

Zeitschrift: Swiss textiles [English edition]
Herausgeber: Swiss office for the development of trade
Band: - (1946)
Heft: 1

Artikel: Schappe
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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-798968>

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SCHAPPE

Schappe or spun silk is the yarn obtained by the spinning of silk waste which, in its turn, is either naturally discharged, that is to say produced by cocoons but unfit for reeling, or waste produced during spinning.

Raw silk or “raws”, as it is often called, is of course reeled off or unwound from cocoons of the *Bombycidae* silk-moth, the *Bombyx mori* being the most typical of the species. The filaments drawn from the cocoons are combined into very long lengths, 3 to 8 cocoons being unwound simultaneously. The cocoons used for the reeling process are previously placed in an oven where the chrysalids they contain are killed by the heat. Were this not done, the chrysalid might reach maturity and pierce the cocoon to find its way into the world in the form of a moth. A certain percentage of cocoons are reserved for reproduction, however, and the pierced cocoons of the breeding moth still represent a high commercial value. These imperfect cocoons are subjected to the discharging process whereby the silk gum or natural sericin of the worm is removed ; the filaments are then combed and spun into yarns in exactly the same way as other discontinuous textile fibres such as cotton or wool.

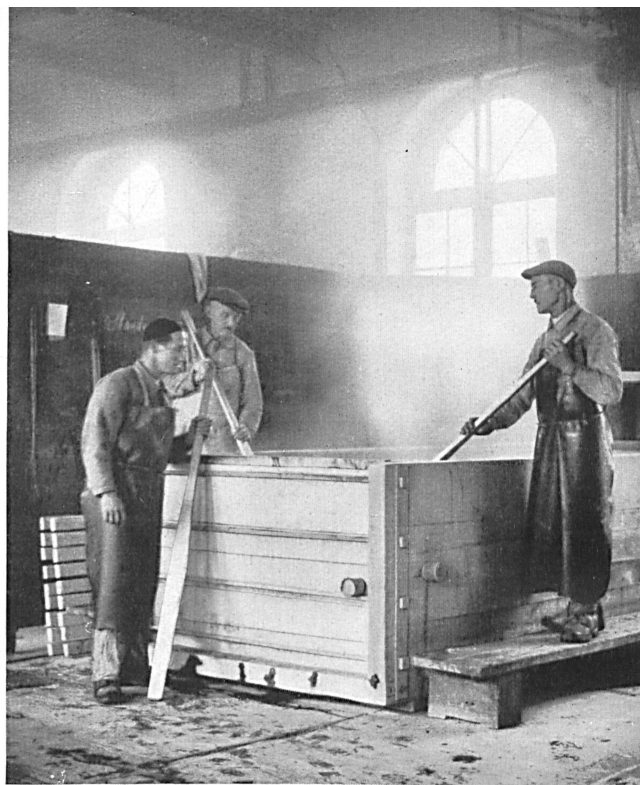
This treatment of waste has been practised simultaneously with the reeling process since time immemorial and it is indeed the method still adopted to-day by the natives of certain countries. One may even presume that it is the more ancient method and that the reeling of silk in the manner we have described was a later development. Spun silk or schappe may be considered as the predecessor of reeled silk.



Sorting the cocoons.

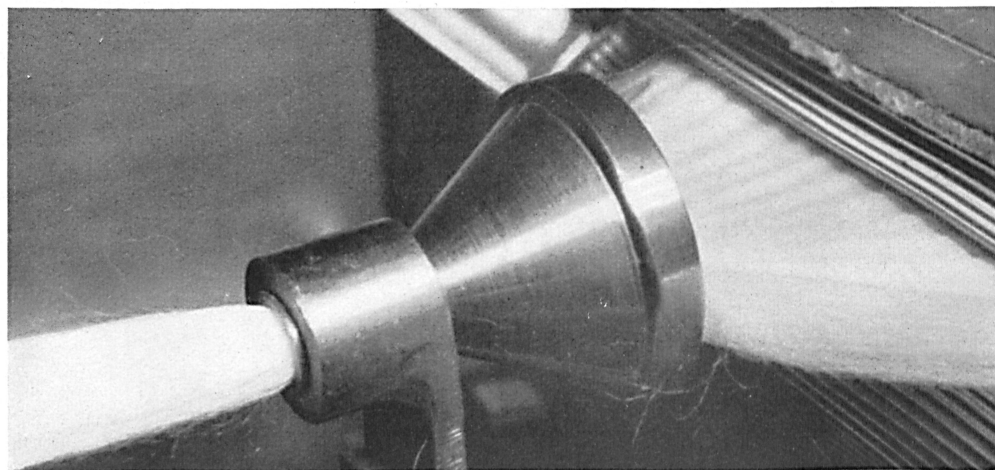


Arrivals of silk waste.

