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SOUTH SUMATRAN SHIP CLOTHS

Mattiebelle S. Gittinger

Textiles increasingly receive recognition as an art medium and Indonesia's varied peoples have contributed richly to the field. Sago brown and indigo batiks from Java and boldly patterned cottons from Sumba are familiar examples. There are, in addition, other types of textiles from the Indonesian islands that are familiar only to a few museum curators and cognoscenti. One of these is a group of textiles stemming from South Sumatra generally known as ship cloths.

These textiles receive their name from the predominant use of a ship motif. This ranges from small craft to huge forms that dominate the cloth. Also, there is a rich panoply of horses, elephants, carabou, fishes, turtles, birds of many species, trees that harbor gifts and human figures, houses of many styles, human forms in various costume and posture, umbrellas, banners and pennants as well as many forms which escape our labelling. Most frequently these elements are rendered in deep blues, yellows or reddish-brown colors created by natural dyes. The textiles are no longer woven today, but some examples still exist in South Sumatra and function within the ceremonial life of the people. From all aspects—their social function, their technical virtuosity and range of motifs—these textiles command attention.

The cloths exist in two major forms. One, called *palepai* or *sesai balak* [1]* is a long, narrow rectangle which may extend to 3.5 meters in length (figures 1-4). The other, termed *tampan*, is a relatively small rectangle or square that may be 40-75 centimeters on a side (figures 5-12). A few exceptions fall outside these parameters. *Tampan* are found as family heirlooms in a few households along the southwest coast of Sumatra from the vicinity of Benkulen through the area south of Krui. They exist in greater number along the two large bays on the south coast. On the other hand, *palepai* exist only in this southernmost area and, according to evidence remaining today, were made only by peoples living near Semangka and Lampong bays.

Several small cultural groups of related ethnic stock inhabit these areas. Of most importance for a study of ship cloths are the Paminggir who live on the west coast near Krui, on the upland mountain plateau of the interior south of Lake Ranau and along the south coastal strip of

*Numbers in brackets refer to the Notes on page 15.

Semangka and Lampong bays. Their major social group is the *suku*, which appears to be a patrilineal descent group. Four or more *suku* occupy a geographic area called *marga*, and the larger social grouping is also often called *marga*. *Suku* are considered weak or strong according to age, population and wealth; they also have positional designations to the right or left.

The eldest direct male descendant of the founder of the *suku* and *marga* has the title *penjimbang*. This title may also be used by the founder of a village, but this seems to be a more recent practice. The *penjimbang* and their families constitute an aristocratic class, and one of their prerogatives is the use of the long cloths.

Originally only the *penjimbang* rank had the right to use the *palepai* as a wall hanging. Formerly it may have been restricted to the rites of passage for the *penjimbang* and his oldest descendant, but today all of the children of a *penjimbang* use the cloth at times of social change. Because the *palepai* is used and inherited only in these families, the form category of the cloth alone is a symbol of the aristocratic class and the continuance of these lineages in time.

The manner in which the cloth is displayed has additional symbolic relevance. *Palepai* are hung on the right wall of the centrally located women's section of the house where the cloth serves as a backdrop for the principal of the ceremony. By custom, however, these cloths are rarely hung alone, but are flanked to the left and right by the *palepai* belonging to *suku* which exist within the social structure in a corresponding position to the left or right of the principal. Therefore, the tableau they create portrays the relative position of the principal within the total social framework.

The cloth with its ship design becomes a symbolic means of conveyance during specific parts of a ceremony. In a marriage ceremony, for example, the bride sits before the cloth of her husband-to-be after arriving in an elaborately bedecked procession. This procession has rigidly prescribed positions that may be viewed as constituting a ship form. The bride is thus transported to the marriage ceremony in a ship and finally makes the transition to her husband's *suku* as she sits before his *palepai*. The ship of the cloth acts as the bold symbol of this transcendental transfer.

For other transition periods the long cloths have a similar role. These include a ceremonial return to the bride's home three to seven days after the wedding when she is presented in her married state, a ceremony for the newborn children involving name-giving at the maternal

grandparent's home, circumcision ceremonies for boys and funeral rites. In each of these the long cloth symbolically conveys the principal to a new state of being.

Tampan operate on a similar, but much broader scale. These small cloths are not limited to a particular class or rank, but flow horizontally through the society in response to various social commitments. When they are inherited some textiles will descend to each sibling in a household. Thus, their distribution is much greater than the restricted long cloths. In some functions they closely correspond to the *palepai* for the *tampan* also act as a symbolic means of transition. Many small *tampan*, or merely one, served as the ritual seat in the transition ceremonies. This custom is still practiced in the Semangka Bay area and was probably followed in all *tampan* regions at one time.

Tampan also had, and in some areas still have, important functions as part of obligatory gifts. On certain ritually fixed occasions, such as marriage negotiations, the textiles serve as wrapping for bundles of ceremonial food which pass from the members of one *suku* to corresponding positions in another *suku*. In later exchanges there is a reciprocal flow of the cloths and food. After each of these ceremonies all of the textiles are returned to their original owner. It is not clear whether returning the cloths is a current day response to the scarcity of the cloths or whether this was always the custom. Whichever, it is clear that in this capacity the *tampan* are the visible expressions of the interlocking relationships between families and *suku* established at transition periods.

On other occasions the gift of a *tampan* serves as symbolic evidence of a completed state of transition. This seems to be the implication of two different customs. One of these is found among the Serawai, a small group of people living near Manna on the Sumatran west coast. In this area they tie a *tampan* and flowers to a spear which is used throughout the wedding ceremony. The groom carries this for the symbolic slaughter of the festival buffalo and then plants it in the ground behind the bride as she sits in state to be viewed by all the guests. Later, after the actual killing of the animal, the *tampan* from the spear is included in the gift of meat given by the groom to the bride's family. The *tampan*, flower and spear are a tree-of-life which is ritually destroyed by removal of the *tampan*. This cloth then serves as evidence to the bride's family of the completed transition. The Paminggir custom associated with true elopement may have a similar significance at its base. In many areas of the south a young man who elopes with a girl must leave a *tampan* in her parent's home. This is not returned today. Within the Indonesian context, textiles do not usually constitute gifts given by a groom, for within the dualistic pattern found in the archipelago, cloth appears as female goods. Therefore, the

significance of the *tampan* left behind by the man must be its symbolic value as a sign of completed transition.

Many of the other ways *tampan* functioned may be obscured by the changes which arose because of the lack of a continuing supply of these textiles. For example, because textiles serve as a principal female gift in the exchange of goods normally associated with marriage in Indonesia, it is justifiable to suppose *tampan* formed a part of the bride's dowry in South Sumatra. However, this cannot be established with certainty today. Large numbers of *tampan*-wrapped food bundles are exchanged between the bride's and the groom's families and the former's family is always expected to contribute slightly more bundles in the exchange. Today this excess is only four to six textiles—hardly a significant number when considering traditional bridal gifts. If large quantities were at one time given to the groom's family this practice is not remembered. Now the exchanges and actual giving of *tampan* tends largely to be symbolic of the interlocking relationship between two families and their respective *suku*, rather than in the realm of material wealth.

Why manufacture of these textiles ceased remains a mystery, but some series of events ended weaving in this region within the first quarter of this century. The cloths that remain in use stem from that time and are not being replaced by small squares of imported cloth which could easily fulfill the physical requirement in the services these textiles perform. It therefore seems that the ceremonial validity of the form category itself exists within the traditions surrounding these particular textiles—their history and manufacture.

Technical features

The cloths themselves are the sole evidence remaining concerning their production. They show the dominant materials are cotton and silk which were both raised and processed in South Sumatra at one time. In addition many of the long cloths have metal wrapped threads, flat foil strips and a few *tampan* show small mirrored glass disks sewn to the surface. These supplementary materials were surely imported, and some portion of the silk was also probably gained from outside the region, for silk was a trade commodity from Palembang throughout the southern area.

The designs are executed by continuous and discontinuous supplementary wefts on a plain weave foundation. As the name implies, a supplementary weft is an additional weft element inserted between two of the regular foundation wefts. Continuous supplementary wefts extend from selvage to selvage across the entire width of the cloth. The yarn floats

on the obverse or intercrosses the foundation to float on the reverse face of the cloth. The two faces, therefore, have the same pattern, but in reverse. Discontinuous supplementary wefts are limited to discrete pattern areas only and do not extend from one selvage to another. These two forms of supplementary weft occur individually or coincidentally on a single cloth in cotton, silk or metallic yarn. The plain weave foundation, however, utilizes only unbleached cotton yarns.

We can speculate about the major dyes, using information contained in old reports which make reference to the materials used in the manufacture of women's sarongs in this area. These were very probably also used for the ship cloth fibers as well. From peoples along the west coast mention is made of *sepang* (*Caesalpinia sappan*), *mengkudu* roots (*Morinda citrifolia*), and tamarind (*Tamarindus indica*) for red-brown, tumeric (*Curcuma domestica*) and tamarind for yellow, and indigo (*Indigofera* spp.) and lime to form blue [Hille 1894, p. 178]. Near Lampong Bay old reports say yarns were first soaked in a solution prepared from *njari* leaves, *bungur* bark (*Lagerstrumia floribunda*) and *djali* bark. After drying, further mixtures were applied for specific colors—a mixture of black clay and water for black, a preparation of *sepang* for red, and one of *terung* leaves (*Solanum melongena*) for yellow [Jasper 1912, p. 67]. Dyers in this southern area also used annatto (*Bixa orellana*) to obtain yellow. Yarns were boiled in a solution of scrapings of annatto and lye. After rinsing and drying, the fibers were dyed with *sepang* and alum [Buhler 1948, p. 2500].

The cloths give evidence of at least two different methods of yellow dyeing. In some textiles this dye, apparently tumeric, is extremely fugitive and in only a few seconds of handling stains the hands. Other yellow yarns do not produce this result and may have been dyed using annatto. Professor Alfred Buhler, a Swiss expert in the textiles and dyes of Indonesia, suggests the fast yellow in the ship cloths may also result from *Cudrania javanensis* used with an alum mordant (personal communication).

