

Needlework through History: An Encyclopedia

Catherine Amoroso Leslie

Greenwood Press

Handicrafts through World History



NEEDLEWORK THROUGH HISTORY

An Encyclopedia



Catherine Amoroso Leslie



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This book is dedicated to my grandmother, Kay Murphy and my mother, Colleen Murphy Hilliard, who taught me to value the legacy of needlework.

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Contents

List of Entries	vii
Acknowledgments	ix
Introduction	xi
Timeline	xv
The Encyclopedia	1
Bibliography	229
Index	231

List of Entries

Africa
Appliqué
Aran

Beadwork
Berlin Work
Blackwork
Bobbin Lace
Bosnian Crochet
British Isles
Buttonhole Stitch

Candlewicking
Central Asia
Chain Stitch
Couching
Crewelwork
Crochet
Cross-stitch
Cutwork

Drawnwork

East Asia, Southeast Asia, and the
Pacific
Eastern Europe
Eastern Mediterranean
Embellishment

Embroidery

Fair Isle
Feathers and Beetle Wings
Fringes, Tassels, and Pompoms

Ganseý

Hairpin Lace

Indian Subcontinent

Knitting
Knot Stitch
Knotting

Lace
Latch Hooking
Locker Hooking

Machine Needlework
Macramé
Metallic Threads
Middle East
Mirrorwork

Needle
Needle Felting

Needle Lace
Needlepoint
Needleweaving
Netting
Nordic Knitting
North America

Patchwork
Plaiting and Braiding
Pulled Threadwork
Punch Needle

Quillwork
Quilting

Reverse Appliqué
Ribbonwork
Rug Hooking
Running Stitch

Samplers
Satin Stitch
Scandinavia
Shadow Work
Shells, Coins, and Sequins
Single Needle Knitting
Smocking
South America
Sprang
Stumpwork

Tambour
Tatting
Tunisian Crochet

Western Asia
Western Europe
Whitework

Acknowledgments

It is recognized that a book of this type is not the work of one person, but the work of many who often go unmentioned. I would like to thank the unknown needleworkers throughout history, whose innovation and creativity enhanced the experience of everyday life. Often illiterate and prohibited from owning property, these talented stitchers left a cultural legacy and their mark on history through needlework. I also thank those who wrote before me, carefully documenting techniques and traditions, often as a labor of love.

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On a personal note, I am deeply grateful for the support of mentors and friends, especially Dr. Carole J. Makela, Dr. Teena Jennings-Rentenaar, and Ellen Swendroski Evett, who provided invaluable insights about organization and presentation of this vast topic. This work was also greatly enhanced by its editor, Debby Adams of Greenwood Press, who not only guided me in writing but had a sincere interest in the history of needlework. Finally, I am thankful for the encouragement of my family and especially my husband, James Leslie, whose continuous belief in my abilities made all the difference.

Introduction

People have been creating and embellishing textiles for thousands of years. Bone needles and seed beads found in Western European caves provide archaeological evidence of early needlework. It is thought that the invention of the needle and the warmth of sewn clothing allowed early peoples to migrate north. In addition to functional purposes, needlework has communicated individual and social identity, spiritual beliefs, and aesthetic ideals throughout time and geography. Needlework, like all handicrafts, is an important part of the human experience, and more specifically, a part of the female experience. With few exceptions, needlework is women's work. Making and using textiles is an integral part of women's culture around the world, with many traditions associated with rituals and celebrations of life events. Often overlooked, doing needlework and creating needlework objects offer insights by documenting the history of everyday life.

Needlework is a broad and encompassing term. On its most basic level, needlework can be defined as making or embellishing textiles using a needle and fiber, thread, or yarn. Included in this definition would be embroidery, which is used to decorate existing fabric, and knitting, which creates a new fabric. A broader definition of needlework includes hand techniques that employ other small tools. This would encompass crochet, which uses a hook, and tatting, which uses a shuttle. Some needlework techniques, like macramé, may not require any equipment. The commonality is that they are household arts. Another unfortunate commonality is that, with the exception of pockets of contemporary enthusiasts, folk traditions, and goods created for trade, the expertise related to many of the skills has been lost to time. This is largely due to the availability of machine-made alternatives and changing preferences in leisure activities.

