

NORWEGIAN BREAKFAST CLUB NEWSLETTER

Vol. I No.4

September, 1995

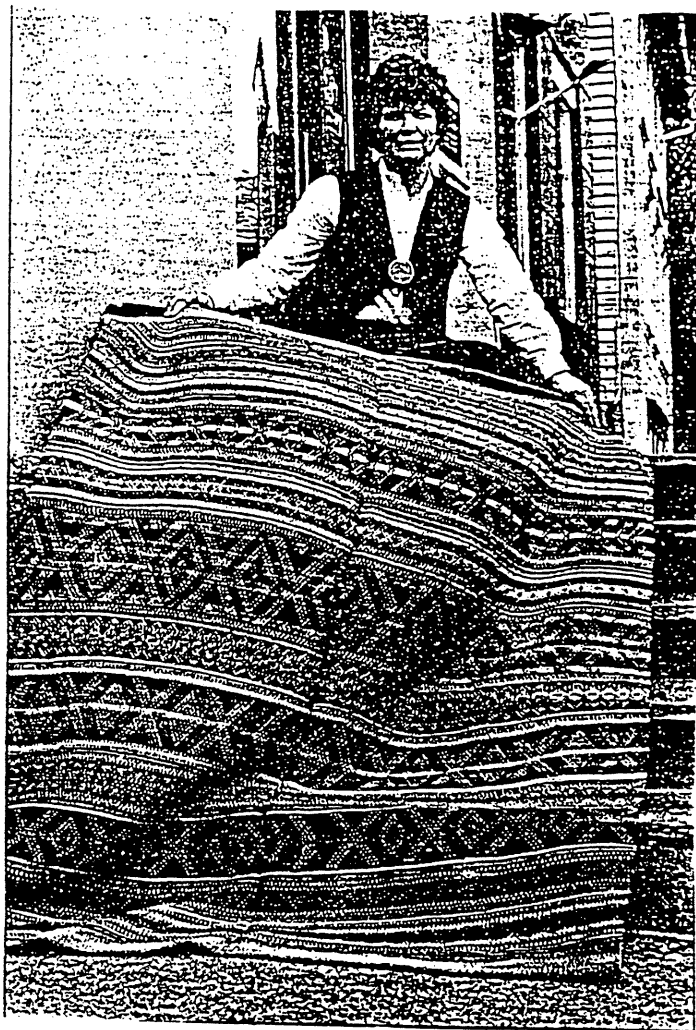
AN INTRODUCTION TO THE DANSK BROGD TRADITION

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

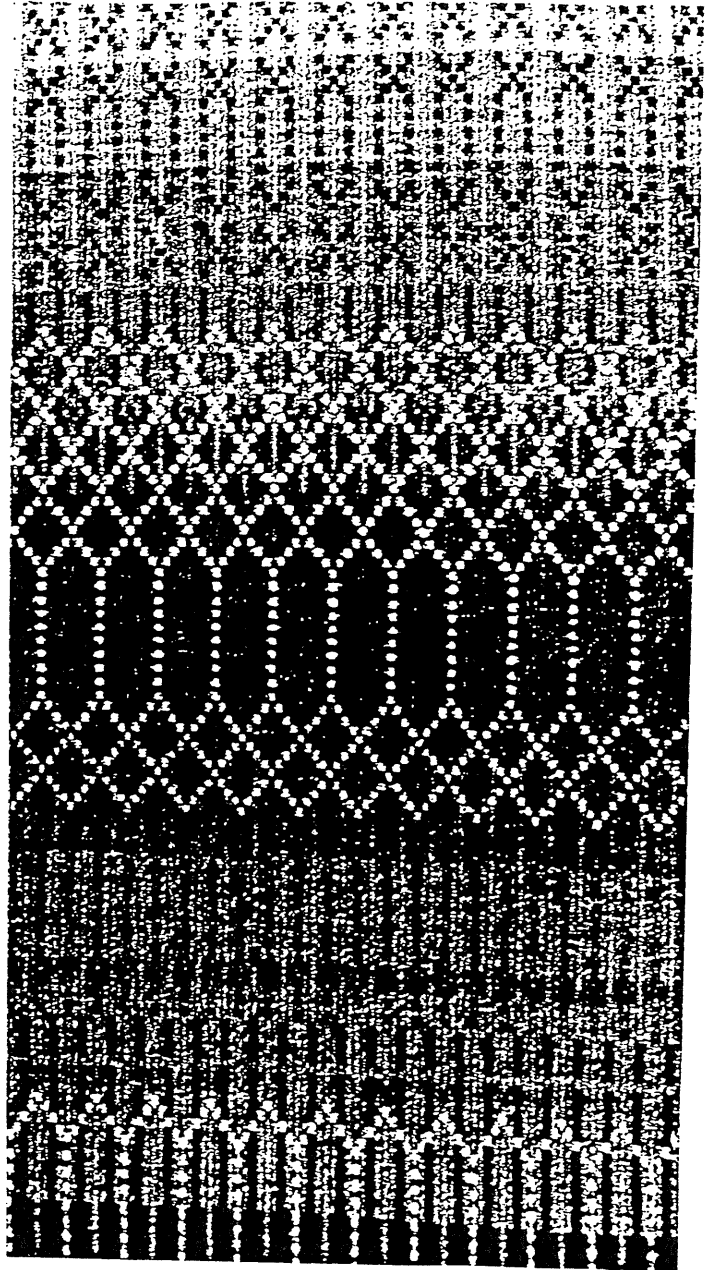
textile historian Anna Gristle. No details were given.

