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# Shuttle Craft Guild

## HANDWEAVERS BULLETIN

**MARCH 1961**



### FROM THE FAJA OF ECUADOR

The ancient Ecuadorian tradition of faja (belt) weaving is today technically modernized, and the narrow textiles have found many new applications, both fanciful and practical. Long, narrow textiles, instead of the single belt woven on the ancient back-strap loom, are now possible through the use of frame looms with warp and cloth beams and shafts and treadles.

It is true that the modern faja do not reflect the true beauty of primitive, free design, nor the characteristic texture and quality of the ancient tradition of the pre-Inca textiles. But since these are qualities which make a belt suitable for museum display and little else, the adaptation which makes the present day belts serve useful purposes, beautifully, in present-day life, must be considered as progress. One trains the eye and the mind to look upon these, and similar adaptations of ancient textiles, for their own usefulness and beauty, without rueing the ancient and now useless traditions which serve no modern need.

Most startling use of the belts, perhaps, is in the faja furniture which is so practical and brightly attractive for porch or patio or garden. The furniture is simple, sturdy frames for chairs, cots, and stools, with interwoven belt lengths forming the seats and backs. The illustrations here are from the catalogue of native handcrafts of AKIOS INDUSTRIES (P O Box 219, Quito, Ecuador), a large and beautiful store devoted to handcrafts and native arts. There are other charming handcraft shops in the beautiful city

of Quito where one may purchase the unique wood carvings, the exotico beads, the remarkable feather work, and other native handcrafts, from small objects such as pan-pipes, costing a few cents, to magnificent hand-knotted carpets costing many hundred dollars. If good design or suitable adaptation to modern needs seem lacking in certain craft areas, these will no doubt soon be corrected through the work of Charles McGee, formerly of Cranbrook and now a U S State Department consultant in design in Ecuador.

The sympathetic manner in which belts join to compose wider fabrics (illustrated also by the Ashanti mantles taken up in the December Bulletin) is utilized to the fullest by the clever Ecuadorians in handbags of many styles, fireplace wood carriers, and sofa cushions. The adaptability of the narrow, highly ornamental fabric to the tailoring of small objects (if the workmanship is exquisite) is illustrated in the notebook covers, coin purses, cigarette cases, needle books, spectacle cases, and even in the very practical and handsome slippers. Seeing the multiple uses to which narrow fabrics are ingeniously put, is a reminder to the handweaver that indulging his pleasure in the weaving of bands need not be idle production of useless belts.

The handweaver is apt to think of inkle as stiff, thick, warp rep bands. This is because the characteristic texture is usually rep, and coarse rather than fine threads are usually used, when weaving on the inkle loom. The wide adaptability of the Ecuadorian faja lies in the finer, less stiff, but very sturdy

character of the bands. These qualities are achieved through weaving the belts on a loom rather than on an inkle or other form of belt loom.

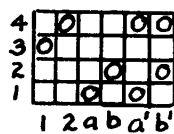
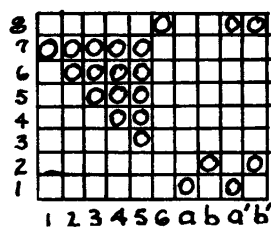
The Ecuadorian belt has its designs in warp-pattern weaving, both simple, treadled patterns and complex, pick-up designs, harmonized with warp color stripes. The base warp is of fine cotton (comparable to our 20/2 plain cotton) and color stripes are of soft-twist, heavier cotton (8/2 or 10/2 are suitable) or of wool. Although the foundation warp, composing the warp-pattern background and the selvages, is of fine cotton, the warp stripes which weave along with the background are of the heavier weight of the pattern-warp thread. Weft is about the weight of the heavier thread, but in the same color as the base warp.

The faja differ from the usual primitive belts and from inkle bands in that they are woven as warp emphasis fabrics rather than as warp rep. A reed is used, and the warp is set closely enough to allow the pattern warp to completely cover the pattern areas. The base warp is set closer than for tabby. Thus, the weft shows through the warp, an unattractive effect unless the illusion of warp rep is created by identical colors in base warp and weft.

A coarse reed (six to ten dents per inch) must be used, with at least four base warp ends per inch. The pattern warp is sleyed in the customary manner for the warp-pattern technique: added to the dents, along with the base warp, where it occurs in the design.

