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Philippine Ethnic Patterns

A Design Sourcebook

Product Development and Design Center of the Philippines
A technical agency of the Department of Trade and Industry

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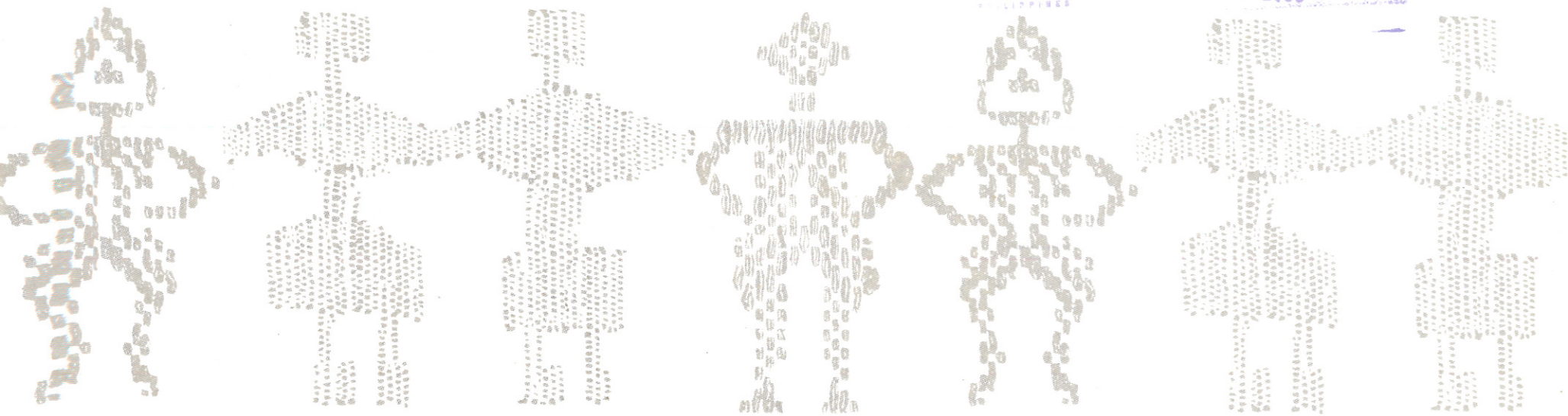

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Product Development and Design Center of the Philippines
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Research and Documentation by the
PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT AND DESIGN CENTER OF THE PHILIPPINES
From the Collection of the NATIONAL MUSEUM

Executive Editor	MINERVA P. FRANCO
Editorial Director / Editor	SONIA P. NER
Consultant, Anthropology	DR. JESUS T. PERALTA
Book Design	LUNA DESIGN Design Team: Joel R. Enriquez Olivia L. Enriquez Honey Lynne L. Vergara Katrina L. Ferrer
Project Management	PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT AND DESIGN CENTER OF THE PHILIPPINES Mary Josephine R. Cruz Jose Marciano C. Orteza Ethel T. Montemayor

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Foreword

by Arturo R. Luz
National Artist
Former Executive Director, Design Center Philippines

In 1979, Design Center Philippines embarked on an ambitious project of gathering and documenting Philippine art motifs found in traditional arts and crafts from all over the Philippines. The concept was to reduce the designs and motifs into simple, flat images that could serve as inspiration for new design and product adaptations. The design sourcebook came in four volumes, and the idea was to include as many motifs as possible, rather than spend time and money producing a glossy publication.

Now, years later, the Design Center is using new technology to enhance the quality of a new edition, which is being published with the help of the Department of Trade and Industry. It is my hope that the new publication will find even wider acceptance among designer practitioners in many different fields.

A Journey of Three Decades

by Minerva P. Franco
Executive Director
Product Development and Design Center of the Philippines

This book has had a long journey. In 1974, the then Design Center Philippines and the National Museum cooperated to answer the need for an integrated approach to the study and application of traditional arts and crafts. Documentation became a continuing activity, not just within the confines of the National Museum but in private collections as well. The project had also intended to document the provenance, materials, and processes. This was going to be a long-term project and we called it OKIR, meaning 'to carve.'

Sometime in 1976, the Design Center embarked on an intensive Crafts Development Program and felt the need for an immediate source of local references that indicate the unique and distinctive features of Philippine products. In 1979, inspired by the famous Dover Series of design elements, Neal Oshima then proposed to come up with a similar concept. Using the collection of the National Museum, Neal photographed portions of each product that was rich in graphic details. From the photographs, abstracts were literally traced to show motifs and patterns, which could be readily used by a designer. There was no attempt to identify the source of the motif or pattern, neither its material nor its provenance as we believed that would be adequately covered by our OKIR project. The first volume, *Philippine Ethnic Motifs*, was produced through photocopying. The volume showed the motifs classified by their common forms - i.e., anthropomorphic, zoomorphic, botanical, stellar, geometric, and series (diptych and triptych). The volume was well received and elicited queries on the origins of the motifs and patterns. The second volume then contained some information on the materials and provenance. Two more volumes followed, produced through the photocopying machine, as Design Center had limited funds for printing.

A kindred agency expressed interest in undertaking a joint project with the Design Center to focus attention on the *Philippine Ethnic Motifs*, to include an exhibit and hopefully generate interest for publication. Unfortunately, the project did not materialize. A planned joint project with a publishing company to put out *Philippine Ethnic Motifs* met the same fate when the publishing company scaled down its operations. So users of the motifs, most specially designers, had to content themselves with the volumes of photocopied graphic abstracts.

The late Ely Pinto, learning about the compilation, visited the Design Center in early 2005. At our meeting, Ely viewed the *Philippine Ethnic Motifs* volumes and was impressed with the richness of the cultural information and its potential as a book. Further study of the information's potential drove us to presenting a proposal to the DTI, which approved the proposal. Funds for its publication were transferred from the DTI to CITEM and then the

Design Center, the implementing agency for the book's publication. A team was formed and certain decisions were made as regards the limitations and scope of the contents. The book was truly underway.

The *PHILIPPINE ETHNIC PATTERNS A Design Sourcebook* is rich as a cultural reference for its intended users – designers and design students. With the expert help of Dr. Jesus Peralta, the patterns are now clustered according to materials, processes used to achieve such patterns, and their provenance. An essay introduces each cluster and tells the "story" behind the materials, processes, and even patterns used by ethnic communities.

A few black and white photographs of the ethnic products – from the documentation done in our OKIR project – are also included to validate the patterns' authenticity. With the infinite possibilities offered by technology, we were able to extract the patterns from the black and white photographs as faithfully as we could, thereby providing not just one motif but a series of patterns from which the designer can innovate ideas.

The *PHILIPPINE ETHNIC PATTERNS A Design Sourcebook*, a first in the Philippines, has finally arrived. It has achieved perpetuity.

Finally, the Philippine Ethnic Patterns, A Design Sourcebook, Comes to Light

by Augusto F. Villalón

When the Design Center Philippines was founded in 1973, its primary mandate was to assist the export industry in its formative years to gain a larger share of the global market. To achieve this, the office worked on improving Philippine products through good design and achieving enhanced quality by introducing efficient production methods.

Those were the early days of exports when most products were crafts-based – a time when gifts, houseware, and furniture exported from the Philippines were mostly hand-made. The few manufacturers in the industry all produced variations on the same basic design, all executed from identical natural raw material. There were few innovators and hardly any variety. Most products were similar in look and price without much thought to design. Since everyone produced "cheap and cheerful" products, marketing options were severely limited. The only way to compete in the global market was for a manufacturer to price himself lower than his competitor who responded by lowering his own price further. Buyers pitted manufacturers against each other. The industry was caught in a vicious cycle. Accepting the existing milieu as its starting point, the Design Center Philippines set out to reshape the Philippine image in the global export market. To achieve the task, an entire design structure had to be created including the support system necessary to sustain it.

The task of the design structure was to move Philippine exports away from the low-priced "cheap and cheerful" handicraft products and progress towards an up-market range of products that would attract higher price points because of added value from good design combined with the cost advantage resulting from efficient production-line manufacturing.

Creating the design structure meant establishing a new profession in the country – professionally trained designers who not only were aware of forms, shapes, but also of the ergonomic functions that relate the shapes to human scale. They had to be aware of the skills and manufacturing process required to produce their designs efficiently. Since their designs were to be sold in the global market, they had to be aware of market preferences, trends, and pricing in the countries where they aimed to sell their products. Furthermore

they had to present their designs in eye-catching displays that would catch the eyes of jaded buyers roaming the vast exhibition halls all over the world in search of new products during international product exhibitions. Most importantly, the designers had to be aware that they were not creating one-of-a-kind works of art. Rather, the designed and manufactured object was to serve a function, be of high commercial value, and unquestionably global in look and appeal.

Although the designer normally would not reproduce traditional Philippine craft or make souvenir-type versions of it, craft plays a pivotal role in product design. The handmade component still widely available in the Philippines is no longer available in the industrialized societies that compose the global export market. To set itself apart in the global market, Philippine products were designed to allow the intervention of man-made craftsmanship at certain points of the manufacturing process, a fusion of man and machine.

Bamboo and rattan are pressure-treated before being mechanically stripped, then handed over to weaver-craftsmen who employ traditional techniques to weave amazingly modern, non-traditional baskets. A variety of threads, cotton, *buntal*, linen, *abaca*, banana, are combined and hand-loomed on backstrap or floor looms into lengths of stunning textiles which are later machine-sewn into upholstery, table linen or houseware products. Traditional *ikat* dyeing sometimes provides patterns for modern textiles, and for convenience, colorfast chemical dyes replace the old vegetable dyes. Wood is dried in kilns, fed into machines that rough-cut it into components that are later hand carved or combined with hand-woven natural materials before the piece of furniture is assembled and finally hand finished. In design adaptation there is a continuum: old inspires the new.

Our handcrafted tradition gives Philippine export products identity, special warmth and tactile human quality. The finished product bears the imprint of but does not copy Philippine traditional craft. In the export product, tradition is updated through adaptation. The look of the finished product must appeal to the global market. The object should achieve an international look that in many instances may no longer be identifiable as being particularly Philippine. The designed object is identifiable as a first-rate global product that competes in the market with other global products of the same type on an equal footing.

Product adaptation is a process that sometimes combines global design with tradition. In the adaptive process of product development, tradition is the basis. It is the springboard for discovering shapes and forms, for learning handcrafting techniques, for manipulating natural materials, and for marveling at the amazing level of Philippine craftsmanship. The outcome of this process, three decades since the start of Design Center efforts, is the successful production of a range of high quality products of sophisticated designs that are global in appearance but decidedly Philippine in craftsmanship. This reportedly has earned for the Philippines the title " Milan of Asia" in export trade circles.

Perhaps because of their orientation towards the global market, our designers tend to look outwards, specifically, westwards, for inspiration. Another reason for this orientation could be that more reference sources, books, magazines, and catalogues of overseas origin are locally available. Although it cannot be said that there is a serious lack of Philippine sources at the disposal of designers for research, there is little printed material and there are few repositories of design sources in the country. It is considered difficult and time consuming by a majority of designers to spend time researching in the field or visiting

collections and museums all over the country for design sources. Arturo R Luz, the Executive Director of the Design Center from 1973-87 and now National Artist for the visual arts realized this shortcoming. After establishing a small collection of outstanding Philippine craft as reference material at the disposal of designers, his next step was to expand the cache of reference material through additional documentation of Philippine design motifs.

The documentation was conceived in 1974 as a joint project between the Design Center Philippines and the National Museum. A team of researchers from both institutions jointly photo documented pieces from the museum's ethnographic collection that were felt to be of particular significance as future design sources.

This publication offers the reader, researcher or designer several options. One option is to focus on the complex traditional designs, which are presented in black and white graphics – some are graphic abstracts, reduced to simple shapes, while others are faithful representations of the patterns. Each shape is capable of triggering an idea in the creative process of the designer, ultimately leading to the design of a new product. Since the design of contemporary products of international standard is the primary purpose, the abstract black-and-white forms are a perfect starting point for the designer who may most likely not want his vision to be cluttered by excessive details, ethnic coloration, or representational material. It brings the designer to the essence of the motif.

Apart from the reduced simple shapes, the original photographs of the objects with close up on the designs from which the reduced shapes were derived are included. These help contextualize the design motifs, make them readily identifiable as Filipino and in many instances, provide additional ethnic motifs as well. The photographs will prove particularly useful for present day students of design who are often curious or forced to be curious by their teachers about the origins of design motifs. A section in color of selected objects in different materials and from various Philippine ethnic communities will give the reader of this publication an adequate sampling of our color sense.

Patterns from this design book are mere suggestions for the product designer to adapt into three-dimensional utilitarian products, for graphic designers to turn into patterns, for textile designers to weave into yardage, for fashion designers to create silhouettes or embellishment, for architects, interior designers, or landscape architects to incorporate into living spaces. One motif can inspire countless adaptations. With the creative mind, the possibilities from this collection of motifs are endless.

Style Guides and Pattern Books are not new. They were widely published and used in 19th century Europe and the United States, particularly popular as guides to craftspeople, homebuilders and architects. There are many other books that are informative reference material as well. Certainly the albums from the Spanish colonial era of sketches and watercolors, prints and paintings in museum collections, traditional examples of decorative arts and antiques are sources which designers normally do not avail of. This book follows the long tradition of pattern or style books, aids to design professionals working in any branch of today's creative industries. Certainly this is the first design source book that is Philippine.

It took a long time for this material to see print after being stored in the Design Center Philippines vaults for 30 years. Having been involved in the original documentation, I was aware of the benefit of the material to the few designers who made extensive use of it. Meanwhile time marched on. In its determination to assure a permanent pool of

designers, Design Center Philippines eventually launched the Industrial Design profession in the Philippines, today a large influence in industry across the nation. Design Center Philippines matured, changed its name to Product Development and Design Center of the Philippines. Over the years the Design Center collaborated with other national and international agencies for overseas promotion and marketing of the Philippine products that the PDDCP had a hand in designing. The consistently high quality of Philippine design today seen in export showrooms and evident (although unnoticed) in consumer products of local manufacture are works of professional industrial designers-proof that the PDDCP achieved its original mandate of improving Philippine products through good design and enhancing its quality.

I mentioned to my friend and colleague, the late Ely Pinto, that this treasure trove of ethnic material at the PDDCP was a source waiting to be shared with creative industries practitioners. With PDDCP participation we all agreed that the material should be published as the *Philippine Ethnic Patterns, A Design Sourcebook.* It does not matter that it took 30 years for the material to be published. The black and white abstractions of Philippine tribal motifs are timeless. They should inspire a new generation of designers for longer than the next 30 years.

And if the publication inspires some practitioners in the creative industries to research deeper, to discover the history, authenticity and anthropological relevance of each motif, then the resulting cultural grounding of those individuals is yet another resource that adds another dimension in making them better practitioners of the cultural industries in the Philippines.

Philippine Ethnic Art

By Jesus T. Peralta

Art in the Ethnic Sense

It is the apposition of western and eastern cultures that accounts for distinctions between what is understood as craft or art. In the Philippines, art often refers to the ornamentation on craft pieces or in the manner by which it is made. This may be gleaned from the perspective of the people themselves by way of the language they speak. Language is a measure since if people have a term for something, then they have some knowledge of it. The term *okil (okir, ukit)* for example, connotes the carving, engraving or decorative motifs on a piece of craft, and can be treated separately from the artifact itself. This may be seen in the friction-induced designs on a Pala'wan blowgun or the incised motifs on a flute.

Among the indigenous populations there are no pieces made as an art object per se. Production is along the specific lines of a genus or type of artifact which is made as a response to the demands of culture. In basketry, for instance, a backpack made of rattan with a specific name, *pasiking*, will always be made in the same manner as if it were made in a modern automated production line. There are instances however in the making of a *pasiking* when such finesse is achieved that the object itself becomes endowed with exceptional aesthetic qualities. The *pasiking* can then be regarded as a work of art without prejudice to its pragmatic function. Art as used in this book and in the ethnic sense is to be understood in this manner.

Art and Culture

Art is a form of adjustment to the way the people integrate their strategies for existence, including the alternatives and must therefore be taken within the context of the culture of the people. There is a direct relationship between the character and complexity of the art and the character and complexity of the socio-political organization of a people. A change in the techno-economic situation also produces a corresponding alteration in the artistic visualization. Hence, to understand the art of a people, it is necessary to have an understanding of the totality of their culture. The wellspring of creativity is the manner by which the environment

is perceived and internalized by craftsmen through the filters provided by culture. What we now recognize as the traditional art forms of the various ethno-linguistic groups are based on these perceptions and internalizations which in turn result in concepts. Perception is a vital function in the visualization of art. There are various ways by which people look at things, and color is first among these because it makes perception possible. One of the more popular and admittedly overused concepts of traditional craft can make this art process clearer. This concept is the Maranao *sari-manok*.

The *sari manok*: from *Perception*, to Internalization to Concept

Physically the *sari manok* is in the form of a bird but closer in abstraction to a jungle fowl or domestic cock. Dangling from its beak or grasped in its claws is a fish. More often than not, the fish is found in both beak and claws.

The extraction of the concept from the physical environment is without a doubt. The late sociologist, Mamitua Saber, who established the Aga Khan Museum in Marawi City, has an initial explanation for the bird-form. He said that the Maranao craftsmen, who get their inspiration from nature, must have observed the hawks frequently hovering over the waters of Lake Lanao in the province of Lanao del Sur. The predatory birds dive or skim over the waters catching fish that surface, hence the image of a bird of prey with a fish in its claws or beak.

This interpretation, however, is not the end-all because the creative mind can derive from other perceptions and extract from other sources, even from itself. Influences are never uni-lineal but are actually multi-lineal – they come from all over, from different sources. Later, the mind assimilates these influences into a single integrated image. It can glean from mythology for the bird-image, hence a mythic interpretation of the *sari manok* is that there was a prince who was separated from his beloved princess, and he sends messages to her through a bird. The messages were in the form of a fish.

The image is not yet complete as it is because the form of the *sari-manok* is that of a fowl, a jungle fowl or a domestic cock, and not that of a hawk or a "messenger" bird, not unless the chicken in mythology had been used to carry messages. The image of a distantly flying hawk is more difficult to articulate in the mind of a craftsman than that of a jungle fowl or more so of a domestic cock. The cock is very proximate and intimate and its image is ingrained in the cognitive world of the craftsman. Hence, the cock-like tail feathers and comb of the *sari manok* appear in the objective correlative of the concept, which is regarded at present as a symbol of the celebrating elite.

Visualizing Flora

The articulation by the craftsman is further compounded by another form of cultural filtering in that the *okir* of the Maranao is highly influenced by the floral approach to visualization used by Southeast Asian artists. This approach is often interpreted as a Middle Eastern influence that spread with Islam through Southeast Asia. This is supposed to have originated from the angular form of Arabic alphabet, the floriated Kufic, that is found mainly in decorative inscriptions from Kufa, a city located south of Baghdad in Iraq. This is a possibility if not for the fact that even indigenous peoples of Southeast Asia who are not influenced by Islam also used floriated images in their art forms. The interlaced vegetal forms, scrolls of fern and varieties of floral motifs are evident, for instance, among the Ian, Kayak, and other groups in Borneo. These floral

forms are also found among the nominally Muslim influenced Sama, although to a lesser extent, than among the Islamized segments. The flora of Southeast Asia has been established as early as the middle of the Pleistocene era. Since then the different ethnic groups of the region, including those in the Philippines especially in the south, have been exposed to an environment of tropical forests. Of course, there are the semi-temperate forms in the Cordilleras of Northern Luzon. The tangle of vegetation, more so in the areas that exhibit myriads of distinct species with the associated fauna, becomes the primary environmental influence on the inhabitants. Here, the confluence of images impress the discerning mind – the myriad plant forms: trees in as many as three canopies; oppressive parasitic vines, even ones that later overwhelm their hosts and become trees; trees that bear flowers and fruits; flexible bamboo that creep like vines or stand tall in groves, bushes and other reeds. It is here where ferns unfurl their fronds in spirals, curlicues and scrolls, in increasingly complex growth. Some rise in vertical developments, as if laid out by stringent hands. Others follow the lay of the land meandering horizontally, while others appear wind swept into an asymmetrical pile. The leaves of this vegetation come in forms articulated only by taxonomists: ovate, speculate or serrated in enumerable shapes and configurations. The flowers are just as complex. All these images deluge the mind with intricate possibilities.

The Maranao Okir

Mamitua Saber explains the intricacies of Maranao okir by reducing the design patterns into basic irreducible motifs. He also explains how these are derived from the proximate and overpowering floral environment rather than from some religious belief. The motifs are identified and named into a convention that somehow defies change and readily identifies the culture of the Maranao. There is, for instance, the Arabic domelike shape identified as *potion* or primordial flower, the bud. The flower is the *katorai*, which is the edible flower of the identically named tree. *Dapal* or *raon* is the spatulate leaf. The simple spiral of the fern frond tip is the motif, *pako*. The developing complexity of stems and fronds of the growing fern is the *pako rabong*. When this complexity is arranged by the craftsman into a vertical and symmetrical shape, this is the *birdo*. A simple asymmetrical combination of a number of motifs is an *armalis* while a horizontal development of a motif like the *pako* is called a *magayoda*. The *birdo* or *armalis* need not be composed of the development of a single motif because other motifs are interspersed within the design.

Leaves, buds, even geometric forms like the circle or *matilak* are combined in an intricacy that only the artistic mind can conceive. The most complex of these can be seen in the *torogan*, the floor beams of the regal Maranao house. The ends of these beams are the triangular-like projections called the *panolong*. These come in two forms, the *niaga naga* (dragon-like, serpent-like), and the *pako rabong* (growing fern). These two are alternately placed in the frontage of the house to indicate the high status of the owner, who is often the head of a large extended family, and having such alliances, becomes the acknowledged community leader.

Culture and Color Perception

In the same manner that forms and shapes impinge on the minds of the craftsmen, the wide range of hues and chroma that impact the eyes is likewise dictated upon by the anatomy of perception and the filters of culture.

Color perception differs among different people as among individuals. Every normal human being has the same physiological equipment for the perception of light: a pair of eyes with the corresponding

anatomical parts – lens, aperture, iris, retina, and so on. Yet people do not internalize colors in the same manner. They do not see the same colors the same way, more especially with people belonging to different cultures. Strange as it seems, color perception is cultural and is learned. The eyes certainly are light receptive but culture dictates what colors can be perceived. The retina of the eyes has two kinds of anatomical parts that are receptors of various wavelengths of light. These are the rods and cones. The rods operate under very low illumination and these can only distinguish between what is dark or bright. The rods are distributed about the periphery of the retina. On the other hand, cones operate under medium and high intensity light and can perceive colors. The cones, however, are concentrated only in the center of the retina. The two mechanisms operate differently under different conditions. It is easier to sense the binary opposition between light and dark. The opposition is the first thing that one can be aware of especially under conditions of low illumination. What is clear is the differentiation between the lightness and darkness of an object, that is, the least sensing condition of the existence of an object - that it is visible at all.

The perception of color is different. Color begins to be discernable when light intensifies. This is where culture comes into play since there is now a need for deliberate cognition of parameters laid down by the culture of the group, otherwise one will only be able to differentiate between the brightness and darkness of a specific color. This peculiarity of color perception has a great deal to do with how ethnic groups perceive color.

Differing Color Perceptions for Different Ethnic Groups

A study of groups of people all over the world reveals that ethnic groups do not perceive nor articulate the same number of colors. Some groups perceive more, while others much less and the reason for this may have something to do with the level of integration of the group, the complexity of social organization and structure, and particular ethos, among others. These people can be categorized into a number of groupings. One group, for instance, is composed of ethnic groups that can recognize only the binary juxtaposition of brightness and darkness of things. To this group, as it is to infants, perception is limited to what tends towards dark, and what tends towards light. This group has linguistic terms only for these two categories. What is sensed, in technical terms, is color saturation in a broad, continuous band from white, various shades of grey to black.

A succeeding group is one that can categorize three colors: light, dark and red. The inclusion of the category, red, in their perception and even in their language is probably a logical sequence. Of all the ranges in the color spectrum visible to the human eye, red is the color most likely to be isolated and distinguished, because it has the broadest band in the spectrum. It is the most visible of all colors with respect to the chroma of this hue. A red object will reflect red wavelengths while absorbing all others; thus the only light that reaches the eye from a red object is red light. This limited categorization by ethnic groups with respect to colors is a factor that must be taken into consideration if one is to interpret ethnic art. Since art is a variable within the totality of a society, an understanding of the whole culture of a group is a prerequisite to the understanding of a particular art of a people. The relationship of several other groups in relation to perception of color and their conclusions suggest that the number of colors categorized by groups has a direct proportion to the level of technological integration they have reached. Simply said, the less developed an ethnic group is, the greater the likelihood that there will be fewer colors that they can articulate. Contemporary societies will not only categorize more colors but the terminologies used in the identification of colors would depend on what specialized sub-groups there are in that society. Those

in the field of fashion would use words like mauve, lavender, fuchsia, beige, and Nile green even if Nile is really colored by mud. Those in the visual arts would have color categories like alizarin crimson, Indian red, burnt amber, burnt sienna, yellow ochre, ultra marine and so on while a housepainter will be using mahogany, dark mahogany, sky blue, brick red and the like. Those who are in the more exact sciences will be charting their colors through letter-numeric codes as in the Munsell Color Chart so that the exact hue, chroma and saturation can be identified.

The Color World of the I'wak

The I'wak of the Cordilleras of Northern Luzon compose a group associated with the dry cultivation of taro as the preferred staple on mountain slopes and small terraces. They live in small fenced-in communities and are associated with frequent rituals centering on pigs. They can distinguish three colors: *amputi*, *atuling*, and *ambalanga*. There is no focus in the perception of color. The way they perceive things as well as their terminologies are broad. What they perceive as white is referred to as *amputi*. This does not specifically mean white but rather a tendency toward lightness or whiteness. The term for black is *atuling*, which is again a tendency toward being dark. Red is referred to as *ambalanga*. This is not a specific categorization of a spectrum but a tendency toward the warmness of colors. The identification is more relational such that a grey would be *atuling* compared to white or *amputi* when seen against black. In the same manner, an *ambalanga* could be *amputi* or *atuling* depending on the relationship being established, although the tendency would be toward warmer hues.

In the conceptualization of colors in the spectrum, one goes through the hues – the violets, the blues, to the reds and so forth. There is another consideration with reference to color perception, and this is the value of the chroma. If one keeps on adding white to red in graduated quantities, the red turns gradually to pink and eventually to white creating tints. If black, however is added gradually, the red becomes of increasingly darker shades until it is very black. This last is saturation. The I'wak does not perceive colors by merely looking at the hues in the horizontal spectrum band, but vertically through the hue in terms of value of chroma. They see colors in terms of darkness, lightness and warmness. In their internal view, red can be perceived contrarily as *amputi* or *atuling* depending on the point of reference. All the other colors fall under the same mode of classification. A clearer understanding of the role of colors in ethnic art requires an understanding of the people's internal mode of color categorization employed by respective groups. This is an aspect of ethnic art that cannot be ignored if their art is at all to be given a meaning. It cannot be assumed that people, given similar visual equipment, can conceive and perceive colors in the same manner, and can externalize these perceptions in the same way.

The Three Color Theory

Another consideration regarding the perception of colors needs to be discussed. This tends to complicate or even negate the previous discussion. This has reference to the early 1807 three-color theory. This theory states that with the colors blue, green and yellow, one may perceive all the other colors if these three were mixed in varying proportions and consistencies. For instance, if blue, green and yellow were mixed in a certain proportion, it is possible to perceive the sensation of red. This is supposed to be physiologically correct, so that when one looks at red, one is not really looking at the red band in the spectrum but rather at the particular mixture of blue, green and yellow. What this implies is that color is not something constant, rather it is cultural. Perception of color depends on

what the culture dictates. When culture says you will see red, then you will see red because perception of color is not focus specific. When one looks at the color spectrum, the focus is not the band of red but rather the mixture of the colors in the whole spectrum. This three-color theory also states that color is produced by the mixture of primary colored lights composed of red, green and blue, culturally filtered to sense a hue, and that the mixture of primary colored pigments – cyan, magenta and blue – affect the transmission of the kind of colored light to the eye. It is enough to say that there are many culturally variegated ways whereby colors are perceived by the human eye to merit understanding the way ethnic groups conceptualize their art. It should be pointed out that it is difficult to come by a vernacular word for 'color' in the different Philippine languages. Rather, reference is made to colored objects. The color for red among the Pala'wan is the red flower, *mararag*. To refer to the generic term for color, the Tau't Batu use a term equivalent to the English word "body". For many groups grey is the same term for ash.

Colors and Cultural Relationship

Early on, the use of colors on artifacts was limited to what was available in nature. Earth colors like iron oxide and hematite whether black or red had been used in prehistoric rock art and rituals all over the world. Bones of forebears were painted or covered with red hematite before reburial. There are many instances where hematite was used in painting pottery and burial jars before and after the firing of the vessels. Its use is associated more with ritual and belief systems. Plant dyes are probably more common in use. The votive figures of birds, turtles or pigs among the Pala'wan are covered with the soot of burnt plant parts like leaves of the sweet potato, and when completely covered these are incised with appropriate designs whether as positives or negatives.

Used singly, colors are associated with certain cultural relationships. The Pinatubo Negrito use red loincloths if they are known medicinal specialists, otherwise the commonly used color for this apparel is dark blue. Yellow, which is associated with brass, refers to the upper echelon of Maranao society since this is also the color of gold. The use of green among the Maranao, Maguindanao, Tausug, and Sama Dilia is very common since this is the color associated with Islam. Red male clothing among the various Manobo/Bagobo groups is a prerogative of the *bagani* – a warrior class.

The Western usage of color combinations like triads, analogous and other sets are basically oriented toward visual effects of certain combinations of pigments. The affective arrangements differentiate between a homogenous impression or a more contra-puntal effect The theoretical concepts of European Impressionists with regard to "modulation" of colors, where there is little or no connection between the natural color of a subject is an example of this. The painting remains valid as long as there develops a color harmony among the elements of the artwork. Under this scheme, for instance, it is possible to paint a green person against a backdrop of a triad with warm colors or any of the individual colors of the triad. Most ethnic combinations are based on contrasts, approximating as closely as possible what exists in nature. Deviating from the natural coloration of things in ethnic art is never an issue, since it is very rare that color combinations are modified and arranged such that these would deviate from what exists in nature. The limiting factor is the availability of pigment.

Pigments

The application of pigment, among traditional peoples, cannot be separated from design patterns because colors are culture oriented. An illustration of this is the intricate decoration of the Maranao bamboo

tobacco container, *lakub*. If rendered only in black and white, the design patterns cannot be distinguishable as Maranao. On the other hand, if the traditional colors are introduced, the ethnic relationship of the *lakub* cannot be mistaken. The case is similar in textile weaving where ethnic identity is possible only upon the application of specific colors. There are two sources of pigments for ethnic artisans: inorganic and organic materials. The earliest known and dated use of inorganic pigments is the presence of a red slip in pottery fragments found in the Neolithic Site in the Boloboc Cave in Sanga-Sanga, Tawi-tawi, southern Philippines. The slip was from hematite, an iron oxide – a pigment commonly used during the prehistoric times not only in the Philippines but elsewhere in the world. This sedimentary formation has a reddish brown color and an earthy luster composed of very small grains. Its red color lends itself in use as a pigment. The color range is from silver gray in some forms and to red and brown in earthy forms. The range of hues and variations depend largely on what other elements are present in the ore.

Red hematite has been used not only in pottery but also in dressing the exhumed bones of the dead found in jars and caves, or in making handprints on cave and cliff walls. In pottery, it is used not only in the form of slips but also to paint decorations applied before and even after the firing of the vessels. The black variety was also used, as in a specimen dating from the Neolithic period recovered from the island of Polillo. The use of black hematite is not very well documented.

In the Philippines, organic dyes are more commonly in use than inorganic dyes. The organic dyes are limited to those obtained from vegetative materials. Nearly any plant will yield some kind of color if enough of it is used in the dye preparation, but only a few plants have enough of the dye chemicals that make them useful as dye plants. Most vegetable parts give yellow or beige colors. Barks tend to yield brown and grays. Flowers often give yellow dyes but may not be colorfast. Natural colorants of this sort are limited in range, providing only hues that are not very brilliant: yellow and brown, yellow, orange-yellow, brown and purple-grey, red, purple and black, blue and neutrals. Most dyes require mordants for ensuring the relative fastness of the color to sunlight and washing. There are some dyes that do not need mordants, but the use of mordants usually gives much better and brighter colors. Different mordants will yield different colors from the same dye. Alum, for instances, gives very bright colors. The most commonly used mordants are salt, vinegar and wood ash.

The use of specific plants for a certain color and the techniques used in coloring are not constant among the different ethnic groups. A group like the Tagbanua of Palawan may use burnt *camote* (*Ipomoea batata*) leaves for black while others may have no knowledge of this at all. The same group will obtain the same color in decorating their blowguns by means of friction rather than by the use of a black dye. Depending on the availability of dyeing materials in the immediate vicinity of habitation, and the channeled transfer of the technique within the group, the use of certain materials for specific colors and the manner by which pigments are employed vary. Fill-ins of ash, clay or lime may be used in inscribed lines to provide contrast with the natural surface of a material. A method for providing unobtrusive color through refractive contrast is the application of an organic glaze on the surface of pottery. Organic glaze rubbed all over the outer surface of the pot while it is still hot from the fire makes the vessel less permeable. If the glaze is applied in separate diagonal strokes, a decorative effect is also created by the difference in the refractive index with the pottery surface. After the 18th century, the use of organic dyes was generally supplanted by the use of synthetic dyes, but Philippine weavers continued to be dependent on plant dyes.From the foregoing there would seem to be enabling factors on how ethnic groups tend to conceptualize their decorative designs, among which are the

limitation of their technological attainment; the manner by which their culture enables them to internalize, and the availability of resources. Color, which is the basis of vision, is the most important among these.

Motifs vs. Patterns

The organization of the materials in this volume went through an evolution of angles of approach. Initially, the classificatory principle used was to group the materials by way of similarities in basic forms. Concepts like square, circle, cruciform, anthropomorphic and so on, were used as organizing principles. The system went well for the first few items. This method, however, was given up when after all the circles, squares, cruciform patterns were selected, a larger part of the collection could not fit into the niches of these conceptual categories. The traditional ethnic designs simply could not be classified using Western concepts. Also, the difficulty is that it is not simple motifs that are involved but patterns, which are composed of multiples of motifs in a single compounded expression. When confronted with a visual image that is a composite of spirals, squares, circles, where should this be classified under this Western scheme? This approach was thus abandoned.

While motifs are universal since these are the basic irreducible forms that the mind can conceive, culture filters these and their use, such that ethnic identity is not possible if the motifs stand alone. How can one identify the ethnicity of the circular motif? Or the square or triangle? This is possible only when used within the context of the culture-bearing society, for instance when incorporated in a manner compatible with other motifs and patterns identifiable with and within the color combination associated with a specific group. An analogy is that a motif is something like the smallest particle of a chemical element, the atom, while the pattern is the bonding together of motifs to form the molecule, so to speak, as the fundamental unit of an identifiable ethnic design. The rule, of course, is better observed in the breach than in observance, for certainly there are motifs so conventional that there is no question about their ethnic attribution.

The broader approach used by the collators of this collection, focuses on patterns instead of motifs, to avoid the problem of misattribution. The body of patterns and designs are derived from black and white photographs of the ethnographic collection of the National Museum, which is one of the main reasons the patterns here are in black and white. The patterns are reduced to the basic forms and shapes. This is done deliberately without the introduction of color so that artists can use these without chromatic biases in their contemporary design, while still retaining the ethnic flavor.

Classifying According to Materials and Technology

The final approach of presenting the ethnic patterns in terms of materials and technology was conceived of when the realization came that design patterns as a whole come about in a large measure because of the technology with which it is produced and the materials that are used in the craft. This is exemplified by Maranao art. Among the people, there is a differentiation between male and female art. Brought down to the absurd, the curving line is male art (*okir a datu*), while the straight line is female art (*okir a bai*). The reason for this is the association of carving of wood with men that result in curvilinear designs, while the craft of weaving is the sole domain of women. The women cannot help being geometric because the technology of weaving reduces designs into jagged patterns. When a mat is woven, for instance, even curvilinear forms are depicted using

broken straight lines. The dichotomy is so stringent such that even the nomenclature of the motifs or patterns differ between men and women, for instance, the *sari manok* of male *okir* is the *papanok* of the female *okir.*

Other forms of craft technology, too, allow only certain designs and patterns to be used. The *utaw* motif that is produced in the back-strap weaving is not possible in metal casting using native techniques since nuances of the image will be lost in the process. Neither will the motif work in woodcarving except in a much reduced manner. Even in weaving technologies, designs in back-strap *ikat* will be different from those textiles produced in frame looms, or those from tapestry methods. In metal casting, the designs produced may be similar; the appearance and overall impact will be different. Where wires are used to form the pattern templates, the effect is distinctive and contrast with those produced by hand-carving the design. The technique of inlaying also produces effects that immediately classify artifacts into a homogenous group.

Materials and Technology Dictate Design

In a large measure the materials, in conjunction with the technology, used in craft dictate the kinds of design that are suited for it. There is simply no way to apply a single design pattern on all types of materials; and *vice versa*, one kind of material cannot admit all kinds of design patterns. There will always be variance. The Mandaya design called *suksuk ng kasili*, meaning scales of the eel, is an embroidered pattern which simply cannot be used in mat weaving, unless this is magnified to absurdity and with a loss of detail. It can be used in wood carving or in metal casting. On the other hand, the ornamentation and technique employed in the Maranao *lakub*, the bamboo container described earlier, is not possible in wood carving, metal casting or in any other. These two factors, technology and material, work in tandem, in unison or in variance, in the production of design patterns. These two, then, enable a more natural grouping of the design patterns that is readily comprehensible.

Probing the Creative Ethnic Mind

The final approach of presenting the ethnic patterns in terms of materials and technology was conceived of when the realization came that design patterns as a whole come about in a large measure. If one were to consider the role of this book in the study of ethnic art in its full range, there will be some amount of frustration by what this has failed to accomplish. In fact there was some discussion as to what exactly is being taken up in the book – a collection of motifs, or what? The fact is the idea of motif is difficult to comprehend within the context of the traditional ethnic mind. This is the reason why local languages have found it difficult to articulate the concept except in the generic term. *Ukit, ukir* or the like. The basic circle, square, and so on, is easily grasped. But the craftsman's mind can also grasp pattern as a single and unitary element of design. The *binulan-bulan* or moon motif in some interpretation is a set of concentric squares, and when reduced to a single square will not anymore be the named motif among the Mandaya.

To better understand the ethnic mind, there is a need to articulate how unitary elements are isolated. Instead of beginning with a mix of design patterns and single elements, focus probably should be made to traditional ideogenesis or the generation of concepts by ethnic groups. What really is in the culture of specific groups that enabled them to recognize and isolate a single visual element, and to be able to apply a name to it? The only study of this type, although still rudimentary, was the work of the late Mamitua Saber among the Maranao, the study most cited in all treatments of ethnic art.

The concepts as derived in other ethnic groups have been mentioned in isolated studies only in passing, when each motif would have articulated the operations of the ethnic creative mind. Each culture would have different imperatives in the approaches to their art. The psyches to be determined are different. Ethnic art does not exist in a vacuum and cannot be studied apart from its context. It is an integral part of the cultural complexities or state coordinates of a group. The art cannot be separated from the artist; neither can the artist be understood without his culture. Ethnographies are necessary to determine the visual perception parameters that include both physical and social aspects. Only after such studies have been made can it really be stated that ethnic art is beginning to be understood.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY
INFORMATION CENTER
OCT 17 2006

Philippine Ethnic Patterns

Bamboo

Bamboo

By Jesus T. Peralta

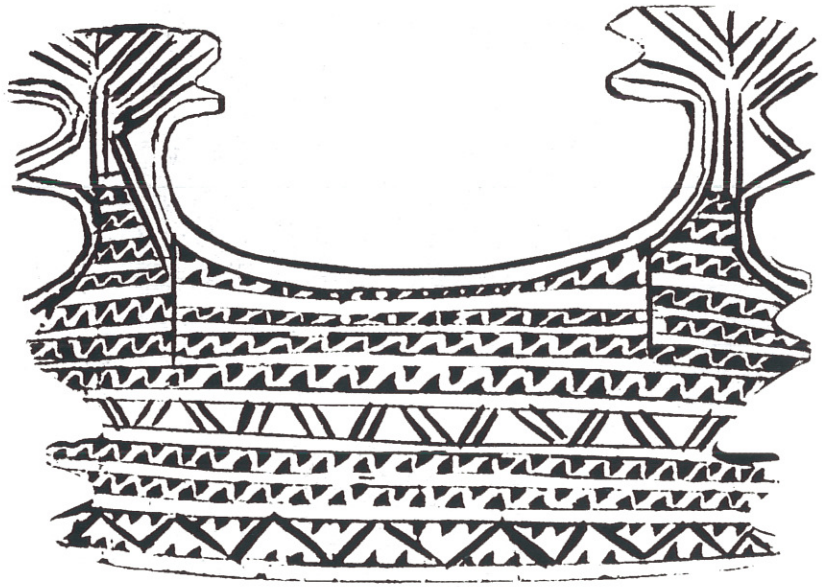
A very versatile material, bamboo is utilized either as whole sections, narrow slats or stripped down to narrow, flat strips for weaving. The most aesthetically engaging example of the use of bamboo is the Maranao *lakub*, a tobacco container. This is basically a cylinder composed of a section of giant bamboo with an internode at the bottom. If the *lakub* is to have a cover then a segment with two internodes is used. Close to one internode, the tube is cut with this shorter segment used as the cover. Otherwise a wooden plug is used.

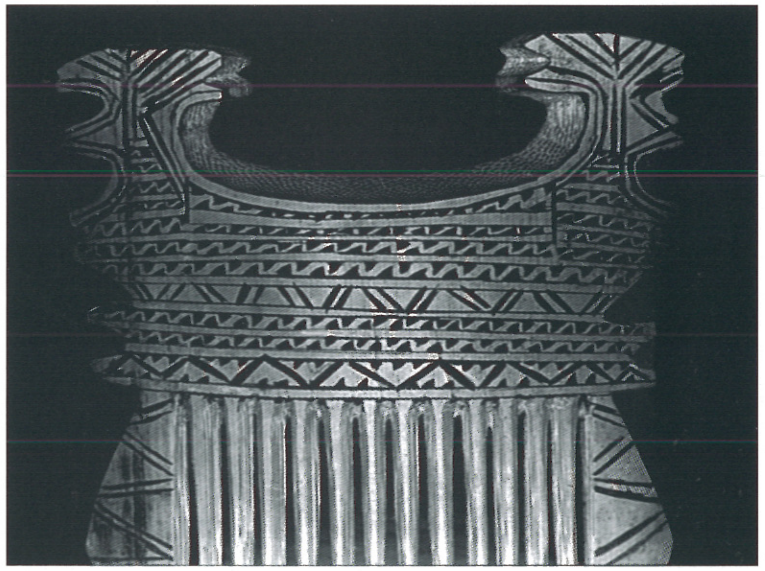
The uniqueness of the lakub, however, comes in the treatment of the surface. The entire surface is often covered with intricate designs of tiny squares arranged in crosses, squares, rectangles, diamonds, triangles, and other geometric forms. Curvilinear patterns are also used. All these are executed in a multiplicity of colors – magenta, green, red, ochre, and others. When scrutinized, the manner in which the colors were applied appears puzzling. What is apparent is that the colors were applied through the process of dyeing. How this is done is really intriguing. Tiny bits of square paper and other shapes are used as resist. These are pasted all over the surface of the bamboo cylinder in designated patterns. The cylinder surface is then dyed. Some bits of paper are then removed to successively expose other surfaces to subsequent dyeing, using other colors until the desired design is achieved. The last bits of paper to be removed will be that which will have the natural color of the bamboo surface.The same technique of decoration is used for the cover. At times, the cover is provided with a floriated finial in the form of a symmetrical woodcarving of a growing fern. At times, a wooden plug is used with the top provided with a circular design pattern.