To explore the history of needlework, this book surveys techniques around the world and through time. Some techniques are defined by the process, for example running stitch, and some by materials, for example mirrorwork. This

text contains a comprehensive listing of general topics, with selected examples to illustrate the diversity of experience and changes over time. There are likely to be traditions that have gone unmentioned, but it is hoped that the examples enhance appreciation of needlework, especially its part in the history of everyday life. A greater familiarity with needlework techniques can help to make connections between history and the objects of material culture found in the collections of local, regional, and national museums.

Some techniques have been excluded, most notably weaving and plain sewing. Weaving has a long and extensive history and warrants its own examination. In plain sewing, existing fabric is cut and shaped into a finished product with a needle and thread. Plain sewing also includes marking, the ancestor of monogramming. More decorative types of stitching are known as fancy sewing, which is synonymous with embroidery. For the purpose of this book, fancy sewing is considered a type of needlework, where plain sewing is not.

There are countless variations on each of the needlework techniques. Some carry similar names, but are very different processes. One example is needlepoint, which most popularly is used to describe embroidery on canvas, but can also describe needle lace. Filet lace generally refers to geometric openwork netting. A similar effect is achieved by looping with a hook and is called filet crochet. Needlework and its practice are constantly changing, with some traditions such as sprang and beadwork dating from the very earliest civilizations. Others, such as latch hooking and needle felting, are late-twentieth-century innovations.

Throughout history, techniques traveled with merchants and explorers, creating a legacy of cross-cultural exchange. Embroidery traditions that began in China were passed along the Silk Road. Many of the Western European traditions originated in the Middle East, and traveled westward to Morocco, then northward into Spain and Italy. Techniques were reinvented by nuns for fine ecclesiastical or church textiles. Boosted by goods brought back during the Crusades, this “nun’s work” quickly spread to the rest of Europe. Beginning in the sixteenth century, the English, Spanish, and Portuguese disseminated European techniques around the world through exploration and conquest. Embroidery from China imported by the British East India Company furthered the cross-cultural needlework exchange that continues into contemporary times.

Some techniques, such as cross-stitch embroidery, are virtually universal, but others, such as Native American porcupine quillwork, were confined to areas where quills were adequately available. Seemingly identical techniques are practiced by cultures on opposite hemispheres with little evidence of cross-cultural exchange. A notable example is the reverse appliqué practiced in both South America and Southeast Asia. Some techniques, such as patchwork, originated with settlers and were re-invented as indigenous arts. These examples can lead to a greater understanding of the development of cultural traditions and the historical value of seemingly everyday activities and objects.

This survey of cultural traditions in needlework can inform a wide range of readers, from those unfamiliar with needlework to practitioners seeking a broader understanding of their art. There are several ways to use this book. A general idea of techniques can be learned from the reading the entries. Bibliographic information is provided to allow for more in-depth exploration. Boldface cross-references make connections among related techniques and places of practice. Finally, specific countries are included to allow the reader to identify traditions associated with certain areas of the world, recognizing that place names have changed over time. Whether in regard to a cultural tradition or creative expression, it is hoped that this survey will lead to a greater appreciation of the historical record that is reflected in the practice of needlework throughout the world.

Timeline

Before 3000 B.C.E. Needles with eyes were used by prehistoric people dating back 30,000 years. Beads of stone and animal teeth were used to decorate clothing as early as 38,000 B.C.E. The buttonhole stitch was used over 8,000 years ago.

Single needle knitting, a variation of the buttonhole stitch, was used by peoples of ancient Egypt, ancient Peru, and the Judean desert, and dates from 6500 B.C.E. Evidence of the buttonhole stitch was found in Denmark and dates from the Stone Age, around 4200 B.C.E.

The earliest extant piece of netting was found in Egypt and dated to around 3500 B.C.E. The Chinese were the first to discover the secret of sericulture or silk production around 3000 B.C.E.

**3000 B.C.E.–
499 B.C.E.**

The metal needle was invented during the Bronze Age (2000–800 B.C.E.). Egyptian kings were ornamented by a net of colored silk thread or beads as early as 2100 B.C.E.

The oldest extant embroidered pieces were found in Egyptian tombs. Archeological finds revealed that cotton cloth was decorated with embroidery and appliqué in India as early as 2000 B.C.E.

Sprang was practiced in the Neolithic period at the start of the Iron Age, with the earliest extant examples found in Denmark, Egypt, and Peru dating to 1100 B.C.E.

