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Bobbins of St Scania by Axel Horlen

Translation Anne-Marie

The help of Vibeke is acknowledged with thanks.

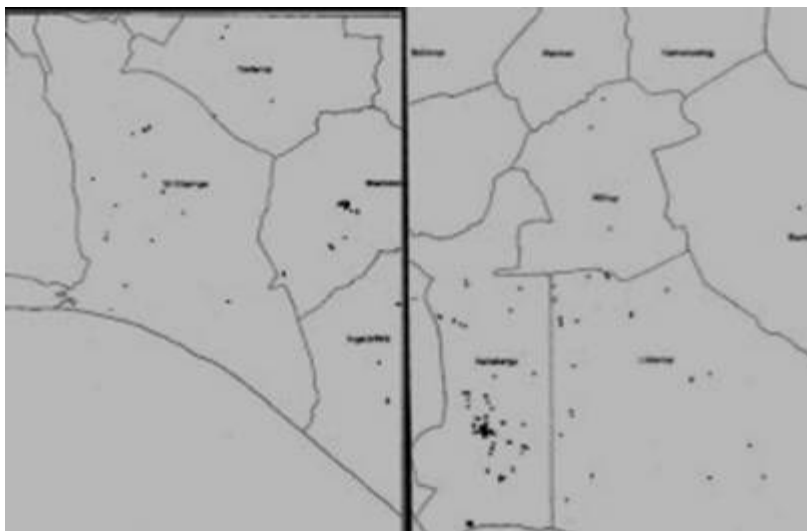
Edited by Brian

Lace Pillows and Bobbins in the Southern Part of Scania

By Axel Hörlén

In my work *Knyppling och knyppelskor i S{o:}dra delen av Ingelstads Härad* (Bobbin lace and lace makers in the southern part of Ingelstad district) I dealt with the question of the origin of lace within the district and the lace-makers work and environment. One of the problems I studied was the differences between the 17th century peasant style laces and the 19th century upper-class products, of current interest. As part of this study I have examined the lacemaking equipment, on one hand the original examples of bolster pillows and bobbins, on the other hand the 19th century bobbin lace pillow and its bobbins.

The lacemaking district in question comprises the area of the villages Hagestad, Löderup, Valleberga, Ingelstorp, Glemminge och St Köpinge, of which Valleberga holds a unique position. In my opinion bobbin lace commenced in this area at the end of the 17th century originating from the Karelian headland, possibly the Baltic States. I also believe that the second revival of lace making in 1819 had a connection to Bohemia. Of the professional lacer-makers 51% worked within Valleberga, which is why it is reasonable to look at this village as a lacemaking centre with lace making areas to both the East and the West of the district. An important reason for this division is the fact, that the shape of the bobbins had generally remained unchanged in both shape and size in lace making areas on either side, but especially the western side, of Valleberga, while those in Valleberga shows a rich variation in shape.

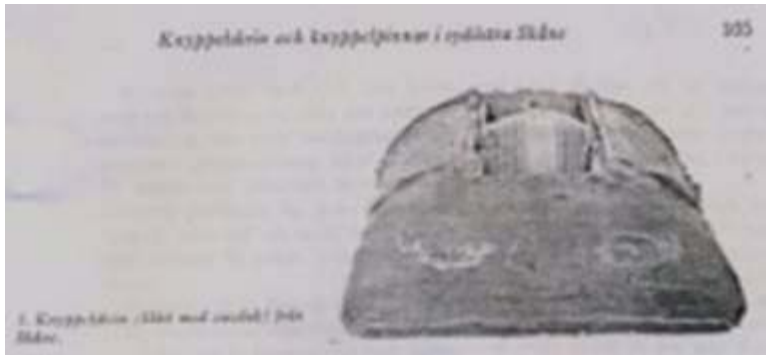


Map of the Area

Pillows.

