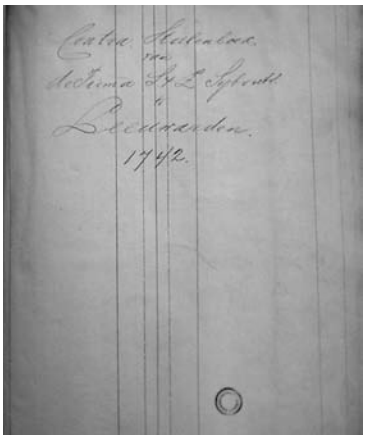
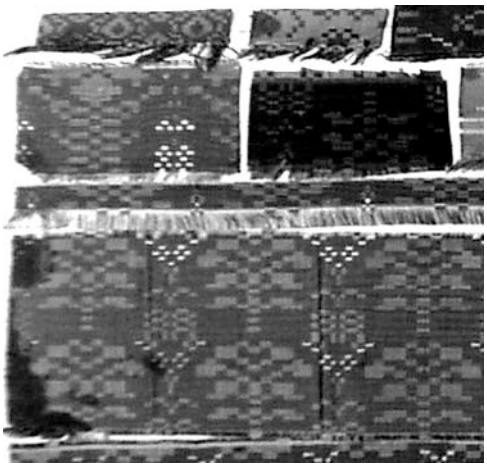
The Highlights of Gros de Toers
by Augusta Uhlenbeck



1. Het Digtenboekje sample book

Simultaneously with the research of "Het Digtenboekje" in Haarlem, Netherlands, dated in the year 1752, I studied a Frisian[1] contra-sample book dated in 1742 from the Frisian firm S. and L. Seybouts. This book is also filled with woven samples. There are no technical explanations and only initials from the maker(s)[2]. Some names of the fabrics were mentioned: Caroken, Peruviennes, Caffa, Italian Glacé, Small Damask.

My attention was focused on this sample (Figure 2.) with "highlights" and called "Gros de Toer". The name Gros de Toers is a corruption of Toers, the first French town where silk was woven (around the end of the 15th century[3]), before Lyon. It is also the French name of silk-woven warp rep. If not woven in silk, it is called cannelé. The sample gave me the idea that it was a damask structure. The glimmering and shining highlights are the warp floats of the Gros de Toers and were also known under the name "mirrors" in the Dutch weavers' workshop during the second part of the 18th century.



2. Fabric with "high-lights" of the contra-sample book Seybouts.

Looking more closely, you discover that it isn't a damask and that the Gros de Toers is not a real Gros de Toers. The sample is what we call now a figured "colored pattern", or a "color and weave-effect" structure. In the Dutch language area during the eighteenth century it was called "Cadrille"[4] and woven on a draw/pulley loom.

I guess that nobody is using a draw loom with 22 shafts nowadays, but every shaft loom can be drawn-in like a draw loom. The advantage is the warp threads have space to work, the threads will not rub together, and you need to think about only half of the tie-up. Once you have half of it, the other half is automatically the opposite part of it.

The Design and the Blocks: Analyzing the design from the sample book.

Looking at Figure 3 which is a draft of the design in Figure 2, the number of different blocks is: 11 in the warp direction and 15 in the weft direction. Every block has a minimum of two shafts: Eleven blocks will need 22 shafts. Every treadling block will need two treadles. Fifteen treadling blocks will need 30 treadles.

Warp and weft/colors/threads/fabric.

There is one warp in two different colors. (For example: one blue and one gray).That's what the French called "un fil à fil"; in the old Dutch manuscript it has the name of "oog om oog". The French talk about the color of the thread; the Dutch about the eye in the heddle.

There are two wefts in two different colors and thicknesses: one thin one and one thick. (For example: green and white)

To create the glimmering "mirrors" you need a shining yarn in the warp. Silk would be the best, but it is expensive. Try to replace it in mercerized fine cotton, viscose, etc. The fabric is reversible.

How was it done?