Slats of bamboo used for parting hair, mouth harps and other such forms are often decorated using incisions in geometric forms, which are then blackened to provide contrast with the natural color of bamboo. Smaller species of bamboo used in flutes are also often incised or crosshatched to make the surfaces more appealing. Among the Tagbanua, another technique is used in decorating their blowpipes. A long strip of rattan is wrapped around the blowpipe. The rattan strip is then pulled alternately up and down to burn the bamboo surface by friction, producing a black surface.

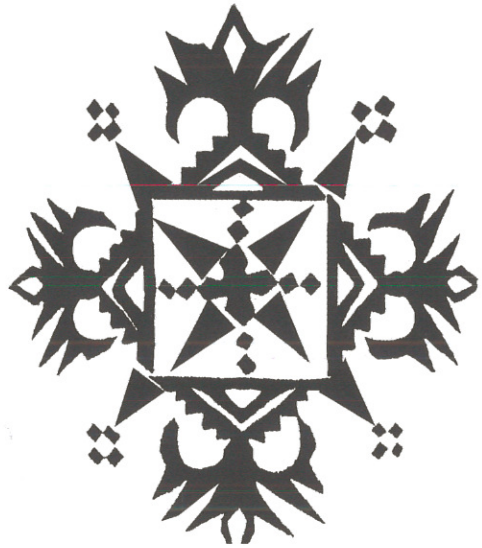
The most common use of bamboo is in the weaving of baskets, bags and mats, with colored inserted discontinuous wefts introduced into the warps to produce a variety of patterns.