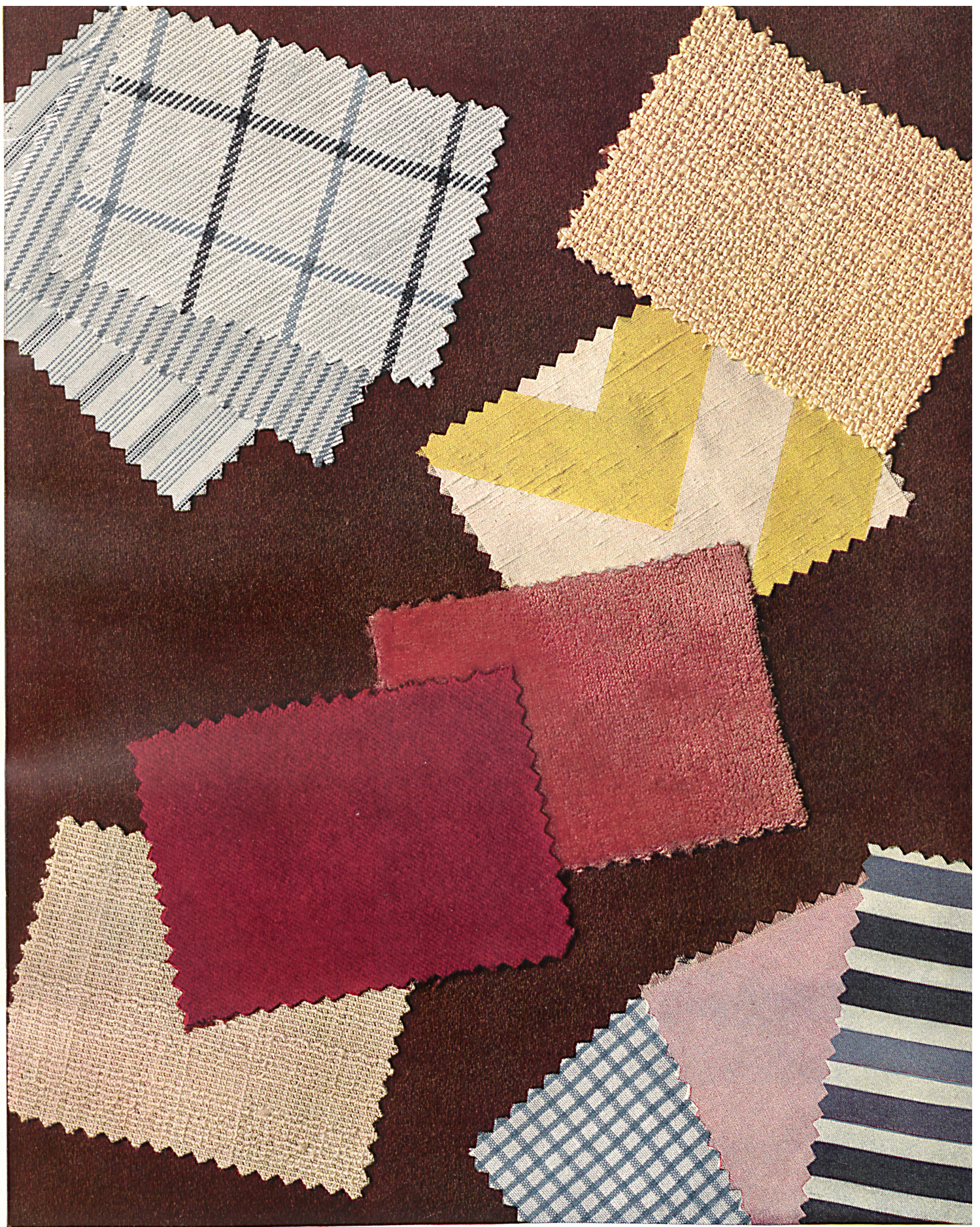


Boiling silk waste for the removal of gum
(the discharging process).

