



# *Blackwork Journey Blog*

November 2022



# UZBEKISTAN



## November and the approach of Winter.

2022 which started with so much hope has not gone as expected with the continuing uncertainties surrounding Covid 19, the war in Ukraine and the economy affecting so many lives.

However, we must make time to concentrate on the positive aspects of our lives and look for the things that bring peace, satisfaction and enjoyment. I escape from my everyday concerns by picking up a piece of embroidery, designing a new chart or sorting threads and fabrics for the next project. Whether it is slow stitching for mindfulness or concentrating on a complicated piece of counted thread embroidery, I find problems soon regain their perspective and I am able to cope with the complexities of modern living. Some people use baking or painting as their means of escape, but we all need something positive in our lives!

## Uzbekistan

### Following on from Part 1 in the October Blog I have been looking at the traditional crafts I found in Uzbekistan

Many centuries ago, the Great Silk Road provided a valuable trade route between Asia and I had the opportunity of visiting the central area of this route recently in Uzbekistan where I travelled to the capital Tashkent and then Samarkand, Bukhara and Khiva where I saw many inspirational buildings and met many craftsmen and women who are still following tradition crafts and creating textiles, tiles, paintings, silk paper making and silk carpets to a very high standard, just as their ancestors had done beforehand.



One of the handcrafts I found in Bukhara was scissor making and especially, bird-shaped scissors.

Storks are seen as symbols of prosperity and happiness. The scissors are not just attractive, but also very sharp!

I could not resist buying two pairs of stork scissors, male and female!

**Scissormaker in Bukhara**

## Suzani embroidery

Suzani embroidery has many decorative tribal designs and can be found in several Central Asian countries. Fabric embroidered with silk threads is called *suzani* and another called *ikat*, which is woven with hand-spun silk yarn. It is also called Uzbekistan Tribal Embroidery and is stitched on a type of cotton fabric with various chain, satin and buttonhole stitches. Some of the embroidery is also tamboured with a tambour hook.

Suzani embroidery is part of everyday life and can be seen everywhere throughout the country, although each area has its own interpretation of the embroidery. The colours are vibrant and full of life which is appropriate for a dry, hot country. Whilst the designs would have looked out of place in many other settings,

here they were totally appropriate and contrasted with the blues and turquoise, browns and sand colours of the mosques, mausoleums and temples.

Whilst I didn't have enough time to explore every aspect, I spoke to many of the craftsmen and women and saw enough examples to encourage and challenge me. Each area has its own style of suzani embroidery of which the most notable are:



**1. Nurata** embroidery originated at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The flowers are worked on a background of white fabric.

**2. Bukhara** embroidery which I really appreciated, consists of flowers on small branches scattered over the whole of the fabric.



*I loved the vibrant designs, the layout and the use of colour!*



*Bukhara - bed throw*

Modern embroidery from Bukhara often includes branches with flowers spread all over the surface of the fabric and round rosettes. Bukhara Suzanis often have a wide outer border with large flora medallions.

3. Samarkand embroidery is different again with a central design and leafy circles.



*The shading within this piece of Samarkand embroidery and the stitching was the work of a master craftsman*

### 4. **Taskent** also has two different styles of embroidery - Suzani-palak and qulkurpa.

There are many articles on the internet about the different types of Uzbek tribal embroidery which explain in detail the difference between the regional embroideries if you wish to research them further, but I hope you enjoy the following photographs taken at random on the streets. They convey something of the vibrancy I felt of the whole region.





Some of the women were sitting behind their stalls embroidering their wares using hand dyed silks. There was a wide range available from cross stitch to intricate designs hand drawn onto the fabric.



*Tamboured shawl*



### Headwear for men

The Tubeteika is a soft or hard skull cap with a lining. It is an integral part of the Uzbek national costume and is still worn today.

Many of the hats worn by the men were hand embroidered in white on black, but very colourful ones in traditional patterns were worked in silk on a coarse stiff aida fabric using hand dyed silks.

Besides copying already known motifs, embroiderers often create new original patterns and colours, which makes every Tubeteika unique.

