

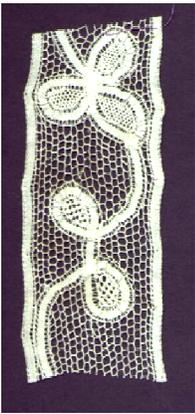
BOBBIN TAPE LACES

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I have been asked to explain “The Differences Among Bobbin Tape Laces.” So, first, it is important that we define exactly what Bobbin Tape Laces are.

Confusion arises, again, because of terminology used in describing lace. We are NOT considering the laces made with a length of machine-made tape combined with bobbin stitches or with needle and thread. Here is one such simple tape lace. This use of the term tape lace would also include such laces as Battenberg, “modern lace”, Branscombe. This is the sort of lace which is described in a recent IOLI article.* This is NOT Bobbin Tape Lace.

One lace term can have so many different meanings. For example, at one of our lace gatherings, a lacemaker working from one book asked innocently “Exactly what IS whole stitch”, precipitating a discussion among us about our understanding of that term as c-t-c-t, or ctc or tctc, depending on which book or teacher first introduced us to making lace.



Machine Tape Lace

So, to be clear, we only want to discuss the type of tape lace made ENTIRELY WITH BOBBINS. Even in discussing ONLY this use of the term “tape lace”, confusion arises. Various authors have tried to create a more uniform term to describe “tape lace”. One valiant attempt is made by Veronica Sorenson when she rejects the term entirely in reference to bobbin lace, and substitutes “Braid Lace” for “Tape Lace”. She also uses the term “sectional lace” rather than “tape lace”. Other authors call this same category of bobbin lace “part lace”. Gillian Dye titles her book on Tape Lace “Bobbin Lace Braid”.

Having put aside Machine Tape Lace, exactly what is meant by Bobbin Tape Lace? As a lacemaker, you might not have given it much thought, but you already know that Bobbin Lace can be structured in two different ways. The FIRST type, continuous or “straight” lace includes all those bobbin laces made in one piece by one worker, who creates mesh and motif at the same time from a pattern. The worker hangs on a certain number of bobbins as the work begins, and uses those same bobbins to make the whole lace. No bobbins are added, and none thrown out (generally).** Also included in this first classification, continuous lace or straight lace, are guipure laces.

The SECOND type of bobbin lace, which is the type we want to define, is made in parts or sections or tapes (to use the dreaded word again), which are joined together later. More than one worker can make the parts, and indeed this was the “speedy” method used when lace was an industry, NOT a hobby. Nowadays, of course, we lacemakers rarely work that way: one lacemaker makes the parts and joins them or hooks them together with sewings or bars. That is, we are defining Bobbin Lace into two kinds by the way it is made, by its STRUCTURE.

To reiterate:

Some patterns are designed to be worked by one person using a specified number of bobbins to which none are added or thrown out during the working. These are called Straight Laces or Continuous Laces. (Once again, terminology. The term “straight” here does not designate the shape of the pattern.

The lace can be worked in any shape—circle, square, rectangle, a heart, etc.) Continuous lace would be a better term, but STRAIGHT is what is used to designate this first type of bobbin Lace.

Included among straight or continuous laces are the mesh-based laces such as

Torchon

Twist-net or Point ground lace (*such as Tonder, Bucks, Bayeaux, Chantilly, Blonde*)

Mechlin

Flanders

Binche

Valenciennes

Paris

where the mesh and motif are worked with the same bobbins.

and also included in the continuous or “straight” category are Guipure laces including

Cluny

Maltese

LePuy

Bedfordshire

Some of these Guipure laces have bars or mesh added later as joinings.

But today we are NOT considering these continuous laces. We are considering only the second type of Bobbin Lace; the sectional laces, part laces, free laces, which some will persist in calling Tape Laces. And, to add to the confusion in terminology, some authors, even some websites, want to further divide this second category (tape lace, part lace, free lace) into two separate kinds, noting that some of the laces here really do consist only of a narrow clothstitch tape which does look “snaky” and meanders all around to create the lace, while other tape laces also have a basic tape shape, but have other elements added. However, this is a needless division. Laces are either (1)continuous (straight) or (2) Part (tape). As one author remarks “Honiton lacemakers, for instance, are horrified to have their lace called tape lace: BUT IT IS.!” Parenthetically, Pat Earnshaw's excellent ID book is one which treats Tape Laces of the meandering type as a separate category, which can be confusing.

