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THE EMBROIDERIES OF MARY, QUEEN OF SCOTS: NOTES ON THE FRENCH BACKGROUND*

By Patricia Wardle

The embroideries of Mary, Queen of Scots, have been the subject of a number of detailed studies¹ and it might be thought that little more now needs to be, or indeed can be, said about them. However, it may fairly be commented that in all the studies the work that can confidently be attributed to Mary's period in captivity in England has been considered somewhat in isolation. The bulk of it is canvas work of a type foreign to the contemporary English tradition. Nor is this surprising, since Mary was brought up at the French court, and in fact, if one examines the available evidence, it proves possible to show that the extant work by her, far from being an isolated phenomenon, was firmly rooted in a French tradition.

All writers on the subject invariably begin with a reference to Catherine de Medici, who supervised Mary's upbringing and who is known herself to have been extremely fond of needlework. However, they can find little to link Catherine and Mary otherwise, since the only contemporary reference to the type of work favoured by Catherine merely speaks vaguely of silk embroidery. This is, of course, Brantôme's famous comment that Catherine was wont to pass *ses après dinées à besogner après ses ouvrages de soye, où elle estait tout parfaite qu'il est possible*². She is also credited with a devotion to *lacis* or darned netting³, a variety of linen embroidery featured prominently in the pattern-book *Les Singuliers et nouveaux pourtraicts* of 1587, which was dedicated to her by its author Frederico Vinciolo.

If we turn to the inventory that was made of Catherine's possessions after her death in 1589⁴, we find that it amply bears out Brantôme's statement, but does not lend much support to the *lacis* theory. True, there are a certain number of references to *lacis*, such as this one to a bed:

445. *Ung lict de réseuil par carrez, recouret d'or, d'argent, et de soye, garny de huicts pents, trois rideaux, deux bonnes graces, le fond et dossier.*

However, they all refer to made up work or merely to large pieces of *réseuil* without any indication that these were composed of squares of needlework or indeed that they were embroidered at all. In the section in which the contents of various chests are listed, on the other hand, we find the two following entries:

487. *Cent neuf carrez de toile baptiste ouvrez de fil de Fleurance*

488. *Cinquante quatre quarrez de gaze remplys de soye et feuillage de plusieurs couleurs.*

These obviously refer to the type of silk embroidery related to *lacis*, which was worked on *buratto*, a variety of silk gauze of Italian origin with a clear open weave. Earlier entries in the inventory (411-19) refer to lengths of various types of gauze, mostly white or "natural" (*incarnaat*) in colour, which were presumably meant for

this kind of embroidery, while two later entries would appear to indicate quite clearly that this type of work was done by the Queen herself and her ladies. One concerns squares with the patterns drawn or painted on ready for working:

489. *Cent quatre vingtz six carrez de gaze peintz sans aucun ouvrage,*

the other a piece with a pattern drawn on it, on which the embroidery had been begun, but left unfinished:

493. *Une bande of gaze portraicte et commancée à ouvrir par l'un des boutz environ ung tiers.*

Two further entries, 494 and 495, also concern bands of gauze *remplies de soye de plusieurs couleurs*, while a further entry under 493 shows that this kind of embroidery was also done on a mesh ground:

*Une bande de campane de réseuil remplie de soye, d'or et d'argent*⁵.

Finally, two further entries demonstrate the use of this kind of work for bed hangings:

508. *Ung ciel de lict de réseuil de fil avec ouvrages de soye garny de trois rideaux, le dociel (dossier) et couverture de mesme*

509. *Ung autre ciel de pareille estoffe, plus grossier, avec la mesme garniture.*

But this is by no means the end of the story, for these chests also contained enormous quantities of canvas work. A characteristic entry is:

467. *Vingt deux carrez de tapisserie de soye à gros point rehaussez d'or et d'argent.*

The following entries, up to and including 474, are the same, amounting to over two hundred squares in all. Among the numerous other references to canvaswork squares of this variety, not all of which are enriched with gold and silver, are some that tell us a little more about the types of design to be found on them. 475 and 476 concern 57 squares *à pointz d'Hongrie* (an interesting early reference to this technique); 479, *neuf carrez de portraictz d'arbres*; 485, *sept petitz carrez en façon de bouquetz*; 492, *quatre vingtz sept petitz carrez de gros pointz de soye façon de bouquetz*; 486, *quatre vingtz quinze petitz carrez . . . en façon de fleurs*.

From the quantities involved it is clear that the embroidering of squares of canvas work was quite as popular, if not more so, with Catherine and her ladies as *buratto* work, and of course there is an obvious reason for this. Such small pieces of embroidery were easy to manoeuvre, since the material could be stretched in the kind of portable frame current at that time, which could be supported either on a table or on one's lap. A portable rectangular frame supported on a chest is shown on the title-page of Peter Quentel's pattern-book, *Eyn neue kunstlich Moetdelboech*, published in Cologne in 1529 (Fig. 1), while a similar frame supported on the user's knee appears in the delightful scene of ladies engaged in needlework in a garden, to the accompaniment of music played on the virginals, which is painted in the autograph album of 1613 of Gervasius Fabricius of Salzburg⁶ (Fig. 2).

The most obvious surviving examples of such squares of silk embroidery in the present context are, of course, the two associated with Mary, Queen of Scots, which are now at Hardwick Hall⁷ (Fig. 3). They feature emblems in small ovals against a ground of lilies, roses and thistles in a diamond trellis pattern. Moreover, they are indeed enriched with gold and silver thread, most unusually in that the whole of the cross-stitch ground is run with gold thread. Further evidence that the Queen of Scots went on making “squares” in the manner she had learned in France is to be found in the inventory made of her possessions at Chartley Hall on 13 June 1586⁸, which includes:

A square with yellow ground, powdered with white and red roses

Another square with white ground, with flowers in compartments

Another square, made in tent stitch with a single emblem in the centre and others around, the arms of France, Scotland, Spain and England in the corners.

Two squares listed in the inventory appear to have been mounted, perhaps for use as cushions:

A floral square with dove-coloured ground, trimmed with carnation satin and fringe

Another square, cross stitch, with a peacock’s tail, trimmed as above.

A further interesting entry concerns an unfinished square:

Another square with red ground, not yet enriched, with roses and thistles in compartments . . . for a bed.

There were various ways in which squares of canvas work might be used on beds. Sometimes they were sewn together to form valances and bases, with or without the addition of borders. This type of valance is well known from surviving examples, often made in one piece as well as in separate sections, with squares containing a flower or fruit tree with a large bird or animal⁹. The Chartley Inventory also lists two unfinished pieces of this type:

Two pieces of canvas, worked in compartments with silk in cross stitch, for a small canopy, with the bands painted only in black.

Bands or borders of canvas work were often embroidered separately, as is abundantly clear from such entries as the following in the inventory of Catherine de Medici:

478. *Quatre petitz montans* (vertical bands) *de canevas rempliz de tapisserie de soye à gros poinctz, deux autres de mesme hauteur rehaussez d’or et d’argent, et deux petitz morceaux de campane, l’un sur toile fine et l’autre sur canevas*

482. *Quatorze bandes de canevas . . . sur lesquelles y à des bandes de tapisserie de soye a gros poinct de plusieurs couleurs et façon.*

The bands were used not only as borders to the valances and bases¹⁰, but also to edge the hangings of the bed, which were generally of some other rich material or embroidery in another technique. An elaborate bed of this kind is listed in Catherine de Medici's inventory:

561. *Ung lict à double pentes à campanes au gros poinct de tapisserie de soye rehaussé d'or et d'argent, garny de six pentes de tapisserie trois pour le haut et trois pour les soubassemens, quatre pentes de damas blanc figuré d'or, sur lesquelles y a des bandes de broderie d'or et d'argent cliquant, pour servir au dedans du lict, quatre quenouilles de mesme damas, trois grandz rideaux de mesme damas garnys d'une bande d'ouvrage de soye rehaussé d'or et d'argent par dehors, et par dedans d'une bande de broderie d'or et d'argent cliquant avec des chiffres, quatre bonnes graces de tapisserie de soye rehaussée d'or et d'argent doublée du mesme damas blanc figuré d'or semblable au rideaux, la couverte de parade de mesme damas blanc figuré d'or garny de pentes de broderie d'or et d'argent cliquant au lieu de passément.*

This bed was part of a whole set of textile furnishings, including a table carpet in the same style¹¹.

Squares of canvas work might also be applied to richer materials, again sometimes in combination with borders embroidered in other techniques. Two further entries in Catherine de Medici's inventory illustrate this:

573. *Une pente de velours cramoisi à campane . . . sur laquelle il y à deuz carrez de tapisserie de soye rehaussez d'or et d'argent, et une bordure de broderie sur velours*

582. *Une pièce de satin cramoisy, sur laquelle il y à cinq quarrez de tapisserie de soye à gros point rehaussez d'or et d'argent, garny de six montans de broderie d'or et d'argent.*

The practice of applying embroidery to rich grounds goes back to the Middle Ages, but it took on a new lease of life with the upsurge of domestic embroidery at the time of the Renaissance and here we come to a tradition that appears to have been well established at the French court even before the time of Catherine de Medici. We know of it thanks to the inventories that were made of the contents of Versailles and other royal palaces in the second half of the 17th century¹². The lists of textiles begin with some old hangings now in store, including the following:

4. *Une autre teinture de tapisserie de velours découpé, rouge cramoisy, fonds de satin par compartimens, avec des carrez de petit point représentant des emblemes et des fleurons, appelé la tapisserie de la Reyne Claude, composée de six pièces, au milieu desquelles il y a un rond de petits points dans un carré sur lequel est représenté une salamandre au pied d'un laurier, entre deux escussons, avec ces mots: Extinguo nutrisco.*

La Reyne Claude was, of course, the queen of François I, whose reign ended in 1547, the year before Mary, Queen of Scots, arrived in France, and the salamander was the device adopted by him in imitation of his father. The motto is here given the wrong way round, the correct version being *Nutrisco et Extinguo*, meaning "I nourish (the good) and extinguish (the bad)"¹³. The addition of the laurel tree is unusual¹⁴, but it may perhaps figure here in its meaning as a symbol of the victor.

This *tapisserie de la Reyne Claude* is a famous piece in the annals of French embroidery and is mentioned by both Harvard and De Farcy¹⁵. De Farcy quotes a piece of embroidery in the Spitzer Collection¹⁶, as featuring a salamander and a tree and suggests this might once have formed part of the *tapisserie*, which is now lost, like most of the other textiles of its period formerly in the French royal collections¹⁷. In fact, however, the embroidery in question features a salamander and an oak tree and bears no motto and it is the wrong shape, while the technique, metal threads, coloured silks and coral beads on a white satin ground, with many parts in high relief, bears no resemblance to that referred to in the description of the *tapisserie*.