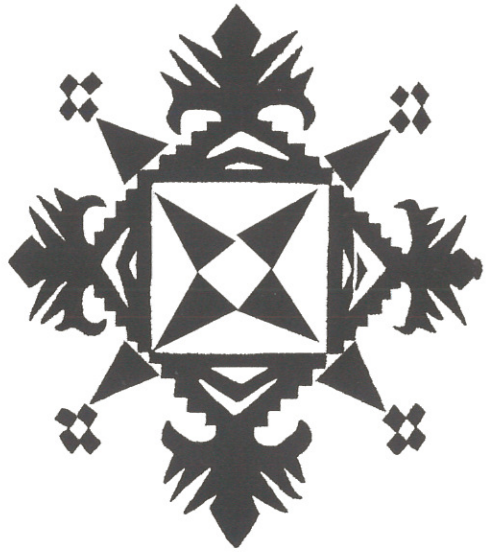
Manobo

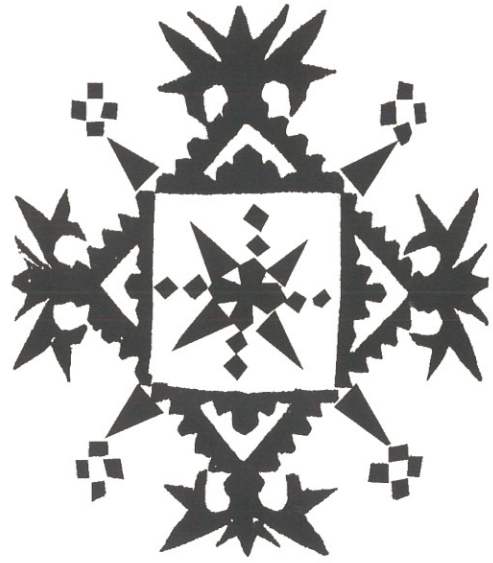


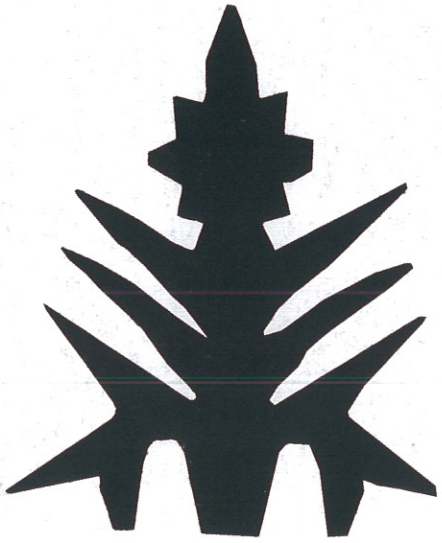


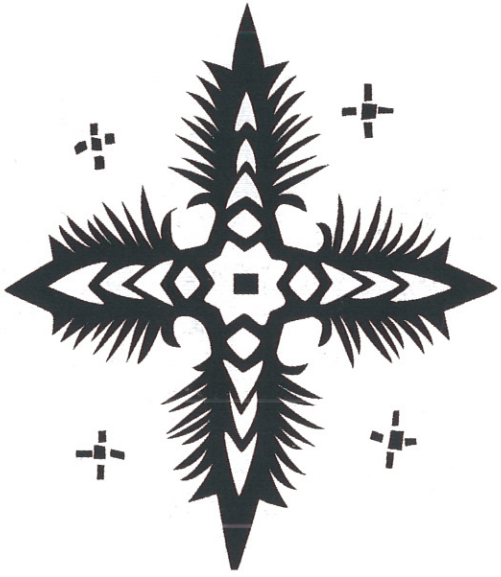
Maranao

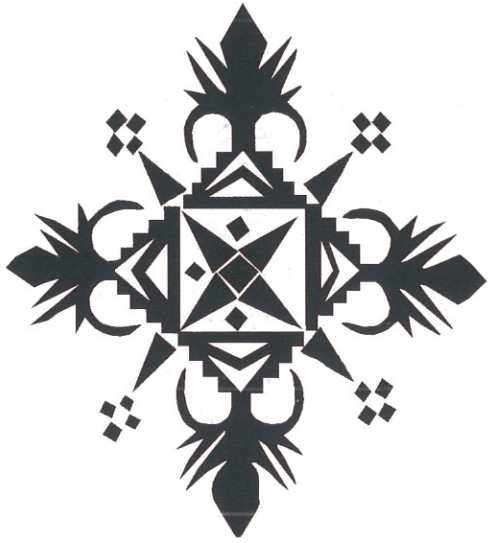


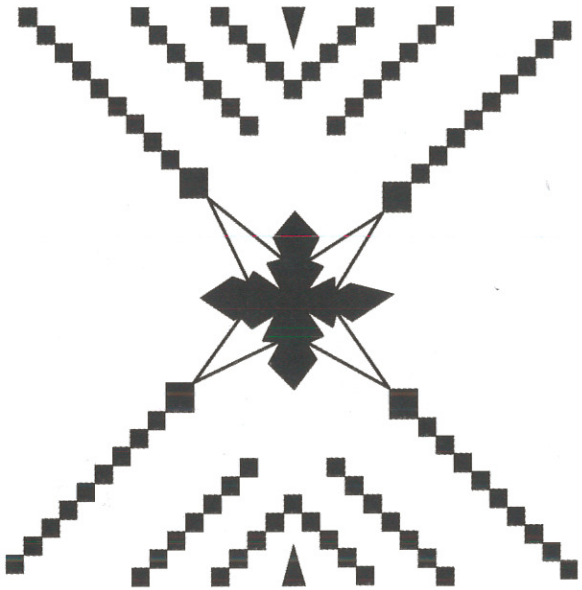


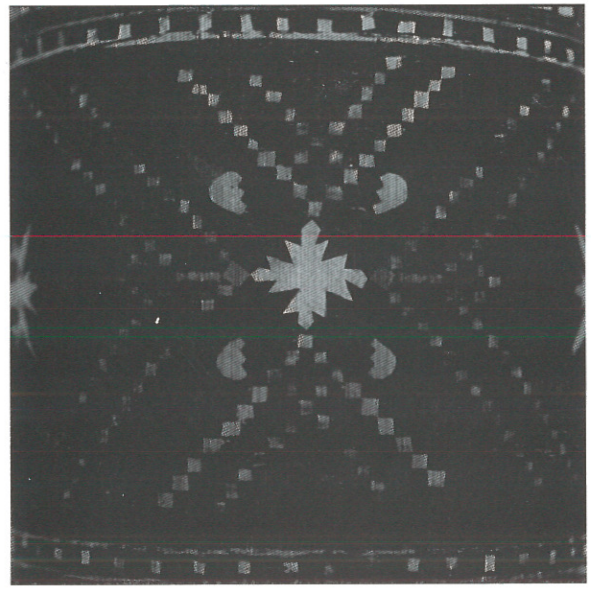


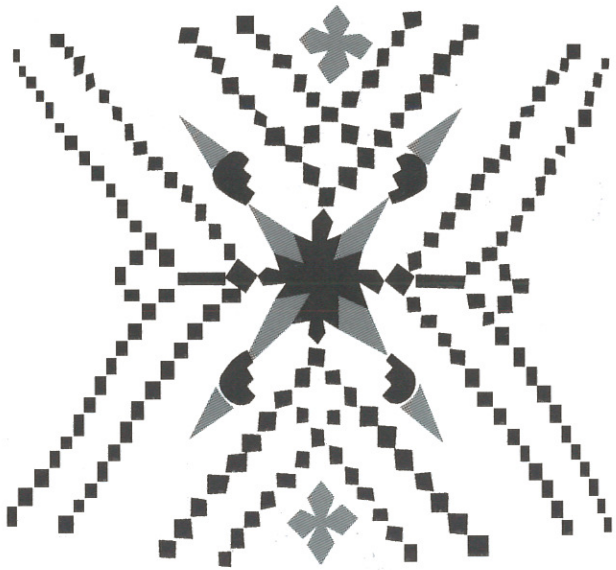


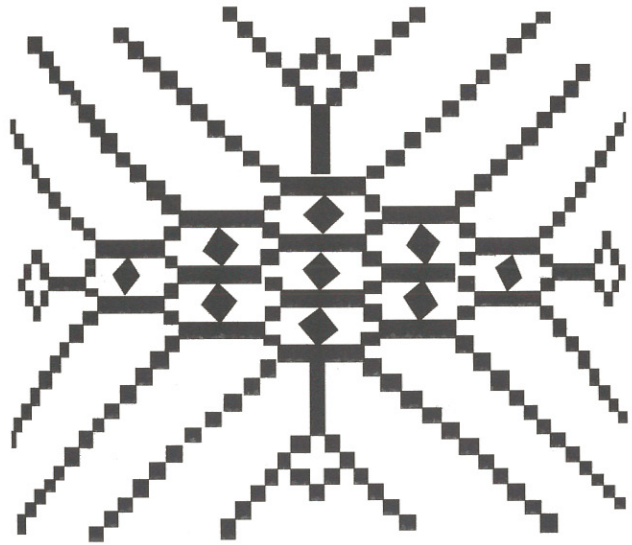


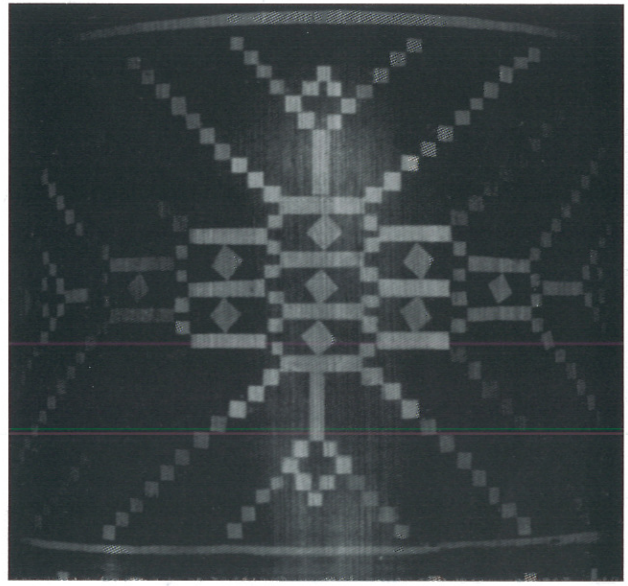


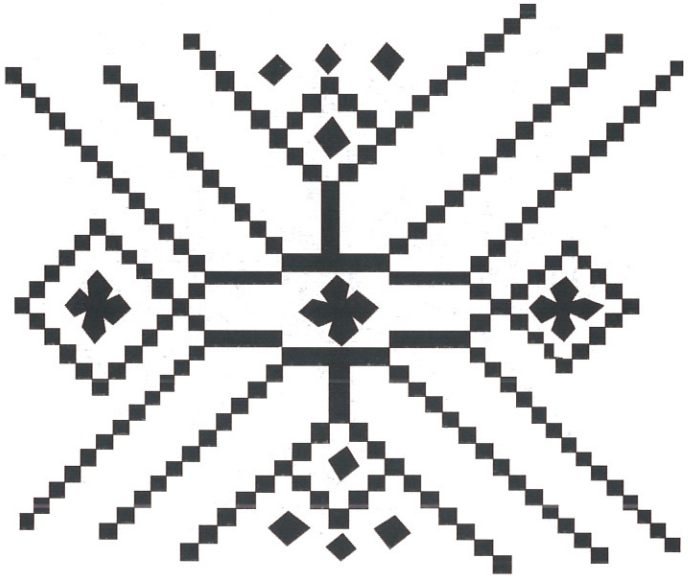


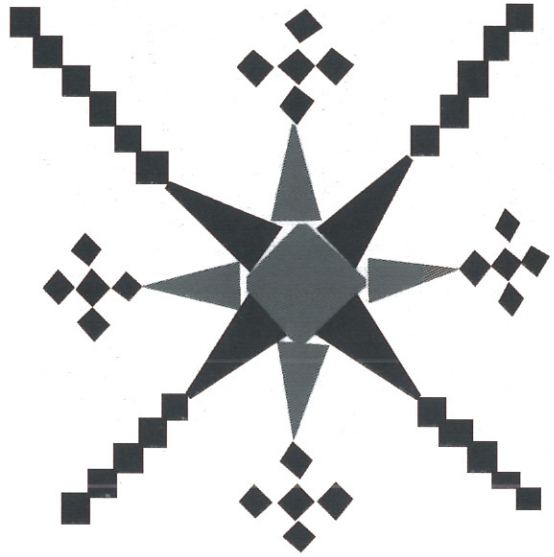


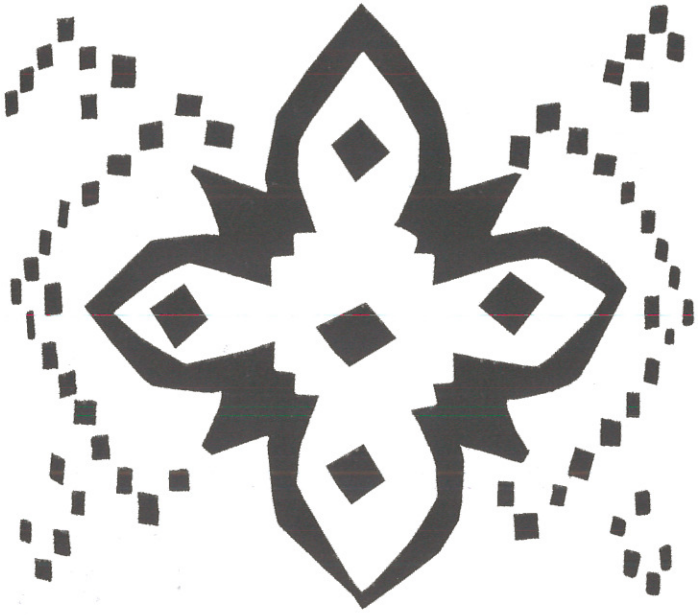


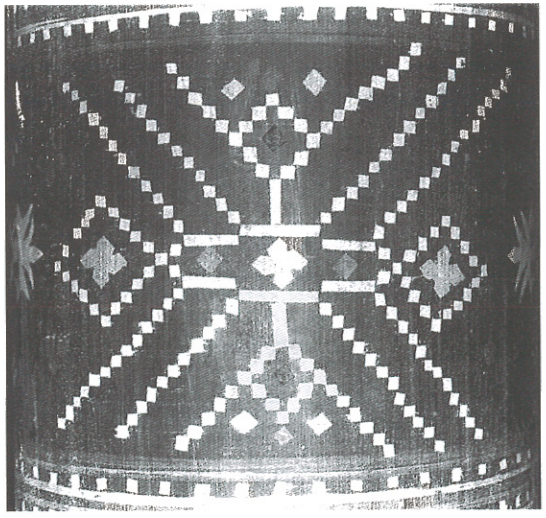


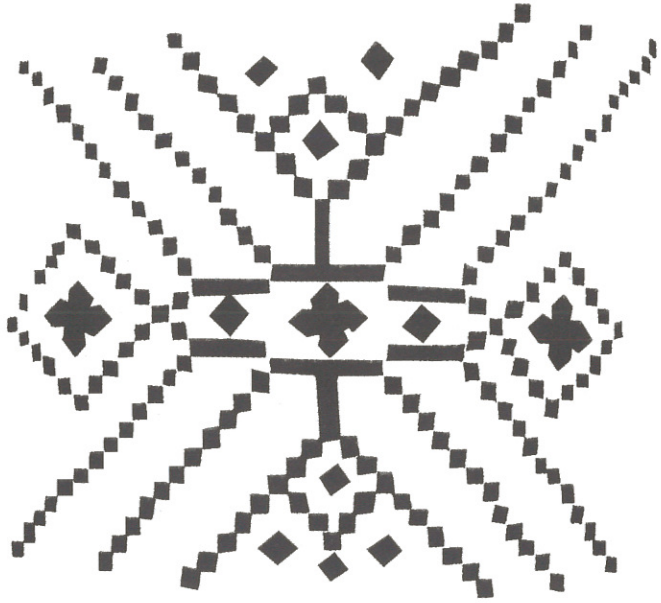


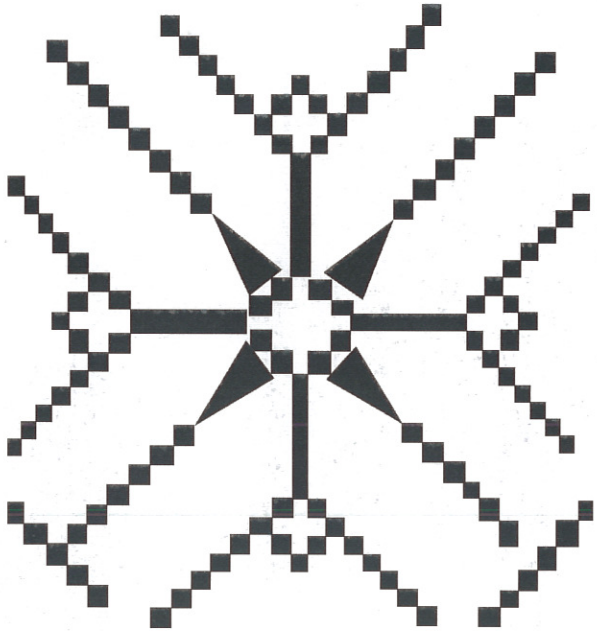


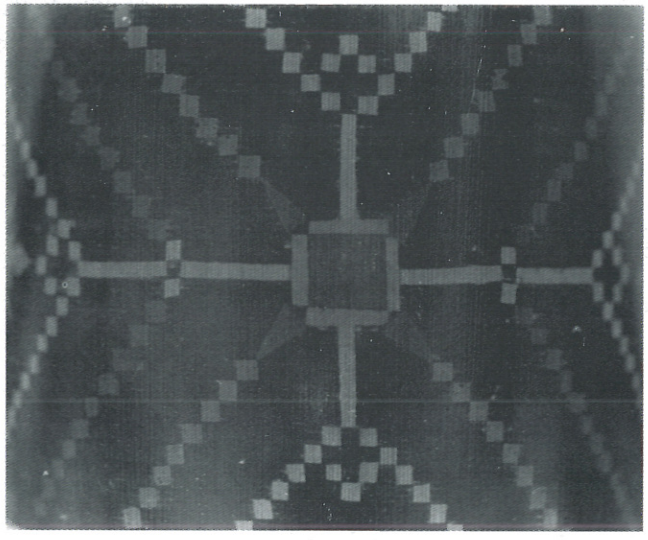


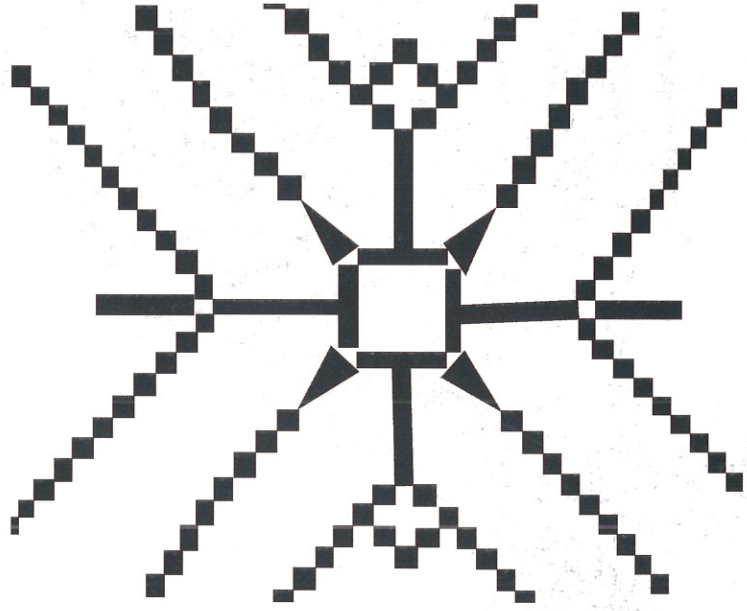


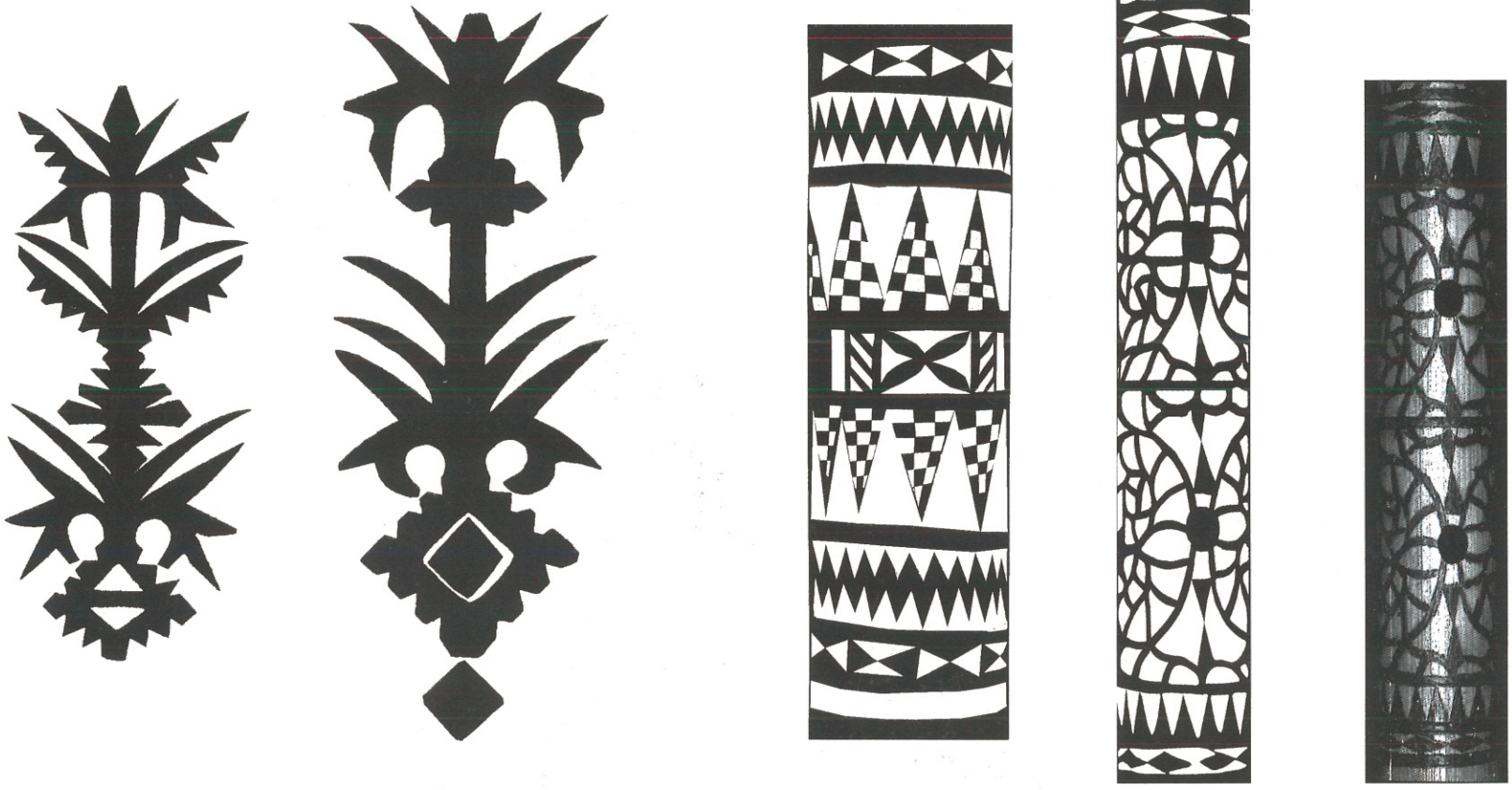


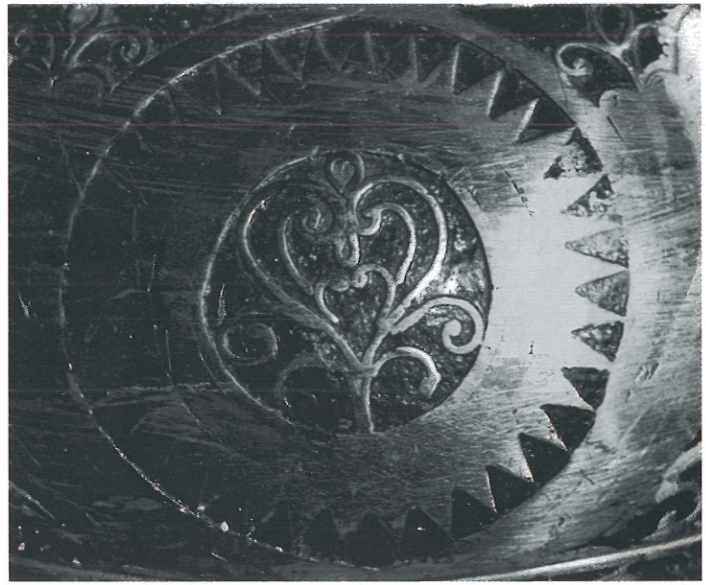


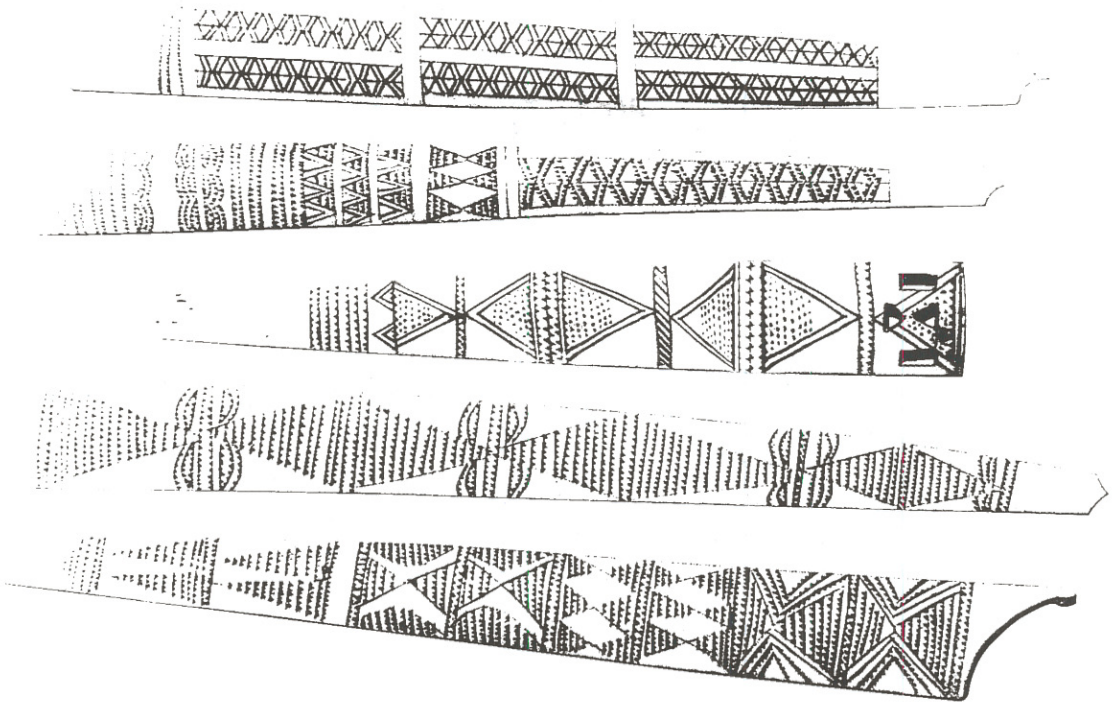


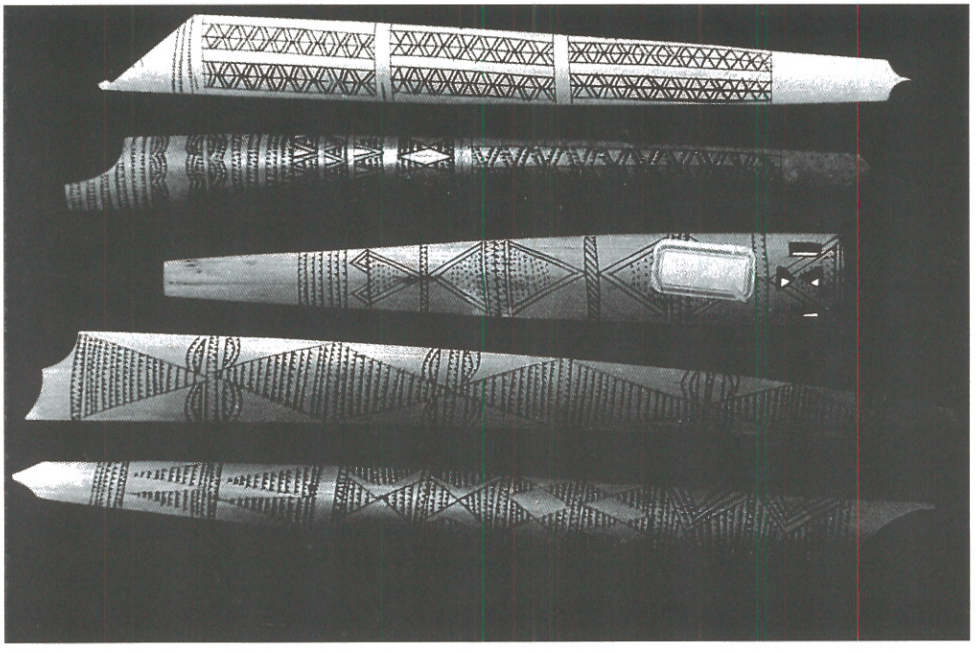




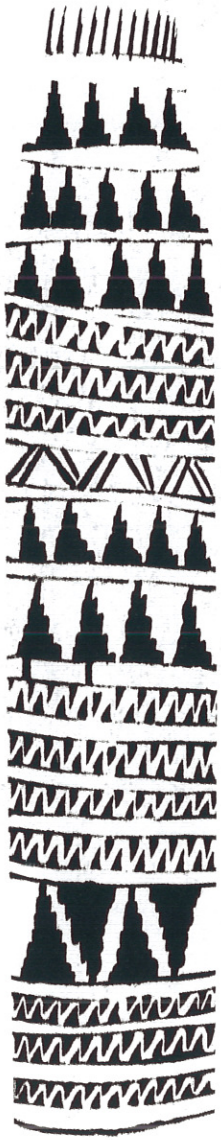




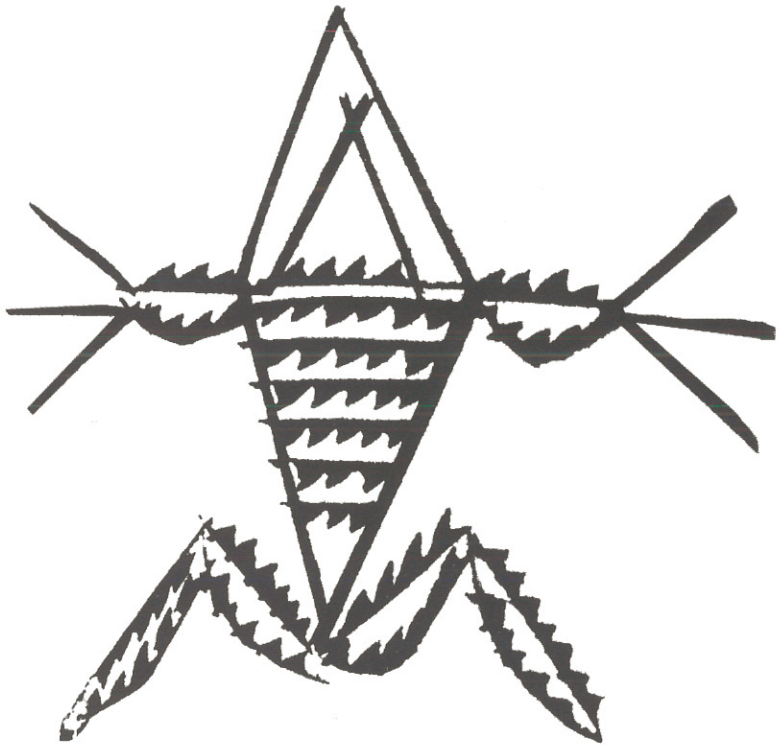


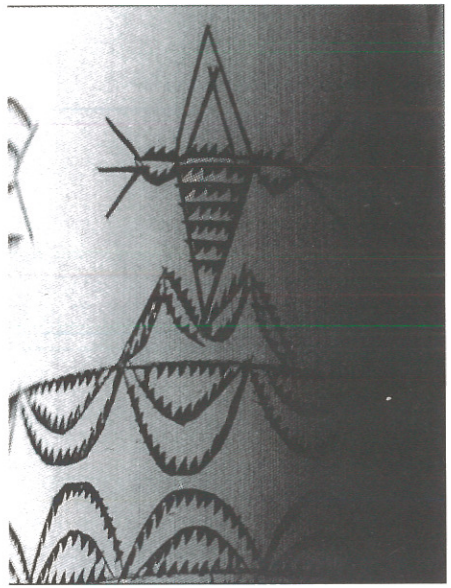


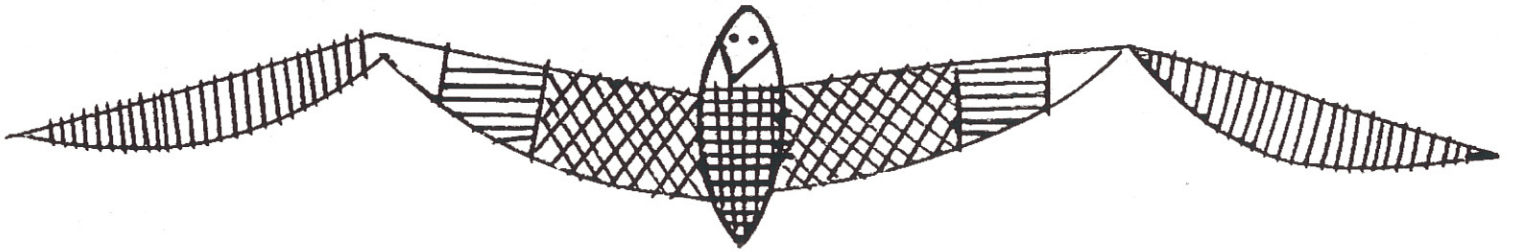
Subanon

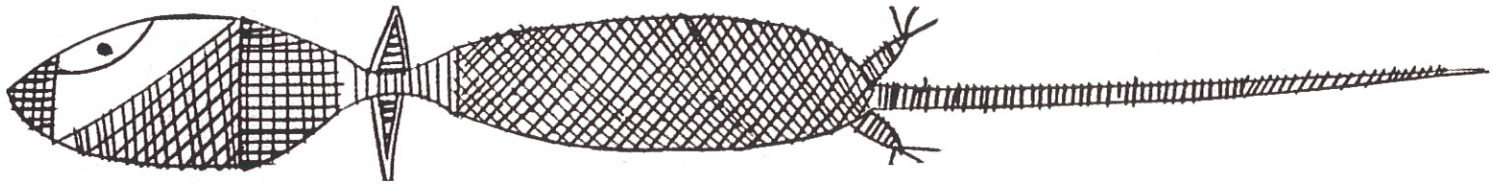


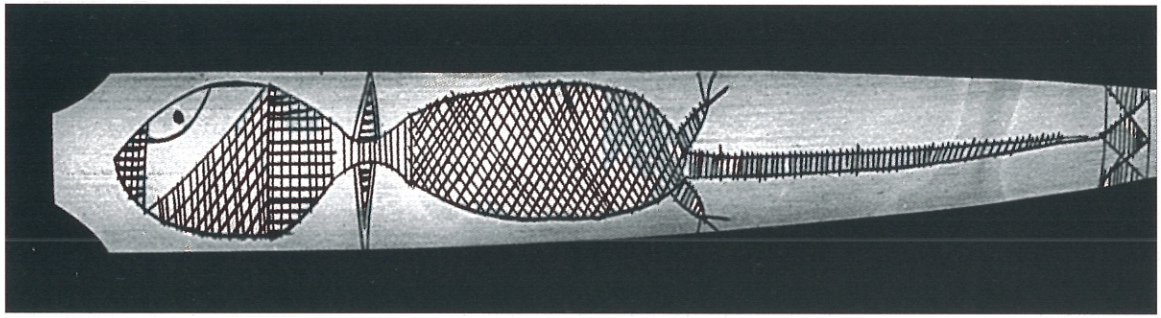
T'boli

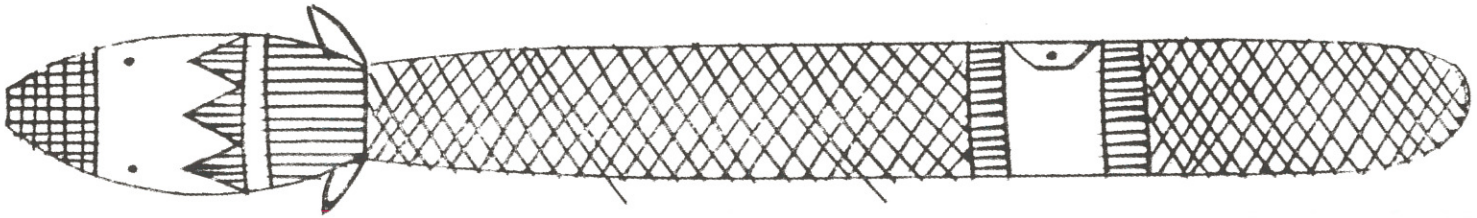


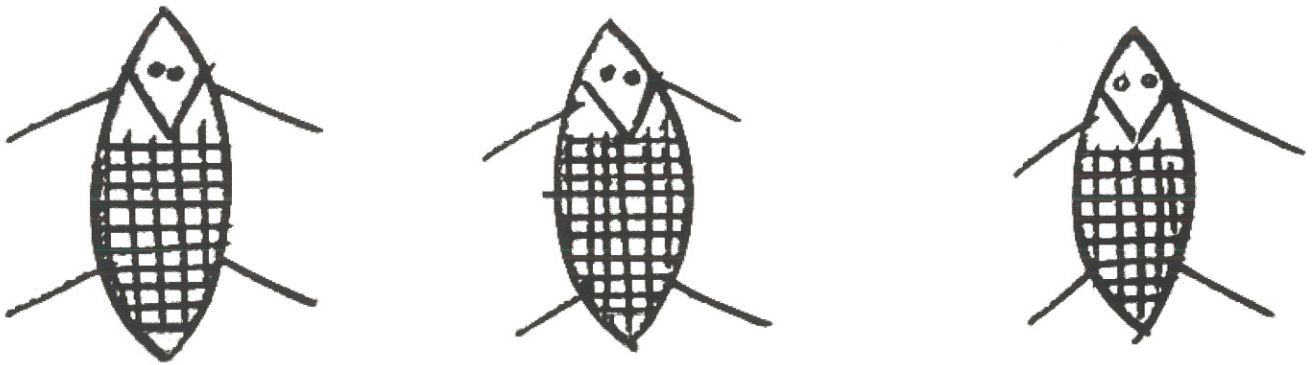


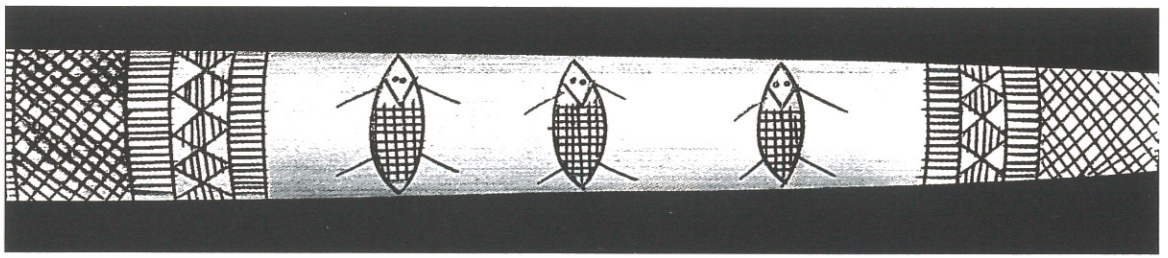


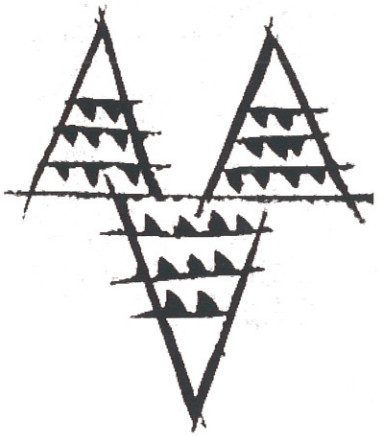


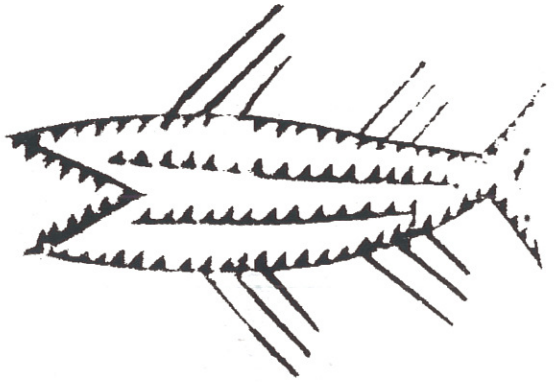


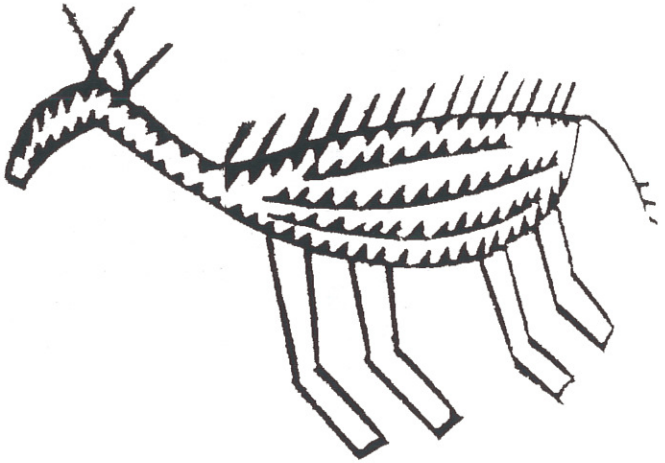


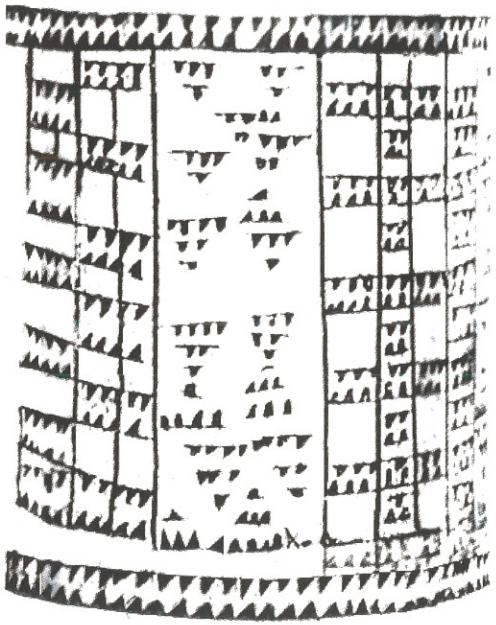


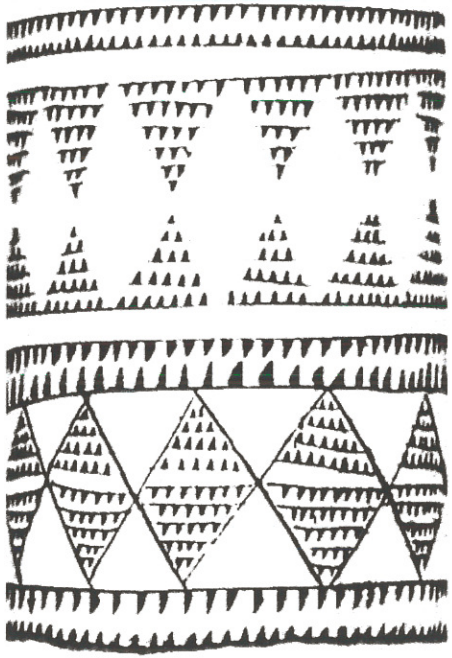


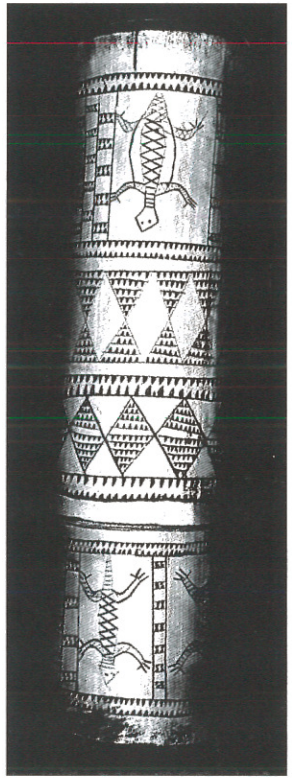


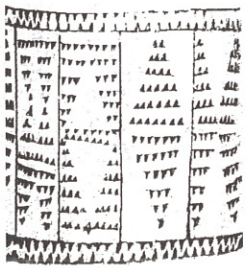


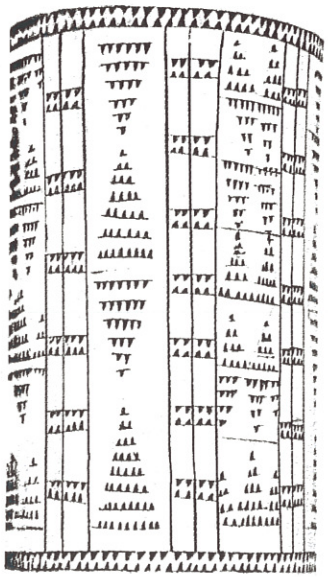


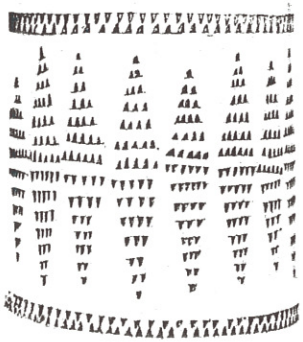


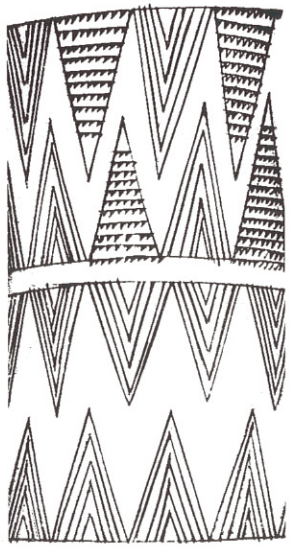


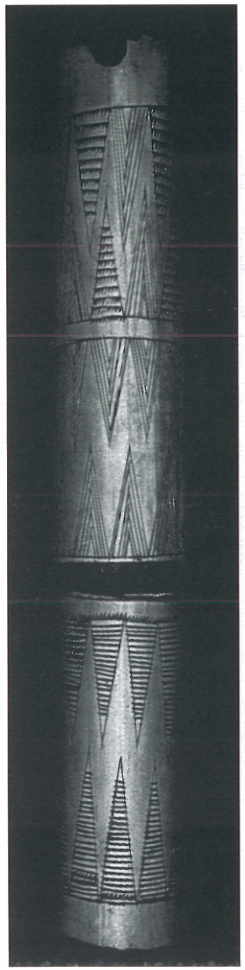












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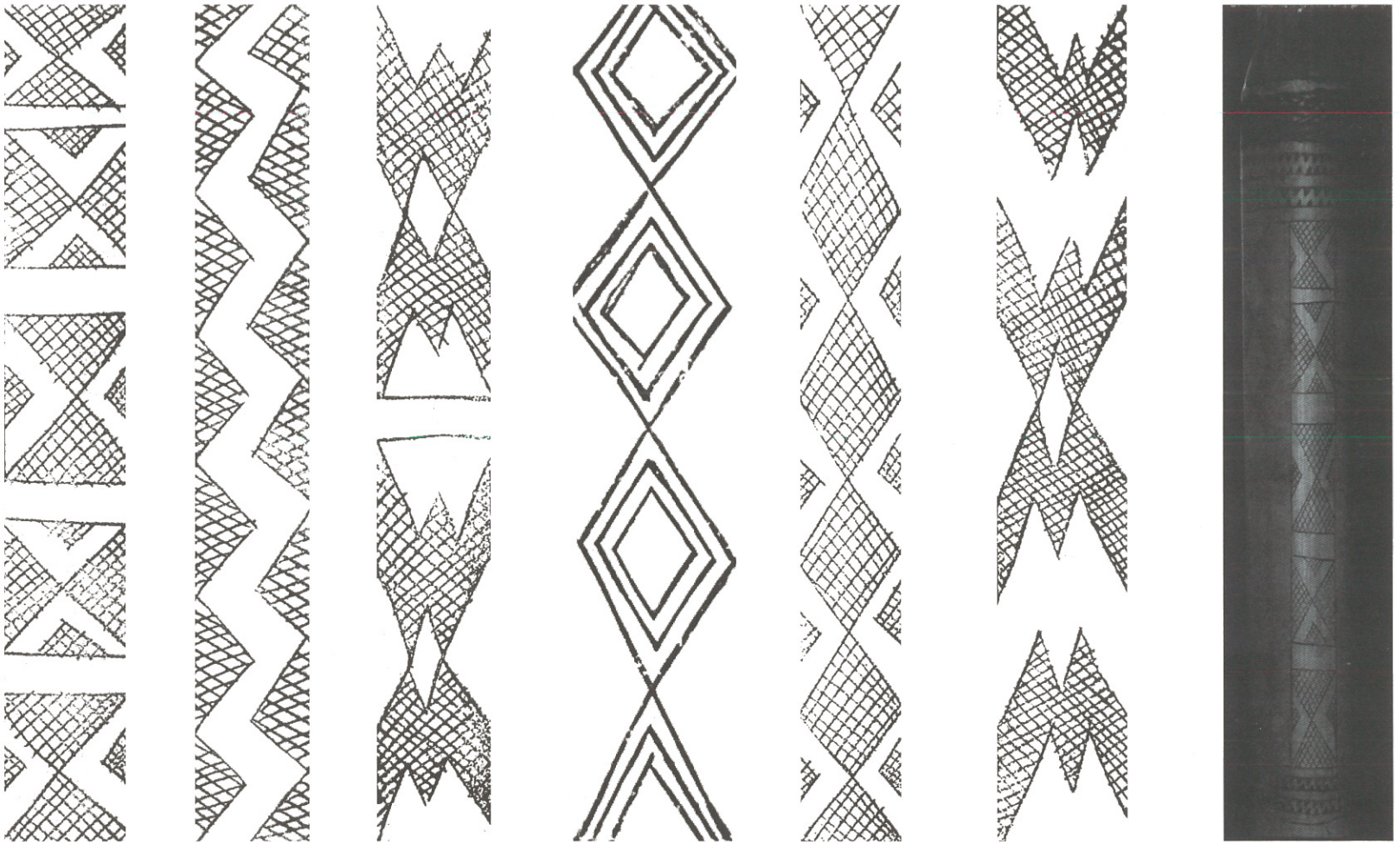
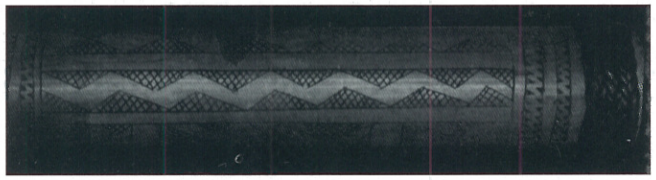
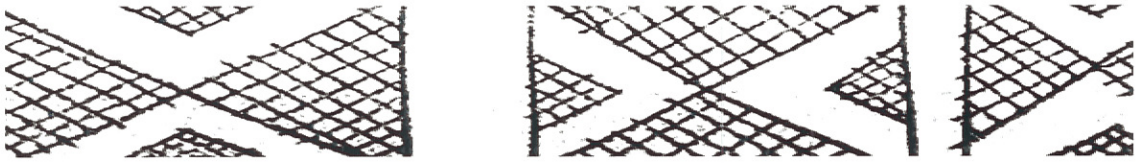
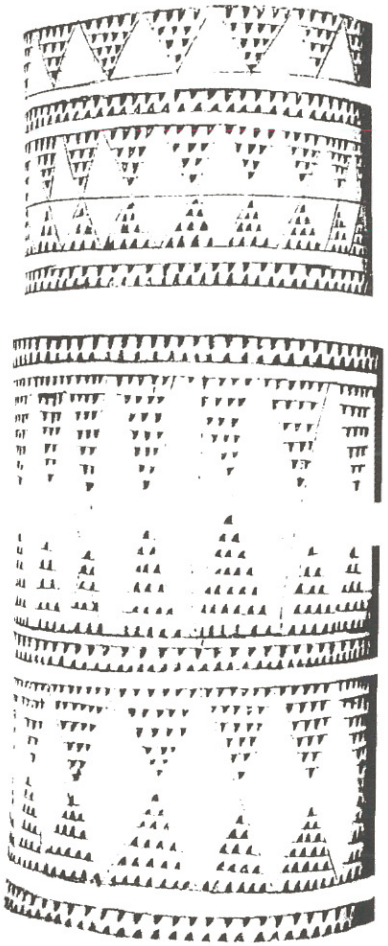
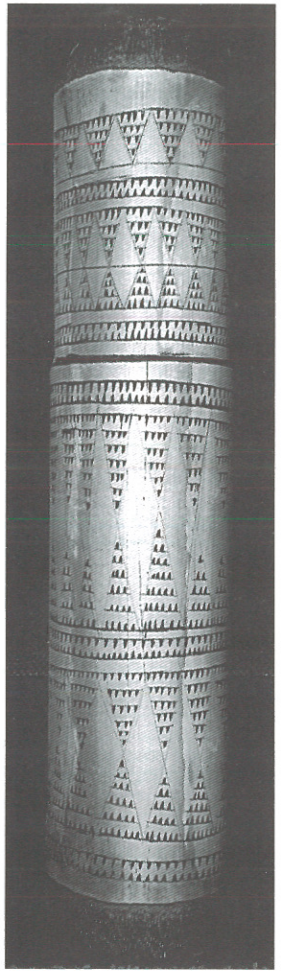










Metal

Casting with Wire Templates

By Jesus T. Peralta

There is a very distinct class of metal objects cast in southern Philippines principally by the Maguindanao and Maranao. The distinguishing characteristic of these objects is the presence of wire-formed ornamentation that comes in loops, spirals, circles, curlicues, running and interlocked scrolls, often plantlike as vines and growing ferns.

A great deal of these objects comes in the form of bronze/brass *lotoans*, or betel-nut boxes in various shapes: quadrangular, octagonal, cylindrical or lunette. Some are disparate objects like gong hangers, trailers for cosmetic cases and the like. Occasionally, this decorative technique is applied to enhance the appearance of *kulintang* gongs with triangular forms ornamented with wire-like curlicues radiating from the boss.

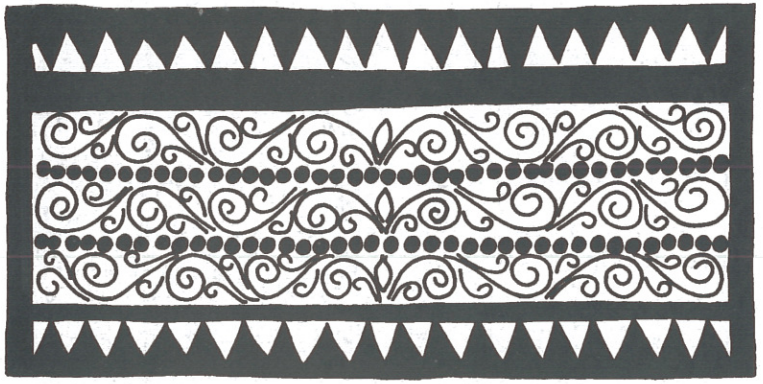
The process of making this kind of *lotoans* involves the lost-wax/waste-mold technique. Tablets of wax representing the sides that will be decorated are first prepared. Sections deep enough to accommodate the thickness of the ornamentation to be implanted are excised. Wire-like lengths of wax forming the whirls and curls of the ornamentation are then applied within the excisions. There is a wide variation in the thickness of the appliqués, depending on the desired effect. Thin appliqués result in tiny and intricately delicate compositions, while thick ones result in designs that are more robust. The most common effect is a floral, lacelike, open latticework. Oftentimes, the application of the ornamentation is done with a very high density, giving the impression of a highly textured surface rather than one composed of isolated decorative motifs.

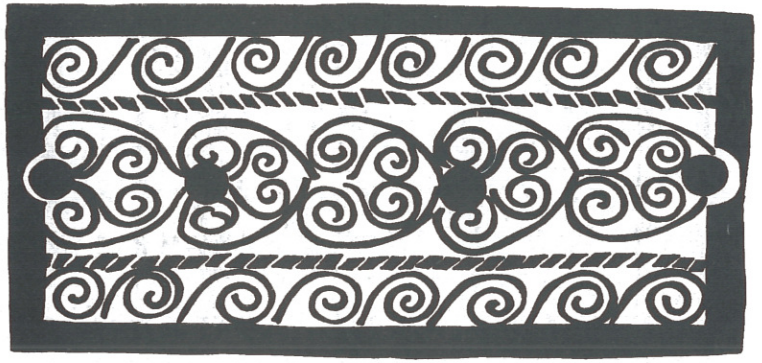
The tablets are put together to form the section to be cast, and then covered with thick layers of clay and sand as mold. There will be as many molds as the number of parts the object has. Spruces through which the wax, and then later the molten metal will run out later are provided in the mold.

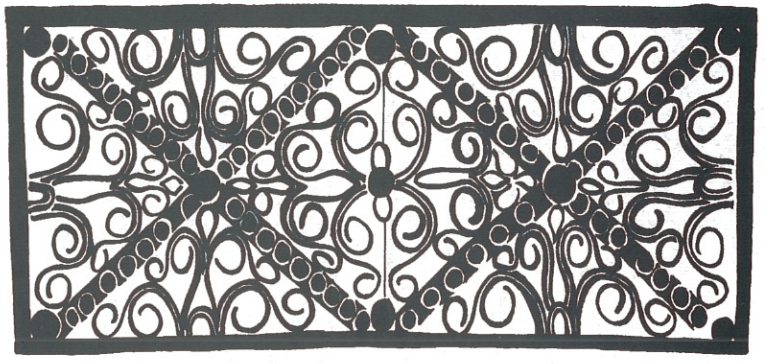
The liquefied bronze or brass is then poured through the channel into the mold, and then allowed to cool sufficiently. Subsequently, the molds are broken apart to extricate the cast objects. Final cleaning, repairing, refurbishing and polishing may be required before assembling the parts of the *lotoan*.

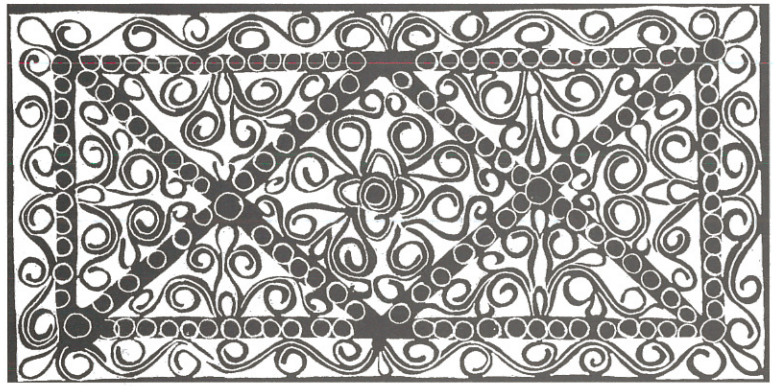
For less dense wire inlays, the grooves are engraved with an ongletter, a narrow type of engraving tool with a swallowtail profile. The wire is then forced into the groove by hammering. For wider pieces of metal inlays, a square graver is first used, followed by an ongletter, to create the undercut.

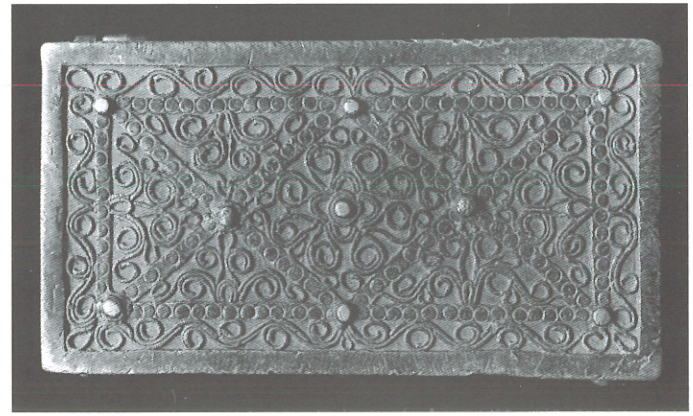
Bagobo

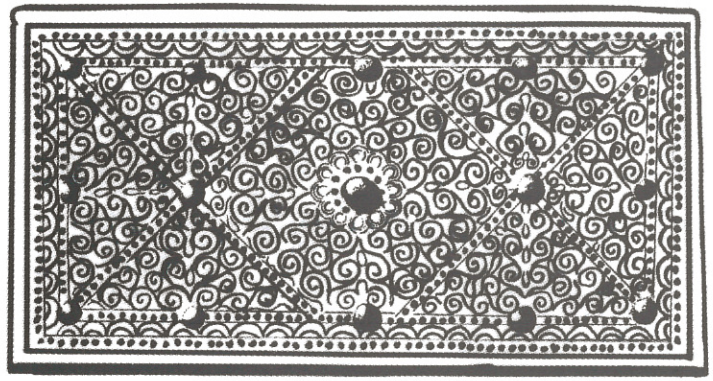


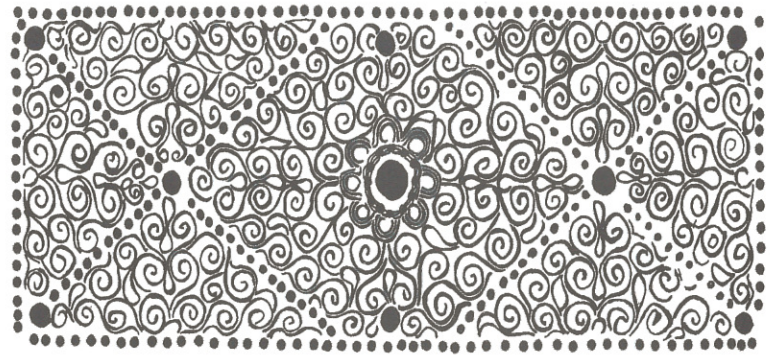


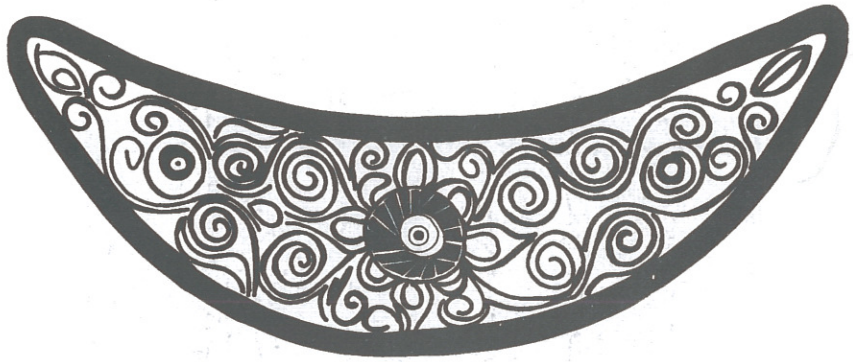


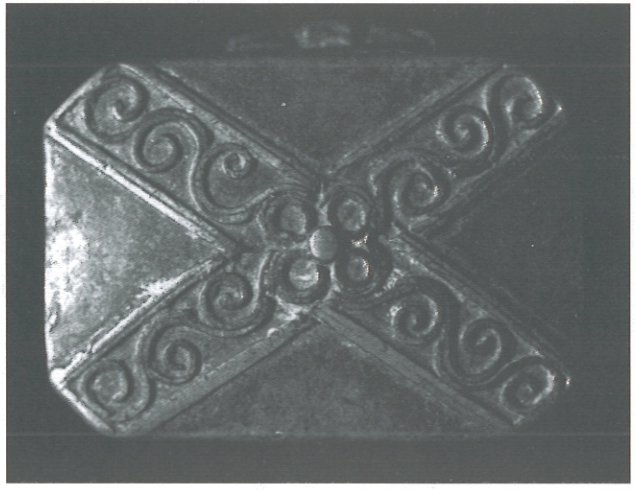


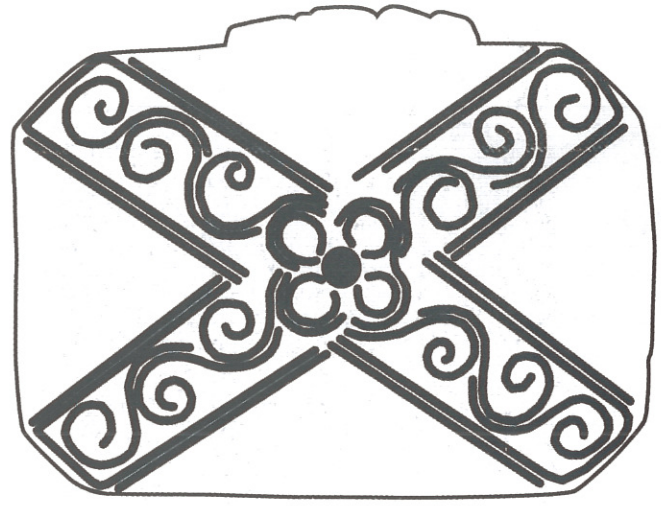


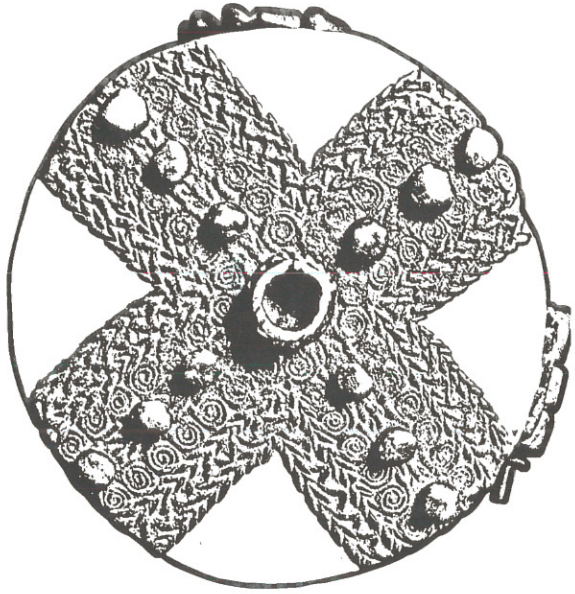


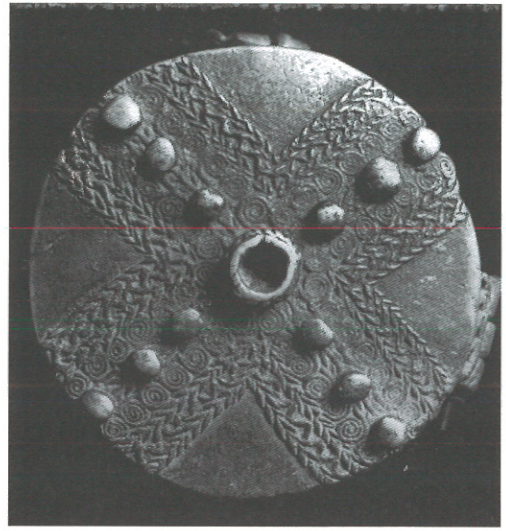












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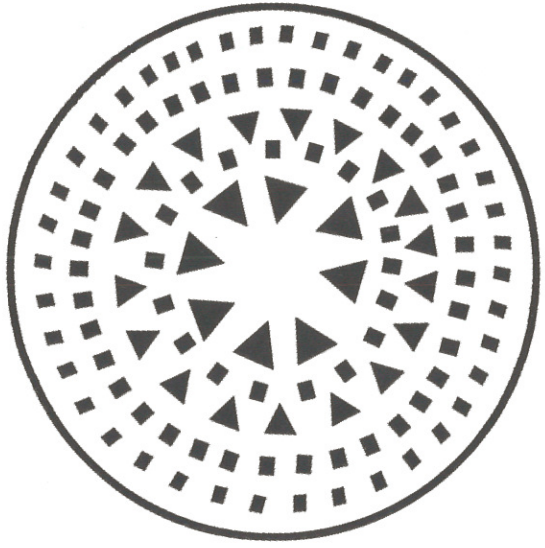

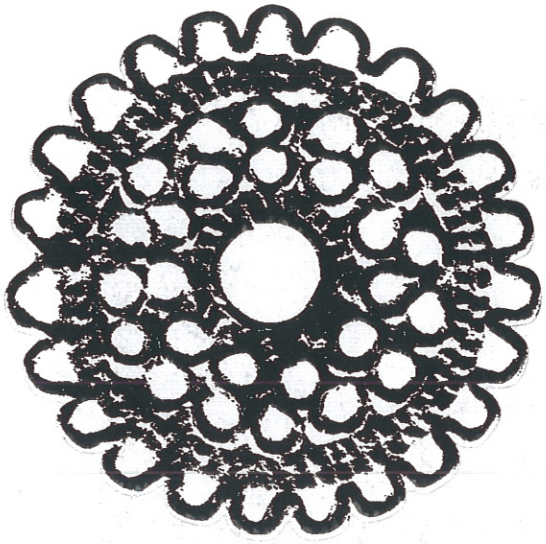

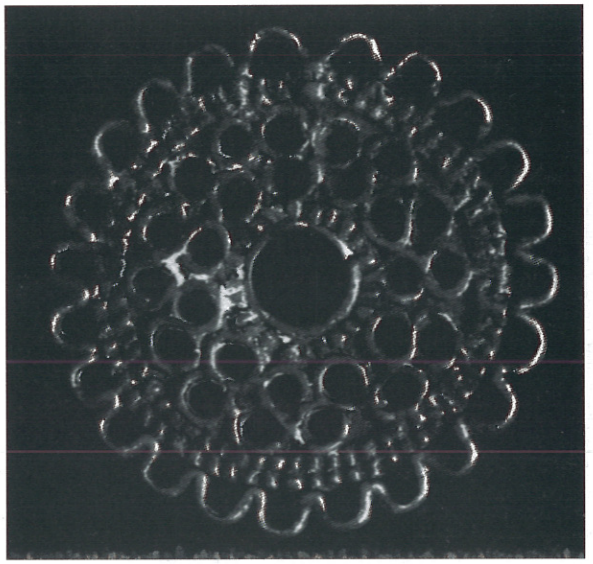

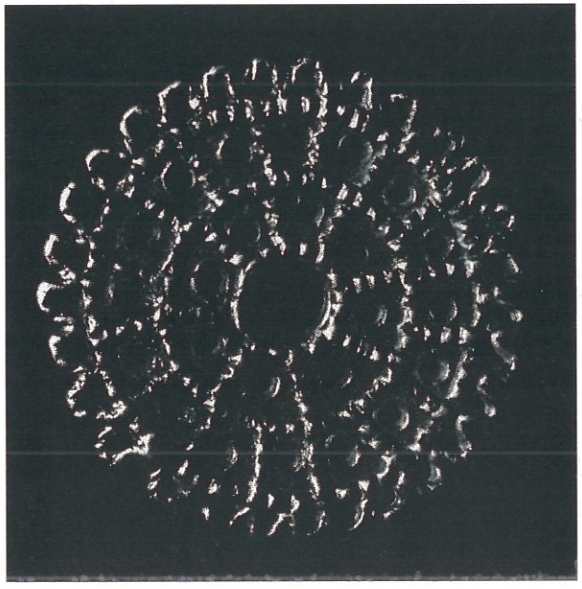

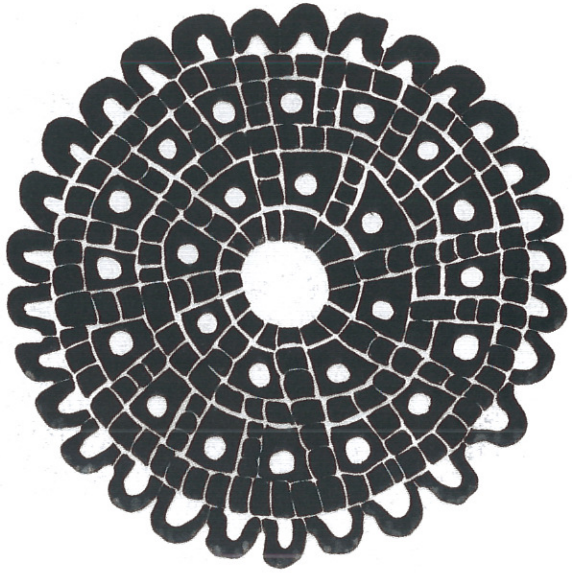

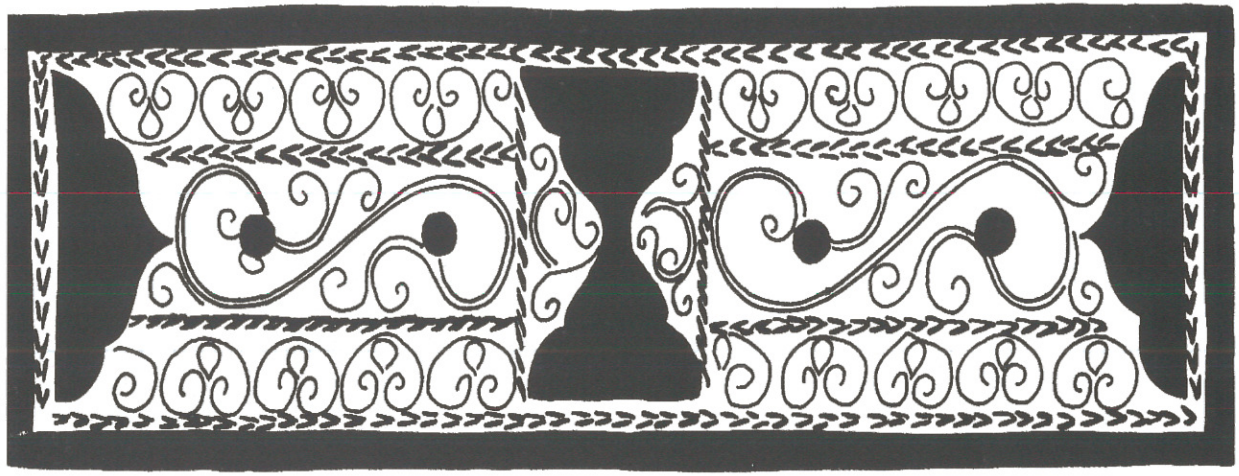

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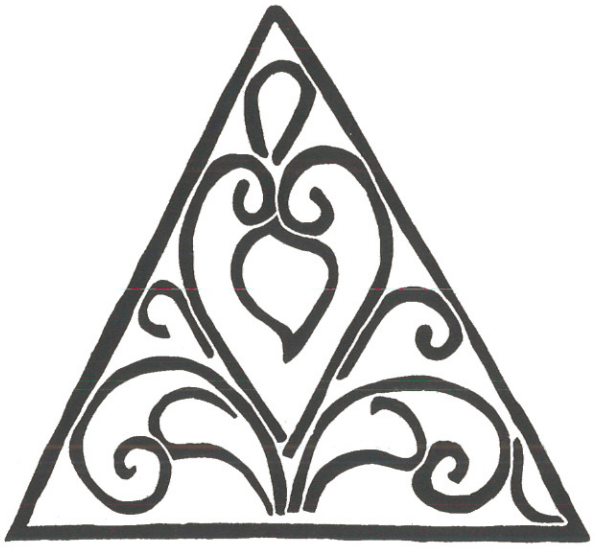
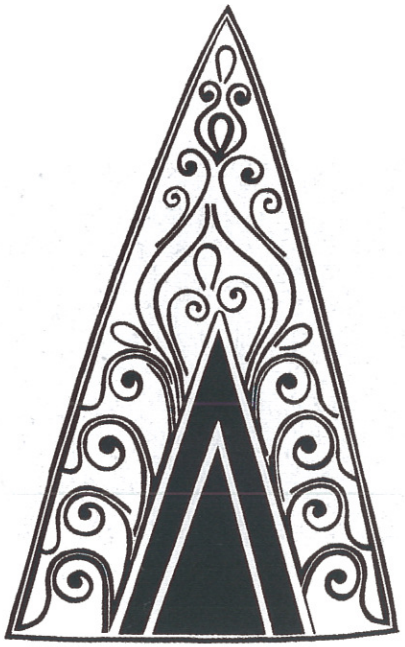
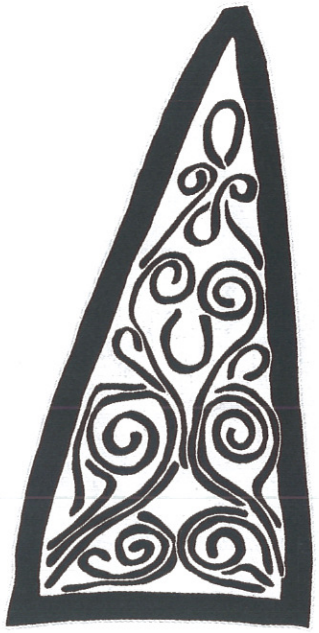
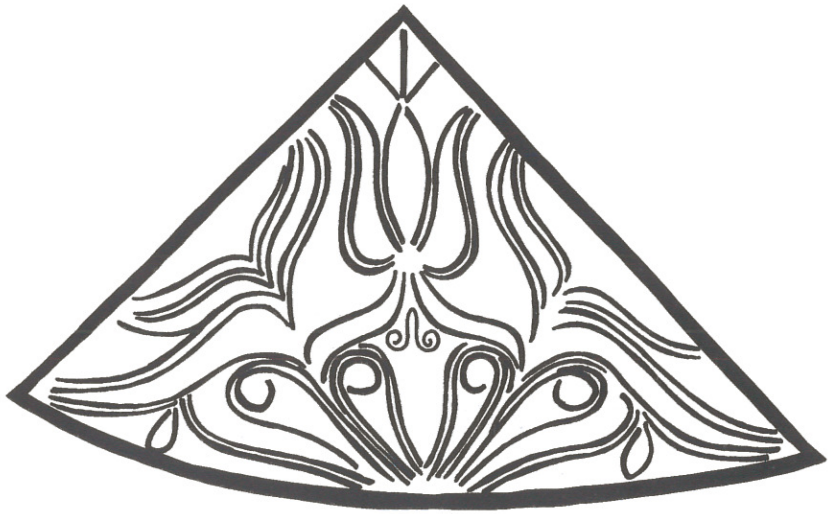
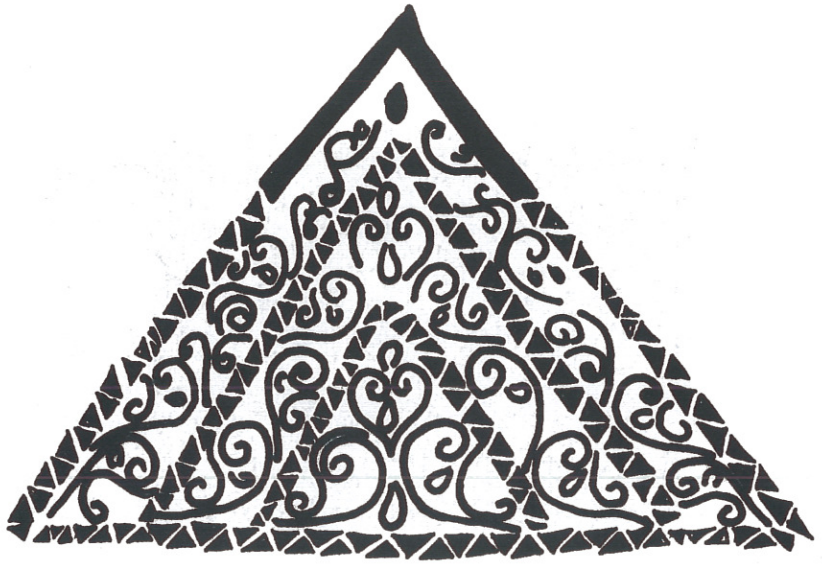
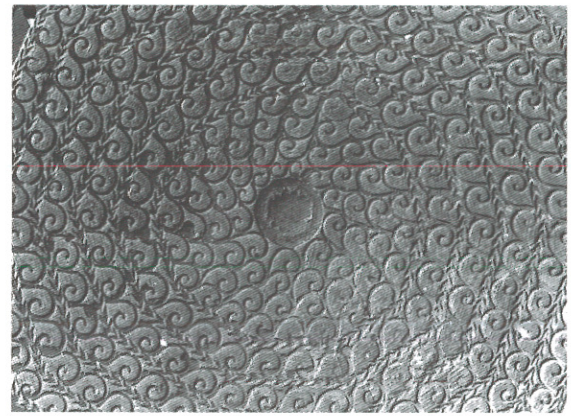