The spherical bolster pillow was made of coarse linen with a filling of husk, sand etc and was probably imported from

the Baltics by a captain Petter Rytter and his wife. The bolster pillow has not been found in estate inventories within the region under study, probably because of the inexpensiveness of the equipment. Compared to the bolster pillow is the pillow with a roller set in it (*known now-a-days as the "Swedish Pillow"*) fig 1, which is a much more practical lace pillow. The wooden framework of this Swedish pillow is made of a square base with a recess and a gable at the back, all made in pine. The gable's upper edge can be entirely curved or curved at the sides and horizontal in the central part). In exceptional cases the gables exterior was decorated with "hearts", "stars", "tulips", in connection with the label of the year of manufacture and also the lace-makers initials. More often the "heart shapes were cut out of the gables. The angle between the bottom and the gable varies from 87 to 126 degrees. The oldest pillows are about 90 degrees, which leads to the assumption that the imported pillow had a right angle too. You may ask, why the lace-makers had pillows made with a bigger angle? It seems as if the old lace-makers had the same problem as younger generations, namely to keep the lace clean. When the pillow had a straight angle, the lace bundle hung directly on the not so very clean gable. With a bigger inclination on the gable the lace hung free. The method was obviously not sufficient, as the lace-makers later gathered the lace in a pocket made of cloth, nailed to the gable.



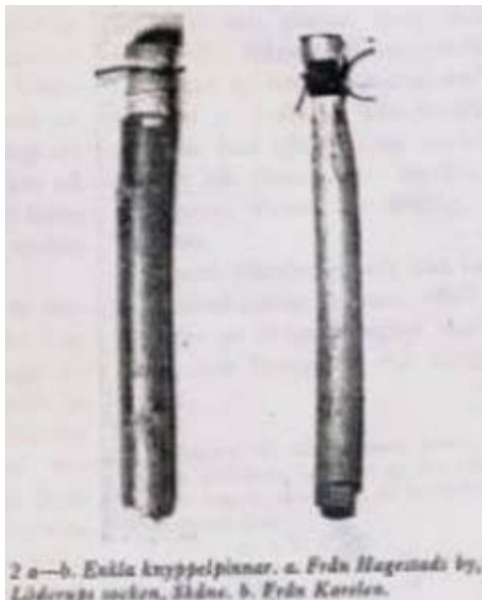
The recess in the pillow looks like a box with the gable as one side. The revolving roller fixed inside this recess is like a miniature bolster. At the right of the roller is a latch mechanism, which stops the roll from rotating to the front.

The pillow is filled with simple materials: hay, straw, the remains from flax hackling, or wood wool. (*Could that be wood shavings?*) Older pillows typically have coarse linen as covering (47%). The material was also found on older rolls, of which only a few have been available for a close examination. The coarse linen threads of the covering served as a guide to the lace-makers, when placing pins at the edges. An obvious inconvenience though, was the napping of the threads, which is why the cover was replaced with white cotton fabric with blue stripes over the existing cover, so called blouse-fabric. The roller is as a rule, (60%) filled with pig's bristle, a material that is soft enough to put the pins in and firm enough to hold them.

The Bobbins

The essential difference between working on the bolster and the pillow is that the bobbins must hang on the bolster but they lie on the pillow. That is why you have to shape the bobbins so they are suited either to the bolster or the pillow.

The bobbins consist of head, neck, collar, handle and handle end. The termination of the handle is the distinctive identification feature of the bobbins. With the exception of the bobbins with a cylindrical handle end, i.e. without a shaped handle end, fig 2 a-b, which are useful for both bolster and the Swedish pillow, but some of them only suitable for the bolster, others only for the pillow.



Bobbins constructed from twigs.