There is a more detailed description of the *tapisserie*, revealing more of its make-up and precisely how the pieces of canvas work were applied, much later on in the French royal inventories:

1381. *Une tapisserie remplie d'octogones de petit point, représentant des emblèmes et des fleurons enfermez par des bandes en compartimens de large passement vieux, de de soye rouge cramoisy à fleurs veloutées fonds de satin, ayant au milieu un grand rond de petit point, représentant une salamandre au pied d'un laurier, entre deux escussons, avec ces mots: Extinguo nutrisco, le tout dans une bordure de 10 pouces de large, composées de deux bandes de toile d'or trait, dont celles de dedans est figurée par des carderons, et celle de dehors de feuilles d'eau, et de refens lizeré de cordonnet d'or, qui enferment une bande du dit passement de soye rouge à fleurs veloutees . . . doublée de toile rouge.*

Whether or not the canvas-work panels on this hanging were squares or octagons, we know that panels of various shapes were used in this way from descriptions of other old hangings at the beginning of the inventories:

2. *Une teinture de tapisserie de petit point relevée d'or et de soye, représentant des fables, des métamorphoses, en trois pièces, composé chacune d'un tableau octogone dans le milieu et, aux quatre coins, de dans chacuns desquels est la devise de la salamandre; le tout rapporté sur un fonds de velours rouge cramoisy avec des branches de lières et de lauriers liées ensemble*
3. *Une autre teinture de tapisserie de broderie d'or et soye, composées de huit pièces, dans chacunes desquel sont représentées les armes de Navarre, dans les quatres autres, des compartiments de rétaille, et dans celui du milieu, une histoire de l'Ancien Testament, dans une bordure fonds de satin noir, avec des grands escriteaux.*

There can be no doubt that Mary, Queen of Scots, knew these hangings and was thoroughly familiar with their style. The inventory made in 1561 of "The Quenis Movables" at Holyrood House¹⁸ lists two beds with oval panels of canvas work featuring "histories":

11. Item ane bed of crammoisie brown velvet maid in broiderie work and lieffis of claith of gold with sum histories maid in the figure ovaill furnisit with ruif headpece and sex pandis and three under pandis all freinyeit with threid of gold etc.
22. Item ane bed equaillie dividit in claith of gold and silvir maid in figure of pottis full of flouris with broderie work of lang roundis callit ovaill quhairin the histories ar contenit.

Moreover, the Chartley Inventory shows her to have been occupied with work of this kind during her captivity:

- The valance of a bed, prepared for a design of ovals
- Seven embroidered figures of women playing musical instruments
- Two ovals of the same size, to make a border
- Two tigers and flower sprays to apply to the above valance.

There are no references to any oval "histories"¹⁹ by Mary herself, but the Chartley Inventory does list a square one:

- The story of Esther and Haman in a square.

Perhaps the most significant of all the entries in the French royal inventories from our point of view is the following:

1383. *Un emmeublement de velours rouge cramoisy enrichy de plusieurs tableaux octogones de petit point, représentant des oyseaux, animaux, fleurs et fruits, et d'autres tableaux de broderie or, argent et soye, représentant des salamandres; le rest remply de compartimens de taillure de toile d'or trait, avec des feuillages de taillures de toile d'or filé et des encolis de toile d'argent le tout provenant d'anciens meubles du garde-meuble de la couronne, garny de crespine, frange et mollet d'or de Milan à la Milanoise, supporté de soye rouge cramoisy, consistant en un grand lit, deux sièges ployans, deux carreaux et une tapisserie.*

The *tapisserie*, of which a description then follows, is the same as that given under 2 above.

It must surely have been this *ameublement*, or the embroideries from which it was made up, that inspired the embroideries of plant, birds, animals and fish made by Mary, Queen of Scots, during her captivity and now known to us chiefly from the Oxburgh Hangings (Fig. 4). It can now clearly be seen that Mary was following a French fashion in working the motifs for application in panels of various shapes, the English practice in this type of work being to cut flower or fruit "slips" to shape before applying them, so that the effect was more as if they were embroidered directly on the ground to which they were applied.

The plants on the Oxburgh Hangings, like many of the emblems, are in octagonal panels and the birds, animals and fish in curious cruciform shapes, but it seems fairly clear that Mary also worked motifs of this kind in the familiar squares. The Chartley Inventory lists a number of embroideries of this type:

- 52 different flowers in *petit point* drawn from life²⁰, of which 32 are uncut, the rest cut each in its square.
- 124 birds of different kinds, in *petit point*, also drawn from life, uncut
- 116 others, some cut
- 16 four-footed beasts, also in *petit point*, including a lion attacking a boar, counted as one
- 52 fish of different kinds.

The references to "cut" and "uncut" are a little puzzling, but perhaps the "cut" pieces had been cut out ready for mounting, the original canvas naturally being larger in size to allow for stretching it in the frame for working. Furthermore, we know for certain from a small number of surviving pieces that some at least of the birds, animals and fish were worked in squares, albeit with a cruciform device as part of the design (Fig. 5).

Margaret Swain discusses the evidence relating to the Oxburgh Hangings²¹, and comes to the conclusion that they were probably mounted in their original form

sometime after Mary's death, possibly by Alatheia Talbot, daughter and heiress of Gilbert, seventh Earl of Shrewsbury. This may perhaps be so. The cruciform panels might certainly point in this direction, if it were really the case that they were all originally worked as squares. The remaining square panels with creatures all have more or less elaborate motifs in the corners and there would clearly have been no point in working these if they were only to be cut out later, but perhaps someone concerned with the mounting who had not been involved in the working would not have felt any scruples about doing so. However, it could also be the case that the idea of square panels for the creatures was abandoned in favour of cruciform shapes after a few trial pieces had been worked, which might explain why it is precisely the square panels that have remained unmounted. We do not know the shapes of the panels with creatures listed in the Chartley Inventory, nor whether these are the same as the panels now on the Oxburgh Hangings, but certainly the square panels with plants are not the same as those now on the Hangings.

Whatever the answer, it certainly does not obviate the fact that the idea for the embroideries was of French inspiration and that with their emblems, plants, birds, animals and fish they fit completely into the tradition current at the French court during Mary's childhood and youth. It might well be, too, that some design for mounting the canvas-work panels had been worked out by Mary and Bess of Hardwick together in the days when they were still on friendly terms. It hardly seems likely that they would have made so many pieces of similar types without some plan in mind. And we can be sure they will have discussed hangings of a mixture of rich materials and canvas-work embroidery, just as they did other French modes which Bess set herself to emulate. There is an entry in the Hardwick Hall Inventory of 1601 which certainly seems to suggest that Bess put Mary's information on this head to practical use²². It concerns a set of hangings "in the little Chamber within the best bedchamber" made up in the sort of way we have now become familiar with from the inventory descriptions of French hangings:

fyve peece of hanginges of grene velvet and Clothe of golde and silver set with trees and slips and ciphers with long borders of stories in nedleworke and borders about all these hanginges of Cloth of tyssue silver and grene silk, everie peece being Eight foote deep.

Thus even if the Oxburgh Hangings were made up at a later period, it seems quite probable that they may have been done according to a design worked out by Mary and Bess in consort, and certainly the way in which the canvas-work panels are mounted with wide passementerie, silk and additional linking needlework also agrees with the style of the French hangings.

It still remains to be mentioned that there is a postscript to all this. It will have been noticed that some of the old embroideries crop up twice in the French royal inventories and it may now be revealed that on the second occasion on which they were listed, along with the *ameublement* with the birds, animals, fruit and flowers,

they were not at Versailles, but at St. Germain-en-Laye. The date of the second inventory is 1689 and we owe these second, more detailed descriptions to the fact that these old embroideries were brought out of store in that year to furbish up St. Germain-en-Laye to receive the newly exiled James II of England. Madame de Sévigné described James' arrival at St. Germain on 10 January 1689 and his reception there by Louis XIV²³:

The King went to meet him at the end of the Salle des Gardes; the King of England bent low as if to embrace his knees; the King stopped him and embraced him three or four times very cordially. They conversed in low tones for a quarter of an hour, the King presented the King of England to Monseigneur, Monsieur and Cardinal Bonzi and then led him to the chamber of the Queen, who had great difficulty in restraining her tears. After they had talked for some time the King brought them to the Prince of Wales and stayed with them some minutes and then left saying, 'This is your house; when I come here you will do the honours for me as I will for you at Versailles.' "

It may be imagined that the installation of the main rooms at St. Germain to receive the exiled King was done in great haste and there would certainly have been no time to make new hangings. Possibly interests of economy will also have played a role, but in any case, the old work, though doubtless rather old-fashioned in appearance by now, will still have made a grand enough show. Some work was also done on the old pieces to adapt them to their new purpose. The six pieces of the *tapisserie de la Reyne Claude* were divided between the King's antichamber and the small room next to it and some of them seem to have been repaired or restored. The *tapisserie* in the small room is described as follows:

1382. *Une tapisserie pareille à la précédente (1381) excepté que les bandes en compartimens de large passement de soye rouge cramoisy à fleurs veloutés fonds de satin, qui enferment les octogones de petit point, sont toutes neuves.*

The *ameublement* with the fruit, flowers, birds and animals and the other hangings were used to furnish *la grand chambre du grant appartement du roy*, and it may perhaps be counted as one of the small ironies of history that Mary, Queen of Scots' great-grandson should have spent his exile surrounded by the very embroideries from which she herself had drawn inspiration for the work that beguiled her own exile and captivity.

NOTES

- * I would like to express my grateful thanks to Santina M. Levey, Assistant Keeper of the Department of Textiles, Victoria and Albert Museum, for her unfailing kindness in checking references and embroideries for me and for help in obtaining photographs.
1. F. de Zulueta, *EMBROIDERIES BY MARY STUART AND ELIZABETH TALBOT AT OXBURGH HALL, NORFOLK*, Oxford, 1923; G.F. Wingfield Digby, *ELIZABETHAN EMBROIDERY*, London, 1963, in particular pp. 53-62, 114-6, 122-5; Margaret Swain, *THE NEEDLEWORK OF MARY, QUEEN OF SCOTS*, New York, London, etc., 1973.
 2. Quoted in Wingfield Digby, *op.cit.*, pp. 53-4.
 3. This rumour seems to have been started by Mrs. Bury Palliser. In a passage which must have been added to the third, 1875, edition of her *HISTORY OF LACE*, since there is a reference in a note to Bonnaffé's publication of the inventory of Catherine de Médici, she writes: "Catherine de Médicis had a bed draped with squares of reseuil or lacis and it is recorded that 'the girls and servants of her household consumed much time making squares of reseuil'. The inventory of her property and goods includes a coffer containing three hundred and eighty-one of such squares unmounted, whilst in another were found five hundred and thirty-eight squares, some worked with rosettes, and others with nose-gays" (p. 22 in the revised edition of 1902). This is, however, a misinterpretation of the inventory entries.
 4. Edmond Bonnaffé, *INVENTAIRE DES MEUBLES DE CATHÉRINE DE MEDICIS EN 1589*, Paris, 1874.
 5. Larousse defines *campane* as an old word for a bell or a silk ornament in the form of a bell, so a band of such forms would probably have been a scalloped band to form an edging.
 6. British Museum, Add. MS. 17025, f. 50.
 7. The most detailed account of these appears in Wingfield Digby, *op.cit.*, pp. 114-6, with Plate D.
 8. Labanoff, *LETTRES ET MÉMOIRES DE MARIE, REINE D'ECOSSE*, Paris, 1844, Vol. VII, p. 240. Quoted in Swain, *op.cit.*, p. 91, (spelling modernized).
 9. There are a number of these in the Victoria and Albert Museum. The squares described in Catherine de Medici's inventory also featured trees or bouquets of

flowers, but figure subjects, too, were used in the same way. At the Château Brézé near Saumur there is a valance known as the TOUR DE LIT DE DIANE DE POITIERS (the mistress of Henri II and another prominent figure in the girlhood of Mary, Queen of Scots). This consists of fourteen squares of canvas work surrounded by embroidered flowers and fruit applied to red velvet. In the squares are female figures of the Virtues clad in French court costume in the style associated with the so-called Franco-Scottish group of canvas-work valances, etc., in England (see Wingfield Digby, *op.cit.*, pp. 134-6). One of the figures has a crescent moon in her hair and is traditionally said to represent Diane herself (De Farcy, LA BRODERIE DU XI^e SIÈCLE JUSQU'À NOS JOURS, 2e SUPPLEMENT, Paris, 1919, Pl.241). Another piece of this type is a panel in the Untermyer Collection with three designs in rectangles representing the months of September, July and August and a border of a trailing stem bearing fruit and flowers (Y. Hackenbroch, ENGLISH AND OTHER NEEDLEWORK, TAPESTRIES AND TEXTILES IN THE UNTERMYER COLLECTION, Cambridge, Mass., 1960, Fig. 176).