Evidence also indicates different types of red dyeing were practiced. The report from the west coast listed *mengkudu* which contains alizarin needed for Turkey Red dyeing. This elaborate process, known elsewhere in Indonesia, would mean the cotton yarns must be tanned, oiled, and treated with a mordant. In contrast, the ingredients mentioned by Jasper from the south coast indicate a simple mordant dye was also used to obtain the red and red-brown colors found in South Sumatran textiles. Professor Buhler also points out that the lac dye (*ambalau*), used elsewhere in Sumatra, may have been employed for the bright red in some silk yarns.

Knowledge concerning the details of indigo dyeing from this area is too brief to allow any extensive supposition. The deep shades of blue characteristic of most examples, however, suggest many repeated dippings were involved.

Once dyed, the yarns were probably stretched on a simple back tension loom. From the early reports of the looms in this region, we may also conclude the loom employed a noncontinuous or noncircular warp. In this type of loom the ends of the warp threads are firmly attached to a stick and then wrapped around one beam (the warp beam) leaving a relatively short length of thread to be secured to another beam (the breast beam) which rides in front of the weaver. The weaver works sitting on the ground and as the cloth is woven, new lengths of warp are unwrapped from the warp beam and the finished cloth is rolled up on the breast beam. This beam has cords attached to the ends that lead to a belt of sheepskin. The leather fits into the small of the weaver's back, where she can press her weight against it to maintain proper tension on the warp. During the actual weaving the greatest length of the warp is wound on one of the two beams so that the weaver does not bear the total weight of all the yarns as she tries to maintain control of the tension. This allows a textile of theoretically any length, and an example of 408 centimeters exists in the Djakarta Museum (no. 23200).

The details of the loom remain open to question. The early literature suggests there were two heddles and a flat sword to beat each new weft. Other evidence argues a reed was used to maintain even spacing of the warp thread. These elements of which we are fairly confident would allow weaving the foundation structure, but to effect the designs, additional loom elements and painstaking work were required. Some device was needed to raise a particular combination of warp to allow the insertion of the supplementary wefts. The design evolves by slightly changing the length of floats of successive supplementary wefts. However, to do this, the weaver must raise a new combination of warp threads. In this laborious manner each curve and angle of the design was created. Precisely how these combinations of warp threads were raised is not known. A device similar to the heddle could have been used. This would have required a separate stick with hoops of string for each combination of warp yarns. Or, as Miss Rita Bolland of the Tropical Institute in Amsterdam suggests, the weaver could have picked out each warp combination with a thin stick or slat. After inserting the supplementary weft, this stick could be pushed to the top of the warp where it would not interfere with further weaving. In this way a particular shed or combination of warp threads could be "stored." By saving each pattern stick in this manner, when the design was finished the weaver could begin reusing the stored pattern sticks to

create the design once again, only this time the design would appear upside down because the weaver would have to use the sticks in reverse sequence. Certain cloths which show an exact inverted repeat in the pattern certainly support Miss Boland's theory—or possibly a combination of these two different patterning devices.

The use of the discontinuous or continuous supplementary wefts, while similar, has varying effects on the design details. With the latter, only one color is used to create all of the designs affected by a single weft. More than one color may appear when this form is used, but these are successive weft bands. The added possibilities of the use of discontinuous supplementary wefts are obvious. Different colors may be used adjacent to one another to build many discrete design elements. Most *palepai* use the discontinuous supplementary weft in the major design field and continuous wefts in the lateral borders. *Tampan* may employ both means, but the small cloths which utilize discontinuous supplementary wefts seems to appear only along the south coast, in the area where *palepai* are made. Common to other areas, as well as the south, are *tampan* having a continuous supplementary weft.

What might have been a limitation in these methods of designing was used to add to the beauty and style of the textiles. Because of practical factors such as snagging, the supplementary yarn may never float free of the foundation cloths for too great a distance on either face of the cloth. Therefore, to create the bold major design elements the yarn is periodically secured or anchored by a small area of the foundation fabric, then allowed to continue floating. As a result, a small portion of the foundation shows within the major design, and by careful organization, the weaver may pattern the large form using these areas. Intricate ribbing, cross-hatching and dotting may result as an examination of the details will show in figures 7 and 9.

To a degree, the use of the supplementary wefts may have contributed to the bilateral symmetrical organization of the design composition that prevails in the majority of these textiles. Once the combination of warp threads to be raised for one half of the weft dimension is determined, repeating the count inversely for the second half is a simpler matter. This could give rise to both individual elements that are bilaterally symmetrical and to entire compositions with this arrangement. By combining this bilateral aspect with the practice of reusing the pattern sticks, identical mirror image quarters result. These technical features which could abet the symmetrical character of the *tampan* would not apply in the weaving of the long cloths. However, the same preference for bilaterally symmetrical compositions exists in the *palepai*.

The increased work and complexity of organizing the compositions on the long cloths is enormous. All of the compositions must be turned ninety degrees to be properly oriented in relation to the warp direction. In this orientation each weft extends from the top to the bottom of the composition, not from side to side as in the small cloths. Therefore the technical advantage of having bilaterally symmetrical forms and composition in the correctly oriented finished textile are lost to the weaving process. Yet the same formal elements of composition are maintained and there is no diminution in detailed execution. Indeed, the use of the discontinuous supplementary weft allowed greater enunciation of specific design elements.

There are other features, not common to all the textiles, that indicate attention to detail was highly prized. In some textiles the design borders at the warp ends may be elaborately twined or, in one example, worked in a slit tapestry method. Also, embroidery was used to embellish design details after the weaving was complete, and flat foil strips were frequently tacked to the surface of the cloths to lend glittering highlights to the contours of the major designs. These techniques serve in a minor capacity, never usurping the major patterning function of the supplementary wefts.

So few of these cloths exist in South Sumatra today that local people cannot define which textiles are more aesthetically or ritually pleasing. Other factors now far outweigh such consideration. However, the technical qualities of the cloths themselves demonstrate that labor intensive features and meticulous attention to detail were important elements of the cloths that very probably were major considerations of aesthetic and ritual worth.

Design and Composition

Initially the design elements and their arrangements awe the viewer with their variety and range. However, there are a limited number of basic compositions and, in the long cloths in particular, there are unique design features that allow separation of these textiles into four discrete classes or groups.

In one group of *palepai*, as in figure 1, a single large blue ship stretches the entire length of the cloth. The ship has a trifurcated bow and stern and commonly carries angular tree forms and an architectural structure containing people. In some examples the large blue ship may carry smaller boats with an animal and rider, flag poles or a variety of tree forms. Also unique to this type of cloth are houses with bifurcated projections from the sides of the structure. It is probable that this detail

is in imitation of similar ornamentation appearing on old-style houses still in use in the interior region. These homes have two wooden projections—similar to a bifurcated bow of a ship—set at right angles at the four corners of the house. The textile feature is, therefore, not a mere decoration, but an attempt to portray, or signify, an actual house. This building does not appear on all textiles with a single blue ship, but it never appears in any other type of ship cloth.

A second group of *palepai* has two large red ship forms dominating the textile as in figure 2. Normally, each of these major forms carries three buildings which may be crowded with animal and human forms. Flag poles, banners, small ships, birds and human figures fill the space above the buildings. In the hold of the ship may appear more human or animal forms. Medallion-like designs mark the hull and, in most examples, hooks or scrolls emerge from the bottom of the keel. A few textiles belonging to this group show a single red ship flanked by trees. In all details other than these, however, the textiles with a single red ship belong to this grouping.

The third *palepai* group has two or three parallel rows of stylized human forms as in figure 3. A detail of the design element in figure 3a reveals its ambiguous character. None of the renderings reveal the meaning of the angular headgear or the scrolls flanking the spinal column. In a common variation in this group of *palepai* a row of these stylized figures appears above and below a central band carrying small angular ships containing an animal and rider. The organization into horizontal rows and the specific human rendering define these textiles as a unique group.

The final group of long cloths has four or more discrete design panels. These *palepai*, as in figure 4, may be one continuous textile or a series of cloth panels sewn together at their selvages. The panels of a single *palepai* usually contain the same composition, although the subject of these may vary widely among the textiles in this group. Some examples show tiers of superimposed boats carrying human forms, or only angular tree forms may fill the entire panel. Another cloth has a large building containing human and animal forms set in a small red ship. There are many design elements and compositions in this group of textiles, but no factor other than the panel format is ubiquitous to them all [2].

Tampan do not lend themselves to such discrete classification. The much greater number of these small cloths involved many more weavers having a broad range in skills and variable understanding of the designs. This gave rise to many mutations in design elements and compositions which superficially suggest many unique examples. However, a survey of over three hundred of these textiles indicates that in the cloths containing

representational elements there are approximately 25 to 30 distinctly different compositions.

These *tampan* compositions range from the very simple to extremely complex. Figure 5 illustrates one of the latter which is an assemblage of many interlocking elements. A simplified sketch in figure 5a delineates the major forms. Two confronting stylized animals carry on their backs a human figure in a diamond-shaped structure. Along the base line other humans appear in hut forms. On the cloth there are many additional details. A structure with a conical roof appears to hold four figures on the extreme left and right of the cloth. Further toward the selvage appear two men, one in a boat. In the center between the animal heads is another structure with two human forms. To the left and right of this appear small animals and additional human figures.

The major forms sketched in figure 5a are the basic elements which reappear in a group of closely related *tampan*. However, imprecise rendering of elements makes it impossible to understand the composition when the cloths are viewed in isolation. In one example, the angles defining the heads and tails of the confronting animals have been omitted. In another cloth, figure 6, the animals have only three legs, the heads are omitted and only an angular neck and upright tail that extend to the top of the cloth suggest the original form. Other textiles show even more bizarre misreadings of the original forms. Only by placing all of these textiles in juxtaposition to one another and to the one intelligible composition can we read the elements they all have in common. This is true for most of the compositional groups.