So, at last, we come to a list of Part Laces also confusingly termed Tape Laces. These designs are made in segments or parts which are connected either as one works, or put together later. To repeat: So several lacemakers, theoretically, could make parts which could later be integrated into a piece of lace. And historically, when lace was an industry, not a hobby, this is the way many laces were done. Nowadays, of course, as hobbyists, we make those individual parts ourselves and connect them as we work, but we still make them in parts. These Part Laces, made in Sections, are also called Free Lace, sectional lace, TAPE LACE, and include:

Russian

Idrija

Schneeberg

Hinojosa



Russian Tape Lace (Pattern by Bridget Cook, laced by Doris O'Neill.)

Milanese
Flemish
Cantu
Rococo

and also the Flower Laces (*Bruges Bloemwork, Mirecourt, Brussels, Duchesse, Sluis Duchesse, Withof Duchesse, Rosaline, Honiton*)

And, finally to address the original issue: Differences in Bobbin Tape Laces... they differ in country of origin, in starts and finishes, in techniques, in motifs, in size, in thread size, in possible interpretation by lacemakers, and any other way you can think of. But they are all Part Laces, free laces, sectional laces, non-continuous laces, and yes, TAPE LACES. To elaborate on just a familiar few:

The tape laces developed in different ways because they were made in many different countries. Some are named after the places where they were originally made. Russian tape with its many complicated fillings takes some concentrated effort to work, and we are especially indebted to Bridget Cook for her comprehensive study of this tape lace. I do think the out-of-print Peggy Martin book is a good place to start before tackling this lace, since it covers many techniques and joinings very simply.



Idrija Tape Lace

Idrija lace, defined by its meandering design, is less complicated initially. Bridget Cook wrote a book on this lace also. And there are several other Idrija books..The lace can be identified quickly by the tape which seems to lack pinholes on one side. Some Idrija tape lace has added elements.

And so sometimes does another tape lace, Schneeberg. Schneeberg is a more recently developed tape lace. Developed in Germany, Lia Baumeister's name is associated with instruction manuals on this lace.



Schneeberg Tape Lace (Pattern by Lia Baumeister)

To summarize:

The simplest way to differentiate the two types of Bobbin Lace is to name all laces which are NOT continuous, by one of these terms, whichever you prefer: PART LACE, FREE LACE, SECTIONAL LACE, or TAPE LACE. As for differences among them, techniques differ, motifs differ, the way each begins differs, the way each is ended off differs, and that's the fun of learning how to do them all.

*IOLI vol 2, number 3, Spring 2012

**Gimp sometimes an exception

BOBBIN LACE, CLASSIFIED BY STRUCTURE

STRAIGHT LACE (continuous lace)

- Torchon
- Twist-net laces
 - Bucks
 - Tonder
 - Bayeaux
 - Chantilly
 - Blonde
- Mechlin
- Flanders
- Valenciennes
- Binche
- Paris
- Guipure lace
 - Cluny
 - Maltese
 - LePuy
 - Bedfordshire
- etc.

TAPE LACE (part lace, free lace, sectional lace “braid lace”)

- Russian
- Idrija
- Schneeberg
- Hinojosa
- Milanese
- Cantu
- Rococo
- Flower laces
 - Bruges Bloemwork
 - Duchesse
 - Withof
 - Rosaline
 - Honiton
- etc.

Note: Pat Earnshaw identifies TAPE Laces as “trail laces in which the design is formed by a wholestitch band which curls a snaky path within the lace. Generally, they are non-continuous”.

Note: Virginia Bath calls some free laces “pieced lace”.

Note: Virginia Sorenson calls all tape lace “braid lace”