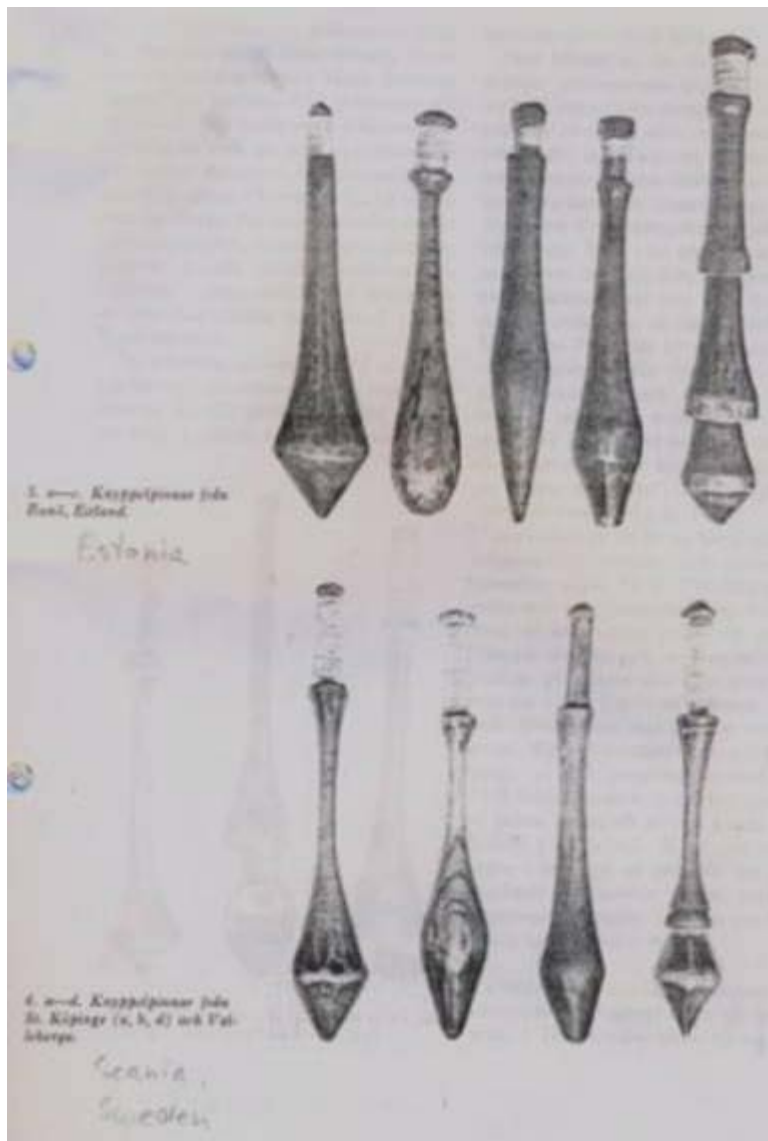
Lace making is a rhythmic motion, and is accompanied by the sounds of the bobbins hitting each other as they are manipulated. Many occupations have typical sounds associated with them e.g., threshing with a flail, hammering in the smithy, weaving with liftgate, marching under guidance or music etc. The clatter that arises during bobbin lacemaking can be rhythmic, if the bobbins are suitably shaped and handled by an experienced lacemaker.

The rush of orders, which probably prevailed during the winter months, forced a mass production of bobbins. It was at this time that captain Rytter and his wife visited Valleberga and taught the women to make bobbin lace. Simple bobbins were made of willow twigs, as they are easy to whittle fig 2 a-b. All the bobbins originating from Valleberga were of the same kind. On the other hand, as these were hand whittled, it is hardly likely that the captain's couple - he himself a commander of one for the 17th century big ships of about 500 tons - would have used such inexpensive bobbins.

One does not know for sure, how the bobbins that the migrants from Estonia brought were made, but they have the shape of (Estonian) bobbins from Runo, fig 3 a-e. The bobbins handle ends are large in maximum diameter in the design, and because of that large area, they are likely to clatter as they hit each other. The Estonian bobbins have very real similarity to those from the St. Kopinge and Valleberga area, fig 4 a-d, and as such it is reasonable to assume that an influence from Estonia can not be excluded. The manufacturing of bobbins during the visit of the Rytters seems to have been divided into two groups, a plain hand shaped one using the natural twig of a branch and those whittled (*or turned*) from a larger piece of wood.