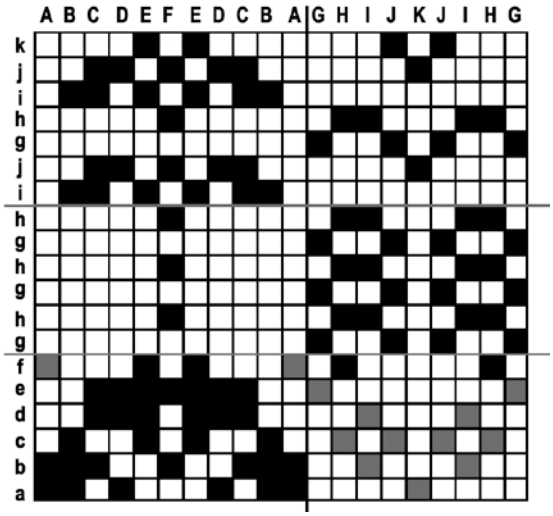
- You had to determine the threading, and whether to use a draw loom or a shaft loom.

- You had to determine the width and the height of your blocks, depending upon the yarn you use.

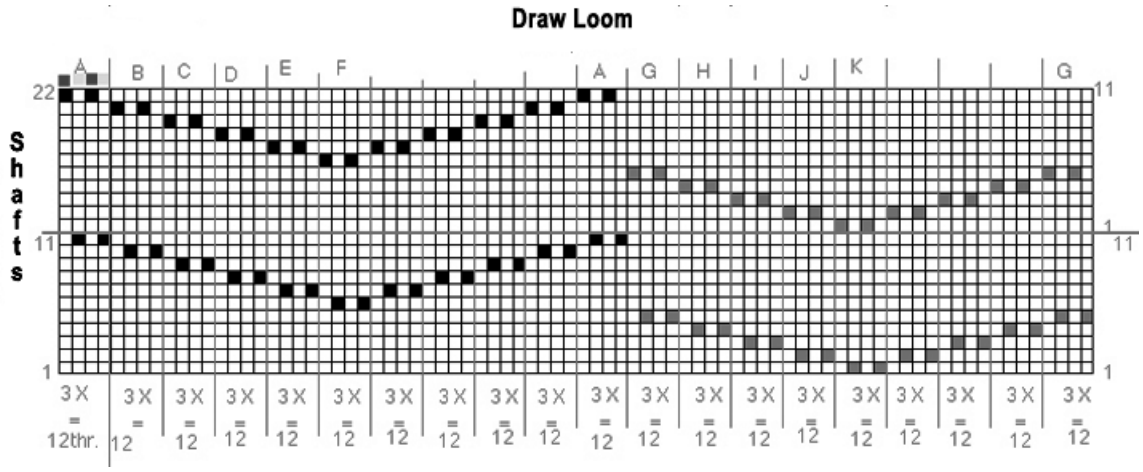
If using the drawing-in and the tie-up from the draw loom, work as follows from Figure 4.

Before thinking about a tie-up, you need a design. A little test design. Or: how to think in opposites?

