Weaving with Rags: 3 Free Rag-Weaving Patterns
2-SHAFT, 4-SHAFT, OR 6-SHAFT PROJECT

DINAH ROSE

Sakiori: recycling something old into something new

SAKIORI—JAPANESE RAG WEAVING WITH FABRIC STRIPS CUT FROM OLD KIMONO FABRIC—ORIGINATED IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY TO MAKE FARM VESTS AND OBIS.

Kimono fabric is too beautiful to waste, even when too worn to be used (many sources for old kimonos are available online; see www.ichiroya.com, for example). One kimono is enough for one vest, and the kimono collar band can be used to trim the vest front.

The fabric for this vest is woven using a 6-shaft warp-rep draft. The warp threads are spaced so far apart, however, that the pattern created by the warp shows only slightly. A very similar effect can be woven on two or four shafts. For other warp-rep drafts to use with kimono rag wefts, see Joanne Tallarovic in Resources, page 3.

One of the two alternating warp colors should be similar to the kimono; the other should contrast (the “pattern” color). Light blue warp threads in this vest create a subtle light-blue motif on a dark-blue background.

Kimono fabric is about 14½” inches wide and rectangular when the stitching is removed (any extra fabric is usually turned under, tucked, or included in a seam rather than trimmed off). Kimonos are easy to take apart since they are usually handstitched with long stitches that can be removed for cleaning. You can use commercial fabric for similar vest, of course.
Wind the warp alternating 1 Blue Jay end with 1 Ink Blue end and thread the loom on two, four, or six shafts using your preferred warping method. To prepare the rag weft, first remove all stitching from the kimono. Press the fabric. Cut lengthwise into ½” strips, saving the collar band (usually an 8” wide strip of fabric) to use for the collar band on the vest. (I didn’t use interfacing for the collar band but doubled it to give it body the way it is doubled in the kimono.) Wind the strips onto a ski shuttle, overlapping the ends.

Begin and end the vest fabric with 1” plain weave using doubled 5/2 Ink Blue pearl cotton. Weave the pattern alternating a single strand of Ink Blue 5/2 cotton with the rag weft following the treadling in your selected draft.

Remove the fabric from the loom and machine zigzag or serge raw edges. Machine wash and dry fabric. (I do this even with silk kimono fabrics, using the gentle cycle on my washing machine and the low setting on my dryer.) Press well.

RESOURCES
**Sewing the vest**

1. Place the new pattern on the woven fabric so that the weft runs vertically and the warp horizontally. Run a line of Fray Check on the fabric along the edge of the pattern piece and allow to dry. Cut out the piece just outside the Fray Check line and serge all cut edges with a serger, if available, otherwise machine straight stitch two rows. (A differential feed on the serger is helpful to keep the curved edges from rippling and stretching.) Handle the fabric gently so as not to put stress on the cut edges. Sew shoulder seams with right sides together; press.

2. Measure the complete front edge and cut a strip a few inches longer than this measurement from the collar band of the kimono (or use a 7 1/2” wide strip of fabric). Fold this in half lengthwise and press. Stitch with right sides together to the front and neck edge of the vest with a 1/4” seam allowance, leaving 1” at each hem end unstitched. Press the seam, fold away from garment, and press again.

3. Now finish the armhole and hem in one of the following ways: 1) Turn the armholes under 3/4” and bottom edges under 1” and machine stitch (as for this vest). 2) Using the sleeves of the kimono (or extra fabric), make a continuous bias strip 2” wide to encase the edges (for directions for making a continuous bias strip, see *Handwoven*, March/April 1995, page 55, or check out the several good sources available online). Press one edge of the bias strip under 1/4”. Sew to the outside edges of vest, right sides together with a 1/4” seam allowance, press seam, and press bias strip away from garment. Fold so the bias strip encases the edge, showing on the outside and overlapping the stitching line with the folded edge of the strip on the inside. Stitch on the front of the garment in the ditch of the seam, catching the folded edge of the bias strip inside in the stitching. 3) Sew a purchased bias tape to the outside edges of the armhole and bottom of vest, press, turn to the inside, and stitch by hand or machine.