10. For a valance composed of squares of applied work with borders of canvas work see L. de Farcy, LA BRODERIE DU XI^e SIÈCLE JUSQU'À NOS JOURS, Paris, 1890, Fig. 84. In the Victoria and Albert Museum there are two valances of woollen material with canvas-work borders applied to them in strips.
11. The Chartley Inventory lists a piece made up in much the same sort of way: Another square, in strips of needlework and green velvet, powdered with silver stars.
12. J. Guiffrey, INVENTAIRE GÉNÉRAL DU MOBILIER DE LA COURONNE SOUS LOUIS XIV, Paris, 1885-6, Vol. II. Similarly, the inventory made of Charles I's possessions in 1649-51 is a useful source for embroideries of the time of Henry VIII (published by Oliver Millar in WALPOLE SOCIETY, Vol. XLIII, 1970-2).
13. Guy de Tervarent, ATTRIBUTS ET SYMBOLES DANS L'ART PROFANE, 1450-1600, Geneva, 1958, p. 33. This device is also among the emblems listed in William Drummond of Hawthornden's description of a state bed said to have been worked by Mary, Queen of Scots (see Wingfield Digby, *op.cit.*, pp. 49-50).
14. De Tervarent, *op.cit.*, pp. 231-4. The laurel can also symbolize virtue, truth and perseverance.
15. H. Havard, DICTIONNAIRE DE L'AMEUBLEMENT, Vol. II, col. 432; De Farcy, *op.cit.* (see Note 10), p. 60.
16. LA COLLECTION SPITZER, Paris, 1892, Vol. V, No. 80, there called Italian, 16th-17th century. What appears to be the same piece is illustrated by

De Farcy himself in the second supplement to his book (1919), Pl. 225, as being in the collection of George Saville-Seligman. De Farcy there remarks that the piece could have once been set into the door of a cabinet. See Also G. Saville-Seligman and Talbot Hughes, *DOMESTIC NEEDLEWORK*, London, 1926, Pl. 74, where the piece is described as a French picture and dated 1525-50. Now in Cooper Hewitt Museum, bequest of Marian Hague.

17. Among the few surviving examples of very rich French embroidery of the period are three pieces of a bed valance of yellow satin embroidered with coloured silks and featuring scenes from Ovid's *METAMORPHOSES*. Two pieces of this embroidery, which dates from around 1560, are in the Musée Historique des Tissus, Lyon, and one is in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. (See E.A. Standen, "A Picture for Every Story," *BULLETIN OF THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART*, Vol. XV, 1957, p. 165; and Swain, *op.cit.*, pp. 25-6).
18. T. Thomson, *A COLLECTION OF INVENTORIES AND OTHER RECORDS OF THE ROYAL WARDROBE AND JEWELHOUSE*, Edinburgh, 1815, pp. 135 and 137.
19. There is a good example of a 16th-century French oval "history" in the Untermyer Collection. It shows the *ADORATION OF THE MAGI* and is worked in coloured wools and silks and silver thread and purl in tent and split stitches with couched work on canvas. (See Hackenbroch, *op.cit.*, p. 1 and Fig. 179).
20. We know, of course, that the motifs were not "drawn from life", but were copied from various printed sources.
21. *Op.cit.*, pp. 96-103.
22. Ed. Lindsay Boynton, "The Hardwick Hall Inventories of 1601", *JOURNAL OF THE FURNITURE HISTORY SOCIETY*, Vol. VII, 1971, p. 26.
23. Quoted in F.C. Turner, *JAMES II*, London, 1938, p. 461.



Verlag von Edwin Schloemp in Leipzig.

Figure 1. Detail from the title-page of Peter Quentel's *Eyn Neue kunstlich Moetdelboech*, Cologne, 1529. Photograph by courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum.



Figure 2. Page from the autograph album of Gervasius Fabricius of Salzburg, 1613. Add. MS. 17025, f. 50. British Museum.



Figure 3. Square panel of canvas work, silk with some gold and silver thread, bearing the cipher of Mary, Queen of Scots. Hardwick Hall. Photograph (taken before restoration) by courtesy of the Victoria and Albert museum.

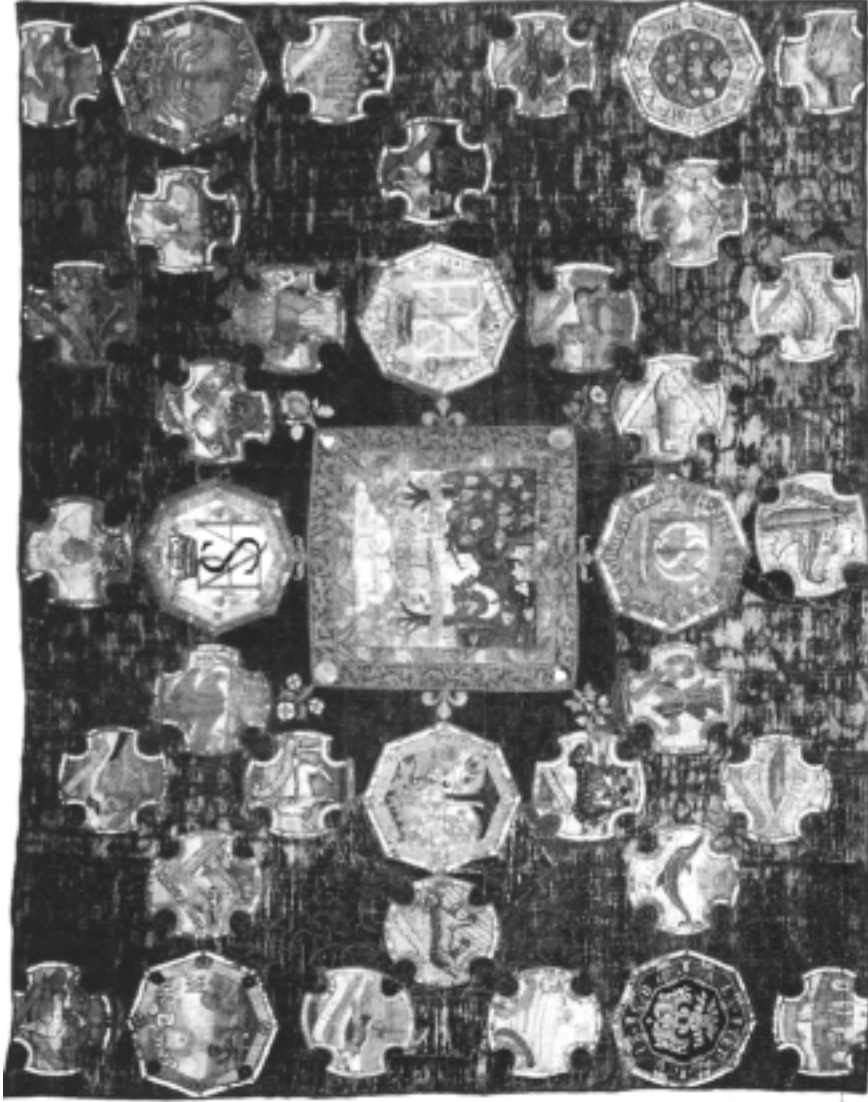


Figure 4. The Marian Hanging, one of the Oxburgh Hangings, green velvet with applied panels of canvas work by Mary, Queen of Scots, and Elizabeth, Countess of Hardwick. Victoria and Albert Museum, on loan to Oxburgh Hall, Norfolk.

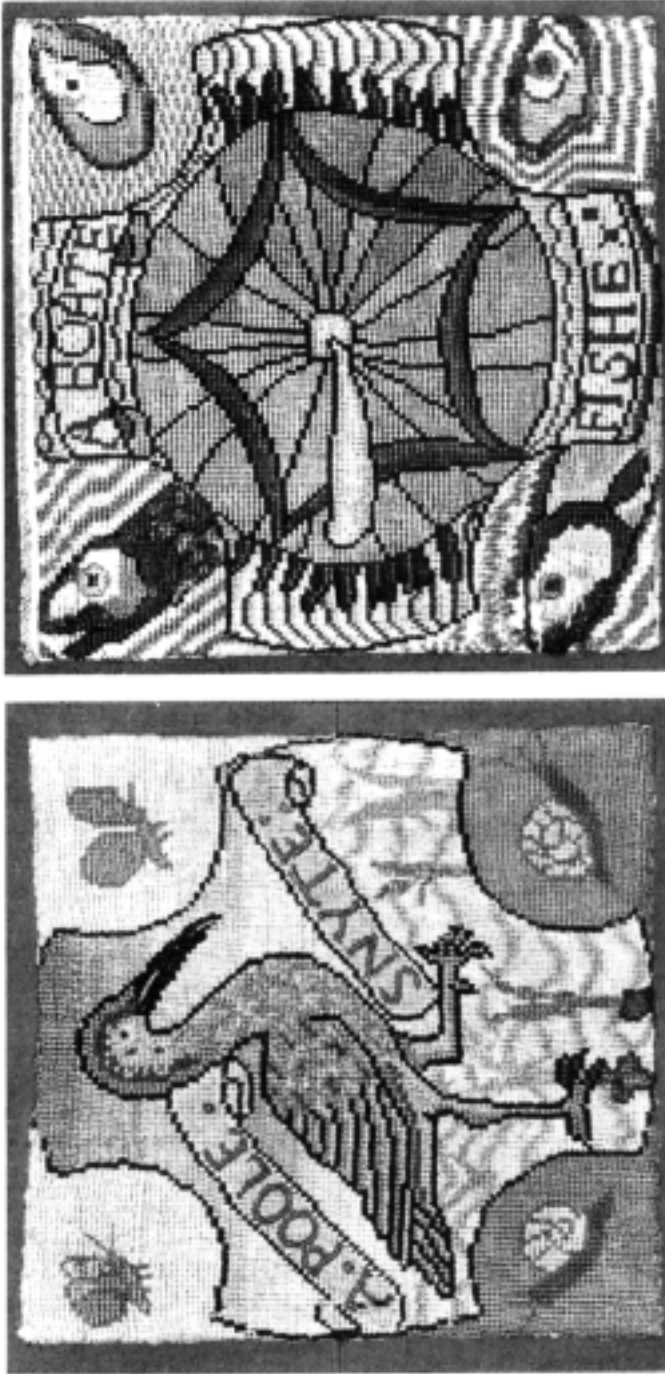


Figure 5. "A Poole Snyte" (a Great Snipe) and "A Boate Fishe" (an Echinops or Sea Urchin), two unused square panels of canvas work comparable to those on the Oxburgh Hangings. Victoria and Albert Museum.

CREDITS

Much of the material presented in this article was compiled from the recently published book by Mária Kresz: *The Art of the Hungarian Furrier*. Professor Kresz also guided me through the comprehensive exhibit and slide show on the Art of the Furriers she curated for the Ethnographic Museum of Budapest in 1980.

I am also deeply indebted to Márton Dorogi, folk art historian who generously shared material he has gathered for over 50 years on the subject of the work of furriers. Master Craftsman József Vass, one of the few still practicing furriers in Hungary, gave me valuable information on the schooling of furriers, their working methods and way of life.

EMBROIDERED SHEEPSKIN COATS OF CENTRAL EUROPE

By Anne Marie de Samarjay

From the beginning of time, wherever shepherds tended their flock, the skins of sheep were used as garments. One skin with a hole behind the animal's head, or two skins tied by the front legs are the ancestors of the fur garments from Central Europe we will discuss in this article.