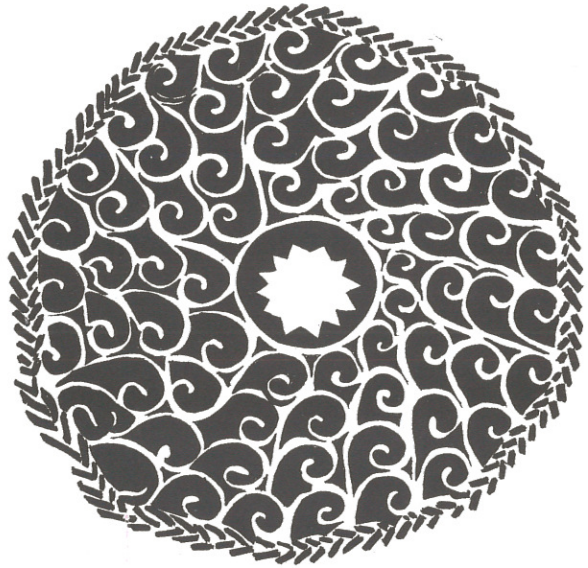


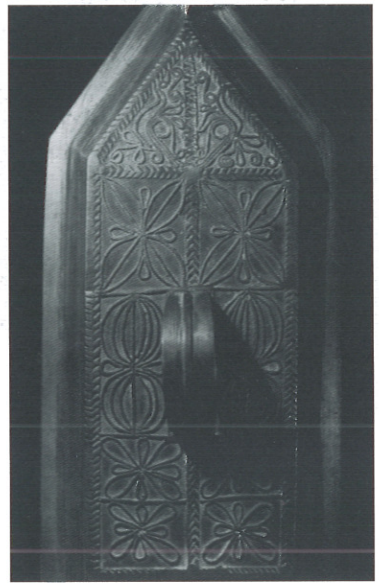


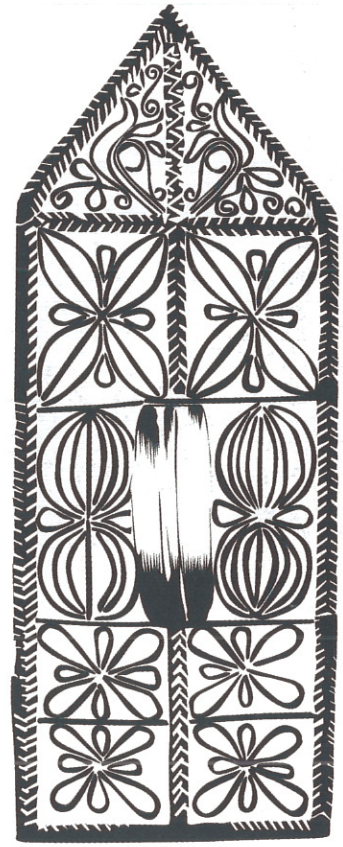


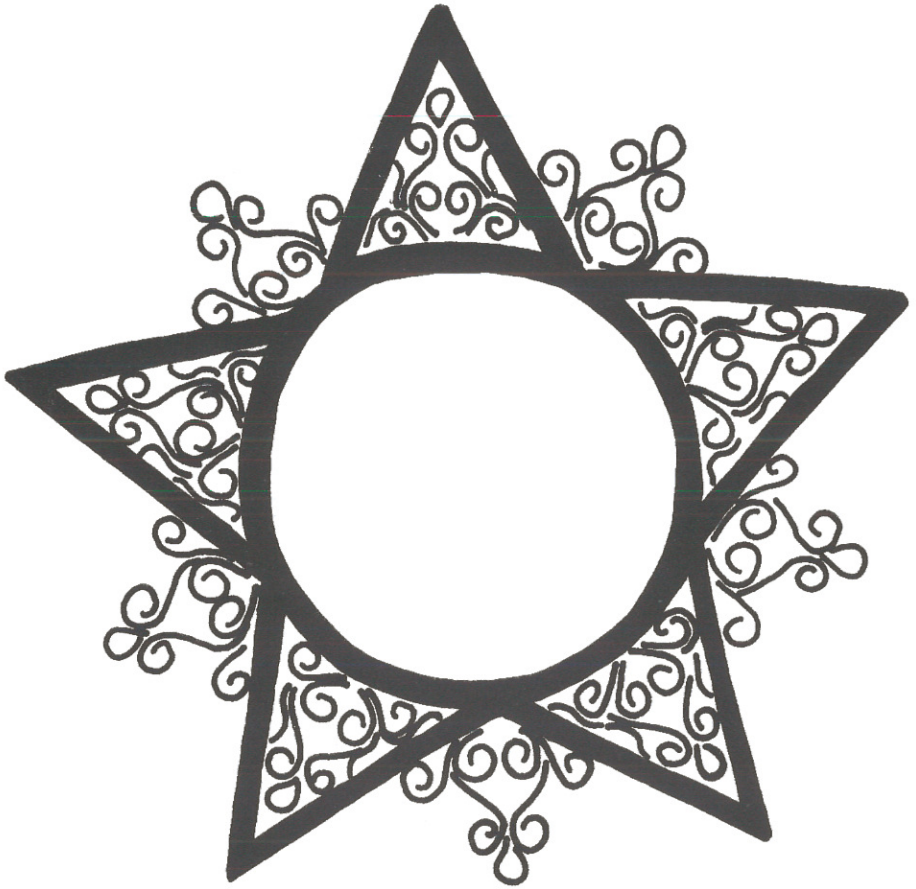


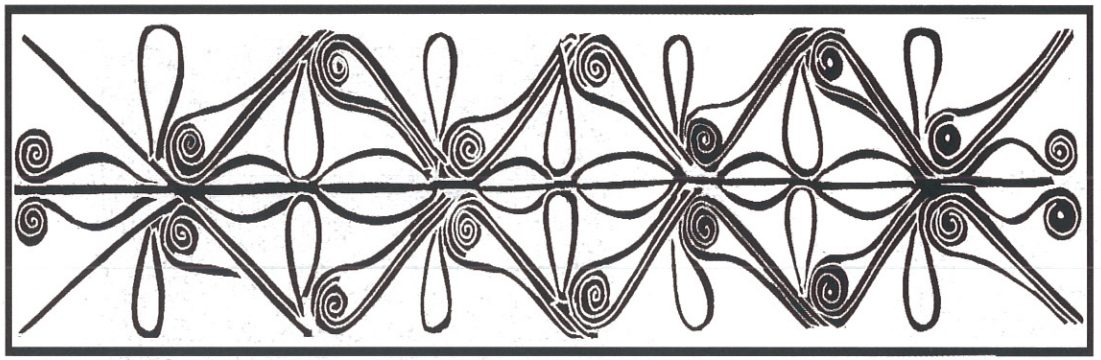


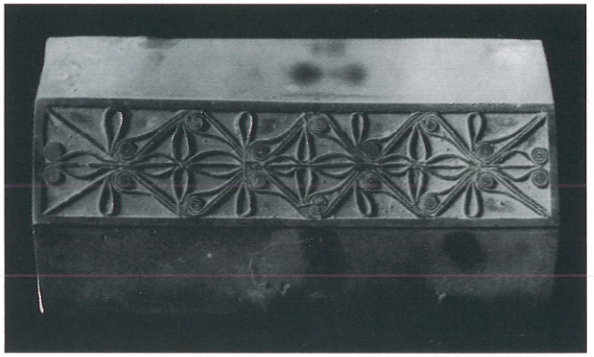


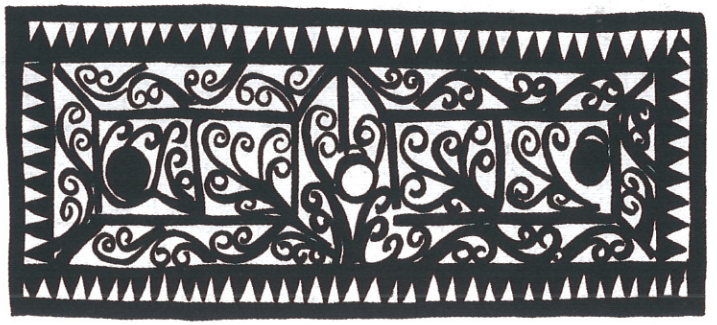


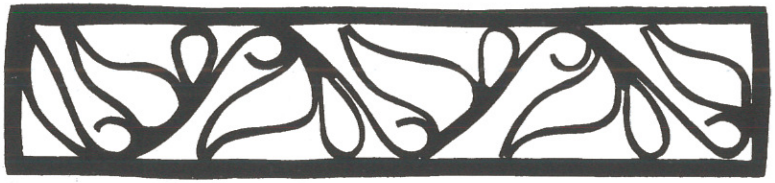


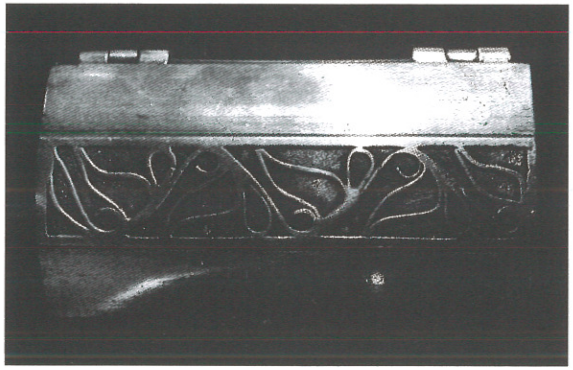


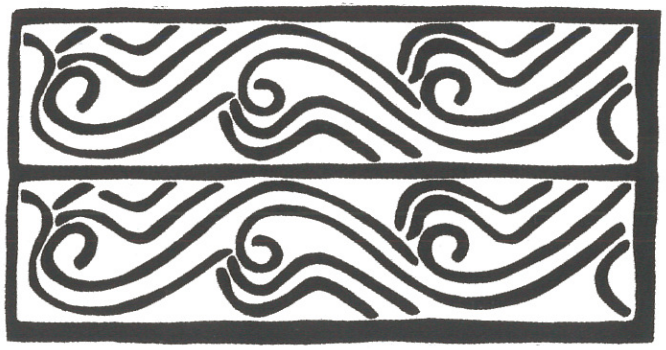


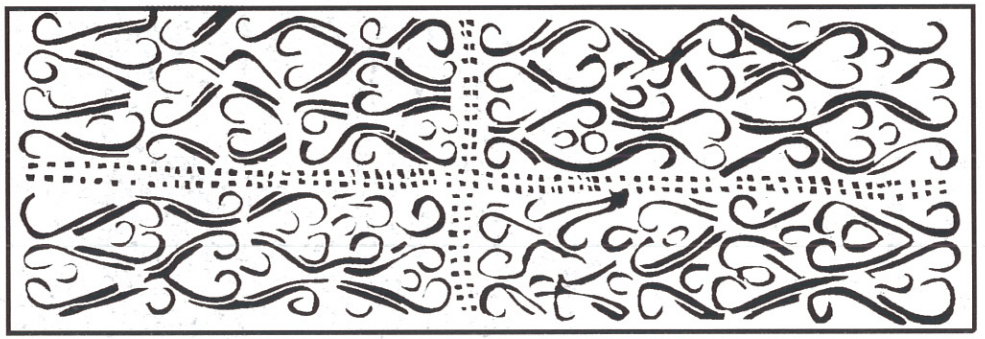


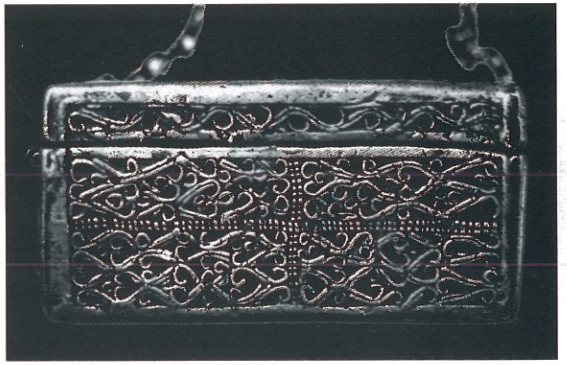


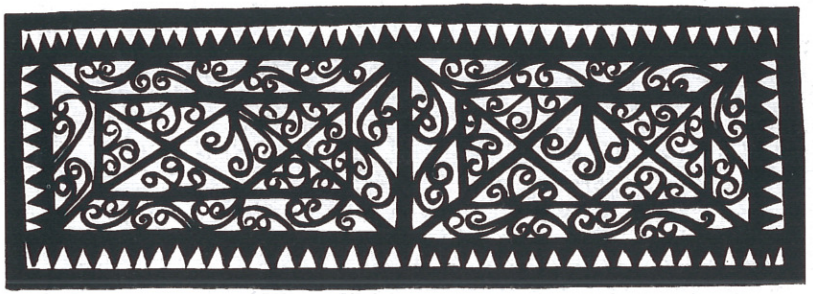


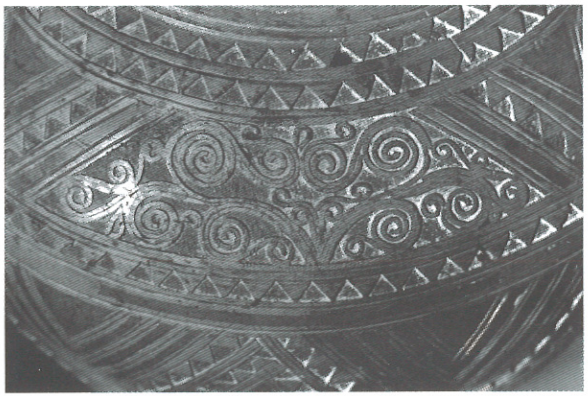












Casting, Applique and Repoussé

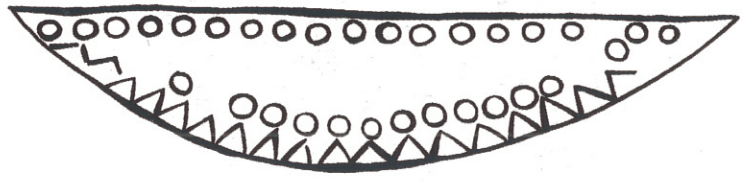
By Jesus T. Peralta

Metal casting in southern Philippines, especially the production of the numerous bronze betel-nut containers, uses the *cire perdue* or lost-wax/waste-mold process. The object is first formed in wax slabs, and the designs to be incorporated are laid out on the slabs. The object is then encased in an earthen mold made of clay, ash, and sand. Outlets for excess liquid metal are incorporated in the mold, as well as a channel to pour in the molten metal. The mold is fired first to melt out the wax, and then the metal is poured in, with the excesses getting out through the spruces. After cooling, the mold is broken to expose the completed metal object. The spruces are removed, and the object polished when necessary. Color contrasts are provided by texturing as background to the designs, or through black enameling introduced in the depressions.

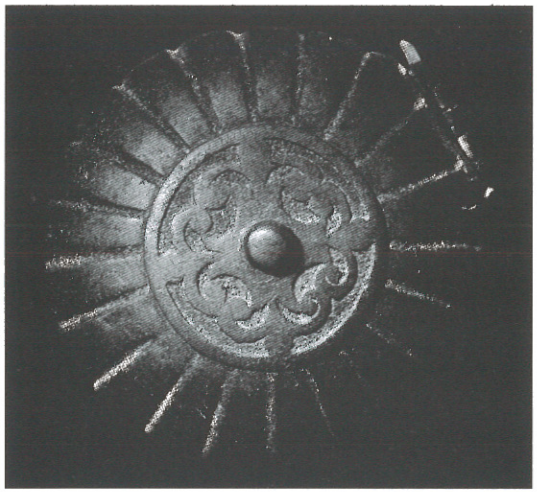
The technique of making shallow bas-relief sculpture on a surface is called *repoussé*. There are many ways of producing *repoussé*. Generally, this is done by sinking the metal down into a mold, sandbag or a soft-supporting matrix. The classic way is to make a pitch backing to a sheet of metal. Pitch is a mixture of wax, tar and a filler. *Sahing*, the sap of the pili tree cooked in coconut oil, was also used. The metal is then hammered into the pitch. This action displaces while supporting the surrounding metal.

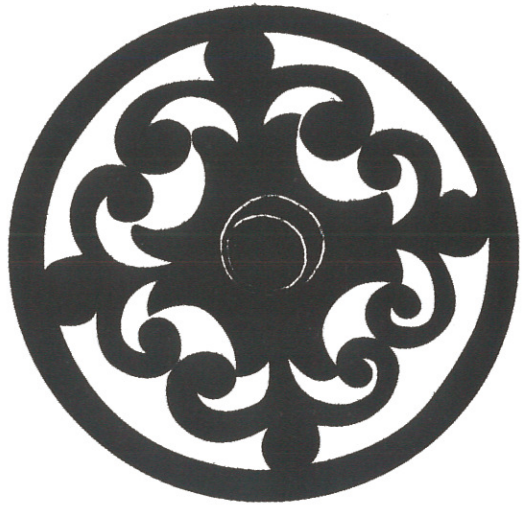
A very distinctive and unique personal ornament among Mandaya women is the *platina*, a silver breastplate. This is a slightly convex disk as large as an outspread hand pounded out of a sheet of silver. The silver disk is usually made from antique coins. A hole is cut out in the middle for suspension. All over the convex surface are very intricate concentric chased designs. As the silver plate oxidizes, the designs stand out in contrasting black. The designs are in short dashes, lines, punctuations and other minute motifs similar to those embroidered in the blouses of Mandaya women.

