

Medieval Textiles

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News From the Coordinator

by Desiree Koslin

Dear MTSG people,

This should have gone out during September, by rights, but I was very busy with the arrangements for TSA '98, and also wanted to include a report on it in this Newsletter.

There is a treat in store for you as well, in addition to the outline for the Proto-Lampas to Lampas Project which I hope all of you will be interested in joining.

1. I would first like to thank Jean Babb very much for the great job done this summer at the Complex Weavers meeting in Atlanta. She brought the CWMTSG binder there and hosted an information session on what we do, and then had the onerous task of getting the binder back to me. She had but a small crowd attending the meeting, and perhaps it is time to take stock on our purpose and relevance. More on this below. Thanks so much, Jean!

2. Gayle Bingham sent in a set of great linen swatches in early August - she considers them 'stop-gap'! Her other project involves woad-dyed woollen examples. Thank you very much, Gayle, for this contribution to

our first study project of the archaeological woollen fragments! Gayle's summer included a trip around Europe with much new inspiration.

3. There were two mostly Medieval Sessions at the just concluded Textile Society of America's 6th Symposium held at FIT in NYC and co-chaired by me and Madelyn Shaw of the Textile Museum in Washington, DC. On the first day, Sept. 24, the Tablet Weaving: Ancient Technique, Medieval Splendor, Modern Technology was held, in which WE were so prominently represented with Ute Bargmann as Chair and Nancy Spies as one of the presenters! It was also a moment of joy to just meet and get acquainted a little better! Ute was masterly in her introductions and tying the parts together, and Carolyn Priest-Dorman did a fine job of putting the technique in cultural and chronological context. Nancy's beautiful slides of her brocaded TW bands drew gasps of awe, and brought home the message of TW as an exclusive handiwork of medieval upper class women. Bonnie Detta's analytical work was very lucidly presented, and belongs in a textbook. All in all, a delightful as well as serious and committed set of presentations. The same must be said of the other Medieval Session, Creating Textiles in Medieval Europe, in which I was the Chair, and brought the audience from the later period back to the Bronze Age in three stages, through conservator (MMA) Tina Kane's beautifully illustrated discussion of the division of labor in the fifteenth-century tapestry-weaving industry in northern France. Philippa Henry from Oxford made vivid to us a chapter in the industrial revolution of the 10th and 11th centuries at the point of the introduction of the horizontal treadle loom, the new high-speed invention. Elizabeth Heckett from Cork examined in detail a finely woven Irish horsehair band with fascinating details, its reversing twill, its 45 warpends, and multiple 'passementerie' finishes, perhaps an elaborate garniture for the elite's status symbol, the horse... Great stuff!

4. I enclose, as usual, a copy of the MEDATS Newsletter FYI. I'm going to their Dress in Burgundy series of lectures in late October, and will report on it

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in my November newsletter (if there'll be one, see below...)

5. In record time, and on incredibly short notice, dear Ute Bargmann has provided a translation for us of an article by Regula Schorta, a textile researcher at the Swiss Abegg Stiftung near Bern. It was published in the Riggisberger Berichte 5 Islamische Textilkunst des Mittelalters: Aktueffe Probleme, and is called "Zur Entwicklung der Lampastechnik" (1997) 173-180. It is through this article I hope to entice you ALL to participate in the Proto-Lampas-to-Lampas project by choosing one of the stages outlined in the article, and weaving samples for an exchange. It will not be important here to use handspuns or vegetable dyed elements, and fine cottons would be quite acceptable replacements for the silks of the originals.

Our purpose here would be to use the information and weave analyses Schorta presents, and weave samples which replicate them (any 'design ') while trying to work with a technology 'reductively', that is, we should try to think through how these early developments may have occurred, and how these textiles may have been possible to weave utilizing as few shafts, for instance, as possible. (I promote the use of 'shaft' to designate a heddlestick or frame, I use 'harness' for a group of shafts (for groundweave, e.g.) or for a group of pattern heddles or shafts on the drawloom.) I am hoping that a few persons can work on the same weave type, and that we can compare notes as we go along.