The basic styles into which the sheepskins of Central Europe were fashioned are: the capes, the vests, and garments with sleeves. To this latter category belong the jackets, some barely 5" long, some reaching to the waist, or covering the hips and the coats varying from knee length to ankle length.

The Jazig people, moving into the Karpathian Basin in the 13th century, introduced both the long capes, called SUBA and the jackets, called KODMÓN, the cut of which shows a strong Asiatic influence.

Shepherds made their own capes, preferring the stiffness of the uncured skins which were the most waterproof. A cape (SUBA) was given away if, softened from wear, it did not "stand up by itself." The less affluent peasants covered their back with a single sheepskin, called KACAGÁNY. In the beginning these skins were hardly cleaned at all, but as the population became more sophisticated, the stench of such garments was objected to, and by 1750 there was an official decree forbidding the wearing of uncured pelts to church.

As the Jazig people and the Cumanians moved on in search of new grazing grounds, the furriers moved with them and spread the fashion for sheepskin garments, which became so popular, that local butchers could not supply all the pelts needed for a district. The furriers of one settlement would get together, taking one or two ox-carts and shop for skins far and wide. Once back home again, they sorted the skins by size and quality. The finest, curliest fur was reserved for hats, collars, and trims; middlesized skins set aside for the short pellerines and jackets, and the largest ones used for long pellerines and coats.

The furriers prepared the skins with utmost care. Once the flesh was scraped off with a curved knife, a skin was washed, combed, then the last bits of flesh removed. After this laborious process the skins were soaked in a solution made of alum, salt, barley flour, and bran for eight to ten days and turned twice daily, to get all parts evenly soaked. After the soaking period the skins were bleached dry in the sun, then dampened again with a brush and "broken" by being pulled back and forth over a furrier's jack until each piece felt like velvet.



Farmer from the district of SZOLNOK in sheepskin SUBA. Braided leather strips cover seams, leather band at edges forces fur outward to form a trim in front and at bottom. Embroidered in green.



Fully spread SUBA worn by farmer. The untrimmed lambskin attached to neck is in the tradition of the KACAGÁNY already fashionable in the 15th century.



Embroidery on the shoulder plate of the SUBA. The lay-out follows traditional rules: over a base line of abstracted ornamentation a “wreath” is formed from stylized flowers and leaves. The symmetrical central motif grows from a “flower pot”, here in the shape of a tulip. Flowers diminish in size as they near the top and the bouquet ends in bud shapes.



At least 16 skins went into the making of this SUBA from SZOLNOK to allow such a rich pleated effect. Multicolored embroidery with applied leather strips.

Besides using skins in their natural, pale tan color, many of the oldest garments found were made of whitened skins. Such whiteness was achieved by rubbing a "white stone", made from burned and ground plaster of paris, over a tightly stretched skin. Some districts preferred dyed garments. The most frequently seen color was brown, a shade produced from a solution of boiled walnut pits. Yellow and gold dyes were made from a powder mixture made from ground leaves and soil, and red dyes were arrived at from extracts of sour cherries and mulberries.

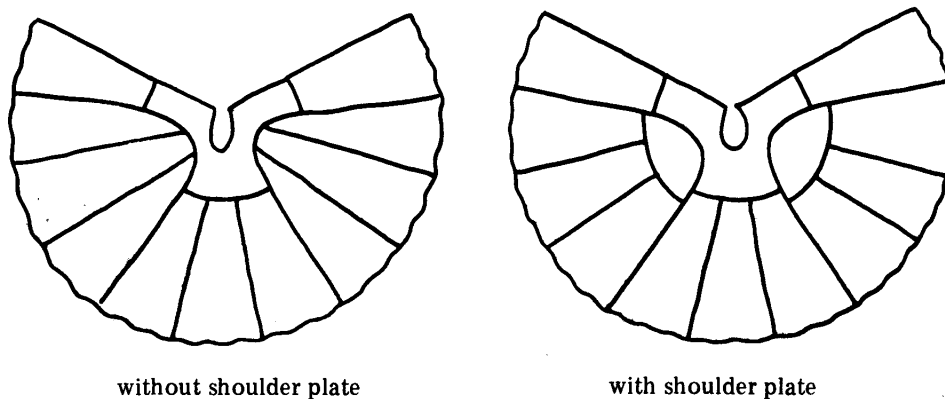
The first written documentation of sheepskin garments worn in Hungary comes from the 15th century. An account book from the court of King Matthias Corvinus lists a "SUBA all'-Ungherese" and in the winter of 1476 the King ordered 8,000 KÖDMÖN for his soldiers.

For an agrarian people like the Hungarians the cape (SUBA) was an obvious choice. The herdsman wore these cloaks for warmth with the fur on the inside, and with the fur turned outside when it rained. Spread over a stubby ground the cape (SUBA) made a soft bed. On the frequent journeys the peasants had to make by cart between the village house where the old people and children stayed, and the farm house, to which the able-bodied moved to work the fields, the capes, long or short, kept man, woman, and child warm. The peasants' innate love for decoration soon devised more and more intricate designs for embellishing these cloaks, until a utilitarian garment became a most treasured possession.

From a 19th century notation, we know that a young man paid the equivalent of the price of a house for his cape (SUBA) and at the beginning of the 20th century the price of a short cape (KISBUNDA) was as high as that of two acres of land. These costly capes were treated with respect. They were carefully dried after a rain so that the skins would not shrink and folded neatly into pleats mindful of the embroidery. A woman might keep her short cape (KISBUNDA) next to her bed and stroke it lovingly for comfort when she felt troubled. A man stood tall indeed if he owned an elaborate long cape (SUBA); the jacket (KÖDMÖN) figured substantially in a girl's dowry and the long cape (KISBUNDA) gave status to a married woman.

Depending on their length, the capes were constructed with or without a neckpiece, with or without shoulder plates. The standard short capes worn by women were made from four to six skins, sewn together to form a sack, adjusted at the shoulders and then slit open. A really fancy short cape formed a complete circle when spread out. Such a cape (KISBUNDA), however, was worn for show only. To be snug on the long rides in an open cart a woman preferred a narrow cloak with pockets inside to keep her hands warm and long enough to cover the hips. The full-length cloaks or capes were made from eleven to sixteen skins and were wide enough to cover two horses.

Structure of SUBA:



After drawings from the book *The Art of the Hungarian Furriers* by Mária Kresz.

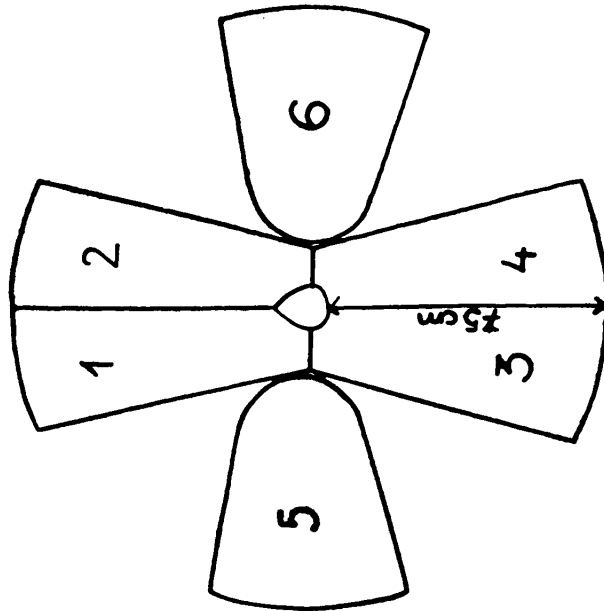
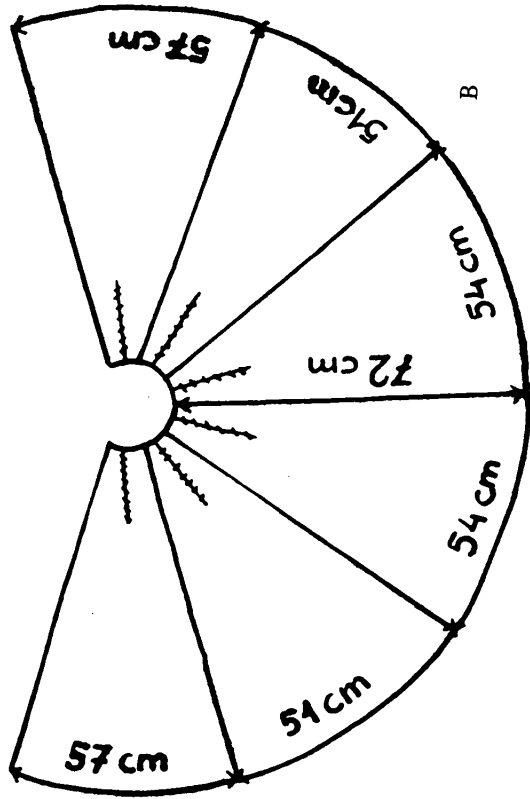
The cut of vests, jackets, and coats varied greatly. Vests were designed to close in front or on the side. The jackets were straight, tucked or pieced at the waist, and many were made with inserts of leather for extra fullness. Depending on the length and size of available skins, the coats were straight or pieced at the waist. There is hardly any limit to the imaginative use of trims and ornamentation.

Each furrier had a sample book of styles and decorations and spent at least half a day with a customer, taking careful measurements, choosing style and decoration to suit the client's taste and pocketbook.

Styles reflect regional preferences. The standing collar is a Magyar characteristic; the vests closed on the side were originally made for Rumanian miners; the shoulder plate insert on a cape (SUBA) is a Jazig fashion. Occasionally one finds garments which do not conform to any regional look. Such pieces started out as copies of Parisian clothes or garments worn at court, sent by an aristocrat to his furrier to be reworked in sheepskin. These fanciful garments are proof of the ability of the artisan to copy an idea and turn it into an original creation.

The construction of a leather garment was a veritable feat of planning and engineering. Since the decorations had to be executed before the garment was sewn together, every detail of the work was carefully thought out ahead. Allowances made for the uneven sizes of the skins, blemishes to be covered up, as well as the structural requirements, influenced the overall plan for the decorations thus making each garment unique. Centuries of experience taught the furriers not to let threads holding seams together be exposed to sunlight. Therefore they joined all seams from the reverse side, using a leather tape for extra strength or covering up the seams with a strip of leather. Such a strip might be a flat, dye-cut piece, a leather braid, or a leather ribbon woven from colorful bands. Reinforcements necessary at the neckline or around the armholes also influenced the overall design of the decoration which was based on a tradition of symmetry.

Two pattern types used for the construction of the KISBUNDA.



A. 2 front and 2 back pieces are joined at center. The two shoulder pieces are eased in place. The resulting sack is cut open in front.

B. Six equal tapered pieces of skin are sewn together, and each skin slit in center near neck. Seams are made to fit pellerine to shoulders. Documentary drawings by Márton Dorogi.

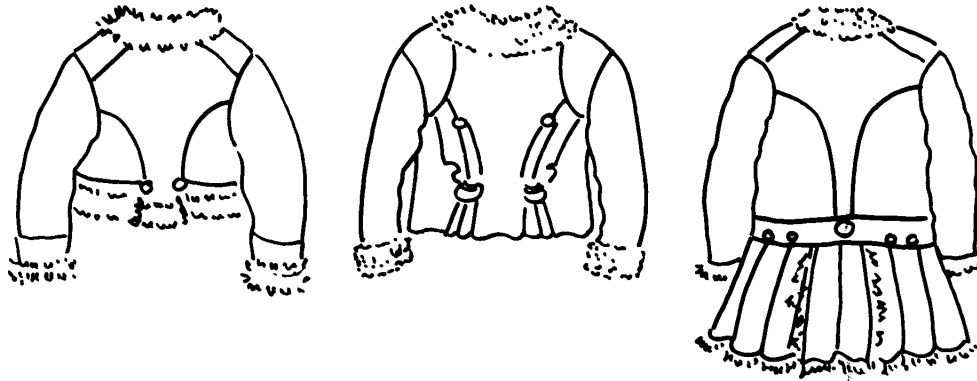


Embroidery on a KISBUNDA from the district of BORSOD. Documentary drawing done by Márton Dorogi.

