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Folk Wear Traditions

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Lithuania's Knitted Luxuries

Ceremonial Dress from Cameroon

Swedish Mittens to Knit and Embroider
p. 32

WINTER 2025

PIECEWORK MAGAZINE

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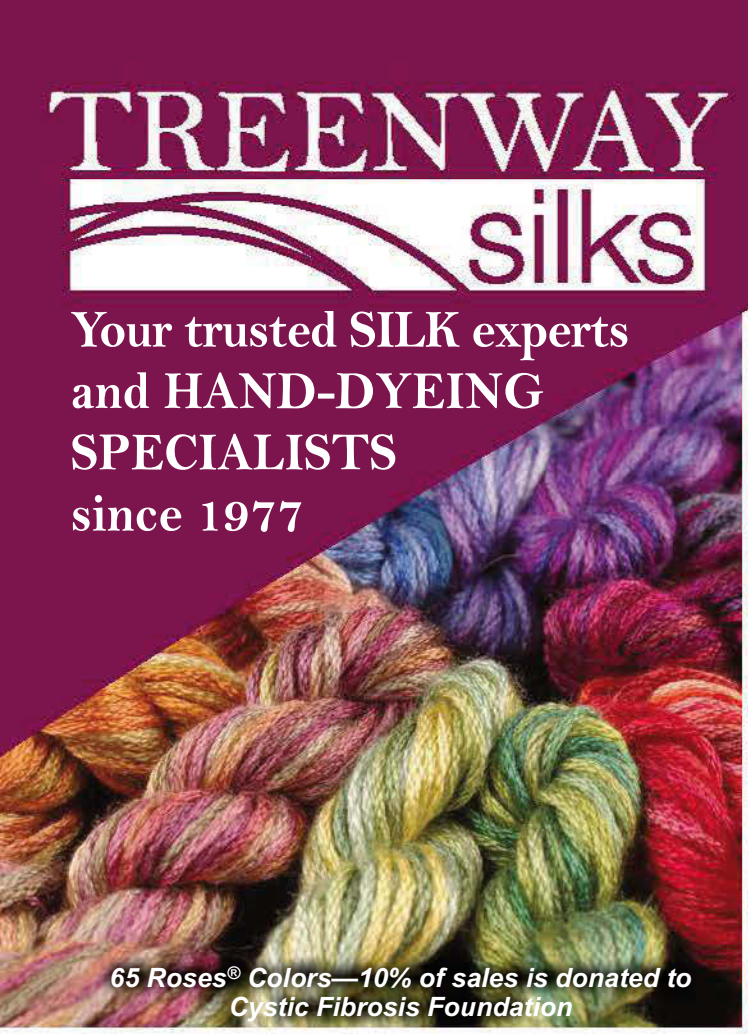

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Contents

PIECEWORK | VOLUME XXXIII, NUMBER 4 | WINTER 2025

Photo by Matt Graves

Hanka Robertson was inspired by her Slavic heritage and a vintage motif collection to create her embroidered drawstring purse.

Folk Wear

Articles

Projects

Departments

On the cover:
Twined knitted mittens by Anna-Karin Jobs Arnberg dazzle with the bold colors and texture of *påsöm* embroidery. Page 32
Photo by Matt Graves

Notions

Wearing Heritage

Photo by Lanka Gurung

Karen Brock in traditional festival dress, Ghandruk, Nepal.

I once spent a few weeks in the highlands village of Chinchero, Peru, while working on a book about Andean textile traditions. Each day, artisans from nearby communities would arrive to demonstrate their remarkable technical skills. Over time, I began to recognize where they were from just by looking at their clothing—earflaps on knitted *chullos*, embroidery along skirt hems, distinctive woven motifs in shawls. It was a powerful lesson in how clothing serves as both cultural and personal identity.

Of course, this is not unique to the Andes. We see a dirndl and think of alpine villages in Germany or Austria; a sarong brings Southeast Asia instantly to mind. That spirit is at the heart of this issue—a celebration of clothing as a window into culture and place. This is what previous editor Pat Olski had in mind when she gathered this collection of articles and projects. As both a textile lover and a traveler, I adore traditional dress and am honored, as the new editor of *PieceWork*, to bring these stories to you.

Many of this issue's articles explore the ties between dress and place. Michele Phillips Barden takes us along the shores of Lake Siljan in Dalarna, Sweden, where traditional dress reflects the joys of rural life. Angela Crenshaw leads us through the pineapple plantations of the Philippines, where the past lingers in every fiber of *piña* fabric. And, of course, we have included a few stunning projects that offer a chance to explore a new cultural tradition.

I hope you will enjoy this folk-wear journey.

Karen

Upcoming Issues

Spring 2026,
American Origins

Summer 2026,
Textile in Blue and White

Submit proposals to these future issues:

Fall 2026,
A Celebration of Museums
What hidden needlework wonders and their stories lie tucked away in lesser-known museums around the world?

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Necessities

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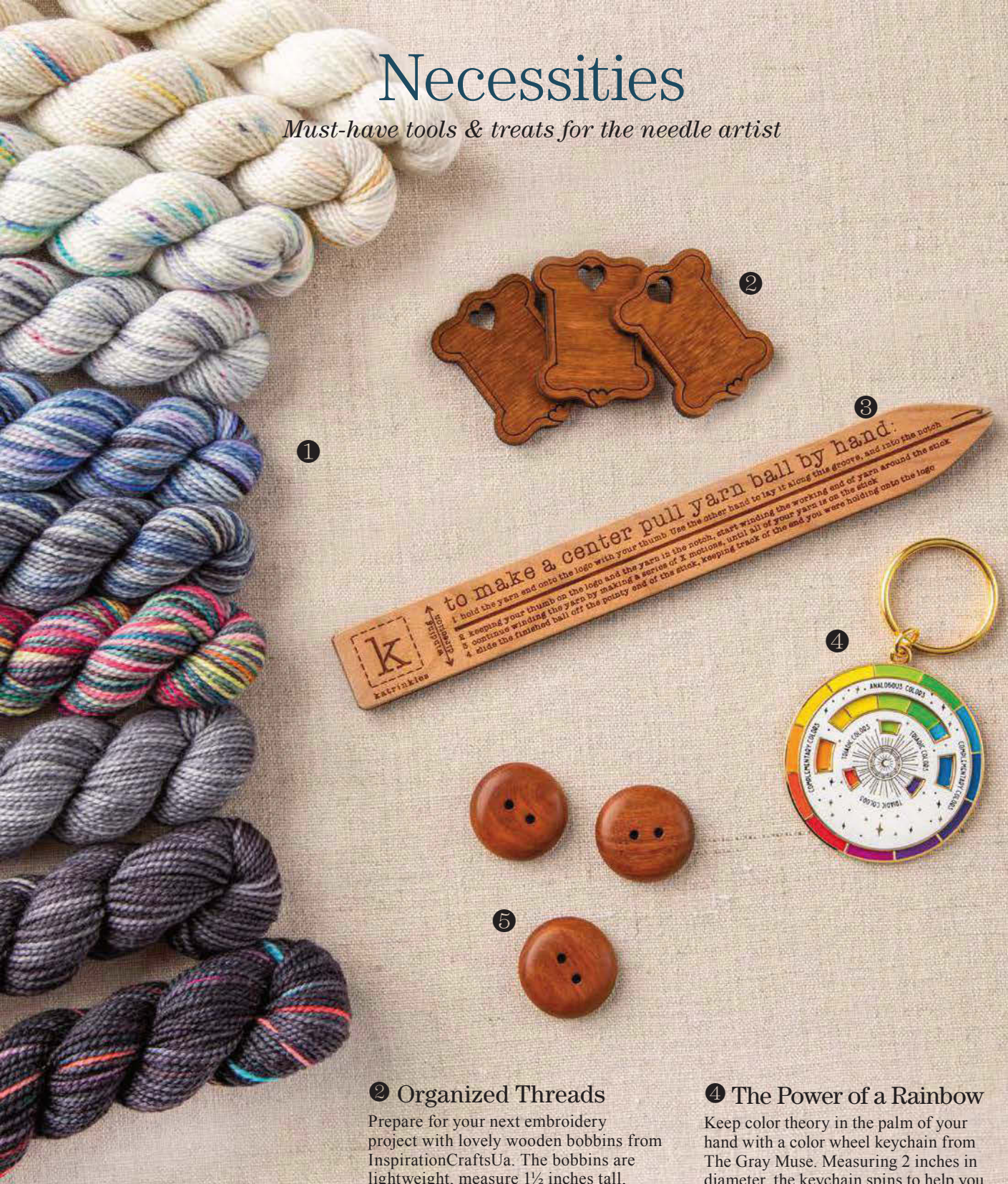


❶ A Fun Fade

Tackle your next gradient project with a pencil box of yarn from Koigu. Each set contains ten 87-yard skeins of hand-dyed, fingering-weight merino yarn and is available in a variety of combinations (Shadow shown). **koigu.com**

❷ Organized Threads

Prepare for your next embroidery project with lovely wooden bobbins from InspirationCraftsUa. The bobbins are lightweight, measure 1½ inches tall, and are sold in sets of 20. **inspirationcraftsua.etsy.com**

❸ A Helping Hand

The center-pull ball winding tool from Katrinkles makes the perfect helping hand for working with yarn. Use it to detangle a pesky skein or to set the yarn up to work from both ends—for two-end knitting or for knitting multiple items such as two-at-a-time socks. **katrinkles.com**

❹ The Power of a Rainbow

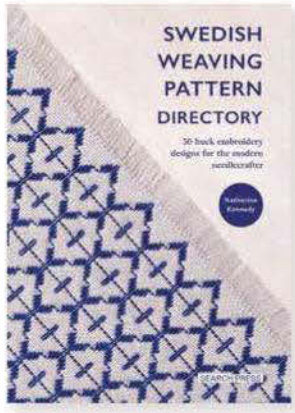
Keep color theory in the palm of your hand with a color wheel keychain from The Gray Muse. Measuring 2 inches in diameter, the keychain spins to help you decide on color combinations for your next project. **thegraymuse.com**

❺ Handcrafted Closure

Finishing elements can make all the difference in your project. Adorn that freshly blocked sweater with handmade buttons from Haulin' Hoof Farm Store. The wooden buttons are made locally from sustainably sourced woods (1-inch cherry shown). **haulinhooffarm.com**

Bookmarks

Approachable Techniques to Sample



Swedish Weaving Pattern Directory
50 Huck Embroidery Designs for the Modern Needlecrafter
Katherine Kennedy
Tunbridge Wells, Kent, UK: Search Press, 2024.
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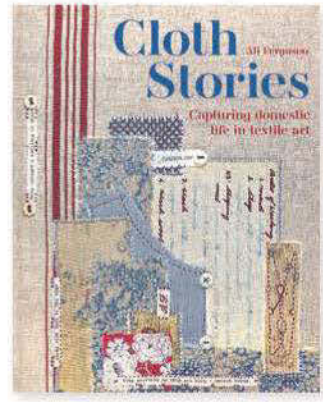

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Ali Ferguson
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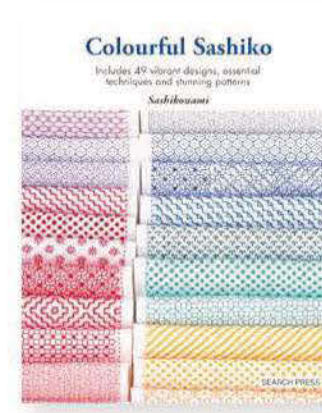

Colourful Sashiko
Includes 49 Vibrant Designs, Essential Techniques and Stunning Patterns
Sashikonami
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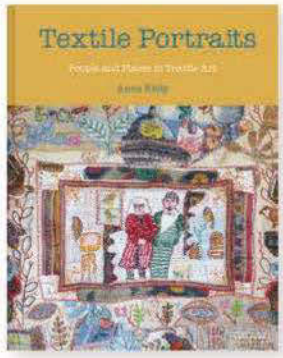

Textile Portraits
People and Places in Textile Art
Anne Kelly
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128 pages, $34.95. ISBN 9781849947534.

The Big Book of Latvian Mittens
100 Knitting Patterns and Charts for Colourwork Mittens and More
Ieva Ozolina
Pynes Hill, Exeter: David & Charles, 2024.
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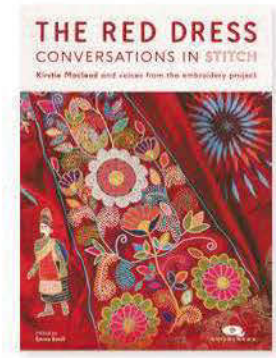


The Red Dress
Conversations in Stitch
Kirstie Macleod
Stroud, Gloucestershire: Quickthorn, 2025.
Paperback, 112 pages, $35.
ISBN 9781739316082.

Caps, Corsets, and Ribbons

A Culture of Embroidery on Marken Island

SARAH PEDLOW

Twelve miles northeast of Amsterdam, the village of Marken stands as a compelling example of cultural resilience and continuity expressed in its layered, embroidered dress. Once a remote island in the Zuiderzee, a bay of the North Sea in the Netherlands, Marken's physical isolation and periodic flooding from the sea profoundly shaped its history, economy, and distinctive traditions.

From the collection of the Dutch Open-Air Museum

Woman in costume for Pentecost on Marken around 1910, drawn in 1950 by Jan Duyvetter.

Marken's origins date to 1235 when a violent storm separated the island from the mainland. That same year, monks from Friesland, in the north of the Netherlands, settled there, constructing dikes to reclaim and protect the land. This geographical separation and later adoption of Protestantism after the Reformation would define the village's identity, fostering an insular community where customs and dress were preserved with remarkable integrity.

Between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, Marken residents (called Markers) developed a distinct form of traditional dress that reflected a unique cultural setting incorporating colorful chintz from India and indigo batik from Indonesia, woven ribbons from France, lace from Brussels, and European wool. Much of the embroidery in a Marker woman's traditional dress was covered by other garments. Marker traditions continued independently from those on the mainland, and the village remained largely isolated until the mid-twentieth century.

The catastrophic flood of 1916 initiated a major transformation in Marken's socioeconomic landscape. The disaster catalyzed the Dutch government's Zuiderzee Works, a monumental project in land reclamation and water management, which ultimately enclosed the Zuiderzee, a shallow inlet in the North Sea, creating the freshwater IJsselmeer. The subsequent decline of Marken's fishing economy forced many inhabitants to seek employment farther away at sea or on the mainland.

In 1957, the construction of the dike and the causeway connecting Marken to the mainland was completed. This newfound accessibility allowed children to attend secondary school and adults to find employment elsewhere, contributing to the declining daily use of traditional dress.

Economic Life and Its Influence on Dress

The economy of Marken revolved primarily around fishing and seafaring. Maritime livelihood shaped the community's clothing, which was originally designed for warmth, durability, and practicality in harsh coastal conditions. Over time, these utilitarian garments transformed into symbolic attire, rich with meaning and personal expression within a structure of faith and community.

Photo by Sarah Pedlow. From the collection of the Klederdracht Museum, Amsterdam

Detail of adult woman's clothing in light mourning with thin black stripes on sleeves. Torso with *baaf* and a bit of chain stitching on the corset, embroidered initials on the apron.

Due to isolation and financial constraints, Marken women handmade all clothing, and mothers taught their young daughters to sew. Work was at the heart of dressing: making clothing, embroidering, and mending it. There is a Dutch expression, "A horse's tooth and a woman's hands should never stand still." There was always work to be done, especially in winter and during the occasional flooding. Women filled any idle moments with stitching.

Women's and children's costumes became particularly elaborate, featuring embroidered bodices, colorful skirts, lace caps, and distinctive patterns that signified age or life stages and signaled important events. Color played an important communicative role. Shirts with red stripes on the sleeves were worn daily. Black-striped sleeves indicated full mourning while red and black stripes represented a moderate degree of mourning, showing that either more time had passed since the death or there had been a more

From the collection of the Dutch Open-Air Museum

Embroidered collar for a man with the initials of the owner, Marken, circa 1950.

distant relationship with the deceased. One could read the seven degrees of mourning from red (not in mourning), to green, purple, blue, and black (signifying recentness or next of kin) in the chin strap of a woman's headdress. If a man's wife or a close family member died, the red buttonholes in his clothing would be ripped out and restitched in green thread.

A piece of printed fabric pinned to the chest over the shirt and corset, called a *baaf* in the local dialect, was a cherished element with variations for everyday wear and mourning. Women wore floral or check patterns daily. They saved an Indian chintz from the Dutch East India Company or a European print for special occasions and wore a plain dark fabric with a small pattern, if any, for full mourning.

The mother of the groom or another family member, an aunt or sister, embroidered the groom's shirt. She stitched the buttonhole and initial of the son's or groom's first name followed by the father's first name in red for festive occasions. *Spaansjes* (Spanish stitches) is a type of counted-thread work that creates a border around the buttonhole. Each stitch crosses three threads. Although it looks like double running stitch, it is not, and it is not reversible. Whitework adorned the rest of the collar for weddings.

Apart from the handstitched initials on a man's work shirt, the only embroidered element was the band around the neck in everyday wear.

The Art of Embroidery in Marken

Embroidery held an important and often hidden role in Marken's cultural expression. Women adorned their clothing with cross-stitch, buttonhole and chain stitches, and whitework. Handwork served as both prayer and storytelling medium. Marking ownership of one's clothing, or depicting biblical narratives on special ribbons or maritime themes on household linens symbolized the village's strong Protestant faith and dependence on the sea.

Girls learned to embroider from their mothers at a young age. One woman described that she was already stitching on corsets at age five, learning on a garment made for a younger sister. Women monogrammed their aprons and embroidered ribbons and kerchiefs with

Executed in black cross-stitch, the ribbon was considered especially personal.

their initials in two different types of lettering, "Bible" and Frisian. An outline with decorative "eyes" or curling lines differentiates Frisian letters from Bible script cross-stitched in a Gothic-like style.

There are 11 parts to the traditional *kap*, or woman's headdress, that transformed over time from a larger structured *grote kap* to the smaller *ronde* style.

Women wore the headdress for confession, for part of the wedding festivities, and during Pentecost. They placed the *vernaaid lint*, an embroidered ribbon, on the head in the sixth step of layering their headdress, later to be covered by the *fijne kap*, the over-cap, made of muslin or cotton batiste with a panel of lace. Executed in black cross-stitch, the ribbon was considered especially personal. Women carefully stitched, washed, and dried the ribbons in secret to protect their designs from being copied. Common motifs for everyday workwear included the eight-pointed star, crows, peacocks, dolls, dragons, and various floral and geometric border designs. Ribbons with Biblical references, such as faith, hope, and charity; Adam and Eve; and Jonah and the whale were worn for confirmation, part of the wedding ceremony, at Easter, and during Pentecost.

The ribbon from my collection (below) shows the worn Frisian letters "G" and "A" characterized by the decorative curls that flow from the outlines. Designs were made in cross-stitch in black silk or cotton thread on linen. Originally, the crosses were elongated due to the uneven thread count of the warp and weft.