Tubeteikas differ in shape, patterns and colours depending on the region they are made in. For example, Tubeteikas from Fergana Valley have plain patterns, whereas those from Samarkand are distinguished by different methods of

embroidery, distinct patterns and colours. In Bukhara, gold embroidered caps are popular for the richness of decoration.

Most of the older women covered their heads with colourful shawls and scarves, but many of the younger women wore no head coverings. Silk fabric, metallic threads and bold ikat patterns are commonplace. Heavy silver and gold jewellery is also worn.





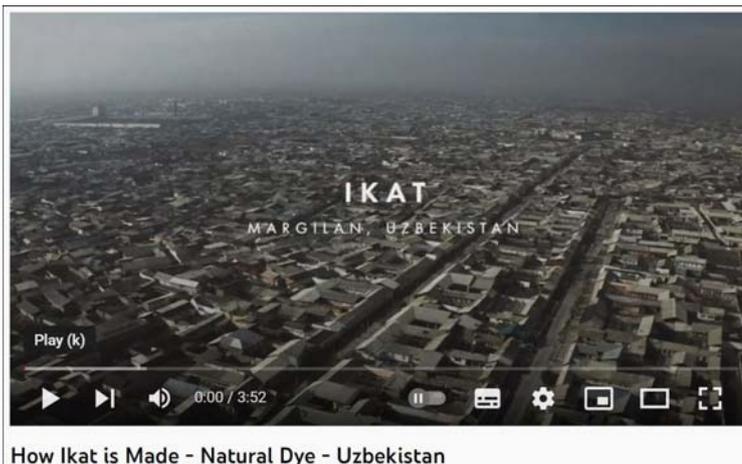
Whilst researching Uzbek costume I came across an interesting video. It features the textiles, clothing and traditional fashion of women from fourteen different regions of Uzbekistan. Whilst this video was made for a modern audience, it takes specialised traditional industries like silk, ikat weaving and embroidery and Suzani and pairs them with modern silhouettes.

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=972982432833898>

### What is ikat weaving?

I have seen ikat fabrics in many parts of the world and to see it dyed, woven and made up into garments is fascinating. I also bought some hand dyed threads to use on my own embroidery.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6qiYUZbQmbc>



How Ikat is Made - Natural Dye - Uzbekistan

Ikat is a dyeing technique used to create a distinct style of textile patterns. It is done by resist dyeing\* sections of the yarns prior to weaving the fabric. In ikat the resist is formed by binding individual yarns or bundles of yarns with a tight wrapping applied in the desired pattern. The yarns are then dyed. The bindings may then be altered to create a new pattern and the yarns dyed again with another colour. This process may be repeated multiple times to produce elaborate, multi-coloured patterns. When the dyeing is finished all the bindings are removed and the yarns are woven into cloth.

*\*Resist dyeing is a traditional method of dyeing textiles with patterns. Methods are used to "resist" or prevent the dye from reaching all the cloth, hereby creating a pattern and ground. The most common forms use wax, some type of paste made from starch or mud.*



Meet the Makers - Ikat weaving in Uzbekistan

**Is ikat different to batik and tie-die?** In other resist-dyeing techniques such as tie-dye and batik the resist is applied to the woven cloth, whereas in ikat the resist is applied to the yarns before they are woven into cloth. Because the surface design is created in the yarns rather than on the finished cloth. In ikat both fabric faces are patterned.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h4gFIFqLx9>



### Recycle, reuse – Uzbek style

Over the past year I have been emphasising the need to recycle the clothes and materials that we discard so freely to create new craft projects and to slow stitch as therapy to reduce stress and slow the pace of modern living down to become more manageable.

In Bukhara I saw the ultimate in recycling. Carpet weaving is very common throughout Asia and there are many wonderful designs woven in both wool and fine silk, but a craftsman in a side street was cutting up old carpets into small squares and reassembling them to make new bags and wall hangings. Not only were they very attractive, but they were beautifully constructed and no two items were identical.