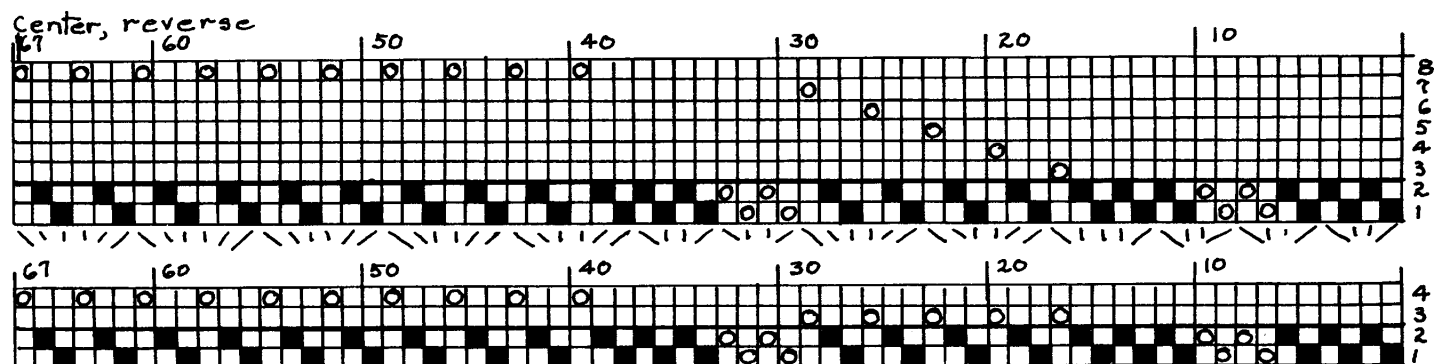
As with all warp-pattern weaving, there are both tension and beaming problems. If the pattern warp is in stripes, rather than across the full warp width, it will build up the warp beam irregularly unless spread very carefully. And because the base warp interweaves very closely, while the pattern warp interlaces loosely, there is a tension differential. After only a few inches of weaving, if the two have been beamed together, the pattern warp loosens and sags, while the base warp tightens. There are three ways for handling this problem. (1) Beam the two warps independently, if the loom has two beams. (2) Beam the warps together, distributing the fine and heavy threads evenly, but fasten a cord around the pattern threads, under the warp beam, and weight the cord sufficiently that the threads are self tensioned. (3) Beam only the base warp ends, making a separate chain of the pattern warp and let this hang over the back beam, adequately weighted. If the band is a wide one (and of course these bands need not be narrow) it will probably be necessary to weight several pattern warp groups independently, if using one of the latter two methods.

A word regarding designs. One must recognize that the finest study of design possible comes through seeing classic models, and studying the great textiles that have been woven, or photographs of them. From these one learns the types of pattern suitable, the use of materials, textures and the means of achieving them, the characteristic colors and color harmonies. It is debatable, however, whether or not it is advisable to make exact copies for other than study purposes and the mas-



Weave (combined treadles):

1-a	b'	1-a'	b repeat.
2-b	a'	2-b'	
3-a	.	3-a'	a'
4-b	b	4-b'	b'
5-a		5-a'	



tering of skills and techniques. In many places where textiles have had a fine tradition, there is a tendency to try to foster local color through copying patterns from the ancient, in modern textiles. Although occasionally one sees this done in a creative and dynamic manner, on the whole such textiles have an unfortunate "souvenir" appearance, and the feel of dishonesty. They recapitulate the surface appearance of the past without functional foundation and without the true spirit of the ancient textile. Therefore, for this project, no exact designs from the faja of Ecuador are given. This is suggested as an imaginative rather than a copying problem.

The principles listed below should prove sufficient for the handweaver to adapt the ideas creatively, in a manner suitable to contemporary use.

Base warp of fine cotton (20/2 or finer), single color, with warp sett giving a warp emphasis (36 to 45 ends per inch).

Narrow, decorative stripes in contrasting colors or values, of heavier yarn, either cotton or worsted.

Warp pattern designs, usually a wide band down the center and one or two narrow stripes at the sides, of the heavier cotton or worsted.

The main warp-pattern designs made as simple groups of horizontal bands, rhythmically repeated. This design broken at intervals, if desired, with more complex patterns, either pick-up or threaded. The narrow side bands threaded for small repeat figures such as triangles, squares, diamonds, rectangles, or some other simple design.

Widths of from two to eight inches, with base warp color composing the selvages.

The warp patterns may be simple, threaded geometrics on two shafts (with the base warp, four shafts required in all), or more complex designs on six or more pattern shafts, or complicated patterns worked by pick-up.

Weft is of the same color as the base warp, a soft cotton considerably thicker than the base warp, and beaten very firmly.

The draft used for weaving the Portfolio sample is given below. This eight-shaft pattern could be simplified to an effective four-shaft threading through the second draft.

The base warp for the Portfolio sample is Lily Mills 24/2 cotton (red), and Lily 8/2 Soft Twist (Art. 108) in dusty pink, is used for the warp stripes and for the pattern warp. The weft is red carpet warp. Warp sett for the base warp is 40 ends per inch, four per dent in a 10-dent reed. Where the warp-pattern stripes occur, there are six ends per dent, as one pattern warp is added for each pair of base warps.