In examining *tampan* in South Sumatra and grouping these examples into their proper compositional alignment more information can be gleaned concerning the small textiles. A specific *tampan* design was not the speciality or property of one family or extended family grouping. Textiles belonging to the same compositional group occur on the south coast, in the mountains of the interior and on the west coast. The groupings also show technique was not a crucial factor linked with a given composition. Either continuous or discontinuous supplementary wefts are used to execute similar compositions. Nor does a particular color remain constant for either specific details or a cloth as a whole. Red-brown, blue or yellow seem to be interchangeable.

Surveying many *tampan* also reveals consistent conventions were employed to distinguish particular forms. Some of these conventions are familiar enough that the identity is clear as in figure 7. The upraised tail feathers ending in diamond shapes as well as the clearly defined crest feathers very probably identify this as a peacock. This rendering of the

tail feathers is used in many *tampan* to distinguish this particular species from other avian design elements which abound in the cloths.

Other conventions demand more speculation. A similar bird figure repeated many times appears on *tampan* from the south coast, the interior and west coast areas. In these textiles, as in figure 8, the simple profile configuration of a bird with arched neck and tail curving over the back is elaborated with two lateral hooks or scrolls dependent from the lower part of the figure. All other features that might help identify this form are lacking in these small figures. However, in a *tampan* of another compositional group, figure 9, the lateral scrolls appear on a large figure that has greater detail. This representation includes an enlarged curved protuberance at the base of the bill which helps to identify this as a representative of the hornbill family, *Bucerotidae*. It is probable that the small bird figures with these same lateral scrolls are also hornbill birds and that the scroll convention was sufficient to establish the identify of the animal.

Certain design elements in the cloths display features which are clearly intrusive. These include occasional rendering of the human form in styles recalling the *wajang* or shadow puppet figures found on Java. Figure 10 illustrates this influence in the profile attitude of the head, frontal square shoulders, attenuated torso, bent arms and costume details—all features common to the puppets.

The greater costume elaboration of these forms in figure 10 allows a more thorough definition of the figures within the composition. Those in the upper row of the ship wear the Javanese court cloths, the *dodot*, characterized in the puppets by the low bustle. Not only the manner in which they wear the cloth, but also the *kris*—a dagger—tucked in the waistband identifies these as men. Because of the variation in costume and the absence of *kris*, the figures in the center row are of a different class or sex. Certainly one of the figures within the house identified by long hair is female, probably an unmarried girl, for after marriage women bind their hair in a knot close to the head. In the lowest row, two figures ride on horses which seem to be led by men who also wear *kris*. The riders wear the men's *dodot*, but have no weapons. This may mean that the men are dead, for *kris* are not buried with the owner, or that the unidentifiable objects in their hands are replacements for the weapon and may be symbols of rank.

Such added detail exacerbates the frustration of not being able to understand the significance of the composition. There is no way to determine the meaning nor whether the source for this highly vocal rendering is ultimately Javanese or South Sumatran. This cloth is not unique in its

narrative implication for there are other *tampan* with *wajang* style figures arranged in different tableau-like settings and these, too, defy analysis.

The *tampan* illustrated in figures 5 to 10 are a small sample of the types of compositions containing representational forms occurring in the small cloths. This type of *tampan* constitutes approximately fifty percent of a sample of over three hundred of these cloths. The remaining textiles are patterned with floral or geometric designs. Figures 11 and 12 represent complex examples of these. The former features an interlocking knot design, and the latter a schematic floral pattern. There are many other textiles in this design classification which have simpler design features. For example diamond forms, interlocking hooks or scrolls, gyronny patterns and a few widely spaced bands of geometric shapes.

Rules of symmetry are the only formal design principles evident in a majority of the ship cloths. This is true for both individual design elements and compositions as a whole. With a few exceptions such as the intrusive *wajang* elements, human figures tend to be rendered frontally and are bilaterally symmetrical. Almost all architectural and plant forms are internally bilaterally symmetrical. Though most animals appear in profile they conform to the idea of symmetry because two of the figures are generally placed to confront a common object. The mirror image thus creates a bilaterally symmetrical composition. In a majority of the examples these individual elements are arranged in a symmetrical fashion no matter how the surface of the cloth is divided. When a single design field exists, as in figure 5, the elements are repeated on each side of a central vertical axis. When three horizontal zones divide a *tampan*, as in figure 7, the elements are usually placed in a symmetrical manner within the zones. Other than symmetry there are no formal features common to any great number of these cloths. Not even such details as borders are consistent in the textiles. Some *tampan*, as figures 5 and 6, are broadly framed with rows of dentates, scrolls and other border patterns that may occupy half of the cloth surface. Others, as figure 9, have virtually no elaboration at the extremities.

Considering the striking character of the ship cloths, few were collected by museums before the 1930's. Then it was mostly European interests that sought out these textiles and not American, so that very few of the cloths exist in United States collections. The most important holdings occur in the Tropical Institute in Amsterdam, the Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde in Leiden, the Museum voor Land- en Volkenkunde in Rotterdam, the Museum für Volkerkunde in Basel and the Jakarta Central Museum in Indonesia. In 1971 and 1972 many of the textiles appeared on the market in Jakarta and most were purchased by private individuals. Hopefully these will eventually find their way into museum collections for there

are only approximately 1,000 to 1,500 of the ship cloths in existence today, and these deserve to be preserved as evidence of a rich artistic tradition that once existed in South Sumatra.

NOTES

- [1] South Sumatrans said *palepai* referred to a ship and *sesai balak* meant "big wall."
- [2] The differences among the *palepai* groups are not arbitrary variations, but a well defined system whose parameters we can only partially discern. Elsewhere [Gittinger 1972] I have shown that the cloths of the first two groups are complementary parts of a dualistic pattern. This analysis was made possible by illustrating that the original red ship configuration was in reality the frontal rendering of a bird.



Figure 1. *Palepai* (277 cm x 54 cm). A large blue ship supports smaller boats carrying an animal and rider. A second human form appears in front of the animal. In the center of the ship are three stylized forms which may be trees. The rather sharp vertical line in the hull is the result of two different shades of blue which were used to complete the cloth. The variations in this class of *palepai* are in the forms carried within the large blue ship. Often these include a house with bifurcated projections from the walls. They all share the large blue ship with its angular trifurcated bow and stern projections. Author's collection.

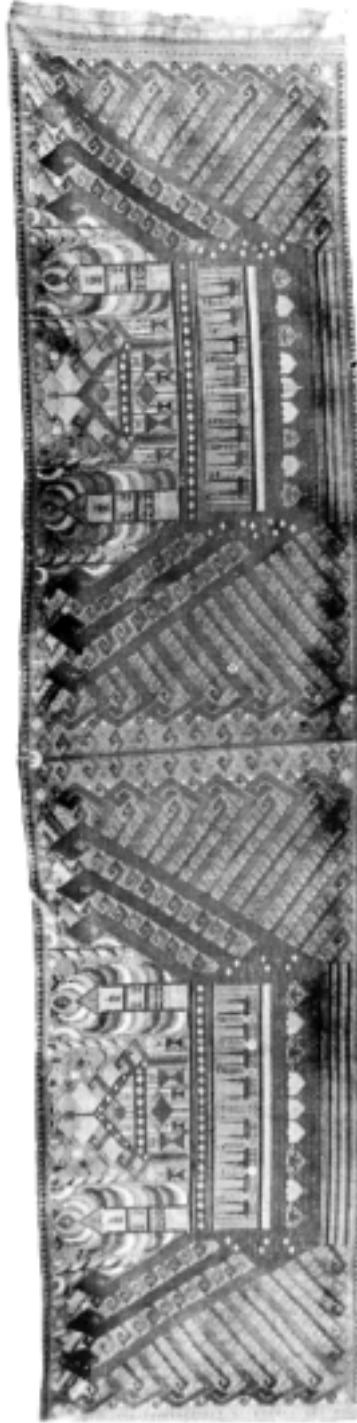


Figure 2. *Palepai* (330 cm x 72 cm). Two major red ship forms provided the matrix for similar detailed compositions. On the deck are three buildings filled with human figures while other figures hold banners between these structures. The walls and roofs are ornamented with curved, horn-like projections and the space above is filled with birds and unidentifiable forms. Within the hold of the ships appear stylized animals. The two red ships which help define this class are reduced to one in a few examples. Jakarta Central Museum, Indonesia, No. 20995.

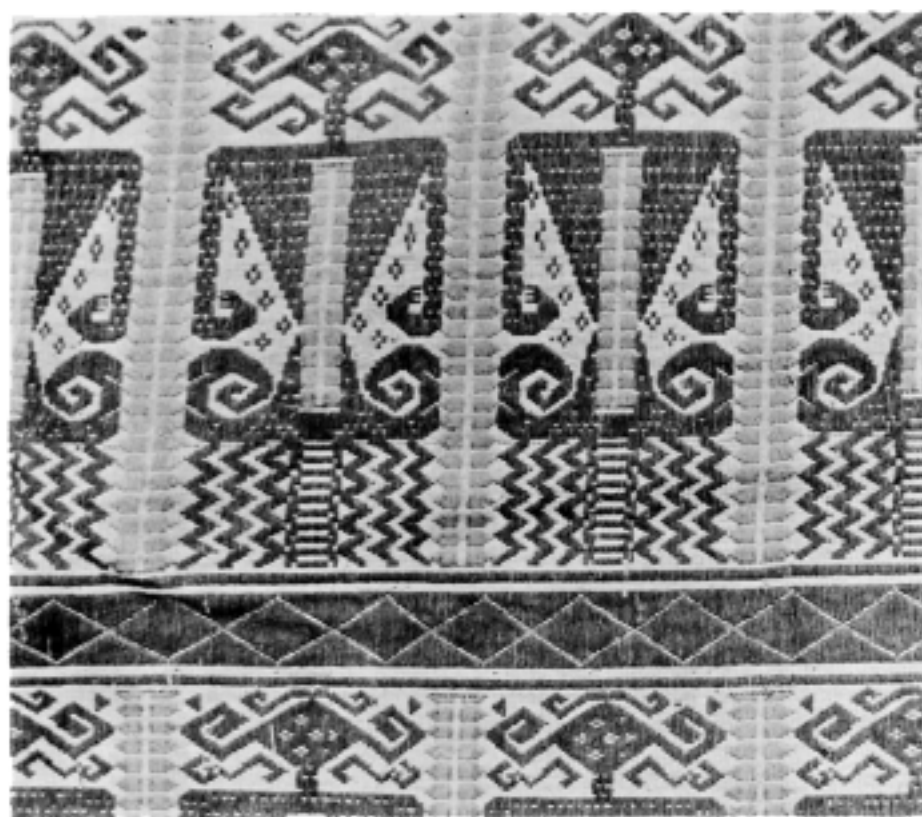
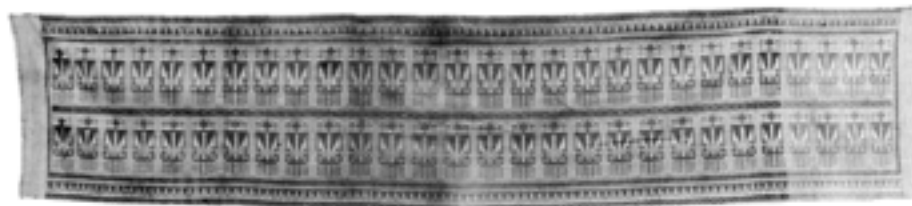


