

LATVIAN BAND WEAVING USING LETTERING

by Anita Apinis-Herman

Notes for use with an INKLE LOOM

Bookmarks and belts are all suitable for the pick-up technique using letters of the alphabet. The word 'Inkle' is an old English word for a linen band or drawstring (Webster's Dictionary). The Inkle loom is not a traditional Latvian loom, however the designs and pick-up technique are traditionally Latvian. Latvians traditionally wove bands using a back strap loom and incorporated the pick-up technique. With the Inkle loom a warping board is not needed and is a somewhat quicker method when shorter band lengths are required.



Anita Herman at her Inkle loom.

Band weaving as such is a warp-faced weave and can incorporate the "pick-up" technique. To do this use a No. 40 or No. 20 crochet cotton for background warp and weft (usually white) and for pattern and plain weave warp use 5 or 8 ply crepe knitting wool. You will also need a pick-up stick e.g. a ruler or even a letter opener will do, preferably something with a pointed end. Also a beater could be used - something like a ruler which has a straight edge but if the pick-up stick already has a straight edge this can serve as a beater as well.

The cotton weft will need to be wound onto a belt shuttle or simply on a piece of cardboard to keep it secure. Do not make a "butterfly" as cotton will tend to become tangled.

LATVIAN PICK-UP TECHNIQUE ON INKLE LOOM

Steps

1) Warping

Warp according to the colours in the draft. The border is in green, blue and red.

Key (Colours are optional)

C - cotton (white) No. 20 mercerised cotton

R - Red (8 ply wool) for pattern

G - Green (5 ply wool) for border

B - Blue (5 ply wool) for border

<-----Centre pattern colour sequence only----->

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	C		R		C		C		R		C		C		R		C		R		C	
R		C		C		R		C		C		R		C		C		R		C		R
1		2		3		4		5		6		7		8		9						

All together there are 51 warp threads. These will form:

- i) A decorative border on either side of the band consisting of 9 wool warps each side and 4 cotton warps. On the left side the order of the threads are: 2 blue, 2 green, one red, 2 green, 2 blue and of course the 4 cotton threads. These repeat symmetrically on the right side also.
- ii) A centre pattern consisting of letters and plain cotton background consisting of 9 wool warps and 16 cotton warps.

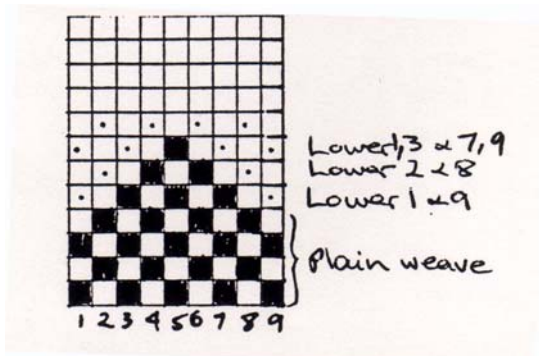
The pattern or lettering section of Latvian band weaving commonly contains 9 pattern warps with 2 cotton warps always separating each pattern warp as shown in the Pattern diagram.

The wool warps, making up the borders form plain weave in each row as they are not "picked-up". They also do not have to contain cotton warps although, to assist the look of the design, some of the wool warps can be a finer ply.

When warping on an inkle loom, the warps are simply wound on one by one, tying each new colour to the end of the last one. Every alternate warp must pass through a heddle or "leash".

2) When the warp is finally wound on the inkle loom you are ready to start weaving. Using the cotton for the weft, start by weaving a few rows of plain weave to adjust the desired width of the band, say 9 rows.

3) Rather than doing the first letter immediately, I usually weave some sort of diamond or other Latvian design to add interest to the band. Say we want to weave a tapered design i.e.



The border design is not shown here because it remains as plain weave throughout. But for the tapered design we already begin the "pick-up" technique. However, in this case we do not pick up but we lower the pattern warps which we do not want to see on top of the weave. Remember this is a warp-faced weave. The warps to be lowered are numbered on the side of the draft for each row. The warps are represented by black squares. The numbers at the bottom of the draft represent the thick pattern warps only.

Note that the white cotton warps in between the thicker pattern warps are never raised or lowered with your pick-up stick or ruler. They simply move via the heddles up or down according to the shed and therefore do not need to be numbered on the draft. Therefore to weave the row immediately after the plain weave, warps 1 and 9 are lowered with the pick-up stick (see photo), while the shed is open.



To begin the tapered design, lower pattern warps 1 and 9 with the "pick-up" stick. Turn stick on its side and pass cotton weft through the shed. Change to next shed and beat down with stick.

