



A TANGLED WEB

In my world, material and colourplay are important components in building up a design. Add technique and weave structure as another building block and all together determine the surface of the cloth. Naturally this kit needs to include how and where the cloth is to be used.

But just as important as the purely material is what the hand and eye experience. The eye sees, the hand feels. Or how does it work, what is it that decides whether the eye or the hand responds and sends the first signals?

FOR THIS WEAVE, a rag weave, I drew inspiration from its Japanese relation – a saki ori weave. *Saki ori* means to rip – weave in Japanese, and just as in Sweden it is a kind of recycling. Old and worn material is utilized, given new life and repurposed.

It all began with a little 20 g ball of yarn, not particularly striking, brown in colour with singular little bits sticking out at regular intervals, a bit spiky and kind of quirky, but it caught my attention. Here it was the eye that reacted first, then the hand.

It remained lying just as it was for a few years before I looked closer at the ball and realized the yarn had once upon a time been part of a fishing net. How remarkable, that little ball is from Japan and in my country we also used old worn out fishing net as weft, mostly for rag rugs. You take what you have and make what you need,

traditional knowledge that has prevailed for centuries, in Japan as well as Sweden.

Fishing net from Japan made of ramie or hemp yarn was from the outset strengthened, just as in Sweden, that is impregnated by dipping. In Japan this was in a persimmon, clay and iron bath, which gives the fishing net yarn an attractive dark brown colour. A colour that can shift depending on the material and the recipe. It makes a beautiful weft, a tad parlous with its spiky surface. From the outset, this fishing net yarn was used as weft for ramie or hemp weaves, hence fishing net yarn used as decorative weft has a long history, a much older history than saki ori weaves themselves.

Cotton plants and fibre did not exist in Japan, but were initially imported from China at some point during the 16th century. It was not long though before the



Japanese understood that the climate in south Japan was suitable for growing their own crops of this ever so useful fibre. Easy to spin, easy to dye, easy to tend, it found its place in all echelons of society. This brought increased access to the material, even for those living on the margins in self-sufficient communities. Poor farmers and poor fishermen could for the first time make themselves warm clothes, even if from patches and worn scraps. What we today call *boro*, can be translated as something ragged.

It is said that when the best, worn patches were taken for boro, the remainder were used for saki ori weaving. In a woven cloth, the remnants turned into cloth for warm, durable working jackets and waistcoats. Traditionally, the weaving width employed in Japan is around 35 cm, and as in Sweden lengths were sewn together into a large piece when needed, that would then be used as a coverlet or underlay for the

traditional futon bed, or as a kind of table-cover under which the family would warm their feet. The cover lay over the low table, which screened off the source of heat in the house, the glowing coals round which the family gathered.

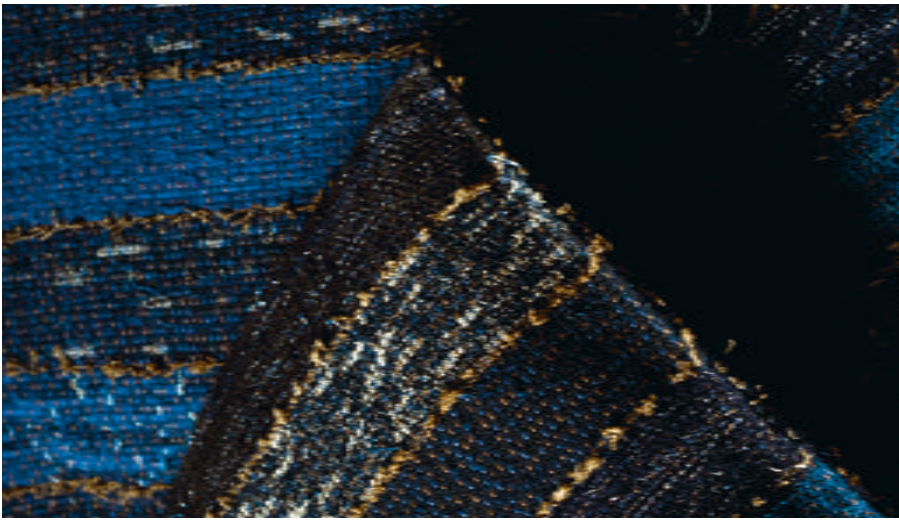
From the end of the 18th century to when Japan became open to the world

around in 1854, fishermen and farmers were forbidden to wear other garments than those dyed in indigo or were in the natural shades of cotton and bast fibre. This produced a monochromatic blue, in every shade from light and faded to a deep black-blue. An austere beauty arose from conditions of outright poverty.

In Japan, fishing net was cut up to make a yarn: the knots then stuck out in every direction. In Sweden we were rather more rough and ready: fishing net was rolled up and then chopped with an axe into strips 3–5 cm wide. The knotted ends sticking out were then trimmed away. Yet it is remarkable how similar our approach was, albeit so culturally diverse in expression and so fascinating when the different worlds meet.

For my 'texture', I wanted to bring together the culture of the two countries: the rag rug from Sweden went to meet Japan. This evolved into a sakiori rag weave for a zabuton. A flattish cushion, used for sitting on the floor.

Monica Hallén



ZABUTON IN RAGS AND FISHING NET

Taqueté, 4 shafts and 6 pedals

WARP	16/2 linen, black, blue and brown, ca 5520 m/kg
WEFT	Hem allowance: as for the warp Indigo dyed rags 5–7 mm Fishing net yarn
REED	60/10, 1 end to a heddle and 1 end to a dent
SETT	6 ends/cm
SELVAGE	2 ends to a heddle/dent, twice on either side

Warp up with 3 ends, black, blue and brown linen.

Enter each end as it comes.

The size of the check is ca 4.5–5 cm.

In the entry sequence, each check is 4.7 cm = 28 ends

Weave the hem allowance in linen yarn. Weave stripes with slender indigo dyed rags. Weave 2 picks fishing net yarn between each stripe.

Weave the checks in taqueté by alternating the slender indigo dyed rags with the fishing net yarn.

Fishing net yarn can be ordered from www.aoni.kyoto