Figure 3 and 3a. *Palepai* (301 cm x 63.5 cm). Variations exist of this type of cloth but all are related by the use of rows of these particular stylized human forms. This textile utilizes only two rows but other examples may have a central third row of human figures or small boats carrying an animal and rider. Jakarta Central Museum, Indonesia, No. 20994.



Figure 4. *Palepai* (277 cm x 60 cm). In this exceptionally well crafted textile four panels each carry a similar design. This is a small red ship carrying a tree having broad angular limbs. Different elements flank the base of the trees. In one case these are horses each carrying two figures. The second panel has elephant figures in the flanking position while two of the panels show human figures near the base of the tree. These panels exist on a common warp but are zoned into panel segments by the use of narrow vertical tree forms. Originally all the major contours of the large design elements were outlined with metal strips tacked to the surface of the cloth. Now only a few remaining pieces add glittering highlights to the cloth. Cloths of this classification all have the panel format though their designs may vary widely from the example given. Author's collection.



Figure 5

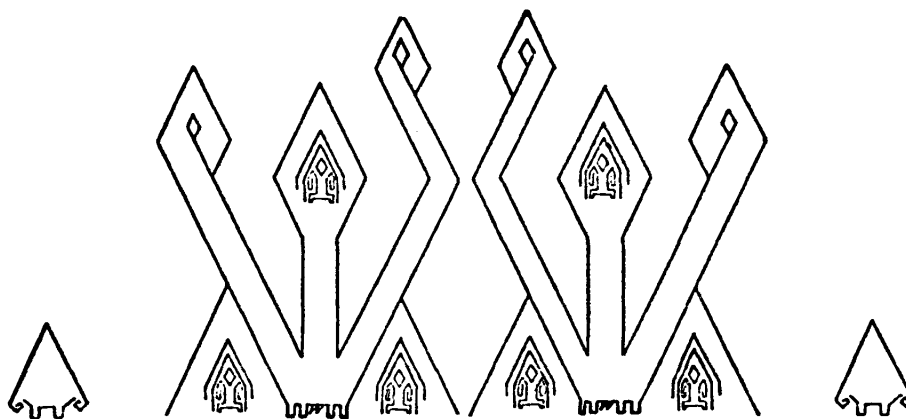


Figure 5a

Figure 5 and 5a. *Tampan* (62 cm x 62 cm). This extremely intricate composition permits the accurate reading of many textile designs which are related but executed with insufficient skill or understanding of the design. The sketch in figure 5a delineates the major features of the cloth which are two confronting animals carrying human figures and other human forms in conical huts on the base line. This cloth was collected by 1886 and is one of the oldest in Western collections. Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde, Leiden, No. 575-19.



Figure 6. *Tampan* (65 cm x 53 cm). This composition derives from a source similar to that in figure 5. Now the animals have three small feet, only the bend of the neck remains and the tail and neck lines extend to the top of the cloth. By comparing many related textiles it is possible to understand the composition of these drastically altered forms. Tropical Institute, Amsterdam, No. 2125-21.



Figure 7. *Tampan* (65 cm x 70 cm). The birds that confront one another in the small boats are peacocks which may be identified by their circular-tipped tail feathers. Tropical Institute, Amsterdam, No. 2125-47.



Figure 8. *Tampan*. Parallel rows of blue bird figures pattern the surface of this cloth. The characteristic lateral hooks on this form may indicate the bird is the same genus as in figure 9. Author's photograph from Padang Ratu near Semangka Bay.

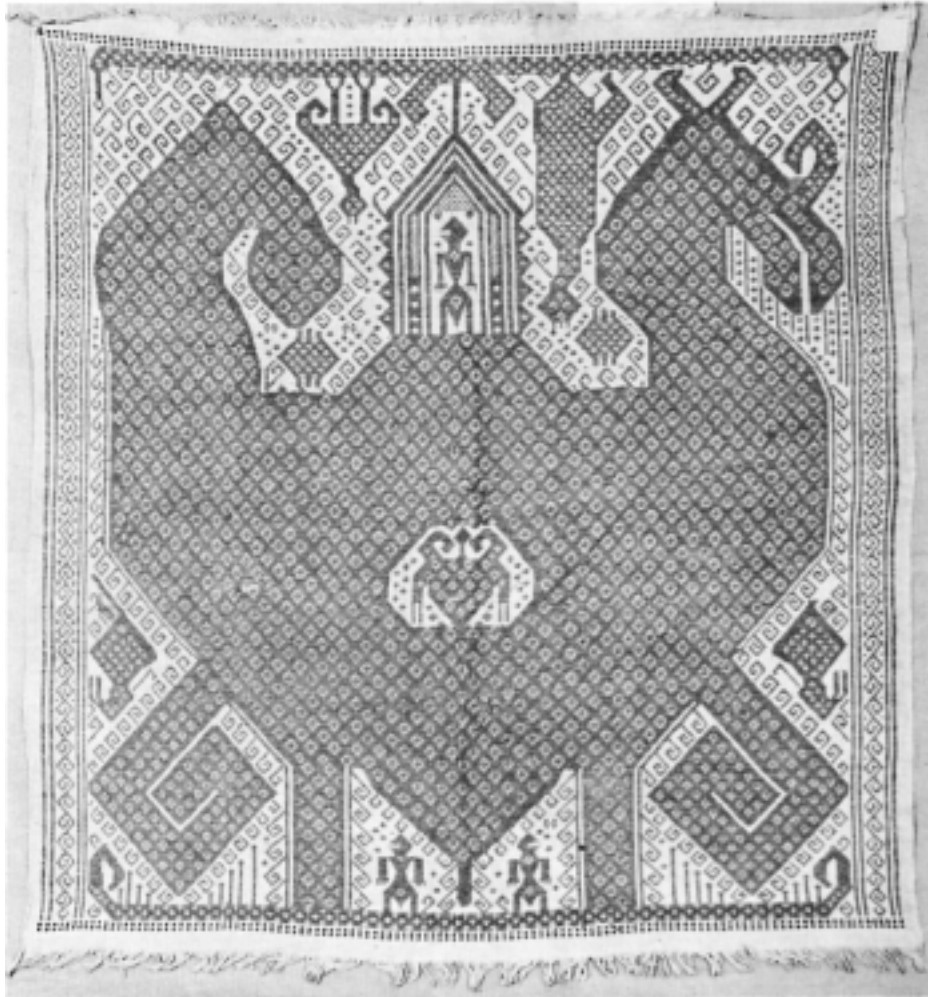


Figure 9. *Tampan* (73 cm x 67 cm). The large reddish-brown bird which dominates this textile is very probably a member of the hornbill family, *Bucerotidae*. This is suggested by the enlarged curved protuberance at the base of the bill which is common to this genus. Museum voor Land-en Volkenkunde, Rotterdam, No. 41452.