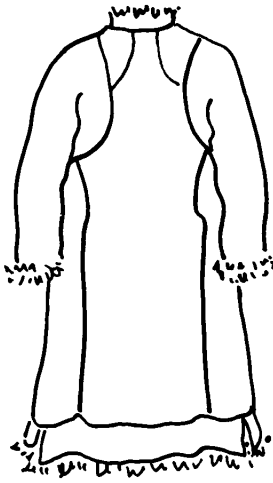
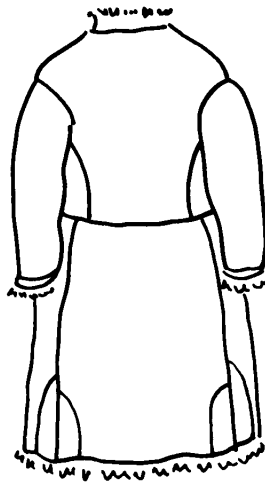
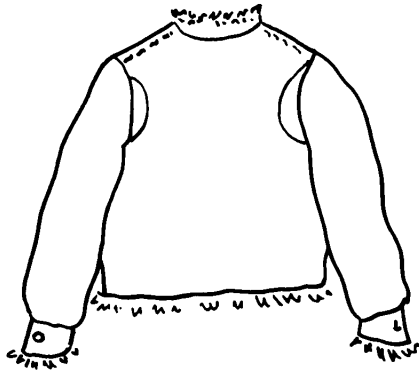
The oldest form of decoration is the appliqué which can be traced back to the migration period. Shapes were cut out from thin leather, using the skin of cattle, dogs or horses. Leather folded in two and cut out resulted in symmetrical motifs. Individual shapes, such as the “Eagle’s Claw” and the “Cat’s Paw” also called a “Double Bud” were used to cover blemishes and were repeated for the sake of symmetry on the unblemished side of the garment as well. The edges of the banded trims were scalloped (called “apple border”) or pinked. These edges were stamped out with a sharp metal dye hammered down on the leather to form a strip. The large shapes were symbolic as well as decorative. Woman, young boy, unmarried man, and old man all had specific symbols incorporated in the design of their garment. The earliest appliquéés were made from shiny white leather and applied to the “whitened” skins. In the 15th century, under Turkish influence, red leather became fashionable for appliqué decorations and in the 19th century brown, black, as well as orange, green, and purple colors were used. At first, the cutout shapes were sewn on with a zig-zag stitch. As embroidery became fashionable, appliquéés were edged with braids, and by the end of the 19th century we see garments with such heavy braiding and embroidery that the appliqué hardly shows.



KISBUNDA photographed by Márton Dorogi in 1940. A large lambskin cape with standup collar covers the upper third of this pellerine and front and bottom are banded with lambskin as well. The provenance of this garment is the Kiskunsag where pellerines are brown with black embroidery. The layout of the design is typical of the district: a wreath of ornamentation at the base and shoulders of the garment, separated by floral columns. Originally such bouquets served to conceal seams. Their application here gives the illusion of the KISBUNDA being made of more skins than it actually is.

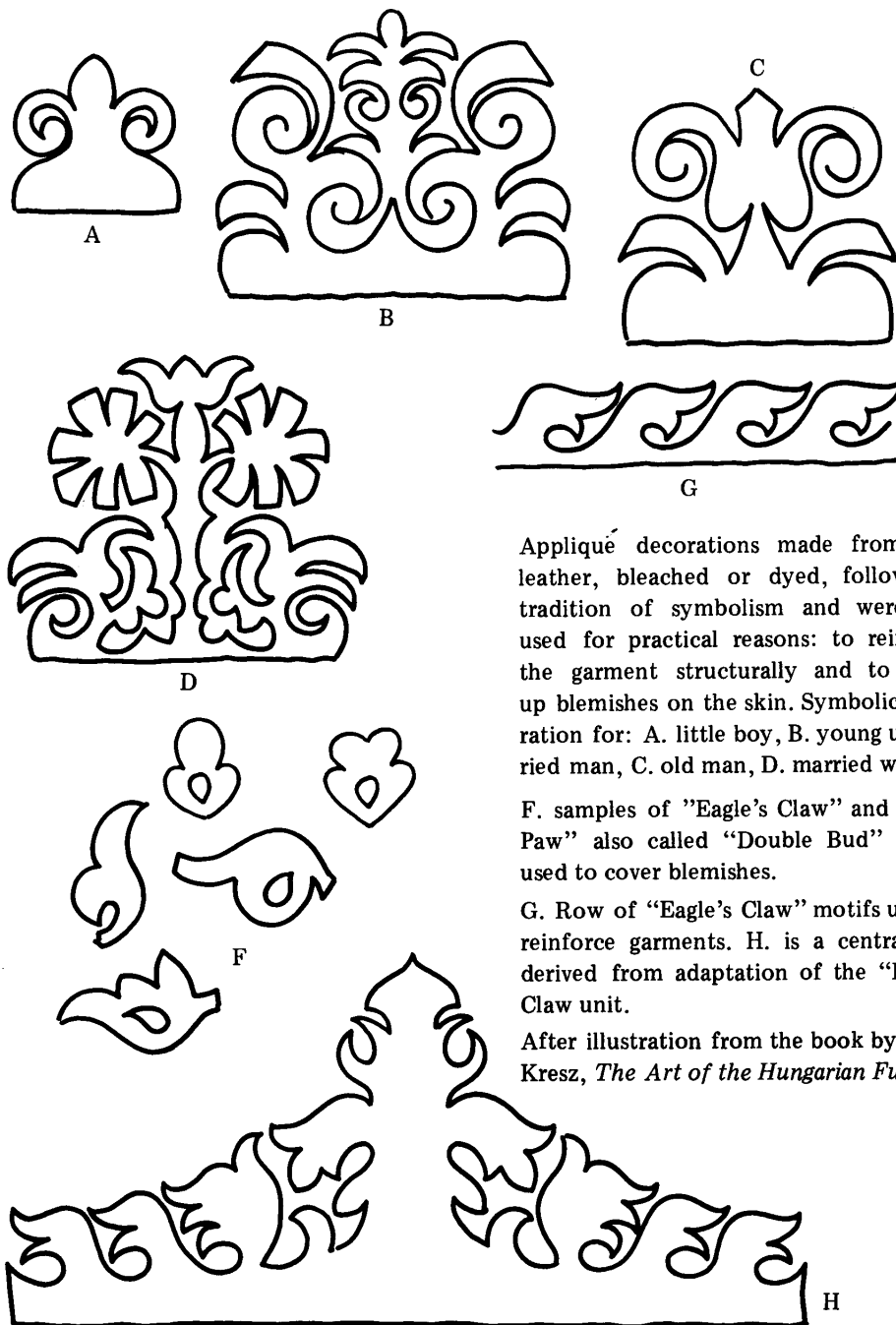


Styles of jackets called KÖDMÖN.



Styles of long coats.

After drawings from the book by Mária Kresz,
The Art of the Hungarian Furriers.



Appliqué decorations made from fine leather, bleached or dyed, followed a tradition of symbolism and were also used for practical reasons: to reinforce the garment structurally and to cover up blemishes on the skin. Symbolic decoration for: A. little boy, B. young unmarried man, C. old man, D. married woman.

F. samples of "Eagle's Claw" and "Cat's Paw" also called "Double Bud" motifs used to cover blemishes.

G. Row of "Eagle's Claw" motifs used to reinforce garments. H. is a central unit derived from adaptation of the "Eagle's Claw" unit.

After illustration from the book by Mária Kresz, *The Art of the Hungarian Furriers*.

Embroidery on sheepskin garments evolved in the 17th century and came into full bloom by the 1820s, when the less expensive wool and cotton yarns replaced silk. Influenced by Renaissance designs and natural forms, mindful of the overall sculptural effect to be achieved, the furrier traced the patterns with a quill dipped into charcoal water, sometimes using a thimble, a cardboard shape, or stamps made of wood or metal for the larger motifs, and filling in the spaces in between with random leaves as he went along. The amount of embroidery to be done on a garment, the amount of open space left blank between elements and the closeness of stitches depended on the price of the garment. The design was retraced with a mild acid solution; this is why we can still see pattern on coats where the yarns have long worn off. The separate pieces for a garment were embroidered by five or six women who worked from dawn to dusk and were paid by the number of threads they used. So as not to soil the piece they worked on, they covered it with a large handkerchief with a hole, just big enough to bare the unit they were embroidering.

The yarns used were silk, wool, cotton, and, later, rayon. Silk and rayon yarns were split for a ripple effect which caught the light and gave the embroidery added depth. Subtle shadings were achieved by diluting the dye with equal amounts of water each time an additional skein was added. Thus from three to five shades of one color were obtained. A particularly charming representation of fall leaves was done by interjecting stitches of a rust colored yarn into a leaf embroidered in shades of green. The veins of leaves were traditionally embroidered in red.

As in the arrangement of appliqué patterns, symmetry was preferred in the layouts of embroidered motifs. Márton Dorogi, who spent 50 years documenting the designs on sheepskin garments, made a scholarly analysis of the rules governing the layouts of embroideries on the small capes of the Kunigs which were embroidered in black on brown skins. Mr. Dorogi states, that the embroidery plan for the pellerine is divided into three units. There is always a flowing base, called a wreath, then a row of large flowers from which smaller flowers grow. Buds complete this central unit. At the height of the shoulders there is a row of bells or tassels, or a row of stylized leaves, forming another wreath. Central units usually emerge from a base inspired by a flower pot. From a central stem, usually topped by a tulip, various species of flowers are likely to grow. Rosemary, the flower grown in profusion in the home of a marriageable daughter, is seen most frequently, combined with stylized roses and carnations. Seams are covered with a traditional standing bouquet.

The color and style of the embroidery enables the expert to place a garment in a particular geographical district. Green embroidery is typical of the Jazig people; black was used mainly in the Kunig plains; polychrome embroidery with gold threads was favored by the Matyo; and mirror work usually appears on garments made in Transylvania. Most garments are trimmed with fur. Occasionally we see fox or wolf fur, inspired by the formal garments worn by the nobility. The most commonly used trimming is lambskin, white for men, and black or dark brown for women. For such trimming the skins of unborn or baby lambs were tightly rolled and dried to make the curls permanent. Often the legs were incorporated in the design of the collar.

Districts kept their preferences for certain styles through decades, and during the slow months of winter the furriers prepared garments with the fair of a particular district in mind. On the day of the fair, the 75 or so garments a furrier took would be sold by ten o'clock in the morning. Because of the great demand for sheepskin garments, there was hardly any jealousy among the furriers. They stayed in each other's homes when journeying to distant fairs, exchanged ideas and made merry at their guild meetings.

Because the furrier had to have a knowledge of chemistry, an ability in structural planning besides an innate artistic talent, he justly considered himself superior to all other artisans. After an apprenticeship which lasted up to fourteen years, a furrier was permitted to apply for guild membership. To be accepted, an apprentice had to create a masterpiece prescribed by his teacher. Already as apprentice, a furrier would start his sample book, drawing some wildly imaginative designs along with the more conventional patterns. In the comprehensive documentary exhibit on the furrier's art presented in the summer of 1980 at the Ethnographic Museum in Budapest, fine examples of sample books from the 19th century were on display and presented in a slide show. This exhibit also displayed a superb Haban guild pitcher decorated with a picture of a nobleman wearing a garment of woven fabric (DOLMÁNY) and that of a furrier sitting on his jack breaking in a skin. The exhibit also showed the tools of the furriers: a three-sided needle which had to be sharpened constantly, metal stamping tools called "laceing irons" for making strips with fancy borders, dies for stamping out patterns as well as the various curved knives used for cleaning off the flesh from the skins. The complexity and variety of these tools is yet another proof of the ingenuity of the furriers.

