

ITO Iki & ITO Nui in the thread test

by Patricia Grabher

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Hello everyone!

By chance I became aware of the new IKI and NUI sewing and embroidery threads from ITO. The threads made of pure silk and made my sewing heart sing. As I also work professionally in the sewing industry as an expert for a Swiss sewing machine manufacturer, support classes as a sewing coach and organize sewing weekends, my curiosity about these two threads and their handling and usability was awakened immediately. Pure silk as sewing and even embroidery thread, is that even possible? ITO was so kind to send me a package, with a selection of both threads that I put through tests.



I would like to introduce you to the individual projects I made and share my experiences with ITO Iki and ITO Nui. Tips and tricks for processing are of course included in the different projects and techniques.

Did you know that ITO also offers a great range of fabrics? Some of the fabrics were also used in the projects that follow.

Have fun browsing through my sewing and embroidery projects,

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Embroidering with ITO Iki and ITO Nui

Artichoke motif with ITO Iki and ITO Nui

The first project I made was to embroider a tea towel with this beautiful artichoke motif. I sewed the tea towel, using the ITO fabric „Linen Cotton Semi Solid” (F312-05). The fabric is a linen-cotton mix and it is very light. For the embroidery pattern which measures 13 cm x 8 cm, I used both threads ITO Iki and ITO Nui in the embroidery machine. The texture of ITO Nui stands out more. ITO Iki is particularly suitable for shading. This is because ITO Nui is a spun and twisted silk that is a little less shiny and thicker (NM 2/60). ITO Iki is a filament silk that is thinner (NM1/71) and has a very nice sheen, beautifully reflects light.

With the following tips, both yarns can be easily used to embroider by machine! :-)



During processing, I observed the following tips:

- Use a metallic embroidery needle or a topstitch needle with a large eye
- Reduce the tension of the upper thread
- Work slow!
- Create a longer path for the thread by using a multiple thread spool holder or by using a separate thread holder and, if necessary, set it up a little further from the machine
- Use special bobbin thread for embroidery in the bobbin
- Use an embroidery bobbin or have your sewing machine dealer adjust the tension on your bobbin

ITO Iki & ITO Nui in the thread test

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Dragonfly, bee and flamingo with ITO Nui or ITO Iki

My second experiment was exciting! I compared both threads using the same embroidery motif. Therefore, I embroidered the dragonfly once only with ITO Nui and once only with ITO Iki. I used the ITO fabric „Two Tone Medium Weight“ (F211-03) on the left with ITO Nui and on the right with ITO Iki.



Both threads performed well. Since the fabric is firm and a bit heavier, the embroidery with ITO Nui is more visible and textured. Though the embroidery with the more delicate ITO Iki also offers a beautiful result.

For both threads, I followed my own tips mentioned above:

- Use a topstitch needle with a large eye, this creates less friction on the thread
- Reduce the tension of the upper thread, you will have to test out different tensions to find the right tension for your machine
- Work slowly to prevent thread breakage
- Create a long path using a separate thread holder so that the thread can “relax” on its way into the tension ;-). Thus, thread breakage can be prevented
- Do not choose large, extensive patterns
- Use special bobbin thread for perfect embroidery!
- Use an embroidery bobbin

I didn't reduce the stitch density with ITO Nui on this motif and I think that ITO Nui has great visibility and texture on this coarse fabric. I can well imagine using this thread also for embroidery on heavy

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linen or denim. For heavier fabrics, I would recommend, using a size 90 topstitch needle. However, I would not use it to embroider very large or very flat designs. The dragonfly motif measures approx. 13 cm x 11 cm.

When embroidering with ITO Iki, I used the same settings as for ITO Nui. Without changes on the setting the motif is much more delicate. For the dragonfly, I used a size 80 metallic needle that is intended for challenging threads and also has a large eye that creates less friction on the thread. Alternatively, I would choose a finer fabric so that the finer thread is more visible.



The cute little bee motif was my next project. I really wanted to test a small but dense design with lots of stitches. Again, I used the heavy cotton fabric from ITO (F211-01). Thanks to the fine ITO Iki silk thread, the white wings look particularly delicate.

The bee motif measures about 4,5 cm x 4 cm. Since the motif is very compact its visibility and texture work very well even on this heavier fabric.



I was particularly fascinated by the brilliance of the filament silk, which shimmers incredibly beautifully in the light. The small wings look very natural.

