an opinion on korkje. I am delighted to help. Thus unraveling the mystery surrounding korkje has become one of my primary interests thanks to these queries from far and wide. Korkje research also dovetails with my work as a lichenologist: craft, science and history, a perfect blend for research. But if I were to answer questions about korkje accurately, and if my interpretation were to be valid, I had to know how to make the dye.

In 1992 I was invited to Sweden to give a paper on historical lichen dyes.<sup>4</sup> After the conference my plan was to find someone who had experience with korkje, and ask them to tutor me. None of the 200 lichenologists at the conference (including a 50 person delegation from Norway) could give any hope that I would find an actual korkje

*practitioner*. Resigned to the idea of self-instruction, I gathered a prudent amount of *Ochrolechia tartarea* on a field trip (enough to stuff into a camera bag), and prepared to return to Nova Scotia to begin my experiments. But one night before we left Sweden Dr. Hildur Krog of Oslo thrust a piece of paper in my hand and gave me a new mission: "You cannot go home before you see this woman," she said.

All we had was a phone number but the woman I called, Gerd Mari Lye, said she would meet the overnight train. Bleary-eyed but hopeful I was relieved to see a woman waving a tiny Canadian flag the next morning as the train pulled into Ås. Today a student of Norwegian costume and a fine botanical illustrator, Gerd Mari and her husband Kåre, a distinguished botanist, had done an exhaustive study of lichen dyes in the 1970s.<sup>5</sup> Here was my chance to talk to a practitioner about korkje! The Lyes did so many experiments on the tinctorial properties of lichens that Gerd Mari's dining room table was piled high with a stunning array of colours; ochre, rust, rich brown, taupe, green, yellow-orange, lemon yellow, bronze and burnished gold; every colour in the rainbow *except* korkje.<sup>6</sup> When I asked why there were no reds and purples, Gerd Mari replied pragmatically, "Because korkje, our national lichen dye, fades so badly, what would be the point? It has a long history but it's not practical."

Was *this* the legacy of Lunde's famous korkje study? If only a handful of writers made reference to Lunde's opinion, it would not matter. That, however, is not the case. Lunde's 1976 korkje study is included in the bibliography of books written in English,

Danish, Færoese, Finnish, French, German, Japanese, Norwegian, Spanish and Swedish. Lunde's korkje experiments are included in studies in archaeology, costume, dyeing, textile history, weaving, Norwegian culture and folklore, natural history and European trade. I have found Lunde's name in books about lichens, medieval industry, and Nordic farming and agriculture. Analysis and interpretation was clearly required if I were to grasp the basis of Lunde's negative opinion of korkje, and offer a new analysis.

Over wonderful food and conversation we discussed dyes and dyeing and Gerd Mari also mentioned to me a woman by the name of Reidun Almedal, a pharmacist, who was very interested in korkje in the 1980s. And it is that connection that enabled me to eventually interpret Lunde's well-known study of korkje.<sup>6</sup> Reidun herself had made the dye. Like Gerd Mari and like Lunde, Reidun was of the opinion (and it must be stated in all fairness, *still is*) that despite its rich history and colourful past, korkje is beautiful but fugitive. I was attending a conference in the USA when Gerd Mari came to Canada to visit relatives in Alberta so I did not have the opportunity to return her hospitality. But when Reidun arrived at Cheverie (the village where I live in Nova Scotia) in October 1994, she brought her korkje *samples*. We compared her work with mine. Our colours were certainly similar, but it was clear that I made my korkje differently. For example, I use more than one type of *Ochrolechia* to make korkje; and after dyeing, a delayed rinse (done only after the fibres have dried for 2-3 days) seems to improve fastness. These techniques have helped to confirm my view of korkje as a satisfactory dye. Reidun and I had a different understanding of the chemistry involved, and using more than one species of lichen was my way of

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## VESTFOLDSMETT; NEW INTEREST IN AN OLD TECHNIQUE

*By Lila Nelson*



*VESTFOLD-TEPPE Døyle-teppet*

specialty.<sup>2</sup> Erling Eriksen's 13 page monograph from 1955<sup>3</sup>, which seems to be the major study extant, reveals how much is left to learn. Former curator at the district museum in Tonsberg, he indicates that at an exhibition in 1925, when local people were invited to bring their family pieces, a Mrs. Meyer<sup>4</sup> arrived with two coverlets in an unfamiliar technique. Director Gulliksen asked the Norwegian Handcraft Association to make some copies and the discovery of more coverlets followed, thanks mainly to the interest and hard work of Ragnar Nordby, who was a teacher in Larvik and a member of the Larvik Handcraft Association.

Where, Eriksen asks, did country weavers in Vestfold get the models for these unique tapestries? Norby, Eriksen, and other Norwegian scholars argue that they derive from the Orient, possibly based on the soumak technique; but how they got to Vestfold is unknown. Some consider an impulse from Sweden, where a similar weave ("krabbasnar") had tradition, though that, unlike Vestfoldsmett, often had a linen ground.

A surprising variety of woven bed covers have been a part of the Norwegian folk tradition, but there is an equally surprising dearth of information about them. Their origins, dates, history, the looms on which they were woven, sources of dyes, all are in many cases open to speculation. In fact, disagreement continues about whether some weaving was done by farm women or professionals and even if some types actually ever served as bed covers at all.

Vestfoldsmett<sup>1</sup> is certainly a case in point. Ragnar Nordby, in 1948 one of the first to write about the technique, stated that only 8 or 9 known examples existed and it appeared to be a local

Neither is there a solid basis for dating the coverlets since only one piece, from Svarstad, had the date 1840 actually woven in, and that is presumed to be the last one. The Kunstindustrimuseet example has a partially illegible date 17\_2 which is interpreted as possibly being 1762. There seems to be a general acceptance of their having been produced in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, but proof is lacking. Aase Bay Sjøvold, former textile curator at the Kunstindustrimuseet, speculates that various generations in just one family could have been responsible for the entire output; others say that the work has to have been done at least in part by professionals.

Eriksen points out that none of the coverlets seem to originate along the coast but rather are found inland in Vestfold. He attributes this to economic factors, noting that the inner areas had wider economic distinctions and more defined economic classes. Some farmers developed big farms and in addition made extra money by lumbering. The landowners therefore had two sources of income while the non-land owners might in desperation turn to crafts such as weaving, especially since there was a wealthy class in a position to buy prestigious textiles. On the coastal areas, where farms were smaller and people were either farmers or fishermen, the economic distinctions were less extreme and people were generally satisfactorily situated but were not wealthy enough to be able to afford luxury textiles. Eriksen, by these assumptions, reveals his belief that Vestfoldsmett were considered better than the everyday bed covers.