A furrier's house was a busy place from five in the morning till eleven at night. The master created the patterns, planned the construction of the garments, supervised his apprentices who were cleaning, curing, and dyeing the skins, as well as the women executing the embroidery on the separate pieces of the garments under way. The furriers were also entrusted with the storage of the fur garments. For a ton of corn a furrier took on the responsibility of storing a coat. He would have each garment under his care spread once a week in the sun, beaten with a fine rod to get the moths out and returned to the chests for safe keeping. When all this activity got to be too much, the master furrier would go out to work in his vineyard or look after his livestock. In the evenings he would get together with other furriers to discuss new methods or styles to be experimented with.

With the industrial revolution came a decline in the appreciation of home-made garments. Store-bought clothes became the symbols of prosperity. Adding to the decline of the production of sheepskin garments was the developing emphasis on woolen cloth. This introduced the Spanish, or Merino sheep to the plains of Hungary. Their wool was superior to that of the Racka sheep previously raised there, but their skin was not tough enough to take the myriads of pinholes necessary for embroidery and trimming.

Since leather garments were made to be used and worn, they, by necessity, were perishable, and few survive. That we are able to reconstruct the patterns, styles and work procedures is thanks to the devoted historians and collectors who cared enough to record the manifestations of an almost lost art. Such a man is Márton Dorogi who spent a lifetime in documenting the work of folk artisans. An orphan boy, he was eager to become financially independent and trained to become a school-teacher. Just as he was drawn to the structural beauty of the Latin sentence constructions, he was drawn to the orderly structure underlying most folk decorations and came to devote a lifetime to recording and documenting the designs of folk artisans in Central Europe. He made extensive records of the wood trimmings of peasant houses and made an in-depth study of the use of animal parts in agriculture and folk art. By far his major work consists of a complete catalogue of all sheepskin garments in the museums of Hungary. His catalogue shows style, construction, embroidery pattern, materials used on each garment and probable date and provenance. He painstakingly matched the threads hidden under the fur, and thus not changed by sunlight, to color charts and has reproduced embroidery designs in authentic colorations. In his drawings and embroideries he is mindful of the direction of the individual stitches, keeping always to documentary evidence.

József Vass, master furrier, is among the few artisans who are presently creating leather coats in the old tradition. Trained in Transylvania he lives in a township on the Great Plain in Hungary and creates sheepskin garments to order. He makes four or five coats a year which are usually exhibited in museums and considered National Treasures.

Once upon a time, magic was attributed to the *SUBA* and *KÖDMÖN*. Many a child was raised on the story of the *MAGIC KISKÖDMÖN*, written by Ferenc Móra, son of a furrier and one of Hungary's famous writers. The *KISKÖDMÖN* gave its wearer such an amount of self-confidence that it enabled him to stand up for "human rights" in a time, and a stratified society, where this concept was hardly known.

Man has always endeavored to be unique, and folk artists through the ages kept busy creating status symbols serving a basic human need. A true artist and craftsman does not count the hours put into a particular work. He derives satisfaction and joy from involving his entire being, using all his faculties in the creation of a masterpiece, the value of which cannot be measured in moneys. Contemplating some of the fine examples of sheepskin garments, we cannot help but be touched by the devotion an artisan gives to his creation, and in our century where quick production, and haste have found a justified place, it is good to be reminded, that there is also room and need for quality workmanship to delight and strengthen the spirit.



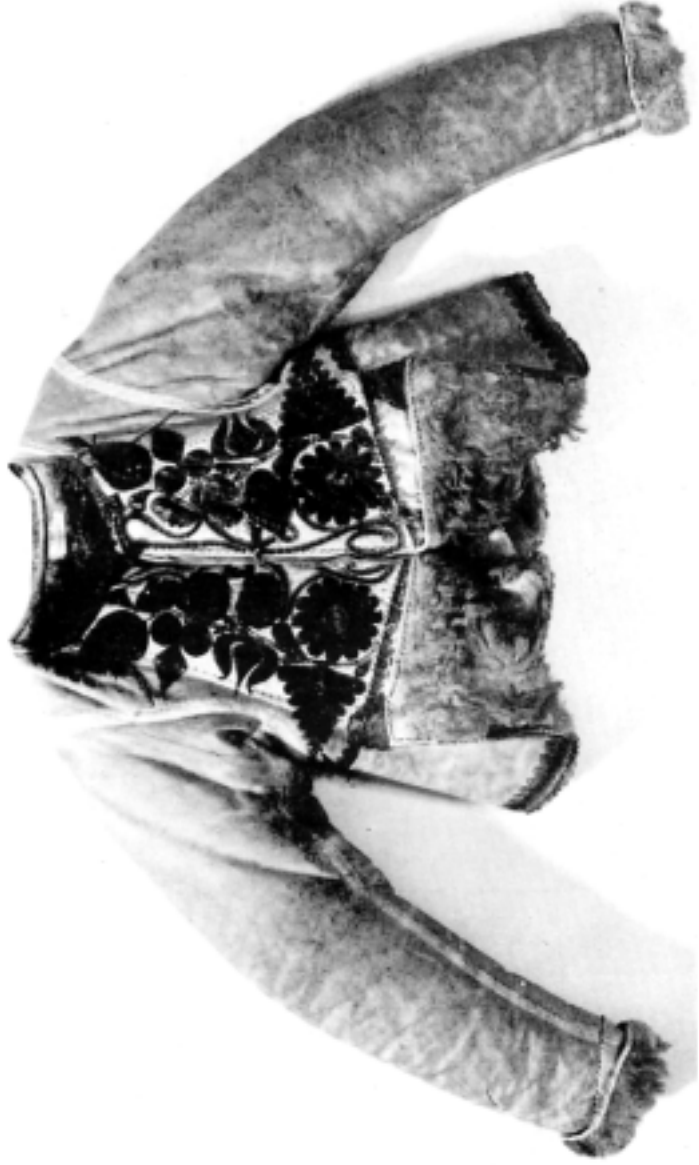
Short cape (KISBUNDA) from the Kunig plains, ca. 1900. Fur is white, and skins are dyed brown, embroidered in black. Stand up neck piece makes this a typically Magyar style. The garment has a cape collar of black lamb fur lined in red and is edged with similar black lamb fur. The seams are reinforced with brown leather strips and form a central structure for decorative units of stylized blossoms. The major floral bouquets show a progression from large to smaller flowers and terminate in buds. A “wreath” of leaves, roses, and rosemary at the bottom of the garment is repeated at shoulder height over rows of “tassels” and stylized buds. Although much of the embroidery is worn off, we can clearly see the design because it was traced on the skins with a solution of acid. The cape (KISBUNDA) is fastened at the neck with a loop made of braided red and green leather strips and an elongated button. Such a button, made of tightly rolled red and gold leather pieces, was a special proof of craftsmanship among the furriers. *Courtesy of the Brooklyn Museum (No. 21.230).*



Large cape (SUBA) from the turn of the century, made from bleached skins. The fur is light grey. All seams are covered with white kid leather bands embroidered with green wool. Shoulders are reinforced with red appliqué leather. Front as well as bottom of garment are trimmed with red kid appliqué bands which push the fur out and down, creating an additional decorative element. Two shades of red leather bands on bottom of pelerine are joined with a narrow twisted gold leather strip. Lacy red leather *SZIRONY* over gold leather, surrounded by green embroidery, accent seams near bottom of garment. Buttons are formed from disks of gold and red leather in an "Apple blossom" mode. The lay-out of the embroidery follows the



classic rules of symmetry. The two bouquets near the front are made up of a stem from which stylized rosemary, roses, and tulips grow. The stem itself starts from a vase type shape. The bouquets on the two shoulder plates show a progression from large to small flowers ending in bud shapes. Both types of bouquets are positioned on several rows of “wreaths” consisting of bells and stylized leaves, the latter embroidered on a band of white appliqué leather edged in a dye-cut “apple” scallop. The presence of shoulder plates in the construction and the green wool embroidery lets us assume that this SUBA was done for a *Jazig*. *Courtesy of the Brooklyn Museum (No. 21.434).*



Fitted jacket (KÖDMÓN) from ca. 1900. White sheepskin, appliquéd and embroidered in red and green. Seams are covered with bands of white leather, except at shoulder and along outer center of sleeves where they are reinforced with red leather tape. Where it does not show, sleeves are made of the less expensive skins of sheep with mottled fur. Cuffs, which cover hands when pulled down, are joined unevenly because of shape of available skins. Neck, waist and bottom of jacket are reinforced with appliquéd red leather bands, dye-cut in "apple"-shaped scallop design. The main design unit is red appliquéd leather attached with a zigzag stitch, enhanced with lacey circles of green leather placed over red. Scrolls of precisely folded leather strips accent the design. Buttons, formed from baskets of red and green braided leather with wool tassels, alternate along front of garment, so that it can be worn both by man or woman. The tips of the bottom of this jacket (KÖDMÓN) are folded back and tacked up, a style worn in the district of Sárkőz. *Courtesy of the Brooklyn Museum (No. 21.434.285).*



A man's jacket (KODMÓN), ca. 1900, made of white sheepskin, trimmed with the finely curled fur of an unborn lamb. Multiple pleats in back add fullness. Large, whitened kid applique shapes cover shoulders, back, and front, as well as lower parts of sleeves. Appliqué bands are made from 1/8" strips of gold, red, and bright green leather woven into a broader, dark green leather base band. *Sallang* edging is a running "Eagle's Claw" dye-cut design of dark green leather laid over red. Embroidery yarns of black, maroon, lilac, and three shades of green (yellow-green, olive, and blue-green) were split for ripple effect. Functional buttons are metal half globes. Brass and enameled buttons set over lacey leather rosettes are distributed within the embroidered units. Of special interest is the pointed, extended tip at the right side of the KODMÓN. This tip is called *Csákó*, a name derived from a resemblance with the visor of an officer's cap, which is called a *Csákó*. Similarity with embroidered elements on a woman's KODMÓN from Tótkomlós, exhibited at the Ethnographic Museum in Budapest, permits us to assume that this jacket was originated in the district of Békés. *Courtesy of the Brooklyn Museum (No. 21.234).*



White sheepskin vest from 1887. Neck and armholes are reinforced with red and green leather strips dye-cut in pinked scallop shapes. Shoulder seams are protected with a band of red kid trimmed with a folded green leather strip. The red leather appliqué design is edged with heavy black cording; red, blue, and green embroidered stylized buds edge the appliqué design. Pompoms made of bright blue and red silk accent the black braids. Lacey tongues of leather, called *SZIRONY*, and tassels hanging from leather cords, wound with red and blue silk, decorate the side seams. Originally cords and tassels were used to close the vest, but here they serve merely as decoration. Gold metal beads show Roumanian influence; the heavy black cording places the vest in the district of Kalotaszeg; the large flower shapes lead us to assume that this vest was made for a woman. *Courtesy of the Brooklyn Museum (No. 21.233).*



White sheepskin vest from the latter part of the 19th century. The alternating position of the buttons which are made of pompoms set in a leather pouch make this vest edged in black velvet and with black velvet lapels equally suitable to be worn by man or woman. A latticework of black cording separates narrow panels of embroidery. A great many colors are used in shades from dark to light. There is a deep red, a gold, two shades of olive, three shades of purple, two shades of rust, three shades of blue, three shades of green. This is a fine example of shading arrived at by diluting the dye with equal measures of water as additional skeins of yarn are dipped into it. The embroidery elements are a combination of motifs from Torda Szentlászló as well as the district of Baranya. The unusual styling, the velvet lapels on a sheepskin garment, point to the possibility of this being a copy of a Parisian or court garment sent by a nobleman to his furrier to be copied. *Courtesy of the Brooklyn Museum (No. 24.206).*