I should like a commitment from all current MTSG members to participate in this project in some way. 'Sketching' on the computer may be very helpful, for instance.

Weaving with pick-up sticks on a 4-shaft loom are definitely excellent options!

Peggy Hoyt has a 30-page Summary from a previous Lampas CW study project which she is happy to photocopy for you at a \$2 mailing cost - it may be a very useful guide. Our focus is complementary to that one, I hope, as we would attempt to piece together the evolution of this structure as it goes from simpler to ever greater structural 'freedom' and flexibility.

In our previous project we had very little outcome, and I applaud again those who carried out their

samples, passed them along to us all, or did full-scale objects. To the rest of you, here's my message: GET WITH THE PROGRAM! Pick a project and plan to submit for the exchange by May 1999, please.

Some of you have paid membership dues through this coming 98-99 year, others need to do so now (check your status indicated on the PostIt of this Newsletter). If you do not wish to participate in the Lampas Project, and cannot commit to some other form of study which would serve as your contribution to the exchange, please let me know, and I'll drop you from the rolls. I will be happy to return any paid-up membership for 98-99. Please let me know your intentions by November 1 by sending in your renewals, if needed, and your choice of weave for the Lampas Project!

Look forward to hearing your reaction. As always, any news from you is most welcome.

P.S. If you have (new) email or fax addresses, please send them to me!



Translation of:

Regula Schorta's Notes on the development of Lampas

trans: Ute Bargmann

From: Riggisberger Berichte 5. Islamische Textilkunst des Mittelalters: Aktuelle Probleme, AbeggStiftung, 1997

[These notes are part of my 1994 Dissertation at Bern University, "Monochrome patterned silk textiles of the 10th to the 12th century." Therefore, I am leaving out the extensive notes and am retaining more or less the format of the lecture.]

According to the extant holdings of European church treasures, there was in the 11th century a substantial interest in - if not predilection for - monochrome patterned fabrics. Surely enough, these existed before and can also be found in a later period. But there seems to be a marked concentration of these almost 1000 years ago. Monochrome patterning should not be invisible - the complicated designs that were woven in were supposed to dazzle - something that was very difficult to achieve by means of the then most popular technique, samitum. Only the monochrome samitum fabrics of the best quality, the so-called "geritzte Seide" (etched silk - with shapes outlined by thin lines) [Abb. 98] can be considered successful. It is probably this very background which, in the 11th century, gave rise to a number of weaving techniques, where ground and pattern structure differ, i.e. techniques eminently suitable for monochrome patterning. The two surface structures reflect the light in different ways, thus making for a higher definition of the pattern. It is, however, not very surprising that most of these techniques are closely related to samitum, since the problems of monochrome patterning were the ones to be solved in this particular technique.

First of all, we have to mention the proto-lampas technique. An unfortunate term which has become common usage in such a way that it will continue to be used, although it is definitely not the prototype, or forerunner, of lampas. In proto-lampas textiles, there is a ground consisting of ground warp and ground weft, as well as of a pattern weft which runs according to the pattern either along the surface or the back of the textile, tied down in a 1/2 twill by the warp threads.

This is definitely not a lampas. Lampas does consist

as a rule of a ground and at least one pattern weft, but this is tied by means of additional warp threads, the binding warp, to the ground. This binding warp does not have any other function - it is never a part of the ground. Our structure belongs to the class of textiles, which Felix Guicherd describes as tissues simulate Des lampas [Guicherd, 1957, 30].

Proto-lampas textiles are defined beyond this description by a ground of alternating single and double warp threads. These groupings of threads in a 1-2 rhythm as well as the tie-down of the pattern in a 1/2 twill are characteristics that proto-lampas has in common with samitum. Guichard [Guichard 1956, 23], as well as James Flanagan [Flanagan 1956, 498-499, note 2] pointed out in 1956 that a loom set up for samitum can also be used for proto-lampas without changing anything on the loom itself. This hypothesis is supported by textiles, in which both techniques are woven next to each other, i.e. on the same warp. The warps that always tie by themselves therefore correspond in samitum to the pattern warp, the two parallel binding threads to the main warp.