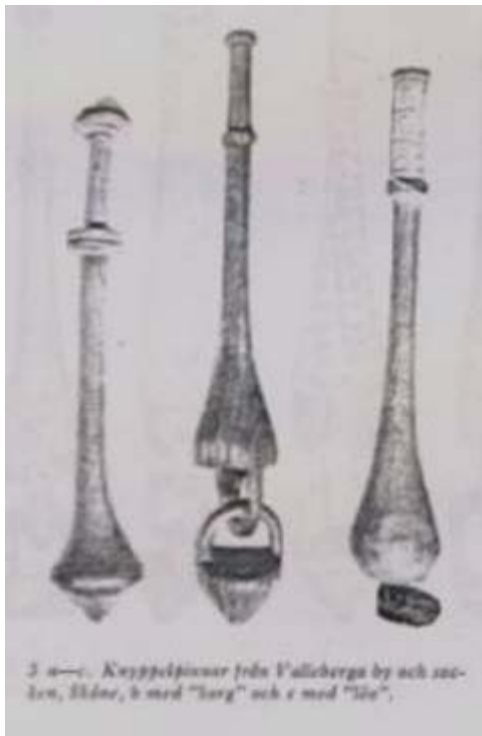
When these more advanced bobbin shapes fall on the pillow dressed with linen with hay as filling, no clatter can arise. To make a clatter the bobbins must either fall on a hard surface or hit against another bobbin.

Top row from Estonia. Bottom row is from St Kopinge and Valleberga



We know that the first pillow, was imported 1819 by Bohemia born Margarita Peters, but because of a fire it was totally destroyed as were the bobbins. This pillow must however have been copied, possibly also the bobbins.

The examination of 1240 bobbins has shown that 10 of them are supplied with clatter makers. (*Could these be spangles?*) The bobbins handle ends carved from the same piece of wood as the bobbin, on the handle end a hoop is carved, on the distal aspect a basket handle is carved fig 5 b. "The wooden shoe-man" Nils Olsson (1819 - 1903), nr 29, Loderup, was known for making among other things such as pillows and bobbins, the latter with carved baskets, which have been given to lace-makers.

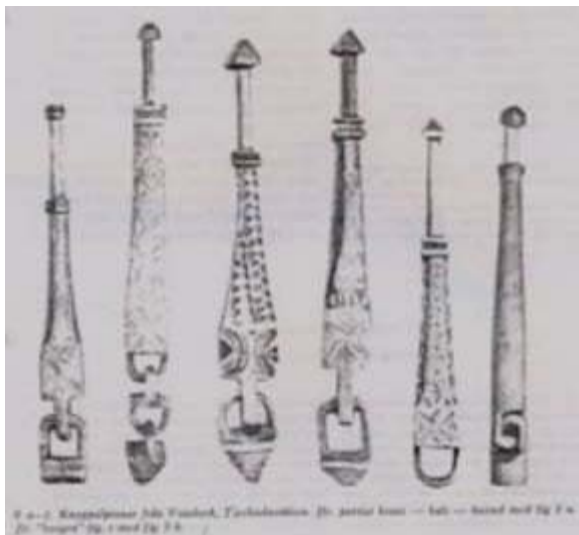


Plain bobbin, one with a basket spangle and the other with a "leaf" spangle

The question which arises is whether the clog maker had a prototype i.e. the pillow from the Peters family - or if he himself made the model? The solution ought to be found in the area, from where Margarita Peters were born, which is in Bohemia. P 106

Thanks to the obliging to the personnel of the University of Lund I obtained microfilms of hopefully, all essays about bobbin lacemaking and lacemaking tools in Czechoslovakia. The authors seems only have dealt with newer tools. The translator, the university mistress Maria Rádlová-Jensen, became interested in the problem and asked her relatives in Bohemia, where she herself was born, to make enquiries at museums. The result was photographs of existing bobbins in Vamberk (about 135 kilometres east of Prague). The bobbins were named differently in different territories: klepcé, klepné, klepané, klepcoky - all sound onomatopoeic of "kliklicke" (*clattering sound*). The importance of rhythm is obviously been present in Czechoslovakia too.

The richly decorated bobbins, fig 6 a-e, seem to have been gifts. Fig 6 shows however a bobbins without decorations with a roughly cut out basket. Fundamentally they are the same as the clog makers' bobbins with basket.