The oldest extant examples of chain stitch in China date from the Warring States period (475–221 B.C.E.).

Macramé and fringe can be seen in Assyrian stone carvings from the Middle East, dated 850 B.C.E.

500 B.C.E.–0

The earliest extant textiles from the African continent were found in Egypt, dating to the fifth century B.C.E.

The Middle East was producing highly developed needlework by the fifth century B.C.E.

The oldest extant Eastern European textiles were found in Siberia, dating from the fourth century B.C.E., with appliqué in use by this time.

Professionally executed embroidered silks and gauzes were being created in China as early as the fourth century B.C.E.

In South America, the Nazca peoples of pre-Columbian Peru created intricate figures in single needle knitting as early as 200 B.C.E.

The oldest extant pieces of wool embroidery date to the first century B.C.E.

1–999

The first double needle or “true” knitting was practiced by the Copts, an Egyptian Christian sect. The earliest examples date from 200 C.E.

Chinese embroidery reached Korea and Japan by the fifth century.

Embroidery, knotting, and other techniques come to Western Europe with the Moors (Moroccans) in 711 C.E.

Although practiced for centuries, the oldest extant piece of cross-stitch dates from about 850 C.E.

1000–1099

The Bayeux Tapestry, documenting the “Norman Conquest,” was stitched about 1077. This crewelwork piece reveals many variations in embroidery stitches that were already highly developed by this time, including running stitch, satin stitch, buttonhole stitch, and cross-stitch.

1100–1199

Glass bead net was used to embellish European ecclesiastical clothing. Knitting reached the British Isles.

1200–1299

The oldest extant pieces of Western European double needle or “true” knitting dates from thirteenth-century Spain.

Smocking emerged on linen clothing worn by agricultural workers in the British Isles.

1300–1399

Blackwork was mentioned in Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* (1387–1400).

Knitters were portrayed in European paintings and written references.

Records include close-fitting coifs or bonnets netted with gold by nuns.

The earliest extant European bed quilts originated in Sicily. Quilted clothing and bedcoverings were made in France, Germany, Italy, Spain, and England.

1400–1499

The earliest usage of crewel or cruell referred to a thin, worsted yarn.

Raised embroidery embellished ecclesiastical garments in Eastern and Western Europe, including Italy, Germany, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia.

1500–1599

Blackwork became popular for secular clothing with Catherine of Aragon, Henry VIII's first queen.

The earliest written evidence of samplers in Western Europe and the British Isles was recorded in a Spanish inventory.

The indigenous people of South America had early contact with Spain and Portugal.

The earliest gold and silver laces were made in Genoa (Italy). Gold lace was worn by King Gustavus Vasa of Sweden.

Queen Elizabeth I (1558–1603) formalized embroidery practices by granting a charter to the Broiderers' Company in 1561.

The first pattern book for embroidered lace was printed in Germany in 1523. Pattern books were published in Germany, Italy, and France.

The earliest known dated sampler was made in England in 1598.

The first bobbin laces were made around Venice, Italy, and bobbin lacemaking spread quickly to Milan, Genoa, Flanders, and other parts of Europe.

The earliest pattern book entirely concerned with cutwork was published in Venice in 1542.

Over 150 pattern books for lace and embroidery were printed in Western Europe in the sixteenth century.

The first knitted garments were imported into Scandinavia.

Machine needlework began when the stocking frame was invented near Nottingham, England, in 1589.

Printed cross-stitch patterns inspired by Asian designs and symbols were published in Germany, Italy, and France.

Hardanger and Hedebo emerged in the seventeenth century in Denmark and Norway.

1600–1699

Hand knitting was introduced to Ireland. The earliest complete examples of knitted garments—stockings, gloves, a purse, and two caps—date from this time.

Books about needle lace became available for the public.

Silk stockings, gloves, and shirts were commonly worn by the upper class in Denmark and Sweden.

The first knitted sweaters were made.

The first raised embroidery was done by professionals on church vestments.

Knotting was practiced in Western Europe and the British Isles.

1700–1799

There was resistance to the growth of mechanization as early as 1710, when stocking-frame knitters protested in London.

Needle lacemaking had all but died out, replaced by bobbin lace.

Aran Island women established a cottage industry spinning coarse wool.