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#### AT LAST --- A RIBBON LOOM

Any weaver interested in inkle and other forms of narrow weaving cannot help but look longingly at the photographs of charming band or ribbon looms illustrated in the Swedish I C A - Forlaget book, BAND, by Trotzic and Axelsson. A ribbon loom is at last available in this country, and such a pleasing, simple, and practical one that it would add a charming note to almost any livingroom. This loom is manufactured by the Norwood Loom Co, Baldwin, Michigan, and sells for \$42.50. It is made of solid cherry wood with a rubbed oil finish. The height is 27", the length 30", the overall width 12", and the weaving width is 8". It is equipped like a standard loom, with substantial warp and cloth beams, and two treadles operating two counterbalanced shafts or harnesses. The shafts are cherry frames with removable heddle bars and steel heddles, suspended in an eleven inch high castle, and grooved into the side pieces for maximum stability. One operates it from the end, in normal loom manner instead of from the side as with the Swedish looms. Anything that an inkle loom can do, this loom can do, and much more easily and rapidly; and it is an ideal frame for supporting card weaving.

Being a person who always sees a further possibility, I am having Mr McGarr of Norwood Looms build me one which is six inches wider (14" weaving width), two inches lower (for relaxed weaving) and with a beater. The frame of the ribbon loom is very sturdy, so no alteration is needed in this. Mr McGarr estimates that this two-shaft, 14" wide, treadle loom will cost \$57.50.

## BINDERS FOR PUBLICATIONS

In December, after a detailed investigation of binding and binders, I announced the availability of binders for Shuttle Craft Guild publications and for other soft-cover library material. My own library, the part of it that has always been a problem, is now neatly, systematically and safely arranged in several dozen binders, all labeled with the gold leaf provided with them. The four sizes are:

- 8 1/2 x 11 x 2 inches,
- 6 3/4 x 9 1/2 x 2 inches,
- 5 1/2 x 8 1/2 x 2 inches,

plus the 8 x 10 1/2 size for Shuttle Craft Guild Monographs. These dimensions are for the maximum size pamphlet each will hold, though smaller sizes will fit into any of them.

As the minimum order required by the manufacturer to make these binders up was met, and they are now in regular supply, please send all future orders directly to:

The Suckert Loose Leaf Cover Co  
11911 Grand River Avenue  
Detroit 4, Michigan,

accompanied by the payment of \$3.00 per binder, plus 30¢ for shipping. Do NOT send orders to the Shuttle Craft Guild.

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## SUBSCRIPTIONS

It is still possible to have subscriptions back-dated to include the September and December Bulletins and THE DOUBLE WEAVE monograph, both regular and Portfolio editions. For regular edition the 1960 publications are now \$3.50, for Portfolio edition, \$8.00, to subscribers. No single copies of Bulletins are sold. Monographs are available from Craft and Hobby Book Service (not from the Guild) Big Sur, Calif, THE DOUBLE WEAVE, \$4.00, SURFACE INTEREST, \$3.00. Anyone wishing to add the Portfolio for 1961 to a regular subscription, send the \$10.00 fee to Mrs Tidball. For Portfolio separates (Bulletins, 50¢, Monographs \$3.50) send orders to Mrs Marjorie Michael.

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## CORRESPONDENCE COURSE

Enthusiastic response is coming through from students who have registered for the Shuttle Craft Guild Correspondence Course under Mrs Frances Afanasiev, 1216 South Fifth, Bozeman, Montana. The course is

excellent for the new weaver or for the experienced weaver with irregular background who needs to fill gaps, and it is particularly helpful for the handweaving teacher. Membership in the Shuttle Craft Guild is a prerequisite for the course. Former members who have already purchased the HOME STUDY COURSE, may use this material. For full information about the course, and prices, write to Mrs Afanasiev (who has been instructor in handweaving at Montana State College, Assistant Professor of Home Economics, since 1947).

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## CARD WEAVING DIRECTIONS

Ever since Mrs Atwater's booklet on Card Weaving has been out of print, weavers have needed a beginning book on this subject. Therefore, CARD WEAVING by Russell E Groff (Robin and Russ Handweavers, 632 Santa Barbara St, Santa Barbara, Calif, \$3.50) is a welcome addition to the bookshelf. The booklet contains very detailed directions for making warps, setting up the cards, performing the simple type of card or tablet weaving. The book is one of patterns, and Mr Groff gives the drafts for 53 different ones, each with a splendid photograph.

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The Macmillan Company has announced June 5 as the publication date for a new book, THE WEAVERS BOOK, A Text on the Fundamentals of Handweaving, by Harriet Tidball. Naturally I am pleased to bring this to the notice of Shuttle Craft Guild subscribers. I have tried to provide here a book to fill that great, empty gap in our handweaving literature: a comprehensive book on the elements of handweaving for the beginner, which can also be a basic reference for the experienced weaver, and and presented on a thoroughly adult level.

For those Shuttle Craft Guild members who are interested, I shall be happy to hold a mail-order "autograph party" for pre-publication orders. For orders received by June first, I shall mail autographed copies on the publication date. The estimated price of the book is \$5.95, and there will be an additional 25¢ mailing fee. Should the price change on publication, refunds will be made, or bills sent, as the final price requires.

*Harriet Tidball, March 1961*