From my own examination of six Vestfold coverlets, however, I question that they were all made by professionals for a

luxury class. One of them in particular shows the marks of an amateur weaver and several reveal casual and erratic methods of handling the loose pattern threads on the back side. I also wonder if they were not used quite steadily as functional coverlets because three or more show definite evidence along the sides of the wear that comes from frequent handling.

Granting that the inland Vestfold areas were economically open to a weaving industry, this still does not tell us why this particular technique found favor there. Similar questions apply to other areas of the country; for example, we can only speculate why Norwegian folk picture tapestries flourished in Gudbrandsdal and hardly anywhere else for over a hundred years in the 1600s and 1700s. Neither does it tell us from where the style came and what influences were at work in its development.

From the middle 1800s to around 1925, it appears that Vestfoldsmett was largely forgotten. With its surfacing at the Tonsberg exhibition, it begins to show up in altered and greatly simplified forms on objects other than coverlets. It serves as decorative bands on the ends of table runners or in spots of decoration on pillows. The results did not please Ragnar Nordby, who in his 1948 article describes them as a disaster. He calls for a return to the quality of the originals, but he is largely ignored. Modern adaptations have continued to the present day.

#### **Graphed information for coverlets on which I have done sight examination**

Origin indicates where coverlet was located, not necessarily where it was made.

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*Cont'd from Pg 2*

adjusting my technique to account for that difference.

But it is Reidun's translation of Lunde that allowed me *for the first time* to discuss Lunde's findings with someone who had practical experience in making the dye, a researcher's dream! The outcome of the translation – presented as a slide program at the first Conference on Norwegian Woven Textiles at Vesterheim in October 1997 – was as hilarious as it was revealing. How was I to tell them that Lunde came to the conclusion she needed to use more mordant to improve fastness, when mordants are not required to make lichen dyes? Lunde's goal was admirable: to make korkje *herself* so that she could better interpret the red dyes in textiles in the museum's collection. I admit that I have a profound respect for museum personnel who must look for answers where often there are no clearly defined parameters other than a very real, and often immediate, need.

Dagmar Lunde's korkje experiments can best be described as "indefatigable". My heart ached for her as I read what she tried and what did not work. Over and over again she "failed" (to use her own word). "What else to do?" she asks at one point when after repeated attempts to get a purple from korkje she (figuratively speaking) throws her hands in the air when the dye comes out "a dull, dirty brown". Later she speculates: "This trouble I am having must be why korkje fades". And who among us would not have come to a similar conclusion?

With all due respect to Lunde's opinion, my interpretation of Reidun's translation leads me to confirm what Lunde herself suspects: i.e., she began her experiments using the wrong lichens. Thus *the use of*

*the wrong ingredients* is one reason for korkje's allegedly poor reputation for fastness. This is an important detail for contemporary scholars, because *it is Lunde they depend on for the definitive word on the subject*. Another clue to Lunde's self-described failure has to do, in my opinion, with her misunderstanding of the korkje fermentation process. (If processed for too short a time, as in Lunde's case, korkje produces brown instead of red or purple: this is the difference in chemistry I described earlier.) Finally, in desperation, Lunde added mordants to the korkje dye bath, even though none are required. Lacking the knowledge herself, and having no korkje practitioner available to consult, what else could she do but try – in vain – to correct the problem? My interpretation of Lunde's experiments require further exploration in situ; that is, in Norway, using indigenous lichens. And what luck will I have finding a practitioner? Reidun does not know of anyone who makes korkje today, nor does Gerd Mari Lye. Aagot Noss says "they're all gone now." This leaves *me* where it left Lunde, but with one enormous advantage – I can identify the *'the right lichens'* in Norway.

In the meantime, Lunde's disappointing results with korkje prevented two dyers from including it in their study (the Lyes), and affected another researcher's opinion of the dye *before* she began her work (Reidun acknowledges she used Lunde's study and anticipated trouble, from the beginning). Lunde's opinion deserves to be recognized for what it is: an odd sort of legacy, but one that underscores the breadth of her influence. Her experiments motivated me to pose another question: how is it that an inferior dye becomes so important economically?<sup>7</sup> I discovered,

for example, that there were important links between medieval korkje and similar products in use throughout England and Ireland in the same period. These other AM dyes (including archil and cork) were made using the *same lichens* as korkje. Archil and cork had a reputation for depth of colour, brilliance and sheen; they were among the dyes most in demand throughout medieval Europe. This economic perspective also provided me with a broader framework within which to re-examine the myth that korkje fades. I asked myself another question: if korkje is *today* an inferior dye, then where is the basis for the historical korkje, a lichen dye that - according to my data - survived for five hundred years? Was korkje made differently then compared to now? In the 14<sup>th</sup> century korkje rivalled Florentine orchil, a dye about which much has been written, *at the expense*, I argue, of recognizing the trade and manufacture of korkje and other vernacular lichen dyes of northern Europe.<sup>8</sup> By the 18<sup>th</sup> century korkje competed with Scottish cudbear. I have also learned that Norwegian lichens (i.e. *Lasallia* and *Umbilicaria*) were actually shipped to Scotland during the late 18<sup>th</sup> century because the highland supply of *Ochrolechia* (i.e. cudbear) had run out.<sup>9</sup>

If korkje was a satisfactory dyestuff six hundred years ago, and if my korkje experiments have worked, what information are we missing? Is this a case where one person's poor opinion (or should I say two, and include Bremnes in this statement?<sup>10</sup>) has affected everyone else's? Will contemporary authors stop repeating the myth if they learn more about the history of medieval korkje, or read about the Lunde family's lucrative 18<sup>th</sup> century export trade in Norwegian

lichens from Farsund and Flekkefjord"<sup>11</sup> The fact that I became a korkje practitioner is no proof of anything other than my determination to explore the relationship between the myth and the reality. History records korkje as an important and valuable item of trade. This would unlikely be the case if the dye was inferior. My replication of the dye has validated this history, answered my own questions, and also provided a practical framework for my on-going query.

To return to Norway to make korkje *in situ*, using indigenous lichens, and thus draw on observations and experience of others, is my next research goal. This will not necessarily provide all the answers. But it may help me to learn more about Dagmar Lunde; to better understand her korkje interpretation within a cultural context. I do admire her frankness in admitting "failure" (today we would say we had 'disappointing results'), and I respect her desire to preserve korkje as a living tradition. To help to perpetuate an interest in Norway's 'national dye' is the best way I know of to honour Lunde's contribution to dye history.