More recently, people stitched across two and down three threads to mimic the appearance of the original style. A local version of the Spaanjses that looks similar to the Holbein stitch was used to create borders or accents in the designs. On my ribbon, the thin circle-within-a-circle or what now looks like a "c" within a circle, originally a square within the circle, is also characteristic of the Frisian-style blackwork. This *lint* would have been worn daily, stitched with popular flower and star motifs. The flower, possibly a rose symbolizing love, beauty, and happiness or a violet symbolizing humbleness, meekness, or sadness is surrounded by small crosses to mark loved ones who have passed away. Small birds, messengers from above, represent freedom. They flank each eight-pointed star, also a symbol of a loved one who has died. The diagonal corn pattern, a sign for prosperity, divides the pattern into sections.

Photo by Sarah Pedlow

Vernaaid lint for everyday wear with star and flower pattern. Collection of the author.

From the collection of the Dutch Open-Air Museum

Photo by Siebe Jan Bouma. From the collection of the Zuiderzee Museum, Enkhuizen

Top: A woman in the middle stage of putting on her cap, Marken, 1943. *Bottom:* A young woman wears a whitework kerchief during a Marken wedding on Top's Land in Enkhuizen, 1949.

A chin strap or *keelband* helps hold the cap in place. The chin straps were narrower than the *vernaaide lint*. Women wore lace and colored embroidered straps daily; on special occasions, adult women and young girls and boys under seven wore white embroidered bands. Simple geometric border designs in counted-thread work show triangles, the horizontal S pattern, and stairs symbolizing the ups and downs of life.

Whitework, including pulled-thread work, needle weaving, and drawn-thread work, features prominently in clothing and home linens. Caps, ribbons, kerchiefs, bridal aprons, and babies' bibs all display drawn-thread work while the intricate detail was often covered by another layer of clothing. Small, folded neckerchiefs or *dokies* on red or blue checkered cotton fabric were hemstitched and monogrammed. Whitework kerchiefs, often with lace edgings, were worn for special occasions including confessions and weddings. Special tassels, originally knotted and more recently beaded, were attached to the ends of the kerchiefs with metal clips.

A distinctive feature of the traditional clothing of Marken is the corset, or *rijglijf*. A simple vocabulary of stitches embellished corsets: buttonhole and chain stitches and a loose cross-stitch. Women wore the garment for support rather than for fashion or the silhouette. Made of wool for daily wear or silk for special occasions, the garments embroidered in the eighteenth century used subtle shades of pink, green, and cream. Five roses were stitched for an adult woman's everyday wear, worn from the age of 18 onward. Seven roses were stitched for the bridal corset reserved for only one day of the wedding festivities, the church service.

Babies wore bibs and aprons with needle lace and drawn-thread work. They were swaddled in cloth with the borders embroidered for protection. Baby girls were even dressed in corsets with light boning beginning at 10 or 12 weeks old. Until age seven, boys, like the girls, also wore long hair, skirts, and aprons. The design of their small caps in colorful chintz and florals and their upper garments revealed their sex. Boys' caps included a round ribbon decoration on top, and a panel of intricate whitework was centered on the *bauw*, or chest piece. Around the age of seven, boys would start wearing male shirts and pants. At the same point, girls began wearing corsets with simple floral designs and full boning, laced

in the back. At adulthood, this corset was exchanged for the five-rose pattern, now laced in the front.

The arrival of aniline-dyed thread in the 1800s brought a brighter palette, what became known as the wild colors (*wilde kleuren*), to the decorative stitching. In the twentieth century, the cut of the corset shifted to a shorter style to allow more flexible movement.

Clothing, Craftsmanship, and Community

Traditional clothing in Marken was handed down through generations, and stitching was taught without any formal drawn or written patterns. Girls learned by watching their mothers and grandmothers stitch and by handling and evaluating the clothing they had made. As houses didn't have closets, garments were stored in painted wooden boxes, stacked with embroidered cloths to protect the decoration. These boxes symbolized a family's wealth; even in this modest community, the number of boxes stacked high in a home was a visible sign of prosperity.

Women frequently exchanged pieces with friends or family members, allowing each to focus on techniques in which they excelled. The quality of sewing signaled not only skill but also social esteem. Sunday church services and summer afternoon promenades were the place to flaunt one's handwork with sisters competing to wear the most treasured pieces passed down from their mothers and grandmothers. Heirlooms were meant to be worn, not locked away, so appropriate mending techniques and alterations were also on display.

Isolation from mainland trade and infrastructure left the people of Marken with few financial resources, and socioeconomic distinctions in dress were understated. Textiles and sewing materials were obtained through trade with Amsterdam merchants or brought back by seafaring relatives. While wealthier families may have owned a greater number of garments, these were not necessarily more elaborate or distinct in style. Driven by the demands of social cohesion, religious observance, and physical survival, the island community cultivated a collective aesthetic in which value was placed on embellishment and craftsmanship rather than material wealth.

Today, Marken is home to approximately 1,800 residents. While only three women over the age of 90 regularly wear traditional dress now, it continues to hold deep cultural and ceremonial significance. On religious holidays, Markers don traditional clothing to express a shared identity, pride in craftsmanship, and enduring community. During Pentecost, people wear their finest garments, and on King's Day, the Dutch national holiday honoring the monarch's birthday, the village comes alive in traditional dress, accented in orange and yellow. The color orange, symbolizing freedom, pays homage to William of Orange, who led the sixteenth-century revolt against Spanish rule and laid the foundations of an independent Dutch nation-state. In preserving their *klederdracht*, traditional attire, the people of Marken have not only maintained a distinctive tradition but also safeguarded a deeply personal and communal narrative stitched into every ribbon, bodice, and kerchief. ❖

The back of a corset shows seven roses for a bride, Marken, 1750–1800. *From the collection of the Dutch Open-Air Museum*

SARAH PEDLOW is an American artist and the founder of ThreadWritten cultural embroidery workshops and travel tours. She lives in Rotterdam, the Netherlands. Find her work at threadwritten.com and sarahpedlow.com.

Carrying Tradition

A Slavic-Inspired Purse

HANKA ROBERTSON

Traditional ethnic folk wear, especially ceremonial clothing, was often lavishly embroidered in bold designs and colors and is truly spectacular. I was born in Slovenia, and I particularly like Slavic embroidery. In wandering through my library of ethnic designs, I found two booklets published by the DMC Library: *Yugoslavian Embroideries, 1st and 2nd Series*. The author, Thérèse de Dillmont, compiled traditional Yugoslavian patterns from clothing and furnishings in many styles, stitches, and colors. In the *2nd Series* booklet, I found a simple pattern on a woman's headscarf worked in cross-stitch, backstitch, and running stitch that inspired this project. The pattern in the booklet was worked in colors approximating natural dyes. I have chosen to use bold primary colors since the design style is representative of many similar Slavic embroideries in strong colors.

Illustration courtesy the New York Public Library

A plate from *Narodne nošnje Jugoslavije*, a portfolio of illustrations of national costumes from different regions of the former Yugoslavia. Illustration by Vladimir Kirin.

MATERIALS

- Wichelt *Jobelan*, 28-ct evenweave (51% cotton, 49% rayon/modal): Antique White, 1 piece 20" × 14" (50.8 × 35.6 cm)
- Muslin lining fabric, cotton: antique white, 1 piece 17" × 12" (43.2 × 30.5 cm)
- DMC #8 Pearl Cotton, 87.5 yd (80 m)/ball: 1 ball each of #666 red, #943 green, #995 blue, and #444 yellow
- DMC #12 Pearl Cotton, 131 yd (120 m)/ball: 1 ball of #310 black
- Sewing thread: medium pastel color for basting (medium gray used); white to match fabric
- ¼" double-sided satin ribbon: 2 yd (1.8 m) in red to match DMC #666
- Needles: tapestry #24 or #26 and crewel/embroidery #8
- 8" embroidery hoop
- Embroidery scissors, sharp with fine points
- Fray Check
- Pencil
- Ruler
- Bodkin, safety pin, or paper clip to fit inside the ribbon casing
- Steam iron

Design Area: 6½" × 6½" (16.5 × 16.5 cm); 92 × 92 stitches (184 × 184 threads).
Finished Size: 7" × 9" (17.8 × 22.9 cm).

Visit pieceworkmagazine.com/abbreviations for terms you don't know.

INSTRUCTIONS

Preparation

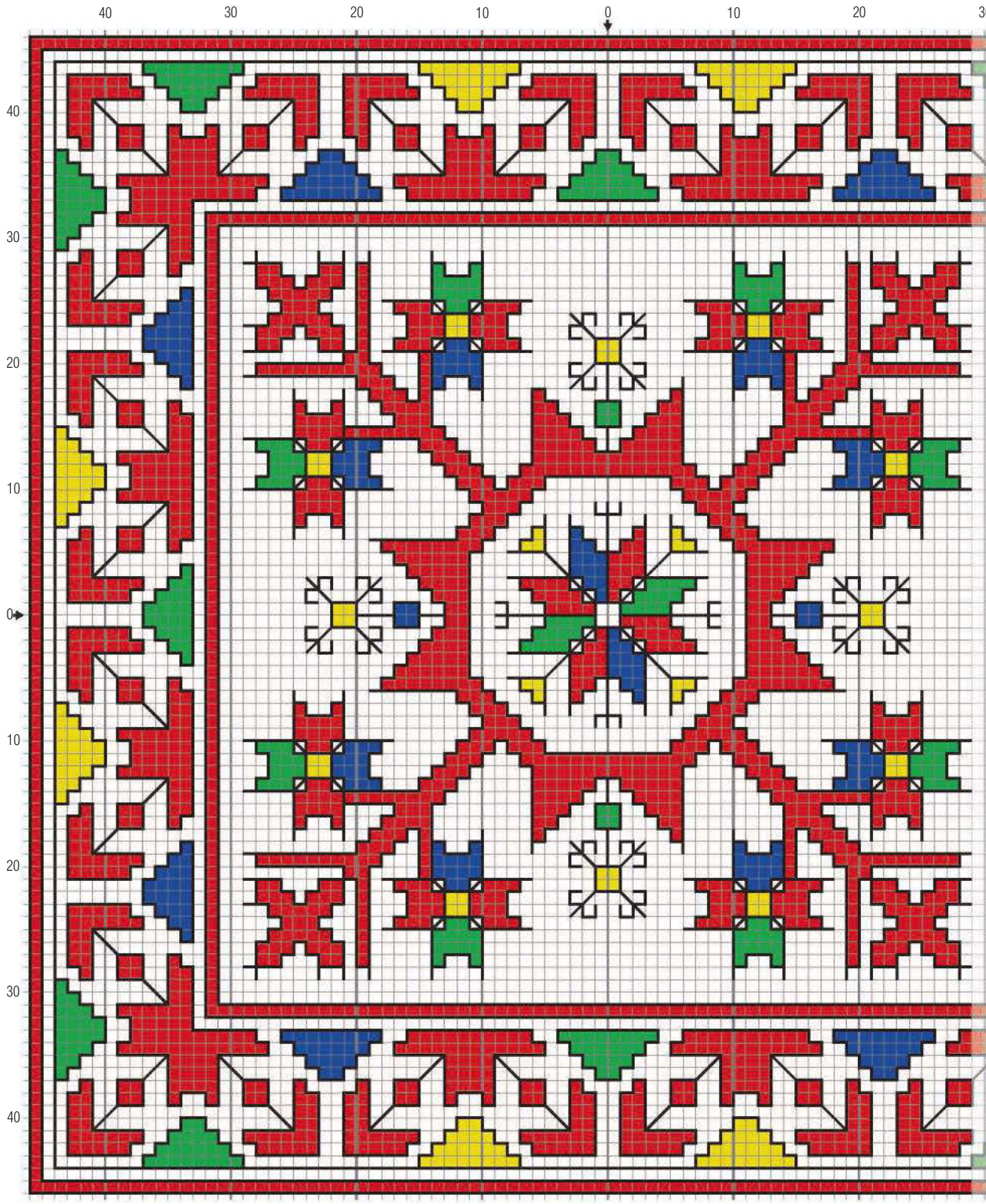
Overcast around raw edges of the embroidery fabric by hand or machine to prevent fraying. Using sewing thread and a running stitch over 4 fabric threads, unless otherwise instructed, baste guidelines A–H onto the embroidery fabric following Figure 1. For counting guideline (C), count 2 threads down from the horizontal guideline (B). Starting at the center vertical guideline (A), baste vertical stitches every 10 threads to the left and right sides. This guideline will help with counting.

Embroidery

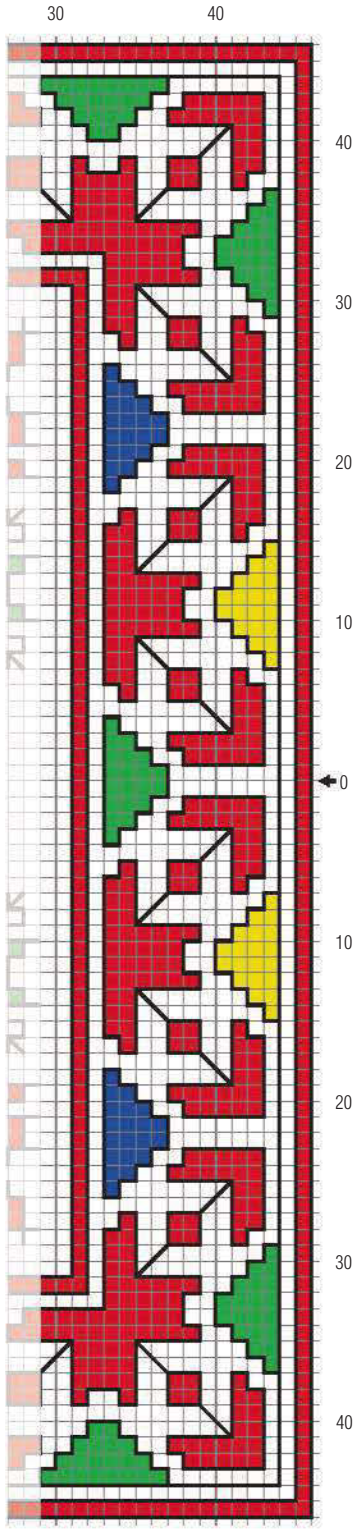
Following chart and using #8 pearl cotton, work cross-stitches.

Photos by Matt Graves

Stitched in vibrant colors, Hanka Robertson's drawstring purse would be the perfect accompaniment to a traditional Slavic folk costume.



Each square = 2 threads of background fabric



Key (Grid size 92 × 92)

- DMC #8 Pearl Cotton, #666 red
- DMC #8 Pearl Cotton, #943 green
- DMC #8 Pearl Cotton, #995 blue
- DMC #8 Pearl Cotton, #444 yellow
- DMC #12 Pearl Cotton, #310 black, backstitch

A doubled eight-star motif forms the centerpiece of the purse design.

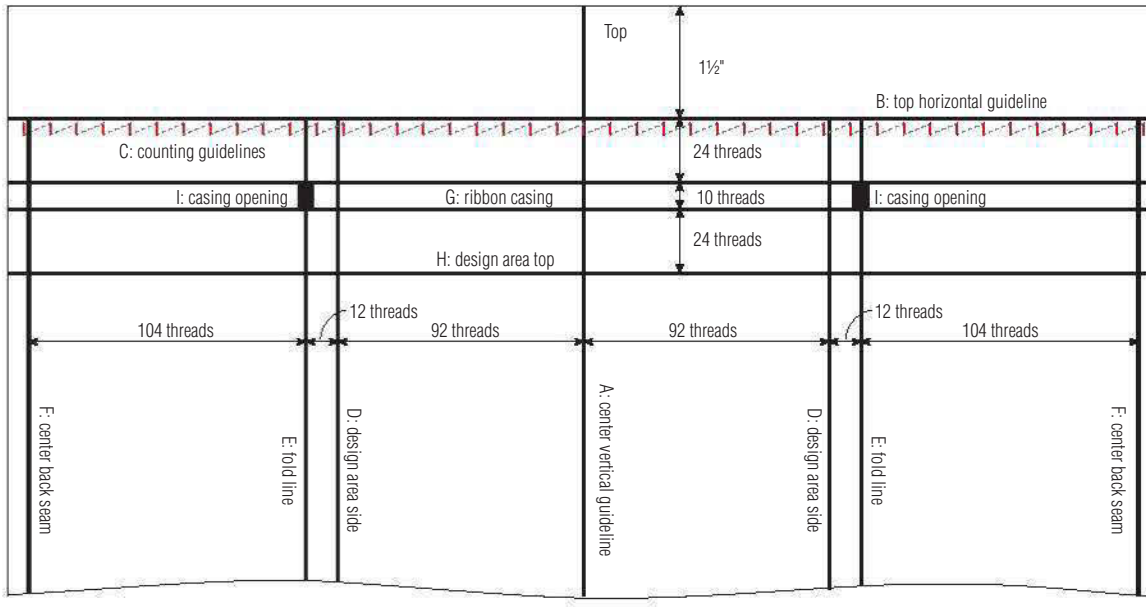
Work outline and decorative stitching with #12 pearl cotton using backstitch or running stitch.

Avoid carrying threads behind unstitched fabric; they may show through and muddy the finished project.

Stitch 3 rows of cross-stitch across the width of the fabric for the ribbon casing and top edge as follows. Using red #8 pearl cotton and starting from the center vertical guideline (A), stitch a line of red cross-stitch to the left and right back seam guidelines (F) just below the bottom ribbon casing guideline (G). Using black #12 pearl cotton, work a line of backstitch or running stitch above and below the cross-stitched rows. Work a second line of red cross-stitch outlined in black just above the top ribbon casing guideline (G). Work a third line of red cross-stitch outlined in black just above the top horizontal guideline (B).

On either side of the fold guidelines (E), skip 1 vertical thread to the left and right of the guideline and work 2 columns of 5 red cross-stitches

Figure 1: Basting guidelines



vertically between the ribbon casing lines. There are 2 unworked vertical threads between the columns of cross-stitches; these will be cut later to open the ribbon casing.

Purse construction

Count 10 threads below the bottom of the completed embroidery along the vertical center guideline. Baste a bottom seam guideline to the left and right edges of the fabric.

Press the lining fabric. Cut a rectangle of lining fabric 15" × 10" (38.1 × 25.4 cm). Mark the center of the top and bottom edges with a small vertical line. Set aside.

On all four sides of the embroidery fabric, count 12 threads beyond the center back seam, the bottom seam, and the purse top cross-stitch row. Remove the 13th thread. Trim away the excess fabric beyond the 13th thread.

Remove the center vertical (A), counting (C), vertical (D), top design area (H), and ribbon casing (G) guidelines. Do not remove the center back seam (F) and side fold (E) guidelines.

Steam-press the embroidery on both sides using a pressing cloth to protect stitching.