4. Finish stitching the collar band to the front edges. Fold the ends of the collar band right sides together and sew bottom seam, trim excess fabric, turn, and press. Fold collar band to the inside so that the folded edge just covers the stitching line. Stitch through all layers on the outside in the ditch of the seam, catching the fold of the turned-under collar band inside. Press. Enjoy wearing your Sakiori vest!

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d. (top) and e (bottom). Other vests made from recycled kimono fabrics
I wanted to do a rep rug after looking at the book Rep by Catharina Carlstedt and Ylva Kongbäck in our guild library. At the same time, I was drooling over the wonderful examples of warp-faced block weaving done by Lynne Giles and Bryn Pinchin in A Rug Weaver’s Source Book. I wanted to use some cotton carpet warp I already had but didn’t have enough for the 36 ends per inch suggested for the rep weave. After some calculations, my project worked out to a “two-thirds rep” sett of 24 ends per inch (epi).

With only 24 epi for my warp, my weft was going to show through the warp a little bit. I wanted the weft to complement the warp, so I purchased 6 yards of 100% cotton fabric. After prewashing the fabric, I cut it into 2” wide strips about 6 yards long and folded and ironed the strips like bias tape.

The thin weft can be any coordinating novelty yarn with compatible fiber. I like bumpy bouclé yarns with little tufts here and there for textural effect. Whatever you choose, the size does need to be considerably thinner than the thick weft. [Ed note: Rep weaver Rosalie Neilson recommends that the thick weft be at least seven times the thickness of the thin weft.]

A Rug Weaver’s Source Book offers suggestions for measuring and warping your loom, or you can follow your own preferred method. Before beginning to weave the rug, be sure that the threading is correct. With warp this closely sett, make sure your sheds open cleanly and the warps don’t stick to each other. My loom requires
1. Warp color order

<table>
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<th>Color</th>
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<th>12x</th>
<th>48x</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parakeet</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>12x</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Draft

<table>
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<th>6x</th>
<th>24x</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P B</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B P</td>
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<td>P</td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P B</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R P</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rows</th>
<th>24x</th>
<th>6x</th>
<th>24x</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R red</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B black</td>
<td>10x</td>
<td>2x</td>
<td>2x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P Parakeet</td>
<td>red</td>
<td>4x</td>
<td>4x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* thick weft</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* thin weft</td>
<td>*</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The variations of this rug are endless. You can use two or four colors of warp instead of three and still get the look of blocks. The thin weft could be a contrasting color instead of a coordinating one. The weight of the fabric and the width of the strips will make a difference. With all these choices, this is my favorite rug to weave.

RESOURCES


**NOTES**

Rep Weaving with Rags

- When starting the first pick of thick fabric weft, leave a tail of 5” hanging out of the shed. Miter that end (cut it at an angle), open the same shed, pull the end over an edge thread to secure it, and tuck it into the shed. Tuck in the tail the same way at the end of the last thick weft pick.
- Lay each weft into place straight across the warp to keep the selvedges straight.
- If the sheds aren’t clear when you treadle, you can clear the shed with a pick-up stick or sword, or you can retie each shaft to a separate treadle and raise the shafts separately for each shed.
- As you weave, miter the ends of the strips of fabric as you add them to the rug, overlapping the mitered ends inside the sheds. You could also prepare longer strips of fabric weft by using fabric glue to attach the shorter strips together before winding them on the ski shuttle.

**STRUCTURE**

Warp rep.

**EQUIPMENT**

4-shaft loom, 24” weaving width; 12-dent reed; three 24” stick shuttles, 1 ski shuttle.

**YARNS**

Warp: 8/4 cotton carpet warp (1,600 yd/lb; Maysville), Parakeet, 864 yd; black, 144 yd; red, 720 yd. Thick weft: 2” wide strips of washed red print cotton fabric cut lengthwise along the grain, 115 yd (takes 6 yd of 40” wide fabric).

Thin weft: Bouclé or novelty knitting yarn (255 yd/5 oz skein; 816 yd/lb; Bernat Soft Bouclé), Folksong, 99 yd.

Weft for hems: 8/4 carpet warp, Parakeet, 6 yd; red, 6 yd.

**WARP LENGTH**

576 ends, 3 yd long (allows 19” for take-up, 27” for loom waste; loom waste includes fringe).