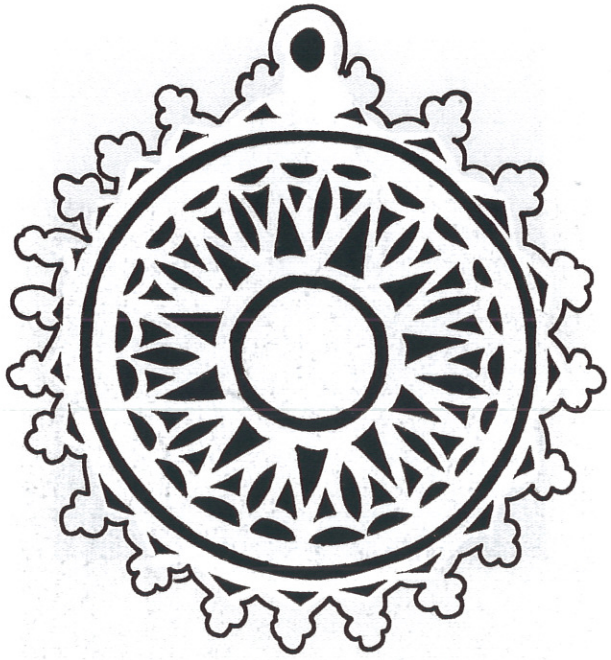
Bagobo

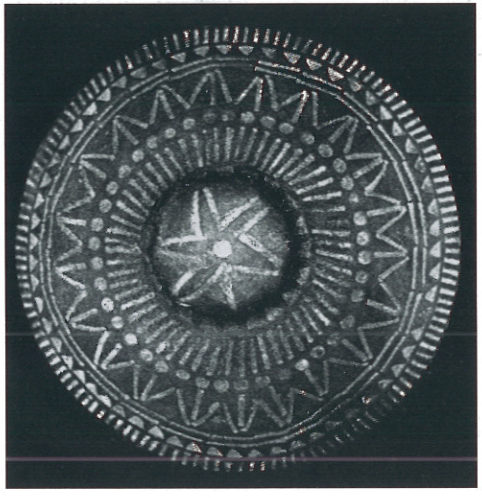


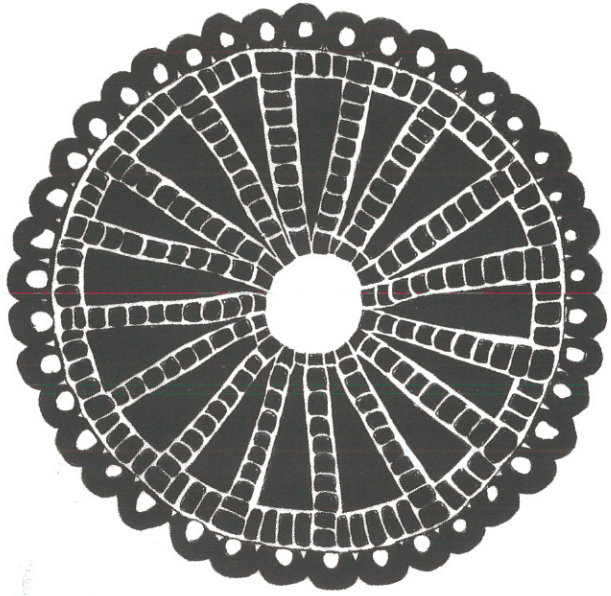
Maguindanao

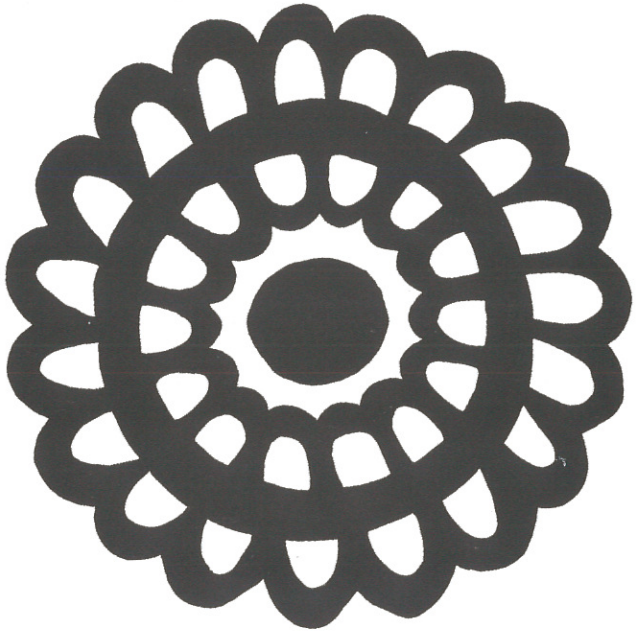


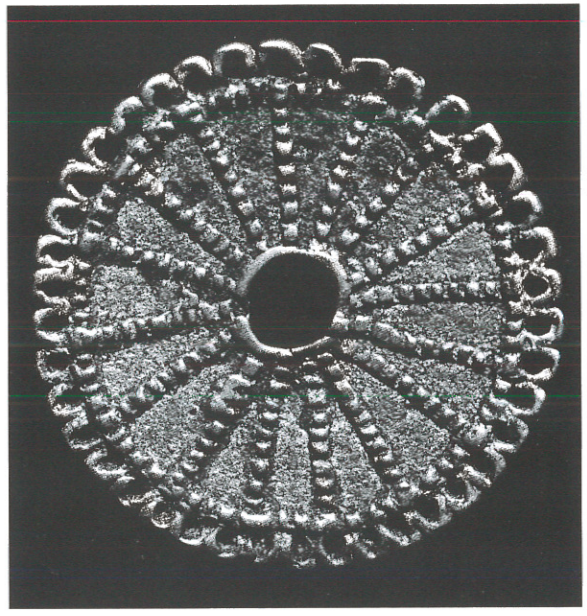


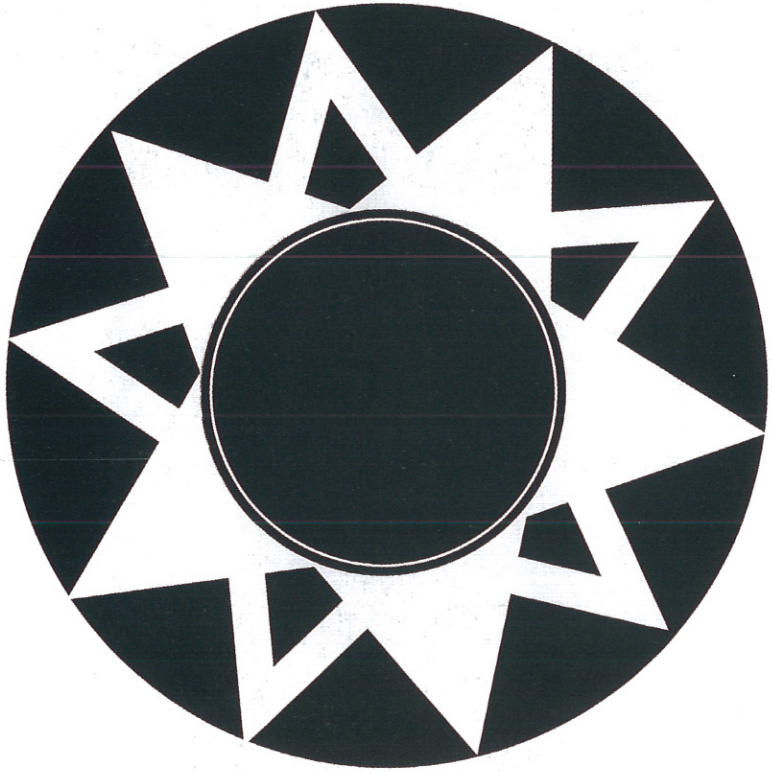


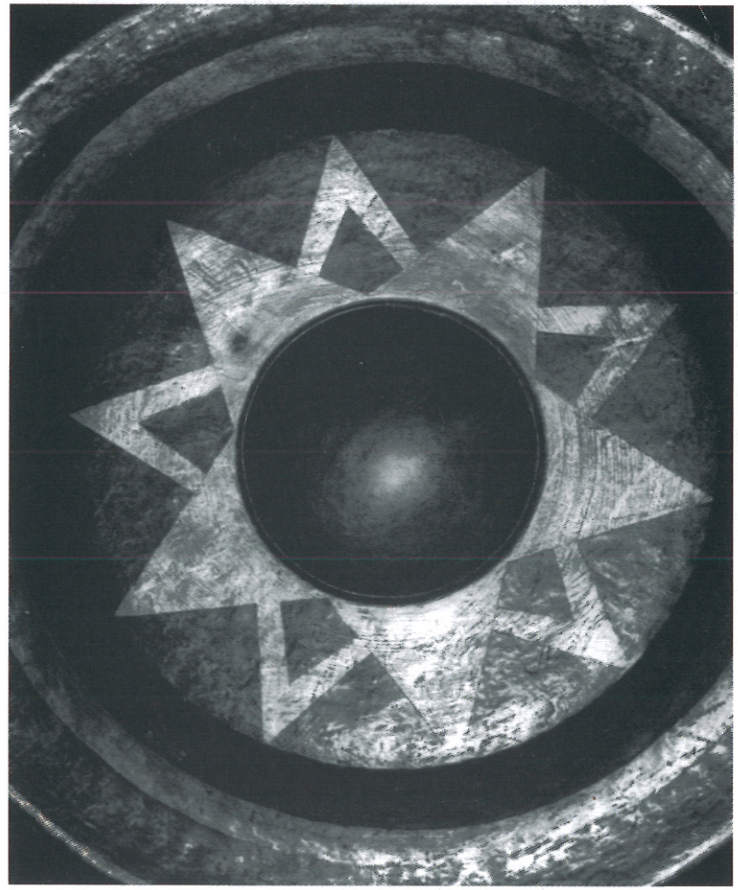


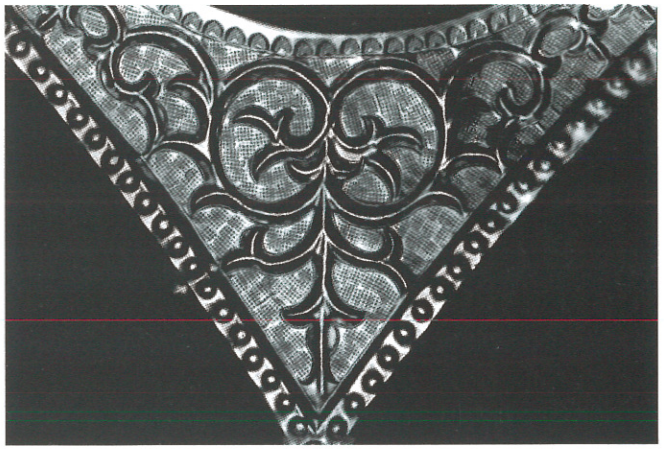


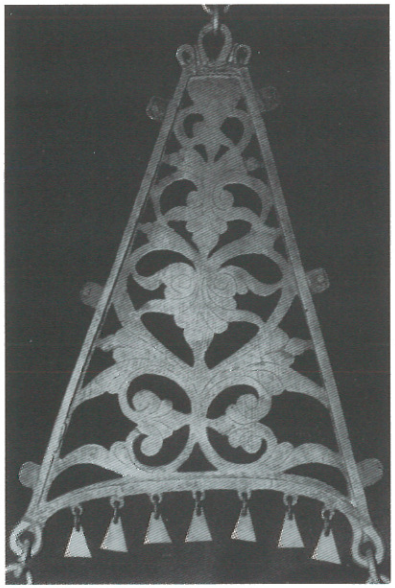


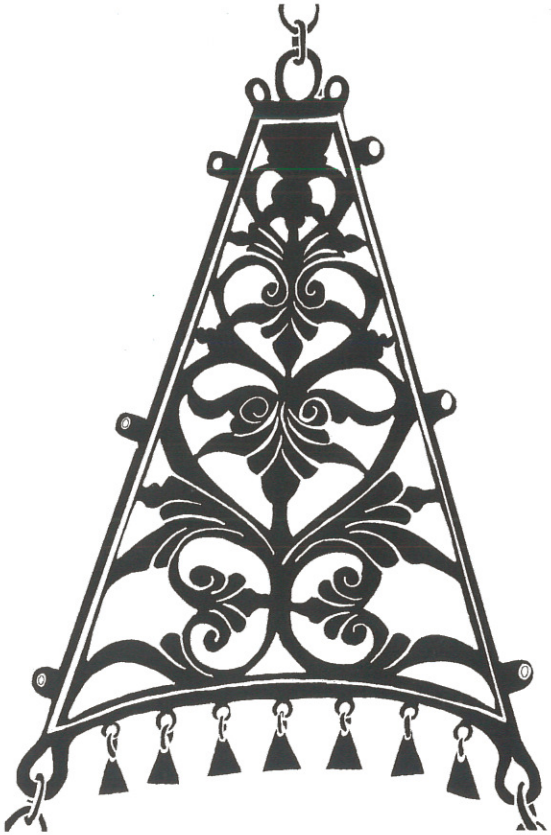


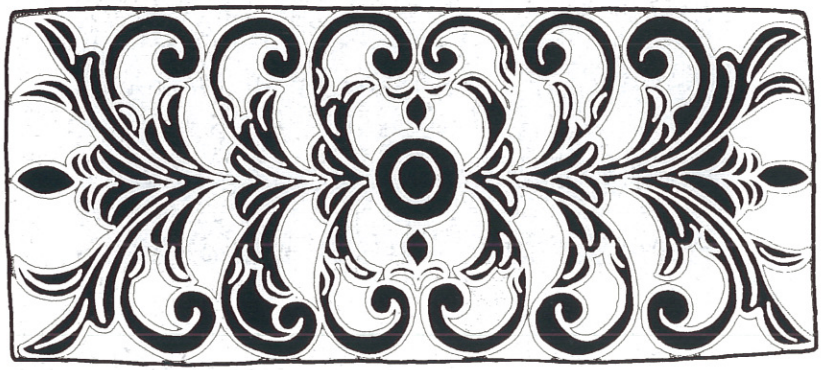


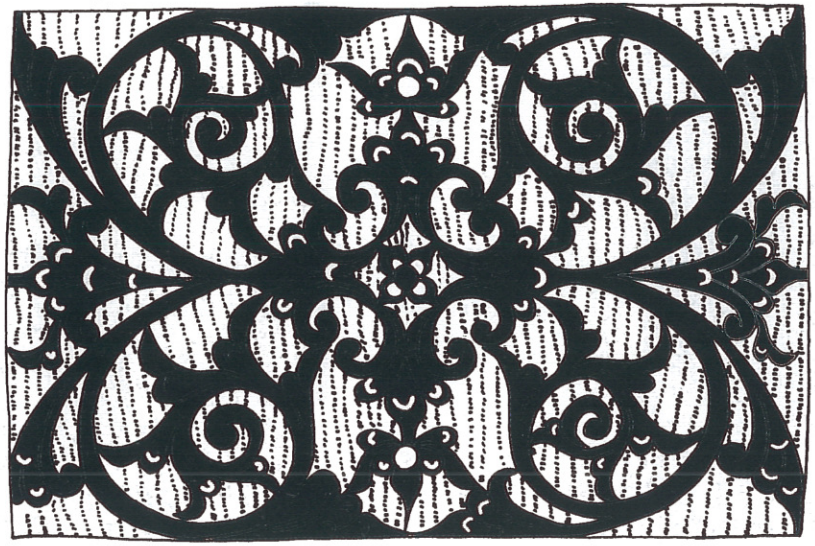


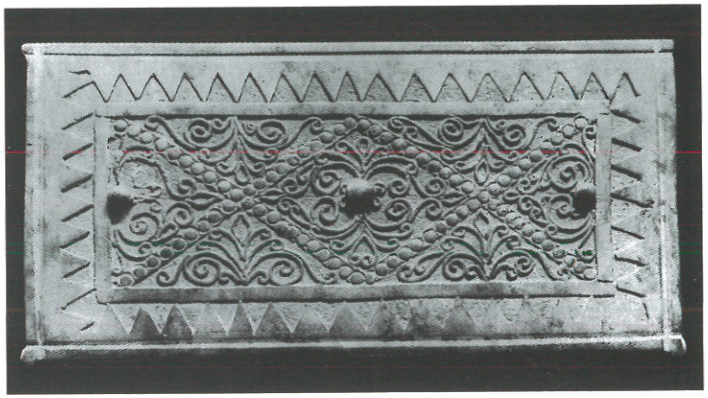


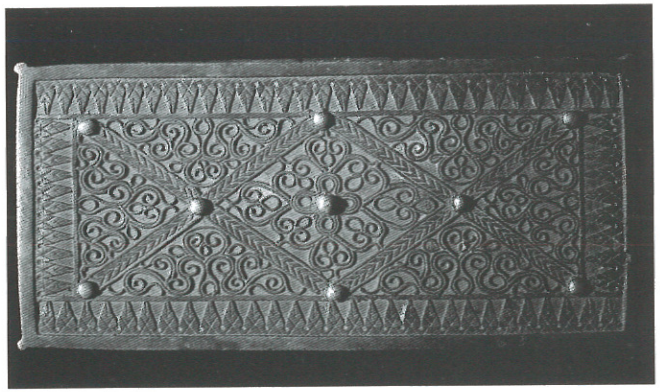


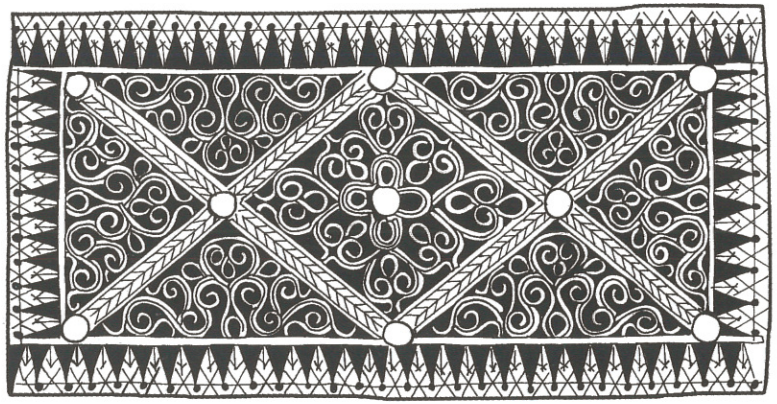




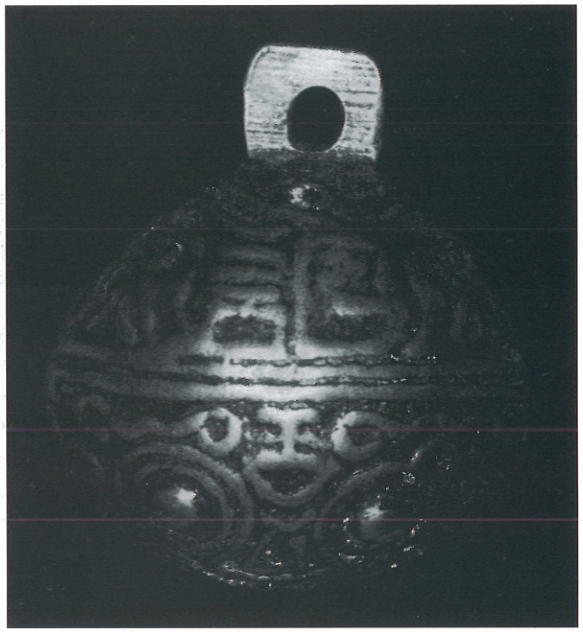




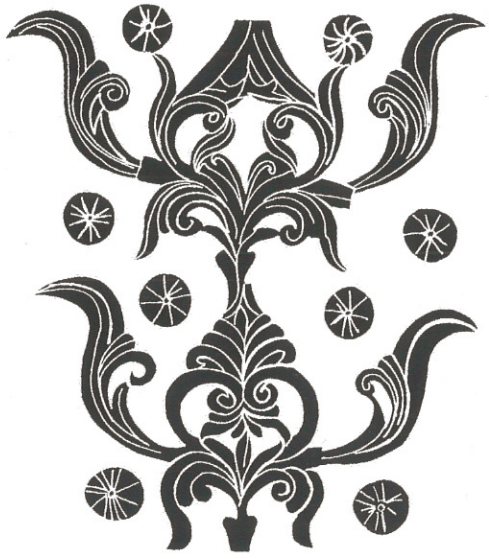


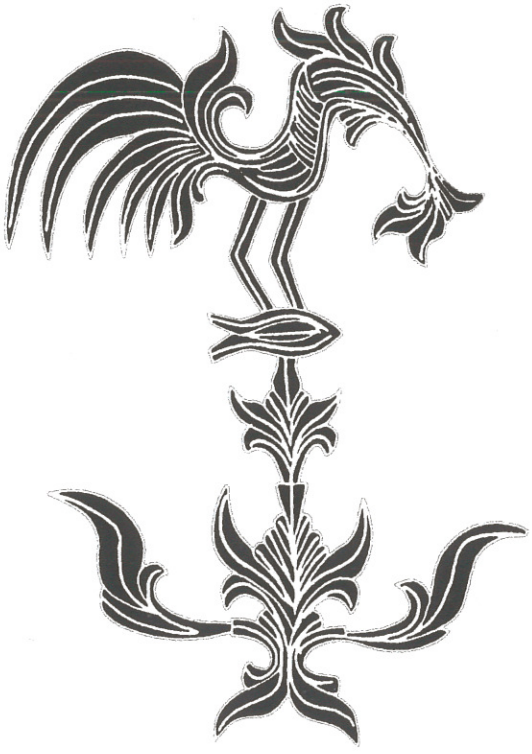


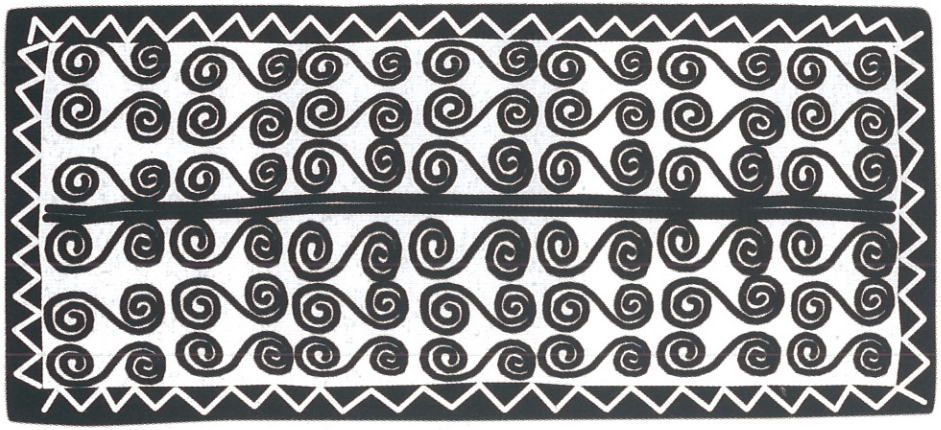
Manobo

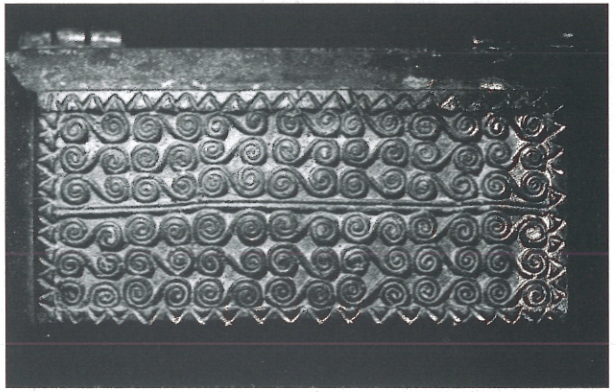


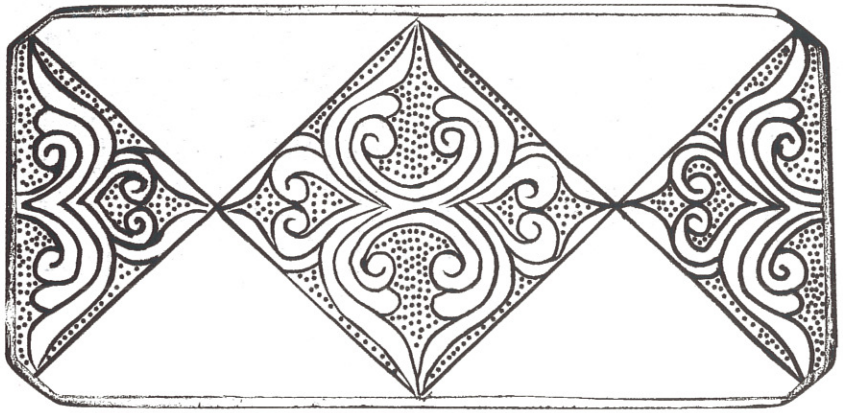
Maranao

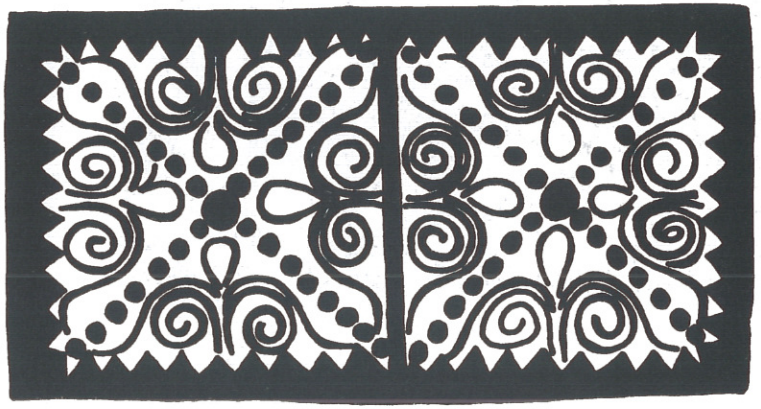


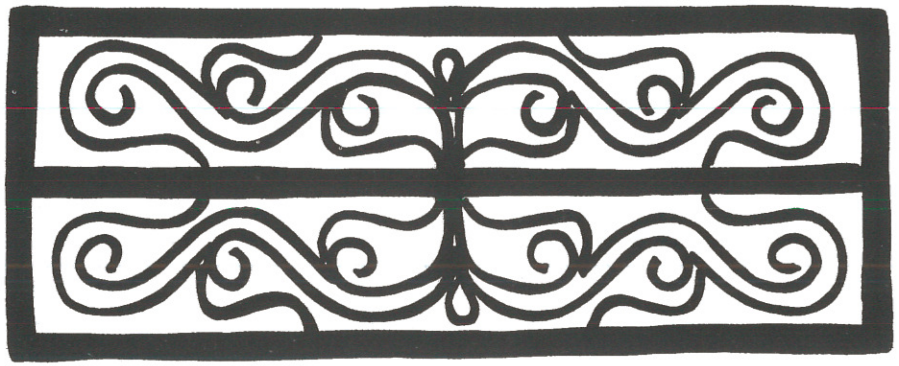


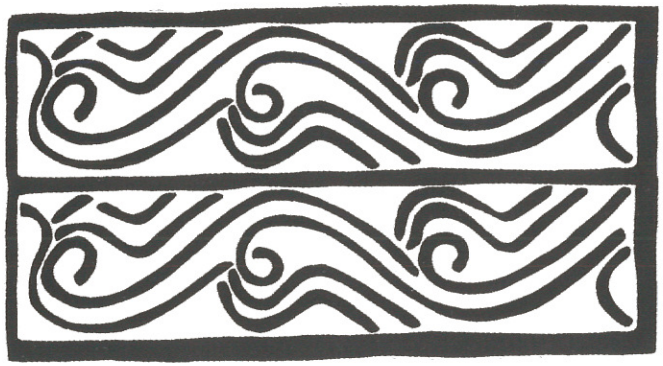


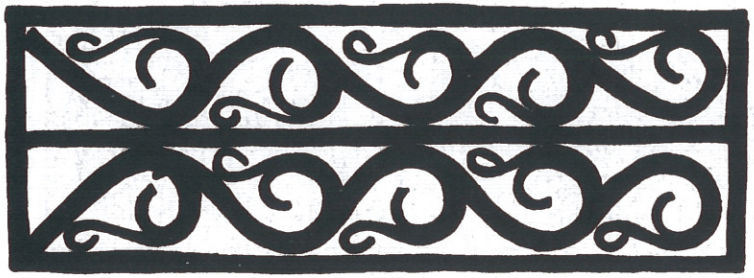


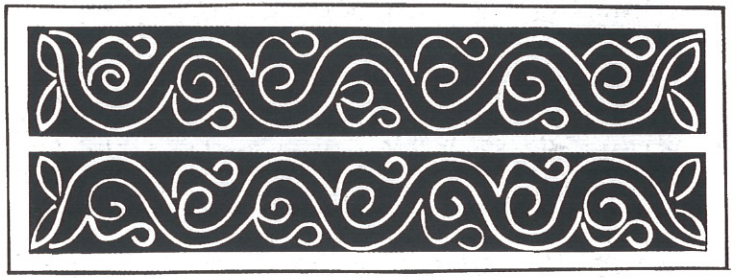


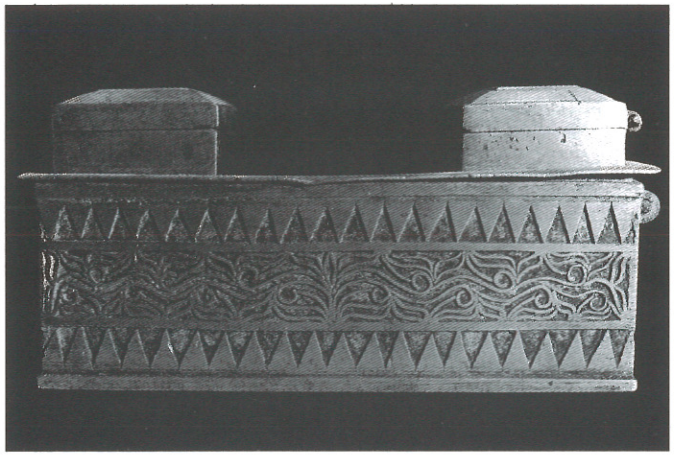


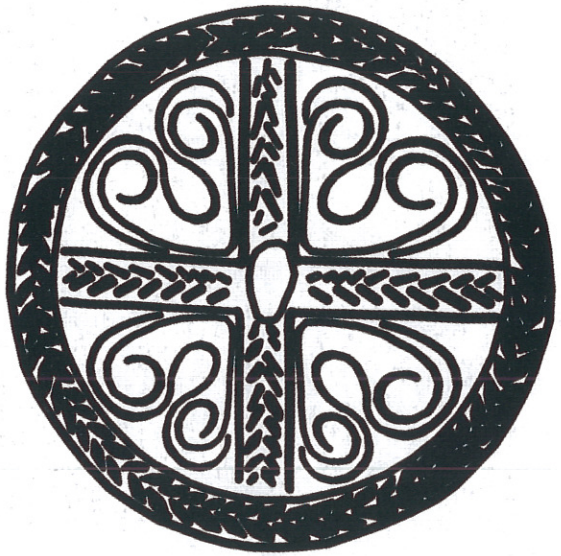


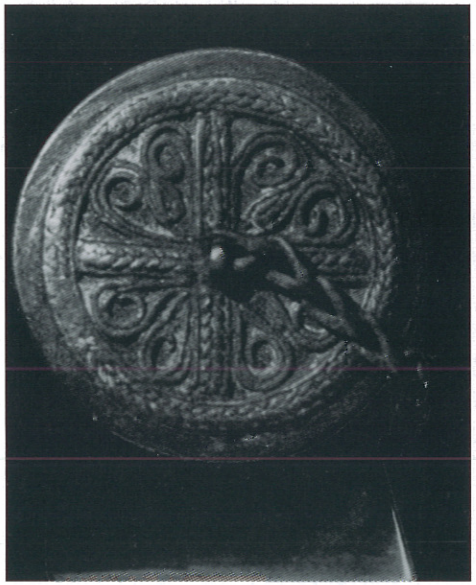


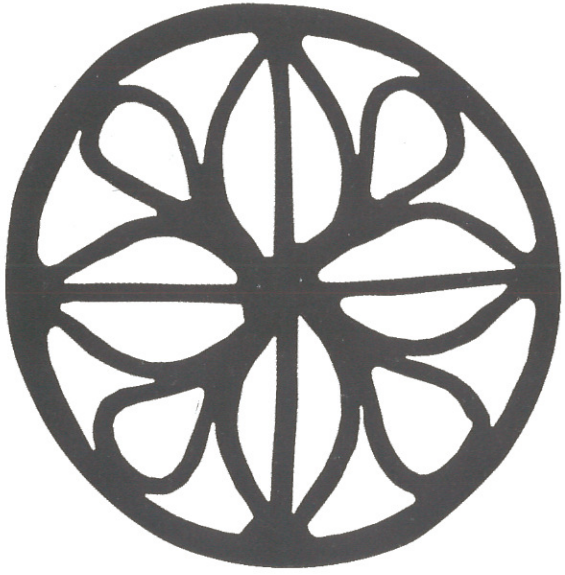


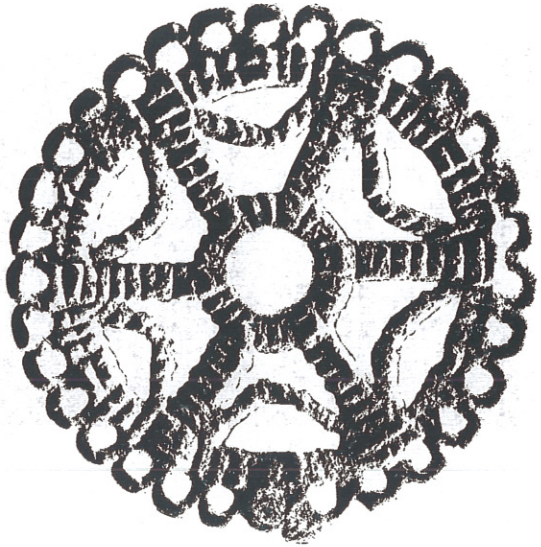


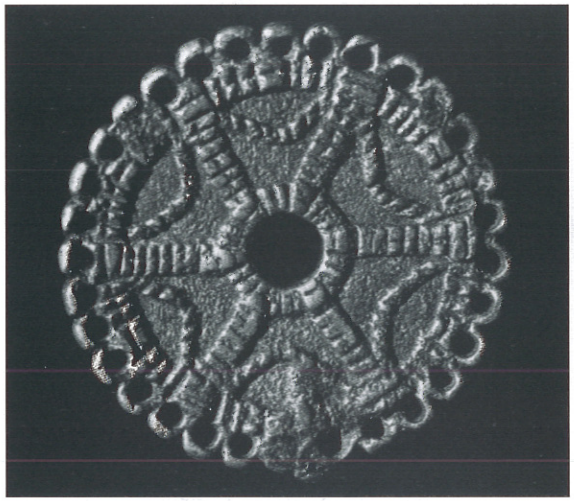


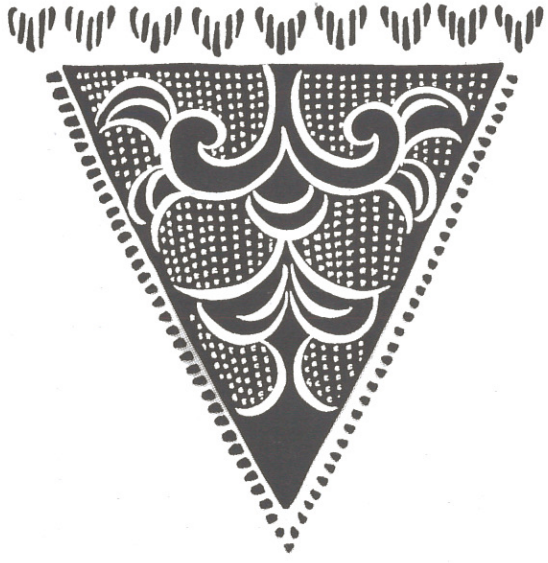


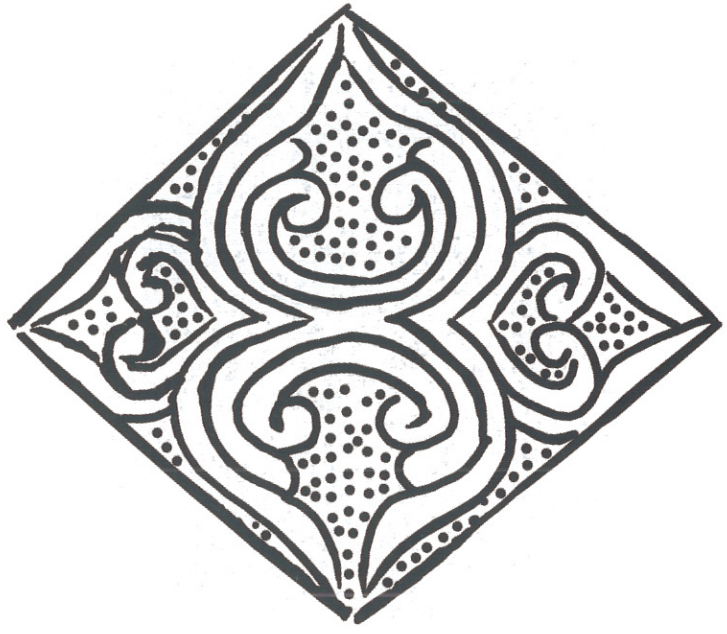


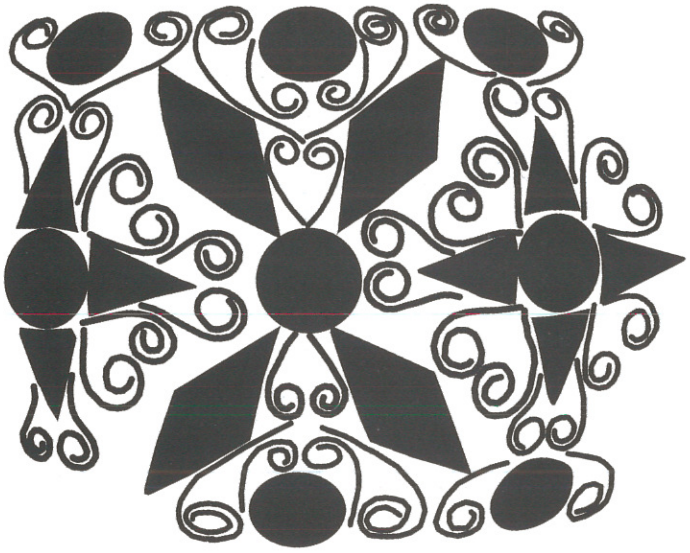


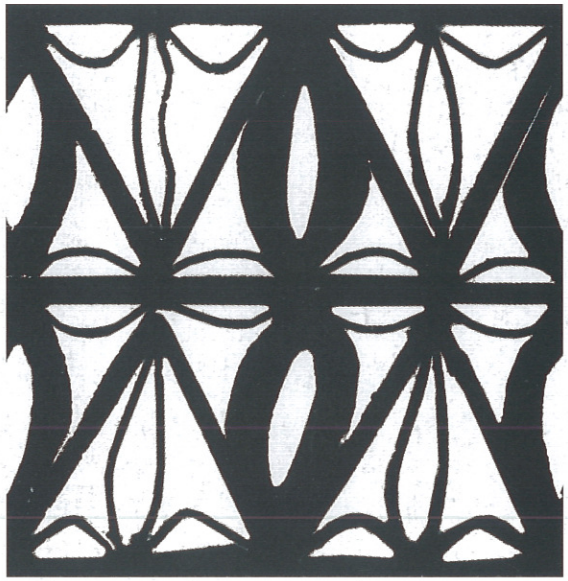


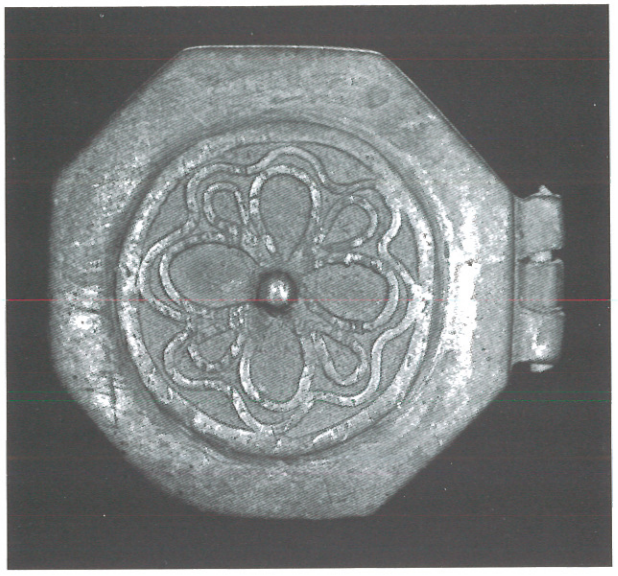


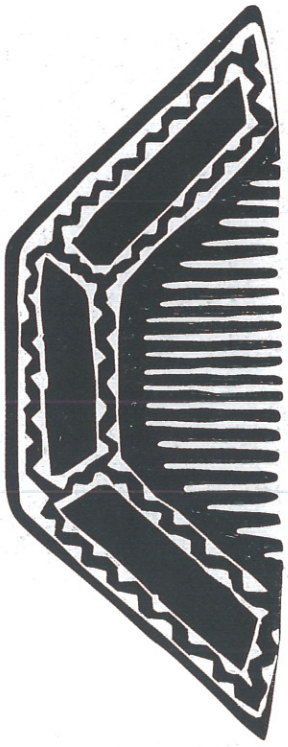


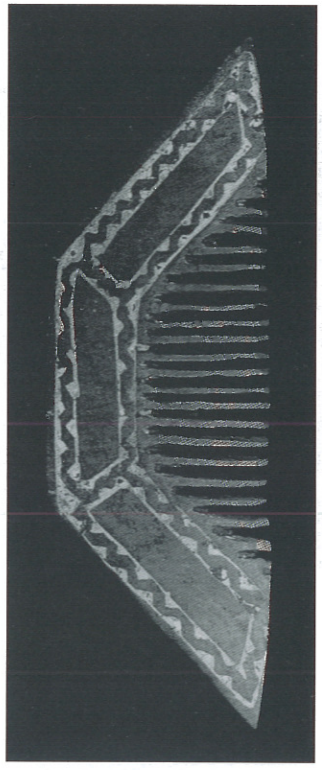


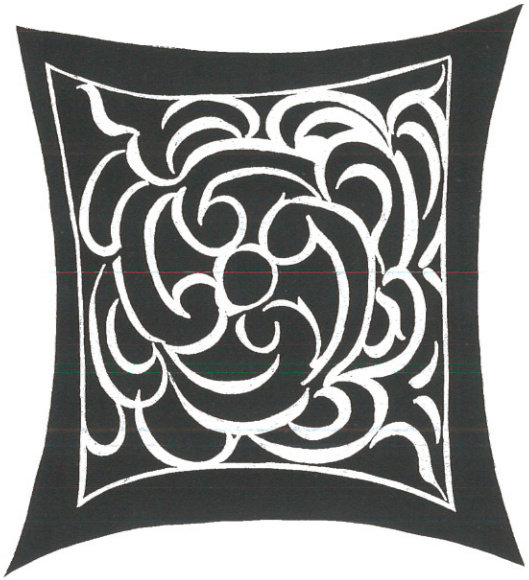


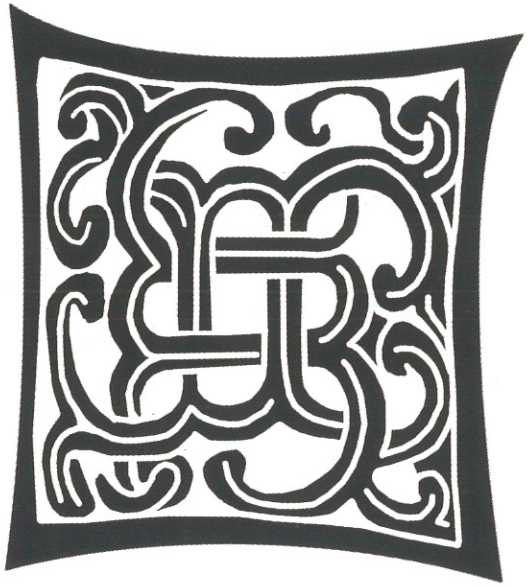












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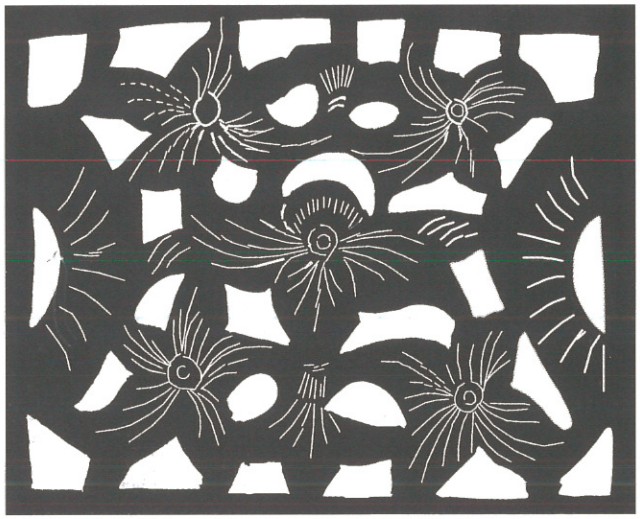
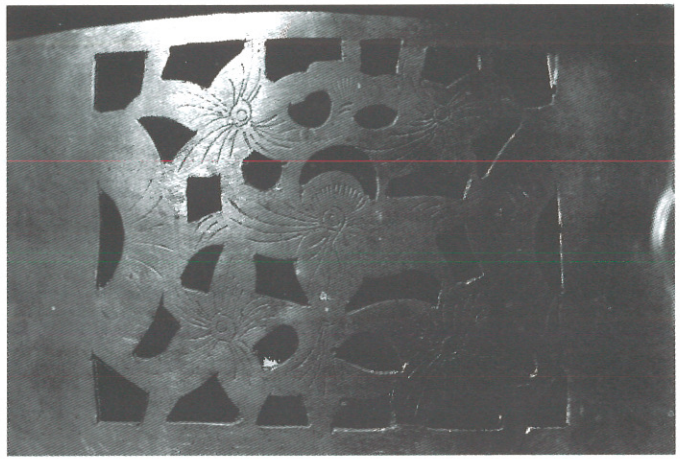




Casting, Metal Inlay

By Jesus T. Peralta

The Maranao, T'boli, Maguindanao, and Bagobo are well-known for the inlaying of precious metals to decorate their artifacts such as betel-nut boxes, jars, bowls, ointment containers, and other personal objects. There are many metallurgical techniques used in the manufacture of these various artifacts, but casting is ordinarily used in objects like the bronze/brass betel-nut boxes and jars preparatory to the inlaying of precious metals like gold and silver.

Metalwork of this sort among the southern peoples employs a traditional technique that pivots in the use of the double-bellows, or "Malay" forge. This consists of two vertical hollow wooden tubes with long-handled pistons with feathered ends to push out air through two tubes that come together on a fire. The forced air intensifies the heat of the fire. The forge is used not only in liquefying metal but also in the firing of casts. Large forges of this kind are often above ground before a large pit where firing takes place, with its air tubes pumping air at the bottom. The person operating the bellows is seated on a structure behind the tubes, his arms alternately pushing the pistons down.

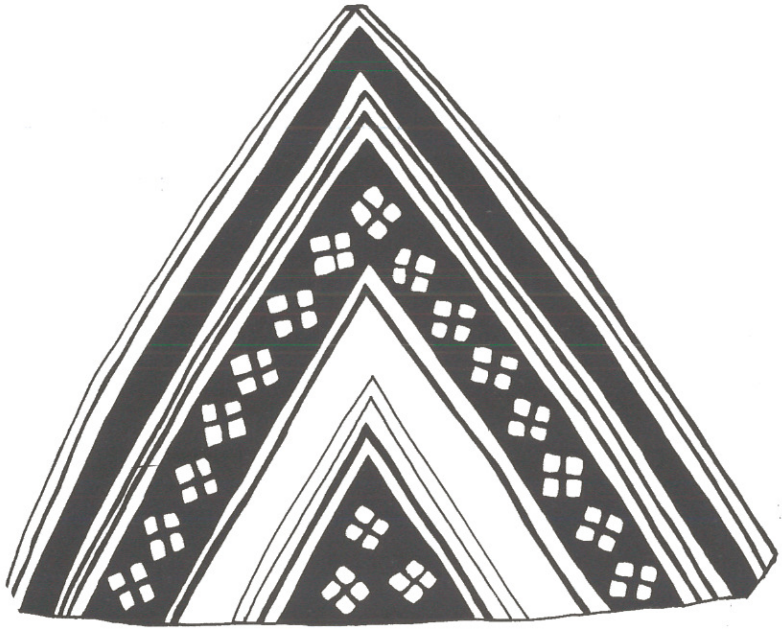
Channels in the surfaces of the object where inlaying is to be done are provided for in the process of casting. The sides of the channels are graved to provide undercuts where these are needed. The inlay metals are hammered in and locked into the undercut edges if the metal is left unsoftened. A bulge in the middle of the inlay is made before it is introduced into the channel. The bulge is subsequently flattened to fit into the undercut sides. Another common method is to soften the inlay metal by heating then gently hammering this into the channel.

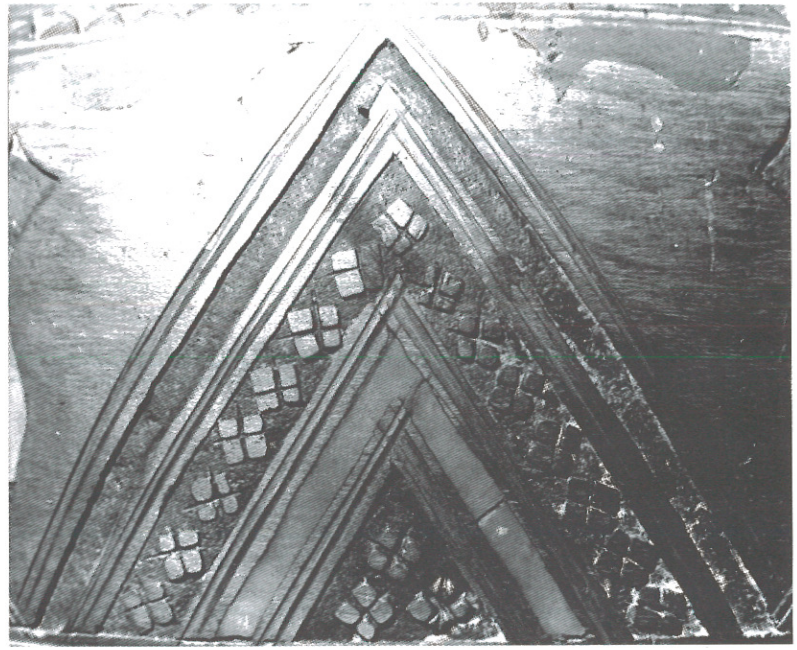
There is also the technique of liquefying the inlaying metal, and then pouring this into the channels provided for during casting. The channels are usually about 3 millimeters deep but the pouring will be about two millimeters above the surface to allow for shrinkage. In this method, the surfaces other than the channels will be treated to a resist so that the pouring will not adhere to these.

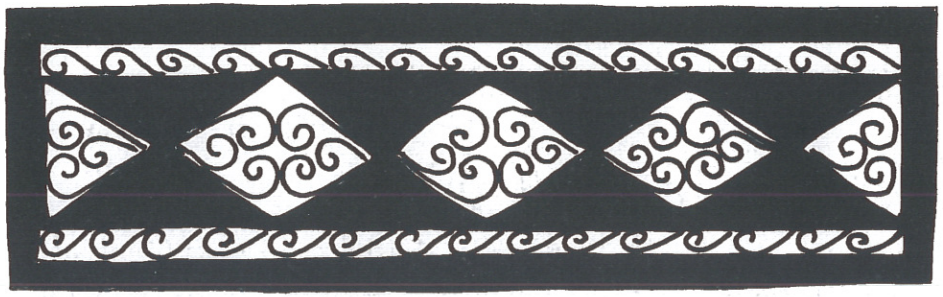
With the techniques described above as well as others, beautiful inlaid objects are made like the exquisite *lotoans* (betel-nut boxes) of many forms and shapes, *gadurs* (jars), *panalagadans* (vessel stands), *kulintangan* gongs, *gukoms* (ointment cases), and *kalis* blades.