Many have assisted my korkje studies - in subtle ways they would not themselves recognize - including Gerd Mari Lye, Aagot Noss, Laurann Gilbertson, Lila Nelson and the late Gösta Sandberg. I am indebted to Reidun Almedal and Kay Larson for translation of Lunde and Bremnes, respectively, and I thank Dr. Sara Kadolph and Laurann Gilbertson for helpful comments on this article. Any additional information from readers, about Dagmar Lunde and her life and work, would be appreciated.

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- 3 Høiland, K. 'Laven korkje, *Ochrolechia tartarea* some fargeprodusent.' *Blyttia*. 1983, Vol 41, pp. 17-21. (English abstract.)
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- 6 Casselman, K. 'Scandinavian Dye Studies'. *Ontario Handweavers & Spinners Bulletin*. 1993, Vol 36 (2) pp. 10-13; Vol 36 (3) pp. 5-7,
- 7 -----'. 'Norse lichen dyes'. *Handwoven*. Fall 1996, pp. 38-40.
- 8 See # 3, 6 & 7. See also *Lichen Dyes: A Source Book*. Studio Vista Publications, Cheverie, NS, 1996.
- 9 Bremnes, G. 'Om fargebruk i Døvle-teppet.' *Vestfoldminne Utgitt Av Vestfold Historielag*. 1979, Vol 6, pp. 30-34. (Kay Larson's translation underscores

that Bremnes' poor opinion of korkje ['it fades very quickly'] is attributable to Lunde's earlier study.)

10 See # 9.

## UPDATE – NBClub TEXTILE TOUR TO NORWAY

We have 30 people registered for the tour to Norway this summer, 23 workshop participants and 7 companions. What a fantastic response in such a short time! Everyone who registered should have received confirmation from me by now, either by letter or e-mail. If you sent in your registration but have not received confirmation, please contact Kay Larson at (206) 842-7734. We're looking forward to a great tour this summer!

*Kay Larson*

## NOTES FROM LILA

An NBClub member has been recognized in the winter issue of SHUTTLE, SPINDLE & DYEPOT. Jon Eric Riis' "A Pair of Prickly Pairs: from the American Tapestry Alliance exhibition at Convergence in Atlanta's Fernbank Museum was photographed. One of the Prickly Pairs duo graced the magazine's cover.

Members interested in the tapestry tradition of "billedvev" may wish to know of the 4X BODOGAARD exhibition 16 January – 28 February at the Steensland Art Museum, St. Olaf College, Northfield, MN. It includes the tapestries of billedvev weaver Grete Bodogaard and textile prints of Ingrid Bodogaard in addition to sculpture and paintings by Harald and Oscar Bodogaard.

*Cont'd on Pg 11*

The last listing relates to a coverlet now in the Kunstindustrimuseet in Oslo: The others are in the Tonsberg, Vestfold, museum.

Dovleteppet (the word "teppet" is also used to mean "coverlet")

Size: L. 62 1/2" W. 52 1/2"  
Warp: 2 ply linen ca. 6.40 epi  
Ground weft: ca. 7/2 2 ply wool  
Pattern weft: ground used doubled. some use of thinner wool  
Colors: white, gold-white, yellow, dk blue, lt blue, orange, red, lt beige, dk beige, black sheep, dk green  
No. bands: 10  
Joining bands: diamond, arrow, zigzag inlays bordered by kjerringtenner  
Center joining seam overcast with medium heavy linen

Meyer coverlet

Size: L. 62 1/4" W. 56 1/4"  
Warp: heavy 2 ply linen ca. 6.40 epi  
Ground weft: heavy 2 ply wool, rya type  
Pattern weft: ground used double  
Colors: white, gold, pinkish beige, lt blue, dk blue  
No. bands: 8  
Joining bands: diamond, arrow inlays, kjerringtenner borders  
Center joining seam in running stitch with heavy linen

Sandar coverlet

Size: L. 75 1/2" W. 55"  
Warp: medium heavy 2 ply linen ca. 7 epi  
Ground weft: medium heavy 2 ply wool  
Pattern weft: ground used double  
Colors: white, gold, yellow-gold, dk blue, pink-beige, brown  
No. bands: 12  
Joining bands: three-thread floats with kjerringtenner

Center joining seam in running stitch with medium heavy linen

Stokke coverlet

Size: L. 63" W. 51"  
Warp: 2 ply linen ca. 6.40 epi  
Ground weft: ca. 7/2 2 ply wool  
Pattern weft: ground used double  
Colors: white, gold, grey-green, red, dk blue  
No. bands: 13  
Joining bands: diamond, arrow inlay, kjerringtenner  
Center joining seam in running stitch with linen  
Inscription: embroidered initials ITD

Andebu coverlet

Size: L. 63" W. 53"  
Warp: heavy 2 ply linen ca. 6.40 epi  
Ground weft: heavy 2 ply wool, rya type  
Pattern weft: ground used double. some thinner wool  
Colors: white, gold, 2 shades green, rust red, brown, dk blue  
No. bands: 10  
Joining bands: diamond, arrow, zigzag inlays. kjerringtenner  
Center joining seam in running stitch with linen

AGD coverlet

Size: L. 64" W. 49 1/2"  
Warp: heavy 2 ply linen ca. 6.40 epi  
Ground weft: medium heavy 2 ply wool  
Pattern weft: ground used double. some use of single ply  
Colors: medium gold, dk gold, reddish brown, dk blue, lt blue  
No. bands: 11  
Joining bands: diamond, arrow, zigzag inlays. kjerringtenner borders  
Center joining seam not noted  
Inscription: embroidered initials and date: AG( ? )D 17( 6? )2



Seen only in xeroxed photographs:  
Sverstad coverlet (dated 1840)  
Hoyjord coverlet  
Solum coverlet (at Brekkemuseet)  
Aske coverlet (privately owned)

### Weaving Technique

As noted above, the warp is generally a heavy linen with a sett of 6.40 to 7 ends per inch. The ground is a tightly packed weft-faced plain weave. All sources have taken for granted that the pattern was lain in on the loom although Aase Bay Sjøvold points out that no one knows this for certain. There is, however, no extension of pattern threads going across the center joining seams, one indicator of embroidery. It is also unlikely that thread-count embroidery would be attempted on a tightly packed wool foundation.

