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# MASTER WEAVER

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## STRIPES

When primitive weaving reached the stage where utility of woven cloth was no more of primary importance, when yarn could be processed in such a way that it was made in different colours, either by sorting and mixing, as white, black, and grey wool, or by bleaching, as natural, half-bleached, and bleached linen, or finally by dyeing the yarn - a new way became open for expression of weaver's artistic, irrational needs.

The easiest way of using colour were stripes in weft. This stage was common to all cultures. But the following step depended on climat and economics. For instance in tropical countries, where life was easy, a weaver had enough time to go into intricacies of pick-up on extremely primitive looms, with the resulting highly developed design in weft. But in moderate zones where agriculture demanded much more labour, the weaver had to be efficient before he could afford to be artistic. Thus he had to develop a better weaving equipment first, and ornamental weaving later.

Therefore if we look for interesting patterns in stripes, we must study countries where this type of weaving lasted longer than in economically more fortunate parts of our globe.

Stripes in weft logically lead to plaids, that is stripes in both: warp and weft. But stripes in warp mean also a comparatively high weaving technique: good looms and warping equipment, and high skill necessary to make a 50:50 fabric. Thus we may expect to find plaids in moderate zones, but only in higher cultures. And this is what we actually find.

We can learn a lot about composition of striped fabrics by observing how this technique developed in primitive weaving cul-

tures. We do not like to say "primitive cultures", because often quite advanced cultures are primitive in weaving. Particularly in the Eastern Block we find communities where "citizen peasant" uses tractors, has electricity and radio in his home, but his wife still weaves striped fabrics on a very simple loom.

First there are only two colours alternating at the same rate, that is each takes the same space. This is extremely uninteresting by all standards, and we can see that soon one colour (usually the darker or the more striking) is broken into stripes of different widths. Compare fig.1 A and B. At the same time one colour will take

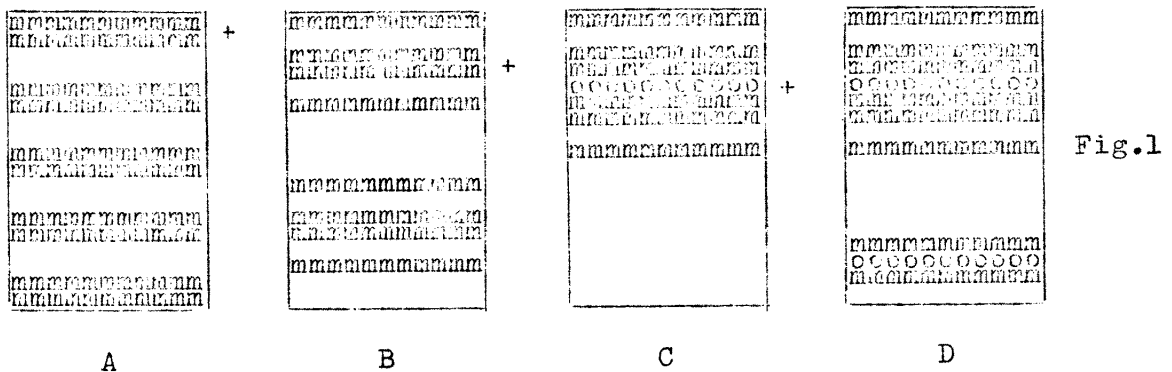


Fig.1

more space than the other. Thus the first colour becomes a "dominant" (MW 32 page 3), and the second a subdominant. Here the reason for having a smaller amount of one colour may be purely economical, because the dominant is usually neutral (white, grey, natural) that is less expensive than the other colour.

The next step is introduction of a third colour usually in a very limited quantity (fig.1 C). This is what we call an accent. Thus the one stripe of a darker colour becomes more and more complicated: compare "+" in A, B, and C.

The next stage is the appearance of a secondary narrower stripe in some way resembling the main stripe as in fig.1 D. This stage may or may not coincide with the introduction of the fourth colour, which would be used also sparingly, and we might call it a secondary accent, something which corresponds to the accent on the subdominant.

But this should not lead us to the conclusion that the development of primitive striped fabrics follows the theory of Mun-

zell, or any other theory of designing, even if we have the four colour elements in the right proportions, because the hues are quite independent of any particular sequence. Here again the economical factors dictated the choice of colours, at least in many cases.

Regardless of how many colours were used, or how advanced was the weaving culture, in primitive design we have only symmetrical stripes, and the rhythm, that is the sequence of different stripes when once established never changes in one piece of weaving. There is also a complete lack of any attempt to blend two colours by using mathematical progressions, like 1, 2, 3, 4, etc., or 1, 2, 4, 8, 16, and so on.

With all these limitations the striped fabrics are fascinating just because they can produce such beautiful effects with such simple means.

If we want to venture into designing of stripes, we have the following possibilities:

1.) Copy and develop traditional stripes by changing and adding colours.

2.) Blend the dominant and the subdominant (not the accents), for instance: 1A, 8B, 2A, 7B, 3A, 6B, 4A, 5B, 3A, 6B, 2A, 7B, 1A, 8B; or: 1A, 8B, 2A, 4B, 4A, 2B, 8A, 1B. The blending area can be followed by a solid stripe.

3.) Use unsymmetrical stripes.

4.) Change the rhythm. This must be done very gradually. At first change slightly the main stripe; repeat; change the secondary stripe; repeat; introduce a new colour in the main stripe, then in the secondary; drop out one colour in the primary; the same in secondary; introduce another colour in primary etc. This is the most creative and rewarding way of composing striped fabrics.

5.) Try to apply faithfully Munzell's theory to stripes; that is select colours, and ratios in which they should be used. Play changes on this theme.

6.) Introduce texture by using floats in accents. This by the way has been done in primitive weaving.

The stripes can be woven in tabby, but not 50:50 tabby. The warp should be covered by weft or nearly so. Other weaves are 2:2 broken twill, or 3:1 broken twill.