

A Sixteenth-Century Spanish Linen

BY R. F. HEARTZ

THERE have been many attempts to trace and establish the origin of weaving, but as it is one of the most primitive crafts, and also almost universal in its distribution, it is quite difficult to definitely place a piece unless something is known of its history or of that of some similar pieces with which it can be compared. While certain weaves have been most popular in some localities, there has also been a most universal knowledge of the fundamental weaves and their variations as well as of weaving.

There are at present several historical societies and interested individuals who are trying to trace and establish the origin of the different types of weaves. I have seen and analyzed pieces from Russia, Finland, Norway, Sweden, England and our own American Coverlets, as well as some of the American Indian braids and blankets, and pieces from other parts of the world. The principles of construction of most of them fall into several general classifications, the outstanding differences being in the designs, color and of the materials that have been available to the weavers.

I have recently had forwarded to me a most

interesting table runner to be copied and analyzed. The collector from whom it was obtained advanced the information that it was sixteenth-century Spanish and quite rare, as overshot weaving, although well known in Spain, was not so common as the "confite, Red de Telar, Alpujarras, Brocades

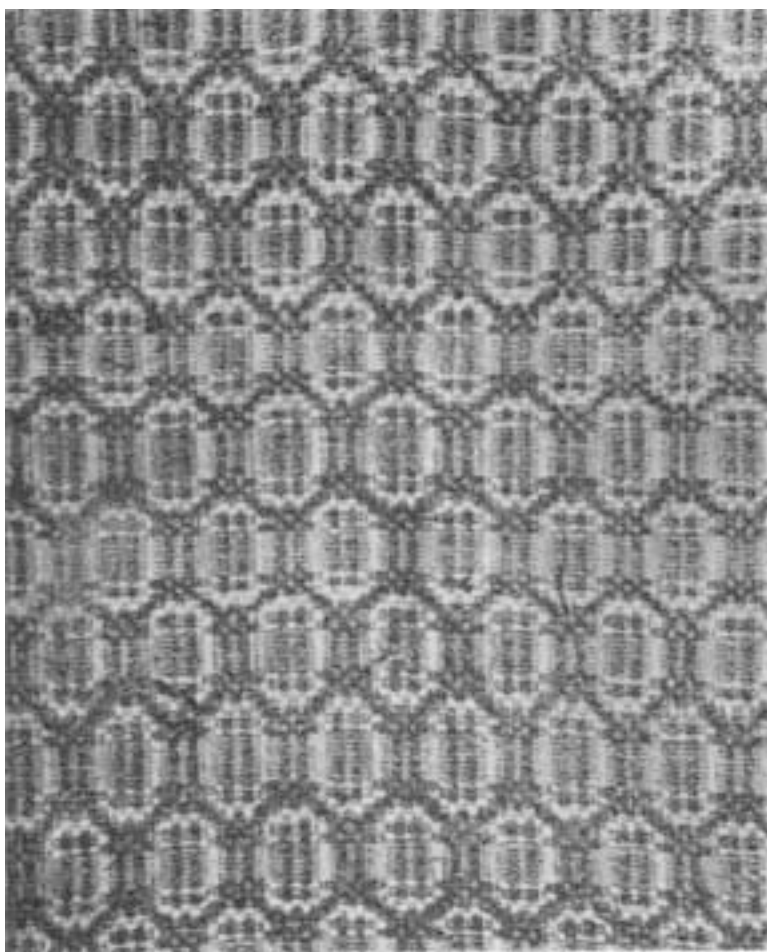
and figured velvets." Mildred (Stapley) Byne, in her book, "Popular Weaving and Embroidery in Spain," makes the following statements that might be of particular interest to those interested in tracing the history of different weaves:

"In the way of fancy linen weaving there were the usual oriental diapers of lozenges, checks, *peoil-nuit*, and *bueso de melocation*, diagonal and straight cords, etc. . . . Supposed to have been brought in by Arabs, combinations of line and geometric shapes capable of infinite repe-

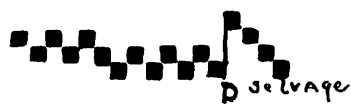
tion were paramount in Mussulman Art."

Included were several illustrations of overshot patterns similar to the illustration in this article.