All directions state that the technique is done wrong side up using butterflies for the pattern wefts, but again there is no certain proof. In my own experiments, I have worked right side up using a straight length of weft instead of butterflies because 1) there is less chance of error or at least a better chance of spotting errors, and 2) it is preferable when weaving free rather than thread-counted designs and when other techniques are included.

Two shots of foundation weft appeared to be standard between each pattern inlay, although I could not examine the coverlets extensively enough to be sure this was constant. Most pattern floats were over two or over three warps. Patterns requiring longer floats appeared to be done in increments of two or three. Although some sources indicate that longer floats were done in soumak or figure eight fashion, I could not in my

cursory investigation see evidence of this. It appeared that the weaver went over three warps, under two, and so on across the pattern area, then returning to fill in the previously uncovered warps. Any of above three methods, however, would seem to be workable and would look superficially similar when used, as in the case of Vestfoldsmett, in limited fashion.

### Colors

As in aged textiles generally, colors have changed in varying degrees throughout the years, and one can sometimes only surmise what they originally were. Some have faded to a rather non-identifiable grayed tone. In 1979 Gunn Bremnes described tests she had made to determine the original colors of Dovleteppet<sup>5</sup> and she came to the conclusion that they were natural white sheep, pale yellow, darker yellow, golden, orange, beige brown, sharp red, blue, and black. (The colors in Dovleteppet are generally better preserved than in many of the other pieces.) I will not go into the detailed studies with indigo and various plant dyes which Bremnes carried out, but she points to what is evident in most of the coverlets, the predominance of shades of gold and yellow. She mentions that birch trees, common in the area, were widely used to produce yellows. Blues are next in importance, along with natural white and black. Orange-red, pinkish beige and brownish-beige tones are also found, as is a grayed green. Generally, one can say that the colors vary a good deal from one coverlet to another, as do the designs, making for a wide variety of effects. Though the background color usually varies within each band of design, the Svarstad coverlet is said to be on an all-black ground.

## Designs

All of the Vestfoldsmett coverlets have a series of horizontal band, each with a different motif, the total number per coverlet varying from about 8 to 13. These are separated by narrow bands which always include kjerringtenner (two colors alternating on plain weave to produce a toothed effect) and very often inlaid diamonds, arrow, or zigzag forms. The total has been aptly described as continuously varied repetition. Each band is filled with a horizontally repeated motif which is built up of floating pattern wefts. The lines usually move diagonally by one or more threads as the pattern progresses, although some, especially the more geometric motifs, have three repeats before change, giving a block appearance. Ragnar Nordby classifies the major designs as being urns of flowers, and he calls attention to 14 patterns: five with constantly changing lines, five with a primarily block orientation, and four with elaborately ornamented variations. Karin Archer stated that the Aske coverlet was described by its owner Martha Aske as symbolizing the story of life and growth in nature through stylized seeds, growing and blooming flowers, dancing figures, and rain. Other sources, however, question a specific symbolic significance in the motifs.

## **Footnotes**

1. This inlay technique has often been called "Vestfoldteknikk", but that term could be applied to any woven product associated with the province of Vestfold; whereas "Vestfoldsmett", so-called by Stromberg et al in their *NORDISK TEXTILTEKNISK TERMINOLOGI*, refers specifically to an inlay process.

They classify it with the Swedish and Danish "krabbasnar", the Icelandic "skakkaglit", and the Finnish "juoksupujotus", defining them all as a folk type of two-harness brocade or in an older variant a brocade on a twill ground with double threads worked wrong side up.

2. Ragnar Nordby. "Vestfoldteppe" in *Yrke*, No. 2, 1948. pp. 29-33. He does not seem to be aware of one example in the Kunstindustrimuseet in Oslo, (Cat. No. 3781), which I saw in 1984.

3. Erling Eriksen. "Gammel vevkunst i Vestfolds bygder" in *Vestfold Minne* 1955. Translated by Torun Gulliksen 1983.

4. Karin Archer. "De gamle Vestfold Teppene" in *Husflid* No. 3, 1975. Archer refers to the unmarried Meyer sisters from Nottetoy.

5. Gunn Bremnes. "Om fargebruk i 'Dovle-teppet'" in *Vestfold Minne* 1979. pp. 30-34. Translated by Torun Gulliksen.

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TRE TEMPERAMENT I VAV. National museum, Stockholm, 1976. No pagination. Section on Helena Hernmarck. In Swedish with English summary.

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The show will be traveling in the United States this year. The itinerary should be available through Grete Bodogaard, P.O. Box 177, Hermosa, SD 57744.

Oleana, a small textile mill near Bergen, Norway, has received the prestigious "Norwegian Design Award" in 1993 and 1997 for its quality, craftsmanship, and innovative creations. Their designer Solviæg Hisdal is inspired by Norway's folk traditions in her wool sweater, as is Elise Thiis-Evensen in her accessory sterling silver jewelry. The highly regarded creations are sold in many Norstroms as well as in fine boutiques from Maine to Seattle. Oleana seems to have successfully carried the tradition into the present, to, as they say, "reflect the past and anticipate the future."

Our member Caroline Miller from Minneapolis succumbed to cancer on November 23, 1998. Long interested in Norwegian folk tradition and her own Sami heritage, she was on Vesterheim's first weaving workshop in Norway, conducted by Marit Anny Tvenge in Valdres in the early 1970s. She was one of the few people to master and teach nalbinding, the ancient looping technique used in Norway for mittens and socks before the introduction of knitting, and was a skilled spinner, knitter, and dyer as well. The present as well as the past delighted, intrigued, and concerned her; she would constantly surprise one with the breadth of her knowledge and interests.

By Lila Nelson

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***Handweaving in the Norwegian Tradition***  
by Laurann Gilbertson and Carol Colburn

This catalog (30 pp., 18 color ill.), which accompanied the major Vesterheim exhibition in 1997, is available at a special price until April 1st.

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## Norwegian Tapestry Workshops Offered

Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum in Decorah, Iowa, is offering two five-day tapestry workshops in July. Ingebjørg Vaagen of Skien, Norway, will teach *billedvev*, a traditional Norwegian tapestry technique characterized by dovetail or hatched joins. *Billedvev* flourished in the early 16th through early 18th centuries. Most of these old tapestries depict stories from the Bible, such as the parable for the wise and foolish virgins or the Three Kings' adoration of the Christ Child.

Although her day job is as Husflid consultant for Telemark, Vaagen is an accomplished tapestry weaver and gifted teacher. Students in her workshops will learn the basic *billedvev* techniques then weave a tapestry of their own design.

Vaagen's workshops are July 17-21 and July 26-30, 1999. For more information on this or other weaving classes contact Vesterheim at 319-382-9681 or [vesterheim@vesterheim.org](mailto:vesterheim@vesterheim.org).