Ribbon embroidery became part of fashion in the Rococo period.

By 1764, background net could be made on a machine, which negatively affected all lacemaking.

Needlework schools were established for poor children in Ireland, Scotland, and England beginning in the 1760s.

The earliest written documentation of *sashiko* was in 1788, where it was noted as an important traditional craft for its grace and beauty.

1800–1899

A mechanized weaving system was invented by Joseph Jacquard in France in 1801.

The first Berlin work patterns were made by a printer in Germany in 1804.

The bobbin net or bobbinet machine was invented in Nottingham, England, in 1808.

The Luddites destroyed nearly a thousand English needlework machines between 1811 and 1818.

In 1812, a Frenchman started tambour stitch classes for girls in Coggeshall, England.

Colonial Americans opened their first ribbon factory in 1815.

Beetle wings were first seen in Western Europe in the early 1820s.

The first type of crochet pattern was published in Holland in 1824.

The Swiss hand lace machine was invented in 1828.

In the 1830s, four Irish nuns trained in a French convent introduced crochet to Ireland.

In 1830, a French tailor was awarded a patent for a chain stitch machine.

In 1834, a Paris, France, exhibition unveiled a tambour stitch machine.

Queen Victoria took the English throne in 1838, and the Victorian era began.

Lace knitting in the Shetlands started in the 1840s.

The immigration of Scandinavian peoples beginning in 1840 introduced Hedebo and Hardanger to the United States.

The lace industry in Ireland was essential to generate income during the potato famine years around 1846.

In 1847, tatting was introduced as a cottage craft for famine relief. The word tatting appeared in English literature after 1842.

Reverse appliqué *mola* panels of the Kuna peoples began in mid-century.

The chain stitch machine, invented in 1855, could make tambour embroidery on net, harming the market for fine handwork.

By 1856, English chemist William Perkin had developed the first synthetic dye.

In 1857, a Virginia farmer patented the first chain stitch sewing machine in the United States.

The Schiffli embroidery machine was first developed in 1863.

The first successful chain stitch embroidery machine was patented in 1865 by a French engineer.

By 1868 it was difficult to distinguish handmade laces from those stitched by machine.

In the 1870s and 1880s the strong craft revival arts and crafts movement turned away from machines and towards handicraft, until about 1910.

The word “crazy” was first used in 1878, with crazy piecing reaching its peak in the late 1880s and continuing into the 1920s.

Around 1895, a woman from Dalton, Georgia, attempted to copy a candlewick bedspread.

1900–1999

The Embroiderers’ Guild in England was established in 1906.

The production of Fair Isle knits for sale was established by 1910.

The Needle and Bobbin Club was established in 1916.

The Prince of Wales, Edward VIII, wore a Fair Isle sweater for a public event in 1921.

The first Aran sweaters were worn by young Irish boys in the late 1920s and early 1930s.

Punch needle or *bunka* embroidery was introduced to America after World War II.

The International Old Lacers organization was founded in 1953.

The Embroidery Research Institute in China was established in 1957.

The Embroiderers’ Guild of America (EGA) was established in New York in 1958 as a branch of the Embroiderers’ Guild of London.

The needlework revival related to the back-to-nature movement grew in the United States in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

The American Needlepoint Guild (ANG) was formed in 1970. The UN Peace Rug was completed in 1975 and the State Seal Rug completed in 1977.

In 1972, Australian fiber artist Patricia Benson developed the modern locker hooking technique.

The Lace Guild was founded in 1976.

Beginning in the late 1970s, Hmong people immigrated to North America, bringing their rich needlework heritage with them.

Needle felting was developed in the early 1980s by American artisans.

During the 1990s ribbon embroidery became popular in Australia and the rest of the world.

Bosnian crochet was marketed throughout the world, often as part of Fair Trade initiatives such as Bosnian Handicrafts, founded in 1995.

2000 and beyond Contemporary needlework enthusiasts and fiber artists continue needlework traditions and create new innovations.

The Encyclopedia

Africa

The world's second largest and second most populated continent, home to 53 independent countries. Africa can be divided into five regions: Eastern Africa, Middle Africa, Northern Africa, Southern Africa, and Western Africa. Some of the most notable cultural needlework traditions are found in the North African countries of Morocco, Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, and Sudan. Other countries with significant traditions include, but are not limited, to Congo (formerly Zaire), Ghana, Nigeria, and South Africa. Many of the rich and complex African needlework pieces are influenced by religion, particularly Islam in the area north of the Sahara Desert. Needlework styles were also influenced by Christianity and Judaism, although to a lesser extent.