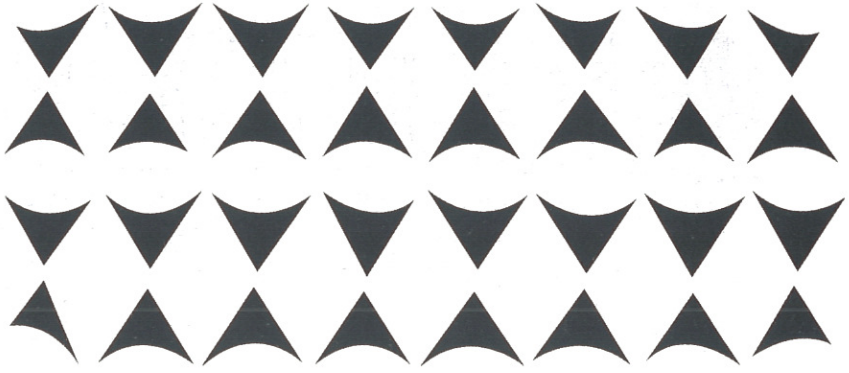
Bagobo

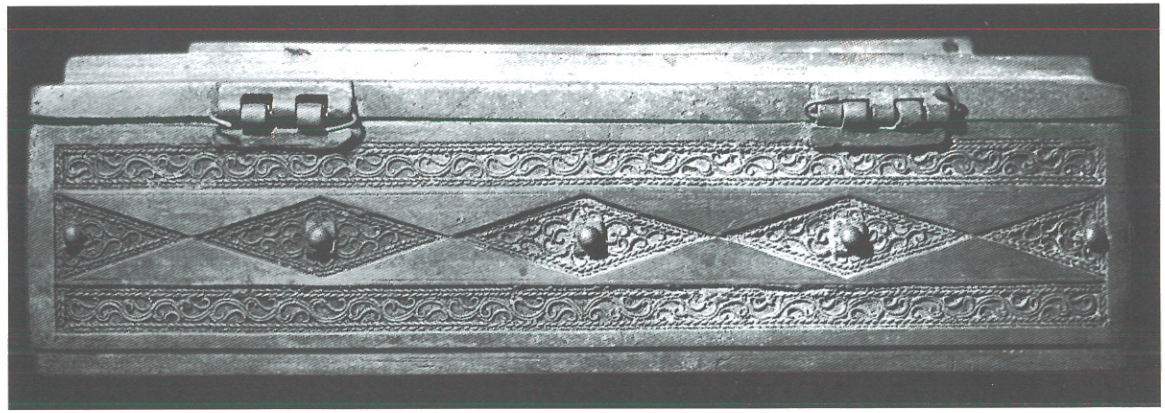
Maguindanao

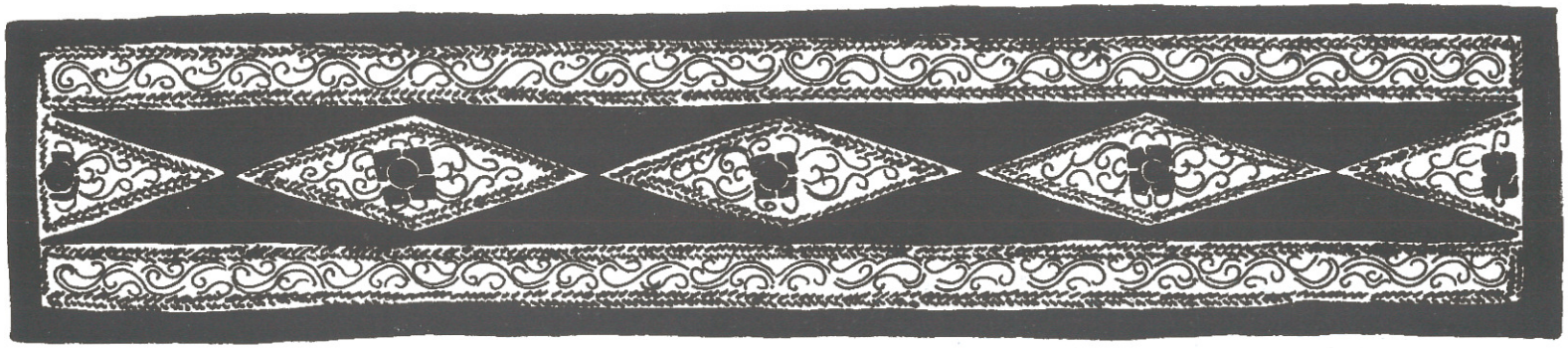




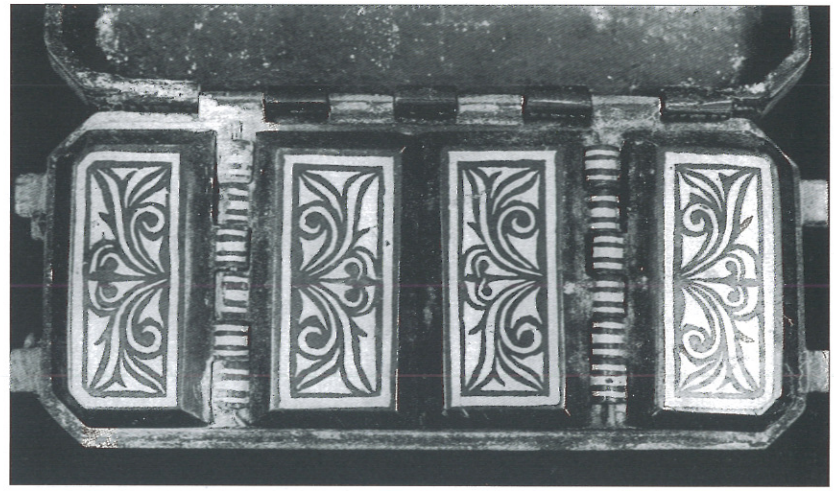


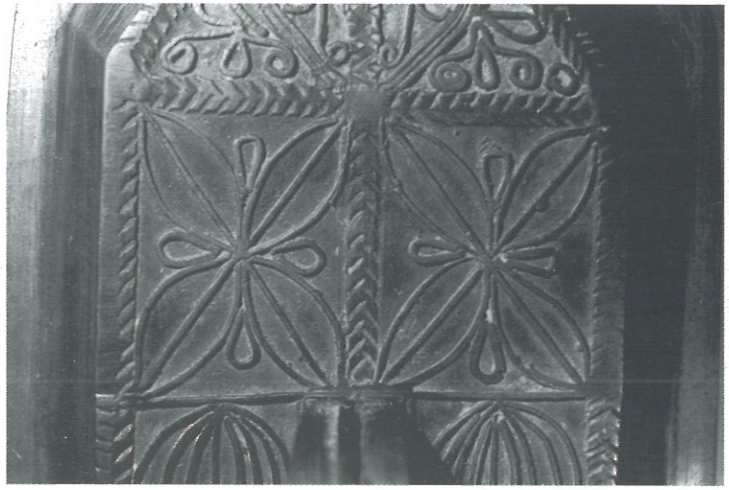


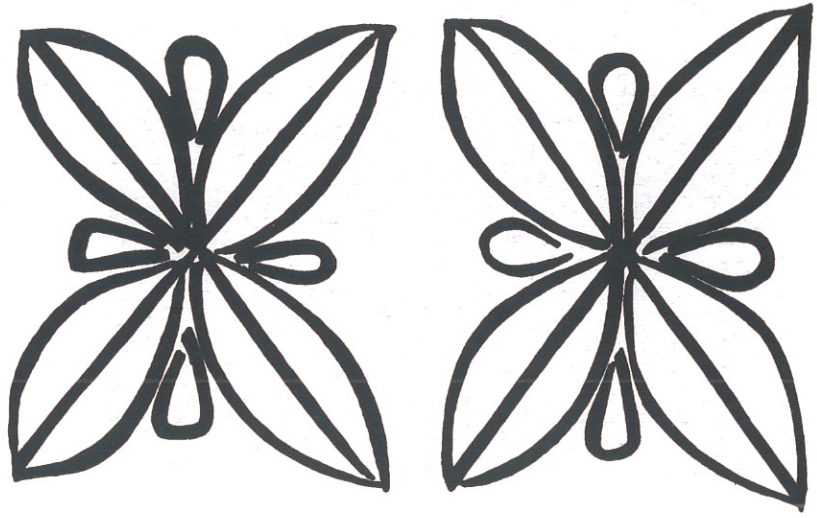


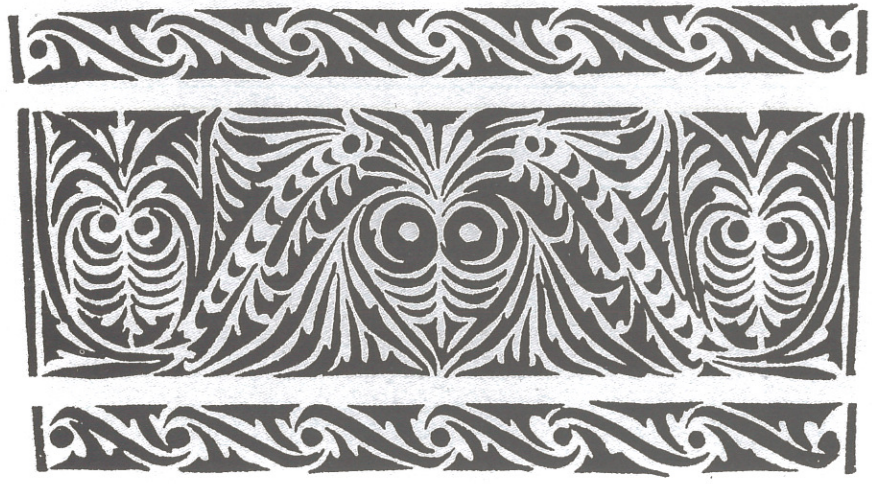


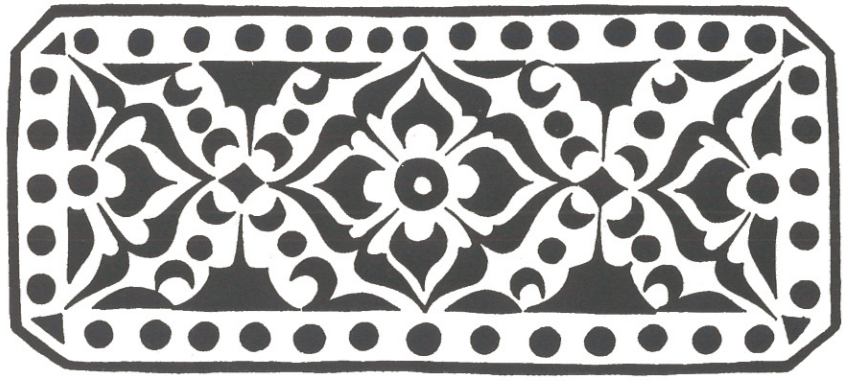
Maranao

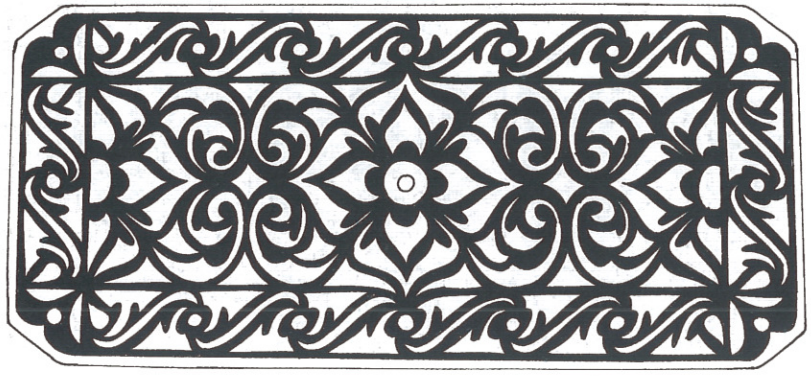


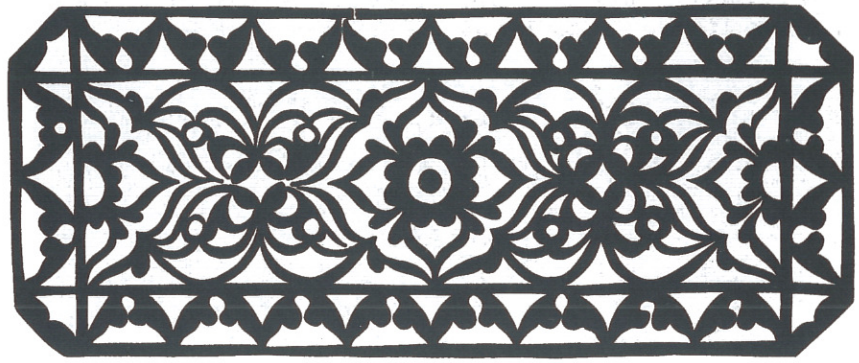


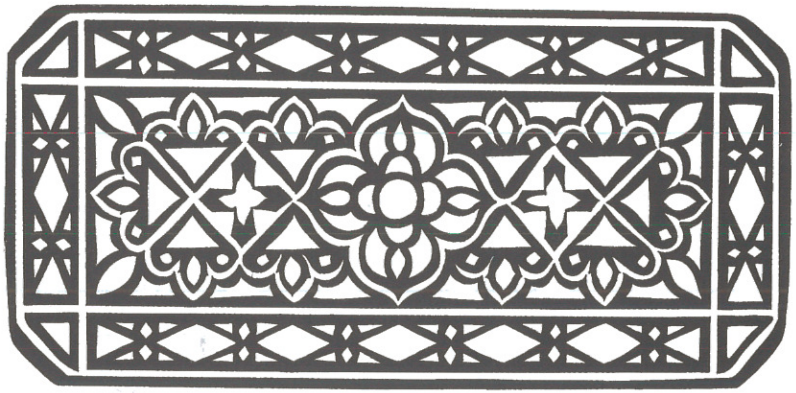


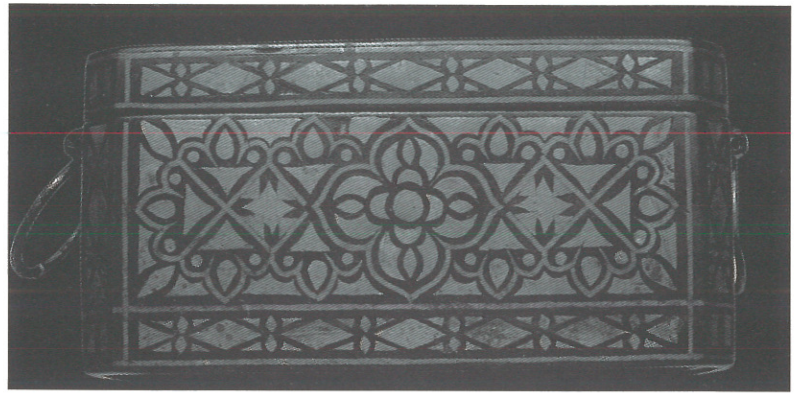


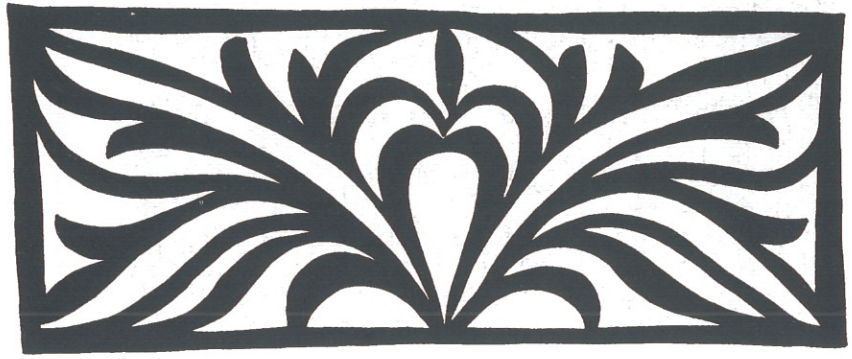


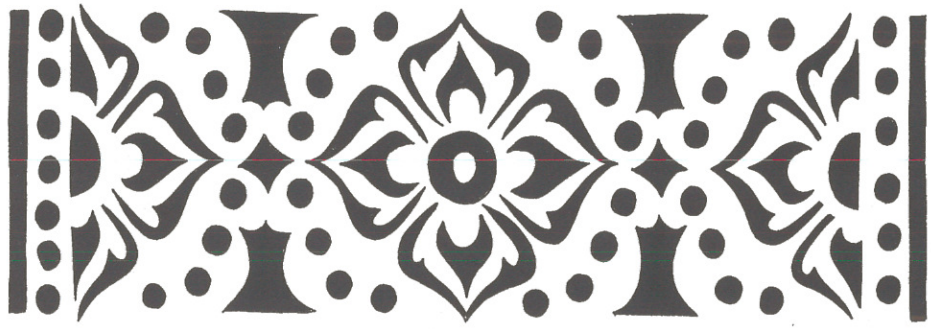


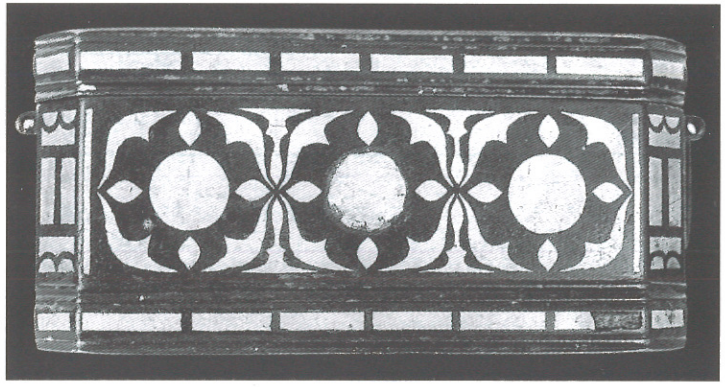


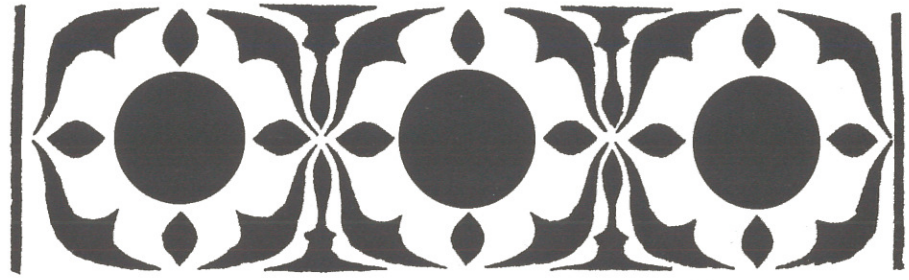


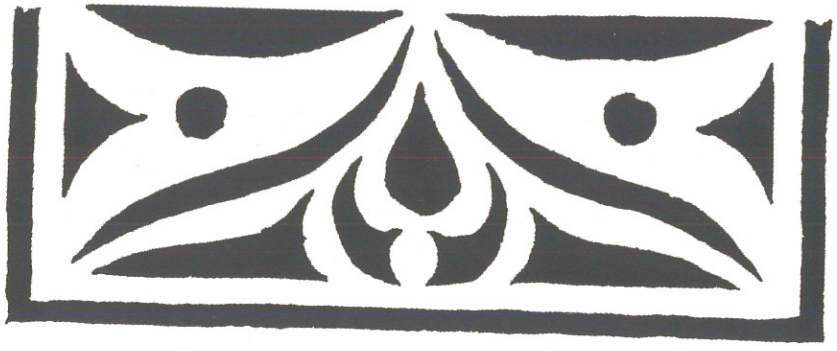


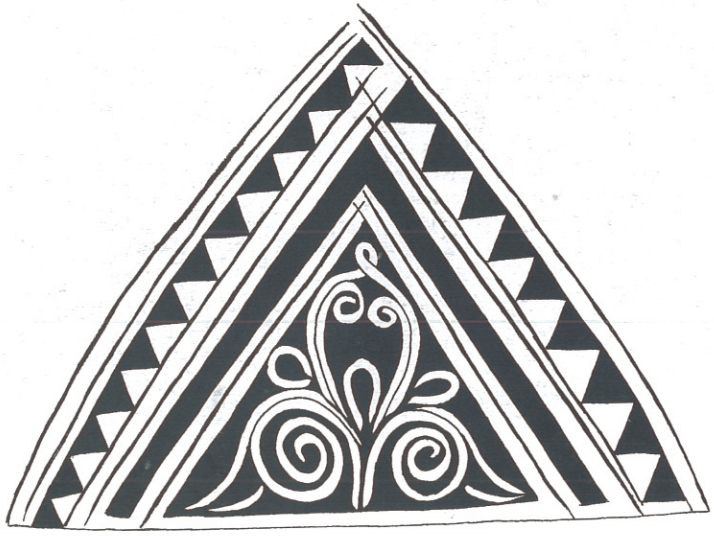


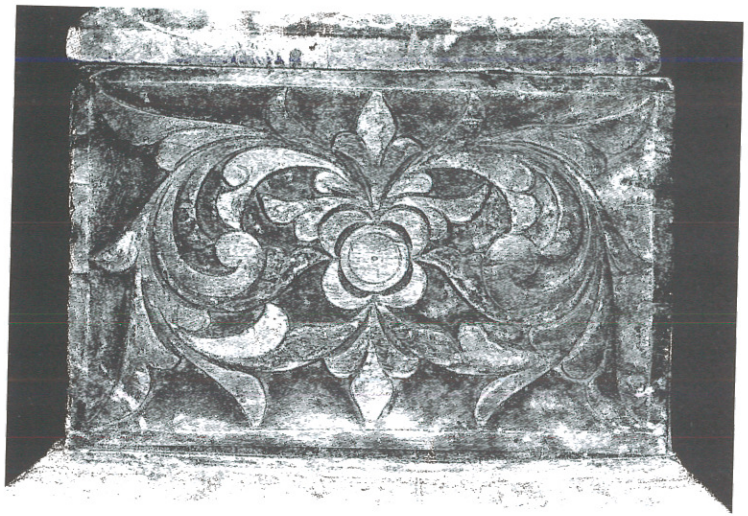


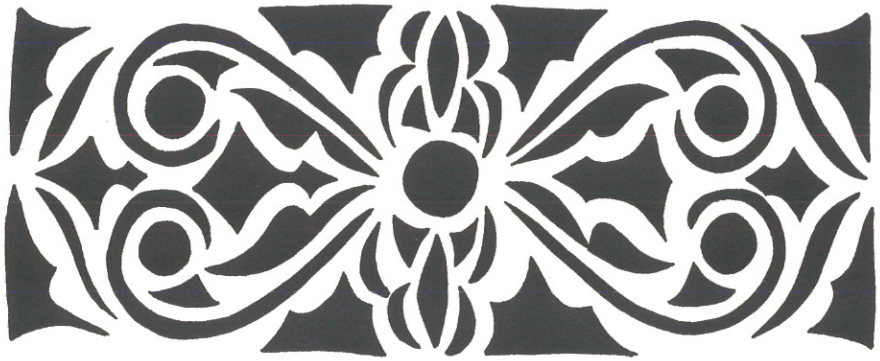


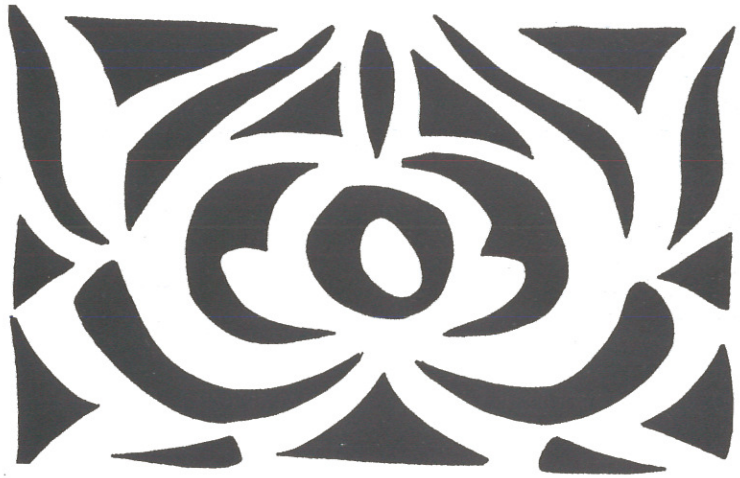


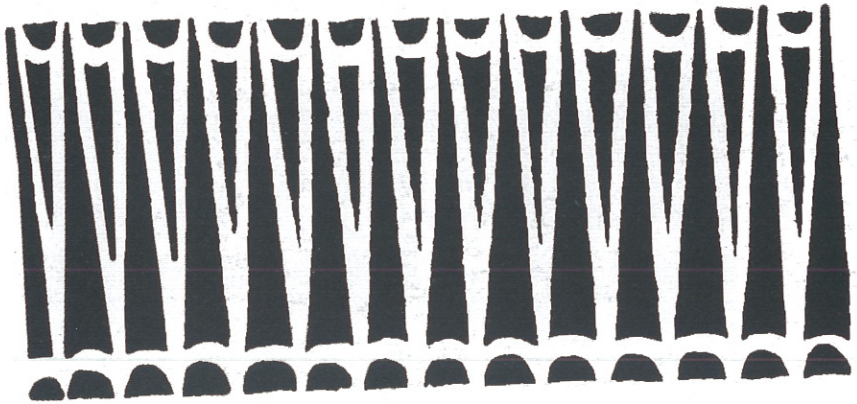


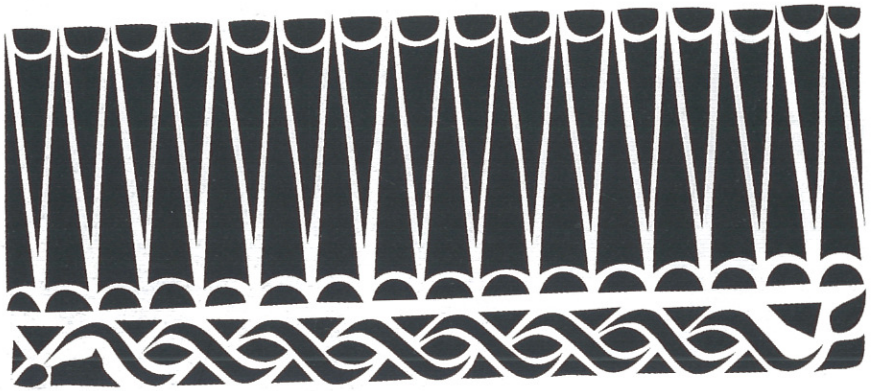


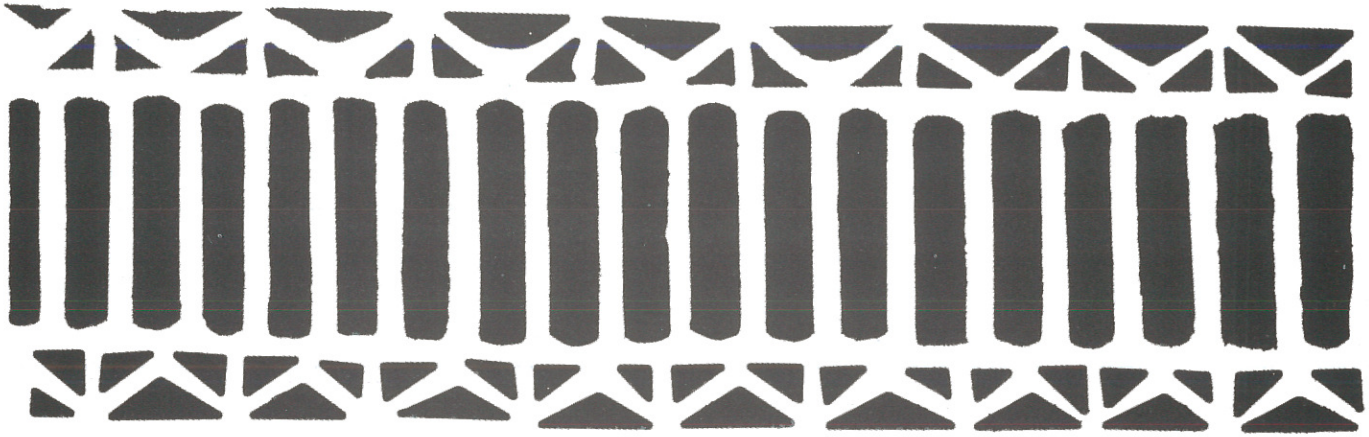


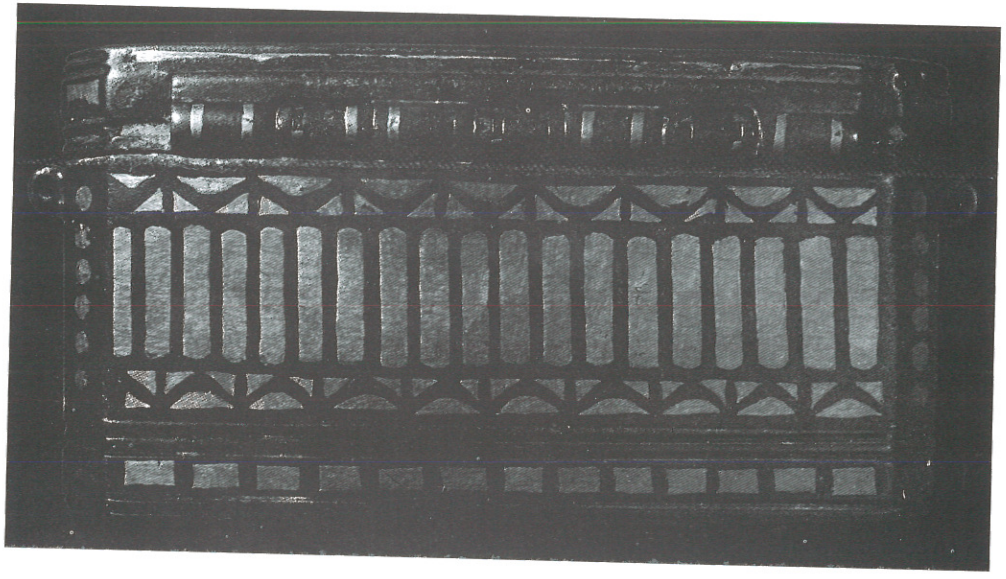












Terracotta

Terracotta

By Jesus T. Peralta

Earthenware, often-called *terracotta* or fired clay goes back to some 6,000 BC in the Neolithic Age of the Philippines. It is one of the earliest crafts done by man. Red clay is the medium used because it is highly plastic, and when dried and fired, it hardens to retain its form and yet still have a porous body.

There are a number of things to consider in the craft. First is the form of the object to be made. Creativity comes in the variety of shapes a particular form can offer. The pot for example can come in many shapes. The zenith of Philippine creativity in the manufacture of earthenware was reached in the Metal Age, approximately between 2000 BC and 1000 AD, when the most elaborate shapes and ornamentation flourished.

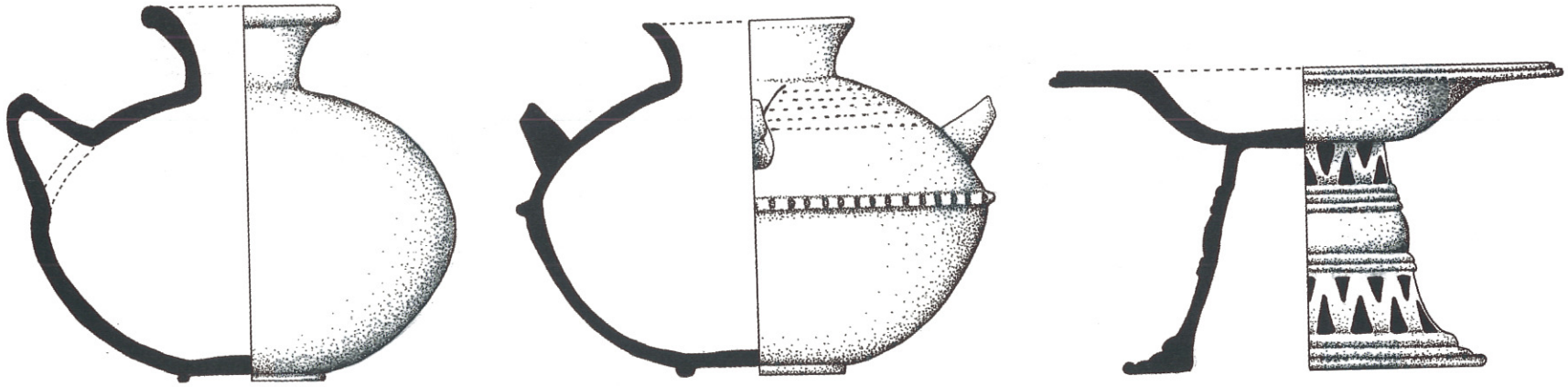
The potter's wheel in pottery making was never used in the Philippines during pre-historic times, and only a manually turned platform – pieces of pottery, matting or textile – were used to rotate a vessel being made. The pieces were hand-molded, built up by coiling or by rings, then later on finished with a paddle and anvil. The numerous forms and shapes were made by these and similar methods.

The treatment to alter the nature of the surface follows. The simplest is the polishing of the surface with a shell operculum or a piece of stone. A further development to improve the surface is the application of a slip, a solution of clay. This is done by dipping the vessel in the slip or brushing the slip onto the surface of the vessel. Once dry, the slip provides a smooth surface and when fired the slip often turns red. During the Developed Metal Age, the surface with the red slip was further burnished with the use of a smooth operculum or stone, sometimes in parallel lines that form patterned designs that glisten against the matrix of the slip.

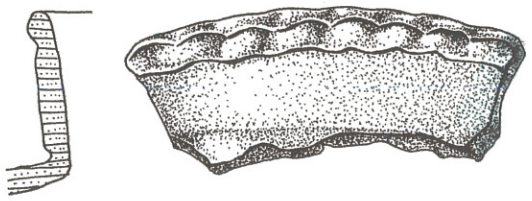
Another direct alteration of the surface to produce an aesthetic effect is done during the process of forming the body of the earthenware. The paddle used to thin the walls of the vessel against the anvil inside is at times provided with grooves instead of being just smooth. This leaves parallel grooves on the vessel wall. A further development is a cross grooving on the paddle, which gives a more elaborate effect on the clay wall. Sometimes, instead of carving the paddle this is wrapped with cordage, producing cord marks all over the wall.

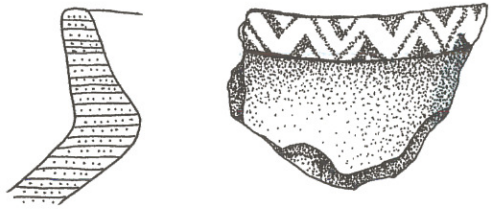
More elaborate surface alteration is done by incising lines, whether singly or combed, in different patterns. Designs, too, can be impressed as dots, slashes or as textures in an area. Excising materials from the vessel wall or cutting out patterns from pedestals is also done. Impressed or incised designs are sometimes inlaid with lime to provide a white contrast against the vessel's surface. Further, the vessels can be painted with red or black hematite before or after firing, using a free hand, or within areas defined by incisions. It is only imagination that can limit the range of creativity that an artisan can make out of clay.

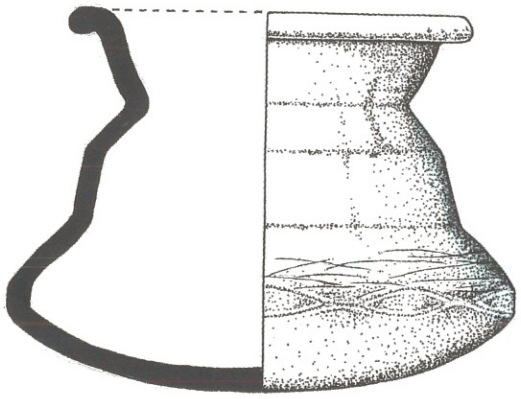
Contact Period Forms

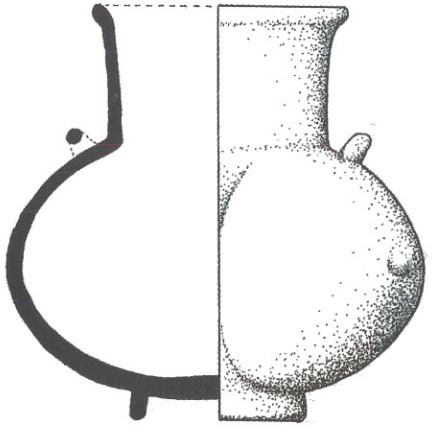


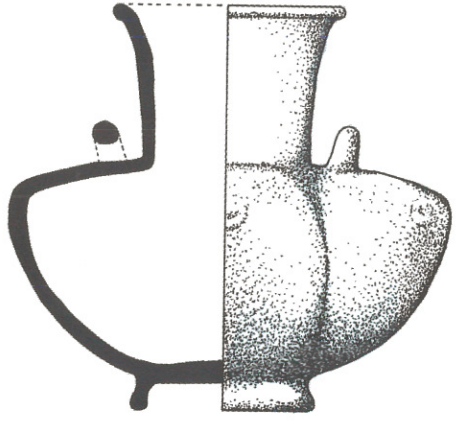
Metal Age Forms

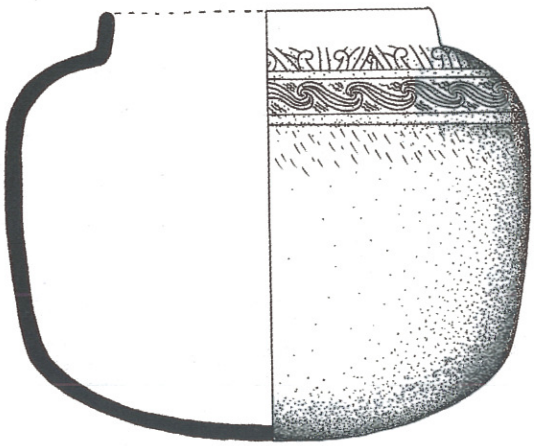


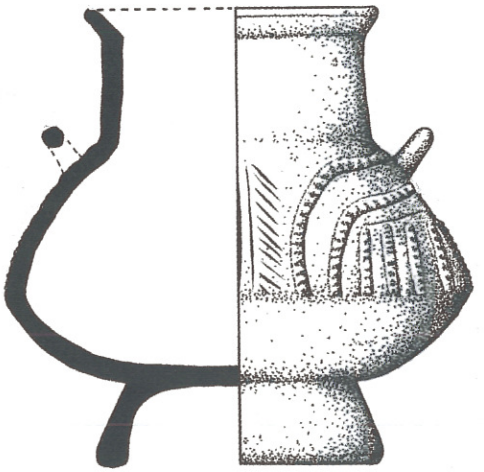


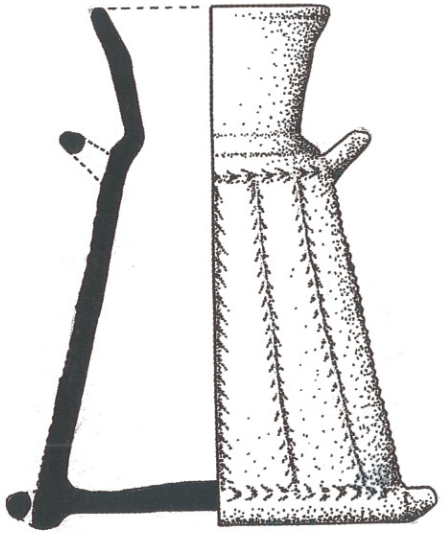


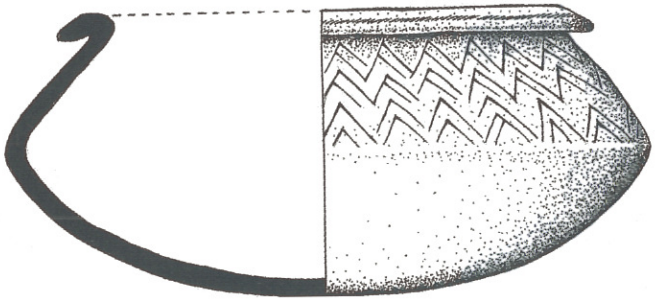


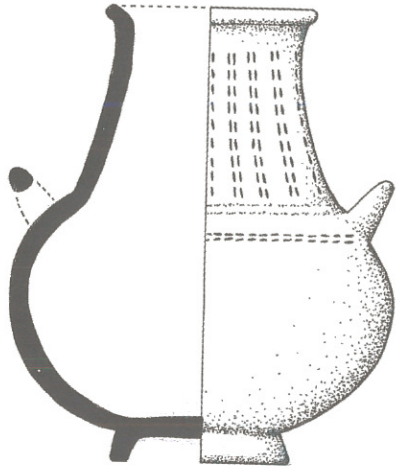


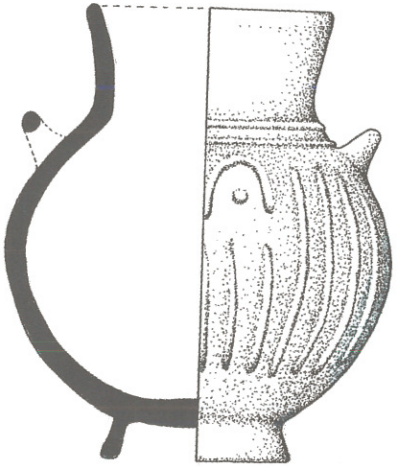


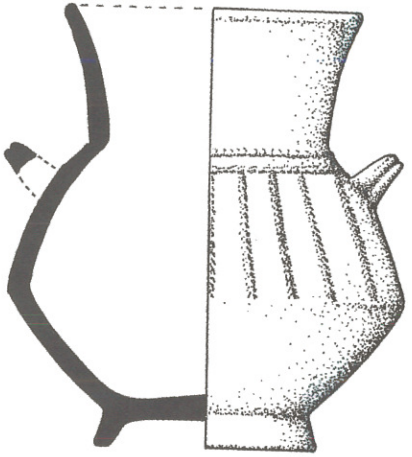


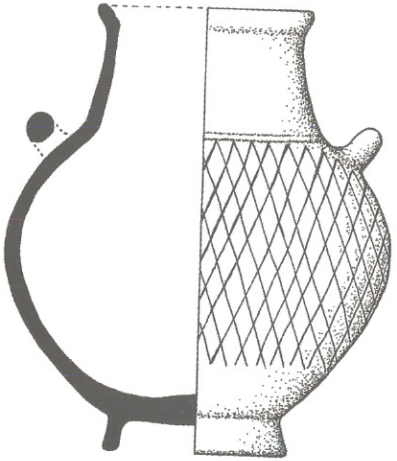


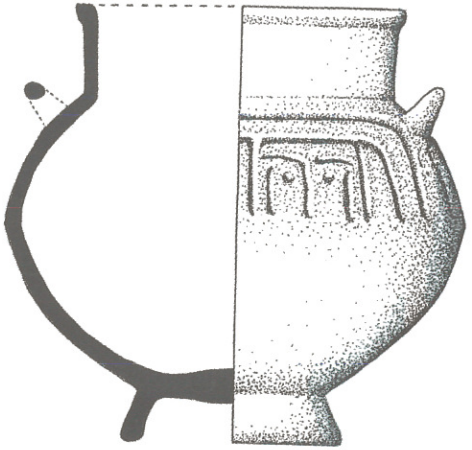


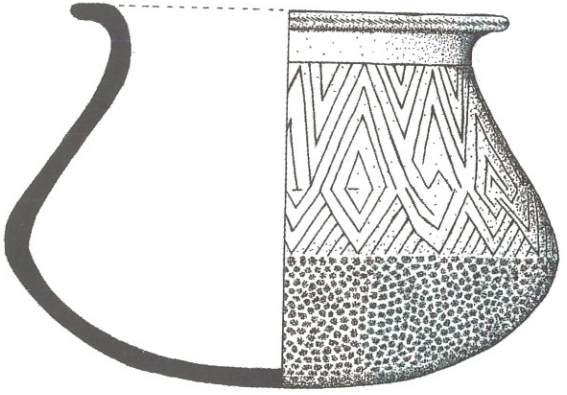


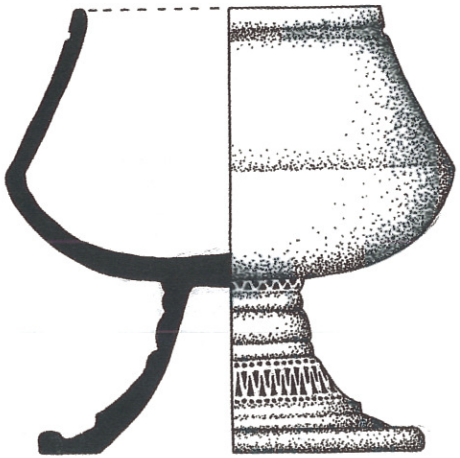


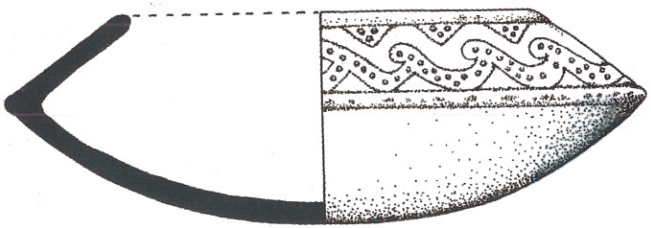


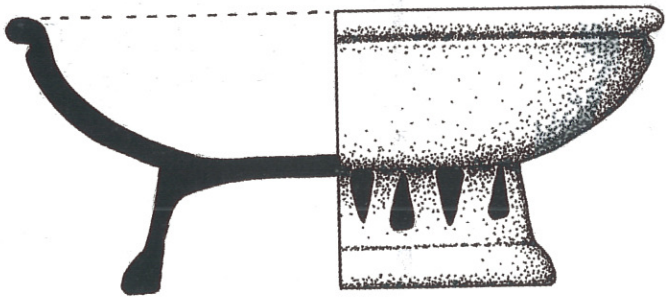


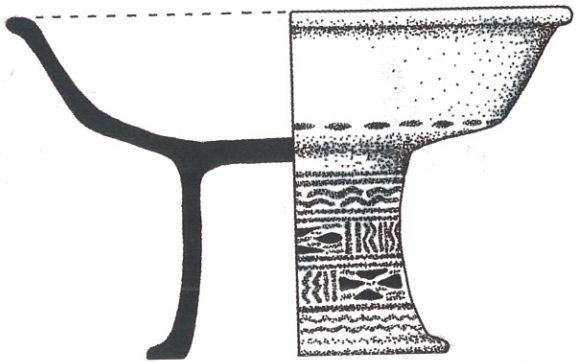




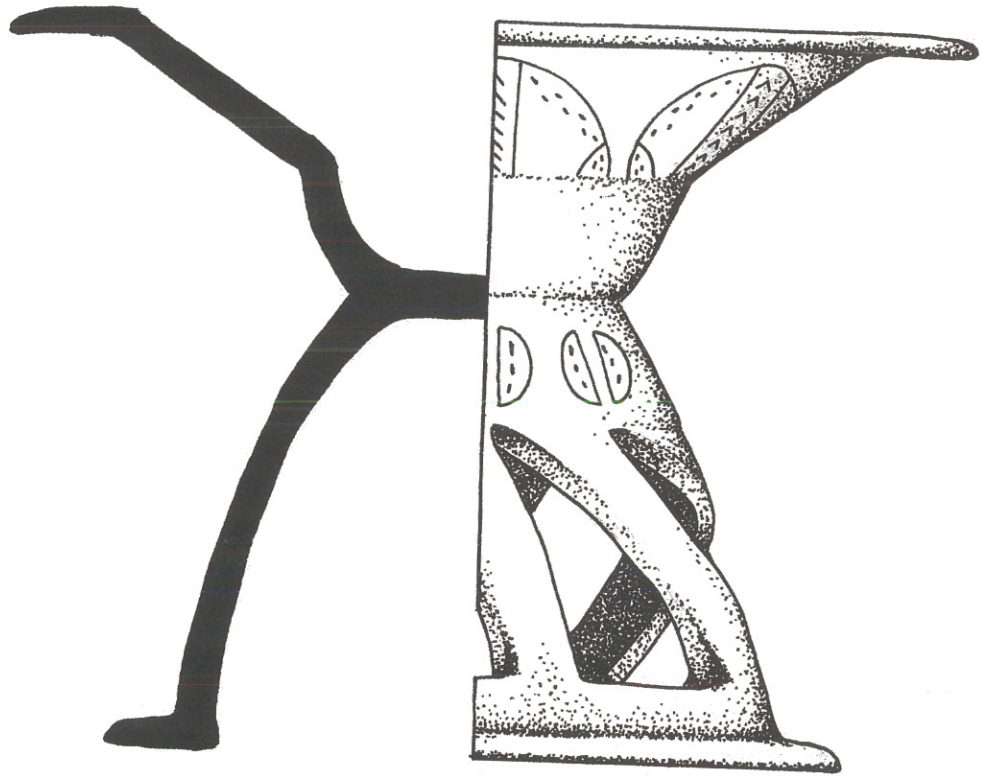


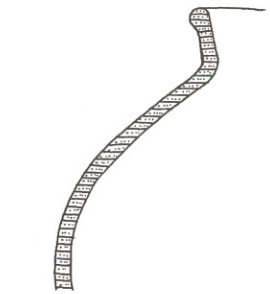


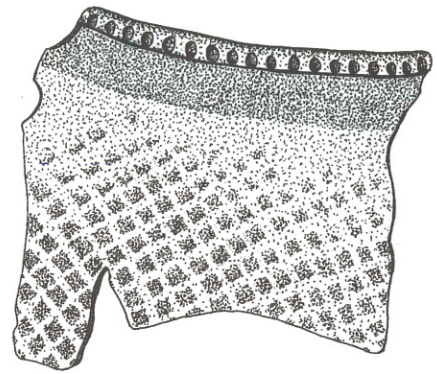


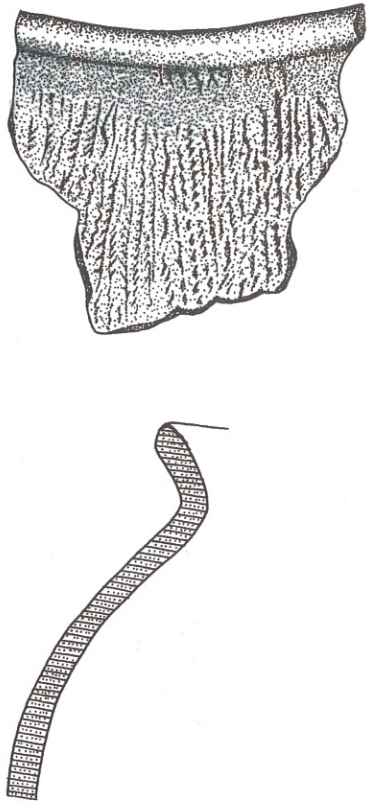


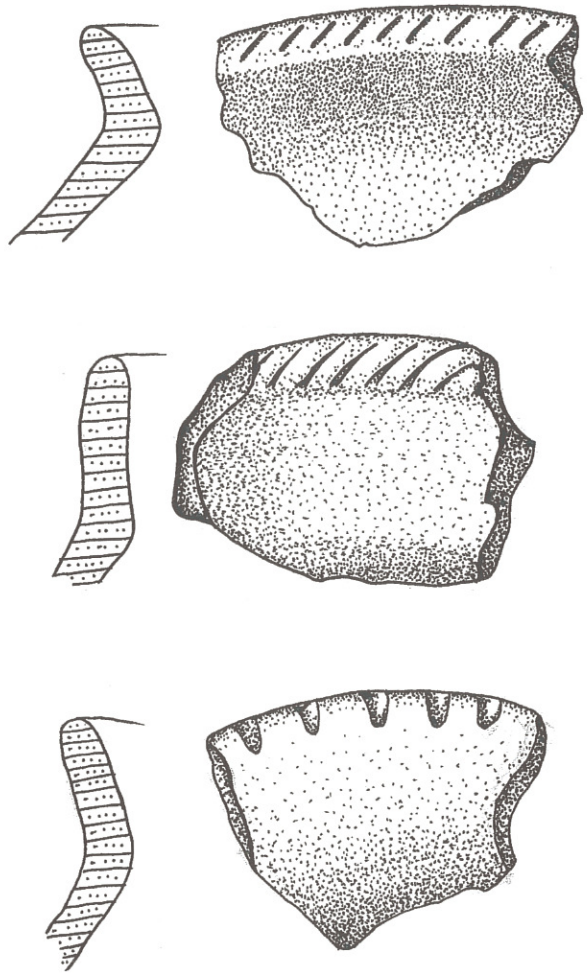
Neolithic Age Forms



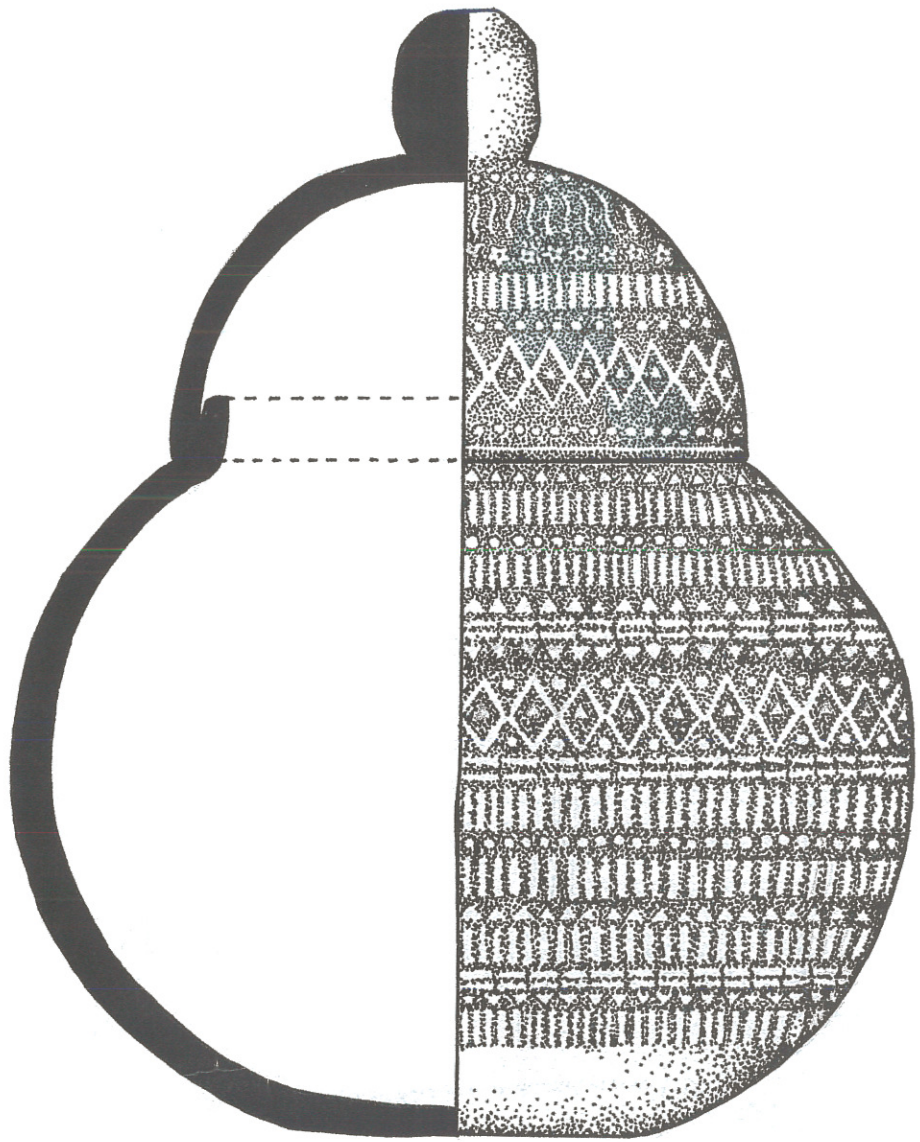








Kalinga (Contemporary)



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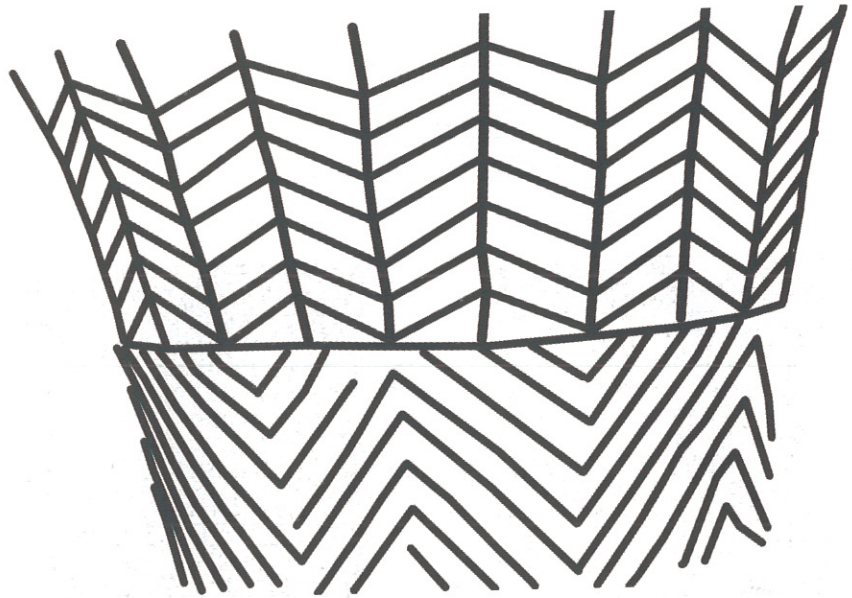

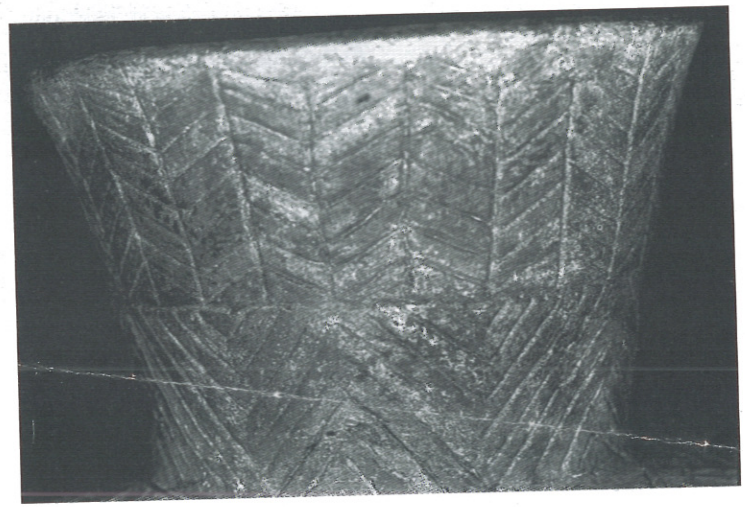

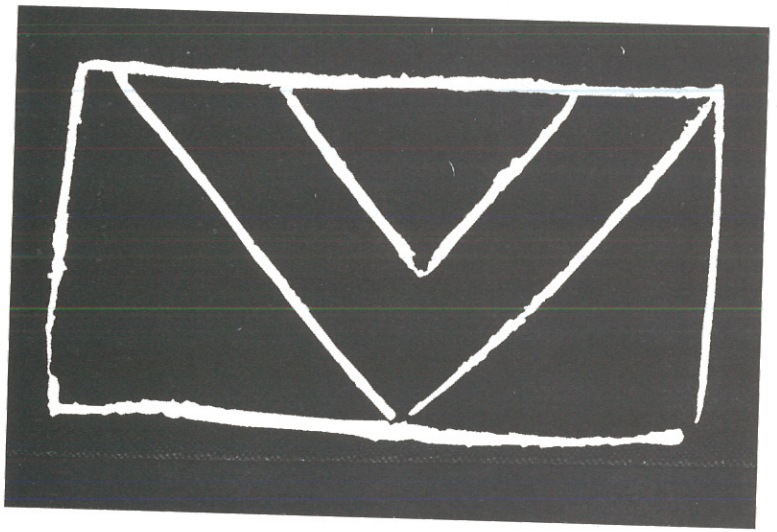

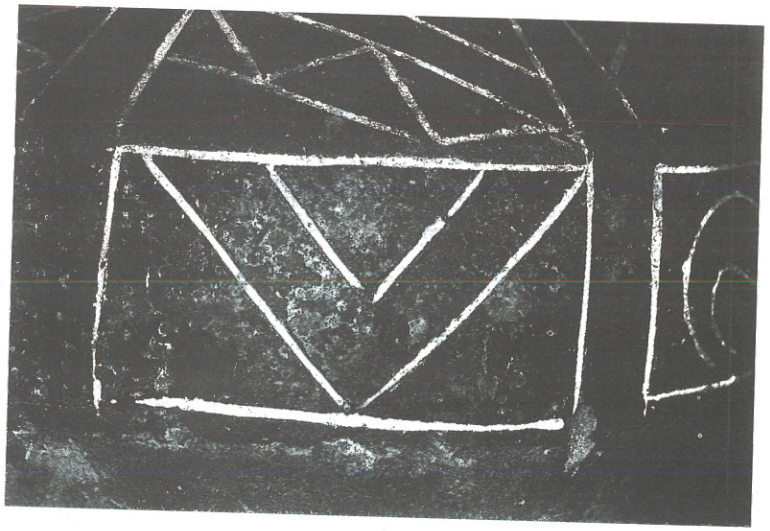

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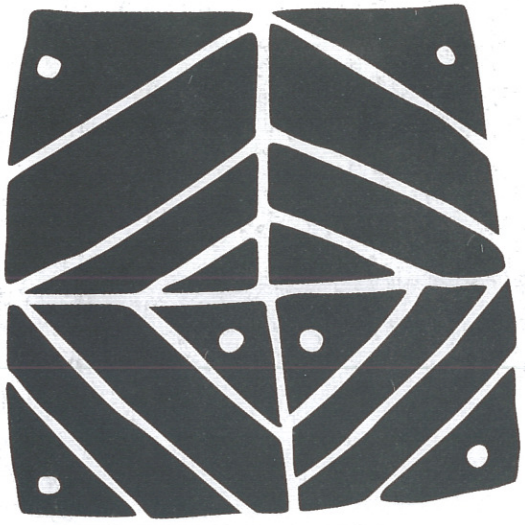
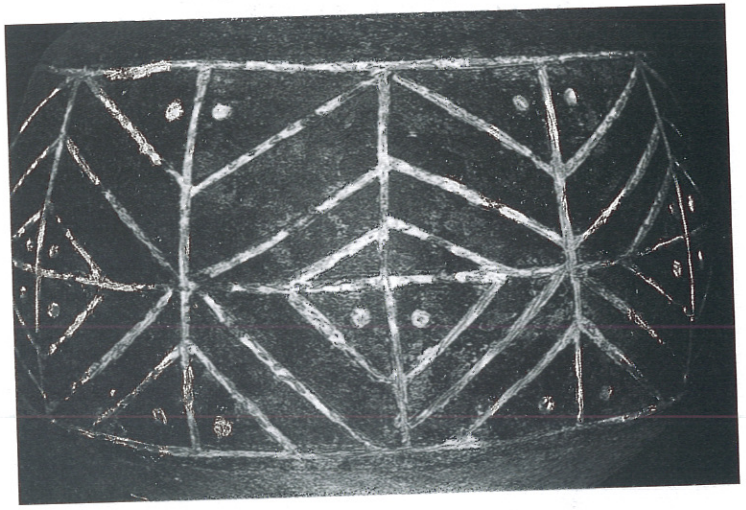
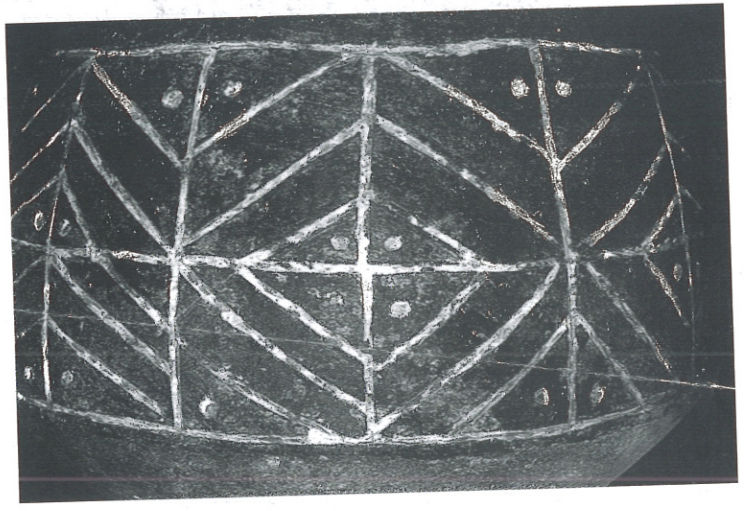
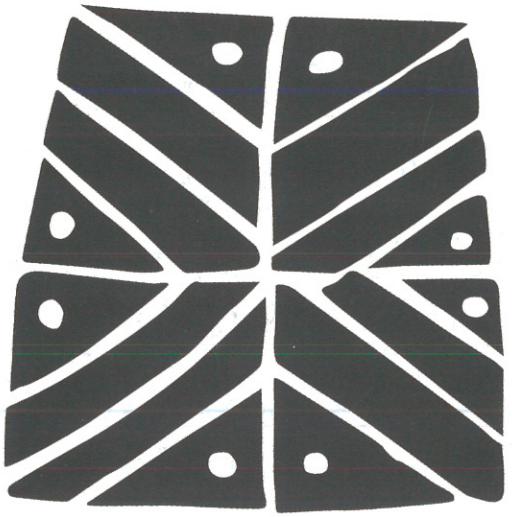
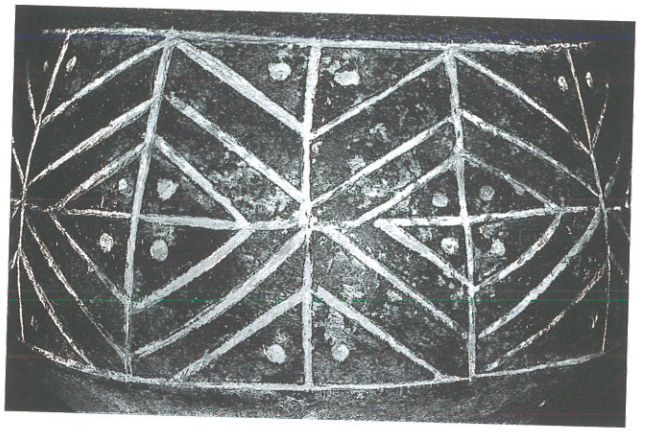
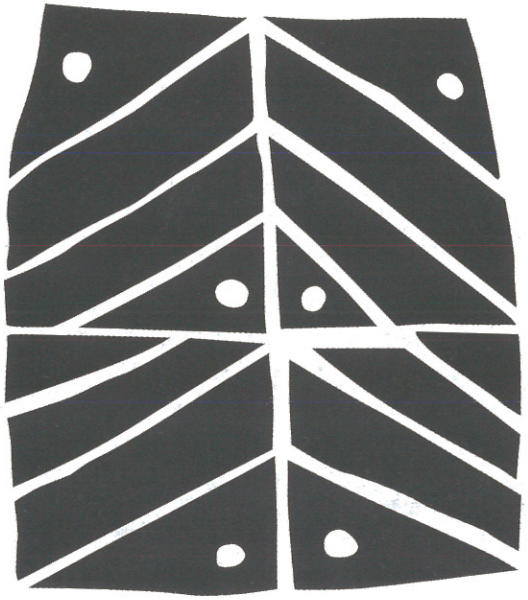