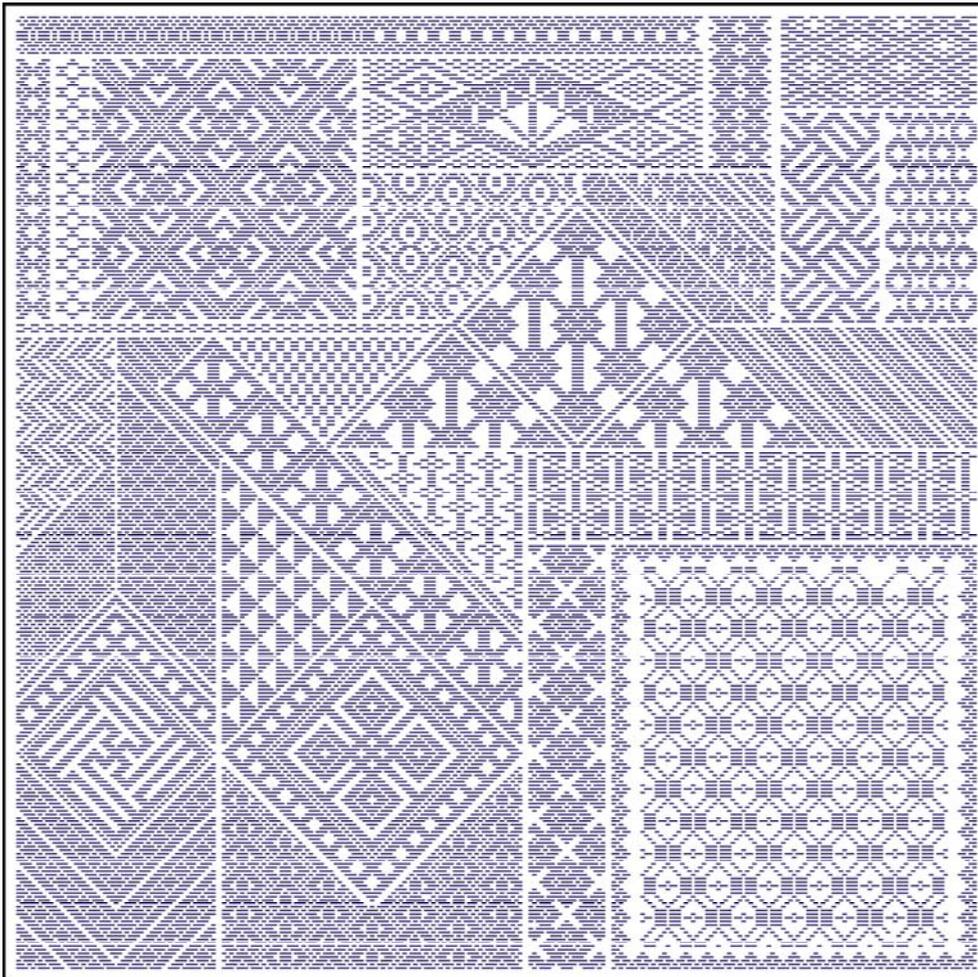
### Work in progress!

This month I have been busy teaching and preparing materials for kits as I have a number of talks and day schools across the UK, so I haven't been able to do as much stitching as I would have liked to do. However, I have been working on a large Kogin sampler with 30 different patterns which can be used individually for different projects.

Normally, I carefully plan a project out in detail before I start to stitch, but this time it just grew from one block to another and I followed my needle! I didn't graph it until all the stitching had been completed. It would have been much easier to have graphed it first and then worked the stitching!