The earliest extant textiles from the African continent were found in Egypt, dating to the fifth century B.C.E. Ancient Egyptian textiles survive in part due to the dry and hot climate and also because of burial practices. Beginning in the first century, Christianized Egyptians, or Copts, created detailed embroideries. Coptic textiles were dominated by Christian themes and human figures worked in split stitch, stem stitch (**running stitch**), **satin stitch**, **chain stitch**, and **needleweaving** in wool thread on linen. Coptic people also used **single needle knitting** to create clothing items such as socks.

The Islamic religion originated in the **Middle East**, spreading along northern Africa from east to west in the seventh and eighth centuries. In Morocco, Muslims founded the city of Fèz in 808, which also had a vital Jewish population. The rise of Islam significantly influenced North African design in that Islamic custom discourages representations of human and animal figures. Popular motifs on African Islamic textiles included the candelabra, tree of life, flowers, eight-pointed stars, geometric shapes, boxes, wheels, jagged teeth, intertwined knots, and the crescent moon.

The Islamic Mamluk dynasty ruled parts of the Middle East and Egypt between 1250 and 1517. Mamluk embroiderers created complicated pieces in royal workshops, known as *tiraz*, that were established in Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco. Working in linen, silk, and wool, Mamluk textiles used the double running stitch and needleweaving. In the late sixteenth century, Jewish people in Fèz were involved in manufacturing gold thread, **lace**, and **embroidery**.

Embroidery is the most common needlework technique worked on the African continent, although **patchwork**, **appliqué**, and forms of **knitting** were also practiced. For example, the Dervishes of Sudan showed their rejection of the material world by wearing robes made of patchwork, and men's societies in Ghana make appliqué banners and flags that convey allegorical messages. A fascination with ancient Egypt following the discovery of the tomb of Tutankhamen in 1922 led Egyptian tent and awning makers to make appliqué versions of tomb paintings for the commercial market. Mostly practiced in **Western Europe** and the United States, **Tunisian crochet** may have evolved from hooked knitting, which was practiced in Egypt, Afghanistan, and Tunisia.

In the North African countries of Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia, popular embroidery stitches and techniques include the **buttonhole stitch** and eyelet,



Hand-embroidered Nigerian chief's robe, mid- to late twentieth century. KSUM, Silverman/Rodgers Collection, 1985.45.13ab.

chain stitch, **couching**, satin stitch, **metallic threads**, and **pulled threadwork**. Nomadic women living in the oases of Western Egypt use red **cross-stitch** to embellish their black dresses. This tradition is related to Palestinian embroidery in the Middle East. **Blackwork** originated in Morocco, which was the home of the Moors who settled in southern Spain beginning in 711 A.D. The Moors developed an embroidery style of geometric motifs outlined in black on a white ground that were later adapted by the Spanish, and subsequently by other Western Europeans. Also known as “Spanish work,” blackwork is characterized by “Arabesque” designs in repeating step and box shapes. In North Africa, both men and women embroider, decorating costumes, towels, tablecloths, pillow covers, wall hangings, and animal trappings.

In the West Africa country of Nigeria, chain stitch is used to create linear designs on men’s “eight knives” shirts. Most of the finest embroidery is worn by men for ceremonial purposes. Detached buttonhole stitch or **single needle knitting** is also practiced. Most of the embroidery on clothing in West Africa is done by men. Throughout Africa, **embellishments** are used on clothing, often with symbolic meanings. Cowrie **shells** from the Indian Ocean have been used in parts of Africa for 4,000 years. In the past, cowrie shells formed a part of a woman’s marriage price or dowry. Today, the shells are used for decorative rather than nuptial purposes, often mixed with **beadwork**. Cowrie shells are thought to resemble an eye and are used for protection from the evil eye. A tradition practiced among the Zulu people of South Africa involved densely sewn or woven bead belts and bands. Usually made in white and red, bead belts or “love letters” conveyed messages. The arrangement and coloring of beads on a young girl’s belt signified her romantic intentions.