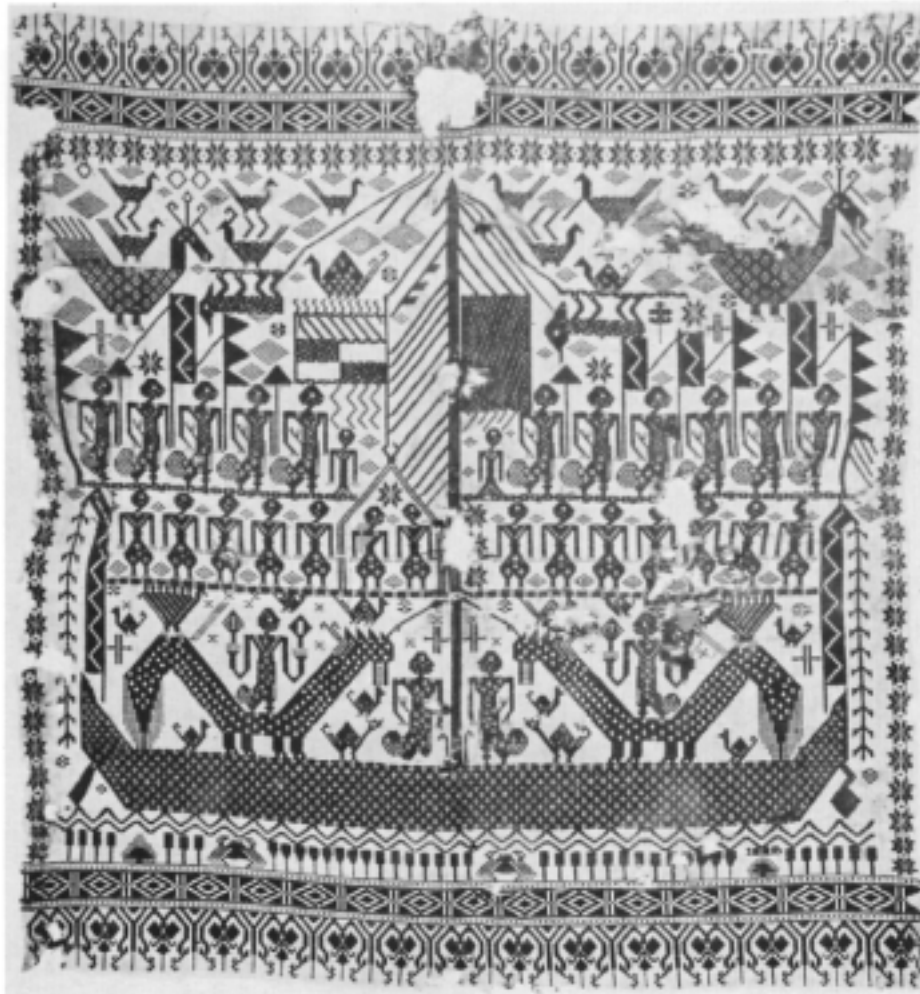


Figure 10. *Tampan* (80 cm x 74 cm). Though pocked with holes, the intricacy of the composition of this *tampan* is still apparent. The human figures are rendered in a manner similar to the Javanese puppets suggesting the adaption of forms from that neighboring island. The figures on the ship deck and those in the upper row may be identified as men because they wear the men's *dodot*, the Javanese court dress, and have *kris* at their waist. The composition is worked in a finely spun brown thread. Tropical Institute, Amsterdam, No. 2125-25.

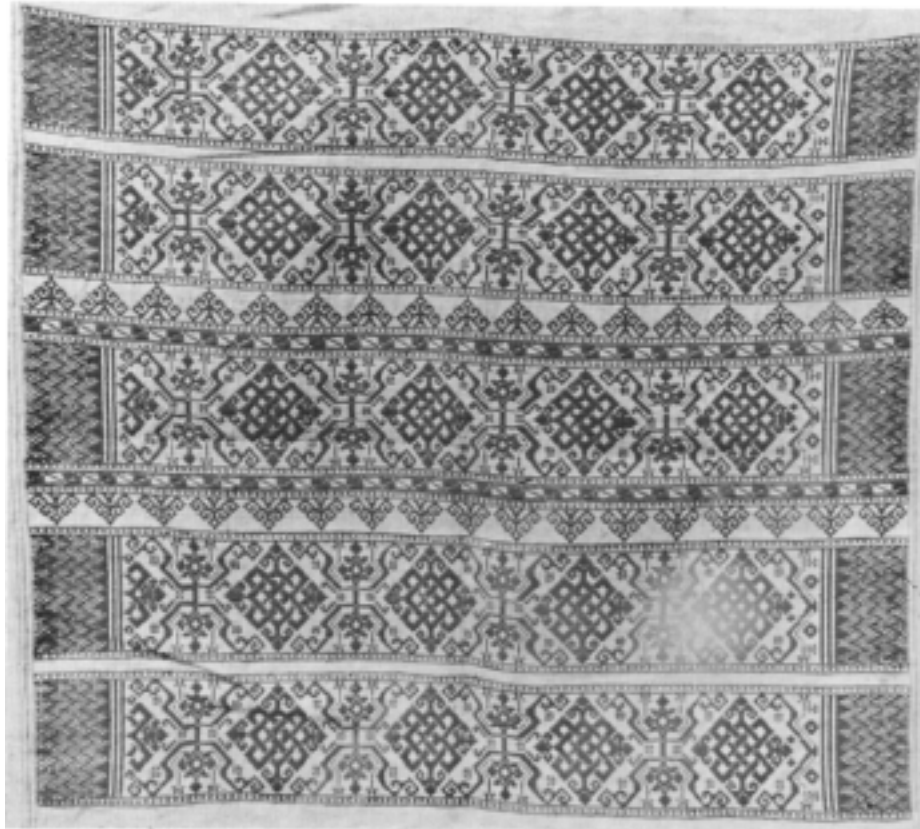


Figure 11. *Tampan* (73.5 cm x 70 cm). This design of interlocking knots is a very unusual pattern which has been executed with supreme skill. This motif also occurs on metal work in Sumatra and may have been copied from that medium. Jakarta Central Museum, Indonesia, No. 26362.



Figure 12. *Tampun* (63 cm x 60 cm). Stylized floral forms are used to pattern the textile surface. The use of a repeated design and the continuous supplementary weft make the reverse face of the textile as acceptable as the obverse face. Tropical Institute, Amsterdam, No. 1334-11.

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NOTES FROM ABROAD

The Needle's Excellency

In 1631 John Taylor's Poem "The Praise of the Needle" prefaced a pattern book published by James Bolter under the title *The Needle's Excellency*. It is this name that has been given to a travelling exhibition of sixteenth and seventeenth-century embroideries belonging to the Victoria & Albert Museum.

The exhibition was first shown in London in the spring of 1973. In September and October it was then shown in Brussels as part of "Euro-pania", a grand casserole of cultural festivities produced to mark Britain's entry into the European Community. "The Needle's Excellency" will subsequently be included as one of the many fine travelling exhibitions organized by the Circulation Department of the Victoria & Albert.

In Brussels the exhibition was held in the Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire in Parc Cinquantenaire. Although the main museum is now closed for two years for major renovations, the special exhibition room was open and attracting many interested visitors. The scarlet colour scheme of the display cases of "The Needle's Excellency" fitted well with the gigantic ceiling-high tapestries of the main salons of the museum.

One of the highlights of the 126 items in the exhibition are the fragments from the famous "Oxburgh hangings", embroidered by the Scottish queen, Mary, Queen of Scots (1542-1587), and Bess of Hardwick, Countess of Shrewsbury (1520-1608), whose husband was the Queen's chief jailer from 1569 to 1584. The embroideries, worked during this period, are the property of the Victoria & Albert and will shortly be returned, after conservation treatment, to their more usual site, Oxburgh Hall, a National Trust property in Norfolk.

The hangings are canvas work, with medallion motifs applied to a green velvet ground. Many of the designs were taken from Conrad Gesner's *Icones Animalium*, *Icones Avium* and *Icones Animalium Aquatiliium* (Zurich, 1560). Although some of the motifs bear the crowned initial "MR", sometimes with the Greek monogram of Mary's first husband, Francis II of France, it is not known exactly how much of the work can in fact be attributed to the Queen's needle. She was a keen embroiderer and her needleworks headed the list of possessions she handed for safekeeping to her French maid, Mlle. de Beauregard, immediately before her execution at Fotheringhay in 1587.

The Oxburg embroideries constitute the earliest items included in this exhibition. Dating from the beginning of the 17th century is a pin cushion, delicately embroidered with a stitch count of 38 to the inch, worked in polychrome silks on a linen ground, in tent stitch, gobelin stitch and French knots. From the same decade, too, is a linen purse embroidered with silver and silver-gilt thread, silver purl and polychrome silks, with a floral design.

One of the most noticeable attributes of "The Needle's Excellency" is the continual repetition of floral decoration. An elaborate silver-gilt and silver thread floral picture (no. 123 in the catalog), with a rose and three buds carefully balanced by foliage, is worked in careful motif outline and would have been intended for subsequent application to a ground of velvet or silk: there is a similar panel on permanent display in the American Museum in Britain, Claverton Manor, Bath. In the design of this exhibition panel is a certain oriental approach to the symmetry of foliage, a balance typical of the day.

There are many examples of embroidered costume in the exhibition. An early-17th century hood, of white linen with seam embroidery and bobbin lace decoration, shows simplicity of style. A contemporary glove gauntlet, on the other hand, has a linen canvas ground heavily and densely embroidered with silver and silver-gilt thread, silver purl, coiled wire and silks, once again with a floral overall design. It is an elaborate work, awe-inspiring in intricacy of design and workmanship, epitomising much of needlework embellishment of the time.

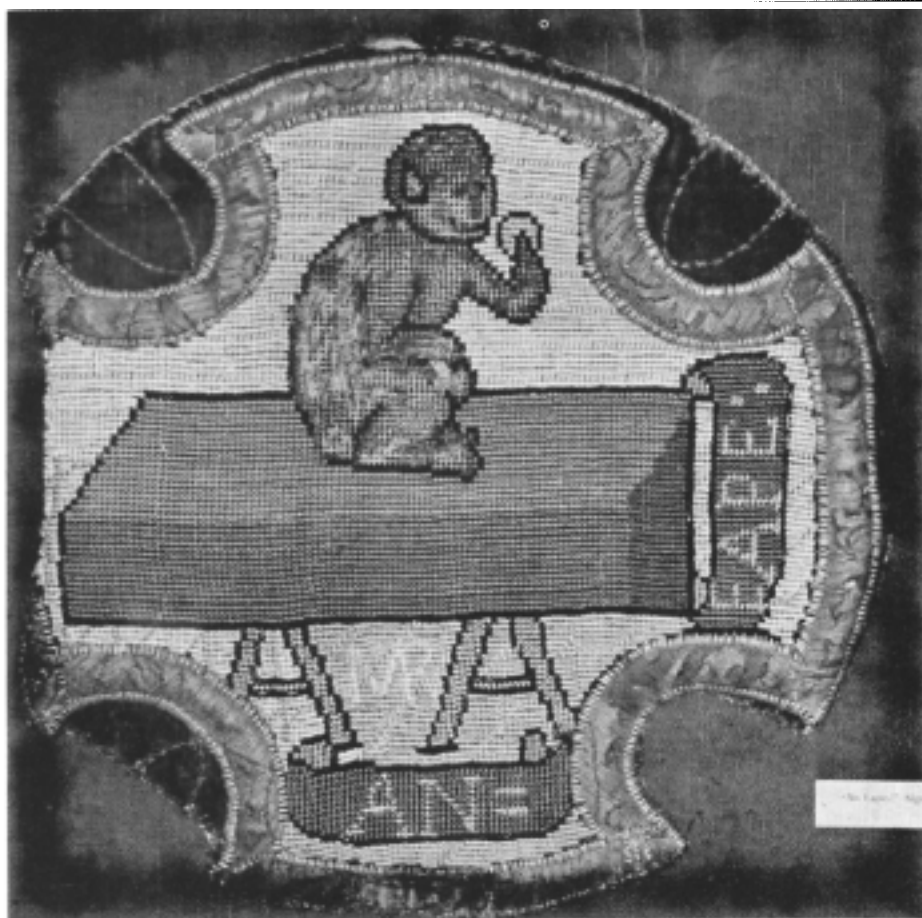
It is a thoroughly representative exhibition, covering the whole gamut of embroidery of the era. There are religious themes and secular designs. There are simple - and elaborate - embroideries, and there is use of usual - and unusual - materials. A quill pen from the end of the 17th century, for instance, has its shaft completely covered with gold wire and plaited silk. One of the two mirror frames in the exhibition, signed and dated "EB 1669", has seed pearls, beads and metal strip and thread added to the main silk and linen threads worked on a satin ground. This particular item, no. 36 in the catalog, is in fact one of the most complicated pieces in the whole exhibition. It is 26" x 21 3/4" and includes stump work (shown also in the needlework casket, 1683, no. 28), pile work and applied canvas work, needlepoint and satin panels.

