

HANDWEAVING NEWS

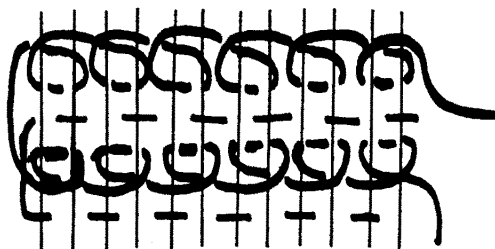


Figure No.1

Further Notes on Soumak Weave.

This month I will give a few more notes concerning the Soumak stitch as it was not quite complete last month, and also some other variations of the method of working, which gives another type of texture to the fabric when finished.

Greek Soumak Stitch. When it is necessary to stop a color for just 3 or 4 knots, as in the case of the places on the design where there are doors or windows indicated in September News, the color of the larger area can be carried across the back of the 3 or 4 spaces, and continued instead of tying in another spool. It can be interlocked with the color of the 3 or 4 spaces at the point where it comes up between the warp threads to continue, if the slit is too long without the interlocking. On this piece some of these short verticals were not interlocked, as this was for a wall hanging, while for a rug or for upholstery, inter-locking would have to be made. The color should not be carried across the back if the skip is more than about 6 knots. When a color is no longer needed, the yarn can be broken off after the third knot and pulled through to the back. This end can be tied to another finishing end, or can be run down into the threads on the back with a needle and then cut off close.

When the design has been finished, weave a plain weave heading for the top, the same as at the beginning. For a rug the ends of the warp could be knotted after it has been cut from the frame. For a bag or for upholstery, or a wall hanging, a close row of machine stitching at both ends will hold the weaving securely, if one does not wish to have a fringe. For a wall hanging, the material should have a backing cloth of some sort. Pongee or a fair quality of sateen is an excellent backing cloth. This can be stitched to the fabric at the top, but should be hemmed by hand on both sides and across the bottom of the piece. Some people do not fasten the backing cloth down at the bottom at all. But if it is not fastened, a cozy nest for moths to grow is under the backing, and this should be avoided. Cut the backing plenty large, and do not let it pull as it is put on. If a rod is to be inserted at the top to hang the piece up with, it is easy to make an extra casing on the backing cloth at the top through which the rod can be slipped. The piece should be carefully stretched, dampened and pressed on the wrong side before it is lined.

Another form of the Soumak stitch is described by Luther Hooper in Book I. "Weaving on Small Appliances". The front of this stitch resembles the so called simple outline stitch of embroidery. A row of plain weave is put in, then a row of the Soumak, then a row of plain weave, then a row of Soumak. If the direction of making the knot is kept the same as described for the Greek Soumak, that is make the stitch from right to left as shown at Figure No. 1, all across the width, then a row of the plain weave, and then back from left to right with the Soumak making the row as shown at figure No. 2, the result will be like chain stitch, and be raised on the top side. While the back resembles the plain tapestry. But each knot is made to go over two warp threads, and under two each time as shown above at Figure No. 1. The chain effect is more distinct if two rows of the Soumak is put in, and then the plain weave.

Suggestions for Materials to Use for the Soumak stitch with plain weave between. The yarns used for the plain weave between each row of knots can be much finer than that used for the knot. The knots are made over two warp threads, and so the warp also can be some finer than that used for the Greek Soumak if desired. Separated figures in pattern design can easily be designed, and could be used on a linen warp. For such a plan, linen like the warp could be used for the plain weave between each row of the knots, and the knot stitch row be made with heavy linen floss. Or fine stranded yarn could also be used, such as crewel wools, or Bernat's Turkey wool, or six strand cotton embroidery floss. This is an excellent rug or tapestry technique. For a rug coarse Butcher's twine or Barbour's linen shoe thread could be used, or even carpet warp as the warp is used double. But for a rug, it is easier to use a regular loom than try to use a picture frame loom, since the plain weave between each row of knots is easier to do on a regular loom, and the beating up is also easier too. For a rug, heavy rug wool should be used for the knot stitch, and either finer wool or yarn like the warp for the plain weave rows.

Detail of Working the Soumak Stitch.