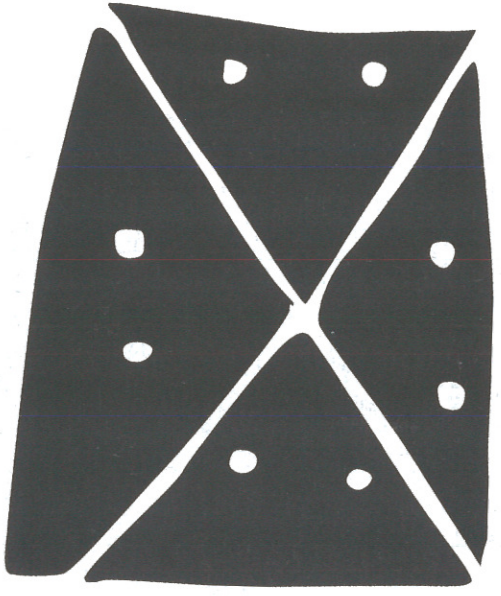


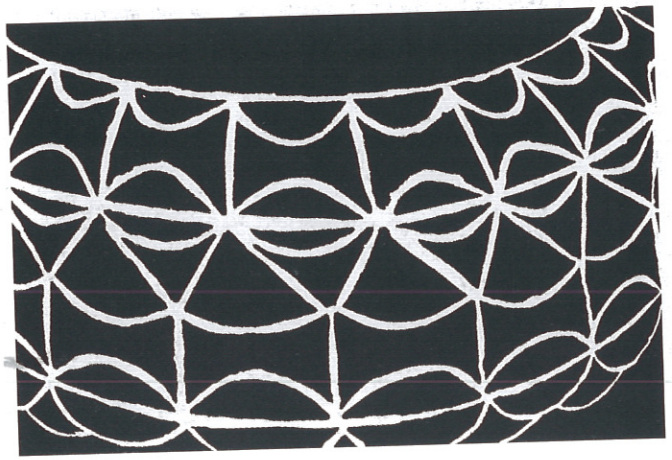


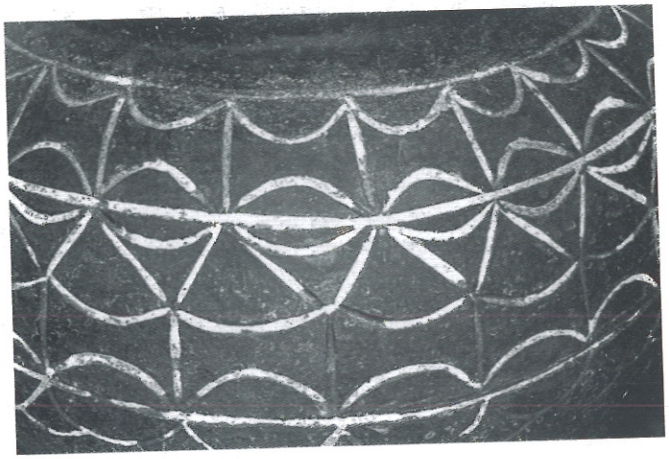


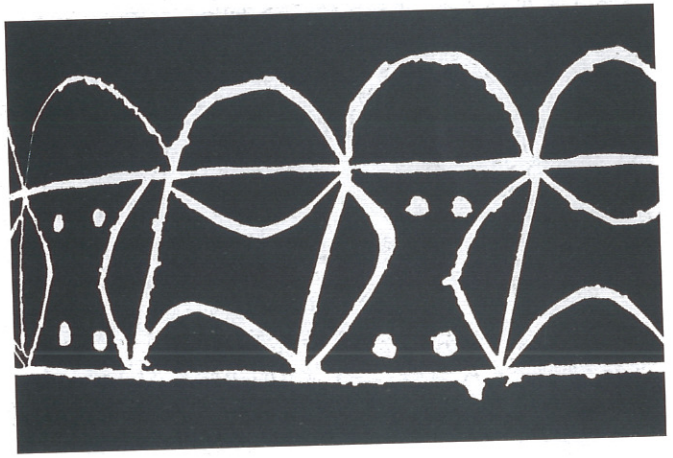


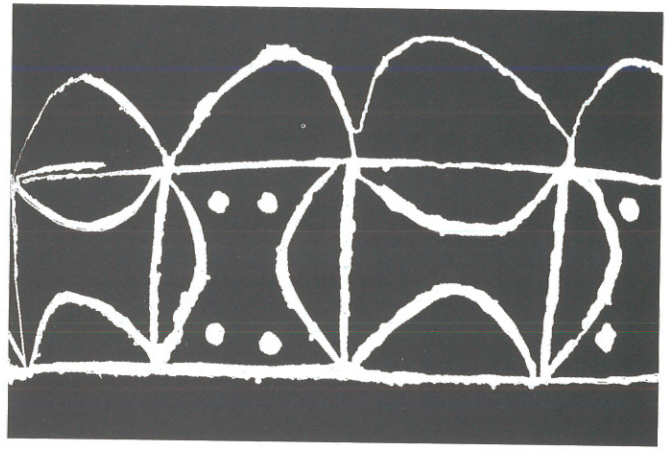


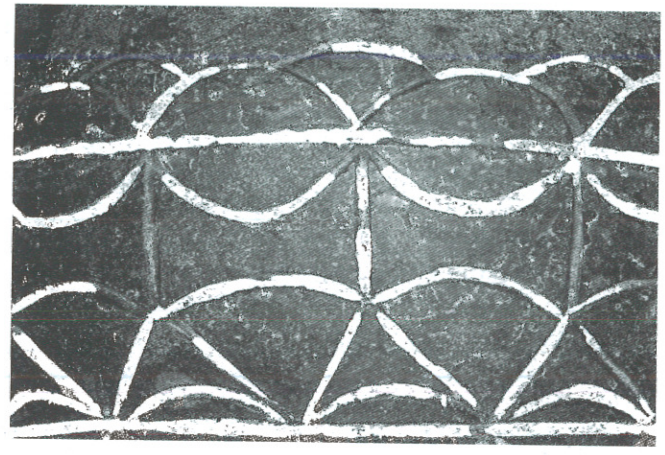


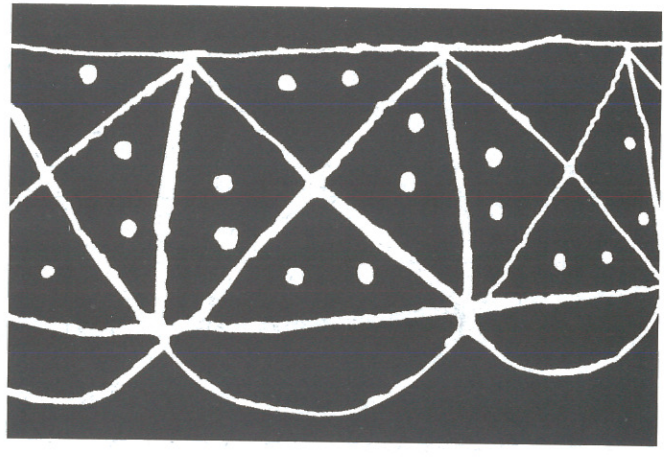


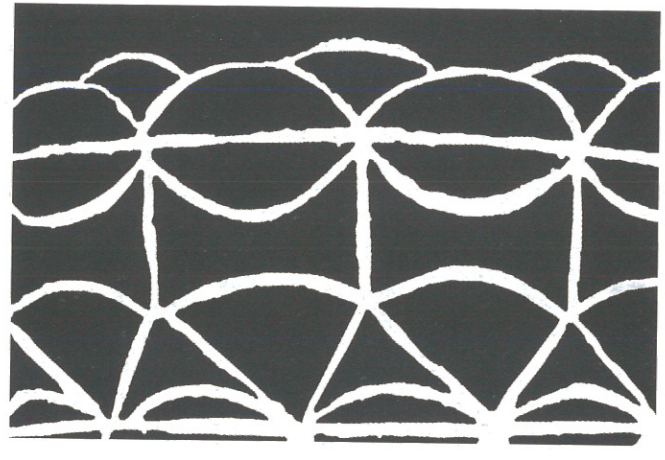


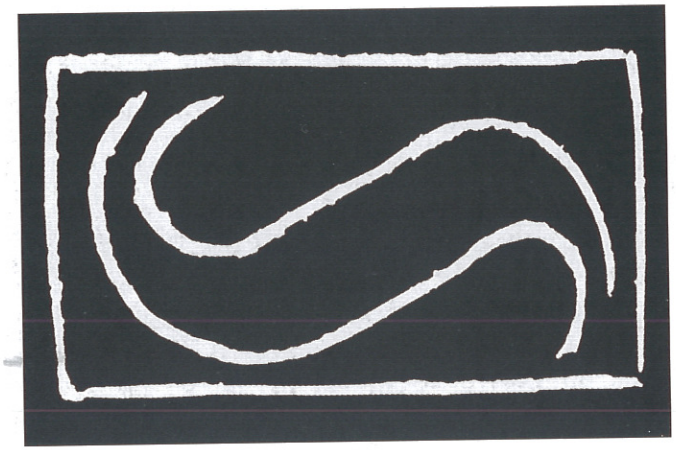


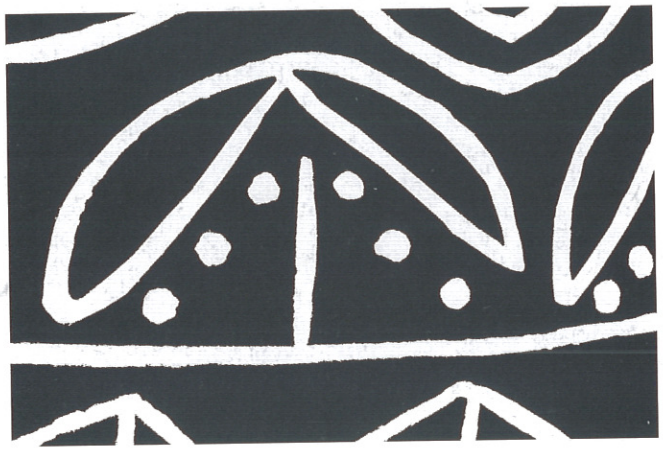


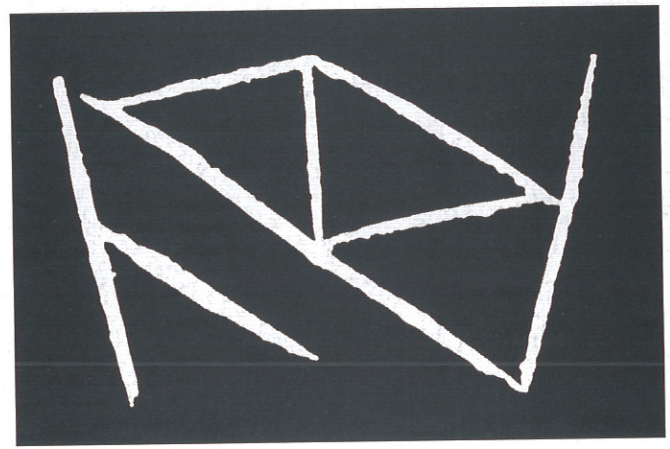


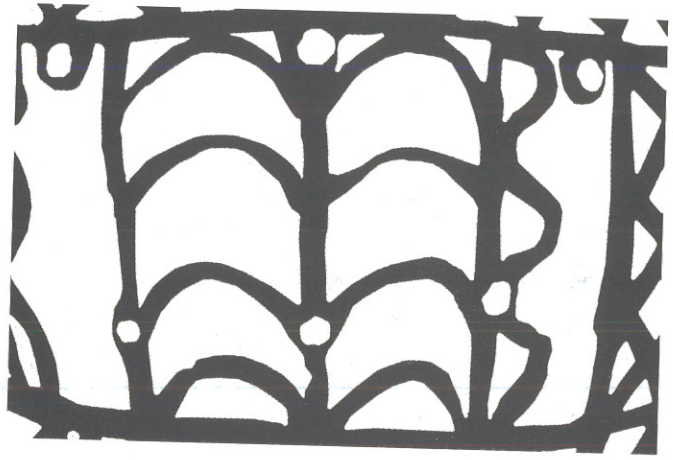


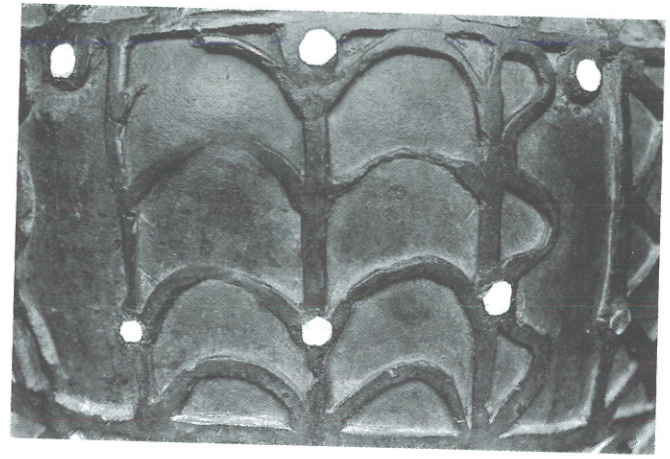


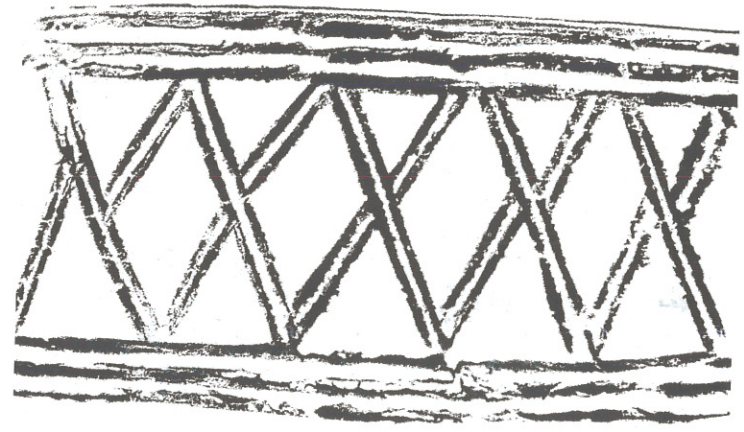


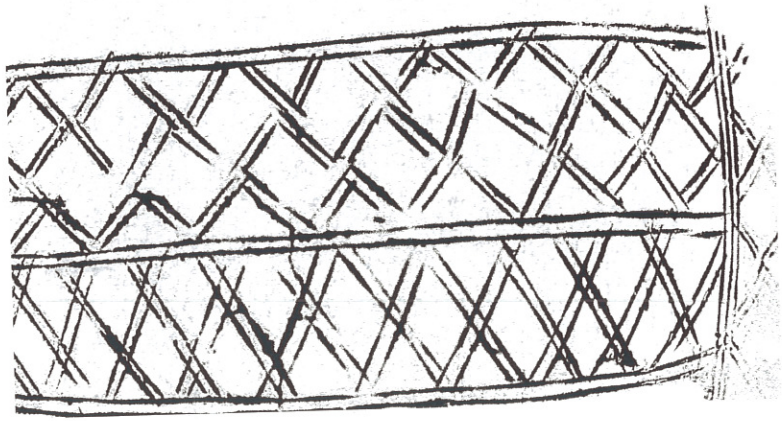


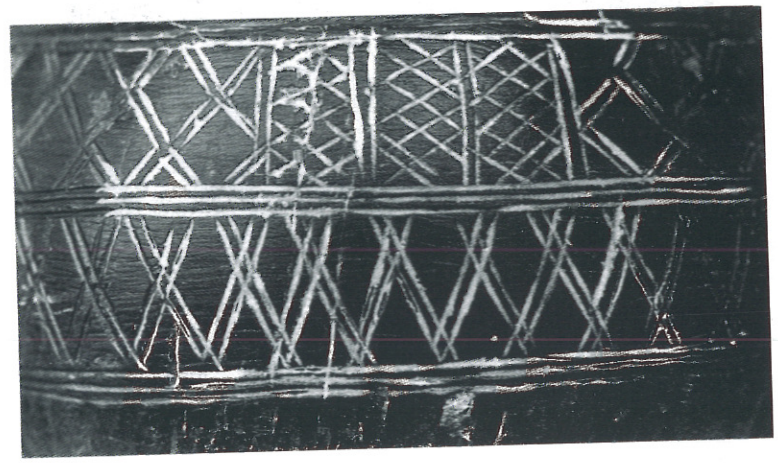


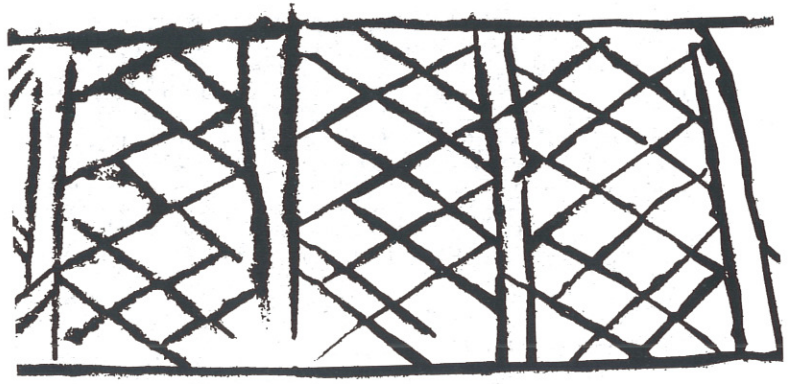


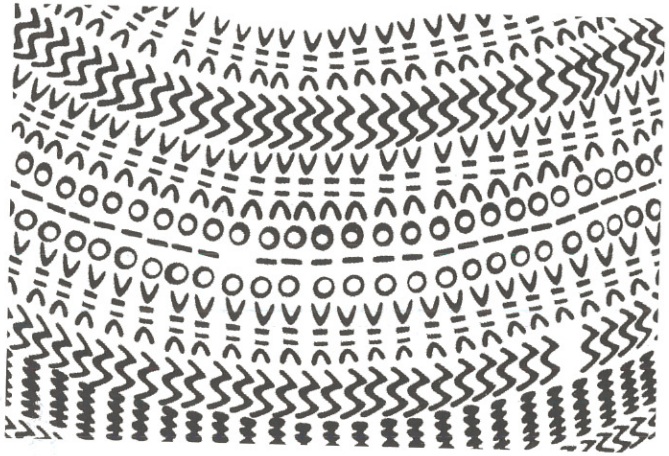


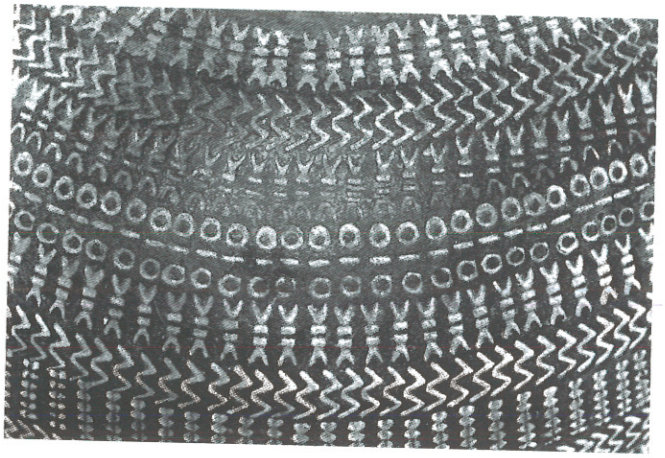


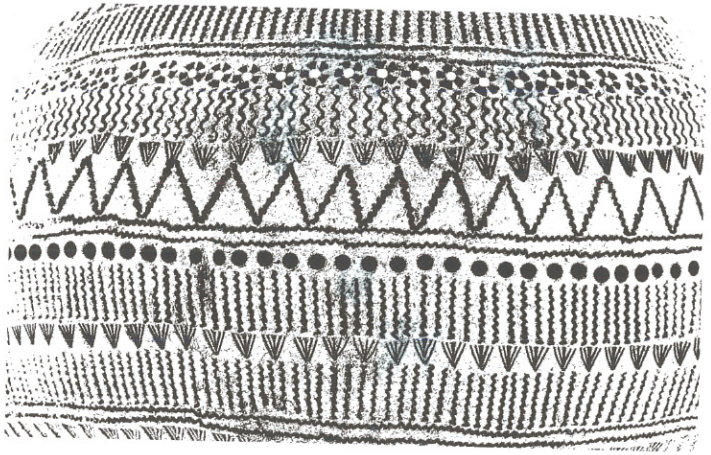


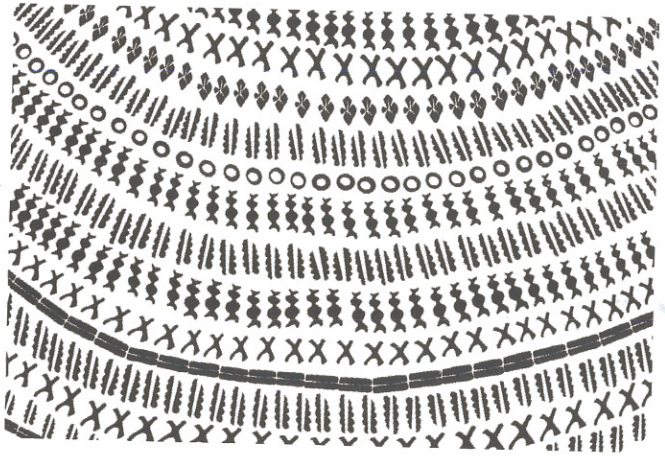


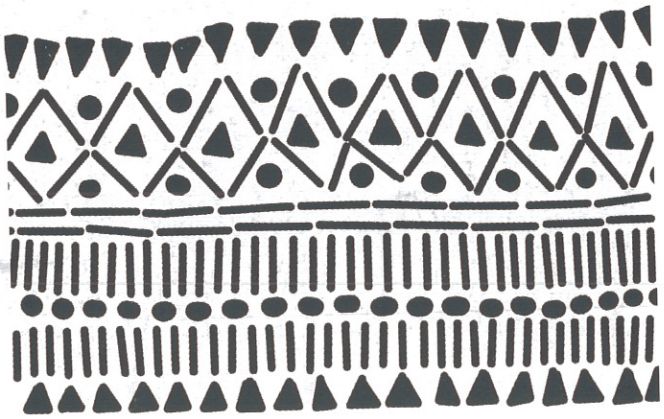


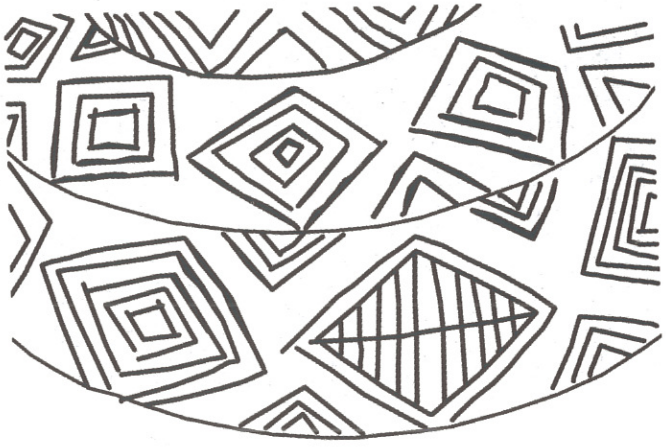




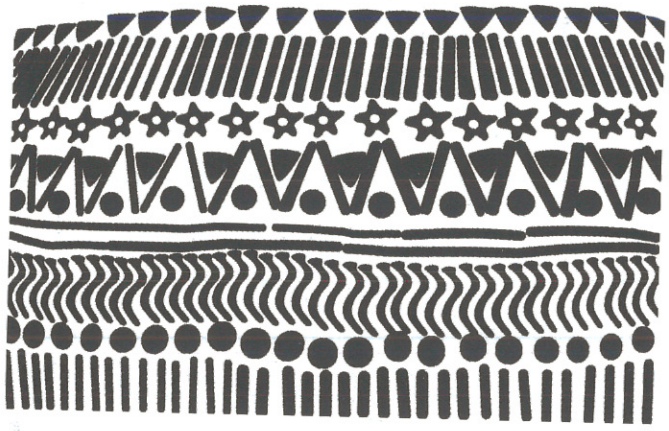


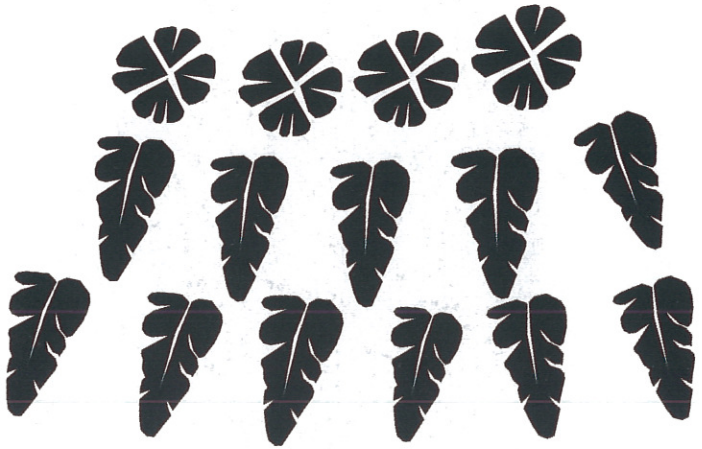


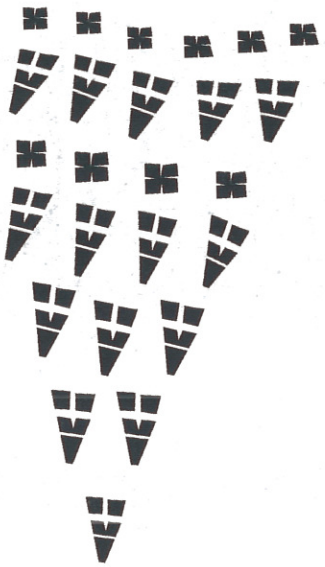


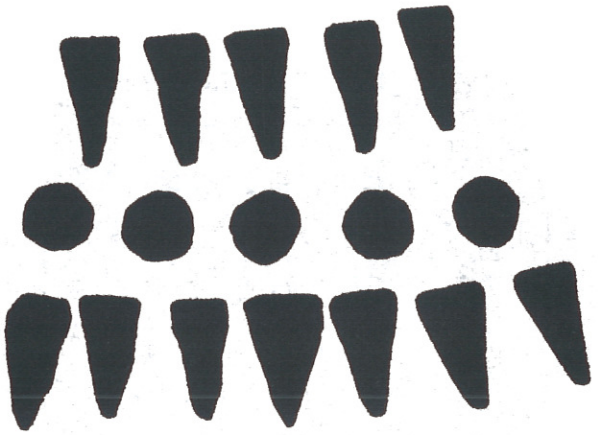


Subanon

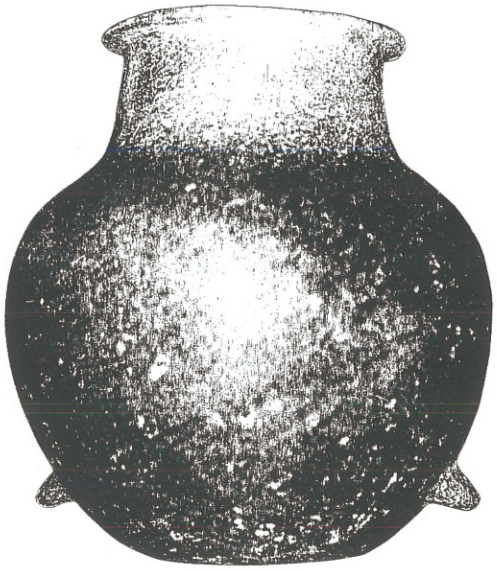








Southwestern Tagalog



Textile

Back-strap Loom Weave

By Jesus T. Peralta

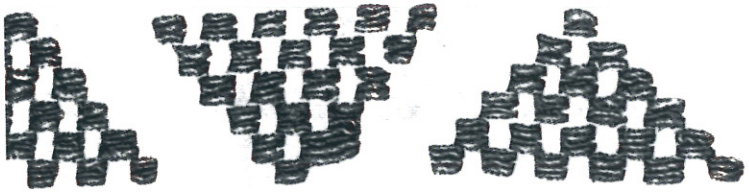
People in the interiors of the Philippines, like other ancient peoples during the late Neolithic Age, use a simple apparatus in weaving textiles – the back-strap loom. Even today the back-strap loom is still in use, notably in the island of Mindanao and the Cordilleras of Northern Luzon to produce the very colorful and intricately designed textiles that identify the ethnicity of different people. Among those who use this type of loom, are the Ifugao, Bontok, Itneg, Ilanon, Yakan, Mandaya, Mansaka, Maranao, T'boli, Bagobo, Manobo and B'laan.

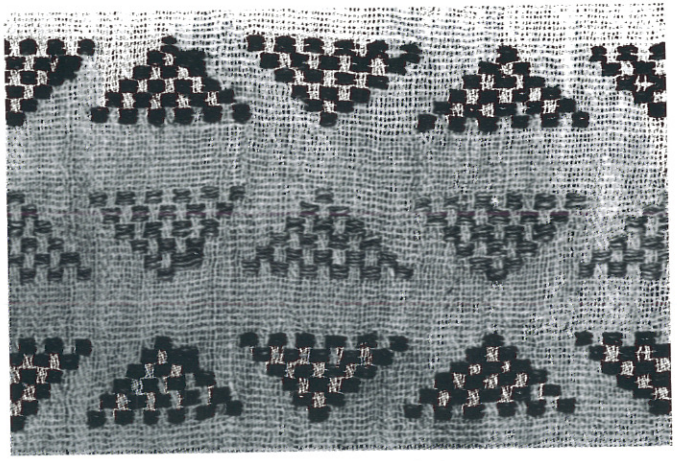
There are many variations in the configuration of this loom. Basically, the strands of longitudinal threads called the warp are stretched between rods in the outermost end of the loom (warp-end rods) and the cloth end rods nearest the weaver. The warp-end rods are attached by cordage onto a firm support like a house beam. The warp threads are kept taut by means of cords from the cloth-end rods attached to a strap at the back of the weaver – hence the term, back-strap, or back-tension loom. From the top, a lease cord maintains the order of the threads and provides an opening between the threads for the insertion of the shed roll. A shed roll, often made from a section of bamboo, divides the warp in half. Below this are the heddle sticks, which hold the warp threads. These provide facility in introducing design patterns into the cloth. The horizontal threads (weft) are introduced by means of a bobbin pushed through in between the warp threads, and forced down by a wide and heavy beater to add another strand to the cloth being woven.

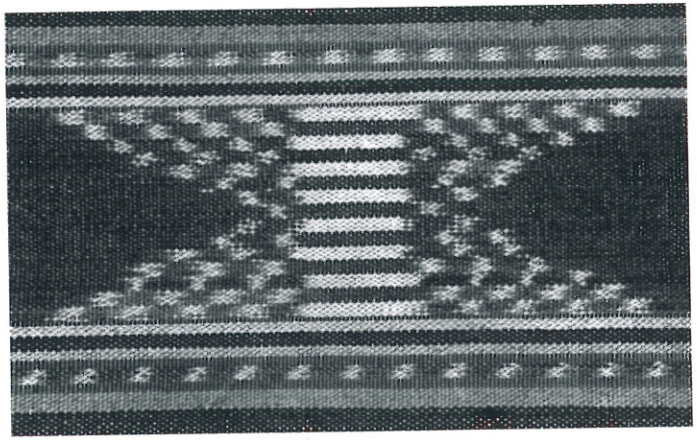
Design patterns are introduced into the cloth by the prior dyeing of the warp threads, which results in vertical designs relative to the loom. Or else, it could be the weft threads that are dyed to produce horizontal designs. A combination of these two methods makes a more intricate pattern. Additionally, dyed horizontal threads (supplementary weft) may be added to make the design even more intricate.

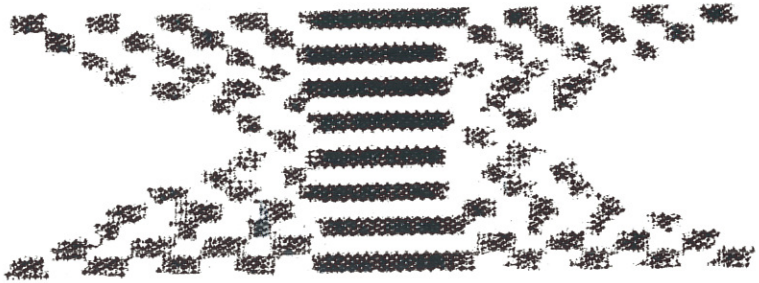
While the back-strap loom is essentially the same throughout the country, there are differences in the number of heddle sticks that separate warp threads. The late historian William Henry Scott often wondered why a heddle stick was missing from back-strap looms in the north, while it is present in the south. It might have been really a matter of textile design.