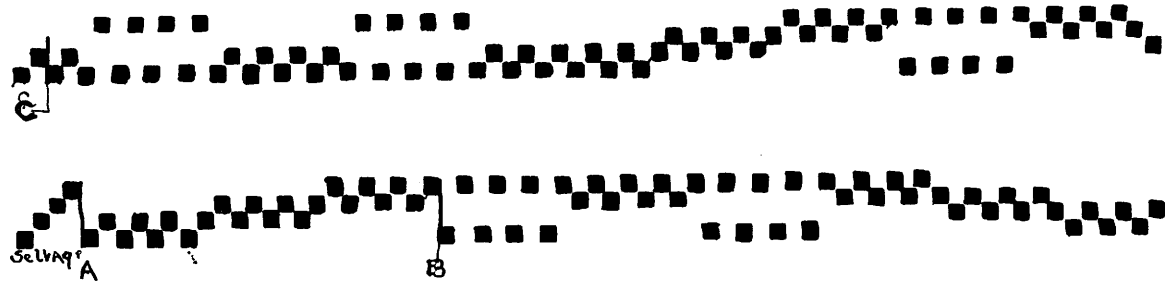
It is interesting to note that what she calls "Oriental Diaper," we in America classify as Colonial Overshot, and in Scandinavian countries is known as Simple Damask, and in Russia as Russian Diaper.



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Draft for 16th Century Spanish Linen Table Runner



Strictly speaking, they are all irregular twills developed from one of the three fundamental or primary weaves, the three fundamental weaves being the plain weave, the twill weave and the pile weave. In some quarters the satin weave is given a separate classification, but it should be included in the twill class, as it is a broken crow or twill weave. All other weaves and pattern effects are developed from innumerable variations and combinations of these three fundamental weaves.

The piece illustrated is of the familiar overshot weave, but it is woven in a slightly different manner than is noted in the treadling draft, and also the pattern weft has been loosely plied, a favorite method with some of the Spanish and Italian peasant weavers. In plying the yarn several strands are wound together, with no more twist than occurs in the process of winding the strands from separate balls to one shuttle; in this case three strands are wound together.

The warp is of a single twist linen set 30 threads to the inch, and the ground weft is also of a fine single twist linen. The pattern wefts are both of a coarser single loosely twisted linen and plied as above noted. Referring to Bernat's Linen Sample Card, the nearest approach to these yarns, both in weight and color, is here listed. Warp — Special natural No. 20. Ground weft — Tow bleach No. 20. For the pattern wefts the Linen Special LS250 may be used for the tan color and the Linen Special LS206 may be plied for the blue pattern weft, or the tan Linen Floss LF250 and the blue Linen Floss FL206 may be used "as is" without being plied.

The pattern is a small all-over figure without any border on the ends or sides. The drawing in draft

THE TREADLING DRAFT

Pattern Weft		Pattern Weft	
1 and 2-4 times	blue	3 and 4-4 times	blue
2 " 3-4 "	blue	2 " 3-4 "	blue
3 " 4-4 "	blue	1 " 2-4 "	blue
1 " 4-4 "	blue	1 " 4-4 "	blue
3 " 4-4 "	blue	1 " 2-4 "	blue
1 " 2-1 "	tan	3 " 4-1 "	tan
1 " 4-1 "	blue	1 " 4-1 "	blue
1 " 2-1 "	tan	3 " 4-1 "	tan
1 " 4-1 "	blue	1 " 4-1 "	blue
1 " 2-1 "	tan	3 " 4-1 "	tan
1 " 4-1 "	blue	1 " 4-1 "	blue
1 " 2-1 "	tan	3 " 4-1 "	tan
1 " 4-1 "	blue	1 " 4-1 "	blue
1 " 2-1 "	tan	3 " 4-1 "	tan
3 " 4-4 "	blue	1 " 2-4 "	blue
1 " 4-4 "	blue	1 " 4-4 "	blue

for one repeat plus the two edges is given and there are seven and one-quarter patterns in the width of the runner. Draw from A to B once, then from B to C seven or any desired number of times for the center, finishing with C to D for the opposite edge.

The blue and the tan weft shots are inserted in pairs with no ground weft between them, i.e., after the tan pattern weft has been inserted on the 1 and 2 shed the blue is inserted on the 1 and 4 shed without using the ground shed and weft at all. The omitting of the ground weft between the pairs allows the blue and tan to be beaten up more closely and makes the pattern much more interesting than if the ground weft were inserted.