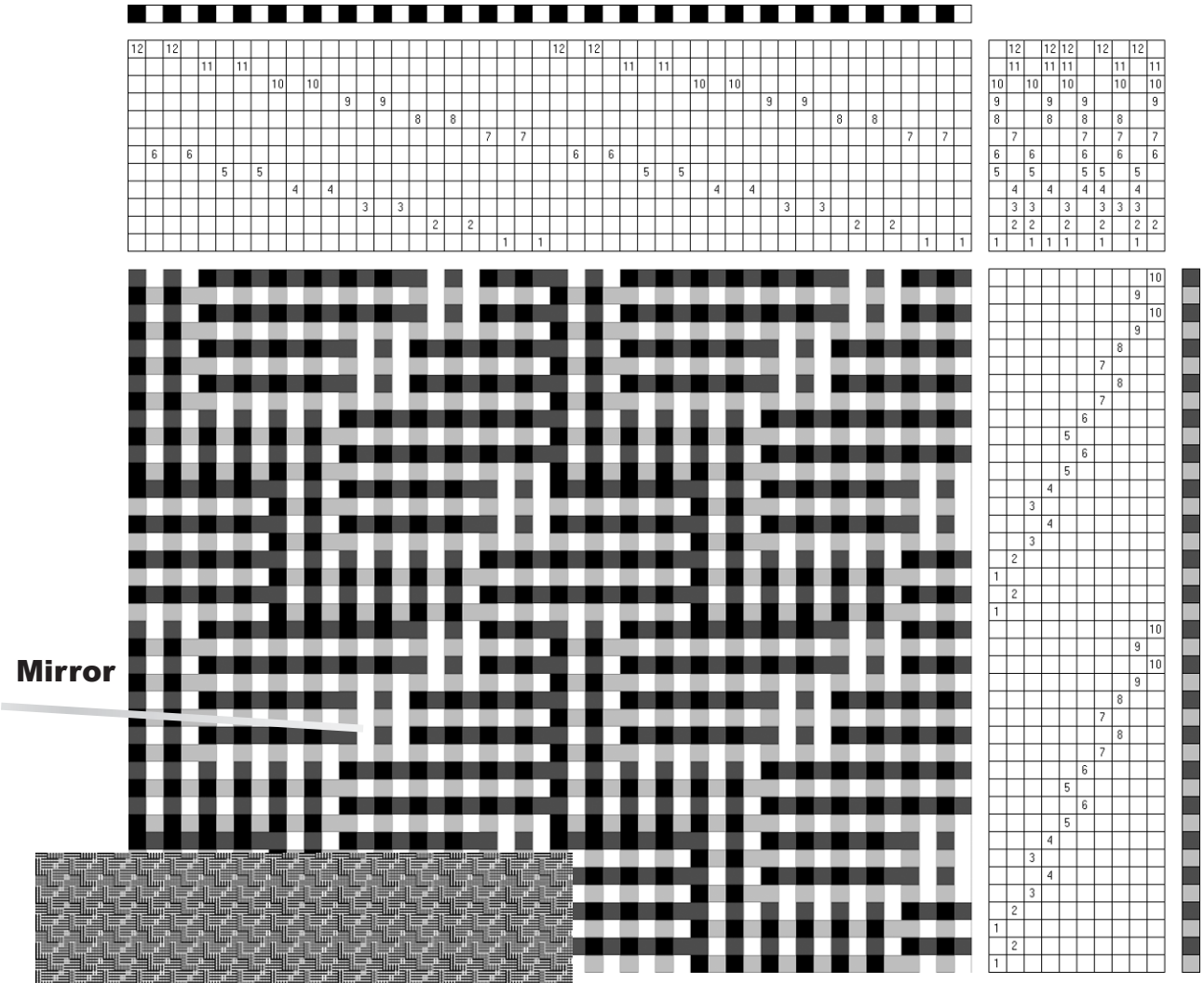
I created a test design. Looking at



3. Analysis of section of Gros de Toers design



4. Draw loom diagram



5. Test Design (above) and
6. Simulation of cloth produced in Figure 5 (left)

Figure 5, creating the whole tie-up, you select the upper part (above the line in Figure 5), change it into the negative/opposite (what is black becomes white, and vice versa) below the line. In the upper part the warp-shaft is down.The whiter areas in the cloth are the “mirrors”.

Or, you take the design (Figure 5). Weavers having problems with the warp and weft direction should clearly notice the place of each of them. There are predominantly white areas, black areas, and gray areas, difficult to see in the draft but more visible in Figure 6, the fabrics. The different thread sizes and colors form warp ribs, with floats of five threads in the warp direction, where the mirrors are, and two floats in the weft direction.

If you need, or believe that it is necessary to have selvedges, you need two more shafts. That gives 24 shafts. One thread will be on shaft 24; the other on 12. That gives us the following for the original design, as shown in Figures 7 and 8.

sFootnotes:

[1] Friesland in the North East of the Netherlands.