If I were to use ITO Nui for this motif, I would have to reduce the stitch density or enlarge the design, so that the stitches are not too close. If the stitches are too dense, there is always a risk of needle or thread breakage. Here, again, you must try out what works best on your machine!

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The funny flamingo is embroidered with ITO Iki on the lighter linen-cotton fabric that I also used for the tea towel (ITO F312-05). It makes a discreet and delicate impression!

The flamingo is even more fussy than the dragonfly motif, the neck consists of only one line of stitches. However, the body and the glasses are clearly visible on the thinner fabric.

For embroidery with ITO Iki, I recommend using small, compact motifs on heavy fabrics and for delicate motifs the choice of finer fabrics. With ITO Nui I can also imagine the flamingo very well. It would be much more vivid and look particularly beautiful in bright colors. For ITO Nui, however, it is essential to use a topstitch needle with a larger eye!





Tendril motif with ITO Nui

For my last experiment with the embroidery machine, I sewed napkins from ITO „Dobby Print Semi Solid “(F210-05) and decorated them with eyelet embroiders. To do this, first the motif is embroidered and then the holes are made with the eyelet tool. In the last step the edges of the holes are embroidered again to prevent the fabric from fraying.

I embroidered the tendril with ITO Nui and bobbin thread in the bobbin case. I am very satisfied with the result and even washed the napkin at 60° C, which did not damage the silk thread.



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Sewing with ITO Iki and ITO Nui

I also tried both threads with different sewing projects.

I love to sew blouses!

Perfect buttonholes are a must for me!

On this project I used ITO Iki as top and bobbin thread for the buttonholes, the monogram, and the top stitched seams. For the buttonholes I increased the density of the stitches a little.

Especially on this fine fabric ITO Iki wonderfully emphasizes the stitches. The seams are delicate, and the monogram is subtle, but not inconspicuous. When sewing letters or decorative stitches, I always recommend placing some tearable embroidery fleece underneath the work, the stitches will be more visible and not sink into the fabric or pucker.



If I would use ITO Nui instead for buttonholes, I would have to reduce the stitch density a little so that the buttonhole doesn't get too tight. I can easily imagine ITO Nui for buttonholes on heavier fabrics as denim or wool or even sewn by hand on boucle fabrics to achieve a "couture" look. The classic Chanel jacket comes straight to my mind. ;-)

The most important thing when sewing, is using the correct needle. For ITO Iki I recommend a size 80 metallic needle. In addition, the seams should not be exposed to high stress, friction or pressure when sewing with this thin filament silk thread.



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For the circles with decorative stitches, I have used the den BERNINA circular embroidery attachment and the open embroidery foot. The fabric is pressed over a tack and fixed. When sewing, the fabric is transported in a circular motion. I sewed the decorative stitches with both threads on the heavier cotton fabric from ITO (F211-03). To stabilize it, I used tearable embroidery fleece again on the back of the fabric, which I removed after sewing. A great idea for placemats and coasters.

Again, I did the washing machine test at 60°C and ITO Iki passed the test, just as before ITO Nui!

On the same fabric I also tested machine applique. I ironed the hearts onto the fabric with Vlisofix and used tearable embroidery fleece for applique on the back of the fabric. The big heart is made with the lighter cotton-linen Fabric (F312-05) and sewn with ITO Nui, the small heart is a darker color of the heavier cotton fabric (F211-03) and sewn with ITO Iki.

For applique, I reduced the tension on the thread a little and used the BSR foot of the BERNINA B770. When freehand sewing, the stitch regulator creates stitches of the same previously set length. Not only great for applique, but also for patchwork and quilting.



ITO Iki and ITO Nui in the overlock und coverstitch machines



I think beautiful hems are particularly important. In the picture above you see a rolled hem on the lower left and a picot stitch on the upper right. The rolled hem is made of a dense satin stitch seam that is perfect for frilled edges and summer dresses. The picot stitch is also a kind of rolled hem, but the stitch spacing is not as dense and it creates a slight "shell effect".

Both hems are sewn with pure silk on pure silk ;-)

For this fine combination I used ITO Iki in the overlock machine in the upper looper and reduced the thread tension of my BERNINA L460 Overlock machine a little. The result is convincing, and I think the possibility of using a pure silk filament thread for hemming fine silk fabrics is great.

ITO Iki & ITO Nui in the thread test

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The thread is also subtle and delicate in the hem. The silk thread does not only look elegant, but also feels soft and fine as a finishing – just like silk – and I am considering hemming pure silk fabrics only with pure silk threads in the future - the perfect combination of fine fabric and thread.