With RS together, pin or baste lining and fabric along the bottom seam guideline. Sew by hand or machine along guideline from edge to edge. Remove basting thread. Press the seam open.

Thread satin ribbon through the casing for the drawstring top. Two vertical columns of cross-stitches secure the opening.

On the WS of the lining, with the ruler and pencil, continue the center back seam guideline (F) down the lining fabric on one side. It isn't necessary to do so on the other side.

With RS together, pin or baste along the center back seam guideline. Sew seam from top to bottom by hand or machine. Remove basting and the center back seam guidelines (F). Press seam open.

Refold the purse to align the center back seam and the center line marks. Pin or baste bottom edge

A geometric border, echoing Slavic tradition, surrounds the star at the heart of the design.

seam between the two fabrics, lining up the back seam and center line tick marks. Sew by hand or machine in the ditch of seam across the width of the purse. Remove basting.

Turn the purse RS out, lining to the inside, and tease out the corners.

Pull up the purse fabric and lining at the purse opening, aligning center seam and marks, making sure folds are the same width from the embroidery on each side. Press the purse using a pressing cloth. Remove the side fold guidelines (E).

Apply small drops of Fray Check to front and back of the 2 vertical columns of cross-stitches between the cross-stitch ribbon casing rows. Let dry. Carefully snip the horizontal and vertical fabric threads between the 2 vertical columns of cross-stitches. Make sure not to snip the cross-stitch threads. *Tip*: If there are obvious bits of white fabric threads that show at the casing openings, color them using a fine-point red permanent marker.

Along the top edge of the purse, fold the raw fabric edge to the inside of the purse (between fabric and lining). Baste (recommended) or pin in place. Fold the lining edge toward the fabric, folding to line up a couple of threads below edge of outer fabric. Press folds well. Slip-stitch the top edges of the fabric and lining together with small stitches and white sewing thread. Remove the basting threads.

Run a basting line in the middle of the casing and another just under the top edge cross-stitch line to stabilize the areas. Baste the fabric and lining together, making sure to keep the front and back of purse separate. Using the same holes as the black outlines, handsew (recommended) or machine sew along the top and bottom cross-stitch casing rows. If handsewing, backstitch over 2 threads every other cross-stitch. Steam-press well using a pressing cloth on the embroidered side.

Cut two 32" (81.3 cm) lengths of ribbon. Using a safety pin, paper clip, or bodkin that fits in the casing, thread one length of ribbon through the casing, around the purse, exiting on the starting side. Make sure not to twist the ribbon when drawing it through the casing. Starting at the other side of the purse, thread the second ribbon length through the casing in the same manner. Adjust ribbon to have equal lengths on each side. Tie ends of the ribbon in an overhand knot on each side about 6" (15 cm) from the purse. Trim the excess ribbon on the diagonal. ❖

HANKA ROBERTSON has embroidered since her early teens. Now retired, she spends almost every day with needle in hand and her cat at her side "helping." Embroidery and needle lace of all types are her passions. Hanka is a member of the Embroiderers' Guild of America, the American Needlepoint Guild, and the New England Lace Group.

Knitted Lithuanian Wrist Warmers

A Practical Little Luxury

CAROL J. SULCOSKI

Lithuania, nestled between Latvia and Poland on the western coast of Europe, has a long tradition of beautiful handcrafts. In earlier times, weaving played a dominant role in Lithuanian folk arts, and knitting was less popular. At the beginning of the twentieth century, however, a growing sense of nationalism sparked renewed interest in traditional folk costumes and crafts. In the 1930s, a remarkable husband-and-wife team of Lithuanian ethnographers, Antanas Tamošaitis and Anastazija Tamošaitienė, began studying and preserving patterns used in folk art and regional costumes. Part of their work involved collecting and documenting regional knitted colorwork and lace motifs, and Anastazija wrote instructions for knitting a variety of accessories using traditional motifs and colors.

Wrist warmers knitted in black wool with glass beads, nineteenth century. This beaded fir tree motif is striking set against the solid black background. From the collection of the Biržai Region Museum

Gloves and Mittens

With the cold winds blowing in from the Baltic Sea, Lithuanians needed to stay warm. Not surprisingly, then, they created socks and stockings made of wool, often featuring colorful geometric patterns. Flax fields dotted the Lithuanian countryside, providing linen and hemp for knitting cooler socks for the summer months. Women wore lightweight socks and "footless socks" or leg warmers when working in the fields so their legs wouldn't get scratched.[1]

Mittens and gloves provided a canvas for knitters to create beautiful and intricate designs. Gloves in particular carried symbolic or spiritual significance and played a significant role during major life events. As Lithuanian knitting expert Donna Druchunas notes, "Many Lithuanians believed that gloves had magical or supernatural power, and gloves with festive and symbolic designs were knitted as gifts and blessings for family members and other loved ones."[2] Women frequently put gloves on the hands of the

dead at funerals and also slipped them in the pockets of gravediggers and coffin carriers, so those attending the burial would see them.

Gloves were also an important part of wedding traditions. Wedding guests as well as the groomsmen and the matchmaker received gloves as gifts. The bride gave a pair to the groom when they exchanged rings and also left a pair of gloves at the altar during the ceremony.[3]

While gloves had flexible fingers, mittens tended to keep hands warmer. Mittens also presented a larger surface suitable for more complex patterns. Cuffs were knitted in ribbing or other stretchy stitches and often featured stripes. Mittens were sometimes very short, particularly warm-weather ones, while winter hand gear had longer cuffs, often embellished with fringe.

Mittens and gloves were effective at warming and protecting one's hands, yet they didn't allow the freedom of movement that was often necessary to do household or field work. Wrist warmers, simple tubes that kept the lower arms warm while leaving the hands free, became popular, not only in Lithuania but all over Europe, from the Baltics to Scandinavia, Poland to Iceland.

Cold Hands, Warm Wrists

We call wrist warmers by various names: wristers, armbands, pulse warmers, fingerless gloves, or cuffs. In Lithuanian, the most frequently used name is *riešinės*. You might associate wrist warmers with cold weather, but author Irena Felomena Juškienė interviewed many knitters and their family members who described wrist warmers as an item worn all year. People wore wrist warmers to work in the fields or forests, while at home, or in church. "Our great-grandparents never took off their wrist warmers, neither in winter [n]or in summer!"[4] said one Lithuanian knitter.

Cold weather explains why wrist warmers were so useful; it was chilly even inside one's home for much of the year. And they were important because of the shirt styles of the times. Blouses and shirts were made with wide sleeves. The sleeve cuffs could be gathered and tucked into wrist warmers, protecting the wearer from wind and cold. Wrist warmers were also handy when children grew rapidly. If a child's sleeves became a bit short, wrist warmers could cover the gaps until a larger shirt could be sewn.[5]

Top: Men's linen wedding gloves, knitted in a geometric openwork pattern. Knitted by Ona Vaitiekūnienė around 1927, while living in Sidaugi village, Pakruojis district, Lithuania. Such gloves were given by the bride to the groom during the wedding. From the collection of the Šiauliai "Aušros" Museum

Bottom: Wool mittens from the mid-twentieth century. The hands are gray with stripes of various colors, and the wrists have geometric ornaments, ending with fringes. From the collection of the Šiauliai "Aušros" Museum

Wool gloves from 1885. From the collection of the Museum of the History of Lithuania Minor

Wrist warmers were more than just a practical item, however; they could also be a small luxury, an important accessory when dressing up or on special occasions. These formal wrist warmers were made to impress, using patterns created with glass beads in intricate designs. Fancy wrist warmers could be seen peeking out from shirt or coat cuffs on holidays or special occasions.[6] They are an integral part of the folk costumes of many areas in Lithuania.

Everyday and Luxury

Lithuanian knitters made two kinds of riešinės. Everyday wrist warmers were made of leftover scraps of yarn, often handspun. Sometimes yarn was repurposed by unwinding old or outgrown garments. These wrist warmers were knitted with thick wool and heavy needles or, in some areas, crocheted. Depending on what yarn was available, they might be solid or multicolored, often in haphazard color combinations. A knitter might knit riešinės to try out a new technique or create stripes. Some were knitted in the round, and others were knitted lengthwise, then seamed.

Everyday wrist warmers were made with wool from sheep native to the region, such as the Coarsewool and the Blackface breeds,[7] hardy sheep that have double coats. Knitters used the finer undercoat to spin wool for their knitting. They may have used yarn in the original sheep colors—brown, tan, gray, or white—or colored with botanical dyes. Later, they would use aniline dyes to make more vivid colors. Knitters made lighter-weight wrist warmers for warm-weather wear in linen or hemp using openwork or lace patterns.

Fancy riešinės were a different story, made of high-quality wool in fine gauges or later knitted with commercially spun yarn. Some were knitted in the round in stockinette stitch with stranded colorwork. Others were knitted in garter stitch worked

sideways instead of in the round. Garter stitch is very stretchy, easily conforming to the shape of the hand and wrist, and it is also a dense stitch that is thicker than stockinette.

Wrist warmers varied in length from 2 or 3 inches (5 to 7.5 cm) to 7 or 8 inches (17.75 to 20 cm). Often a ruffled or lacy edging was knitted or crocheted onto the cuff. While a few wrist warmers with embroidered designs survive, most were decorated with beads, usually white ones. Glass beads were brought to Lithuania, some historians believe, from the Middle East and/or Byzantine Empire.[8] Originally, the beads were a luxury and a sign of wealth. Over time, they became more common, and artisans used them in a variety of handcrafts, including Lithuanian riešinės.

Beaded Beauties

Motifs and color schemes for fancy wristers varied from region to region. Most knitters opted for solid yarn in dark colors. In the northeastern provinces, bold hues such as red, black, green, or blue were popular. In the southeast, wristers came in bright colors such as purple, blue, burgundy, or rust, as well as black and dark blues. Some regions in the northwest favored stripes. In the Žemaitija region, two-color stripes in contrasting colors—red and blue or purple and green—were popular.[9]

When it came to beading, geometric motifs were popular, especially variations of zigzag patterns, triangles, and diamonds. Motifs were often arranged in bands of echoing lines. Designs were usually centered on the lower edge of the wrist warmer, with plain knitting on the upper section that would be hidden by sleeves. Most beaded designs were created on a solid background, although in some regions, designs appeared against striped backgrounds. Most surviving wrist warmers have white beads, although occasionally other colors or multiple colors were used and might depict flower petals or alternating geometric motifs.

Lithuanian knitters also gravitated to designs drawn from the natural world around them. Fir trees,

Photo by Edvardas Tamošiūnas, courtesy of the Šiauliai "Aušros" Museum

Photo by Donna Druchunas. From the collection of the Šiauliai "Aušros" Museum

Left: Women in traditional Lithuanian national dress, wide sleeves tucked into their *riešinės* at the Žaliūkiai Village Miller's Farmstead-Museum, 2020. *Right:* Everyday wrist warmers were knitted in simple garter stitch stripes from leftover yarn.

Photo by Donna Druchunas

These vintage beaded *riešinės* contain motifs similar to those used in northern Europe and Britain, including a snowflake reminiscent of Scandinavian patterns. From a private collection

flowers, clovers, and leaves were popular motifs. Some textile historians believe that nature-based motifs are a more recent development, with geometric designs dominant in earlier years.

Lithuania's geographic location—on the coast and close to the center of Europe—created opportunities for interactions with other countries. Some motifs frequently used in Scandinavian and British colorwork also appeared in riešinės. For instance, you might recognize the snowflake or star motif often seen in Norwegian colorwork or small motifs similar to peerie patterns in Shetland knitting. While we can't know for certain the source of particular designs, it makes sense that knitters might have been inspired by knitwear from other areas.

Riešinės have enjoyed new popularity in recent years and are a quick and beautiful project to knit. We're lucky that ethnographers and knitting experts have preserved so much beautiful work from these talented Lithuanian knitters. ❖

Special thanks to Donna Druchunas for her research and for providing photographs.

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CAROL J. SULCOSKI is a knitting author, designer, and teacher. She has written seven knitting books, including *Knitting Ephemera* (Sixth & Spring Books, 2016), which is full of knitting facts, history, and trivia. Her articles have appeared in publications including *Vogue Knitting, Modern Daily Knitting,* and *Noro Magazine,* as well as on the Craft Industry Alliance website and elsewhere. She lives outside Philadelphia and teaches at knitting events, knitting shops, and guilds. Her website is blackbunnyfibers.com.

Riešinės from Lithuania to Knit

DONNA DRUCHUNAS / REKNITTED BY KATRINA KING

Photos by Matt Graves

Knit a little luxury in fine wool and elegant beadwork, capturing the spirit of Lithuanian handicraft.

Beaded wrist warmers are my favorite souvenirs of my travels in Lithuania. I saw several antique pairs in museum collections and purchased a few pairs for myself at craft fairs and in folk art galleries. These small wool accessories warm your wrists and your heart. For winter wear, they add an extra bit of warmth both indoors and outdoors in times when you don't need the extra protection of gloves or mittens. In summer, they are perfect to protect you from the chill of air-conditioning.

Editor's note: Donna Druchunas originally knitted this design for the November/December 2011 issue of *PieceWork*. As a tribute to the enduring appeal of Lithuanian wrist warmers, Katrina King reknitted the design.

Materials

- Brown Sheep *Nature Spun Fingering* (100% wool), 310 yd (283.5 m)/1¾ oz (50 g) skein: 1 skein of #225F Brick Road
- Needles: size 00 (1.75 mm) or size needed to obtain gauge
- Scrap yarn for provisional CO
- Spare needle for three-needle bind-off
- Crochet hook: size 0 (2 mm)
- Beads: 1,410 size 10/0 seed beads (optional, size 8/0 or 9/0), Cream
- Collapsing eye beading needle

Finished Size: about 7" (17.8 cm) circumference at wrist and 6" (15.2 cm) long; to fit adult wrist.

Gauge: 35 sts and 74 rows = 4" (10.2 cm) in garter st, unblocked.

Visit pieceworkmagazine.com/abbreviations for terms you don't know.

Notes

Stitches should be dense and tight to hold beads in place and to fit the wrist snugly. Place bead as follows: On wrong-side row, knit to bead stitch, push 1 bead up to previous stitch worked and knit 1 stitch. (The bead and the next k1 count as 1 stitch.) The bead stays on the wrong side of the work.

Instructions

Wrist Warmer

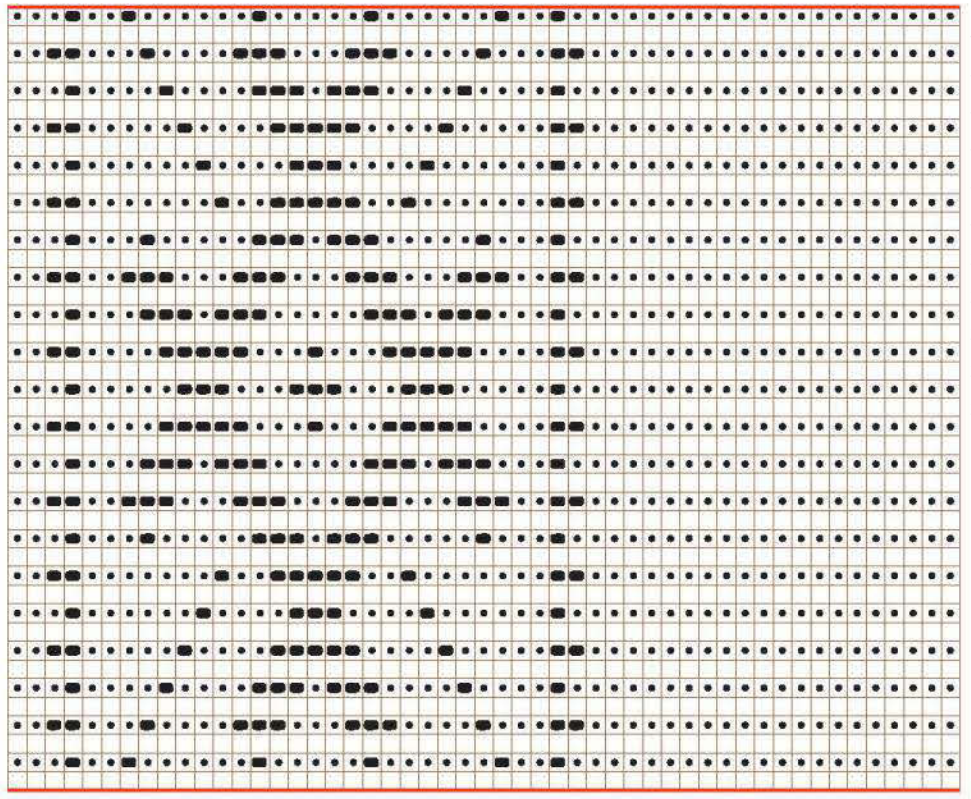
Make 2

String 705 beads onto yarn. With scrap yarn and crochet hook, ch 55. Working into the back of the chains, pick up and k 51 sts.

Knit 2 rows.

Work Rows 1–42 of Wrist Warmer Chart 3 times. Remove waste yarn, place stitches onto one needle.

Wrist Warmer Chart



Key

- k on RS
- k on WS
- place bead (see Notes)
- repeat

With right sides facing each other, join with a three-needle bind-off.

Repeat for second wrist warmer.

FINISHING

Crochet Trim

At wrist edge (edge with beads), join yarn and work shells as foll: *Sc in 1st garter ridge, sk next garter ridge, work 3 dc in next garter ridge; rep from * around. Sl st to join. Fasten off. At arm edge, join yarn and work 1 sc in each garter ridge. Join with sl st. Fasten off. Weave in ends. ❖

DONNA DRUCHUNAS worked as a knitting designer, author, and teacher for over 20 years. Currently, she makes comics and self-publishes patterns for traditional Lithuanian mittens at bartonriveryarns.com.

KATRINA KING is the assistant editor of *PieceWork*.

Wrist warmers are knitted flat and joined together with a three-needle bind-off.

Påsöm

Anna-Karin Jobs Arnberg and the Spirit of Dalarna

MICHELE PHILLIPS BARDEN

When I first discovered *Påsöm*, a booklet by Anna-Karin Jobs Arnberg, it became a bit of an obsession for me. Anna-Karin's book is an authoritative manual on *påsöm*, a traditional Swedish embroidery technique from Dala-Floda, the author's hometown in the Dalarna region. This technique uses colorful four-ply wool yarn to create dense floral designs on woven or knitted fabric. I immediately began one of the booklet's embroidery projects and carried it everywhere I went. Påsöm is vibrant and fun; the yarn is thick, the effect is raised and luscious, and the embroidering moves along quickly. As an embroidery teacher, I could see that påsöm would be a great technique for beginners daunted by other forms of surface work, such as crewel. I love påsöm and didn't need much encouragement to dig deeper into this lovely technique.