Embroidery of the 16th and 17th centuries attained an apogee of versatility that has seldom been repeated. Decoration with the needle was utilized in all facets of life, as "The Needle's Excellency" well portrays. Having seen the exhibition both in London and in Brussels, I feel that it shows to best advantage outside its native museum, where there is an

unrivalled collection of embroidery permanently on display. "The Needle's Excellency" is an important exhibition that makes an impact on the lover of the embroidered arts, an effect that will be continued as it progresses on its planned itinerary around Britain. (Full details of current locations can be obtained from the Circulation Department of the Victoria & Albert Museum, London SW7).

— Mary Gostelow

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"An eape", with the initials "MR", attributed to Mary Queen of Scots and taken from a design on page 92 of *Icones animalium* by Conrad Gesner (Zurich 1560). This panel is one of the "Oxburgh hangings", worked by the Queen and Bess of Hardwick, Countess of Shrewsbury, during the years of the former lady's imprisonment, 1569 to 1584.

AN EXCITING TWO-PART EMBROIDERY EVENT will be taking place in London this fall. The Embroiderers' Guild is holding an International Art Auction and, following it, a large Christmas Festival. The Auction, at 8:00 p.m. on Wednesday, 20th November, at the Grosvenor House Hotel in Park Lane, will be conducted by Mr. Paul Whitfield of Christie's. Patrons of the evening include Their Royal Highnesses, the Duchess of Gloucester and the Princess Grace of Monaco, and items for auction are already being received from many parts of the world. Lots will include embroidery, embroidery tools and books, and related valuable art pieces. Two weeks later, on Wednesday 4th December, the Christmas Festival will be held at the Portman Hotel in Portman Square from 11:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. The organizer, Miss Alexandra N. Beale (Secretary of the Guild), is planning exhibitions of embroidery, demonstrations by leading embroiderers, sales of art works and gifts, and stands of leading embroidery suppliers. Any reader of the *Bulletin* planning on being in England at the time is warmly invited to participate. Further details can be obtained from Miss Beale at the Embroiderers' Guild, 73 Wimpole Street, London W1 or from Mrs. M. F. Gostelow, 43 Milton Abbas, Blandford Forum, Dorset.

— Mary Gostelow

BOOK NOTES

Katharine B. Brett, *English Embroidery in the Royal Ontario Museum*, Toronto, Royal Ontario Museum, 1972.

Another treat from the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto, Canada, is their picture book of English embroidery. This is a selection of choice pieces from their collections, edited and described by Katharine B. Brett, Associate Curator of the Textile Department.

Precise in its technical information and beautifully printed, it should prove a delight to the scholar, connoisseur and collector. The objects shown have been carefully chosen, not only for their aesthetic qualities, but also to give a representative selection of the varied techniques and uses of English embroidery, ranging from Tudor times to the late eighteenth century. Among the household articles are pictures, mirrors, caskets, carpets and chair-seats worked in canvas stitches as well as silk embroideries worked on satin, to be used as bedcovers, mirrors and pictures. The crewel-work bed-hangings and bed-spreads are embroidered in a variety of styles and techniques. Most important in this group is a bed-hanging worked in the usual heavy branching style of the late 17th century. This is signed with a cypher and the date 1619, which places it precisely at the very end of the reign of James II. The most enchanting coverlet is worked on linen and cotton twill embroidered in bright crewels with a variety of flowers, birds, animals and chinoiserie figures, dated 1728.

Embroidered costume articles, too, show a wide range of techniques and styles. There are aprons, waistcoats, petticoats and coifs, worked on silk or linen. Altogether, the book gives a comprehensive survey of the art of the English embroiderer, - which should give all lovers of needle-work food for love and pleasure.

— Cora Ginsburg

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Dorothy K. Burnham, *"Cut My Cote,"* Toronto, Royal Ontario Museum, 1973.

To those of us who didn't have the good fortune to see the exhibition, "Cut My Cote," which was on view at the Royal Ontario Museum during the summer of 1973, there are still the delights of reading the catalogue

written and illustrated by Dorothy K. Burnham of that museum. The show, which was beautifully mounted by John Vollmer, also of the museum staff, expounded and illustrated the manifold ways in which a simple length of cloth could be cut and arranged so that not a scrap of cloth would be wasted, while producing a garment of grace, utility, and even opulence. The diagrams appended to the drawings of the garments illustrate the ingenuity of man in using every inch of the precious cloth as it came from the loom, - precious because it was produced by hand labour and so not to be wasted. Various looms produce cloth as narrow as four inches up to as wide as a yard.

Extreme simplicity of cut is often allied with the richest decoration, sometimes woven and sometimes embroidered. The garments of this type most familiar to us are the Indian sari with its graceful folds (arranged by the wearer) and the Scottish kilt, which was originally a pleated length of woolen fabric patterned in vari-colored tartans, wrapped around the body and held in place at the waist by a belt. With the present imminent shortages in our prodigal society, a backwards glance at the economy of means used in producing these beautiful garments might prove useful to us. Perhaps we'll all be wearing togas again.

— Cora Ginsburg

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Harold B. Burnham and Dorothy K. Burnham, "*Keep Me Warm One Night*" - Early handweaving in eastern Canada, University of Toronto Press in cooperation with the Royal Ontario Museum, 1972.

This magnificent book is a masterly presentation of a previously unstudied field of textiles. In 1947 Miss Florence McKinnon gave a coverlet woven in Ontario to the Textile Department of the Royal Ontario Museum. Dorothy Burnham, then the Keeper of Textiles, was inspired by this gift to the idea of discovering and recording examples of early weaving in eastern Canada. Many people carried the project forward, guided later by Mrs. Gerard Brett, the subsequent Curator of Textiles. It was subsidized at first by grants from ten Ontario textile firms. In 1964, Harold B. Burnham took command, and the project was enlarged to include handweaving in other Canadian museums. Grants from the National Museum of Man in Ottawa, the Canada Council and Dominion Textile, Ltd. made possible its completion to this point.

The book begins with an exhaustive study of immigration patterns in

eastern Canada, starting in 1604 with Champlain, and the resulting developments in domestic and commercial handweaving up to 1900.

Equally thorough study is made of wool, linen and cotton, the materials of Canadian handweaving; the tools for processing and spinning them, the yarns, the reels and swifts, the dyes, the mordants, the spools and warping racks, the bobbins and shuttles, the looms and their parts, the means of dressing them and weaving on them, and finally the pattern drafts for threading them, - from one of which this book takes its name. 74 photographs with full captions complete this section.

A discussion of the basic weaves of Canadian handweaving, twill and tabby, is illustrated by exquisite drawings by Mrs. Burnham in which the various versions of these weaves are expanded to make clear the three-dimensional interlace of warp and weft. Each drawing is supplemented by an entering draft, a diagram of the shaft and treadle tie-up, and a diagram of the order of treadling. Weaving terms to be used in the following chapters are defined.

A short section on costume shows how in earlier days in Canada materials imported from Europe and native Indian materials supplemented Canadian handwoven fabrics. The photographs illustrating this chapter are also fully captioned and often documented with touching personal histories.

Carpets, blankets, linens; the various kinds of coverlets - two-shaft, overshot, 'summer and winter', multiple-shaft, twill diaper, doublecloth, and jacquard - are all presented in detail. 385 examples are illustrated and given individual expertises.

The book contains in addition 5 color plates, a Select bibliography, an Appendix, an Index and two beautiful hand-drawn maps - one of Quebec and the Atlantic Provinces, and one of the Southern Ontario Counties.

Mr. and Mrs. Burnham, both of whom have been textile curators at the Royal Ontario Museum, bring more to their subject than could anyone else. They are both skilled handweavers and gifted scholars and writers as well as patriotic Canadians dedicated for twenty-five years to this "major research venture of the Royal Ontario Museum Textile Department." It is a tragedy that the death of Mr. Burnham just after the completion of this book broke up an extraordinary partnership whose enjoyment of their highly specialized work together is yet another of the fine qualities apparent here. One hopes that Mrs. Burnham will carry on the aim they state modestly of concentrating on other aspects of early weaving in Canada remaining to be pursued.

— Jean Mailey

Serge Chassagne, *La Manufacture de Toiles Imprimées de Tournemine-Lès-Angers (1752-1820)*, Paris, Librairie C. Klincksieck, n.d.

This book is a formidable achievement of intelligent research. Although it is a local history of the textile-printing industry of Tournemine-Lès-Angers from 1752 to 1820, it develops its subject in depth, starting with the historical background of the importation and domestic production of 'indiennes' before the Edict of Nantes and their prohibition in 1686. It continues with the 'bootleg' production from that date to 1752 and the final rebirth of the printed fabric industry all over France, when it was again legalized. The manufacture in the sleepy town of Angers is considered from all angles - economic factors, technical problems and the personal aspects of the entrepreneurs and workers involved.