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.

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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.

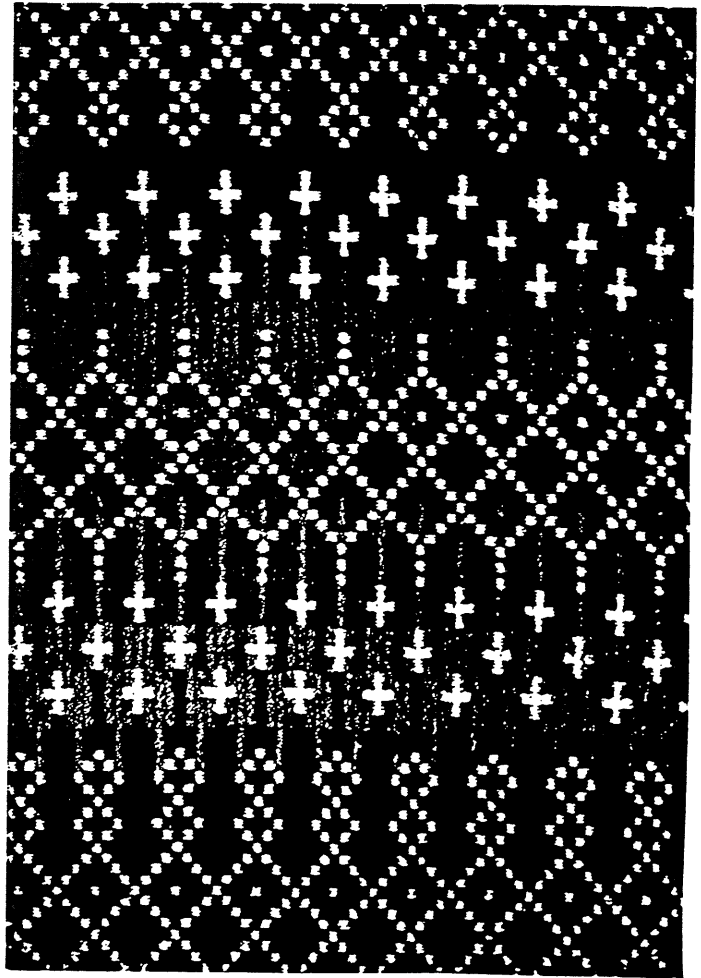
My experiments with dansk brogd have been with color, design, material, and threading. Instead of having solid color background bands, I have carried elongated krokbragd motifs in dark tones in the background on which the lighter colored dansk brogd motifs have been picked. The resulting varied and complex 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 Lilla 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).