

THE WOVEN COVERLETS OF NORWAY



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Brocaded Coverlets: Vestfoldsmett

A form of brocading that appeared in the borders of some square-weave coverlets was the primary technique in a small group of coverlets from the district of Vestfold (fig. 7.15). In brocading, patterns are created by a supplementary weft thread that floats over and under a ground weave, a simple idea that was interpreted in a variety of ways throughout the world. A similarity in pattern and technique can be seen, however, between the Vestfold coverlets and brocaded textiles from Russia and some Eastern European and Mediterranean countries. In Norway, evidence of brocaded weaving was discovered in the Oseberg Viking ship, excavated from a ninth-century burial mound which, interestingly, was located in the district of Vestfold. Whether the brocaded coverlets of Vestfold were the result of a long standing tradition or whether they indicate later influences from abroad is unknown.

The Vestfold coverlets, woven on a ground weave of weft-faced plain weave, contained brocading in two variations plus a supplementary weft patterning that traveled from selvage to selvage. Individual bobbins were used to create brocaded patterns in discrete portions of the weaving. In the first variation of this technique, often referred to in English by its Swedish name, *krabbasnår*, patterns were built of constantly shifting horizontal lines. In the second variation, known as *halvkrabba*, the pattern was composed of blocklike shapes (figs. 7.16–7.17). The selvage-to-selvage patterning technique echoed the brocaded effect, with a supplementary pattern weft floating over and under a set number of warp threads across the width of the weaving. This fairly simple technique was sometimes combined with vertical stripes of pick-and-pick to create more detailed patterns (figs. 7.18–7.19).

Coverlets in the Vestfold brocading techniques were usually composed of horizontal bands of pattern. Larger bands of brocaded patterns—diamonds, zigzags, representations of plants and flowers, and other intricate designs—were interspersed with smaller bands of the selvage-to-selvage technique, pick-and-pick, or a combination of the two. The ground weave was woven in colors that varied from one band of pattern to the next, and the brocaded and selvage-to-selvage designs were accentuated by the use of contrasting colors.

The Vestfold coverlets were all woven in two pieces of approximately five feet in length and two feet in width that were sewn together. The warp material was linen, set from six to ten ends per inch, and the weft material was a two-ply wool.

In other districts, simple brocading appears in coverlets composed of a combination of techniques (see “Combined-Technique Coverlets,” below). The selvage-to-selvage/pick-and-pick technique was also used in the borders of square-weave coverlets from many areas, and occasionally served as the basis for patterning throughout an entire coverlet (fig. 7.20). The brocaded effect in these coverlets was quite simple, however, differing markedly from the ornate coverlets of Vestfold.

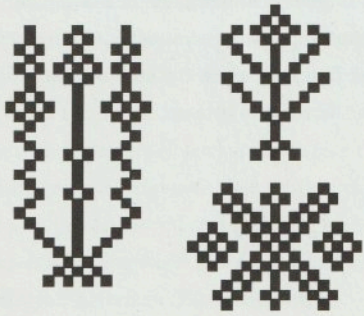
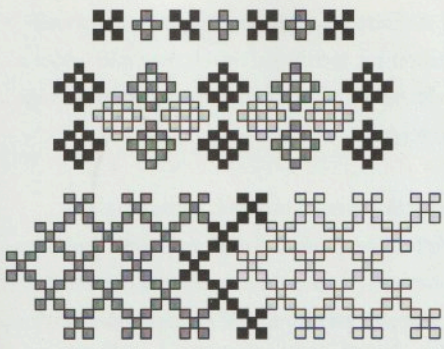


7.15 A coverlet woven in the Vestfold brocading technique. In the detailed view (*above*), supplementary weft patterning is seen in the small panels at top, center, and bottom. Brocaded patterns with blocklike designs (black background) and diagonal designs composed of shifting horizontal lines (green background) are seen in the larger panels. Andebu, Vestfold. *Vestfold County Museum*.

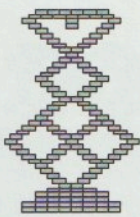
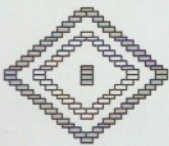
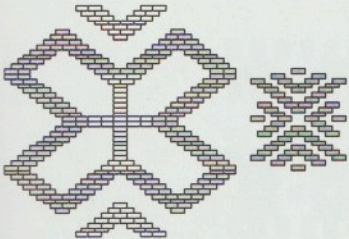
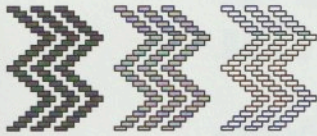
7.16 A bobbin of weft yarn travels back and forth in a small pattern area to create brocaded patterns (*far right*).

7.17 Brocaded patterns were composed of: (a) blocklike shapes; (b) shifting lines; (c) a combination of blocks and shifting lines. Diagrams of these and additional brocaded patterns from Vestfold coverlets can be found in Thorrud 1992.

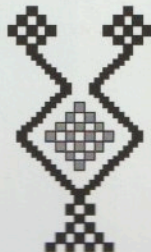
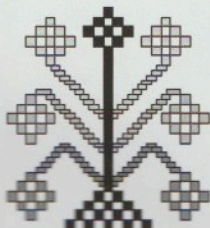
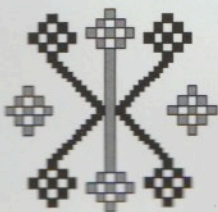
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104 Seattle: University of Washington Press,
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a



b



c