*Right: Adoration of the Magi tapestry, late 17th c., Vesterheim Museum 95.30.1.*

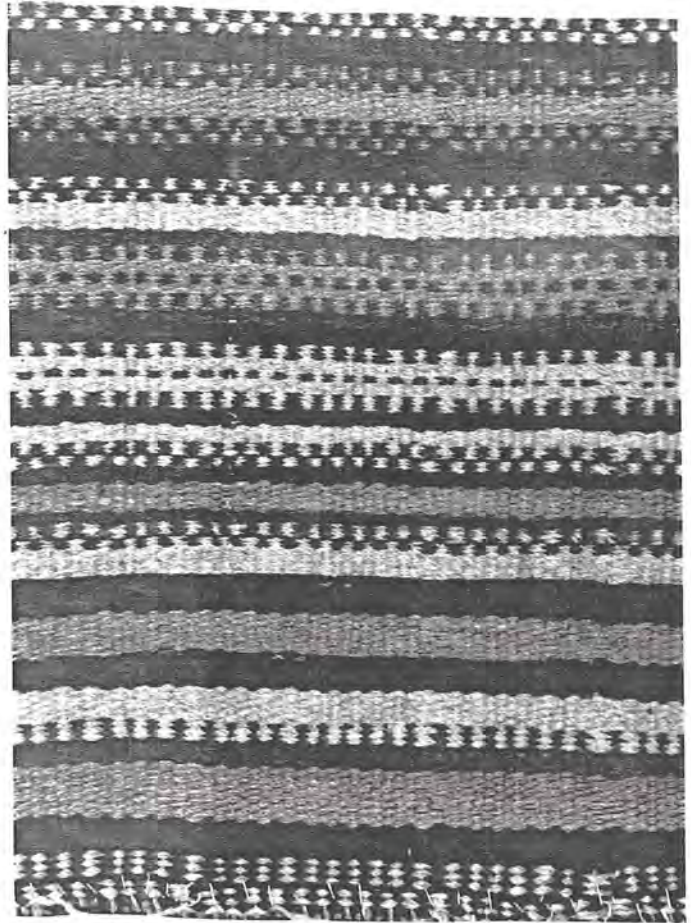


## Mystery Coverlet

Laurann Gilbertson and Syvilla Tweed Bolson  
Decorah, Iowa

This is the final installment of directions for weaving the Stavanger mystery coverlet. Pattern "S" appears at the very end of the coverlet. It is made up of solid stripes and simple two-shuttle bands. The coverlet originally ended with a hem, but that portion of the textile has been damaged. You can finishing your adaptation of the coverlet with a hem or fringe.

In the next Norwegian Textile Letter there will be a color picture of the whole coverlet. Have you been weaving along? Please let us know. We'd like to include a photo of your work in the next newsletter too.



**Mystery Coverlet Workshop**  
August 2-5, 1999  
Vesterheim Museum, Decorah, IA

Syvilla Bolson will teach a workshop in weaving the Mystery Coverlet. Students will use the museum's floor looms to weave a project that incorporates the six pattern bands. You'll use Norwegian wool yarns, and the original coverlet will be available to study. Contact Vesterheim, 319-382-9681, for details.

### Instructions: Pattern S - Stripes Band #12, originally 16" tall

#### Part I-A

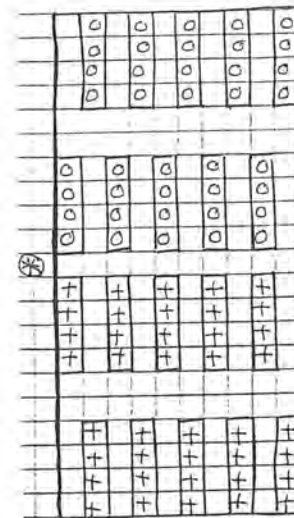
- 1) Weave red and gray teeth (kjerringtenner) in tabby using 4 shots of each color.
- 2) Weave 2 shots of red in tabby; change sheds for each color.
- 3) Weave gold and red teeth. NOTE that gray has changed to gold and red has changed order.
- 4) Weave 14 to 15 shots (1/2") of red in tabby, a repeat of #2 above.
- 5) Weave gold and red teeth in tabby, 4 shots of each color. The order will be the same as in #3.
- 6) Weave 2 shots of red in tabby.
- 7) Weave red and gold teeth in tabby, 4 shots of each. NOTE the placement of colors.
- 8) Weave 14-15 shots (1/2") of gold in tabby.



□ blue  
 ◻ gold  
 ⊠ red  
 ⊡ gray  
 \*Repeat 7-8x  
 ⊕ Repeat 14-15x

**Part I-B**

- 1) Weave blue and gold teeth in tabby, 4 shots of each.
- 2) Weave two shots of blue in tabby.
- 3) Weave gold and blue teeth. NOTE change in color placement.
- 4) Weave 14-15 shots of blue in tabby (1/2")
- 5) Weave gray and blue teeth, 4 shots each. NOTE color change.
- 6) Weave 2 shots blue in tabby.
- 7) Weave blue and gray teeth in tabby, 4 shots of each. NOTE the placement of color.



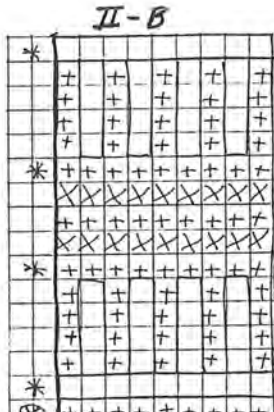
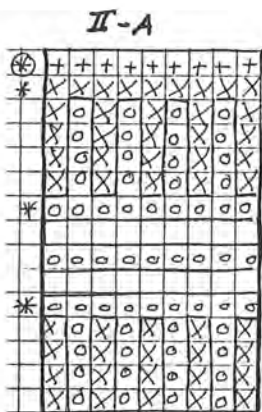
I-B

**Part II-A**

- 1) Weave 14-15 shots (1/2") of gray in tabby.
- 2) Weave 7-8 shots of red in tabby.
- 3) Weave red and gold teeth in tabby, 4 shots each.
- 4) Weave 7-8 shots of gold in tabby.
- 5) Weave one blue shot, one gold shot, one blue shot in tabby.
- 6) weave 7-8 shots of gold in tabby.
- 7) Weave red and gold teeth in tabby, 4 shots each.