A notable African cultural tradition is practiced by the Kuba people of Congo (formerly Zaire). Raffia fibers are used to embellish skirts and decorative squares in a number of different techniques including embroidery, appliqué, **reverse appliqué**, and patchwork. Fine-quality raffia cloths made in Africa were admired and collected by Western Europeans. For example, a sixteenth-century Portuguese painting depicts the Virgin Mary and an angel kneeling on raffia cloth. The abstract patterning of Kuba raffia inspired modern artists including Klee and Matisse, who displayed his large collection on a wall of his studio. Raffia cloth uses the same patterns as other Kuba art forms, including wood sculpture, metalwork, and women’s body scarification.

Raffia cloths were worn for ceremonial occasions, which are quite rare today, but the tradition continues for funerary purposes. The most difficult and prestigious decoration is cut-pile embroidery. A small square could take as long as a month to complete. Embroidery designs are drawn from a large repertoire of patterns, with at least 200 known by name. The most common are the comma-shaped “tail of a dog” and lozenges punctuated with circles worked in eyelet stitch. Larger pieces are made with appliqué and patchwork. Kuba men are responsible for decorating their own skirts, while women decorate female dancing skirts and cut-pile embroidered panels. There is considerable variation in quality in contemporary

raffia work, especially that done for tourists. In a poor and often tumultuous society, raffia pieces are a source of pride and provide income and employment.

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Appliqué

A general term for adding pieces of material to an existing ground fabric. Rather than creating a new textile, appliqué is a decorative technique usually used for **embellishment**. It may have developed from the practice of sewing patches to damaged cloth and in many cultures is associated with poverty and renunciation of material goods. A wide range of fabrics can be used for appliqué. The most common are cloth, felt, and leather, although any flat material can be appliquéd, including fish skin.

Appliqué has been practiced since ancient times. Archeologists have dated an Egyptian canopy of appliquéd leather to 980 B.C.E. Tomb excavations in Siberia and Mongolia found leather and felt appliqué on carpets, saddle covers, and wall hangings from the fourth century B.C.E. Throughout history, appliqué has been frequently used for creating banners and embellishing military uniforms.

There are three main types of appliqué. The first and most common is called overlaid appliqué. In this technique, pieces are cut out and applied, leaving areas of the ground fabric visible. In inlaid appliqué, a piece of contrasting fabric is cut to fit exactly into a hole in the ground fabric. The third and most complicated type is called **reverse appliqué** or *mola*. In reverse appliqué, motifs are cut from layers of fabric and edges of the holes turned under to reveal the fabrics underneath.

Felt and leather are ideal for overlaid appliqué because they do not fray and are quite durable for clothing and other utilitarian items. Strong traditions for embellishing sheepskin jackets and vests with appliqué are found in the folk dress in **Eastern Europe**, Russia, and **Scandinavia**, most notably in Hungary,



Nineteenth-century Eastern European vest heavily embellished with appliqué braid. KSUM, transferred from the Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Oberlin, Ohio. Gift of Mary L. Mathews, 1944, 1995.17.134.

Bulgaria, Romania, the Baltics, Ukraine, Turkmenistan, Siberia, Greenland, Iceland, Sweden, and Lapland. These traditional costumes include tassels, braid, pom-poms, floral **embroidery**, and leather appliqué with shapes cut of leather, punched with holes, and secured with a sewing machine. Leather appliqué is also found in Pakistan, where it is coupled with embroidery in thick thread or couched **metallic thread** braids to embellish covers and men's clothing. Furthermore, traditional Moroccan leather slippers are often decorated with embroidery and leather appliqué.

Felt appliqué is common in many parts of the world. It has been traditionally used by the nomadic tribes of **Central Asia** to embellish bags for the struts of their yurts (or tents), camel trappings, and most notably for counterchange floor coverings. In counterchange appliqué, felt fabric is folded and repetitive patterns are cut out. The resulting motifs are mirror images of each other. In Eastern Europe, felt appliqué is used to decorate in home furnishings such as mats and folk aprons. Women's aprons are an important part of traditional dress and are thought to provide spiritual protection.

If overlaid pieces are made of a woven fabric, rather than felt or leather, the edges must be hemmed. Appliqué motifs are cut out and tacked onto the ground fabric. Then the edges are turned in and sewn under using a hem or slip stitch. Overlaid appliqué traditions using woven fabric with turned-in edges are widespread throughout the world. For example, in **Africa**, Asafo men's societies of Ghana display cotton appliquéd flags with allegorical messages. The Kuba of the Congo (formerly Zaire) create dance skirts in raffia **patchwork** and appliqué.