Vest made of whitened sheepskin with grey and black fur. Beginning of the twentieth century. Stand-up collar is Magyar style. Strips of brown leather woven into bands of natural leather reinforce neck, armholes, front, and bottom of garment. Appliqué decorations are made of heavy brown hide, treated to acquire a linear texture and edged with a green cord. The symbolism of the shapes places this as a vest made for a boy or young bachelor. Red, orange, and green wool was mixed for pompoms and cords. The buttons are leather rosettes. *Courtesy of the Brooklyn Museum (No. 51.177).*



Man's coat made of sheepskin which was dyed a deep brown. Raglan sleeves allow this style to be made without a seam at the waist. Note the use of an appliqué band to reinforce the raglan seams. Five pleats in back add weight and fullness to the garment. Collar, and trim on sleeves and bottom of coat are made from the tightly curled fur of black lambs. The color of the leather used for the elaborate appliqué work is predominantly light orange, dull red and purple. The triangular motifs were cut from leather folded in two, for a mirror effect. Instead of following the traditional mode of sewing appliqué designs directly to the skins before a garment is assembled, the decorations for this coat were sewn to a base leather, and applied to the finished coat. From the collection of the Costume Institute of the Metropolitan Museum, Roumanian, prob. early twentieth century. *Courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.*



White sheepskin vest, with dark grey fur, from the turn of the century. Two sets of pleats in back give vest fullness. Applique design of red, green, brown, and natural leather is surrounded with wool rope and accented with finely folded strips of natural leather. Pompoms of yellow, green, brown, and red wool mixture are fastened to the allover design. Neck, armholes, pockets, as well as front and bottom



of vest are strengthened with bands of leather edged with a dye-cut scalloped pattern. The mirror work inserted underneath the leather "flowers" show the influence of work done in Transylvania. This vest is probably an adaptation of a cloth garment worn at court. *Courtesy of the Brooklyn Museum (No. 21.434.287).*

GLOSSARY

BUNDA	From the German <i>bunt</i> meaning colorful. Came into usage at the beginning of the 18th century.
CSÁKÓ	Officer's hat. The similarity to the shape of the visor of such a cap lent the name Csákó to the pointed extension of the right side of some sheepskin jackets made for men.
CUMANIANS	Nomads of Turkish origin, settled in Hungary in the 13th century.
DOLMÁNY	Garment made of cloth.
JAZIG people	Nomadic people of Iranian origin who settled in Hungary in the 13th century.
KACAGÁNY	Untrimmed skin worn over the back. The nobility and members of the military wore Kacagany made from wolf and fox skins; the peasants wore sheepskins.
KISBUNDA	Short cape worn by women.
KÓDMÖN	Fur garment with sleeves. The root of this word comes from the Turkish expression "to put on".
KUZSUK	Braided leather trim.
MENTE	Jacket made of cloth and lined with sheepskin.
RACKA	Species of Hungarian sheep. Its hide is tough and its wool is coarse.
SALLANG	Appliqué leather strip used to reinforce or cover seams of fur garments and as decoration.
SUBA	Origin of word is Arabic. Originally used to designate fur garments in general. By the end of the 18th century Suba connoted the long sheepskin cloaks.
SZIEONY	Leather thongs used for trimming on sheepskin garments.
SZÚCS	Furrier. Root of word comes from the Turkish "to sew".
VOC	Leather passe-partout used to reinforce seams.

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NOTES ON AUTHORS

Anne Marie de Samarjay comes herself from the region of which she writes so sympathetically. She is now a well-known designer and design production consultant in New York City.

* * * * *

Patricia Wardle, now Mrs. Griffiths, is the author of several books written while she was a member of the staff of the department of Textiles at the Victoria and Albert Museum. Among them are the revised 2nd edition of A.F. Kendrick's ENGLISH NEEDLEWORK (1967), VICTORIAN LACE (1968), and GUIDE TO ENGLISH EMBROIDERY (1970).

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BOOK NOTES

Burnham, Dorothy, *WARP AND WEFT — A TEXTILE TERMINOLOGY*. Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, Ontario, 1980.

It is rare that a multilingual textile dictionary serves the purposes of both the professional and the amateur. Dorothy K. Burnham of the ROM has managed to put together one that does. Her *WARP AND WEFT, A TEXTILE TERMINOLOGY* just issued by the ROM, is going to prove useful for designers, engineers, students and museum curators. Nevertheless, it is attractive and clear enough to interest even those with only a casual background in the textile arts. Specialist members of CIETA (Centre International d'Etude des Textiles Anciens) worked diligently on a multilingual terminology for years. Under their auspices two previous publications were produced, for members only. They served their purpose in their time, and this glossary has been formed with them as a good foundation.

Another part of the secret of the success of this book derives from the fact that Dorothy Burnham first came to ROM about 50 years ago as a draftsman. The many illustrative diagrams are those she herself prepared. The ROM collections have served for the hundreds of clear, sharp and pertinent fabric photographs. The few photographs with less clarity are so old, interesting and often beautiful that one admits they deserved inclusion. Multilingual textile dictionaries are nothing new. But most are written exclusively for members of the trade. The best of the past consisted of a series, the illustrated set by Schlomann-Oldenbourg. They are still useful for specialists and engineers. Volume 16, *WEAVING AND WOVEN FABRICS*, issued in 1925, has never really been replaced. It worked with six languages, English, German, Russian, French, Italian and Spanish. It contains over 1,300 illustrations. But it is now out of print, rare, and somewhat out of date.

The International Textile Service in Zurich issues a six language textile dictionary, in English, German, French, Italian, Spanish and Portugese. While useful and current, the volumes really cannot be recommended for the unsophisticated. Attempting to translate an unknown foreign language with nothing more than a dictionary can be seriously misleading. the ITS guide, which merely presents words as equivalent rather than real definitions, is only for professional use. Lacking the diagrams, it is not as instructive as the older Oldenbourg.

WARP AND WEFT presents clear English definitions, often with illustrations, along with the equivalent terms in French, German, Italian, Portugese, Spanish and Swedish. It covers a huge variety of weaves, and also includes many of the important terms for yarn preparation and weaving devices. Special topics such as tapestry, tablet weaving and the so-called "knotted" rug pile systems are also clearly described and illustrated. The only real complaint that can be levelled against the book is that it makes one want still more. No real mention is made of the Tibetan carpet knot; however, the Rya or Flossa Scandinavian technique is. Philip Denwood pointed out

in *THE TIBETAN CARPET* (Aris and Phillips Ltd, Warminster 1974) that they were related. For the best available description of the Tibetan rug systems, there is Murray L. Eiland's *CHINESE AND EXOTIC RUGS* (New York Graphic Society, 1979). The ancient plaiting or braiding techniques, once widely practiced in Canada, is another area of technology, related to weaving, which has been passed over. Possibly that subject deserves a book all its own. If such a book is to be written, one can only hope that the definitions and illustrations will have the simplicity, directness, clarity and beauty of those in Dorothy Burnham's work.

— Braham Norwick

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Bridgeman, Harriet and Drury, Elizabeth, editors, *NEEDLEWORK: AN ILLUSTRATED HISTORY*. Paddington Press, New York and London, 1978.

Histories of embroidery are hard to come by. A welcome and most interesting and useful one is "Needlework", covering the field from the United States and across Europe to Russia. The work of each country is described by a specialist in the field and there are many illustrations to complement the text. Unfortunately, they are sometimes set up in an oddly random fashion which makes it not easy to co-ordinate them with the discussions. Nevertheless, this is an important reference book.

The text is full of information covering history, techniques, and the interrelation between embroideries and artists. This is particularly useful as it allows the reader to fit embroidery into the frame of art history in each country. Another welcome addition to our knowledge is the discussion of embroidery as a social and civil entity through a description of guild organization and professional requirements. The further information on government sponsorship and the organization of national movements to sponsor study of historical heritage and techniques is most welcome.

There is a glossary of stitches, of techniques and of miscellaneous information concerning fabrics, clothing, both secular and religious, weaving patterns and embroidered household articles. In addition, there are bibliographies arranged by country, and biographies of the selected authors of the various national sections. The editors of the book are Harriet Bridgeman with an M.A. from Trinity College, Dublin, and Elizabeth Drury who is a graduate of the Courtauld Institute, London University. They edit and produce publications on the arts and antiques. This book fills a void in today's shelves.

— Frieda Halpern

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Guy Delmarcel, TAPISSERIES ANCIENNES D'ENGHIEN, Mons, Fédération du Tourisme de la Province de Hainault, 1980.

The small town of Enghein in Belgium was an active center of tapestry-weaving from the 15th to the end of the 17th century, but only a few dozen products of its looms have been identified. Guy Demarcel, in an excellent brochure with each piece illustrated, has assembled 66 tapestries that are documented from archival sources, or have the Enghien mark (like a four-winged pinwheel), or are so closely related to others so identified that they are attributable to the city without much cause for doubt.

The earliest examples are the well-known armorials in Budapest made for Margaret of Austria, regent of the Netherlands, in 1528. Numbers 7 to 19 in the book are verdure, some of great beauty, like the set with children and animals playing amid the leaves bought by the Musée communal of Enghein at an auction in 1964, an enlightened act by the city fathers. The author mentions the similarity between verdure with very large leaves, often called "feuilles de choux", made in Enghein, Grammont and Audenarde, all small communities southwest of Brussels. He suggests that the weavers of all these centers worked from cartoons furnished them by dealers. To allot tapestries of this type without marks to one or the other center may thus be a hopeless endeavour.

The remaining tapestries in the book are garden scenes, biblical stories and classical myths, with a remarkable set of eleven (of an original twelve) heroes and heroines, woven in 1616-1618 for the Bavarian court and still in Munich. Many figural pieces are copied from Brussels originals, such as a FALL OF PHAETON in Munich and a set of the HISTORY OF JACOB in Madrid.

The author describes his work modestly as "un premier essai pour un catalogue raisonné de la tapisserie ancienne d'Enghien". Though it is his book on the great Brussels set in Madrid, LOS HONORES, that tapestry *aficionados* are most eagerly awaiting, the present work will be highly valued wherever Flemish tapestries are studied and loved.

— Edith Appleton Standen

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Alain Erlande-Brandenburg, LA DAME A LA LICORNE. Paris, Editions de la Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 1978.

The best-loved tapestries in the world are certainly the six pieces of the LADY WITH THE UNICORN set in the Cluny Museum, Paris. Dr. Erlande-Brandenburg, director of this museum, is clearly the best person to write the definitive book on them and this publication will bring joy to everyone who has entered the magic

world that these tapestries spread before us. Every piece is shown in color, only slightly too hot, and there are quantities of details, in color and black and white, which, as always in good tapestry books, provide new and unexpected pleasures and insights.

Dr. Erlande-Brandenburg has, as might be expected, written a most valuable scholarly account of the set, clearing up the misconceptions, frequently romantic, of nearly a century and a half. He establishes the date, 1484-1500, the meaning of the set (not made for a marriage), and the identity of the man who commissioned it. He discusses most illuminatingly the vexed questions of its place of origin, designer and weaver — New Yorkers will be interested in his comparisons of the set with our own HUNT OF THE UNICORN in the Cloisters. When the sets were shown in adjoining galleries at the Metropolitan Museum in 1974, it was impossible to believe that they were, as had been suggested, closely related. Dr. Erlande-Brandenburg agrees. On this occasion, he says, “les rapprochements stylistiques n’apparaissaient pas. Au contraire, les différences éclataient.”