Weave a plain weave heading as wide as desired. Wind several yarn bobbins for the colors to be used for the design. In this case the design is to be an isolated figure. Plan the design on cross section paper, and let each square represent two warp threads, and 2 rows of weft, that is one row to the right and one back to the left, and also a row of the plain weave. If desired a row of the plain weave can be put in between every row of the pattern. Then each cross section paper square would represent a row of plain, a row of pattern color from right to left, a row of plain, and then another row of pattern color back from left to right. The pattern color would be taken over two warp threads, and the plain over every other warp thread. The pattern yarn can be threaded into a large needle, but it seems to me unless the distance is very small for the pattern color that to wind yarn bobbins is better, and easier to handle. The plain tabby weft can be wound on a regular loom shuttle. Either side of the material can be used for the right side, and ends of the pattern color should be fastened into the plain weave shed carefully so they do not show and cut close. When two pattern colors come together, they can be locked as in the Greek Soumak knot if desired, but this is not absolutely necessary as the plain weave row will close any slits which might occur from not interlocking the colors. The effect of this weaving is to give a somewhat raised figure on a background of plain weave. It can be a matter of choice as to whether a chain stitch effect is desired, or not. If the plain effect is desired, always throw the pattern thread color, the same way instead of reversing it when the pattern thread is taken back from left to the right. This stitch is, it seems to me, practically embroidering on the loom. Note that only one knot occurs on each two warp threads. Keep the warp threads spaced as evenly as possible during the working of the pattern wefts, and do not split the stitches between these two warp threads, if the underside of the material is to be used for the right side, always make the stitch over the same two warp threads. This technique can easily be used on the little heddle belt looms for small pillow-tops or wall hangings, but rugs and large pieces are easier to make on a large loom.

Another variation of Soumak.

This form of the Soumak has been called Scandinavian Soumak, and is also described in Miss Emily Goodwin's "Correspondence Course" mentioned in the September News. This differs from the technique just described in the following ways. First there is no plain weave between each row of the knot stitch, second it is made on a single warp thread, and third the design is carefully inked on to the warp threads, and the under side or the tapestry effect side of the weaving is the right side.

The picture frame loom can be used for small pieces, and a continuous warp made as described in the September News. For large pieces a regular loom should be used.

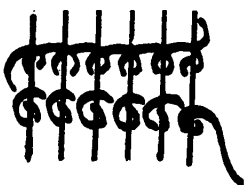


Figure No.2

Warp- Use coarse twine or tire cord set about 8 threads to the inch. Mark the dowel rods at the top and bottom as explained for the set-up of the Greek Soumak knot, and for this technique make the warp as wide as the width of the design to be used. Weave a plain heading at the bottom to have a firm foundation to beat against. The knot should be beaten down into position with a fork or coarse comb.

Design Requirements for this Technique.

The design should be made in the actual size it is to be woven, on architects linen or tough drawing paper. Color this with the values of the yarns to be used, and pin to the design the shades of weft to be used. Tapestry or crewel wool of fast colors should be used for the weft for bags, upholstery, pillow-tops or wall hangings. A good quality of rug wool for rugs is best. Pin the design carefully and evenly back of the warp threads to the plain weave heading. The first design should have rather large masses with little fine detail as the one given at Figure No.3 below for a bag. With pen and waterproof ink carefully put a dot on each warp thread to follow exactly the design outline. Then ink each of these warp threads all the way around. This is a slow process, but must be done carefully to keep the exact contour of the design. Let the ink become dry before starting to work. Figure No.3 given below is an excellent design for a bag that is easy to do for the first piece in this technique. Colors are tan for background B, D for dark brown, M for middle red-orange, L for light red-orange. Other colors can be substituted for these if desired. Tie the weft to the first warp thread with a single knot and bring the end to the back in the same way the Greek Soumak stitch was started. This is the first stitch or knot. Make the next stitch or knot on the second warp thread as at Figure No.2 on Page 2. Under or foundation masses must be worked first, so with the tan work all of the background as far as A and C on the design. Then color M can be worked as far as the first mass of L at the bottom of the design, then work L and finish the rest of M. Now all of D can be worked as far as the beginning of L2, and so on. Not more than four stitches or knots which would be four rows, should be on the same vertical warp thread. When this has to occur work the adjoining mass up to this point, and interlock the two weft colors in the same manner that the interlocking occurs in the Greek Soumak knot. Long verticals should be staggered, and in this case the rows of adjoining color need to be worked along together. Otherwise work as much of one mass of color as possible before using another color unless it is necessary to change the color for the design. Always cover the dot with the under color. Keep warp spaced evenly, and do not let edges pull in.

Figure No.3

Design for a Bag in Soumak Stitch.