*Kogin sampler for 2023?*



*Take the same design and work in the traditional colours of white on blue or blue on white fabric using DMC floss or sashiko thread.*



*Sashiko thread*

### **What is Kogin embroidery?**

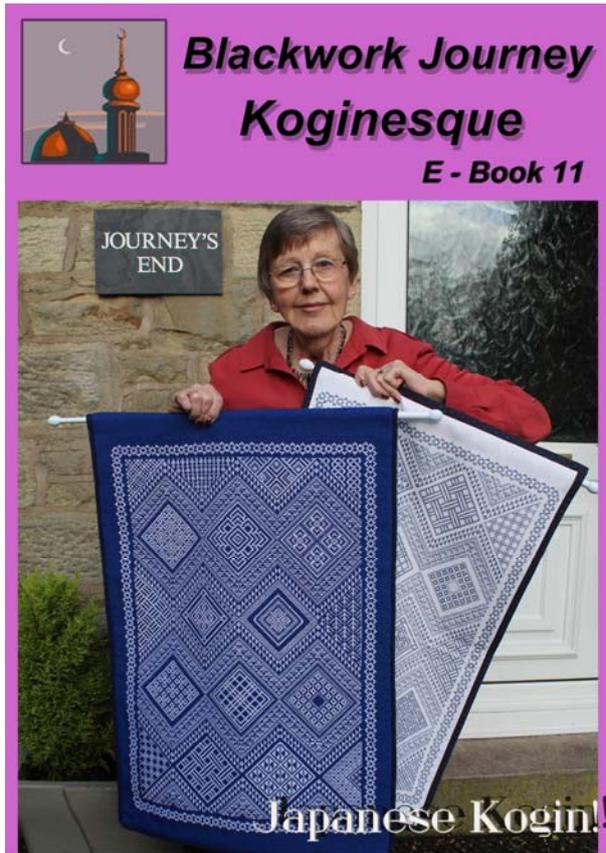
For those of you who are new to Kogin embroidery it is a heavy form of pattern darning, which originated in the Aomori Prefecture of Northern Japan. This area is rural, with snow covered mountains, thick forests and rice paddies. Protective clothing for the farmers and fishermen was essential, so the fabrics were joined together by stitching and made into clothing for warmth and stability. Cotton fabric and threads were expensive, so local indigo dye hemp cloth was often used for these garments.

The Kogin 'stab' stitch is a very old technique with the earliest records of it dating from the 1600's. Kogin stitches were worked in hemp threads to reinforce the garments and join layers together for warmth. It was its history and humble roots as embroidery of the working people that appealed to me as a modern embroiderer.

Traditionally Kogin would have been worked on blue fabric in white thread. This can be very difficult to see, so for charting purposes and to save eye strain the second design has been stitched on white fabric in blue thread. Nowadays coloured threads are frequently used.

There are many different Kogin designs on the Blackwork Journey website in 'Charts' and 'E-books' to explore and the patterns can be worked on Zweigart evenweave or Aida fabrics using a variety of threads.

*\*If you would like to try stitching a small Kogin design you will find one at the end of the Blog.*