A skirt band made with *påsöm* from a Dala-Floda woman's parish dress. *Photo by Per Erickson, courtesy of the Dalarnas Museum's Cultural History Collection*

ANNA-KARIN JOBS ARNBERG

Born in 1971 and raised in Dala-Floda, Anna-Karin is many things: master craftsperson, curator, researcher, writer, teacher of textiles, and musician. She comes from a long line of teachers and family members who embroidered professionally in Dala-Floda for the tourist market. They trained her when she was a girl, then she went on to receive her master's degree in embroidery, and is now a curator of textiles at the Dalarnas Museum. She uses the museum's påsöm collection as inspiration for her research and classes. Considered Sweden's foremost expert on påsöm, she travels all over Sweden and abroad to teach and promote påsöm as well as other forms of folk textiles. Her husband is a renowned violinist in Sweden, and she is a violinist and folk dancer. She focuses consistently on the folk heritage of Dalarna.

THE PÅSÖM JOURNEY

Attempts to reach Anna-Karin through email failed, my correspondence arriving predictably in her spam folder. I had already planned a follow-the-needlework solo trip to Estonia, so I added Sweden to my itinerary. I landed in Stockholm and immediately headed the two and a half hours north to Falun, the location of the Dalarnas Museum, hoping to find Anna-Karin at work. The museum was closed when I arrived, so I walked to the Dalarnas Hemslöjd. *Hemslöjd* is Swedish for "handcraft" and is a type of shop in Sweden that sells traditional handicrafts. I burst into the beautifully stocked store in Dalarnas and immediately searched for anything related to påsöm. I came to Sweden knowing about the network of Hemslöjd stores and thought they all carried similar items. It seemed reasonable to assume the Dalarnas Hemslöjd, being named for the entire region, might have a book or a kit related to påsöm, but there was nothing.

So began my introduction into the specific regionality of crafts in Dalarna. Påsöm, the shopkeeper informed me, was from Dala-Floda, population six hundred or so. I would need to visit the Floda Hemslöjd, just under an hour west of Falun, to find

It is the combination of the thickness of the tapestry-weight yarn and layering techniques that give påsöm its distinctive raised effect.

påsöm. This information added a new and exciting dimension to my trip. I decided to visit all the Hemslöjds in the Dalarna region.

I arrived back at the Dalarnas Museum ready to overwhelm Anna-Karin with my enthusiasm for all things påsöm. The letdown was immediate: Anna-Karin only works at the museum on Fridays, and I would have to return four days later to meet her. However, she had curated an exhibit of folk clothing, so I was soon surrounded by display cases filled with the gorgeous ethnographic textiles of Dalarna.

I mapped out a week's worth of places to visit and headed west to Dala-Floda, the home of påsöm. An hour later, I arrived and drove by the Floda Hemslöjd, which was closed until Friday. Researching påsöm was becoming quite a challenge. I decided to drive north along the western shore of Lake Siljan toward the Mora Hemslöjd. There, I crossed to the eastern shore of Lake Siljan, heading back toward Falun. As I drove through Rättvik, I visited a Red Cross thrift store in the same area as the Hemslöjd, and that's where I found my first treasure, a child's hat worked in påsöm.

Spirit of Dalarna

Although I hadn't found Anna-Karin yet, I had begun to understand why Dalarna holds such a special place in the hearts of Swedes. I saw the chubby little Dala horses—painted wood and the real inspirations grazing in the fields; the traditional music, dance, clothing, and Falu red houses; the emphasis on making things to celebrate a place. In my search for Anna-Karin, I found the spirit of Dalarna.

Dalarna owes its craft industry to its rural setting, which drew scores of artists in the late 1800s. Anna-Karin later explained to me that Carl and Karin Larsson, Anders Zorn, and Gustaf Ankarcrona

Photo by Per Erickson, courtesy of the Dalarnas Museum's Cultural History Collection

Photo by Matt Graves

Left: A traditional girl's frock from Dala-Floda, Sweden, with *påsöm* embroidery. *Right:* Child's hat worked in *påsöm* embroidery the author purchased at Röda Korset Second Hand in Rättvik.

Flodkulla en face, a painting by Anders Zorn from 1915 celebrating the pastoral lifestyle and the local dress of Dala-Floda.

Photo courtesy of the National Museum, Sweden

Handicraft in Sweden

The National Association of Swedish Handicraft Societies (*Svenska Hemslöjdsföreningarnas Riksförbund*) is a nonprofit organization composed of 90 regional and local handicraft societies across Sweden. Together they constitute *Hemslöjden*, a movement that has promoted intangible cultural heritage for more than one hundred years. Through education, handicraft gatherings, exhibitions, and other diverse projects, the organization strives to convey the significance of craft to younger generations. Identifying handicraft is therefore an important part of the association's work, and its vision is that "handicrafts should be a natural part of everyone's daily life." To learn more, visit hemslojden.org.

all created art that celebrated the pastoral lifestyle and folk traditions of the villages that dot the landscape. Recognizing the threat of industrialization, they worked with others to encourage, retain, and— according to some—control the patterns, colors, and techniques used in folk crafts and clothing. Selling crafts became a major economic opportunity for rural people in the region, and tourists wanted the version promoted by Ankarcrona and others. The tourists who flock to Dalarna every summer create a tremendous demand for the folk art of the region, and their expectations for consistency have driven production. Anna-Karin's mother, grandmother, and aunt embroidered for a living, and two of her teachers, Anna Olsson and her great aunt Karin Lundin, both born early in the twentieth century, gave her a strong understanding of the forces that controlled the development of påsöm.

Påsöm, from the Swedish *på* (on top of) and *söm* (seam), arrived in Dala-Floda with the introduction of zephyrgarn, a four- or five-ply (300 meters/100 grams) yarn used in Berlin work, a highly decorative floral needlepoint style popular in the first half of the nineteenth century (1804–1850). Zephyrgarn arrived in Dala-Floda via traveling merchants, and village women immediately embraced the eye-popping colors. They began small, placing a few motifs on their clothing. The technique exploded in popularity by 1890, with wallpaper and fabric motifs frequently used as inspiration, and it soon embellished bonnets, bags, skirts, jackets, sleeves, mittens, pillows, socks, and my favorite, men's suspenders. In the past, colors were subdued, with a woman's palette limited to wool that was raised and processed locally and then dyed with natural dyes at home. The bright colors suddenly available pushed them into a new era of creativity. Soon, they were creating a boisterous riot of thick flowers, leaves, and vines.

The stitches of påsöm are simple and straightforward. It is the combination of the thickness of the tapestry-weight yarn and layering techniques that give påsöm its distinctive raised effect. Much

Photo by Per Erickson, courtesy of the Dalamas Museum's Cultural History Collection

Twined-knitted wool mittens feature textured floral motifs in *påsöm* embroidery, finished with multicolored fringe at the cuff.

Embroiderers use templates to transfer the motifs directly onto wool or tightly knitted fabric, making this technique accessible to beginners.

of the work is done in straight, satin, or stem stitch. Embroiderers use templates to transfer the motifs directly onto wool or tightly knitted fabric, making this technique accessible to beginners.

A PÅSÖM MEETING

Later in the week, when I returned to visit Floda Hemslöjd in Dala-Floda, I was greeted by two wonderful volunteers, Gun and Karin. I explained my quest to them, and Gun immediately began calling Anna-Karin's husband and assorted friends and family members to locate her. Within 10 minutes, I was speaking to Anna-Karin on the phone. She had received multiple texts in a short period of time, all with the same message: "An American is looking for you!" She was understandably bewildered but agreed to meet with me the following day at the Dala-Floda

Photo by Matt Graves

Antique *påsöm*-embroidered waist purse with pewter hook, engraved "M," purchased by the author at the Floda Hemslöjd, Dala-Floda, Sweden. From the collection of the author

Photo courtesy of the author

Anna-Karin (*left*) and the author finally meet in Dala-Floda.

Värdshus, a charming bed-and-breakfast just down the road from Floda Hemslöjd.

Now that I had located Anna-Karin and had arranged a meeting, I allowed myself time to enjoy Floda Hemslöjd. The shop offers the tapestry wool and fabric needed to create your own projects, as well as completed items and kits. As I piled my long-sought treasures on the counter, Gun asked me if I wanted to see the collection next door. We walked to another smaller shed, which revealed hundreds of items for sale on consignment from local families. It was an overwhelming display of one small village's contribution to Swedish national craft. I could easily imagine the thousands of hours the village women had spent making clothing for themselves and their families. I found a small purse designed to hang from a pewter clasp on a woman's skirt. The letter "M" was inscribed on the clasp, a sure sign that it needed to come home with me.

I was at the Värdshus bright and early the following morning and finally found myself in the same room as Anna-Karin. She regarded me with a bit of trepidation and asked, "What do you want from me?" Having searched for her with single-minded focus, I now realized I needed to reassure her that my intentions were to learn about påsöm and only påsöm. She agreed to create a project for this issue of *PieceWork* and then graciously made space in an already full day to give me a private lecture on the history of påsöm. There is no one better qualified to share the techniques and designs of påsöm with the wider world. ❖

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MICHELE PHILLIPS BARDEN studies and teaches the ethnographic textiles of the Baltics and Scandinavia from her farm in Norridgewock, Maine. She is living a long-held dream by traveling to the areas of origin of her favorite needlework techniques and studying with local craftspeople. She is always willing to travel, talk, and teach. Visit her website at fiberphilia.com for news of her upcoming classes.

Spirit of Dalarna Mittens

ANNA-KARIN JOBS ARNBERG

Photos by Matt Graves

Påsöm is the name of a traditional wool embroidery from Dala-Floda in Dalarna, Sweden. The embroidery is so magnificent that it has found its way beyond traditional folk costumes and today adorns everything from cushions and wall hangings to bags and clothing—and it's not just women from Dalarna who hold the needle.

The technique has a colorful history, and the embroidery motifs have changed over time. As early as the beginning of the nineteenth century, possibly even earlier, simple vines and stylized flower, star, cross, and diamond shapes were embroidered on some garments. These embroideries were done freehand, and the yarns were plant-dyed in red, blue, yellow, and green.

In the 1860s, soft synthetic-dyed yarns in bright colors and shades, such as pink, purple, blue, and red, were imported. The yarn was called zephyr yarn and inspired new styles and floral patterns. Soon after, the region experienced an economic boom, and the embroidery exploded into lavish floral motifs, which became prominent features on folk costumes, mittens, and other textiles.

Satin-stitch vivid floral motifs in contrasting colors to embellish the twined knitted mittens.

MATERIALS

- Wålstedts Ullspinneri *Tvåändsgarn* 4/2 (100% wool), 328 yd [300 m]/100 g: 1 skein of #0101 Vit (white)
- Knitting needles: size 2.5 (3 mm) set of 5 double-pointed (dpn), or size needed to obtain gauge
- Stitch marker
- Scrap yarn or small stitch holder
- Tapestry needle
- Needlepoint yarn, such as Brown Sheep *Waverly Wool* (100% wool), 143 yd [131 m]/100 g skein, splitting the strands, or Appletons *Tapestry Wool* (100% wool), 60 yd [55 m]/25 g skein: dark green, light green, light red, medium red, dark red, light rose, medium rose, very dark red, white, and yellow
- Chenille needle for embroidery: size 18
- Fine-tip marker (0.7 mm to 1 mm) for knitted fabric (brands include Edding, Pen Touch, Pilot, Uni, Paint Marker, and others)
- Plastic page protectors or other transparent plastic sheets for embroidery templates
- Heavy paper or cardstock for motif templates, 1 sheet
- Tassel-making tool with tines about 1" (2.5 cm) or handmade "fork" (see Notes) for fringe
- Strong sewing thread (linen or polyester blend) for attaching fringe
- Nailbrush or similar for shaping fringe
- Scissors: embroidery and paper

Finished Size: 9½" (24.1 cm) long and 7¾" (19.7 cm) hand circumference, after blocking.

Gauge: 31 sts and 32 rounds = 4" (10.2 cm) in TS.

Visit pieceworkmagazine.com/abbreviations for knitting terms you don't know.
Visit pieceworkmagazine.com/basic-embroidery-stitches for embroidery terms you don't know.

SPECIAL STITCH

Twined Stockinette (TS)

This technique is worked in the round with 2 strands of yarn, which can be from the same ball. Both strands are always held behind the work, and the right side of the work always faces you.

Step 1 Knit the first stitch with 1 strand of yarn; drop the yarn behind the work.

Step 2 Bring the other strand of yarn up and over the first strand, knit the next stitch, and drop the yarn behind the work.

The yarn used to knit the stitch in Step 2, closest to the tip of the right needle, is now the front yarn. The yarn used to knit the stitch in Step 1, the second stitch on the right needle, is the back yarn.

Step 3 Bring the back yarn up and over the front yarn, knit the next stitch, and drop the yarn behind the work. The 2 strands have now exchanged places.

Repeat Step 3, alternating the yarns every stitch, always bringing the back yarn over the front yarn to twine the yarns in the same direction.

NOTES

The knitting yarn used for this project is specifically made for twined knitting—worked with two yarns that twist around each other during knitting—and it may be difficult to find an exact equivalent. You will need about 100 grams or 275 to 325 yards (250 to 300 m) of a two-ply, Z-ply yarn in fingering weight.

The preferred knitting yarn is Z-ply, made up of two single threads, tightly plied. Most commercial yarns are S-ply, meaning that each thread is spun clockwise and the two singles are plied counterclockwise. For a Z-ply, each thread is spun counterclockwise and the two singles are plied clockwise.

Twined knitting creates a lot of twist in the yarns. If you work from both ends of the same ball of yarn, leave about two arm lengths between the work and the ball, wrap the yarns around the ball using a backward loop, and pull tightly so the ball will hang suspended in midair. When there is less than 2 feet (0.6 m) between the knitting and the ball, allow the ball to dangle and run your finger between the two yarns from the knitting to the ball. The ball will spin and unwind the yarns. Remove the backward loop, pull out another two arm lengths and replace the backward loop.

Embroidering on a knitted surface requires tightly knitted fabric. If the knitting is too loose, the embroidered stitches may end up in the middle of a knit stitch, making it difficult to achieve the even shape desired. Twined knitting produces the best results, creating a firm, dense, and relatively stiff material that is well suited for embroidery.

For the embroidery, you will need a loosely twisted four-ply fingering-weight yarn in various colors. The yarn should be approximately 275 yards (300 m) per 100 grams. A lustrous wool yarn combined with vibrant colors gives the embroidery the rich character that is so characteristic of påsöm embroidery.

Påsöm embroidery is typically done using satin stitch, short and long stitches, stem stitch, and by filling both the right and wrong sides of the fabric with stitches.

The fringe is made from yarn that is wound tightly, secured, cut open, and brushed out like a yarn pom-pom. The yarn is wrapped around a tool called a "fork" and tied in the middle with a double thread of cotton or linen. The size of the fork determines how large or high the fringe will be. You can make your own "fork" using two steel knitting needles (size 3–4) and a small wooden block (about 2" × 2½" × ¾" [5 × 6 × 2 cm]). Sand all surfaces of the wooden block so that it's comfortable to hold. Drill two holes 1" (2.5 cm) apart through the block (the side that is 2" × ¾" [5 × 2 cm]) using a drill bit that matches the size of your knitting needles. Insert the knitting needles from the underside of the block.

INSTRUCTIONS

Left Mitten

Cuff and Lower Hand

CO 72 sts. Divide sts evenly onto 4 needles with 18 sts on each needle, place marker (pm), and join for working in the rnd, being careful not to twist sts. Rnds begin at pinkie side of the hand, at start of palm sts.

Purl 1 rnd, knit 1 rnd, purl 1 rnd.

The mitten is now worked in TS (see Special Stitch) to the end.

Work even in TS until piece measures 1" (2.5 cm).

Dec rnd: *On Needle 1, k3, ssk, work to end of needle; on Needle 2, work to last 5 sts, k2tog, k3; rep from * on Needle 3 and Needle 4—68 sts, 17 sts each needle.

Work 2 rnds in TS.

Rep the last 3 rnds once more—64 sts, 16 sts each needle.

Work the dec rnd one more time—60 sts, 15 sts each needle.

Work even until piece measures 4" (10.2 cm) from CO.

Thumb Opening

Next rnd: On Needle 1, work to end; on Needle 2, work to end and place last 12 sts on scrap yarn; on Needle 3 and Needle 4, work to end.

Next rnd: On Needle 1, work to end; on Needle 2, work to thumb gap, CO 12 sts across gap with alternating yarns; on Needle 3 and Needle 4, work to end—60 sts, 15 sts each needle.

Upper Hand

Work even in TS until the piece reaches to the tip of the wearer's index finger, or 1¾" (4.4 cm) less than desired total length. For the mitten shown, this is 7¾" (19.7 cm) from the CO.

Tip Shaping

Dec rnd: *On Needle 1, k1, ssk, work to end of needle; on Needle 2, work to last 3 sts, k2tog, k1; rep from * on Needle 3 and Needle 4—4 sts dec'd, 1 st dec'd each needle.

Work 1 rnd.

Rep the last 2 rnds once more—52 sts, 13 sts each needle.

Work the decrease rnd every rnd 11 more times—8 sts, 2 sts each needle.

Knit the 2 sts on Needle 1 onto the end of Needle 4, then place the sts on Needle 2 and Needle 3 on a single needle—4 sts each on two needles.

Break yarn, leaving a 10" (25.4 cm) tail.

Thread yarn onto tapestry needle and run it through remaining sts, drawing them tight. Weave in ends.

Thumb

Place 12 held thumb sts on one needle and join both yarns to start of thumb sts with RS facing.

Next rnd: Work in TS to end of needle; using alternating yarns, pick up and knit 1 st from side of thumb opening, 12 sts across bottom of sts CO at top of thumb gap, and 1 st from other side of thumb opening—26 sts.

Divide sts onto four needles with 7 sts each on Needles 1 and 3, and 6 sts each on Needles 2 and 4.

Work in TS until thumb reaches base of the wearer's thumbnail, or ¾" (1.9 cm) less than desired length. For the mitten shown, this is 1¾" (4.4 cm) from the pickup rnd.

Dec rnd: *On Needle 1, k1, ssk, work to end of needle; on Needle 2, work to last 3 sts, k2tog, k1; rep from * on Needle 3 and Needle 4—4 sts dec'd, 1 st dec'd each needle.

Rep the dec rnd 3 more times—10 sts; 3 sts each on Needles 1 and 3, and 2 sts each on Needles 2 and 4.

Next rnd: *On Needle 1, k1, ssk; on Needle 2, knit; rep from * on Needle 3 and Needle 4—8 sts, 2 sts each needle.

Knit the 2 sts on Needle 1 onto the end of Needle 4, then place the sts on Needle 2 and Needle 3 on a single needle—4 sts each on two needles.

Break yarn, leaving a 10" (25.4 cm) tail.

Thread yarn onto tapestry needle and run it through remaining sts, drawing them tight. Weave in ends.