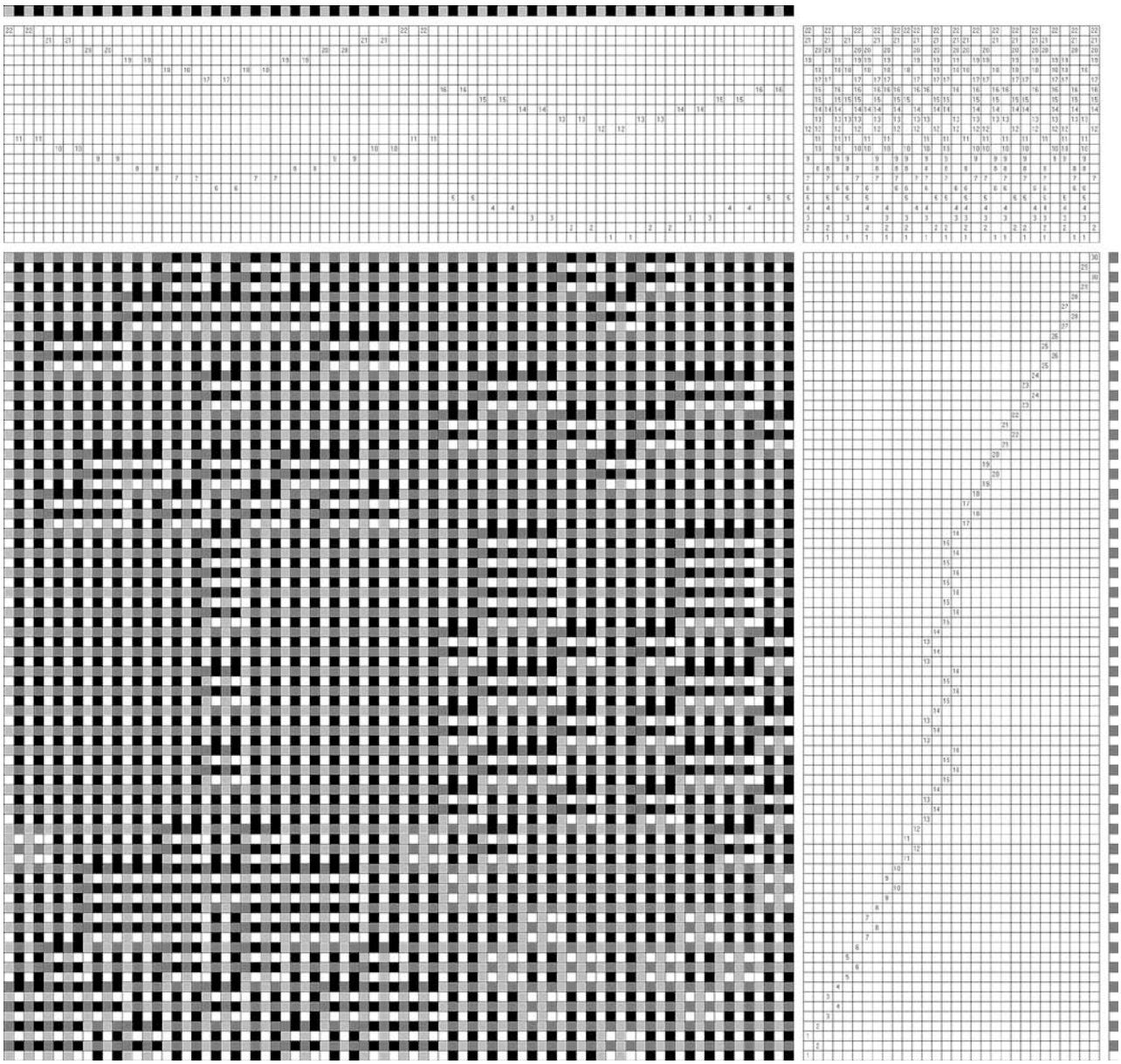
[2] In sample books you see initials of the weavers/workshops. The merchant has a notebook with the whole name. Example: Complex weavers = CW ; if the notebook is not available, you will never known the names.