CH0422 Neko No Ashi



CH9352 Aomori Gold

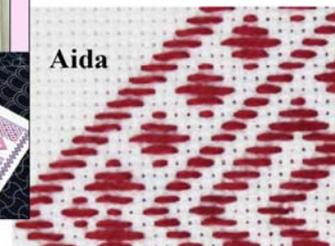
*Aomori Gold  
Kogin design*



CH0395 Kogin Conundrum

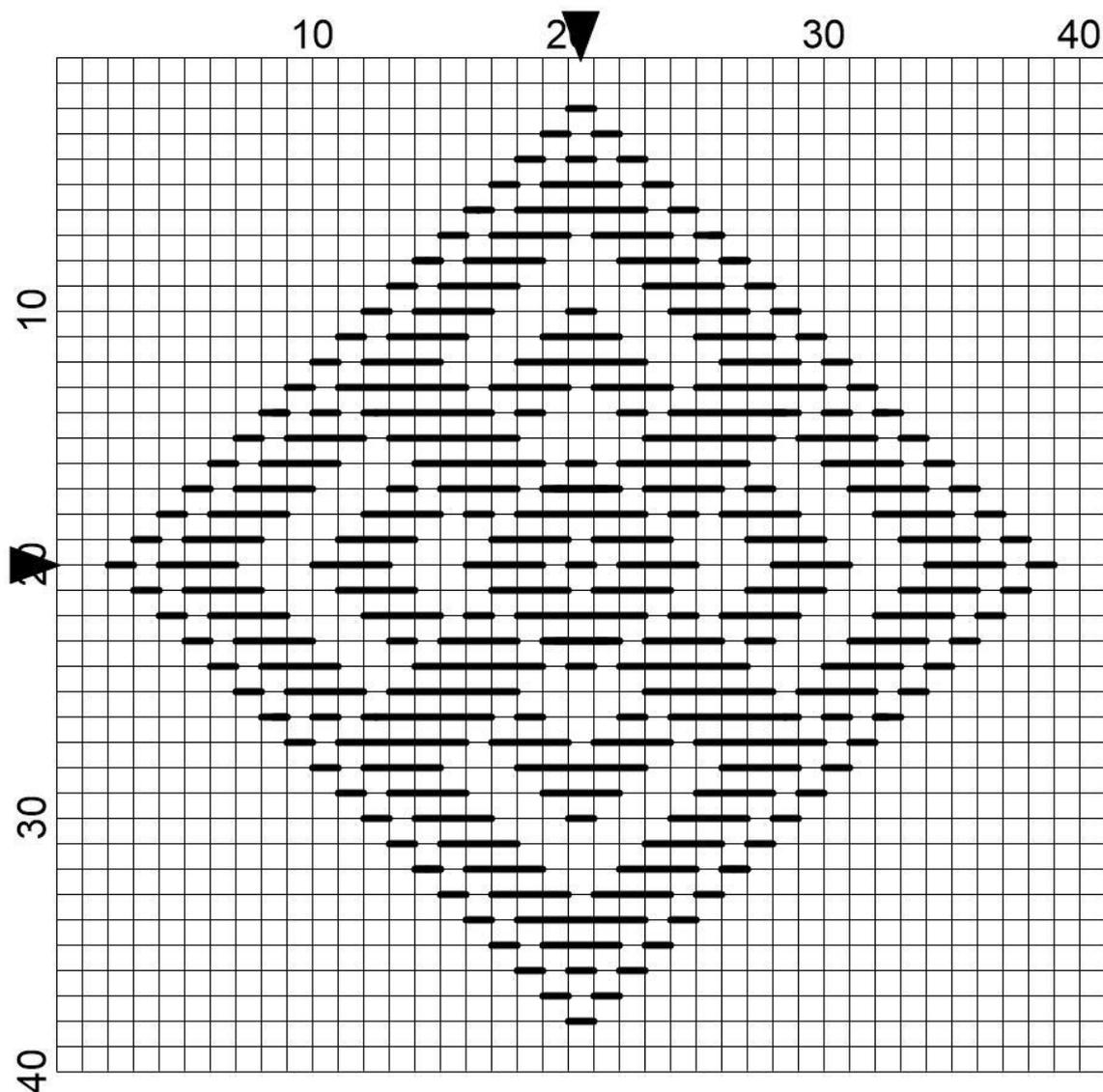


Evenweave



Aida

If you are new to pattern darning, starting with a small piece is a good way of becoming familiar with the technique. If a frame is not used be careful not to pull the stitches too tight as they will pucker the fabric. More than one stitch can be on the needle at any one time. It is stitched in rows along the weft of the fabric.



**Single Kogin motif suitable for a card, brooch or necklace**

**Design Area:** 2.64 x 2.57 inches, 37 x 36 stitches

**Material:** Zweigart 28 count evenweave, or 16 or 18 count Aida 6 x 6 inches to allow for framing

**Chart Key** DMC stranded floss blue or chosen colour. Use four strands.

No 28 Tapestry needle

**Method:**

1. Count from the centre to the left hand side. Start at the arrow and work across the complete row on the weft of the fabric. At the end of each row turn and work the next row.
2. Once the top half has been completed, turn and work the second half.
3. Place face down on a soft towel and press lightly. Mount as desired!

I hope you have enjoyed this month's Blog. If you have any queries please contact me at;  
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Happy stitching, *Liz*