But the publishers, who have been so generous with the illustrations, have not allowed the author the smallest scholarly apparatus. There are no footnotes, references (except for the names of writers and years of publication) or bibliography. Consequently the book, as a study of a single tapestry set, cannot compare with Margaret Freeman’s on the Cloisters set, THE UNICORN TAPESTRIES, which is both learned and readable. But all who remember with pleasure a visit to the Cluny Museum will enjoy M. Erlande-Brandenburg’s publication.

—Edith Appleton Standen

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Margaret Swain, FIGURES ON FABRIC: Embroidery design sources and their application. Adam and Charles Black, London, 1980.

Members of The Needle and Bobbin Club will be familiar with the theme of Mrs. Swain’s delightful small book. The account of the author on the dust-jacket concludes: “A meeting in America with the late Nancy Graves Cabot led to a long friendship and a mutual interest in the search for printed sources of needlework designs. This book is the product of that friendship, and of twenty years’ research into the subject.” The book is, in fact, the first in this field, and, though the author gives complete credit to the discoveries of her predecessors, many of the comparisons she illustrates are entirely her own. Ms. Cabot’s contributions to this BULLETIN are, of course, among the most frequently quoted, and we can only regret that there were not more of them.

The book gives a brief account of embroidery design from the Middle Ages to the present day, emphasizing that “the idea that an embroiderer ought to create her

own original designs in a comparatively recent concept. . . It is no more reasonable to insist that someone skilled in embroidery should work only her own designs than it would be to demand that a great singer should perform only music of his own composing." The chapters that follow are arranged by subject: natural history, the Bible, classical myths and the theatre. Pattern books are briefly discussed and there is a chapter on manuscript patterns. The final account of methods of transferring the designs contains advice for today, as well as information about early practices. A wealth of illustrations (69 plates in a book of 125 pages) is provided and the book-jacket reproduces two embroidery details in attractive colour. Mrs. Swain's familiarity with embroideries in Scotland has enabled her to illustrate many less well-known pieces and even techniques, such as the "inlaid patchwork" of the mid-19th century.

Everybody concerned with embroidery, which surely should include every member of the Needle and Bobbin Club, will enjoy this work and, in all probability, learn from it.

— Edith Appleton Standen

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LES TAPISSERIES DE LA VIE DU CHRIST ET DE LA VIERGE D'AIX-EN-PROVENCE, exhibition catalogue. Musées des Tapisseries, Aix-en-Provence, 1977.

The eight panels of Brussels tapestry showing 26 scenes from the New Testament, dated 1511, and owned by the cathedral at Aix-en-Provence have been studied by English as well as French scholars for some eighty years. They are of special interest to Englishmen because they have coats-of-arms connecting them with Canterbury Cathedral; they can be traced in inventories there down to the time of the Commonwealth.

Pieces of the set have been exhibited in London, Paris, Brussels and New York (the 1974 MASTERPIECES OF TAPESTRY at the Metropolitan Museum) and some are still hung in the cathedral, but Mme Marie-Henriette Krotoff, director of the Musée des Tapisseries at Aix, is to be congratulated on having shown them all in her museum and having invited outstanding scholars to contribute to a catalogue of the exhibition. Donald King has written on the history of the tapestries while in Canterbury, Mme Krotoff on their appearance at Aix in 1658. There are chapters on the iconography, heraldry, costumes and other aspects of the set. Madeleine Jarry compares it to a piece with three scenes from the same cartoons in the Fine Arts Museum in San Francisco and Guy Delmarcel places it in the context of other Brussels tapestries of the period.

Each scene is reproduced in color (rather too red) and in black and white (small prints). All the coats-of-arms are illustrated and there are a number of other detail photographs. The catalogue will be useful to all scholars interested in tapestries of the late Middle Ages.

— Edith Appleton Standen

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Francis Paul Thomson, O.B.E., *TAPESTRY, MIRROR OF HISTORY*. Newton Abbot and London, David and Charles, 1980.

The author of this rather short book (less than 250 pages) is described on the dust-jacket as "an electrical and electronics engineer who has inherited from his father a passionate interest in weaving and history of tapestries." His father, W.G. Thomson, published *A HISTORY OF TAPESTRY* in 1906, which was the first comprehensive study of the subject in English; it is almost valueless today, even in recent reprints, but the author's *TAPESTRY WEAVING IN ENGLAND, 1914*, contains inventories that are still useful.

William George Thomson was also first Director of Weaving at the Dovecot Tapestry Workshop in Scotland, and the chapter in his son's book about his life and the productions of this manufactory is easily its most interesting. Apart from this chapter and accounts of modern centers in such remote regions as Japan, Africa and Australia, it would be hard to find anything to commend in the book. Its range is enormous, from "linen cloth made by Swiss lake-dwellers about 14,000 years ago" to the Victoria Tapestry Workshop of today in Melbourne. There are over eighty black and white illustrations, though too often of comparatively unimportant tapestries, and fifty-one mostly hot and unpleasant color plates.

The point of this view, where old tapestries are concerned, is, as might be expected, that of fifty years ago, though remarkable tolerance is shown for modern constructions in fibre like those frequently shown at the Lausanne tapestry exhibitions. We read, as so often before, of the Renaissance style "all but stifling the tapissier's art" and the wandering weavers of the Loire make another belated appearance. The diversity of medieval French tapestries is accounted for in the following sentence: "Invasion by the Norsemen, followed some two hundred years later by the incursion of Sacarens from the south, and the continuous movement along east-west trade routes straddling the country gave much stimulus to design". Proper names are as often wrong as right, so that we find the Duc d'Antim (Antin) and P.A. Widenner (P.A.B. Widener). There are brief bibliographies at the end of each chapter: the Bible appears in most of them, but there is no mention of the works of such scholars as Maurice Fenaille, Jules Badin, George Leland Hunter, Ludwig Baldass, Marthe Crick-Kuntziger, Jean Paul Asselberghs, Margaret Freeman and so forth.

If it were not that this book is offered for sale in at least one prestigious institution in New York, it would hardly seem worthwhile to review it for the members of the Needle and Bobbin Club. But it has an attractive dust-cover and purchasers may be tempted. As I have said before in these pages, if a single book in English on European tapestry is wanted, buy the Boston or San Francisco museum's catalogue; neither covers as much ground as Thomson does, but each gets its facts right.

— Edith Appleton Standen

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CLUB NOTES

The opening program of the Needle and Bobbin Club for 1981 was made possible through the generosity of Mrs. Charles Hilliard, Mrs. Charles B. Martin, Mrs. Stanley Scott and Mrs. Morris Wirth. On Wednesday, January twenty-third, Dr. Young Y. Chung, distinguished Korean embroideress and scholar, gave a slide lecture on "Oriental Embroidery" at three p.m. in the private dining room of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Tea was served after the lecture and enjoyed by all.

* * * * *

Miss Anne Marie de Samarjay, designer and production consultant, originally from Hungary, gave a lecture on the embroidery of her homeland on Tuesday, March eighteenth, at the National Academy of Science. A fine tea followed. Mrs. Edith Achilles, Mrs. William Binnian, Miss Frances Achilles and Mrs. Donald Ross were the generous hostesses.

* * * * *

The Annual Meeting of the Needle and Bobbin Club was marked by a lecture on "The Four Continents: a set of Beauvais tapestries," by Miss Edith Appleton Standen, consultant to the European Sculpture and Decorative Arts department at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Mr. and Mrs. Rudolph von Fluegge, as in past years, opened their beautiful apartment for this occasion and provided a sumptuous tea.

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The Christmas season was celebrated by a Christmas cocktail party at the apartment of Mr. and Mrs. Paul C. Guth. This festive event on Friday, December nineteenth, filled all with holiday spirits.

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IN MEMORIAM

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

Frieda Halpern
Georgiana Harbeson
Mrs. John Lyons
V. Isabel Miller

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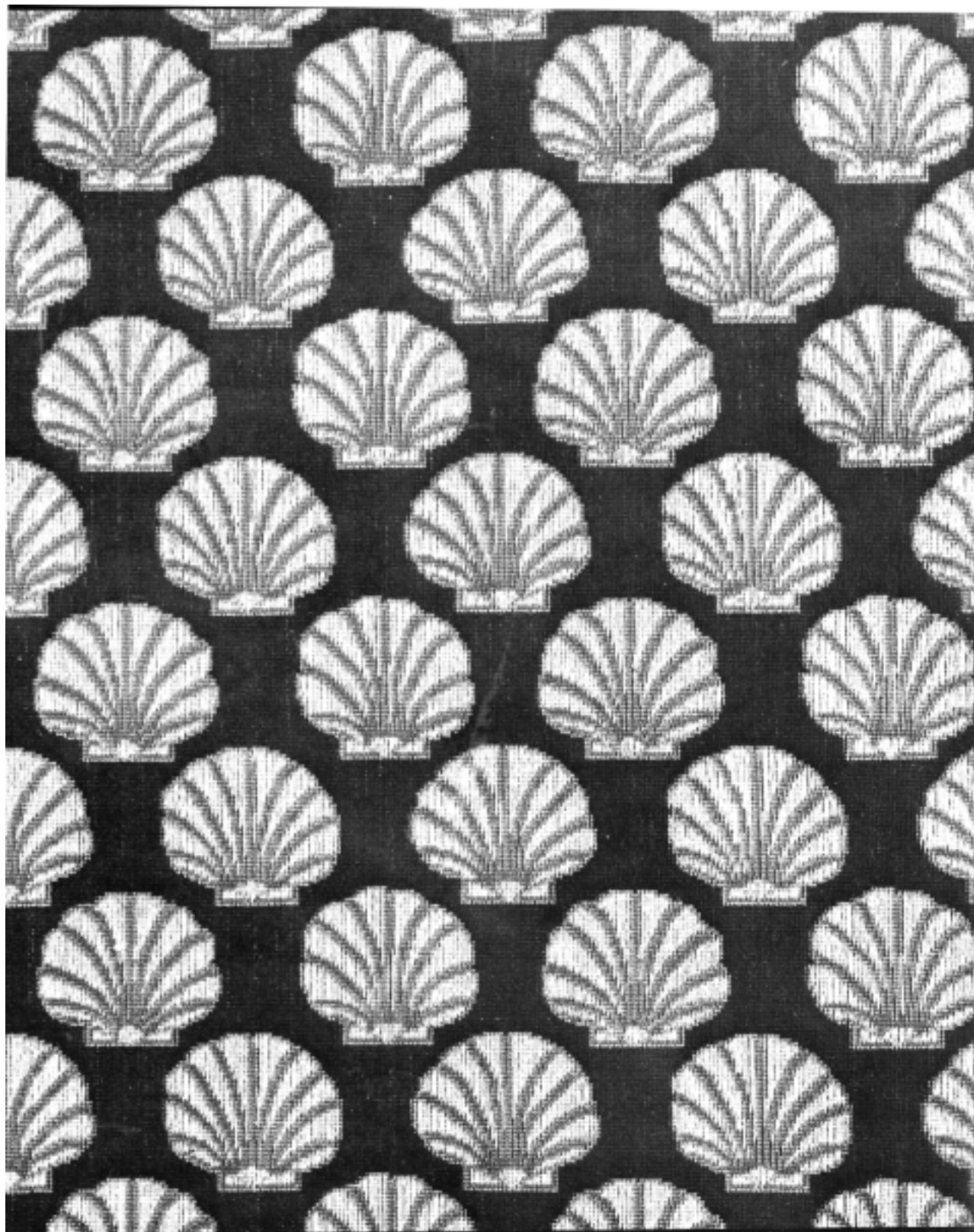
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