RIGHT MITTEN

Cuff and Lower Hand

Work as for left mitten until thumb opening—60 sts, 15 sts each needle; piece measures 4" (10.2 cm) from CO. Rnds begin at thumb side of the hand, at start of palm sts.

Thumb Opening

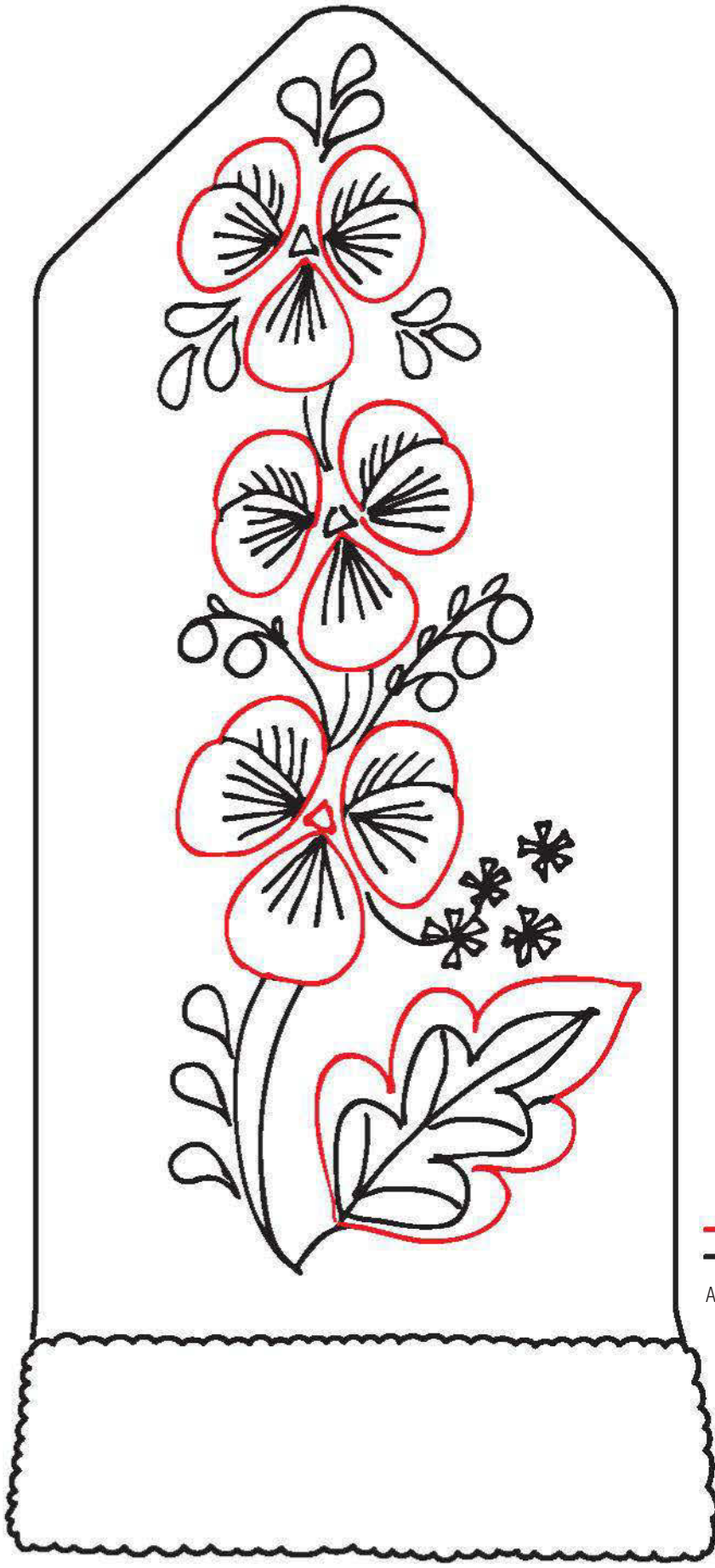
Next rnd: On Needle 1, work 12 sts and place them on scrap yarn, then work to end; on Needle 2, Needle 3, and Needle 4, work to end.

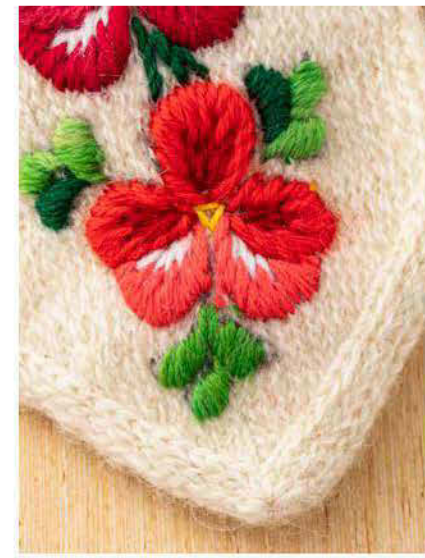
Next rnd: On Needle 1, CO 12 sts across thumb gap with alternating yarns, work to end; on Needle 2, Needle 3, and Needle 4, work to end—60 sts, 15 sts each needle.

Upper Hand, Tip Shaping, and Thumb

Work as for left mitten.

Completed twined knitted mitten ready for embroidery.





A small stem of cheery red flowers adds a special surprise to the thumb. Including a small motif on the thumb is a traditional element of *påsöm*.

Cut stencil
Freeform design

Actual size

FINISHING

Weave in ends. Handwash mittens in lukewarm water with a little soap, block to shape, and allow to dry thoroughly.

EMBROIDERY

Transfer pattern to knitted fabric

Trace floral patterns onto heavy paper or cardstock. Cut out templates.

Place the floral pattern templates on one of the mittens to test the design, and adjust the motifs until you are happy with the arrangement. Place a sturdy, transparent plastic sheet over the mitten with the arranged pattern templates. Trace the shape of the mitten and the floral templates using a waterproof marker. Cut a stencil from the plastic sleeve by cutting out openings for each petal shape separately. Set the floral pattern templates aside. Pin the complete mitten stencil onto the mitten to prevent shifting. Use a waterproof marker to trace or dot the cutout patterns onto the knitted mitten. Remove the stencil. Manually draw the lines and curves on the mitten. To transfer the pattern to the second mitten, flip the stencil over to mirror the design. *Note:* If the mitten surface is very fuzzy, trim the small fibers to make it easier to draw the pattern.

Place a thick plastic sheet, oilcloth, or similar material inside the mitten to prevent accidentally stitching through the fabric and sewing the layers together.

Embroidering Påsöm

Using the color of your choice, thread a chenille needle with an 18"–24" (45–60 cm) length of embroidery yarn. Secure the yarn on the outside of the mitten by passing it through the stitches in the knitting under the area you are embroidering. This way, you won't have to turn the garment inside out each time you need to fasten the thread.

Start embroidering satin stitch in a flower. The first stitch begins at the tip at the bottom of the petal, and the stitch's angle follows the petal's outer contour. Continue adding stitches, varying the stitch length and angle as needed around the outside edge of the petal, until you approach the rounded top where the stitches align with the center of the petal. When the first half is done, repeat the process for the second half. Start at the tip at the bottom of the petal, passing the thread through the knitted fabric under the stitches you just made and filling in from the other side of the petal. End by pulling the yarn through so the tail disappears into the knitted fabric. Using the accent color for the petal and satin stitch, start at the tip and fill in the accent color in the center of the petal. Continue with the remaining petals using the colors of your choice.

Once all the petals are embroidered, stitch the stems using stem stitch. Embroider the leaves with satin stitch. Fill in the space freehand with tiny flowers and leaves using satin and stem stitches. Secure threads with running stitches on the right side. Finish by making French knots in the flowers.

Embroider a small stem with leaves and flowers on the underside of the thumb. See photo.

Fringe

Using extra embroidery yarn, wind the yarn around the base of the fork about 40 times (see Notes). Thread a needle with strong sewing thread. Using the thread doubled, backstitch across the center of the wound embroidery yarn. Pierce the yarns when stitching and pull the thread tight to secure the yarn in the fringe. Tie off. Slide the wrapped yarn off the fork and cut the loops open on either side.

Repeat to make about 15 fringes per mitten. As shown, each mitten has three fringes in each of five colors.

Arrange the fringes where you want them on the mitten cuff. Sew the fringe onto the mitten using a running stitch through the center thread of the fringe.

Trim the fringe along the mitten to ensure the lines are even and neat, shaping it to the desired form and height. For a more compact fringe, steam the fringe and brush it. ❖

RESOURCES

Bush, Nancy. "*Tvåändsstickning*: Sweden's Two-End Knitting." *PieceWork*, January/February, 2007, 18–21.

Dandanell, Birgitta, and Ulla Danielsson. *Twined Knitting: A Swedish Folkcraft Technique*. Translated by Robin Orm Hansen. Loveland, CO: Interweave, 1989.

ANNA-KARIN JOBS ARNBERG has worked as a curator in textiles at Dalarnas Museum in Falun, Sweden, since 2015. As a specialist in folk dresses and folk art, she has worked with the museum's collections, curated exhibitions, and written numerous articles and lectures for the museum. Previously, she worked as the head of the curator department at Nordiska museet overseeing folk dresses and textiles and as a handicraft consultant. She has a journeyman's and master craftsman's diploma in embroidery and a bachelor's degree in textile studies from Uppsala University.

Embroidery Tells a Story

The Ukrainian Art of Vyrizuvannia

MARUSIA FOSTER AND LYDIA HOROCHOLYN

All photos by Severyn Shved, courtesy of the Collection of the Manitoba Branch of the Ukrainian Museum of Canada, UWAC

A detail of Poltava-style cutwork shows a geometric pattern formed by cutwork stitch and flat stitch in white thread on handwoven linen.

Embroidery is possibly the most popular of the Ukrainian folk art traditions. It developed regionally to the extent that some embroidery styles, patterns, and colors were exclusive to a single village. This regional embroidery reflected the needleworkers' skill at integrating design and color, resulting in harmonious, decorative clothing. The oldest Ukrainian embroidery stitches imitate weaving. For example, *zavolikannya* work is stitched horizontally on the face of the fabric, while *nyzynka* work is stitched vertically on the reverse side of the fabric. *Hlad* is a flat or satin stitch created with threads lying straight and parallel to each other and is used with cutwork.

Vyrizuvannia is a type of cutwork widespread in the villages of the Poltava and Chernihiv Polisia regions of north-central Ukraine. In early times, women used natural flaxen thread sometimes waxed with beeswax to embroider on handspun, handwoven linen or hemp fabric. Later, waxed thread colored with soot along with natural dyes came into use until the 1800s. It is widely believed that this embroidery method of cutting within a square came from Byzantium where it was used for religious vestments.[1] Vyrizuvannia was commonly used as inserts and sleeves of both women's and men's shirts and on the lower edges of some women's shirts.

Technique of Vyrizuvannia, Ukrainian Cutwork

In the Poltava style of vyrizuvannia, needleworkers cut and remove both horizontal and vertical threads. They use other design elements to complement vyrizuvannia, as it is never used alone. Satin stitch (*lyshtva* in Poltava), reverse single faggot stitch

(*kuriachyi brid*), double faggot stitching (*zernovyi vyvid*), drawn eyelets (*vykolyuvannia*), cutwork, and drawn-thread work (*merezhka*) are some of the stitches often used with this style of cutwork. The design in vyrizuvannia is usually a diamond shape composed of small squares. The outer squares are left open, whereas the interior squares may be filled with a design. The focus of the overall design rests on the cutout openings.

One of the best-known styles of cutwork is hardanger, typically done with white thread on white linen fabric, similar to vyrizuvannia. Hardanger, however, is built on the concept of "kloster blocks," using satin stitch as the basis of the design as opposed to the Poltava style of cutwork in which the focus of the design is the cutout opening. Vyrizuvannia embroiderers make narrow, overcast bars, just enough to hold the threads in place when cutting the fabric. For each square, three ground threads may be used for overcasting the outline. First, each square is outlined using half crosses while cross-stitches are used on the corners. The overcast stitches are drawn tight so that the openings will appear larger than the overcasting after the threads are cut. Care must be taken to place the stitches so that on the reverse side, the stitches, both horizontal and vertical, lie away from the edge to be cut and are never on the cutting line. The opposing cross-stitches must lie on the same ground threads. Ground threads that lie under crosses are not to be cut. Only those ground threads that lie under the half crosses are cut carefully and cleanly. When all the ground threads at the half crosses have been cut, a cutwork pattern is created.

Having bound the border of the entire form, the center is worked by starting from an inside corner cross-stitch and tightly overcasting the uncut ground threads. A square that borders on plain cloth is never filled. In Poltava cutwork, only interior squares may be filled with a design. The classic filling of an opening takes the form of a cross. Blind cutwork (*sleepe vyrizuvannia*), worn by older women, varies in that the ground threads that are normally cut out are instead oversewn with dark threads, which was done for reasons of modesty.

In past generations, women typically used vyrizuvannia on clothing; however, now we can find this technique used on tablecloths, runners, and other household linens.

Top: Close-up of diamond shape with small squares, including cutwork and flat stitch, in white thread on handwoven linen. *Bottom:* Sampler made in a village in the province of Bukovyna, Ukraine, shows cutwork stitch and flat stitch in blue thread on linen.

Full-length woman's shirt with cutwork and flat stitch on the sleeves in white thread on handwoven linen. The festive-occasion shirt was made in 1887 by Odarka Ivashenko in the village of Yahnyky, Poltava, Ukraine. The shirt is worn with the wraparound skirt, or *plakhta*, shown in the background. The skirt was handwoven from wool and hemp in the 1900s, also in Poltava, Ukraine.

Safeguarding Ukrainian Cultural Heritage in the Twenty-First Century

With the passing of time, foreign trade brought cross-stitch to Ukraine, and in the 1850s, factory-made aniline dyes produced brilliant, intense colors, which lacked the harmony of natural plant dyes. Additionally, there were very few places where authentic traditional embroidery designs continued to exist in Ukraine during Soviet times (September 1937 to August 1991). However, the Orange Revolution of 2004 in Ukraine had a profound effect on Ukrainian national identity and the way Ukrainians perceived themselves. The protests of the Revolution brought purpose and meaning to wearing Ukrainian embroidery. Vyshyvanka Day or Embroidery Day, which is celebrated on the third Thursday in May, was formalized in Ukraine in 2006. The wearing of Ukrainian embroidery became a unifying personal, social, and—sometimes—political statement.

Olha Kosach

Preserving ancient Ukrainian embroidery traditions

Olha Drahomanova Kosach (1849–1930) was known by her pseudonym, Olena Pchilka. Writer, ethnographer, publisher, translator, women's activist, and community leader, Olha Kosach was a highly principled woman who instilled the authentic Ukrainian ancient folk traditions and language in her children—two sons and four daughters. One daughter became a well-known poet in Ukraine and wrote under the pseudonym Lesia Ukrainka.

Olha Kosach was born in the Poltava region into a privileged family who actively opposed the oppressive political and cultural policies of the Russian Empire. She traveled widely in Europe, meeting with the leading intellectuals of the day. Olha Kosach was concerned about the Russian Empire's ban on Ukrainian language and culture and took it upon herself to document the ancient Ukrainian folk art traditions.

In 1876, Olha Kosach self-published, in Russian and French, *Ukrainian Ornamental Designs* (*Ukraïns'kyi ornament*). This book is still considered the first systematic work on the study of Ukrainian folk art and is an invaluable contribution to the preservation and development of the national culture of Ukraine. *Ukrainian Ornamental Designs* was awarded the Prix Award at the World Exposition in Paris in 1878 and was republished five times during Kosach's lifetime.

Photo by Rozayenki

Olha Kosach, Vienna 1891, from the family album of black-and-white photographs spanning 1860 to 1949. This family archive, compiled by Izidora Kosach, includes extensive handwritten descriptions of the photographs in Ukrainian.

Now, with the invasion of Ukraine, there is renewed interest in reviving the ancient traditional stitches. There are over one hundred stitches in Ukrainian folk embroidery and, sadly, today many people do not distinguish between the traditional ancient techniques and contemporary adaptations. The *tryzub* (trident) design on Ukraine's coat of arms has taken on an increased powerful symbolic meaning for Ukrainians. Today, many Ukrainians see the tryzub as a symbol of national identity, cultural heritage, and history. It can be found in Ukrainian folk art, popular culture, contemporary embroidery, and even on military dress as a political statement and unifying factor.

With Ukrainian sovereignty and culture under threat once again, Ukrainian museums in the diaspora have a renewed responsibility to safeguard the unique culture and heritage of Ukraine. The Manitoba Branch of the Ukrainian Museum of Canada's collection, exhibits, and educational programs that we manage are an example of the deep connection between the people of Canada and Ukraine. As Canadians we deeply value the freedom and democratic principles that unite us in supporting Ukraine's fight for justice and independence. It is part of our mission to research and pass on the technique of the almost-forgotten stitches and designs in Ukrainian embroidery. As the museum celebrates its 75th anniversary this year, we continue to document the progression and adaptations in Ukrainian embroidery, recognizing that cultures are constantly evolving, including the folk art of Ukrainian embroidery. ❖

A full-length woman's shirt (*sorochka*) with cutwork and flat stitch in white silk thread on handwoven linen on the sleeve and the hem. The shirt was made in a village in the province of Bukovyna in the early 1900s.

NOTES

1. *Ukrainian Embroideries* from [the] Collection of Maria Kutsenko (Melbourne: Spectrum Publications, 1977), 2.

RESOURCES

Embroidery Tells a Story. Exhibition. Winnipeg, UMC-Manitoba Branch, July 2024–June 2025. umcmb.ca/exhibits/2024-embroidery-tells-a-story.

Kmit, Ann, Johanna Luciow, and Loretta Luciow. *Ukrainian Embroidery*. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1978.

Roman, K. "Poltava Style Cutwork Embroidery, Ukraine." *Folk Costume & Embroidery* (blog), May 5, 2017. folkcostume.blogspot.com/2017/05/poltava- style-cutwork-ukraine.html.

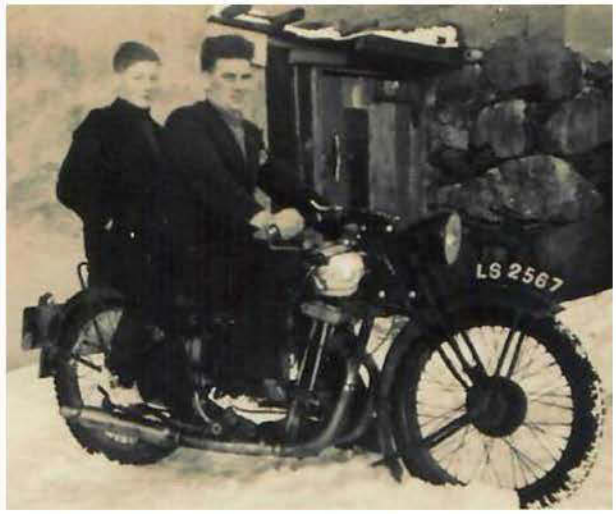
Women of Influence. Exhibition. Winnipeg, UMC-Manitoba Branch, July 2021–June 2022. umcmb.ca/exhibits/2021-women-of-influence.

