

Chapter 12

Compound Tabby, Compound Twill And Other Warp-Backed Structures

Han weavers in China used warp-faced compound tabby in their cloth as early as the 2nd century B.C.E. Known as *jin*, the cloth is essentially a warp-faced structure with a series of two or more warp colors. It is woven with one weft, which is invisible if the sett is warp-faced enough. It allows imagery of different warp colors in the sequence, the cloth is reversible, with the image's color positions being interchanged. However, if the series has three or more warp colors (systems), then the face of the cloth will show motifs composed of one warp on top, with the remaining colors working on the back. The warp floats will be contained, so it can be used on both sides, but the back side will be more muted, without distinctions of image.

Compound Tabby

The structure is a four-pick sequence. A rib structure, or “tabby”, is the base of the structure. One pick lifts all of the odd repeats of warp colors, and sinks the even groups of warps, and another pick reverses this, sinking the odd warp color group and lifting the even warp color group. These picks are interspersed with picks that lift all of one warp system (i.e., all of one color). The warp color that is lifted will have a float that spans three wefts. With a drawloom, Han weavers used as many as 6 warp systems (i.e., colors in their design) in a fabric, but this was not a common practice.

We created samples of Warp-Faced Compound Tabby on a TC-1 loom using 5/2 cotton in the warp, sett at 30 epi. There was a sequence of four colors, and we choose to mimic the CMYK color system, thus cyan, magenta, yellow, and black were our warp colors.



12-1 Detail from Chinese *jin*