Furthermore, there are textiles which were woven since the early 11th century, which can be given the term "composite weft bindings." This term very generally describes a weft-faced textile with two or more weft shots, a main warp and a binding warp, which ties the cloth layers together. Samitum is nothing but a synonym for weft-faced compound twill (Abb. 100). The textiles we are interested in here differ from samitum in that the binding warp does not work over both shots in the same way, *par passee*, but over each other shot in its individual binding. Such textiles were described for the first time - these are also the oldest textiles which are dateable due to external circumstances - by Sigrid Mueller-Christensen within the framework of the processing of the finds from the Bamberg tomb of Pope Clemens 11, who had died in 1047. (Mueller-Christensen 1960, 39, 49-50, Abb. 19, 46-49] Since then almost a dozen such textiles have surfaced and they all have the same structure:

The binding warp goes over shot I, which is the ground, in a derivative plain weave, over shot II, i.e. for the pattern, in a 1/3 twill. Thus, we have two different weave structures for ground and pattern.

In contrast to proto-lampas, this technique requires an

adjustment of the samitum loom: Now we need four shafts and not (as was the samitum norm at that time) three shafts, a phenomenon which may have consequences in the discussion on three and/or four shaft samitum.

Both of the techniques described above are not lampas. In touching on the term "proto-lampas," I mentioned before that these are structures which will not lead in a direct line to the real lampas. We shall return to this point later on. There are, as far as I know, two types of lampas, which demonstrate such a close relationship to samitum that they must have evolved directly from the latter. In both cases it is not necessary to change the loom - just as with proto-lampas. The ground, which was introduced, could easily be achieved by the introduction of one or two heddles or leashes to the frames or the draw-mechanism.

From the tomb of Bishop Ott II of Bamberg (died 1192), we have a Dalmatian of a white on white patterned silk [Kat. Muenchen 1955, 27-28, Kat. Nr. 47 (Sigrid Mueller-Christensen)]. A textile with a very similar pattern is known to us as the mantle of St. Gertrud of Nivelles in Neustadt on the Main [Lessing 1900, Taf. 124a; von Falke 1913, Bd. 2, 65], and for both fabrics there are two-colored parallels (Abb. 101). A further textile, from the tomb of bishop Ulger (died 1149) in Angers Cathedral [Urseau 1925/1926, 58-61, abb. 9, II] points to the possibility that the technique for these fabrics was developed in the first half of the 12th century.

Here, we are dealing with lampas, whose ground, plainweave, is made up of the main warp and a ground weft. In the patterning, this "technical" ground only occurs as an outline. The remaining area of the fabric is covered by the first pattern shot which is bound by the binding warp in a 1/2 Z-twill. A second pattern shot forms a double-face effect. It appears exclusively on the back and is there bound by the binding warp in a 1/2 S-twill.

The Bamberg dalmatic, as well as the Angers silk, both have a woven in kufic inscription. For the width of this band, these textiles are woven only with two shots (the second one, the pattern shot to the back of the textile, is omitted) and in samitum, so that the inscription is also visible on the plain verso, as its only decoration.

It is highly probable that these textiles are related to the unpatterned double-face samitum textiles, which have two differently colored weft-faced surfaces. In my opinion there is no doubt that both of these textiles originated in Spain; last not least, their color scheme is a strong indication of that.

The second true lampas samitum derivative is only known in one textile (Abb. 102). It is one of the four white silk textiles of the high middle ages, which are connected to the tunic of the emperor Henry II in Bamberg [on all four textiles: Berliner 1921; on three of them: Kat Muenchen 1955, 19-20, Kat. Nrn 21-23 (Sigrid Mueller-Christensen)]. The fragments found in the Bamberg Cathedral sepulchre [Textile Grabfunde 1987, 174-175] are probably from the same textile.

The pattern which is formed by the effect of a pattern weft contrasts from the plainweave ground in a 1/3 S-twill. On the back, the negative, 3/1 twill, image of the pattern shot can be seen quite distinctively due to the thickness of the weft. The binding warp works, just as the main warp over the ground weft in plainweave, and only over the pattern weft in twill. The warp ratio is 2 ground warp threads to 1 binding warp, so that there is in the ground a modified plainweave consisting of 1,1,2,2 threads (both warps together) which results in a marked striping effect.