MARUSIA FOSTER is a ceramic artist, educator, and founding member of the Stoneware Gallery and Studio, an artist-run cooperative since 1978. She is currently copresident of the Manitoba Branch of the Ukrainian Museum of Canada, UWAC, and is motivated to safeguard and share the museum's varied and rare textile collection.

LYDIA HOROCHOLYN is a retired librarian who spent 25 years working as a university cataloger specializing in Slavic and Romance languages and music. Lydia was vice president of the Oleksandr Koshetz Choir, an amateur Ukrainian Canadian mixed choir, and copresident of the Ukrainian Women's Association Branch at her church in Winnipeg. Currently, as copresident of the Manitoba Branch of the Ukrainian Museum of Canada, UWAC, Lydia's skills are a valuable asset in researching the provenance and historical context of the artifacts in the museum.

My Father's Fair Isle Scarf

HAZEL TINDALL



Photos courtesy of the author

Top: Hazel Tindall's father on his motorcycle, circa 1940.
Bottom: The original 1930s scarf, (left) and the newly knitted replica.

In the 1930s, my dad bought a secondhand motorcycle. The middle of his three sisters, Mary, knitted a scarf to keep him warm while on his bike. The scarf is now part of my knitting collection.

The original scarf is 120 stitches wide, knitted using thinner yarn than my replica scarf and worked on needles no larger than 2 mm (US 0). In the 1930s, knitters didn't have a huge range of needle sizes, and some had just one *staand* (set of four double-pointed needles); their stitches would be loosened or tightened to suit the project. In the thicker Jamieson's Spindrift yarn, I needed 96 stitches to produce a similar width. Using thicker yarn and larger needles, the replica is 1 inch (2.5 cm) wider but almost the same length as the original scarf. Only Camel was impossible to match accurately.

MATERIALS

- Jamieson's of Shetland *Spindrift* (100% Shetland wool), 115 yd (105 m)/25 g: #141 Camel (tan), #375 Flax (pale yellow), #870 Cocoa (medium brown), and #880 Coffee (dark brown), 2 balls each; #805 Spruce (teal), #470 Pumpkin (orange), and #365 Chartreuse (light green), 1 ball each.
- Needles: size 2 or 2.5 (3 mm): 9" (23 cm) circular (cir) or set of double-pointed (dpn), or size needed to obtain gauge
- Marker for start/end of round, plus (optional) markers in contrasting colors to separate the chart repeats
- Tapestry needle
- Crochet hook for attaching fringe
- Scissors

Finished Size: 6" wide × 48" long (15.2 × 122 cm), including fringe.
Gauge: 31 sts and 32 rnds = 4" (10 cm) in stockinette colorwork patterns from charts, after blocking.

Visit pieceworkmagazine.com/abbreviations for terms you don't know.

NOTES

The fringe is attached after washing and blocking the scarf.

This scarf is worked in the round. Change colors by knotting them together, then trim the ends to no longer than 1 inch (2.5 cm). It is not necessary to

Project photos by Matt Graves

Hazel Tindall knitted this fabulous Fair Isle scarf combining 7 yarn colors and 12 intricate *peerie* patterns.

weave in the ends because they will be concealed on the inside of the scarf tube.

The scarf has 12 different *peerie* patterns separated by a diamond background. Peerie is the Shetland word for "small" and refers, in this instance, to small repeats common in Fair Isle knitting. The background has a 6-stitch repeat that is worked 16 times around the 96 stitches of the scarf. The peerie patterns repeat over 6, 8, or 12 stitches, all of which divide evenly into 96 stitches. The pattern in Chart L has a long float of 9 stitches, but the floats will be hidden inside the scarf and do not need to be trapped against the back of the work.

When knitting the Fair Isle patterns, take care to spread the stitches on the right-hand needle to avoid puckering. The space between the spread stitches should be about the width of 1 stitch.

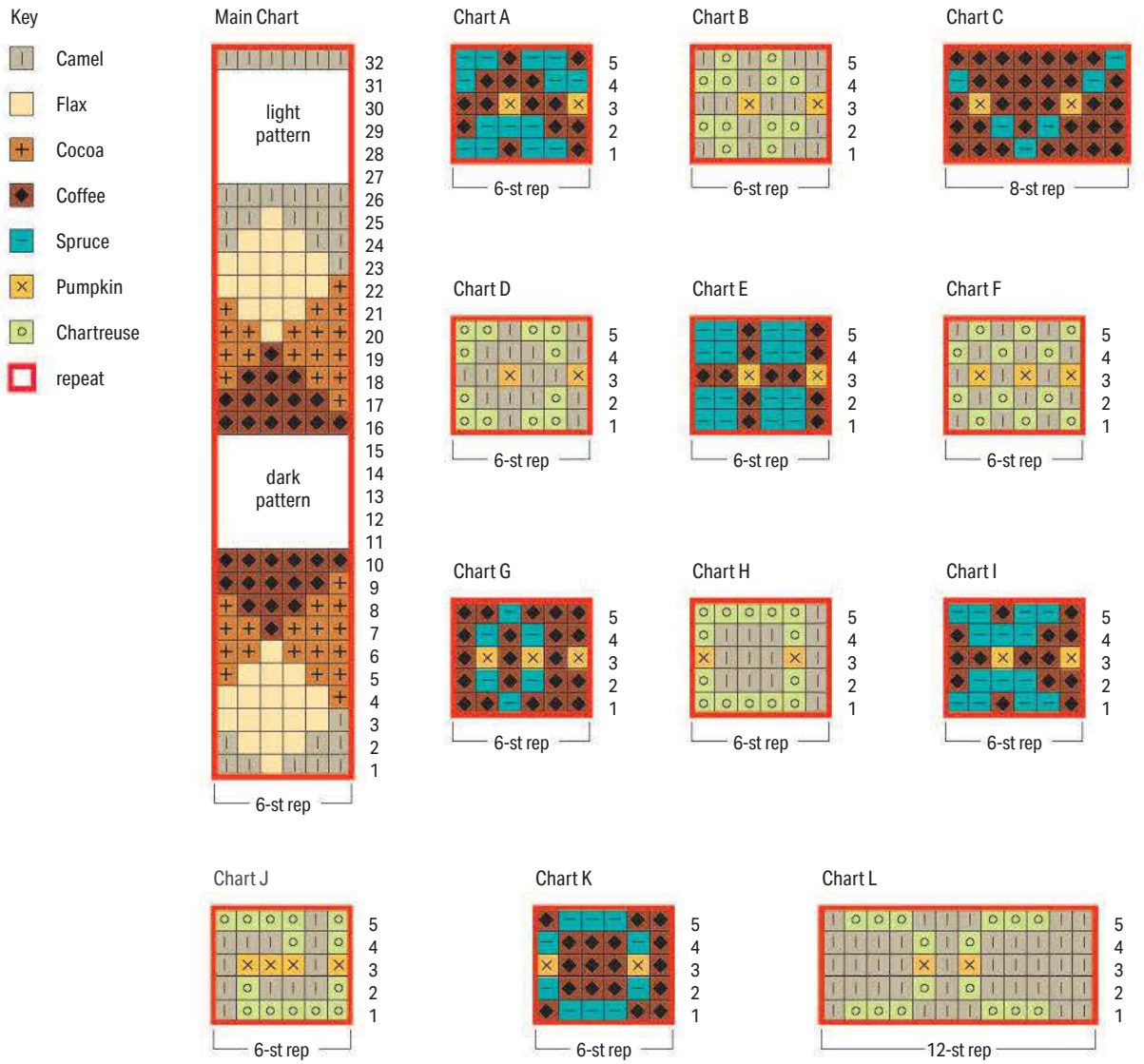
There is enough yarn to add more repeats for a longer scarf or to knit a matching hat or pair of gloves.

INSTRUCTIONS

Scarf

Using Camel, CO 96 sts using your preferred method.

Place marker (pm) and join to work in the round, being careful not to twist sts.



Clever fringe application avoids having to sew the ends of the scarf.

Knit 2 rnds with Camel.

The background diamonds are shown in the Main Chart. Each repeat of the chart uses one of the dark peerie patterns for Rounds 11–15 and one of the light peerie patterns for Rounds 27–31.

Work Rnds 1–32 of the Main Chart, using Chart A for the dark pattern and Chart B for the light pattern. Optional: Place contrasting markers between chart repeats.

Repeat Rnds 1–32 of the Main Chart as foll:

Second repeat: Chart C dark pattern, Chart D light pattern.

Third repeat: Chart E dark pattern, Chart F light pattern.

Fourth repeat: Chart G dark pattern, Chart H light pattern.

Fifth repeat: Chart I dark pattern, Chart J light pattern.

Sixth repeat: Chart K dark pattern, Chart L light pattern.

Note: Chart L is the midpoint of the scarf. From here, the pattern charts are worked in reverse order.

Seventh repeat: Chart K dark pattern, Chart J light pattern.

Eighth repeat: Chart I dark pattern, Chart H light pattern.

Ninth repeat: Chart G dark pattern, Chart F light pattern.

Tenth repeat: Chart E dark pattern, Chart D light pattern.

Eleventh repeat: Chart C dark pattern, Chart B light pattern.

A final partial repeat with a dark pattern is worked at the end of the scarf to balance the patterns. Work Rnds 1–25 of the Main Chart once more, using Chart A for the dark pattern.

Knit 2 rnds with Camel.

BO fairly loosely.

FINISHING

Turn the scarf inside out, make sure all the knots are tight, and trim the ends to about 1" (2.5 cm).

Turn scarf right side out again. Handwash in lukewarm water. Flatten the scarf carefully so the "jog" in the patterns at the start of the round is aligned with one of the folded edges. Roll it in a towel to remove excess water.

In the 1930s, knitters didn't have a huge range of needle sizes, and some had just one staand *(set of four double-pointed needles).*

The scarf can be pinned out with blocking wires (to keep the edges straight), or a piece of 6" (15.2 cm) cardboard or wood slightly wider and longer than the finished scarf can be inserted into the tube as a blocking board. Leave the ends of the tube open and allow the scarf to dry completely, at least 24 hours.

Fringe

The applied fringes will close the ends of the tube, with no need to sew them shut. Decide how long you want your fringe to be; for the scarf shown, 6" (15.2 cm) lengths of yarn produced a fringe about 2" (5 cm) long. Each short end of the scarf has 11 fringe bundles, 1 in the center, 1 at each side, and the remaining 8 evenly spaced in between, about 3 to 4 stitches apart. Cut 22 lengths of each of the 7 colors. For each fringe bundle, take 7 strands (1 of each color), and fold them in half. Insert the crochet hook through both layers of the scarf from front to back at a fringe location, pull the folded loop through to the front, then push the cut ends of the fringe through the loop and tighten. After attaching all the fringes, trim the ends even if necessary. ❖

Resources

Jamieson's of Shetland, jamiesonsofshetland.co.uk.

HAZEL TINDALL was born and brought up in Shetland, where she has lived most of her life. She has been handknitting and designing Fair Isle garments and accessories for over 60 years and was Shetland Wool Week's Patron in 2014. Hazel has won more than one competition as "The World's Fastest Knitter," with a knitting speed of up to 262 stitches in three minutes. Learn more at hazeltindall.com.

Souvenir Travel Dolls

Inspiring Curiosity About Costume and Culture for the Postwar Generation

JUDITH COPELAND

Those who grew up in the 1960s and 1970s may have experienced their first encounter with historical dress and cultural costumes not through life-size garments but rather through miniature representations of them displayed on souvenir dolls. In an age when children were encouraged to collect things, such as stamps, coins, or baseball cards, "Dolls from Around the World" was one of the options. These might have been "International" dolls from the Madame Alexander Doll Company, dolls purchased at a World's Fair Pavilion, or dolls brought home as gifts by loved ones who traveled overseas.

Photo courtesy of the Hennepin County Library

USO entertainer displaying the travel dolls she collected on a tour of the Pacific upon her return home to Minnesota in 1947.

The quality of the dolls that turned up in collections of young Americans varied wildly. The least expensive were assembled from inexpensive plastic parts held together with rubber bands or cotton thread. Their costumes were constructed with minimal sewing and often fastened to the doll with glue. Others were artisan-made, cloth-bodied dolls with papier mâché heads and handpainted faces, sometimes showcasing bits of authentic folk embroidery. The common denominator, however, was a desire on the part of the maker to represent and on the part of the collector to remember some of the specifics of a particular cultural heritage as expressed in dress.

As early as the 1940s, GIs and USO entertainers returning from the Pacific theater energized popular interest in dolls from abroad when they brought home dolls clad in exotic silk kimonos. For many, this was their first introduction to kimono robes and obis. This theme would continue during the Korean conflict when soldiers returned with dolls wearing *hanbok*, again showcasing silk fabrics.

ETHIOPIA

I purchased an Ethiopian doll in the 1960s at the United Nations Headquarters gift shop in New York City. She wears the ankle-length white dress known as *habesha kemis* in Amharic, the official language of Ethiopia, and the large shawl known as a *netela*. Both elements of the doll's costume are fashioned from a loosely woven, gauze-like cotton and are embellished with simple stitching. The embroidery is suggestive of the more elaborate stitched and sometimes woven bands found on garments worn by Ethiopian women. This patterned decoration, in both its woven and embroidered forms, is known as *tibeb*.[1] Although it is outside her usual focus on whitework, noted needlework author Yvette Stanton lived in Ethiopia for a time and has produced a FlossTube video about Ethiopian embroidery.[2] She maintains that many of the embroidered designs parallel the distinctive metalwork processional crosses and pendants used in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, among the oldest expressions of Christianity. The larger pieces of Ethiopian embroidery she collected while in the country are all executed in chain stitch. On my UN doll's garment, running and back stitches suffice, but one can see

the suggestion of a trellised-pattern Ethiopian cross. Embedded in this souvenir doll's simple clothing are many references to traditional Ethiopian dress.

Germany

At the other extreme, there are dolls that pile on trims and laces—the embodiment of "fancy" to the children receiving them. Many of the dolls from the Bavarian region of Germany exhibited this maximalist approach, with plentiful use of lace, braid, fringe, piping, rosettes, and embroidered trim.

Sometimes, the trim depicts the region's beloved edelweiss flower. Growing only at high alpine elevations, it was considered a symbol of strength, courage, and love—love because it required an arduous climb to pluck one for a sweetheart. During World War II, it also took on meaning as a symbol of resistance when the youth group known as the Edelweiss Pirates opposed the tenets and practices of Hitler Youth. In real life, the woolly, and sometimes straggly, edelweiss flower may not be especially beautiful, but its star-shaped representations in embroidery are laden with meaning and remain a regional favorite.

However, it was not just the plenitude of embellishment that made the German dolls of Bavaria so appealing. These were the dolls that drove us to dream about dirndls. A dirndl outfit consists of a fitted bodice, a full skirt, and an apron. A blouse made of white cotton or lace is typically worn underneath the dirndl. Accessories such as hats, shawls, bows, and jewelry can signify specific regions of German Bavaria, Austria, or Switzerland. Common lore suggests that the large bow at the waist offers clues to a woman's status. If it is tied at the right, it indicates that she is in a relationship, and to the left, that she is single. Widows wear bows tied at the back, and virgins tie them at the front. Interestingly, and perhaps because the dolls were marketed to young girls, most examples found in dolls' clothing feature a center-tied bow.

As coded as dirndl accessories may be, it is the distinctive silhouette of the garment that unites regional and sociological distinctions. The dirndl emphasizes the female form with a corset-like bodice transfiguring into a full skirt shaped with pleats or gathers. It is believed that the costume derives from the practical garments worn in the nineteenth century by *diernen* (hence, dirndl), the name given to young women who worked on farms in the region. Later, wealthy and middle-class tourists to the Alpine

All photographs by the author unless otherwise noted

Top: Ethiopian doll purchased at the United Nations Headquarters wearing traditional *habesha kemis* and *netela*. *Bottom:* Two examples of dolls, representing the Schliersee and Hamburg regions of Bavaria, dressed in dirndl outfits. From the collection of the author

Photo courtesy of the Wallach Project

Folk costumes offered at the Wallach showroom in Munich, Germany, prior to World War II.

From the collection of the author

An example of embroidered trim depicting the edelweiss flower.

areas adopted and romanticized the costumes they had seen there, having them made up in more luxurious fabrics and adding the abundance of trim seen not only on souvenir travel dolls but also on the dirndls worn at Oktoberfest celebrations today. This festival-driven revival of interest in dirndl style in recent decades comes after a period following World War II when it fell out of favor, largely because of its associations with Hitler and his embrace of it as an expression of Aryan womanhood.

Ironically, during the early twentieth century, a firm owned by three Jewish brothers, Julius, Moritz, and Max Wallach, did much to make the "rurally inspired dirndl dress fashionable."[3] Opening a "Specialty Store for Regional Dress" in Munich in 1900, the Wallach brothers went on to outfit the entire regional heritage parade in 1910, when Munich celebrated the centennial of its Oktoberfest. In addition to regional costumes, the company produced folk-art inspired home goods and woodblock printed textiles. The Wallach store flourished until 1937, when it was annexed under the state policy of Aryanization. The authorities maintained that because of Moritz Wallach's Jewish religion, he lacked the "suitability and dependability required to participate in fostering

German culture." Brothers Moritz and Julius were able to escape from Germany, and both eventually made it to the United States, but Max and his wife, Melly, were murdered at Auschwitz.

Spain

By the 1960s, Spain was attracting tourists due to its beaches, warm climate, and bargain prices. Many who visited returned from their vacations with dolls portraying flamenco dancers. Art historian and Hunter College professor Tara Zanardi describes her initial encounter with a flamenco doll as follows:

> When my eldest sister, Stephanie, returned home from her semester abroad in Spain, I was just a little girl. She arrived armed with Christmas presents, most of which I do not recall. My gift was exquisitely wrapped. When I opened it, I found a Barbie-esque flamenco dancer whose voluminous flounced skirt and matching red bodice were flecked with gold and proudly displayed by her affected pose. While living in Madrid for doctoral research, I saw many such dolls lining souvenir shops. That this dancer kindled my interest in Spain is probable. What is more important, however, is that this type, the female flamenco dancer, is part of a constructed artistic vision of Spanishness that developed in the eighteenth century. The flamenco dancer is a recognizable type of pictorial *costumbriso*—the Romantic depiction of local customs and characters.[4]

It is easy to understand the appeal of a doll wearing a flamenco dress. Bright colors, and sometimes polka dots, and an abundance of ruffles are two of its most important signatures. Like the Bavarian regional costumes that grew fancier and more elaborate over time, the flamenco dress shares a similar

A Wallach Collection

The University of Illinois's Spurlock Museum of World Cultures houses a significant collection of 59 miniature dolls created or collected by Julius Wallach, the German-Jewish expert on traditional European folk clothing. Each doll is about 18 inches (45.7 cm) high and wears traditional European dress from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Julius Wallach and his brother Moritz recognized that traditional clothing was disappearing from local European communities, so they decided to preserve some fashions in miniature form. They collected original fabric designs from several countries to craft authentic miniature versions of dozens of garments. The University of Illinois purchased the doll collection from the *Volkskunsthaus* Wallach (Wallach Folk Art House) in 1913. To see more of the miniatures in the collection, visit spurlock.illinois.edu.