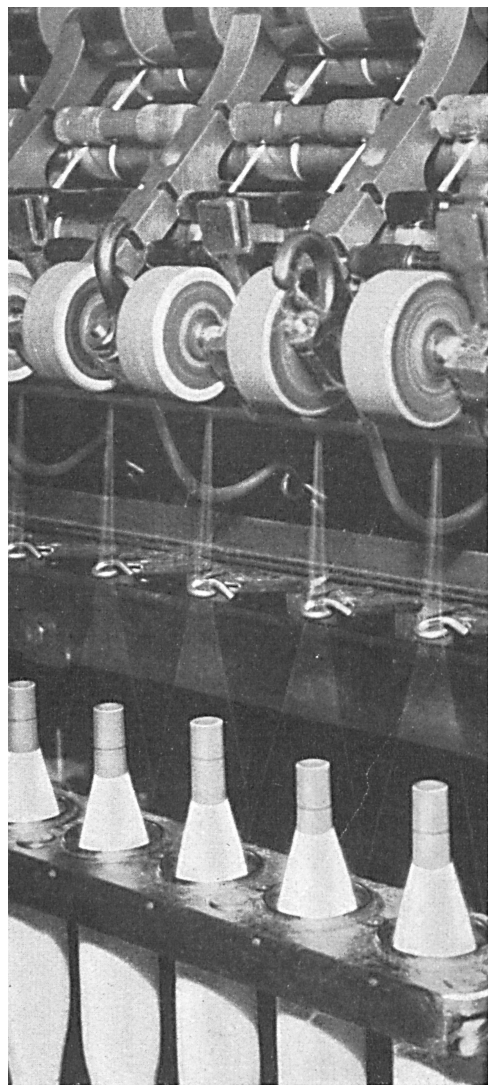
As we have seen, schappe is produced from the pierced cocoons of breeding moths, but other types of cocoons unfit for reeling are also used : those damaged by insects or rats which have broken the filament ; ‘double’ cocoons, those in which two worms have enclosed themselves ; unhealthy cocoons. The floss silk or first filament whereby the worm suspends its cocoon is also used for the production of schappe. On the other hand, all silk spinning involves waste which can be classed as follows : *frisons* or cocoons which have been roughly opened without being reeled ; *curlies*, a matted sort of silk waste ; *punjam books*, the most lustrous of silk wastes ; *bassinets*, *pelettes* and *pelades* or *ricottis* are also by-products of silk spinning. *Gum waste* is produced by the reeling, throwing and weaving processes. Apart from the *Bombyx mori*, other species of silk-worms, half cultivated or wild, are used for the production of the so-called *wild silks* : the brown *Chinese* and *Indian tussahs*. These wild silks form an important source of supply for the spinning of schappe ; the pierced Chinese tussah cocoons and frisons in particular are extensively used.



Open sliver delivered by the drawing frame.

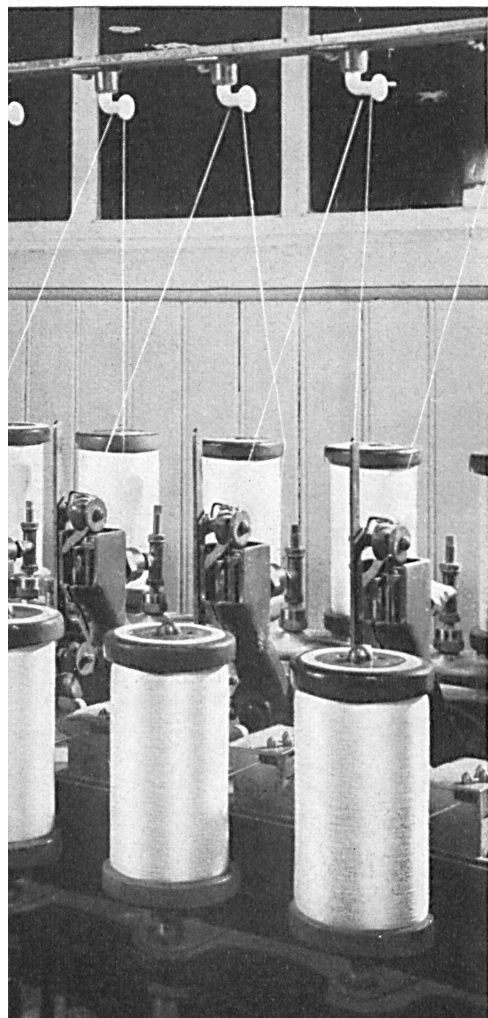


Spun silk fabrics.



Spinning.

Gassing.



The craft of spun silk is extremely ancient. Traces are found of its being practised by the Persians, Greeks and Arabs as early as the IXth and Xth centuries. During the Middle Ages the art of spinning silk waste was brought to Europe and introduced into Switzerland towards the middle of the XVIth century by religious refugees. At the turn of the XVIIth century schappe spinning was adopted in the region of the Lakes of Zurich and Lucerne, and it long remained a homecraft widely practised in these districts. At that time, silk waste was macerated, then combed and spun on a spinning wheel. It was in 1824 that the first mechanical plant for the spinning of schappe was established in Switzerland at Basle. Spun silk and tussah yarns produced in Switzerland are used for the weaving, either in the warp or the weft and sometimes in both, of the following materials : spun silk voiles, crêpes and crêpons, foulards and pongees, silk cloth (*toile de soie*), liberty and peau de soie satins, gaberdines, duvetines,



Spun silk in skeins, spun silk in cops, spun silk twist.

moires, linings, upholstery fabrics, ribbons, laces, lingerie fabrics and the various *pile fabrics* such as : velvet with spun silk pile, velours du nord, transparent chiffon velvets with spun silk wefts, spun silk plush, tussah plush (sealskin). Special types of yarn are also produced such as : sewing twists and silks, yarns for chenilles, decoration yarns for men's suitings, isolation yarns for electric wiring, bases for metal yarns (gold and silver), irregular yarns (periodical, slub, nibby, etc.).

(The information and illustrations used for the above article were obtained from a brochure recently published by Messrs. Société industrielle pour la Schappe, Basle. See page 116c of our present number).