These are the only lampas or lampas-like textiles which can be produced in close connections to samitum. They all have in common that the loom only needs a single set of shafts, namely for the binding warp. Even if a movement of the ground warp is introduced, this always happens by means of already existing gadgets, i.e. with the help of the draw or frame leashes. In lampas, this is different: The movement of the main warp is determined by two mechanisms, on the one hand by the shafts which are responsible for the ground, and then by the draw system which produces the pattern. In examples of solid-color or two-color versions (Abb. 103) from the 11th and 12th centuries, one type of binding is illustrated, which, just like the proto-lampas is somewhat ambivalent. Ground and pattern are plainweave; of the relatively closely set warp threads, every 5th serves as pattern warp. The back of the textile shows an exact mirror image of the pattern, thus, the pattern weft runs where it is not part of the pattern on the back. Those warp ends that only work the ground and those that also bind the pattern weft

are of the same material. They do not show any difference in their integration into the fabric, so that we may conclude that they were all beamed together. This textile may be viewed as plainweave, in which individual threads not only bind the ground weft, but also the pattern weft. The correct term for this would be “plainweave with complementary pattern, the pattern weft bound by each 5th thread in the plainweave.” Just as the proto-lampas textiles, these fabrics are not really lampas, either, even if they appear as such on first glance. If at all, we may speak of a lampas-like textile, in which main and binding warp complement one another for the ground. The main warp alone works the ground only in a plainweave-type binding - only the binding warp threads complement them to a “real” plain weave. Since the binding warp cannot be recognized as such within the ground - they appear to be totally integrated into the main warp the preferred term will be “plainweave with pattern weft.” This group of plain weave textiles with complementary wefts always has several non-binding warp threads, their size can be totally independent of the ratio of binding to non-binding warp threads.

The size of the repeat is quite often considerable, so that we may assume a classical loom setup. The warp is threaded on at least two shafts, whereas the binding warps run through two more, or rather two shafts assigned only to them. Only the non-binding yarns are connected to the draw system.

The step to textiles which are produced in ‘true lampas technique’ is very small if the plainweave textiles with complementary weft are to the starting point. Twice, among them very markedly in the Siviard-Sudarium in Sens (Chartraire. 1911. 22-34, Nr. 18). we encounter the same structure, (Abb. 104) However, with the complementary weft and the brocading shots bound not in plainweave, but in 1/2 S twill. This twill is woven par passee (selvedge to selvedge) i.e. also over the ground shot. Thus the plainweave like fabric consisting of ground shot and main warp - and this is definitely the case here - is not complemented by the binding warp, but it looks as if it were “faulty.” Main warp and pattern warp work completely independently of each other, so that this is without a doubt a lampas weave. The warp ratio is 4 main warps to 1 binding warp. For the ground, the main warp and the ground shot form a modified plain weave - the two main warp threads to the right and

left of the binding warp bind in parallel fashion. This lampas appears to be the earliest of its kind. A derivation from, or at least a close connection to this technique to, that of the plain weave textiles with complementary pattern weft can readily be seen.

From the “complete” ground, which is formed by all the warp threads and the ground weft, the path seems to lead to the “faulty” one, which is due to the fact that binding and non-binding warps (main and binding warp) work in bindings that can no longer be coordinated.

The production condition for this type of lampas should be the same as for that of the plainweave textiles with complementary weft - however with three shafts instead of two for the pattern warp.

Furthermore, there are several silk fabrics with just those “faulty” ground weaves, but the pattern binding is plainweave. First of all, I want to mention the remnants of the lining of the funerary mitre of Henry VI (died 1197) of Palermo Cathedral [Kat. London 1994, 172-175, Kat. Nr. 190 (ii)(Hero GrangerTaylor)]. The solid white textile is in all its characteristics like the plainweave textiles with complimentary pattern wefts, however, the pattern warp threads operate here, in comparison to the others, in a shift displacement, i.e. not transposed to their immediate neighbors, but parallel to them. . Thus, the binding warp threads are completely covered by the two neighboring main warp threads in the ground areas.