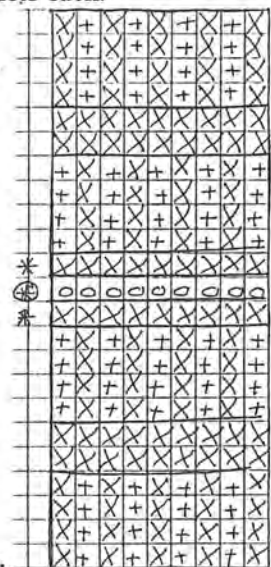
**Part II-B**

- 1) Weave 7-8 shots of blue in tabby.
- 2) Weave gray and blue teeth in tabby, 4 shots each.
- 3) Weave 7-8 shots of gray in tabby.
- 4) Weave one red tabby, one gray tabby, one red tabby.
- 5) Weave 7-8 shots of gray in tabby.
- 6) Weave gray and blue teeth in tabby, 4 shots each.
- 7) Weave 7-8 shots of blue in tabby.
- 8) Weave 14-15 shots (1/2") gray in tabby.



**Part III**

- 1) Weave red and gray teeth in tabby, 4 shots of each color.
- 2) Weave 2 shots of red in tabby.
- 3) Weave gray and re teeth in tabby, 4 shots each. NOTE: Placement of colors.
- 4) Weave 7-8 shots of red in tabby.
- 5) Weave 14-15 shots (1/2") of gold tabby.
- 6) Weave 7-8 shots of red in tabby.
- 7) Weave red and gray teeth in tabby, 4 shots of each color.
- 8) Weave 2 shots of red in tabby.
- 9) Weave gray and red teeth in tabby, 4 shots of each.



III

**Part IV**

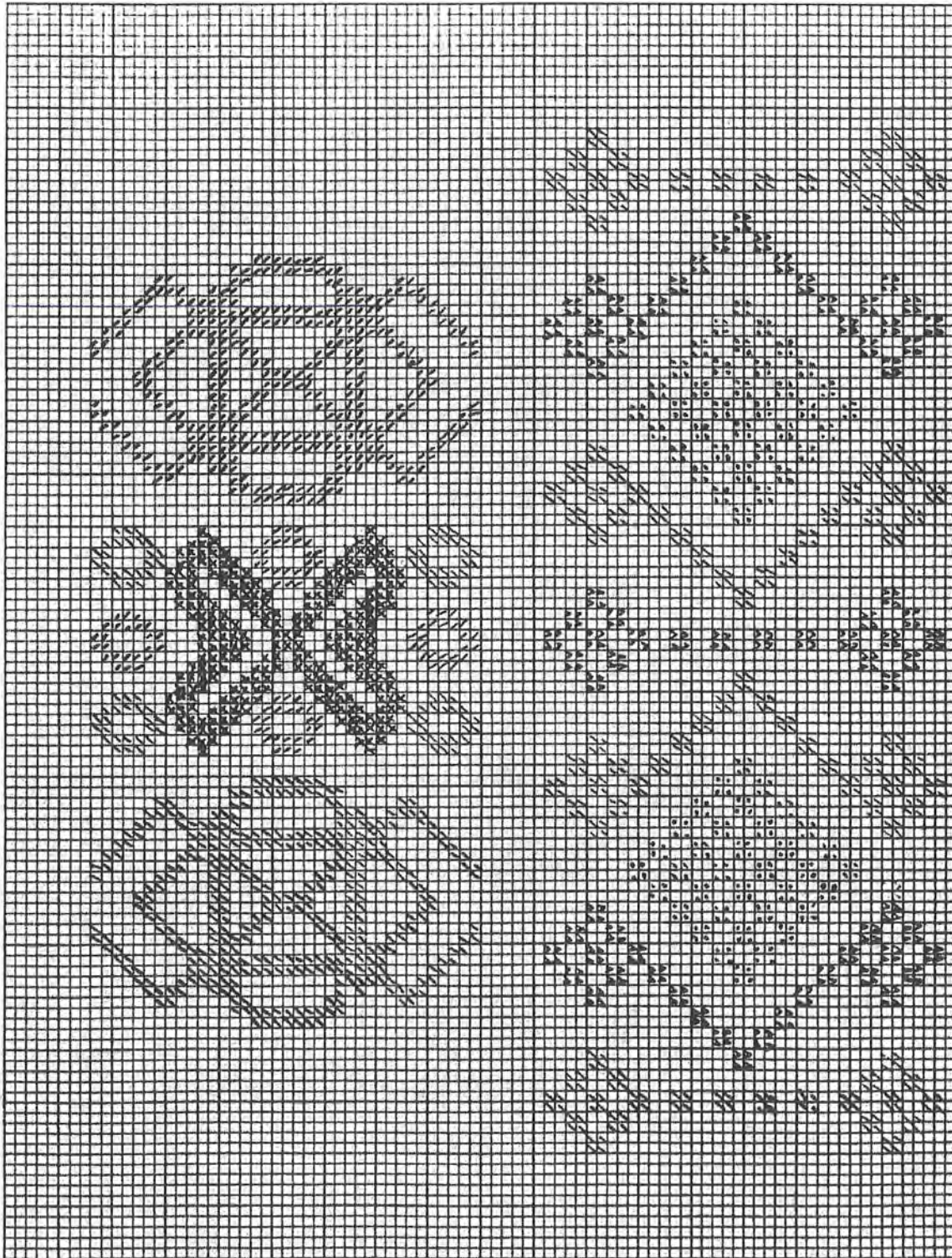
- 1) Weave 14-15 shots (1/2") gray in tabby.
- 2) Weave 1/2" blue tabby, 3/4" gold tabby, 1/2" blue, 1/2" gray.
- 3) Weave red and gray teeth in tabby, 4 shots of each color.
- 4) Weave 7-8 shots red in tabby.
- 5) Weave 3/4" gold tabby, 1/2" blue tabby.
- 6) Weave gray and blue teeth in tabby, 3 shots of each color.
- 7) Weave 2 blue shots in tabby.
- 8) Weave blue and gray teeth in tabby, 3 shots of each.

