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GENEALOGY

OF WEAVES

There were many attempts made to classify the weaves, so that they could be kept in some sort of an order. For instance they would be divided into basic weaves; derivate weaves, pattern weaves, texture weaves etc.

The classifications in many cases were rather surprising. For instance Satin was considered as a basic weave, although it is obviously a variety of a broken twill, when such pattern weaves as Overshot, Summer-2-Winter, and Crackle were entirely omitted.

The reason why the classification is so difficult is twofold: first, nobody defined exactly the word "weave"; second, many weaves may be derived from more than one simpler weave.

"Weave" should mean the way warp and weft are interlaced, regardless of colour, count of yarn, and the ratio between the two. From this point of view "tabby" should include Log Cabin, Rep, simple Two-Warp fabrics, and most tapestries. Also (but with reservations): Inlay, certain types of Swivel, and Locked Wefts if woven in tabby sheds.

As to the derivation of weaves it is next to impossible to establish it historically, because we simply have not enough material to work with. We can only reconstruct the logical derivation, which may be also chronological or not.

The simplest weave of all is tabby. Incidentally it has nothing to do with tabby cat. The name comes from a suburb of Bagdad, called Attabiya.

Tabby is simple and very strong, but at the same time stiff and cold. To make it softer we may use 2, 3, or even 4 yarns woven parallel. Thus we have 2:2, 3:3, or 4:4 Basket Weave. It is warm and soft but at the same time much too weak. As a compromise 2:2 Twill was developed from 2:2 Basket. Fig.1 shows the transition from

Tabby to Basket, and to Twill:



Fig.1

This is the logical development, but it is not true historically, at least not everywhere. We have enough evidence now to be fairly sure that in continental Europe, and probably in the Near East 1:2 Twill preceded 2:2 Twill, and that the sequence was: Tabby, Basket, 1:2 Twill, 2:2 Twill.

From 2:2 Twill the logical progress is clear, although it probably took many centuries. Any weaver who would keep on threading a loom always in one direction (1,2,3,4 or 4,3,2,1), was bound to try to change this direction from time to time and see what will happen. Thus we have Herringbone Twill either 1:2, or 2:2. A similar experiment in treadling will give Wave with plain threading, and Diamond Twill with Herringbone threading.

The smaller the diamonds in the Diamond Twill, the more often we change the direction of threading. If this change comes every three heddles, we have Crackle, and finally if we go back and forth still more often, it is Overshot (fig.2):

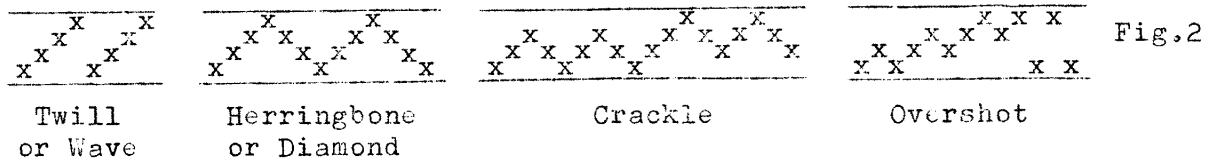


Fig.2

Crackle as a pattern weave is a little complicated, and was developed only in comparatively advanced weaving communities. On the other hand Overshot was known in every country where four-shaft looms were known.

Overshot-on-opposites was a simple development of plain four-block overshot, but Summer-&-Winter, although nothing else but Crackle-on-opposites, was a much later refinement.

This whole group of weaves comes to a dead end on multishaft looms, which increase the number of blocks of pattern, without changing in any way the principle of the weave itself.

***** (to be continued) *****