In a polychrome version this same pattern appears again in a group of lampas textiles, which Dorothy Shepherd assembled for the first time in 1957 (Shepherd 1957); among them are, for instance in the Abbegg Collection the fabrics from the shrine of Saint Librada in Sigüenza (Inv. Nos. 2655/2659 as well as 2656/2660; Otavsky/’ Abbas 1995, 145-156, Kat. Nrs. 85-86). Also, we want to point out the silk in the Abbegg Stiftung, inv. no.935, which was possibly woven in Baghdad [Otavsky/’ Abbas 1995, 143-145, Kat. Nr. 84].

There is also a somewhat more recent silk with asymmetric tendrils and large mythical animals in Bomber [Textile Grabfunde, 1987. 122-123], that probably also originated in Mesopotamia, which can be compared via elements of its binding, i.e. the

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ground warps which bind parallel to both sides of the pattern warp. If one takes into consideration that also two-colored plainweave textiles with complementary weft patterning, for instance a fragment with a crouching griffin in Berlin [Von Wilckens 1992,38039, Kat. Nr.2] were woven in Mesopotamia, it appears that the earliest textiles in lampas technique were woven in that area, maybe in Baghdad. This new technique, however, became known very swiftly, as early as 1100, in Spain, unless one has to assume a parallel development.

Now a word on the patterns: Here, too, we see a clean separation of the samitum and the lampas textiles. The fact that the basic technical difference also has a cultural grounding is emphasized by that.

Solid and polychrome samitum textiles, textiles in composite weft and proto-lampas technique often have identical patterns. For instance, this holds true for the medallions with bird pairs, which exist in solid and polychrome samitum as well as in proto-lampas; for the medallion pattern with griffin and panther pairs, which occur in monochrome samitum and proto-lampas; for the point-oval pattern, which occurs in samitum and composite weft structures; or for the hexagon patterns, which occur in all four types [To list an important example of each of the pattern types: Medallion pattern with bird pairs: Brauweiler, St. Nikolas, so-called Bernhard cope; Kat. Koeln 1985, Bd. 1,488, 451-452, Kat. Nr. kC 28 (Leonie von Wilckens). Medallion pattern with pairs of griffins and panthers: Bamberg, Dioezesanmuseum, pontifical stockings from the tomb of Pope Clemens 11; Mueller-Christense, 1960,44-46, Abb. 31-38, Taf. II. Pointed oval pattern: Mainz, Bischoefliches Dom- und Dioezesanmuseum, Willigis cope; Kat. Hildesheim 1993, Bd. 2, 149-151, Kat. Nr. IV-I (Regula Schorta). Hexagon pattern: Bamberg, Dioezesanmuseum, kSeidenfunde aus dem Domkreuzgang, Nrs M30 (two-colored samitum), M 32(proto-lampas); Textile Grabfunde, 1987, 162-165] . The lampas textiles or the textiles in plainweave with complementary weft patterning show entirely different types of decoration. There are designs, such as in the so-called Ganymede-textile [Otavsky/' Abbas 1995, 127-130, Kat. Nr. 77] or the equally well-known textiles with pointed ovals from Ravy [Otavsky/' Abbas 1995, 130- 132, Kat. Nr. 78]; the Riggisberg mitre [Lembert/Schmedding i 973, Tal. i 5) shows birds in medallions, however the birds are

entirely different from the ones mentioned above. There is only one textile known to date which occurs in both types: it is a pattern of elongated hexagons with pomegranate trees. It is mostly used in composite weft structures [Textile Grabfunde, 1987, 176, Abb.2, Farbtaf. 11], however, we find it in a minor variant also in the mitre from grave 23 in Bremen Cathedral [Katl. Stockholm 1986,76-77, Kat. Nr. 35 (MargaretaNockert)], in plainweave with complementary weft patterning, the pattern weft being tied down by every 5th warp thread.