I am right handed and I always pick up holding the pick-up stick in my right hand, working from right to left. Therefore I put the stick into the shed and lower the 9th pattern warp by pushing the stick over it. Then I continue feeding the stick into the shed and next lower the first pattern warp by pushing the stick over it. I pass the stick or ruler through to the left side of the shed and stand it on its edge in the shed (as in first photo).

Then I pass the cotton weft through the shed, take out the pick-up stick, change the shed and finally beat down.

Now we are ready for the next row, where warps 2 & 8 are lowered. With the changing of the shed, warps 1 & 9 will automatically be lowered. Therefore only lower the warps that are left on top i.e. 2 & 8. Pass the weft through the shed, change to the next shed and beat down. The next row is the last row of the preliminary design. Push the pick-up stick over pattern warps 1,3,7,9 and leave 5 raised. Turn stick on its side and pass cotton weft through the shed. Change to next shed and beat down.

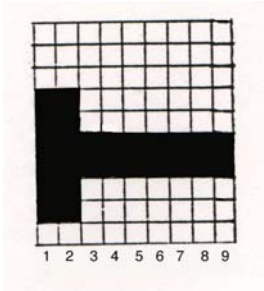


This is the last row of the tapered design where I push the pick-up stick over pattern warps 1,3,7,9 and leave 5 raised. Turn stick on its side and pass cotton weft through the shed. Change to next shed and beat down.

Before beginning the letters weave 2 or 3 rows of background i.e. lower all the pattern warps in the centre section i.e. 1 to 9. This gives a small space between the design and the first letter.

To weave the first letter, have a graph of the letter handy for easy reference (see drawing on graph paper of letters at the end of this article).

No matter which letter is going to be woven take advantage of the shed in which most of the coloured pattern warps are already raised for that particular letter. Let's start with the letter 'T' (see graph).



Here thread 1 should already be raised, thus lowering 3,5,7,9 and picking up 2. Pass the shuttle through.



To weave 'T' leave warp 1 raised, pick up 2 and lower 3,5,7,9. Turn stick on side and pass shuttle through.

In the next shed we need to lower 4, 6, 8 and pick up 1. Thread 2 will already be raised. Pass the shuttle through. When you change the shed the alternate pattern warps will be raised. Pick up all those that are not raised and pass the weft through, change to the next shed and beat down. Again every alternate pattern warp will be raised therefore pick up those that are not raised and pass the weft through to complete the centre of the 'T'.



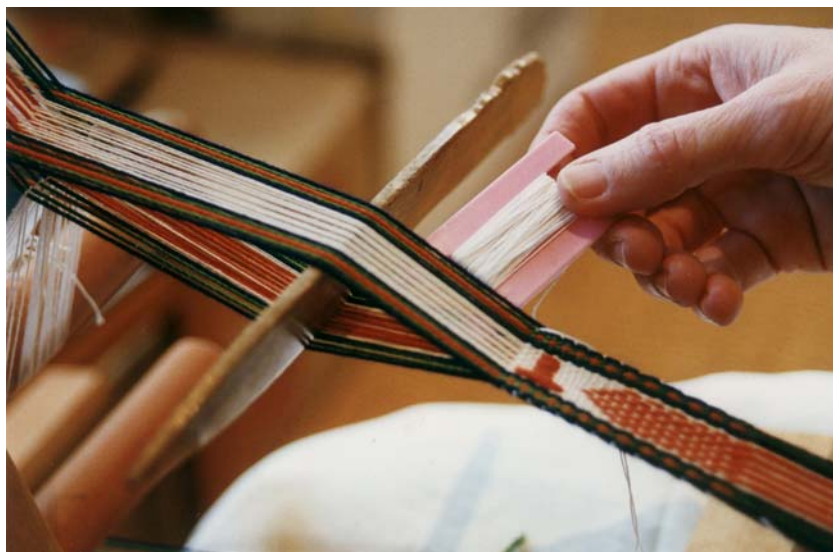
To weave centre of the 'T' pick up, from the bottom shed all the red warps so that all 9 red warps are on top of the stick. Turn stick on side and pass shuttle through.

Change to the next shed and beat down. Now to complete the 'T' lower warps 3, 5, 7, 9 and raise 2. Pass the shuttle through. Change to the next shed and beat down. Finally lower 4, 6, 8 and raise 1. Pass the weft through.



To complete the 'T' lower red warps 3, 5, 7, 9 and raise 2. Pass shuttle through and change shed. Finally lower 4, 6, 8 and raise 1. Pass shuttle through.

Now weave 3 rows of background by lowering all the pattern warps for 3 rows.



Weave 3 rows of background by lowering all the pattern warps. Then begin the next letter.

Begin the next letter in a similar way as the first letter. When the letters are finished weave a tapered design the same as at the beginning of the band.

Leave a space between bands to cut the warps when taking them off the inkle loom. NEVER raise or lower border threads or white cotton threads.