On the **Indian Subcontinent**, appliquéd cloths have several uses, including covers to hide piles of quilts as well as brides being taken to their husbands' villages on ox-carts. *Chakla's* are square hangings with dense appliqué, **mirror-work**, and embroidery created in Northwest India. Appliquéd cloths serve religious purposes when Hindu and Muslim pilgrims leave cloths as shrine offerings in Uttar Pradesh, India. In China, boldly colored appliqué was used to decorate the coats and collars of officials from Manchuria. The appliqué work was often accompanied by embroidery in **cross-stitch**, **satín stitch**, **pulled threadwork**, laid work, and **couching**. Overlaid appliqué is also an important tradition in **East and Southeast Asia**.

Overlaid appliqué has been traditionally used in **Western Europe** and the Americas, too. Native North Americans embellished clothing and other items with appliqué in various materials, including fish skin in Alaska and western Canada. In **South America**, Mexican festival dress is embellished with appliqué, and appliquéd hangings featuring depictions of the peasant lifestyle are popular among tourists in Colombia. The technique known as **whitework** often includes appliqué, and a popular type of **quilting** includes floral motifs appliquéd on a white background. Appliqué of printed chintz flowers on a solid fabric foundation was popular in the late nineteenth century and known as *broderie perse*.

Lace-like fabrics can also be created with overlaid appliqué. Beginning in the early nineteenth century, motifs made of lace, **netting**, or muslin were hand-applied to a machine-made ground using **buttonhole** and **chain stitch**. Made in Belgium and the **British Isles**, these types of appliquéd laces include Brussels, Honiton, and Carrickmacross. The appearance of appliquéd laces was eventually reproduced on Swiss hand embroidery and Schliiffli machines. Appliqué was a popular embellishment technique used on fancy cloaks and capes in the 1890s, along with passementerie braids and **cutwork**.

Inlaid appliqué involves cutting motifs out of the foundation material and fitting other fabrics within the spaces. The seams that join the two are hidden by one or more rows of chain stitch or couched braids of gold or silver. This method is used for appliqué tent hangings, which include complex designs such as Arabic calligraphy and are created by the nomadic Berbers and other peoples of the **Middle East**. Patchwork is also a form of inlaid appliqué that has been associated with frugality and the rejection of material goods. The inlaid technique is used in sawtooth edging on quilts and wall hangings in many parts of the world. In sawtooth edging, triangular points of fabric are pieced together to form border patterns.



South American appliqué table runner in red and white, twentieth century. KSUM, gift of the Vera Newmann Collection, 1989.63.60.

Finally, the technique of reverse appliqué or *mola* is most commonly associated with the Kuna Indians of Panama and the H'mong peoples of Vietnam and Cambodia. Rather than adding material to a foundation, layers of woven fabric are stacked on top of each other and pieces cut away to create the motif. Although reverse appliqué takes fabric away rather than adding it, the edges are finished in a similar method to overlaid appliqué using slip stitches.

All forms of appliqué continue to be practiced by traditional and contemporary needleworkers. The Appliqué Society was founded in 1997 to promote, teach, and encourage the art of appliqué. The society publishes newsletters, holds national meetings, and has local chapters in many areas in the United States and abroad. Contemporary fiber artists appliqué a variety of materials to create wall hangings, quilts, and wearable art.

FURTHER READING

The Appliqué Society. Online: www.theappliquesociety.org.

Central Rappahannock Regional Library. Online: www.answerpoint.org.

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Gillow, John, & Bryan Sentance. (1999). *World Textiles: A Visual Guide to Traditional Techniques*. Boston: Little, Brown.

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Aran

Knitting in complex bold, raised patterns of cables and bobbles named for the Aran Islands off the Atlantic coast of Ireland. Harsh weather made warm woolen clothing necessary, especially for fishermen. The twists and turns of the close-knit Aran patterns create air pockets that help to insulate from cold air. These textured knitting patterns were used to make socks, hats, and vests, but the most common application is the “fishermen sweater.” Originally Aran sweaters were knitted in undyed unscoured wool that retained its natural sheep lanolin, providing water resistance and insulation even when wet. There are specific stitches and patterns used in creating Aran knits, although the term “Aran” has come to describe any highly decorative knit stitch pattern.