Because I was so impressed by the overlock hems with ITO Iki and since everything was already threaded, I tried it out even more.

ITO had sent me a very interesting, slightly transparent cotton fabric that I could very well imagine as a summer scarf. And a rectangle is enough for a scarf, so I simply hemmed the fabric with a rolled hem.

A beautiful, durable finish that looks great and prevents the fabric from fraying.

É voila – a perfect, quickly sewn scarf in ITO „3D Circles “(F313-02) with a rolled hem made with ITO Iki.

I also absolutely had to test the flat seam. On the left with IKI, on the right with NUI... Please do not sew a flat seam in places that are particularly exposed to stress, it is perfect though for decorative seams or hems. With this seam, too, the seam pattern is created by adjusting the thread tension. It is best to have a look at the operating instruction for your machine to find out how to proceed. Here I sewed the seams on Tencel jersey and sweat.



ITO Iki & ITO Nui in the thread test

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Finally, I tested the yarns on the cover stitch machine. Again, I was not disappointed. On the left sewn with ITO Nui, on the right with ITO Iki, beautiful seams can be created with both threads. As mentioned before, I do not recommend use cover stitch seams in places that are exposed to heavy stress. For these seams I also reduced the tension on the looper. You will have to try it out on your machine, since every machine is a bit different. I sewed these seams with the BERNINA L220. Both threads are wonderfully suitable for decorative seams with a cover stitch machine. :-)



Was I able to pique your interest in these threads? I am enthusiastic about both threads and think it is great to have an excellent alternative to classic polyester threads. They are a perfect match for high quality fabrics and give a simple seam a noble character. In the future I will also use these beautiful silk threads for buttonholes.

To make sure that everything works well on your sewing, piece work or embroidery projects, I have summarized the tips and tricks to use ITO Iki und ITO Nui on the following two pages.

The sewing and embroidery patterns were created on the following BERNINA machines:
BERNINA B770 QE, BERNINA L460, BERNINA L890, BERNINA L220
The threads and fabrics were provided by ITO.

Summary ITO Nui

ITO Nui can be used for sewing, machine embroidery, overlocking and cover stitching. The pure silk thread is particularly suitable for embroidery (hand or machine) and decorative seams. Seams that are exposed to high stress and heavy wear should be avoided.

When machine sewing or embroidering, I recommend considering these tips:

- Use a metallic needle or top stitch needle (large eye)
- Reduce the tension on the upper thread
- Embroider and sew slowly!
- Use special bobbin thread in the bobbin
- Use a bobbin with higher tension (embroidery bobbin)
- Use a long path for the tread (e.g., by using a separate spool holder or placing the spool away from the machine)
- Do not use big motifs or motifs with a high stitch density
- You may want to reduce the stitch density in preset patterns
- The yarn works beautifully on heavier fabrics (linen, denim, etc.)
- When using the thread in the overlock machine, thread it into the upper looper to create great seams and hems like rolled hems, picot stitches or flat seams. You may want to reduce the thread tension.
- When machine sewing with ITO Nui also use the yarn in the bobbin
- Perfect for sewing buttonholes in heavier fabrics

Every machine works a bit differently, so I recommend testing on some scraps of fabric from the fabric you will use for your project.

Summary ITO Iki

ITO Iki can be used for sewing, machine embroidery, overlocking and cover stitching. The pure silk thread is particularly suitable for embroidery (hand or machine) and decorative seams. Seams that are exposed to high stress and heavy wear should be avoided.

When machine sewing or embroidering, I recommend considering these tips:

- Use a metallic needle or top stitch needle (large eye)
- Reduce the tension on the upper thread
- Embroider and sew slowly!
- Use special bobbin thread in the bobbin when embroidering
- Use a bobbin with higher tension (embroidery bobbin)
- Use a long path for the thread (e.g., by using a separate spool holder or placing the spool away from the machine)
- To create dense embroidery patterns, you may want to increase the stitch density
- The fine silk looks especially great on smooth fabrics
- When using the thread in the overlock machine, thread it into the upper looper to create great seams and hems like rolled hems, picot stitches or flat seams.
- Perfect for sewing decorative stitches, buttonholes, and monograms
- When machine sewing with ITO Iki also use the yarn in the bobbin

Every machine works a bit differently, so I recommend testing on some scraps of fabric from the fabric you will use for your project.