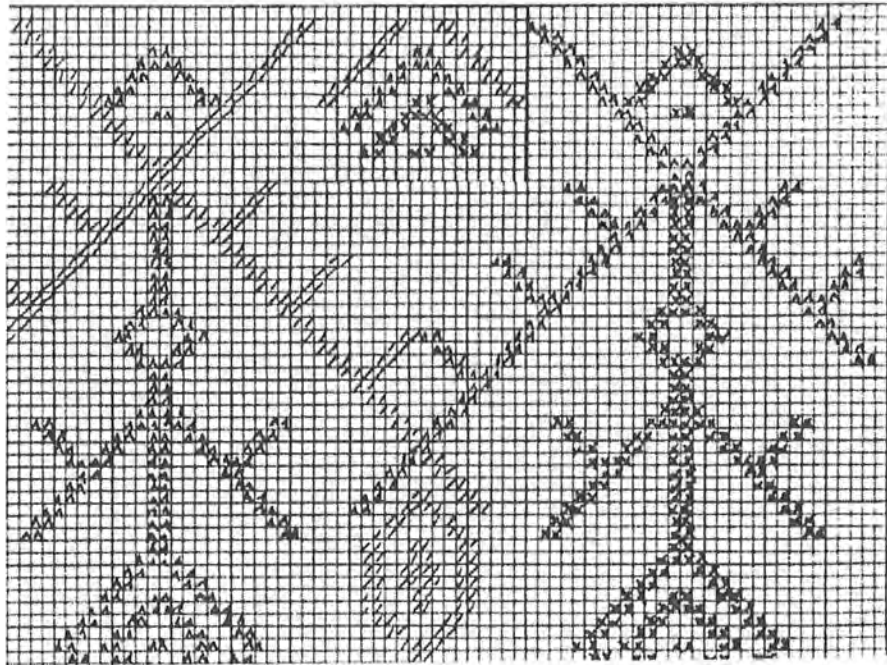
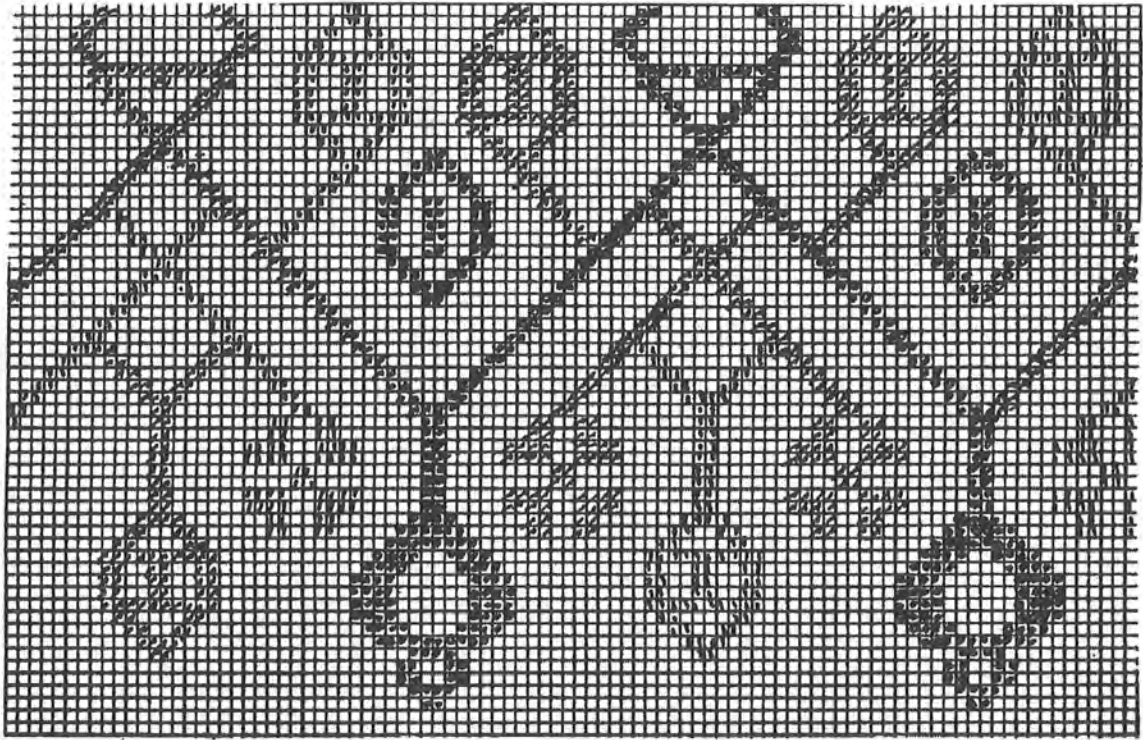
**Finishing**

Weave a 1/2" of blue tabby if you plan to end with fringe, or at least 2" if you will finish the piece with a hem.