[3] La Soi en Touraine. Conseil general d'Indre et Loire. Association "Toers City de la soie". ISBN 2-85443-409-9

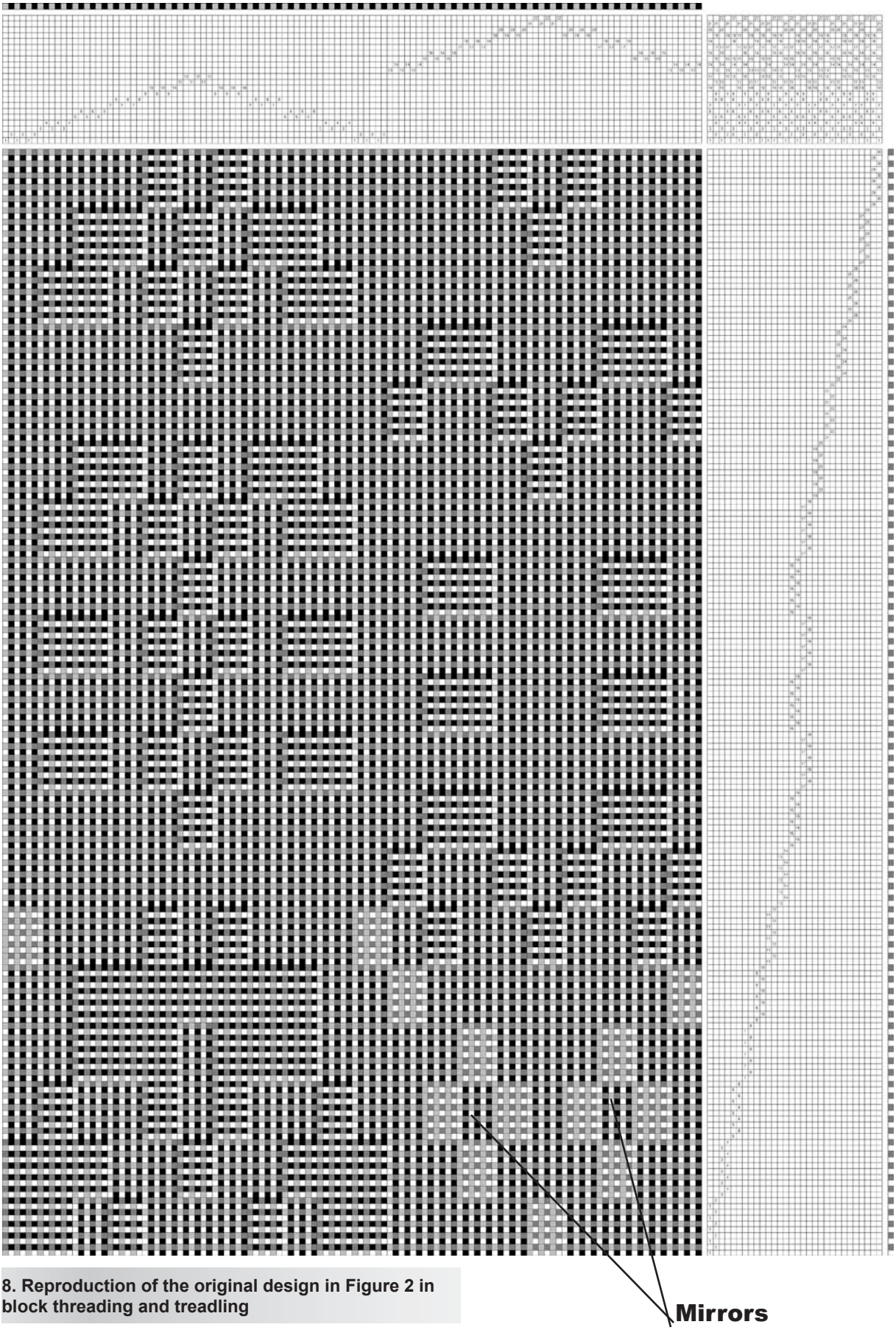
[4] Uhlenbeck, Augusta. "Cruzaden and Quadriljes: An Eighteenth Century Dutch Woven Poem". *Complex Weavers Journal,* No. 84, page 46, June 2006.

Thanks to Gieneke Arnolli, textile curator of " Het Friesmuseum", Leeuwarden (Nl).

Weaving designs: made by the author with Point Carré, Rennes. France. http://www.pointcarre.com



7. Reproduction of fabric in Figure 2: The whole plan, with the reduced threading and treadling



8. Reproduction of the original design in Figure 2 in block threading and treadling