Richly decorated and carved bobbins

Considering the oldest lace pillows common likeness one can assume that they were made from a common prototype inside the area, the bobbin pillow mentioned in the deed of Margareta Peters. There is evidence that Margareta Peters made bobbin lace. So she owned bobbins. Owing to that the odd bobbins with a clattering basket had its similarity in Bohemia, one has even here strong reasons to believe, that they had been imported from there by Margareta Peters and later on be copied by the mentioned Nils Olsson. - To obtain continuous clatter at every stitch at least every fourth bobbins must have a basket, (*Spangle?*) a demand, that could not be completed, and the basket was replaced with a piece of metal, a so called "leaf", that hung in a staple or metal wire, fig 5 c. (*Why should they want to obtain continuous clatter?*)

It is remarkable that within the examined area occurred 102 bobbins with clatter gear (*spangles*), 83 of them were from Valleberga. It seems as if Margareta Peters also had brought other kind of bobbins, possibly provided with leafs (*pieces of metal hung on the end of the bobbin handle*), and that these have been copied as well. It also seems as the western area with only 6 leaf spangles withstood the changes of modernity. Here in St Kopinge the bolster pillows was used until the 1920's. It is probable that the pillow cover not at once could outdo the old bolster. As in other cases, when a new tool comes to use in a village, the old tool will be used for a while together with the new and later not be used at all.

Pillow Coverings

Because the bobbins through their fall against the sides of the case where exposed to wear, so that holes were made, see fig 1. The case must then be redressed, most often over the top of the current cover. 10. As mentioned earlier the dressing was coarse linen the number 1 used material for this kind of dressing. This is the case for 24 cases but only 3 that has been redressed. Fine linen seems to have been a weaker material (6 cases).

A better material had come in the market, the oilcloth, the superiority of which is not fully accepted for the dressing of new cases (16 cases) but used frequently for recovering (53 cases). Just when the oilcloth started to be used as a cover for the cases can not be ascertained. In "Brojournaler at the Tolagschamber in Ystad" "oilcloth" is mention for the first time in 1842 (May 27). Since the greater part of the bobbin lace area belonged to the upper parts of Ystad, oilcloth should have come to use earliest in this year.

Besides the materials mentioned has as dressing and redressing "bladder", that is skin of bladder from pigs (5), various textiles (7), pegamoid (9) and plastic (2).

We will now address the question, why the oilcloth dominated with 69 (16 + 53) covers or 53%. The popularity can hardly be due to the wear-ability of the material, that became a later experience, but rather on its firm surface. When the bobbins fell down, a clattering sound arose, which the lace-makers called "tadder". The rhythm on the oilskin cover was more prominent compared to the clatter of the bobbins. 11.

As already mentioned the bolster was replaced by the Swedish pillow. One can ask what the lace-makers did with the bobbins that were not suitable for the new style of pillow? The inappropriate part was in the handle ends shape; they were either too short-and-fat or long and thin. In the first case the bobbin took too much space because of their width (*diameter*) and in the latter (long and thin) in the length. Among the bobbins examined there have been some that obviously shows, that the short and fat handle ends has been carved to a more suitable dimension, while other has had the long and thin ones cut to a suitable length.

It is remarkable that the last mentioned bobbin category, after the modification of the handle end, became a prototype for new bobbins, where the handle end has become the same shape as the modified cone but with a bevelled edge. The copied handle end seems to have been the source to even another new type where the cone has become flat and wide. Characteristically the lace-makers has named it "potatomasher" did not become popular.

Conclusion

From the investigation appears that the lace-makers at all the times have struggled to get the bobbins to be functional, both for the bolster and for the Swedish pillow by experimenting, with different dressings for the cover. The pillows

were made before a new problem arose, this was when the width of the laces increased from 2 - 3 cm to the 1900 style of 15 cm. The result of this was that the number of bobbins was increased to about 150 pairs. In one moment all the bobbins mentioned above became unsuitable for this advanced lacemaking. A new type were made, long, thin and without a handle end, by and for the lace-makers, Kerstin Ingeman (1884-1929) 12 and her daughter Maria Ingeman (1871.1962), both in Ingeltorp and Kerstin Persson (1880 -) in Glemminge.