Courtesy of the Spurlock Museum, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Julius Wallach created these miniatures dressed in traditional folk costumes of Germany and Austria that are now in the Spurlock Museum Collection.

history. It was originally the clothing worn by peasant women vending at the cattle fairs in Andalusia, and particularly, the April fair in Seville. Over time, the ruffled calico dresses first worn by Roma women grew more elaborate, and in 1929, the *traje de flamenco* (flamenco outfit) was officially recognized at the Ibero-American Exposition in Seville.

Flamenco is a fusion of traditions from the different cultures found in the Andalusia region. A typical flamenco performance combines song, dance, and guitar music. There are more than 50 different *palos* or song forms, which blend elements of Jewish, Roma, and Moorish tradition.[5] The flamenco outfit worn in performance and represented in souvenir doll clothing features a skirt or dress that extends into a long train or ruffles and pleats. The ruffles, known as *volantes* in Spanish and usually presented in multiple layers, create a sense of drama when the dancer moves. In many of the souvenir dolls, these are rendered in polyester lace, which is both inexpensive and easy to sew into gathers. The bodice of the flamenco dress may be embellished with embroidery or lace for added elegance, and the dancer will use a *mantón de Manila*, a large shawl made of silk or lace, to enhance the storytelling aspects of her movements. Dancers wear decorative combs known as *peineta* to add height and attach a flower to the comb or wear it behind the ear to complete the flamenco look.

As another generation downsizes, collections of souvenir travel dolls now turn up regularly on eBay and Facebook Marketplace, often at bargain prices. The tangible representations of costume and culture are no longer sought by those who can ask their phones to bring up vibrant photos of clothing worn by people in other places and at other times. Still, these dolls were once a window into worlds beyond the bedrooms and living rooms where the doll collections lived. However simply and inexpensively their outfits may have been rendered, they did their job if they made us curious about how life was lived in the wider world. ❖

From the collection of the author

A flamenco souvenir doll with an exaggerated 15-inch (38 cm) ruffled train, internally wired for display.

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PRESERVING SAMPLER HISTORY

The Wishing Thorn

Embroidered *Recuerdo*

Memories of People and Places in Philippine Piña *Textiles*

ANGELA HERMANO CRENSHAW

Photo courtesy of the Cooper Hewitt Museum. 1951-111-77.

Handkerchief. Philippines, nineteenth century. *Piña* and cotton embroidery.

The Spanish word *Recuerdo* (memory), embroidered in black and white cotton thread, adorns a square handkerchief in the collection of the Cooper Hewitt Design Museum.

A stitched bird holds a thread in its mouth, connecting the letters of the word. Below, the bottom of the letter R turns into a flowering branch on which another animal sits. The scalloped edges of the handkerchief are decorated with more embroidery and drawn-thread work. This handkerchief is *piña* fabric, made of fibers from the leaves of the pineapple plant, a textile tradition unique to the Philippines. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, many elite women in the Philippines wore garments and accessories made of piña, which they often embroidered with their names, initials, poems, or other words or small motifs. These special textiles carry with them great depth of memory, from the many hands the fibers passed through, from their harvesting to embroidery stages, as they crossed islands and oceans.

Piña Fibers and Clothing

The pineapple plant is not indigenous to the Philippines; Spanish colonizers from South America brought it on ships in the sixteenth century. Native people in the Philippines adapted their knowledge of weaving cloth from *abacá* fibers, an indigenous species of banana plant, to weaving pineapple fibers. Piña textiles are typically lightweight and semitransparent, ideal for the hot and humid climate of the Philippines. Pineapple cultivation and piña weaving are centered on the island of Panay, in the central Visayas region. The process of creating these luxurious textiles is both laborious and time-consuming. First, men and women harvest leaves from the pineapple plant, particularly the leaves growing beneath the fruit. Then they scrape these leaves, typically with a shard from a porcelain plate and then a coconut husk, to remove several layers with different grades of fibers. The *bastos* fibers, which are rougher and coarser, come out first, while the *liniwan* fibers, which come from the bottom of the leaf, are thinner and finer and are the fibers that, usually, women then weave into luxurious garments. Next, they wash the fibers and hang them to dry and bleach in the sun. The piña fibers are too delicate to spin like cotton or linen, and so artisans twist the fibers together end to end by hand, before warping and weaving on floor looms made of native hardwoods and bamboo. Through all these steps, the fibers pass through the hands of many individuals, carrying the memory of each stage, from harvest to scraping to twisting and weaving.

Because piña was so labor-intensive to produce, it was quite costly and was primarily accessible to upper-class elites. Both men and women wore piña garments, but only on the upper body. Men wore a long, loose-fitting shirt called the *barong tagalog*. This long-sleeved shirt typically had

Photo courtesy of the George Washington University Textile Museum. 1961.12.1D.

An early twentieth-century *piña* blouse sleeve embroidered with palm trees. The bottom row places the palm trees above the scalloped edge, within *calado* cartouches, with a row of smaller framed palm trees above.

Photo courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art

A spectacular late-nineteenth-century *piña* handkerchief with cotton embroidery features drawn-thread work around the borders and exotic motifs in each corner.

embroidery on the front chest area. Women wore piña blouses called *camisas*, as well as accessories such as handkerchiefs and *pañuelos*, or shawls that were wrapped around the shoulders. The camisa, pañuelo, and handkerchief often had a matching decorative scheme through embroidery or appliqué embellishment. Garments worn on the lower body were not made of piña. Women wore full skirts made of cotton or silk, called *sayas*, often with an overskirt called a *tapis*.

Embroidery

Merchants or perhaps Filipino elites often sent piña fabric woven on Panay to the island of Luzon, particularly the towns around Manila and the province of Laguna, for further embellishment and embroidery. Indigenous forms of embroidery already existed throughout the islands, but nuns from Europe brought European-style embroidery to the Philippines during the Spanish colonial period and taught young girls in convent schools. They introduced cutwork and

Because piña was so labor-intensive to produce, it was quite costly and was primarily accessible to upper-class elites.

drawnwork techniques, as well as floral and vegetal motifs. Asilo de Molo, a convent run by Vincentian sisters in Iloilo City, produced *bordadoras* (embroiderers) known for the *calado* technique, a drawnwork technique in which embroiderers remove or twist threads together to create a lace-like effect. The convent was also known for *sombrado*, an appliqué technique for which thin strips of cotton are cut out in swirling floral or vegetal patterns and sewn on the inside of a garment, creating a shadowy effect. This form of embellishment was fashionable among prominent families in the region.[1]

Changes in fashion throughout the nineteenth century can be tracked through the size and shape of women's sleeves, which progressively became larger and fuller to accommodate more embroidery and embellishment.[2] While convents and schools produced embroidery in large numbers, elite women also embroidered their garments and accessories at home, showing off their skills and creativity, as on the embroidered "Recuerdo" handkerchief. One embroidered handkerchief in the collection of the Ayala Museum in Manila even features a Spanish poem stitched on piña in blue cotton thread. The poem laments a broken heart, and some believe that the woman who owned or used it was left at the altar. In this way, women marked piña with special acts of personalization, enshrining memories of their presence for years to come.

Exotic Motifs

One small group of extant piña pieces contains special motifs depicting scenes of people and life in the Philippines. These designs are typically embroidered or woven into the piña using thicker cotton thread, allowing the motif to stand out against the thin piña ground. The figures depicted are often wearing typical Philippine costume, recognizable by the silhouettes of the garments and certain accessories. Many of these motifs became archetypal symbols of the Philippines during the Spanish colonial period, such as the Filipino farmer pushing a plow with a *carabao* (water buffalo). Spanish missionaries originally spread this plow technology to create settled communities for their Catholic converts, rather than allowing them to continue nomadic lifestyles.[3] Piña garments embroidered with exotic or tropical themes, especially motifs specific to the Philippines, were likely popular as souvenirs or collectors' items for Americans and Europeans visiting the Philippines in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. The pineapple had been a symbol of wealth and the exotic for centuries in Europe and the United States, and pineapple fabric continued this tradition.[4] The addition of embroidered tropical or exotic motifs further enhanced this symbolism. For example, a pair of early-twentieth-century piña sleeves at the George Washington University Textile Museum contains two rows of embroidered palm trees. Exotic palm trees, embroidered on a rare fabric made from the pineapple plant, was likely an exciting souvenir for foreigners visiting or doing business in the Philippines.

One spectacular late-nineteenth-century piña handkerchief in the Metropolitan Museum of Art features a central circle of plain-woven piña, with elaborate cotton embroidery and calado drawn-thread work around the border.

In each of the four corners are scenes of Filipino people. Two corners feature the same image of two seated ladies, likely gossiping or swapping stories.

In one hand, they hold a small sprig of flowers, and cups of some beverage rest beside them. The V of stitches on each lady's torso likely represents her pañuelo shawl, and close examination reveals that the stitching on each pañuelo creates slightly different patterns. The opposite corners show two men holding chickens, about to engage in cockfighting, a popular sport in the Philippines.

The barongs worn by the men, as well as their trousers, also have slight variation based on the stitches. On either side of both pairs of male and female figures are two other male figures, each repeated four times. One of these men is bent over, performing some kind of chopping or pounding action, while the other man carries two baskets suspended from a rod on his shoulder. In two of the depictions, this basket-carrying man wears a *salakot*, a traditional Filipino conical hat often made of natural materials such as rattan or bamboo.

Another nineteenth-century piña blouse and pañuelo set in the collection of the Yale University Art Gallery also features embroidered Filipino figures. The pañuelo, two bodice pieces, and two sleeve pieces all contain alternating scenes of a man and a woman gathering water at a well, enclosed in a floral cartouche.

Photos courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art

Details of the late-nineteenth-century *piña* handkerchief depict scenes from Filipino daily life.

The man wears striped trousers, rolled up to the knee, and the long, loose barong tagalog. He holds a walking stick as he collects water in a waiting bucket. The woman, wearing a long skirt and blouse with the sleeves rolled up, her hair contained in an updo, gathers water into a jar at the same well. This uniquely Philippine fabric made of pineapple fibers, depicting distinct Filipino people performing specific activities, would have been an incredible testimony to the exotic country even as these pieces traveled across the ocean to wind up in the United States.

A National Textile

Today, many Filipinos consider piña the national textile of the Philippines, and many still wear it on special occasions such as baptisms, graduations, and weddings. In 2023, piña weaving was awarded UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage status. Many designers and culture bearers work hard to keep the craft of piña weaving and embroidery alive. Len Cabili, the founder and designer of the brand Filip + Inna, creates garments of piña and other traditional Philippine textiles, working with communities of

Photo courtesy of the Yale University Art Gallery, 1949.206c

Piña pañuelo with cotton embroidery. Philippines, nineteenth century.

tradition and Indigenous artisans to create the woven cloth and embroidery. Designer Daryl Maat has put a contemporary yet nostalgic twist on his "Pad Paper" series of barongs, creating colorful embroidery reminiscent of childhood doodles on paper. While designs and styles may continue to be updated to reflect the present, piña will always carry with it a memory of place: the Philippines. ❖

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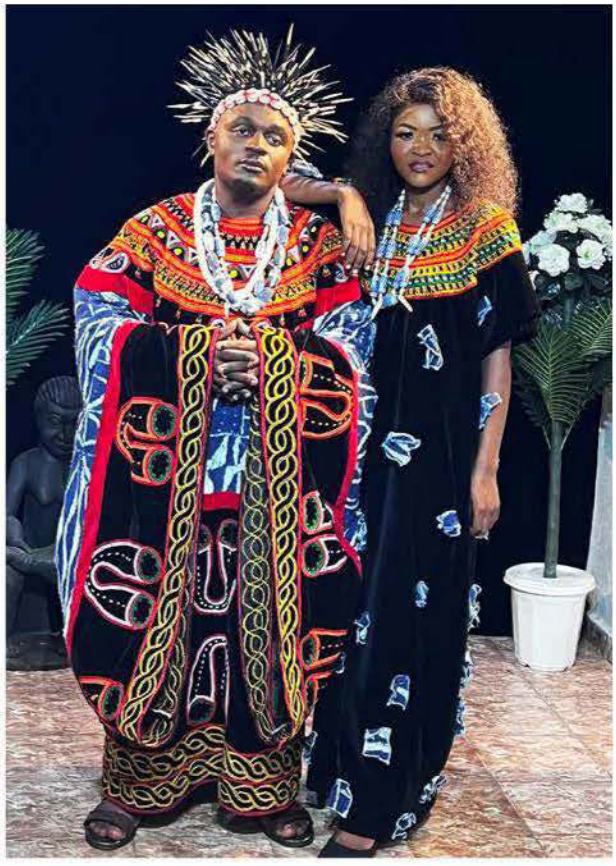
Photo courtesy of the Yale University Art Gallery. 1949.206d-e

Piña bodice with cotton embroidery. Philippines, nineteenth century.

Exploring the Colors and Symbols in *Toghu* Textiles of Cameroon

ELIZABETH OKEYELE-OLATUNJI

During my recent visit to Cameroon, I was captivated by the elaborate *toghu* attire on display in a craft shop. Toghu charmed me immediately with its intricate and vibrant hand-embroidered designs stitched onto luxurious black velvet. I had traveled to Buea, Cameroon, from my home in neighboring Nigeria to speak to the students at HIBMAT University Institute about prospective opportunities working with textiles; I found myself a student, learning about the traditional clothing of Cameroon.



All photos courtesy of Ultimate Traditional Designs (ultimatetraditionaldesigns.com)

The traditional *toghu* at left features the snake motif on the hem and sleeves as well as the double gong. The contemporary dress at right includes patches of another traditional Cameroonian cloth, *ndop*.

TOGHU

My teacher and tour guide, Marion Ngenyi, passionately explained the cultural significance of toghu, its role in Cameroonian heritage, and the differences between hand and machine embroidery—differences that play a crucial role in preserving traditional craftmanship.[1] Toghu is most closely associated with the northwest region of Cameroon, particularly among the Grassfields, an area in the north highlands. Originally, toghu (also spelled *atoghu* or *to'ohu*) was worn exclusively by kings, chiefs, and members of the nobility, going as far back as the nineteenth century, although no specific origin date is known. Over the past few decades, it evolved into a broader cultural symbol of Cameroonian identity and pride, and a cross-section of people adopted the garment and began wearing it on formal occasions.

Toghu refers to the traditional full-length, wide tunic with loose and open sleeves typically worn by men for ceremony and special occasions. It is sometimes referred to as the "big gown" or the "royal robe." The term toghu has expanded to refer to the richly embroidered black fabric with classic Cameroonian motifs. It appears on women's blouses and skirts as well as a variety of tunics for men, household linens, and bags.

The city of Bamenda, often considered the heart of the northwest region, is especially recognized for toghu designs and continues to be a center of hand embroidery, pattern making, and cultural celebration around this textile.

EMBROIDERY COLORS, TECHNIQUES, AND MOTIFS

Traditionally, black velvet is used as the base fabric because of its regal feel and the rich contrast achievable with the varied thread colors. However, modern variations may use cotton, silk, or other cloth. Embroiderers usually sketch designs onto the fabric or outline them with chalk before they begin stitching.

Toghu embroiderers use bright, bold-colored threads—often red, orange, yellow, green, and white. Color has meaning. The black base symbolizes strength and resilience. Red may symbolize strength or ancestral bloodlines, yellow/gold often

In classic *toghu* design, vibrant colors pop against black velvet fabric. These *toghu* feature tiger teeth and the double-gong design.

represents royalty or wealth, and green can signify fertility or nature.

The most common stitch types include chain stitch for outlining bold shapes and creating loops; satin stitch to fill in spaces with solid blocks of color; running stitch or backstitch for detailed lines and contours; and couching, sometimes used to hold thicker decorative threads in place. Each stitch is placed with precision but often shows slight variations, a hallmark of handmade toghu, distinguishing it from machine embroidery. "Hand embroidery has uneven stitches—little imperfections that reveal the human touch," Marion explains. "It carries the value of time, skill, and tradition."

The embroidery for toghu is both intricate and symbolic, requiring skilled craftsmanship and a deep understanding of traditional patterns. Embroidery artists use more than 50 traditional motifs. Each one carries unique meanings, often representing social status, ancestral lineage, or a particular virtue or cultural value. Traditional motifs may include geometric patterns, spirals and curves, floral elements, or stylized animals. For example, spiders represent creativity; tiger teeth indicate power, good luck, and longevity; spiral patterns may represent life cycles or continuity; diamonds stand for reflection, strength, fortitude, and courage. The snake motif symbolizes healing and rebirth in the northwest region of Cameroon.[2] The double gong denotes palace authorities conveying information to the community. This gong sounds during traditional ceremonies and for various occasions, and just by a change of rhythm or tone, it can announce war, a ceremony, or a dance.[3]

Left: The double-gong motif is one of the most common and significant for *toghu* textiles. *Right:* From heritage to high style: *toghu* tradition (*left*) alongside a modern ensemble (*right*).

Once embroidery is complete, designers press the fabric and may embellish it with beads, shells, or extra pieces of fabric, especially in modern interpretations. These additions elevate the garment's status and appeal.

Contemporary Trends

Today, toghu has evolved into a widely recognized African textile, celebrated for its beauty and cultural significance. It is featured in contemporary clothing designs, including dresses, suits, and accessories. Designers are increasingly incorporating toghu into modern styles, blending tradition with innovation. Contemporary Cameroonian designers Anrette Ngafor Akinyele and Kibonen Nfi have formed a fashion house inspired by toghu design. They have translated a Cameroonian cultural icon into practical, comfortable attire for everyday wear. Ultimate Traditional Designs is another contemporary fashion design company hand-embroidering and selling traditional toghu.

Preservation of Toghu Craft

Organizations and individuals are striving to preserve the traditional methods of toghu, ensuring that it continues to thrive as a cultural heritage. The Toghu Association for Culture is one such organization promoting Cameroonian heritage through raising awareness worldwide of the unique toghu attire. In April 2025, the North West Fashion Design Association in Cameroon organized the second annual Atoghu Fashion Festival to showcase designers' work and offered a seminar on the preservation and documentation of traditional toghu. Toghu remains a powerful representation of Cameroon's rich cultural history and creative artistry. ❖

Notes

1. Interview with Marion Ngenyi, communication officer, HIBMAT University, Buea.
2. Bitoh Evodia Ndifor, Nkemaja Dydimus Efeze, Salihu Maiwada, Gwari Williams Bako, and Saliu Ahmed Rafai, "Identification of Symbols Used as Motifs in Toghu Production, a Cultural Heritage of Grassland People in Cameroon," *Art and Design Review* 11, no. 2 (May 2023).
3. "TAM Documentary," Toghu Army Movement (TAM), toghuarmymovement.com/tam-documentary.