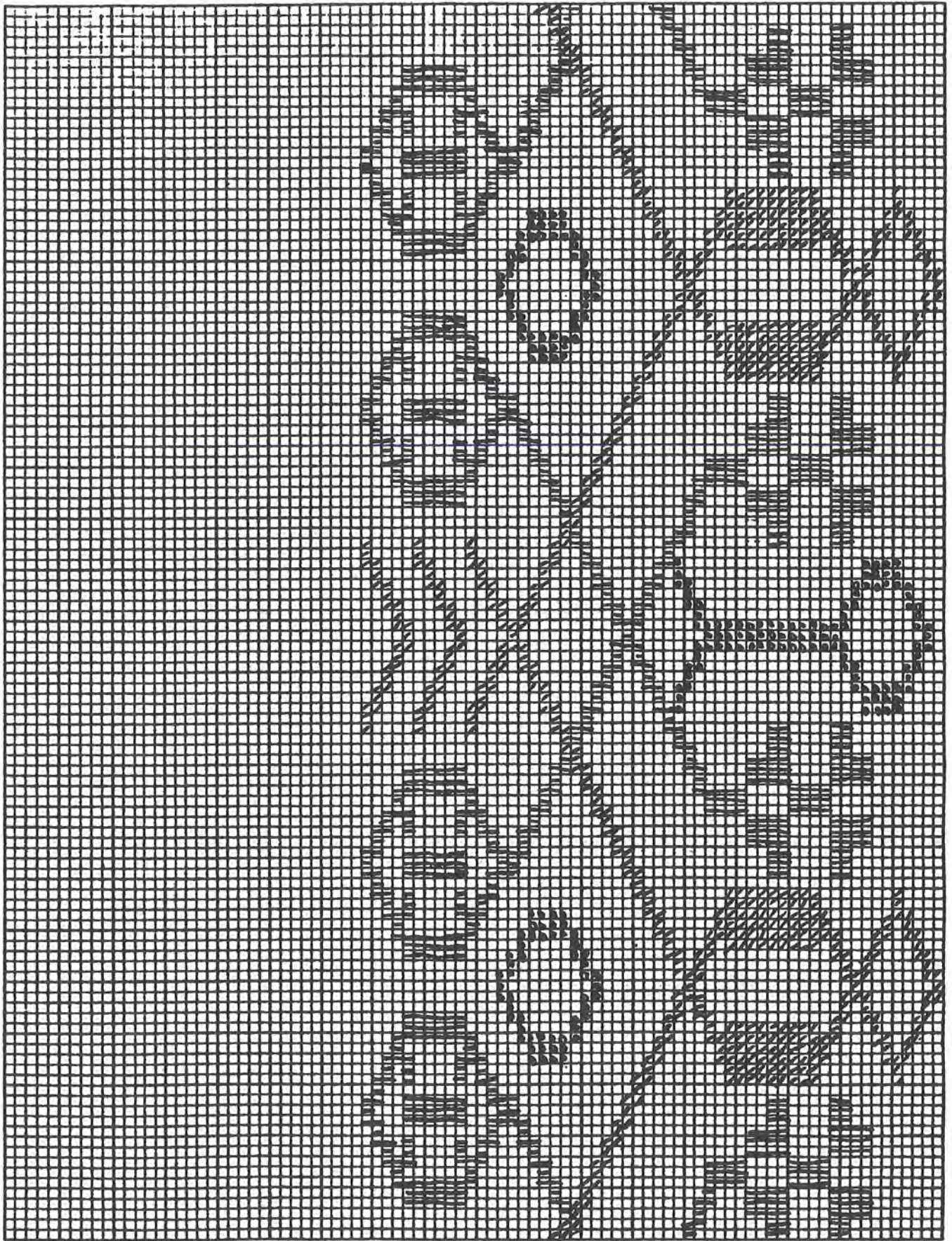


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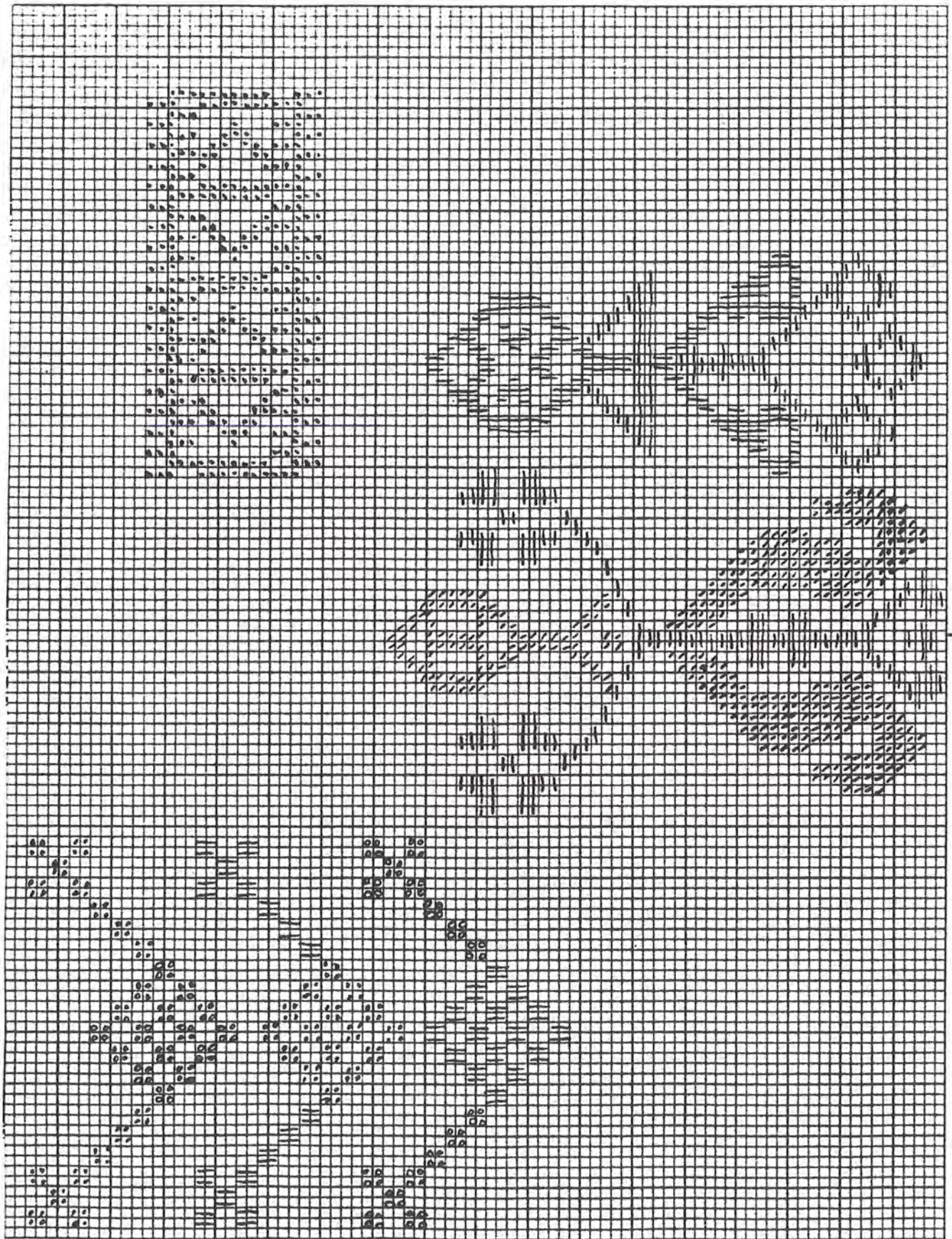














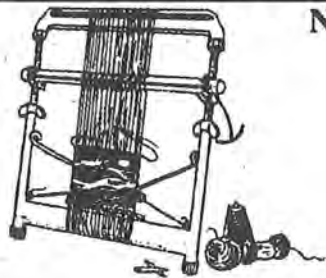
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  - Madeleine (Darling-Tung), co-editor of the Canadian Tapestry Network (CTN) newsletter, is an active tapestry weaver, floor loom weaver, and instructor, and is constantly giving presentations and demonstrating to promote the art of tapestry. For those who are not comfortable with designing for woven tapestry, Madeleine has a line of tapestry kits to encourage individuals to try their hand at this old craft. In addition, working with Brenda Franklin, another CTN member, designer and tapestry weaver, Madeleine and Brenda have introduced this Autumn a new line of needlepoint Christmas tree ornaments tapestry kits, which has also become quite popular. Only quality Norwegian Spelsau yarns are used in all of the woven or needlepoint kits.
  - For more information, please feel free to contact Madeleine at the above address.
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concluded Claudia A. Chase in her review for the American Tapestry Alliance Newsletter



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