The page with only bobbins

Footnotes and picture captions

7. *The reason that the bobbins from Dalarna (Dalecarlia) lack shaped handle ends can be due to the sonorous material, juniper wood, but also of the tradition bound lace-makers.*

8. *The remark of the author, page 61.*

9. *From Valleberga, 7 bobbins, Ingeltorp 2 and Glemminge 1.*

3 a -e *Bobbins from Runo, Estonia*

4 a-d *Bobbins from St Kopinge (a,b,d) and Vallberga*

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5 a-c *Bobbins from Valleberga village and jurisdictional district, Skane, b with "basket" and c with "leaf".*

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10. *One case had 5 dressings.*

6 a-f. *Bobbins from Vamberk, Czechoslovakia. Compare the part collar - neck -head with fig 5 a. Compare the "basket" fig c with fig 5 b.*

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11. *One lacemaker, Matta Per Nils (1850-1927) took away the leaves: "because they where not needed any more".*

12. *The husband of Kerstin Ingeman, Ingeman Andersson (1838-1920) carved her and the daughters bobbins. Kerstin Persson turned her one bobbins.*

Notes on the Czech names/words mentioned by Axel

There are verbs KLEPAT and KLAPAT in Czech . It means, if you are talking about bobbins, clatter, make sounds when wooden bobbins touch each other during the lacemaking. All those names were created from this verb and have the same meaning. The names definitely refer to the sound of bobbins at work. Verbs "klepat" or "klepnout" mean "to click".

There is a possible influence of a German expression for bobbin: "kloepel" which again refers to clicking sound.

A modern Czech word for lacemaking bobbin is "palicka", which means a wooden object used for knocking or clicking. This one is not onomatopoeic, as it doesn't resemble the sound, but rather it refers to the shape and material (wood). Just for example, we would use the same word "palicka" for a drumstick (for playing drums) or for a kitchen utensil used for beating slices of meat to tenderness...

My correspondent has not heard of the bobbins" being called in Czech >klepcé, klepné, klepané, klepcoky. It is possible that in certain regions these names were used for lacemaking bobbins. In different regions in Czechoslovakia people developed peculiar language dialects, which were particularly fond of customised names for objects of daily use. These names could possibly have originated either in Slovakia or in the mountains of Northern Bohemia or Moravia.

Summary.

Axel Horlen studied the lace masking equipment used in a lace making area of Sweden. He compared the tools used at the commencement of the industry (17th Century) with that of the second revival (1819 to the early 1900s).

He was able to show the change from the bolster pillow to the flat pillow or what we know today as the Swedish pillow. He also discovered that the bolster pillows were frequently recovered, probably because of the knapping of the thread. The choice of covers was of a white cotton fabric with blue stripes, or more recently (probably around the mid 1840s) the choice became oilcloth. Horlen puts forward the theory that this covering made a more pleasing sound to the lace maker (a "tadder" sound of the bobbin striking the pillow rather than a clicking sound of bobbins hitting each other, though both must have occurred)

With regard to the bobbins Horlen is able to demonstrate the influence of Estonia on the shape and size of the bobbins (and indeed the origin of the Swedish lace making from the Baltic)

When the flat pillow became popular there was a noticeable lack of "clicking" of bobbins compared to the bolster. On the bolster the bobbins fell and made a decided click whereas on the flatter pillow this noise was not so pronounced. It would appear that Horlen attributes the development of spangles (which he calls baskets and leaves) to the lack of noise to for the bobbins on the flatter pillow. He seems to think that these spangled and leafed bobbins created a nice clatter on the flat pillow. In fact he says that every fourth bobbin was "spangled" and that this gave the clatter to the pillow.

The bobbins also had to change their shape by becoming thinner when the popular width of the lace changed from 2-3 cms to the 1900 style of 15 cm. and the increased number of bobbins required would not allow for the fatter bobbins be accommodated on the flat pillow. This required that the bobbins became thinner. To this end Horlen demonstrates that many of the older bobbins were modified to meet the need of a shorter and thinner bobbin, and that they became a new standard for the makers of bobbins. These changes in bobbin shapes were most noticeable in the Valleberga area as opposed the lace making areas to the East and West of that area.

I need to make it clear that the translator Vebeke, does not agree with my interpretation of what he said in few places. I freely admit to putting my maker and historical interpretations into what he actually wrote. My aim was to make a readable and simple article from his written observations.

This should not reflect upon the work of Vebeke or my total gratitude to her, for without this work on her part, this article could not have been made available by me.

Brian Lemin

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