The bibliography alone fills twelve closely printed pages, a monument to the systematic genius of the French bureaucracy. I stand in awe of the scholarly prowess displayed in this book, a must for all students of textiles.

— Cora Ginsburg

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Muriel B. Crowell, *The Fine Art of Needlepoint*, New York, 1973.

This book is ideal for the busy person of today for home study and easy reference. It has good basic instructions for teaching needlepoint and twenty interesting projects, two of which are especially in accord with current interests - The Phulkari Picture Frame: This Indian embroidery stitch originates from the Punjab and is still there to this day. The Chinese Butterfly Pillow: This is done in rococo stitch which historians say came from China. All illustrations are good and clear.

— Deidre Chapin

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Cécile Dreesmann, *Samplers for Today*, New York, 1972.

This book of samplers has been put together with much enthusiasm as an inspiration for people to learn from the past to create for the future. The numerous illustrations with text are in black and white with some in

color. Techniques, stitches and mounting are discussed. For further study, several other books are recommended.

— Deidre Chapin

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Natalie Hays Hammond, *New Adventures in Needlepoint Design*, New York, 1973.

This is a book on needlepoint unlike any other because of Miss Hammond's own personality and background. She has been an accomplished painter, stained-glass artist and an experienced wood-carver, among many other things. For many years she has made extensive and exhaustive studies of design in many media in terms of the similarity and universality of peoples all over the world.

In work in needlepoint as presented in this book, she uses symbols exclusively as a basis for her designs. 150 illustrations of her works supplement the rich text. Some of them are in color, which is part of the symbolism. They are grouped by the source of the designs. Among these sources are Mexican seals and stamps, hobo signs, stonemasons' marks, house marks and holding marks, merchants' marks, occupational marks and counter marks, armorers' marks, magic signs, astrological signs, ancient chemical signs, English provincial silver marks, letters from alphabets in various languages, heraldic beasts and other creatures, and - very much up to date - electronic signs. Miss Hammond believes canvas work in one basic stitch (there is an excellent chapter on the half-cross stitch and its variations) to be the medium most adequate for her interpretation of the symbols.

This vast and fascinating collection of designs has in common, according to Miss Hammond, concentration, logic, style and self-discipline. The backgrounds and borders evolved by Miss Hammond underline the meaning of each design. She says:

"In substance, this needlepoint represents a few of man's footprints crossing and recrossing the sands of time in quest of the beliefs, faiths and philosophies of his era, or the mirage of his own immortality."

— Marianne A. Huebner

Carol Cheney Rome and Georgia French Devlin, *A New Look at Needlepoint*, New York, 1972.

So many books have been written on needlepoint that it is a pleasure to find this book with a different approach. It starts with a brief discussion on how needlepoint can be a pleasurable hobby with very little effort. The authors also present a history of this art from early times to the Victorian era with excellent illustrations.

The main portion of this book is devoted to how to start, the many stitches that can be used, good color combinations and an easy lesson in design. The projects range from household items to personal attire. The book ends with a chapter on how to finish work properly and some good suggestions for further reading. The illustrations are clear enough to give one a very good idea of what the finished object should look like, and the diagrams are easy to follow.

— Deidre Chapin

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John Shearman, *Raphael's Cartoons in the Collection of Her Majesty the Queen and the Tapestries for the Sistine Chapel*, London, Phaidon, 1972.

The title of this book indicates that its subject is primarily the Raphael cartoons in the Victoria and Albert Museum rather than the tapestries that were woven from them. Its learning is awe-inspiring and the illustrations, especially the details and x-rays of the cartoons, are fascinating and of great importance to the Raphael specialist. But the tapestry-minded reader fares less well. There is indeed a long, detailed and thoroughly documented account of the *editio princeps* of the *Acts of the Apostles* and the other 16th century versions; a fuller listing of the innumerable later weavings would not have been worth the effort. But one would have liked a longer account and more illustrations of the beautiful borders, both those designed in Raphael's workshop and the later supplementary ones for which Dr. Shearman thinks Bernard van Orley may have been responsible. No tapestry specialist is included in the long list of scholars thanked by the author; as a result, perhaps, he has too easily assumed that the "panni" that decorated the walls of the Sistine Chapel in 1391 and the "decem panni virides" of 1464 were tapestries in the strict sense of the word. But among the nearly nine hundred footnotes (which sometimes crowd the text off the page) are a few nuggets for the tapestry-lover. New to me is a quotation from a letter by Pietro Aretino of 1537;

"little flowers are no longer used in damasks or tapestries" (*vazzi*); in other words, *millefleurs* by then looked old-fashioned - at least, in Italy.

— Edith Appleton Standen

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Monica Stucky-Schurer, *Die Passionsteppiche von San Marco in Venedig*, Bern, Abegg-Stiftung, 1972.

The Abegg Foundation, as its second major contribution to the study of ancient textiles, has now given us an exemplary monograph on an important set of early tapestries. The ten *Passion* pieces in Venice are here exhaustively studied; technique, iconography, original use, history, condition and style are discussed with great thoroughness and sound scholarship. One interesting feature is the presentation of each panel in two photographs on facing pages, with the restored areas indicated on one of them. The author surveys tapestry-making in France in the late 14th and early 15th centuries; the Angers *Apocalypse*, the *Nine Heroes* of the Cloisters and eight productions of Arras, including the *Annunciation* in the Metropolitan Museum, are studied in detail and compared with the Venetian set. Charts showing the forms of leaves, flowers, grasses, clouds and other decorative motifs in all these tapestries are part of the close reasoning by which the author reaches the conclusion that the *Passion* set was made in Venice from Venetian cartoons between 1420 and 1430 by a weaver from Arras. The book is indispensable to anyone seriously concerned with medieval tapestries and will be of the greatest importance in all future study of the "Arras or Tournai" problem.

— Edith Appleton Standen

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Jerzy Szablowski, ed., *The Flemish Tapestries at Wawel Castle in Cracow*, Antwerp, Fonds Mercator, 1972.

There is no question to my mind that this is the most beautiful book about tapestries ever published. Much of the credit must go to its sponsor, the Banque de Paris et des Pays-Bas Belgique. The color plates are by the Photogravure De Schutter of Antwerp and are worthy of their subjects, the 150 or so tapestries commissioned by the Polish king Sigismund Augustus in the mid-16th century from the finest weavers in Brussels. The editor has written on the origin and history of the collection; Anna

Misiag-Bochenska on the tapestries with figures, a *Scenes from Genesis* set; Maria Hennel-Bernasikova on the verdure with animals; Magdalena Piwocka on the grotesques; Sophie Schneebalg-Perelman on Flemish tapestry-making as related to the Wawel pieces; and Adelbrecht van de Walle, very briefly, on Flanders at this period. The English translation is by Haakon Chevalier and should have been corrected by a tapestry specialist; the proof-reading is inadequate. The three sections by Polish scholars are excellent and Dr. Schneebalg has provided an informative account of the weaver's marks. But the book, splendid as it is, can be severely criticized for its make-up. The most exasperating fault is the total lack of correspondence between the illustrations and the text; even the summary catalogue at the end of the book contains no references to the plates. The chapters dealing with the tapestries mention much comparable material, such as paintings, prints and book-illustrations. None is illustrated; instead, we have quite unnecessary full-page reproductions of such inappropriate and well-known tapestries as panels of the Cluny *Dame à la Licorne* and *David and Bathsheba* sets, or a two-page spread of a scene from the Rubens *Triumph of the Eucharist*. Nevertheless, open the book at any of the more than eighty splendid color-plates and criticism is forgotten in pure delight; in the details especially, the gold and silver gleam almost as they do in the originals and the perfection of the draughtsmanship and weaving provide a feast for the eyes only to be surpassed by a visit to Cracow.

— Edith Appleton Standen

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W. G. Thomson, *A History of Tapestry from the Earliest Times until the Present Day*. Third edition with revisions edited by F. P. & E. S. Thomson, E. P. Publishing Ltd., Wakefield, Yorkshire, 1973.

W. G. Thomson's *History of Tapestry* was published in 1906; a second edition, somewhat enlarged and revised, appeared in 1930. Now the author's son tells us that the demand for his father's book has become so great that he has had the 1930 edition reprinted almost unchanged, but with a new introduction and appendices. The result is a large and totally useless book. It informs us, for instance, that the only 14th-century Parisian tapestry other than the Angers *Apocalypse* is the small panel in Brussels, omitting New York's own *Nine Heroes*; we read that no tapestries unquestionably made at Fontainebleau are known, though there is the absolutely certain set in Vienna, recently exhibited in Paris. Even the appendices are misleading. No. III, "Where tapestries may be seen", lists the Textile Museum, the Corcoran Gallery and Dumbarton Oaks in

Washington, but leaves out the National Gallery, though the so-called "Mazarin" tapestry there is illustrated in color. The black-and-white photographs are muddy; the color-plates are taken from water-color copies by W. G. Thomson and are poorly reproduced. The book has no value for the specialist and will seriously misinform the general reader.

— Edith Appleton Standen

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Erica Wilson, *Embroidery Book*, New York, 1973.

Erica Wilson is so well-known, not only in the United States but also in England and Europe, that she hardly needs an introduction to anyone interested in embroidery. Her book is of equal interest to the embroiderer and to the history buff. Out of her researches in museums here and abroad, she presents a history and technical explanation of various types of embroidery, illustrated with excellent diagrams and beautiful photographs, both in color and in black and white. It is fascinating to the reader to realize how intertwined were stitches from the East and the West, brought together over well-travelled trade routes.

The author provides a helpful classification of types of embroidery: crewel work, needlepoint, silk and gold threads, black work, white work, stump work, monograms, appliqué and shiska work (a type of needlework from western India using mirrors as part of the decoration.)

Information on fabrics, yarns and needles, and suppliers is included, so that both beginner and experienced embroiderer may increase their capacities for creating beautiful things without a waste of time and materials. There are clear instructions for selecting a design, applying it, and using suitable stitches and the correct frame. The author gives sound information on how to join fabrics, including canvas of various kinds.