**SETS**

Warp: 24 epi (2/dent in a 12-dent reed). Woven width: 1 rug 24” x 55½” plus 3½” braided fringe at each end.

**DIMENSIONS**

Width in the reed: 24”. Finished size: 1 rug 24” x 55½” plus 3½” braided fringe at each end.
Prepare the T-shirts for weft by cutting across the T-shirt at ½" intervals to make loops, then chaining the loops together. (For directions with photos, see page 10 or Resources). Note that the ½" thickness will be doubled when you weave because of the loops.

Without some of the unused calamari yarn and used it on a warp I was working on—and finally found the perfect marriage of material and structure. Through additional research and after the production of many T-shirt rugs, I have tailored the calamari technique to best prepare the yarn for use as weft. Tom Knisely included an excellent photo tutorial of my technique in his 2014 book, Weaving Rag Rugs (see Resources).

I hope this perfect marriage will soon brighten your home, too.

RESOURCES
**STRUCTURE**
Plain weave.

**EQUIPMENT**
2- or 4-shaft loom, 28” weaving width; 12-dent reed; 1 ski or rag shuttle; 1 boat shuttle.

**YARNS**
Warp: 8/4 cotton carpet warp (1,600 yd/lb, The Mannings), Black #02, Slate #13, Dark Gray #60, Lime-stone Gray #36, Pale Blue #91, 115 yd each; Purple #25 and Lime #90, 54 yd each; Kentucky Cardinal #223, Burnt Orange #18, and Parakeet #48, 50 yd each.
Hem weft: 8/4 cotton carpet warp (used doubled), Dark Gray #60, 124 yd.
Rag weft: assorted T-shirts, approximately equivalent to 7–9 large adult shirts, cut into ½” wide loops and joined (see sidebar), about 160 yd.

**OTHER SUPPLIES**
Sharp fabric scissors or rotary cutter.

**WARP LENGTH**
332 ends 2½ yd long (allows 36” for take-up and loom waste).

**SETTS**
Warp: 12 ends per inch (1/dent in a 12-dent reed).
Weft: 12 ppi for hems (carpet warp used doubled); 4 ppi for rag weaving.

**DIMENSIONS**
Width in the reed: 27½”.
Woven length (measured under tension on the loom): 54”.
Finished size after washing: one hemmed rug 27” × 48”.
Preparing the T-Shirt Yarn

• Selecting T-shirts: You need to make a design decision as to whether or not you want bits and pieces of screen-printing or letters to show in your rug. I normally choose T-shirts on which the design ends above the armpit seam, so there won’t be a design on any of my loops. Also consider your colors. The most common T-Shirt color is white, but a white rug has limited uses because it shows dirt quickly. It can, however, make a nice bath mat. If you are going to use colored T-shirts, think about how you want the colors to show up in your final rug. For example, you could link the shirts together in sequence, one shirt at a time, for a striped rug, or mix all the loops together for a hit-or-miss rug.
• Machine wash and dry the T-shirts.
• Lay one shirt out flat on your cutting surface, matching the front and back hems and sleeves together as evenly as possible. Cut straight across the bottom just above the hem. Discard the thick hem loop, unless you want to save the hems to do an all-hem rug later.
• At ½” intervals, cut straight across the body of the T-shirt, through both layers, until you reach the armpit seam.
• Cut off and discard the sleeve hems. Cut the sleeves into ½” loops, the same as the body.
• Once you have cut up all your shirts and have decided on a color order (or lack thereof), it’s time to join the loops. Lay two loops out so they overlap slightly, with the right-hand loop on top. Lift the overlapped end of the left loop up through the right-hand loop, then reach under and through it to grasp the other end of the right-hand loop. Pull this end through, stretching both loops tightly as they lock together. This is the important step: As you pull the loops, the stockinette stitch of the T-shirt fabric curls back along itself and loses much of its elasticity. You are left with a much longer and thinner loop, but one that has much more stability as weft material.
• Continue joining new loops, pulling each one tight as you add it to the chain. Roll your finished weft material into a ball to keep it under control and for ease of winding your shuttle later. Two approximately volleyball-sized balls of yarn will make one rug.