Aran knit sweaters are relatives of the heavy woolen patterned sweaters worn by French, English, and Scottish fishermen. These sweaters are known as **gansey**, from the Gaelic word “geansaí,” meaning Guernsey, one of the Channel Islands located between France and England. Both ganseys and Aran sweaters are quite square with shortened sleeves that would not become wet while fishing. Ganseys generally have patterning across shoulders. A similar style is seen in Aran sweaters said to be made “in the old manner,” with moss and stocking stitch in horizontal bands across the yoke and the tops of the sleeves. Photographs and written documentation show this type of sweater worn by Aran fishermen in 1907.

The sweater patterns have been attributed to ancient designs shown in the *Book of Kells*, an illuminated manuscript made by Celtic monks around 800 A.D. The motifs have also been linked to stone carvings on megaliths around Northern and **Western Europe**. Although the Aran patterns have a similar aesthetic to these ancient sources, their application to knitting is unsubstantiated. Hand knitting was first introduced to Ireland in the seventeenth century, and by the mid-eighteenth century, Aran Island women had established a cottage industry spinning coarse wool and knitting stockings, which they sold to pay their rent. Knitting was a communal activity, and the complicated knitting patterns evolved over time. Patterns were rarely written down; knowledge and skills were passed from one generation to the next. New patterns were disseminated by word of mouth, and women actively sought to duplicate a new stitch in their own knitting work.

Eventually the leap was made from stockings with patterned tops to larger garments with knitted-in decoration. The first Aran sweaters were worn by young island boys in the late 1920s and early 1930s, when family members began to create special sweaters for boys to wear for their first Holy Communion. As a source of family pride visible to the community, great effort went into the patterning. In addition to Holy Communion, sweaters were made for other sacramental occasions, like weddings. The association of the Aran sweater with family may be the origin of the myth that different stitch patterns can be identified with a particular clan.

A commonly believed and perpetuated story is that each family had a sweater with a unique design, so that if a fisherman drowned and was found on the beach, his body could be identified. There is little evidence for this claim, but the origin of the story may have come from a 1904 play, where the body of a dead fisherman was identified by the handknit stitches on one of his garments. However, the garment was actually plain and was identified by the number of stitches rather than by decorative pattern. The link between Aran patterns and family identification is more likely a type of marketing tool for a cottage industry. With the lack of employment and famine in Ireland, hand knitting, weaving, and other home crafts were encouraged as a way to generate income in poor rural communities. Over time, many knitters had favorite stitches and pattern combinations that they reused often, becoming easily recognizable. An official register of these historic patterns has been compiled by the Aran Sweater Museum.



Handknit Aran sweater purchased in Ireland, early 1980s. Author's collection.

Learning English through History. By David Ronder. Category: 21st Century Skills. 17th April 2014. By Guest post. Past Simple: Learning English Through History. History tends to be a controversial subject. When I first presented the idea of Past Simple to colleagues at the University of Kent, some of them balked at the very idea of teaching British history to foreign students of English. They imagined cultural imperialism, insensitive flag-waving, a Land-of-Hope-and-Glory account of our past. Art through the ages. "What is art?" Few questions provoke such heated debate and provide so few satisfactory answers.Â People do not often juxtapose the terms art and history. They tend to think of history as the record and interpretation of past human actions, particularly social and political actions. Most think of art, quite correctly, as part of the presentâ€”as something people can see and touch. People cannot, of course, see or touch history's vanished human events.

Ancient Greece. Historical Background. Welcome to "History through Art". Today we'll be looking at the history, art and culture of Ancient Greece. But why should you be interested in learning about a civilization more than three thousand years old? Thus, the Greeks were history's first humanists, believing that man was the measure of all things. They wished not merely to survive, but to survive in freedom and with dignity. The Greeks aspired to the highest human values, such as justice, human rights, and honour for all. Slavery has existed since before written history in almost every culture and civilization. It started about 11,000 years ago during the Neolithic Revolution after the invention of agriculture. In its strictest sense, slavery can be defined as a situation in which people own individuals and apply the same rules they would to any form of property. Throughout human history, millions of people suffered the utter disregard for their rights and feelings as slaves.