Miss Wilson treats with enthusiasm not only embroidery from the past. She presents with equal enthusiasm and expertise embroideries of today - conservative, artistic, or "just fun." The contemporary embroideries illustrated are by the author and her students. Outstanding is the work of Mrs. Daryl Parshall, who was instrumental in bringing Erica Wilson to the United States.

I do not know whom to congratulate more - the author, for an excellent publication, or all the readers who will enjoy and benefit from this book.

— Marianne A. Huebner

NOTES ON AUTHORS

Deidre Chapin is formerly executive vice-president of the Embroiderers' Guild of America, member of the board of directors for the Needle and Bobbin Club, and advisor on adaptation of needlepoint designs for floral arrangements and ecclesiastical furnishings.

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Cora Ginsburg is a well-known connoisseur, collector, lecturer in the field of historic fabrics.

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Dr. Mattiebelle S. Gittinger lived for two and a half years in Indonesia and, for part of her research project on Ship Cloths, returned to Sumatra for five months.

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Mary Gostelow is a British arts and travel writer who has long made a special study of the embroidery arts, old and new. A result of her researches, *Embroidery of the World*, will be published later this year.

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Marianne A. Huebner comes from a family who for generations have been collectors, connoisseurs, and conservators of textiles.

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Jean Mailey is Associate Curator in charge of the Textile Study Room at the Metropolitan Museum.

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Edith Appleton Standen is Curatorial Consultant to the department of Western European Arts at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and is writing the catalogue of their tapestry collection.

CLUB NOTES

The first meeting of the Needle and Bobbin Club in 1973 was held Tuesday, January 16th, at the Lotos Club, through the hospitality of Miss Ruth M. Anderson, Miss V. Isabelle Miller, Mrs. Malcolm E. Smith and Mrs. Earle Kress Williams. An illustrated lecture on "Classical and Medieval Embroidery," the first in the Club's series of four lectures on "The History of Western European and American Embroidery," was given by Miss Bonnie Young, Associate Curator of The Cloisters. A sumptuous tea followed.

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On Thursday afternoon, February fifteenth, Mr. Adolph S. Cavalle, former Chairman of the Costume Institute, gave the second illustrated talk in the Club's spring series on embroidery. He spoke on "Renaissance and Baroque Embroidery." The lecture was held in the home of Mrs. Hoyte Joyce. A delicious tea was offered afterwards by Mrs. Robert McC. Marsh, who lives in the same building. This neighborly arrangement was much appreciated by Club members.

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The Club was most fortunate to have Miss Mildred Lanier, Curator of Costumes and Textiles at Colonial Williamsburg, speak to them on "Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Embroidery," on Thursday afternoon, March twenty-second, when Mrs. Brett, Curator of Textiles at the Royal Ontario Museum, was forced to break her commitment to do this. Through the kindness of Mrs. Edith Achilles, Miss Frances Achilles, Mrs. E. Farrar Bateson, Mrs. N. Holmes Clare and Mrs. Charles B. Martin, this meeting was held at the National Society of Colonial Dames in the State of New York. A substantial tea formed a delightful close to the meeting.

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Mrs. Rudolph von Fluegge invited the Club to her home for their Annual Meeting, on Wednesday afternoon, April twenty-fifth. Mrs. Florence Montgomery, formerly Curator of Textiles at Winterthur, spoke

on "American Embroidery," the final lecture in the Club's spring series on embroidery. The members enjoyed the charming setting and delicious tea as well as the stimulating lecture.

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Our Spring Safari on May 9th was most agreeable, starting the day at the Joseph Loverings, with Mrs. Georgiana Brown Harbeson as co-hostess. A delicious lunch was preceded by excellent libations! Our thoughtful hostesses had prepared a very interesting and choice exhibit of embroideries. The visit to Cliveden was somewhat disappointing - there were exquisite examples of Philadelphia furniture but only three rooms were furnished so far.

— Dorothy Harkness

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On the Fall Trip on October 10th the Needle and Bobbin members were the guests of Mrs. Flagler Matthews on a beautiful late-summer day with sherry and hors d'oeuvres served on the sunlit terrace followed by a lovely luncheon served to 32 members on the trip. After lunch, Mrs. Matthews provided a speaker, Mrs. Mary Ellis, who spoke on the care and preservation of fine laces. Some laces from the Flagler Museum in Palm Beach were shown and admired. The treasures in Mrs. Flagler's house are always a joy, and her warmth and hospitality are a constant source of *gemutlichkeit*.

— Dorothy Harkness

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The fall season was opened by Dr. E. Byrne Costigan's most interesting lecture entitled "Embroidery Designs from Historical Sources" but including much from her courses at Dublin University on costume and color in ancient Celtic literary sources. She illustrated the talk with her own varied and skillful embroideries. Mrs. Layton S. Allen, Mrs. Jean U. Koree, Mrs. William Binnian and Mrs. Alan Rhys Martin generously

extended the hospitality of the National Society of Colonial Dames in the State of New York for this meeting on Tuesday, November thirteenth.

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By special request, the Needle and Bobbin Club and the Cooper-Hewitt Museum organized a trip to the Hammond Museum on November 16th to see the extraordinary one-man show of Miss Natalie Hammond's needlework. A good and satisfying lunch was served at the Museum.

Miss Hammond's new book, NEW ADVENTURES IN NEEDLEPOINT DESIGN, is an inspiration to designers as well as to "needlepointers." Her backgrounds are different and original while never overpowering the subject. Her pictures range from profound religious subjects to quaint and comic animals and symbols requiring deep and time-consuming research.

— Dorothy Harkness

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A glorious Christmas cocktail party offered by Mr. and Mrs. Norris W. Harkness, III, to members of the Needle and Bobbin Club and their escorts marked the high point of the season. This was held on Saturday afternoon, December sixteenth, from five to seven p.m. in the Harkness's luxurious and festively decorated apartment. A happier salute to the season could not be imagined.

IN MEMORIAM

The Needle and Bobbin Club cherishes the memory of members
who have died during the year.

Miss Wilhelmina Von Godin

Mrs. Merriweather Post

THE NEEDLE AND BOBBIN CLUB

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1974

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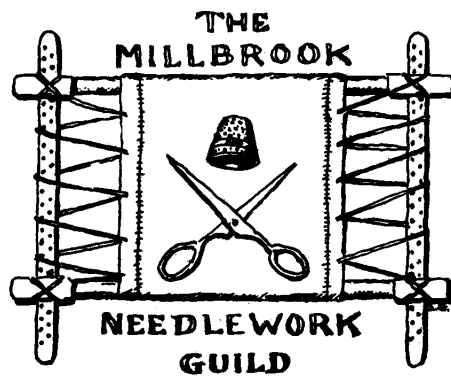
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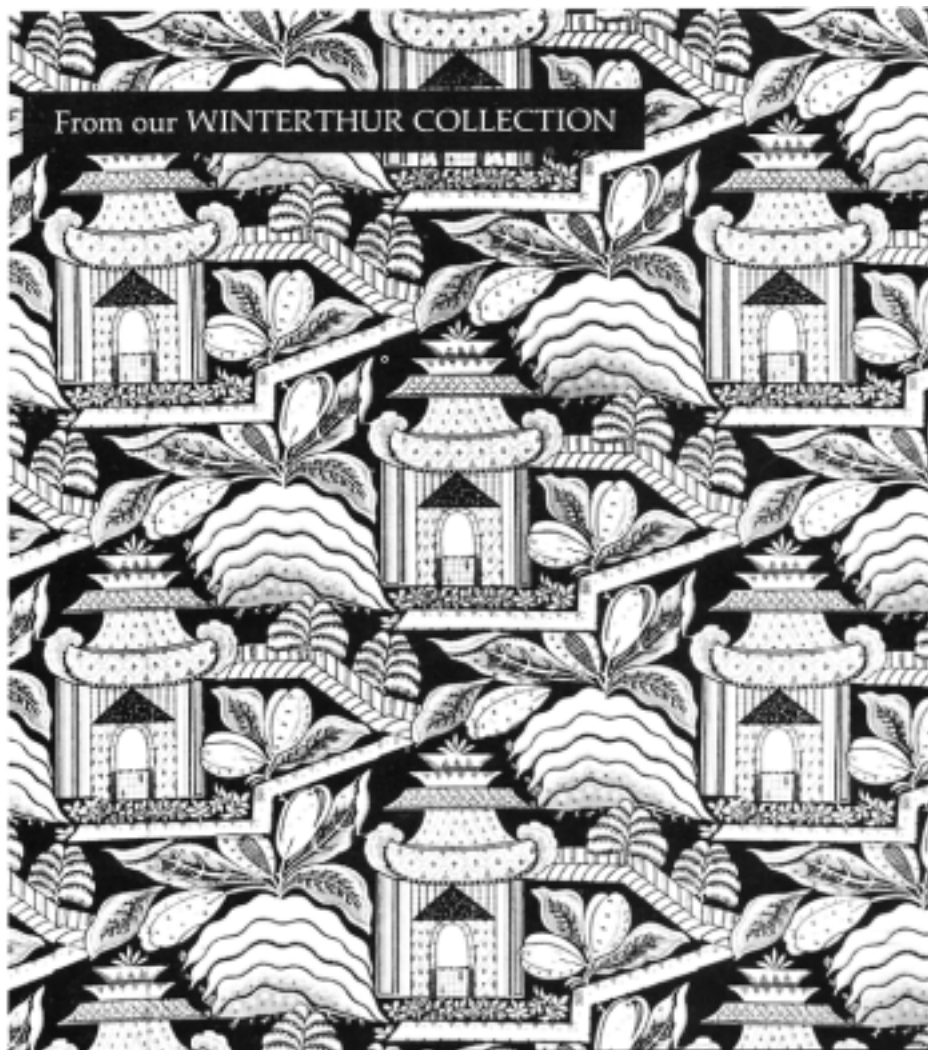
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