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Bakhiya

A Tale of Tiny Stitches

JUDY FRATER

More than 50 years ago, when I first stayed in a Kachhi Rabari village, my host was Lachhuben Karna. She was 35 at the time and was considered "mature," so she wore a plain black backless blouse, or *kapadu*, for everyday. But while the black fabric was plain, Lachhuben had embroidered fine white patterns along the neckline, center front, and raglan sleeve seams. The stitching was called *bakhiya*, and its patterns communicated *suhag*, a sign that Lachhuben's husband was living and she was in a state of auspiciousness, good fortune, and happiness.

Photo by Judy Frater

Varnora, 2007. A Vagadia Rabari group on migration. Dhebaria and Vagadia Rabari subgroups continue to migrate with herds of sheep and goats today. Men take the herds ahead and women and children follow, carrying encampment belongings on camels.

Embroidery in Rabari Life

Rabaris are nomadic pastoralists, originally camel herders, who today live throughout the Kutch, Saurashtra, and North Gujarat regions of Gujarat state, and in western and southern Rajasthan, India. Three subgroups of Rabaris inhabit Kutch District: Vagadias east of Bhachau, Dhebarias in central Kutch, and Kachhis, west of the district capital Bhuj. Rabari women are renowned for their embroidery, a unique style characterized by dense chain and interlaced stitches, profuse use of mirrors in a variety of shapes, and a rich repertoire of accent stitches. Each Rabari subgroup practices a subtly distinguishable regional variation of the style.

When I began studying Rabari embroidery in Kutch, I was impressed by its intimate place in Rabari life. More than purely decorative, it was an obvious and important expression of Rabari culture. Embroidered clothing created and maintained distinctions of identity. The embroidered details of Rabari dress instantly conveyed the wearer's subgroup and status within that subgroup at a particular point in time.

Two broad principles are expressed in Rabari dress. The first is suhag—auspiciousness, good fortune, and happiness—which is related to youth. For happy occasions and in youth, women and men wear color and ornamentation. The second is relinquishing—for sorrowful occasions and as they age, women and men give up color and decoration. Women wear black in ritual mourning that can be traced to the legend of a king who died protecting Rabaris, and men wear white. For women, the concept of suhag is the overriding good fortune; becoming a widow is the ultimate sorrow.

The Realm of Bakhiya

Bakhiya, backstitching with a single white sewing thread, is a less-known Rabari style, and perhaps the origin of Rabari embroidery. "Where did embroidery come from?" Harkhuben Bhojraj, a Kachhi Rabari matron of Bhopani Vandh, rhetorically asked. "We took needles and embroidered. Someone intelligent must have come up with an idea."

Rabari women created their own backless blouses, the only stitched garments they wore, cutting a simple no-waste pattern from a meter of fabric and handstitching the pieces together. Lachhuben Raja has a more practical explanation for how embroidery started. "First," she says, "we did two lines of bakhiya along seams." This reinforced the seams. "Then," Lachhuben continues, "we made *devadi* (shrine motifs perpendicular to the seam). Originally this decorative stitching was done on the gussets on either side of gathers for breasts, to express good fortune. Adding two lines of bakhiya, we did *khadki* (windows) plus shrine motifs, then adding two lines of bakhiya, we did *makudiya* (ants), then adding two lines of bakhiya, we did *popti* (parrot-like symbols), then *ambo* (mango trees). That way patterns grew. You should have all different patterns for your blouses."*

Traditionally, young women's everyday blouses were made of colorful patterned fabric and embellished with side strips and lower borders embroidered in the characteristic Rabari style, chain and interlaced stitching profusely ornamented with mirrors of different shapes in addition to bakhiya at the neckline and seams.

For festive occasions, young and mature Rabari women wore *kanchali*, colorfully embroidered versions of the traditional blouse. Examples of these festive blouses from the 1940s have bakhiya detailing along the raglan sleeve seams, but by the mid-twentieth century, women no longer stitched bakhiya on their blouses; the embroidery itself expressed good fortune, after all.

Elder Rabari women wear plain black blouses, even on festive occasions. Among Kachhi Rabaris, those whose husbands are living embroider bakhiya as simple vertical lines, giving up the cross at the top

Photo by Ketan Pomal, L.M. Studio, Bhuj, courtesy of Kala Raksha Museum

Detail of an elder woman's *kapadu* (everyday blouse), Viyar, circa 1970. The *bakhiya* embroidery patterns of this blouse, *khadki* (window) and *devadi* (shrines) without crosses at the top, indicate that the wearer was an elder who had a living husband.

Left: Kanchali (festival blouse), Nakhatrana, circa 1940. For festive occasions, young and mature Rabari women wore fully embroidered backless blouses. Until the 1980s, conventional patterns and composition were used: circles at the breasts and shoulders, borders at the neck and belly, and ornament motifs on the arms.
Right: Mourning *kapadu*, Sanosara, circa 2000. If a member of a Rabari woman's family dies, she wears a black blouse in mourning. The *bakhiya* patterns on this example are *kareliya* (spiders) at the neck, *popti* (parrot-like) on the raglan sleeve seams, and *devadi* (shrines) that signify *suhag*, that the wearer has a living husband. The use of subtle color in addition to white and *bakhiya* motifs at the base of the center front are other innovations indicating that the wearer is young. Photos by Ketan Pomal, L.M. Studio, Bhuj, courtesy of Kala Raksha Museum

of the shrine worn by younger women. Widows wear only the original two lines of bakhiya without the shrine motifs that signify good fortune.

When a family member dies, Rabari women wear black, regardless of age. Mature and elder women wear black everyday blouses with bakhiya. Younger women who normally wear color add subtle colored embroidery at the sides to distinguish their black blouses from an elder's everyday blouse. Previously, young Kachhi women also wore plain red blouses with the aforementioned embroidery for mourning.

Among Rabari women of the Dhebaria subgroup, bakhiya was traditionally also used to express good fortune, but rather than shrine motifs along the center-front and raglan sleeve seams, the indicator was *mugro*, a tiny motif embroidered within bakhiya along the center-front seam.

Among Dhebaria Rabaris and in Lachhuben Raja's village, Bhopani Vandh, known to be the most traditional Kachhi Rabari village, bakhiya is also used for a man's festival *kediyun*, a fitted jacket with a densely gathered peplum. The embellishment is considered *sobha:* beauty, reputation, and dignity. These jackets are white, and bakhiya decoration is multicolored with elaborate traditional and innovative motifs, including family names in Gujarati and English.

Bakhiya Over Time

Expressing culture and identity, embroidery has evolved over the more than five decades that I have had the privilege of observing.

By the early 1990s, the women of Lachhuben Raja's Kachhi Rabari community were in a dilemma. A single income was no longer enough for a household. Women had to work to earn, and the impact was that they had little time to embroider for themselves. Forced to find ways to apportion their limited time for multiple tasks, they calculated their efforts. The Kachhi Rabaris creatively innovated on their tradition: they employed professional artisans to machine embroider garments and household decorations in a tight zigzag stitch that resembled the chain-stitched

outlines of motifs, and they added handstitched mirrors and details.

Innovation came more drastically to the Dhebaria Rabaris. In 1995, the Nath, a group of elder men who make community rules, banned the making and using of traditional hand embroidery, as they deemed it "too expensive." At that time, young women were engaged in robust peer competition, making more and more imaginative, elaborate, and exquisitely executed embroideries for their dowries, and consequently, they could not complete their dowries and thus go to their in-laws' homes until they were in their thirties. Weddings were becoming a woman's realm, and the Nath's solution was to take some control in the matter. Obeying the ban, Dhebaria Rabaris invented an entirely new art form. They machine appliquéd blouses with commercial ribbons and trim to emulate hand-embroidered ornamentation.

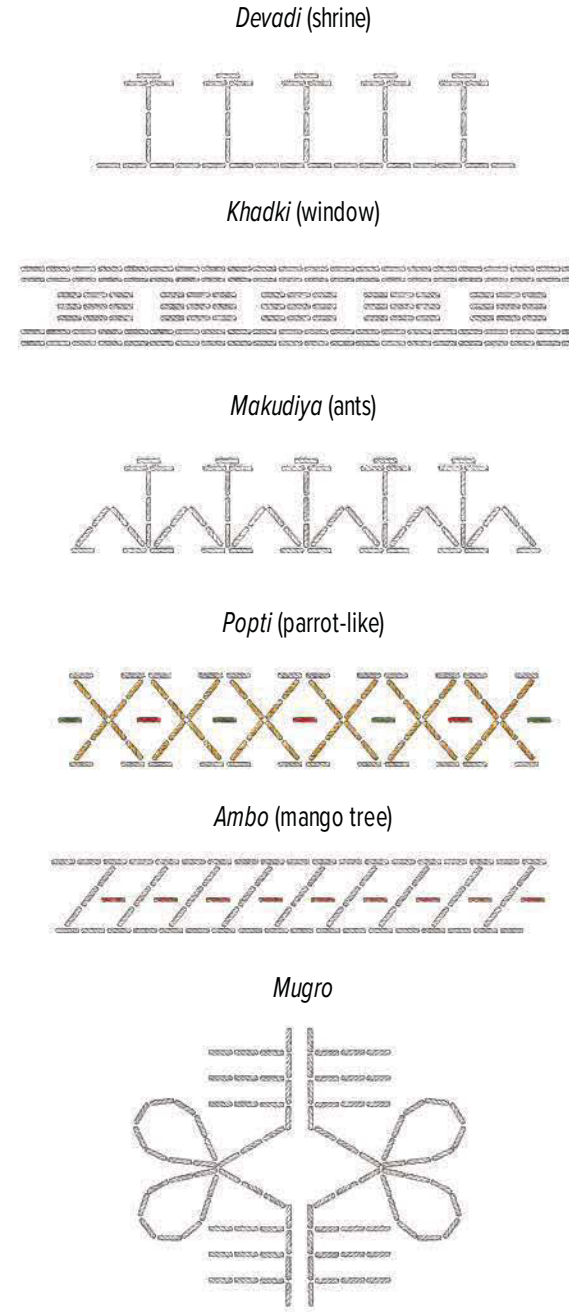
In both communities, women began to lose embroidery skills, notably the rich repertoire of Rabari accent stitches. Bakhiya was on the verge of being lost.

The word bakhiya is also used for simple sewing-machine stitching. As Kachhi Rabari women increasingly relied on machine-zigzag embroidery to substitute for chain-stitched outlines, they began to have the seams of their blouses decorated with simple machine stitching. Sewing machines could approximate most traditional bakhiya patterns, but they could not make the shrine motifs essential to expressing suhag.

"We added shrine motifs by hand," Lachhuben Raja recalls. Twenty years later, she still handstitches the shrine motifs. "It looks good," she says. "Rather—without the mark of suhag it would look bad. But bakhiya should be fine; it shows your capability."

Sajnuben Pachan, a Dhebaria Rabari, is 20 years younger than Lachhuben Raja. She says that after the embroidery ban, bakhiya was still allowed, and women handstitched bakhiya along seams, including the mugro motif that signified suhag. Today they do bakhiya by machine; she herself uses machine bakhiya. "Only elders do handstitching," she says. "And mugro motifs are no longer done."*

As for men's festive jackets, they are machine stitched in bold, simple patterns, in either white or red thread.



Bakhiya patterns. Rabari women choose from several patterns traditional to the *bakhiya* style of embroidery. They enjoy variation, demonstrating their creativity.

Evolution of Meaning

Rabari culture has transformed rapidly and radically over the past half century. With changing needs of neighbors and shrinking grazing lands, Rabari men have left herding for driving cars and trucks, tending shops, or other employment. As women have begun to earn for their families, they have ventured beyond their own tightly knit communities to work in fields and urban homes. Girls

have become educated, taken professional jobs, and earned well. Lachhuben Raja's granddaughter Rani is a police constable in a town 132 kilometers (82 miles) from their village. Gaining financial and social independence, girls have begun to break engagements made in their childhoods by family elders and choose husbands through their own social networks.

Rabaris are merging into mainstream Kutchi culture. Nareshbhai, a Bhuj merchant who for decades sold cloth to Rabari clients, recently told me he now carries "general" fabrics. Asked why, he replied, "Rabaris have come into the general category!"

Dress and embroidery continue to articulate evolving Rabari life. The subtle, critical language of dress codes has opened up. Markers of a woman's status, suhag and age have lost relevance. Most women no longer embroider shrine or mugro motifs on their blouses; while Lachhuben Karna wore black for everyday by the age of 35, Lachhuben Raja, at 70, wears red and maroon. Young widows don't wear black anymore, she notes. The consensus is it's okay to wear color.

Widows and elders traditionally gave up color and ornamentation in sorrow. Today, color is according to wish, according to Lachhuben Raja. Perhaps definitions of good fortune and sorrow have changed.

Surely there is a generation gap in perception. "We think it looks bad if a married woman doesn't wear the signifier of good fortune, bakhiya shrine motifs," Lachhuben Raja says. "But if the young don't agree, we can't say anything."

Embroidery has metamorphosed from the expression of details of identity to fashion. Rani used the embroidery of an entirely different community for her dowry. Her mother uses machine-embroidered renditions of the styles of still other communities.

Photo by Judy Frater

Kediyun, circa 1980. Traditionally, Rabari men wore a densely gathered jacket, the festival version embroidered in multicolored *bakhiya*, including the *devadi* pattern. In this example, names of male family members are embroidered in Gujarati on both sides of the front. From the collection of the author.

Photo by Nevada Wier, from Artisans by Design, courtesy of Schiffer Publishing

At age 70 in 2022, Lachhuben Raja enjoys being able to wear color on an everyday basis. Her appropriate choice is limited to red or maroon, with only self-texture pattern, but she no longer has to wear the black that women her age would have worn decades ago. She has her blouses embroidered with machine *bakhiya*, the fashion now, but she adds the traditional hand-embroidered *bakhiya devadi* that communicate *suhag*.

Cycles of Fashion

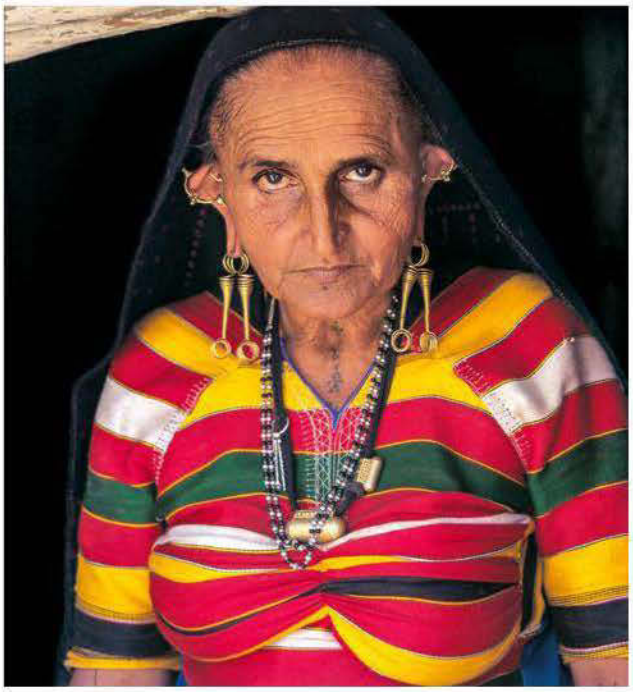
"No one knows bakhiya now," Lachhuben Raja laments. "Young women say the shrine motifs are too hard to stitch."

Besides that, women are more concerned with being seen from a distance. "We used to come close to a Rabari woman and see the bakhiya on her blouse and know immediately if she had a living husband," Lachhuben Raja says. "For the last 30 years or so, women wear machine embroidery and 'lace' (rickrack and commercially made ribbon trims), which don't need to be seen close up." Recently, though, she adds, women are using more hand embroidery along with machine zigzag. She has seen fashions cycle back. "In place of white threads, women were using threads dyed in blueing. Now, white is back."

"And we are using *kungari* and *bavaliyun* [two types of traditional interlaced stitching]!" Lachhuben's other granddaughter Jassu yells from the back room.

Photo by Ketan Pomal, L.M. Studio, Bhuj, courtesy of Kala Raksha Museum

Kapadu, Kukadsar, c. 1997: After hand embroidery was banned by the Dhebaria Nath in 1995, women created machine-appliquéd decorations that mimicked hand embroidery, while incorporating allowed *bakhiya* stitches. This early example features *bakhiya devadi* along the center-front seam with a *mugro* motif.



Photos courtesy of Judy Frater

Left: Bhopani Vandh, 1999. For a wedding celebration, Ramiben Rama wears a striped mashru blouse with handstitched fine *bakhiya* details. At about 50, she did not consider herself old enough to forgo color for festive occasions.
Right: Bhopani Vandh, 2008. Nine years later, Ramiben Rama wears the everyday blouse of an elder Kachhi Rabari woman, black with fine white *bakhiya* stitching at the neck and seams. The neck *bakhiya* is machine stitched. The handstitched *devadi* temple motifs along the raglan shoulder seams indicate that she has a living husband but has given up color.

"If the young like something, they can bring it back," Lachhuben Raja says.

But for that to happen, good examples must be within view. Last year, Lachhuben Raja wished she still had her own dowry embroideries because traditional work was coming back in fashion. I had her *toran* set (festive door hangings) because neither of her daughters had wanted it. This year, I happily repatriated it.

Bakhiya embroidery epitomizes subtlety and patience. Appreciation of its fine detailing requires closeness and intimacy. As long as Rabari artisans have access to good examples of their cultural heritage, there is promise that when the time is right, this minute stitching style that grew from construction to elaboration will return to the Rabari repertoire. ❖

Visit our website at LT.Media/Rabari-Embroidery to view more images for "Bakhiya: A Tale of Tiny Stitches."

Bakhiya – fine white backstitching
Suhag – having a living husband (or unmarried), a state of auspiciousness, good fortune, happiness
Sobha – beauty, reputation, dignity

NOTES

*Lachhuben Raja Rabari and Sajnuben Pachan Rabari, personal communication, 2025.

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Ashoka Fellow **JUDY FRATER** lived 30 years with artisans of Kutch, where she founded Kala Raksha Trust and Museum and the first design school for artisans in India, currently Somaiya Kala Vidya. She has been awarded the Sir Misha Black Medal for Design Education, the Crafts Council of India Kamla award, the Designers of India Design Guru Award, and more. Previously associate curator at the Textile Museum in Washington, DC, Judy is the author of *Artisans by Design, Threads of Identity: Embroidery and Adornment of the Nomadic Rabaris,* and *The Art of the Dyer in Kutch*. She writes and lectures extensively on textiles and craft.

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