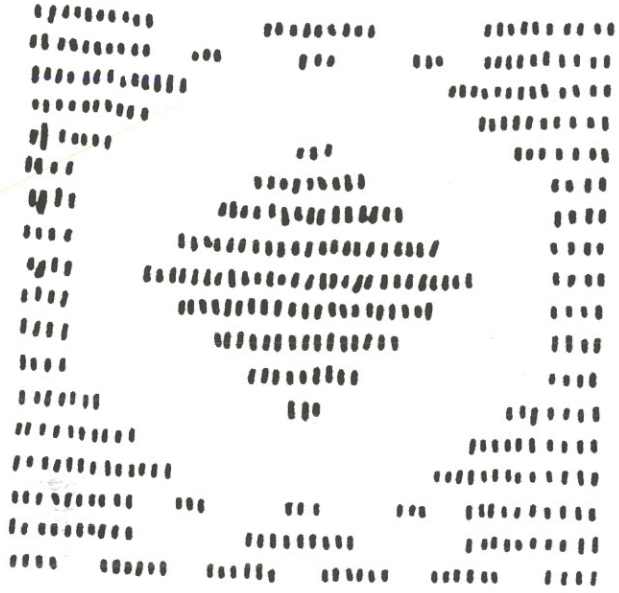
Bagobo

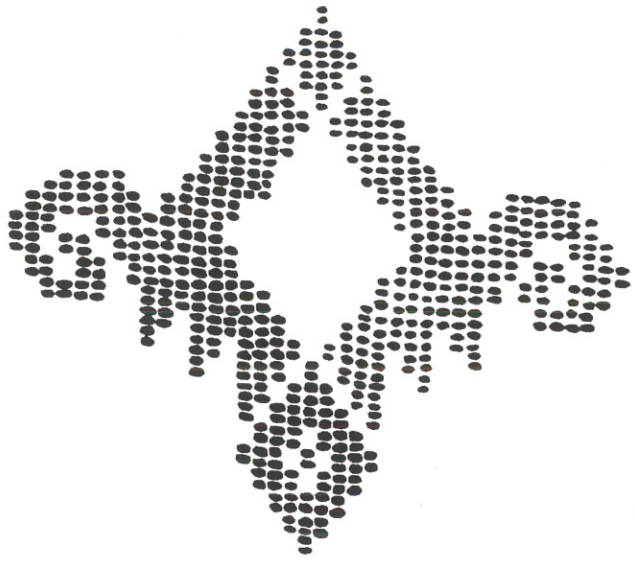


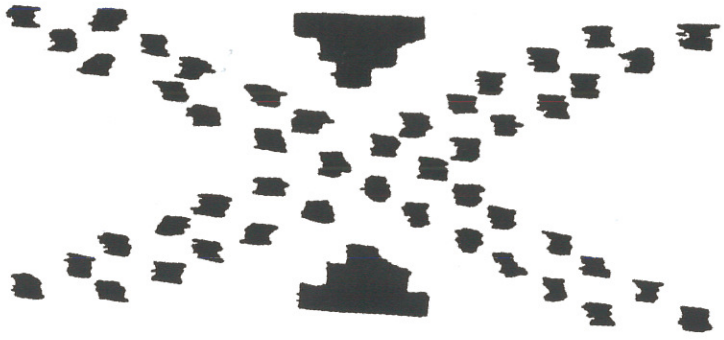


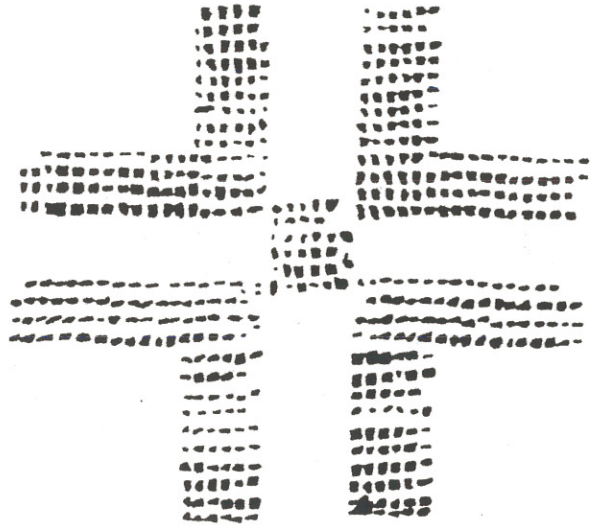


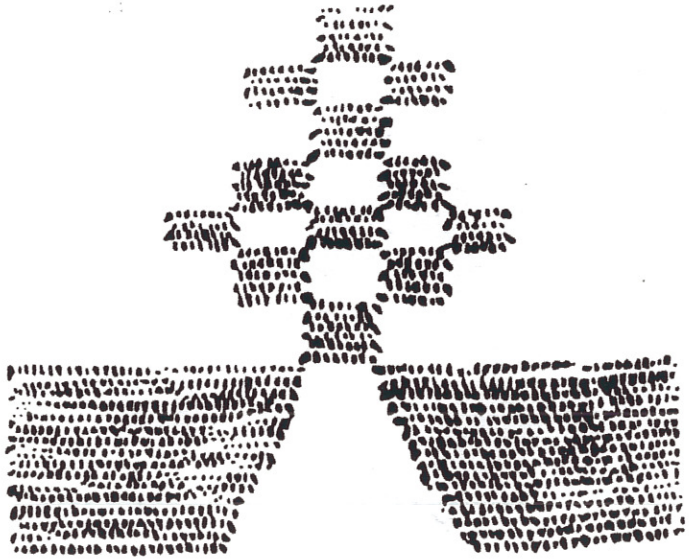


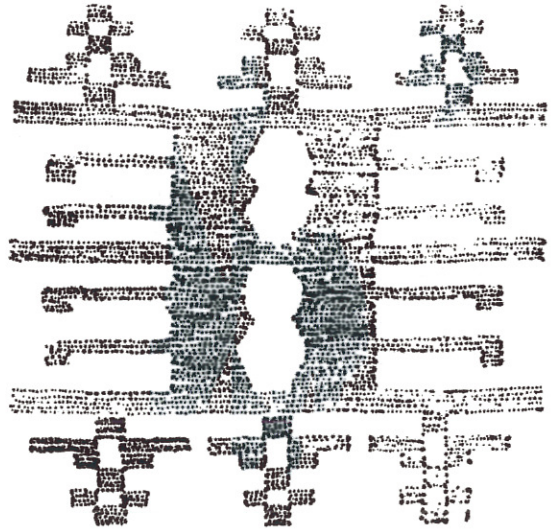


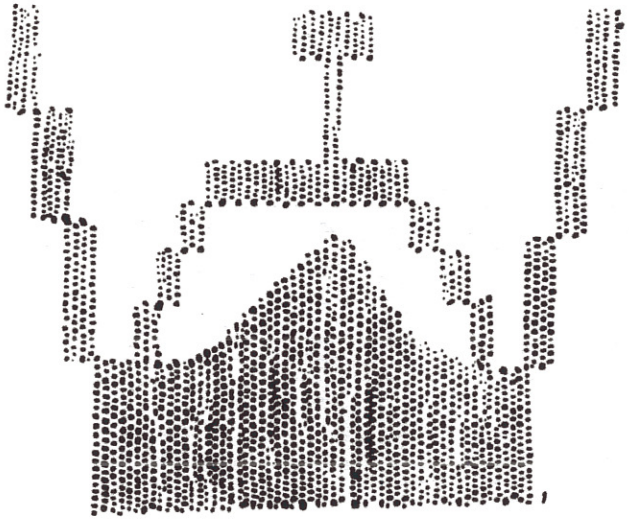


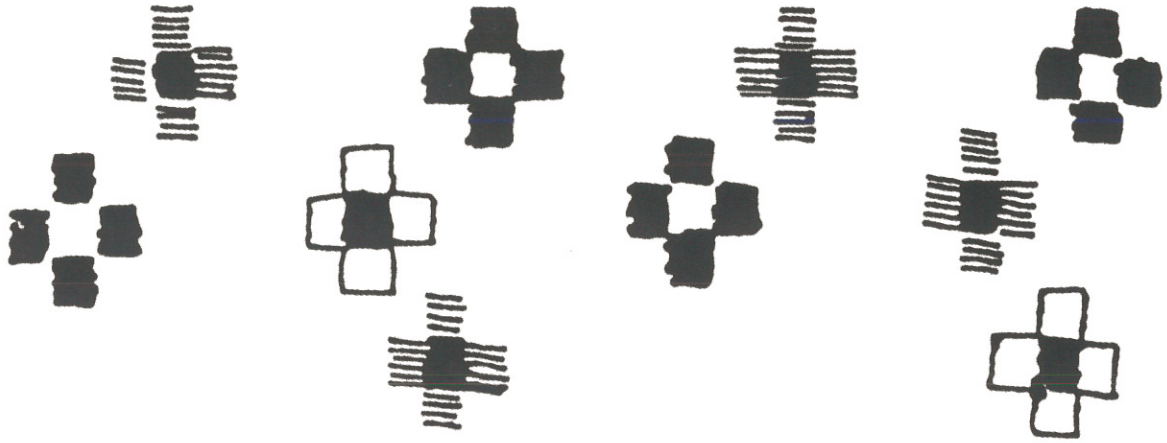


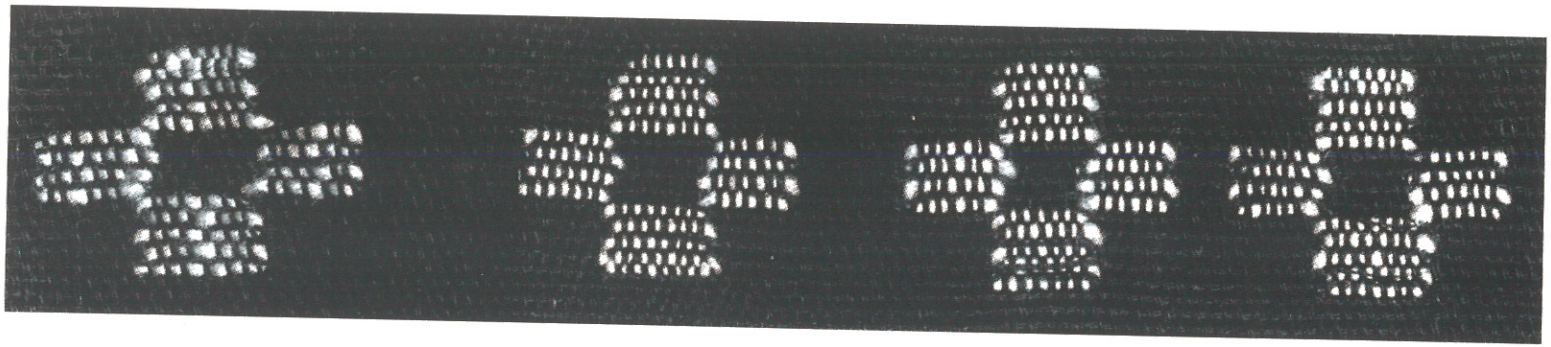


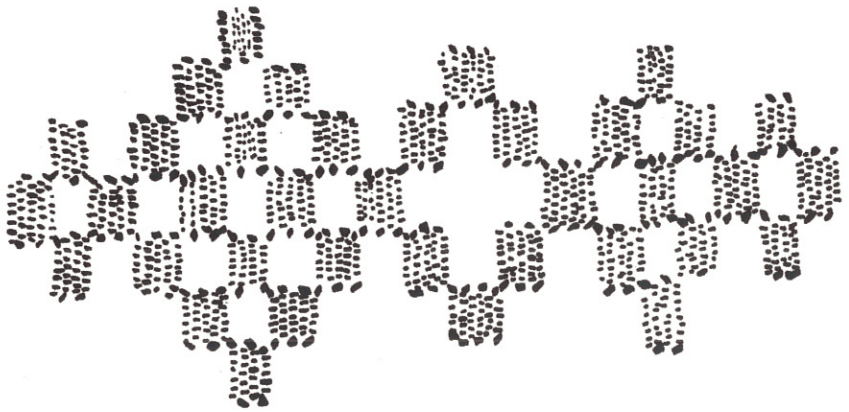


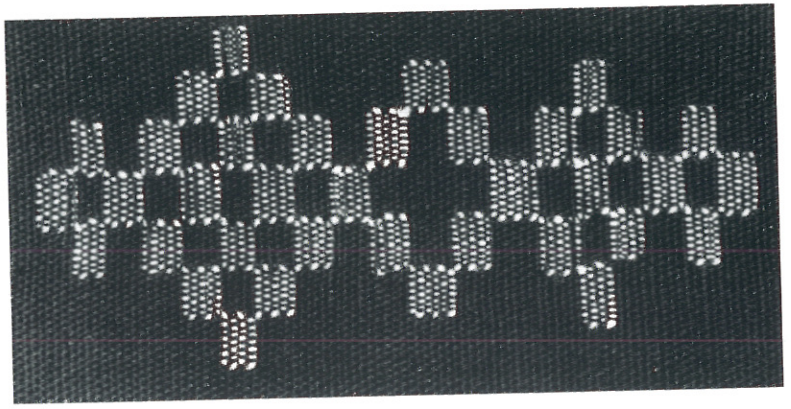


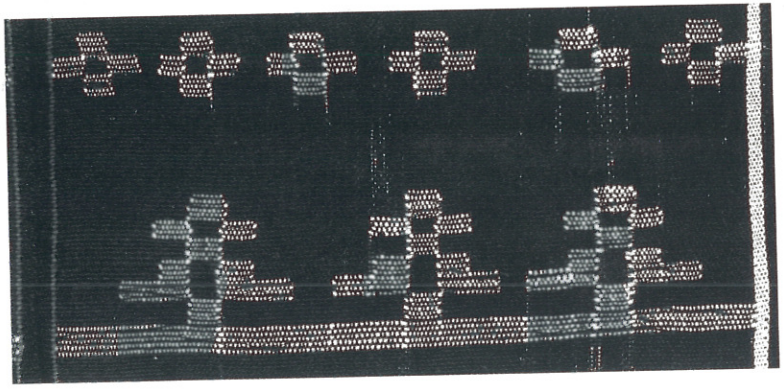


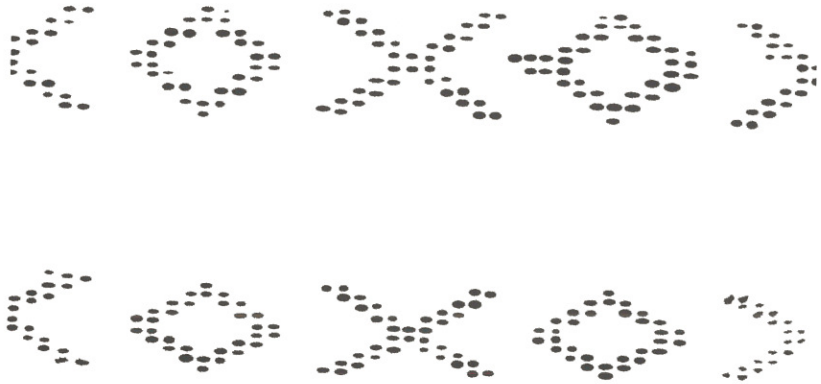


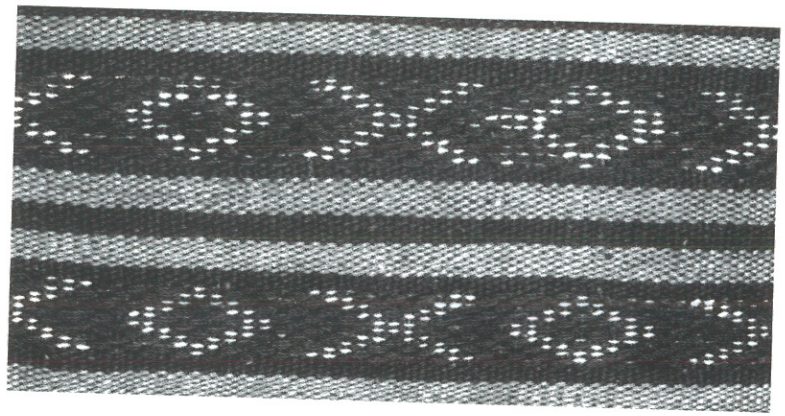


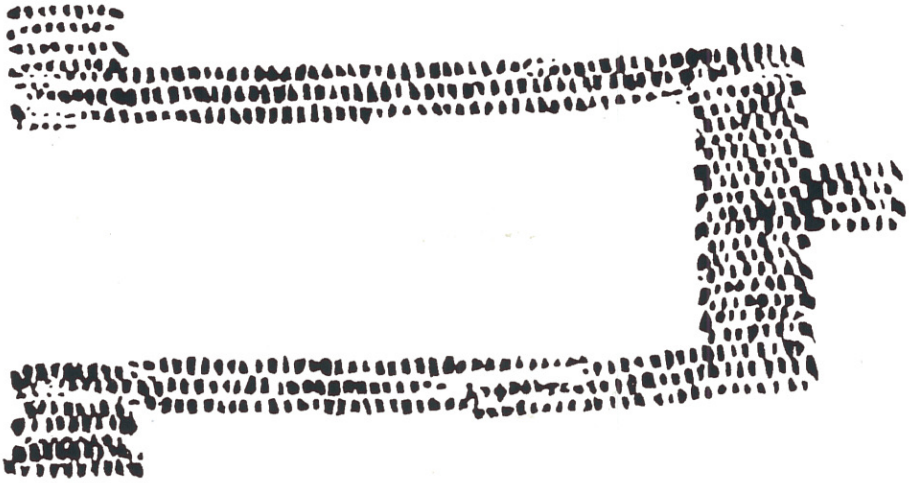


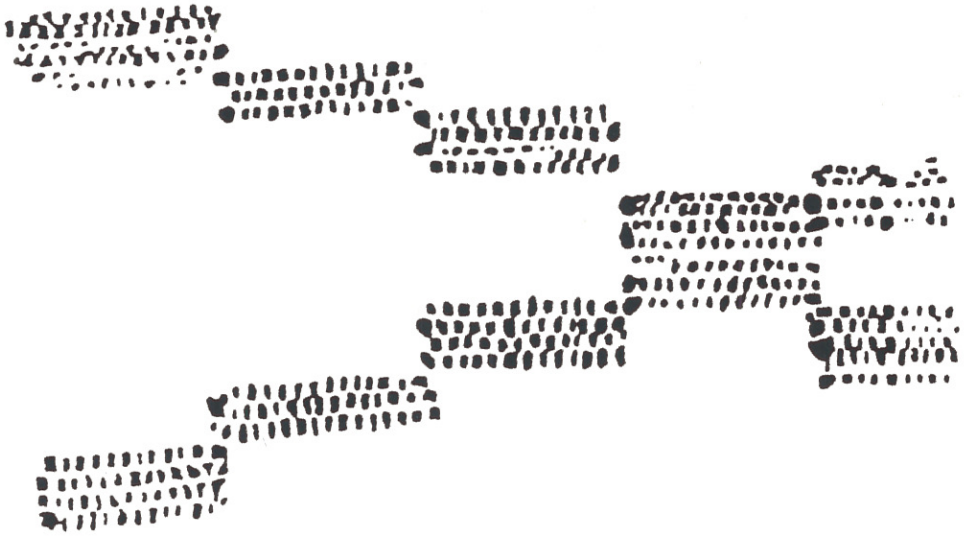


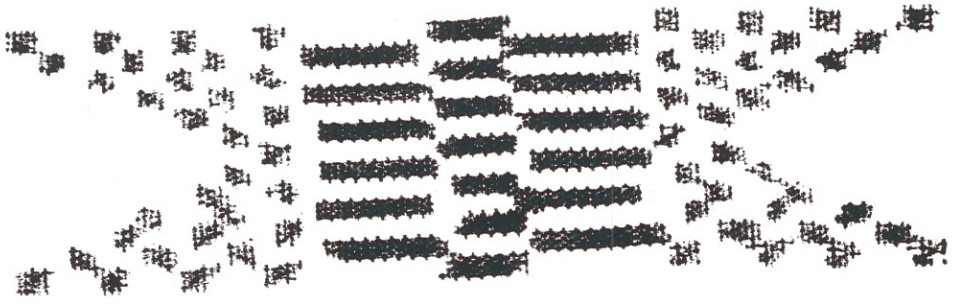




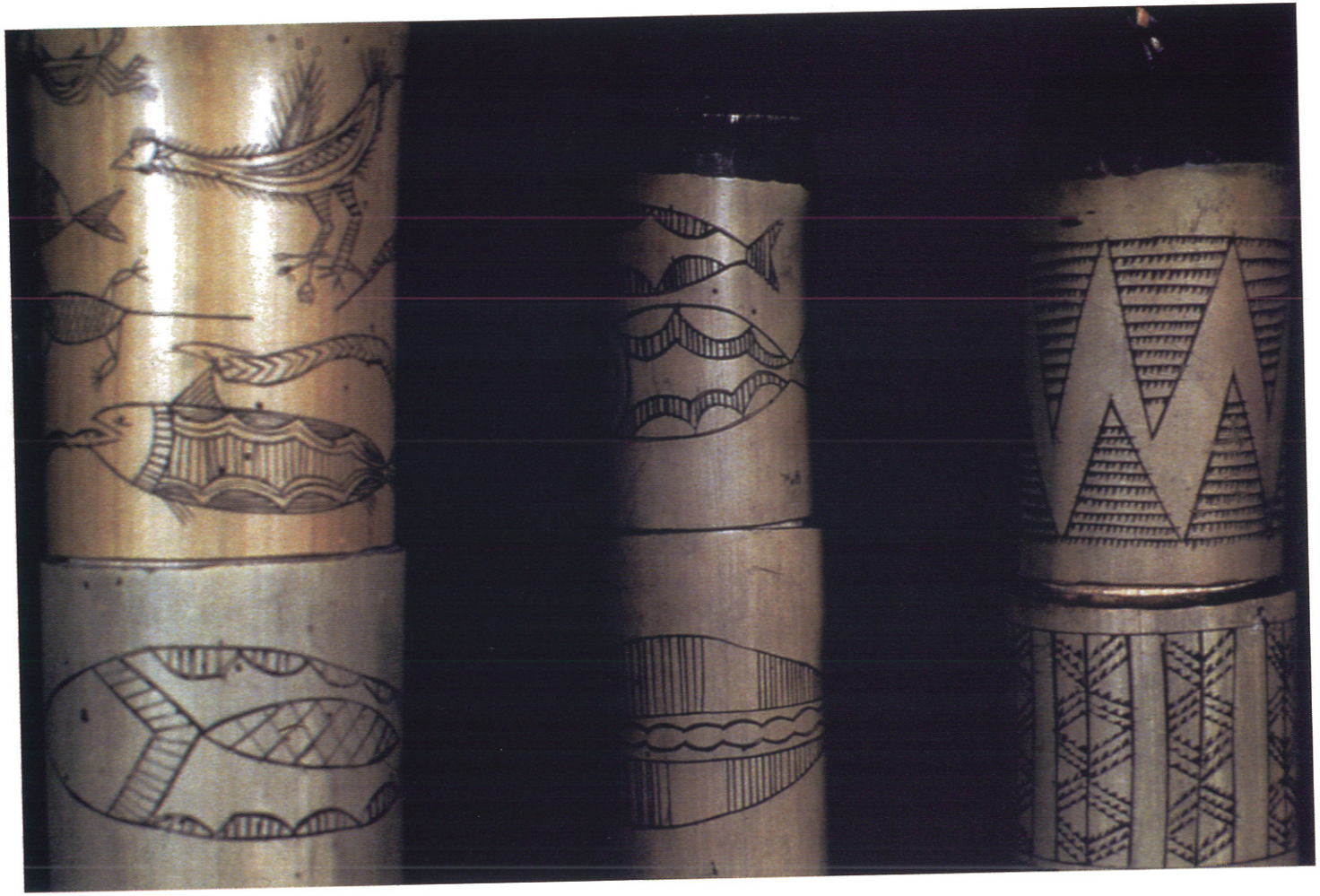








Lakub, Maranao



Tobaco Container, T'boli

Combs, Maranao / Negrito

Metal

Betel Nut Container, Maranao

Betel Nut Container, Maranao

Betel Nut Container, Maguindanao

Earings, Kalinga

Anklets, Manobo and Bagobo

Brassware, Maranao

Terracotta

Angle vessel, Metal Age, Batangas

Trunconical vessel, Metal Age, Batangas

Turtle-bodied vessel, Metal Age, Batangas

Jar, Metal Age, Batangas

Globular Vessel, Metal Age, Batangas

Jar, Metal Age, Batangas

Back-strap Loom Weaver

Textile, Ifugao

Man's Jacket *(ompok ka mama)*, Bagobo

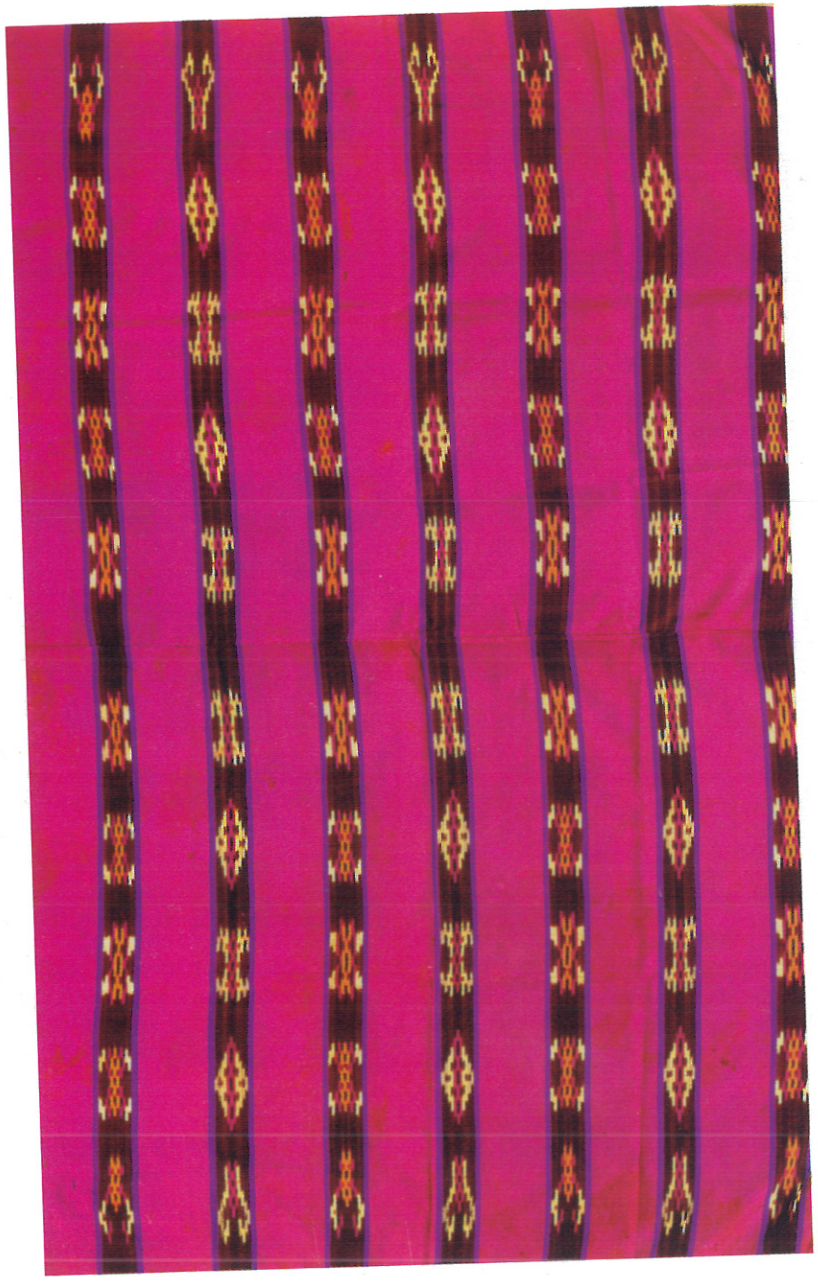
Textile, Maranao

Textile, Bagobo

Tinalak, T'boli

Textile, Maranao

Saputangan, Yakan



Malong a Binaludan, Maguindanao

Malong, Maranao

Ikat, T'boli

Headcloth *(pis)*, Tausug

Headcloth (*Tangkulo*), Bagobo

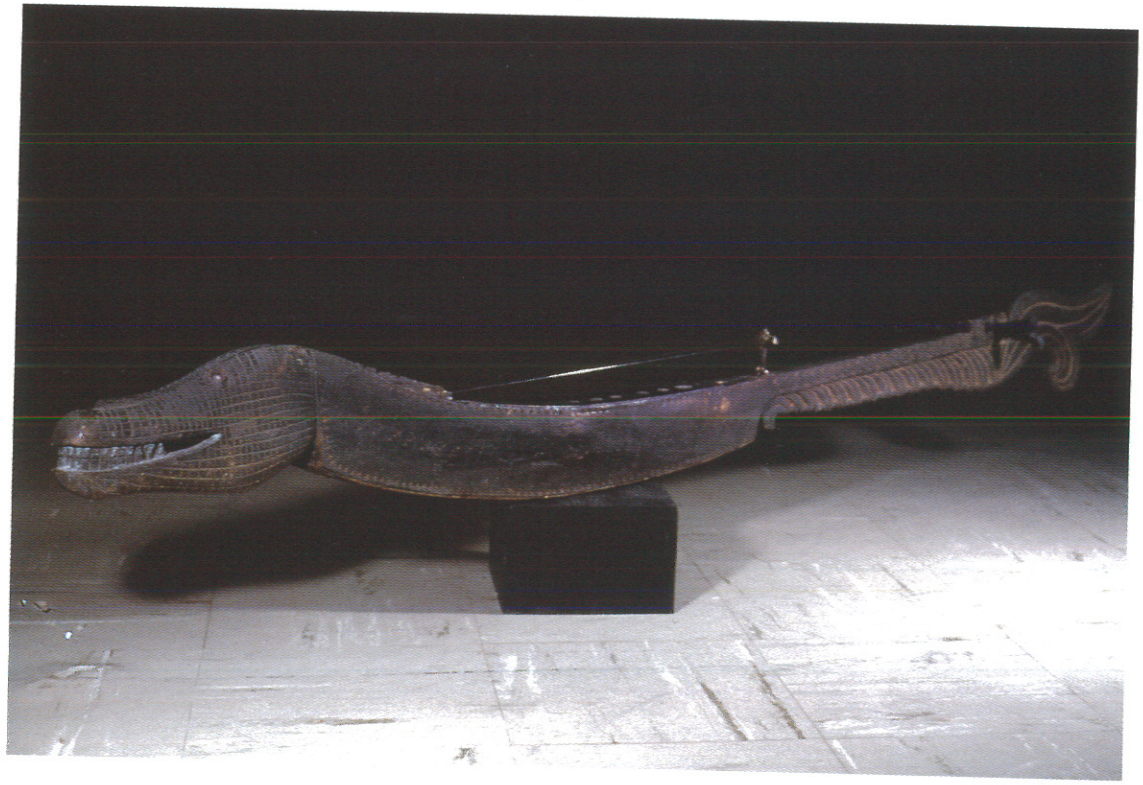
Woodcraft

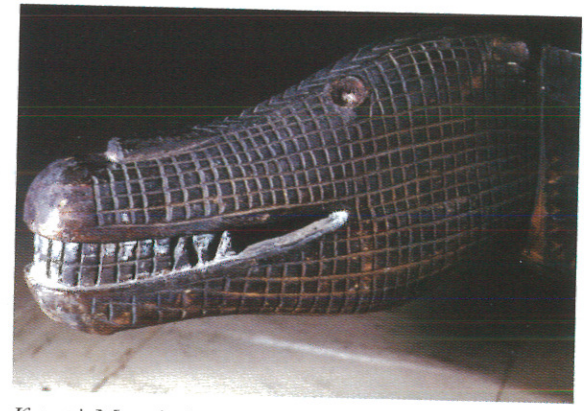
Woodcraft, Ifugao

Woodcraft, Maranao

Sarimanok, Maranao

Panolong, Maranao





Kutyapi, Maguindanao

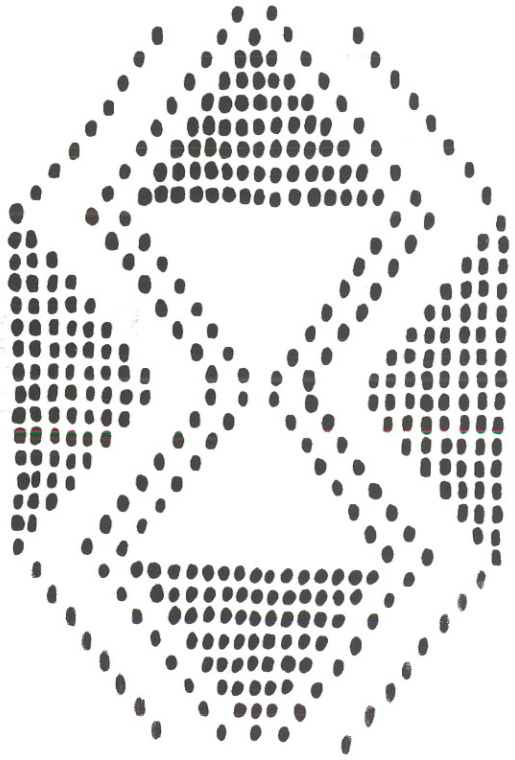
Votive Figurines, Tagbanua

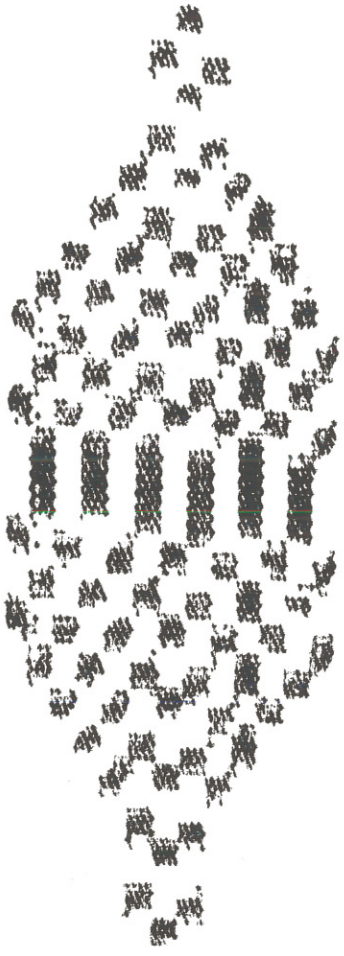
Kalis Seko, Tausug

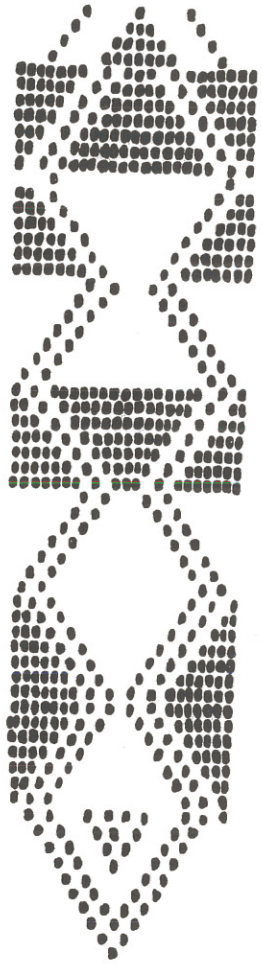
Boat-making Adz *(Patok)*, Sama

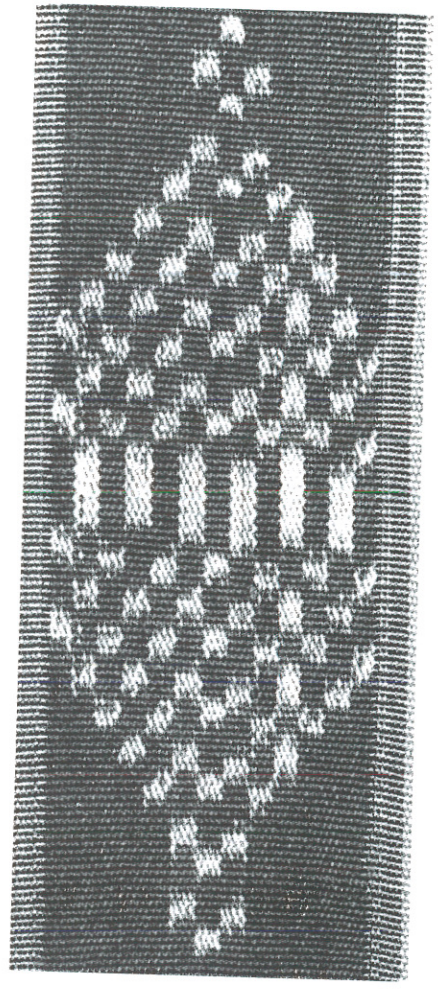
Scythe, Maranao

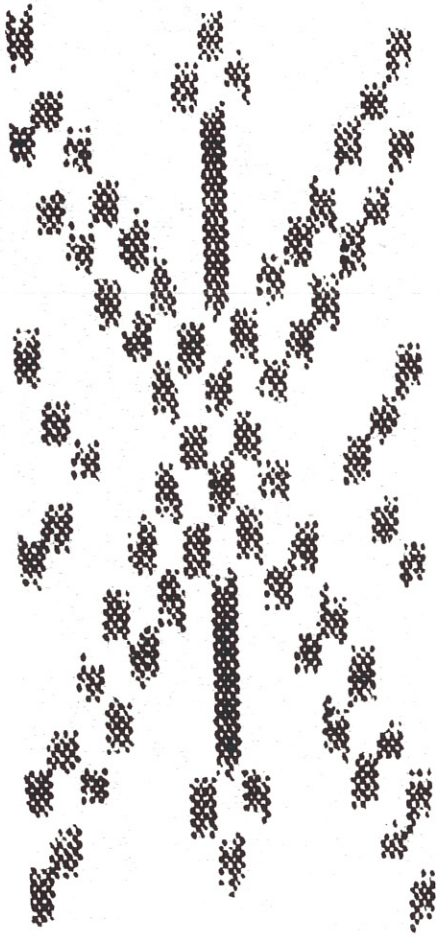
Weed-cutting tool, Maranao

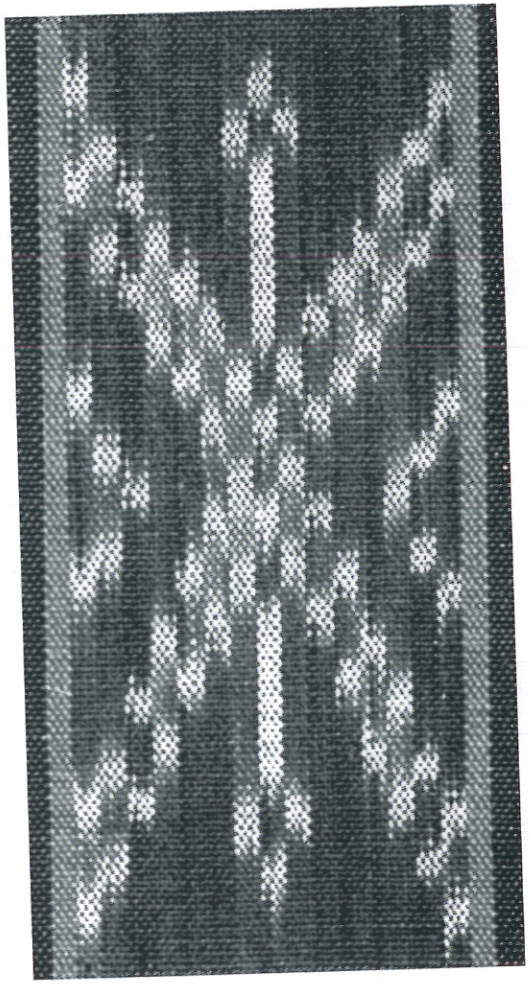












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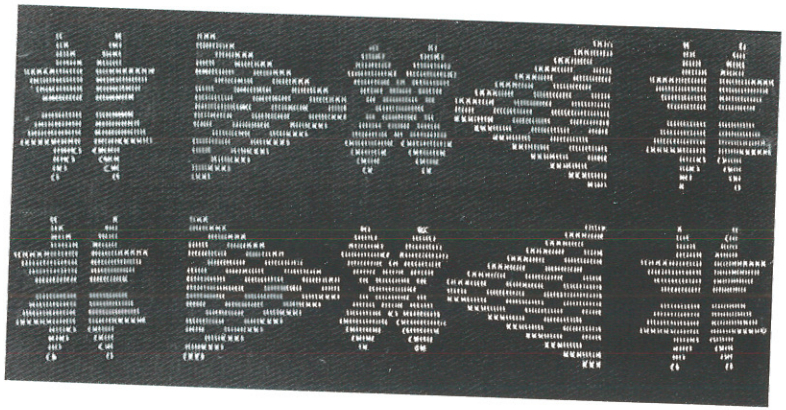
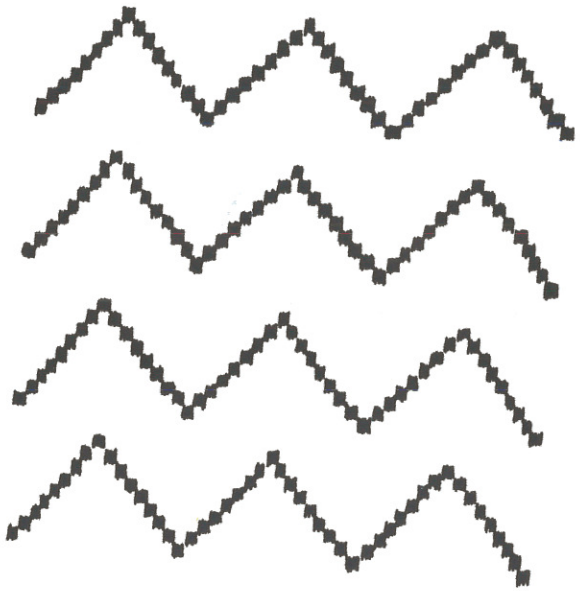
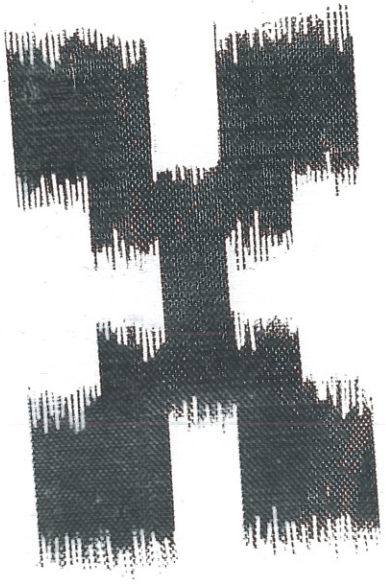
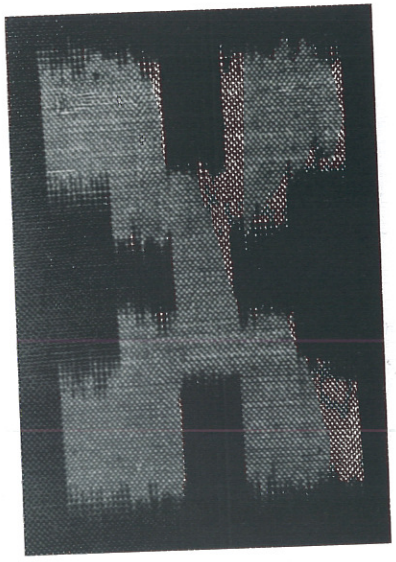
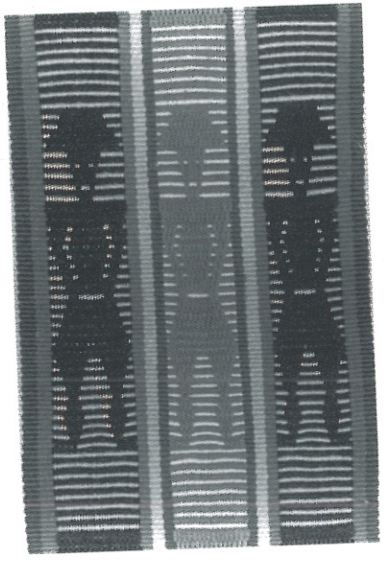
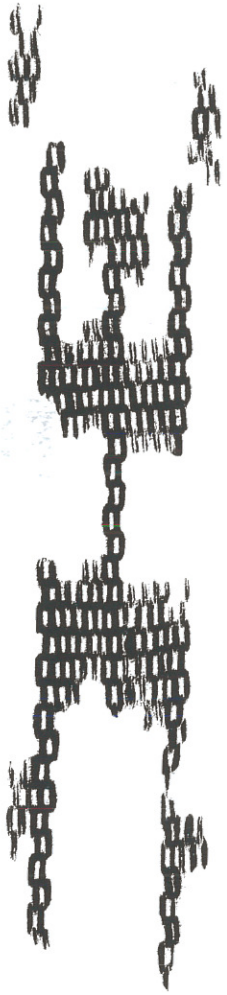


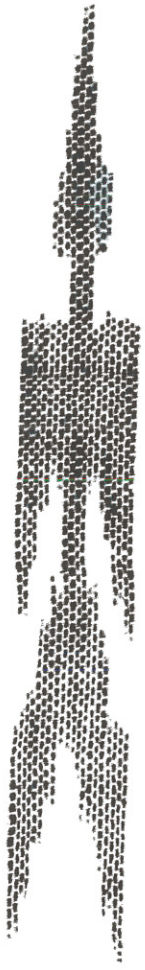


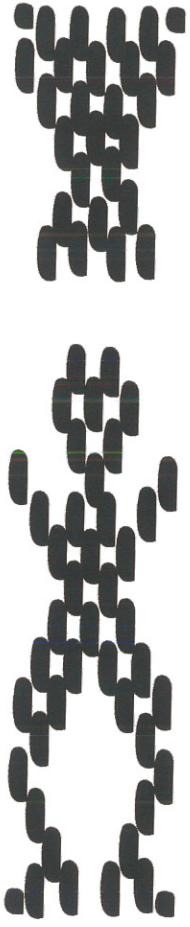


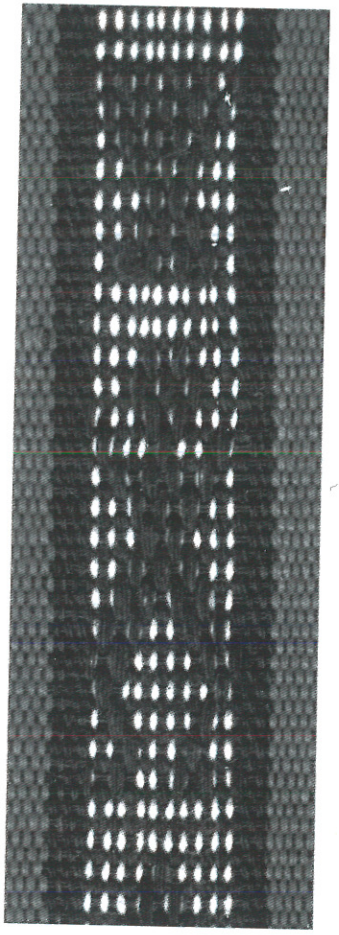


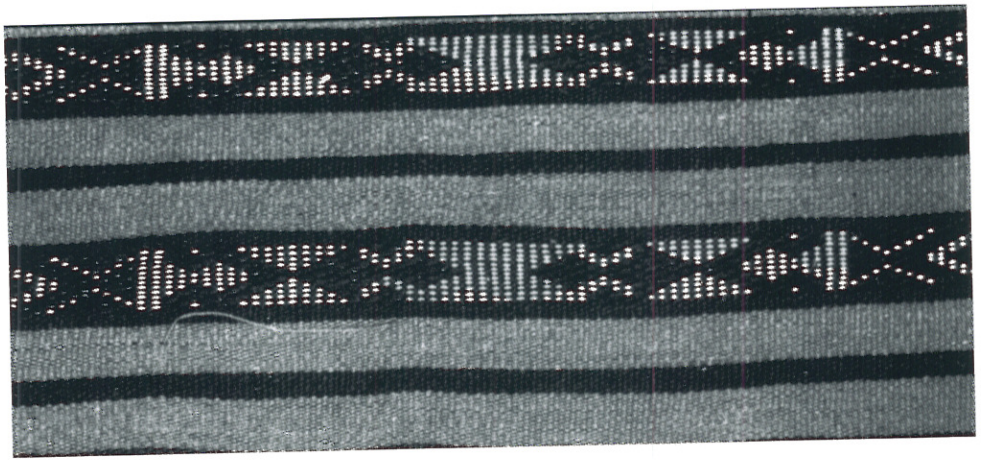


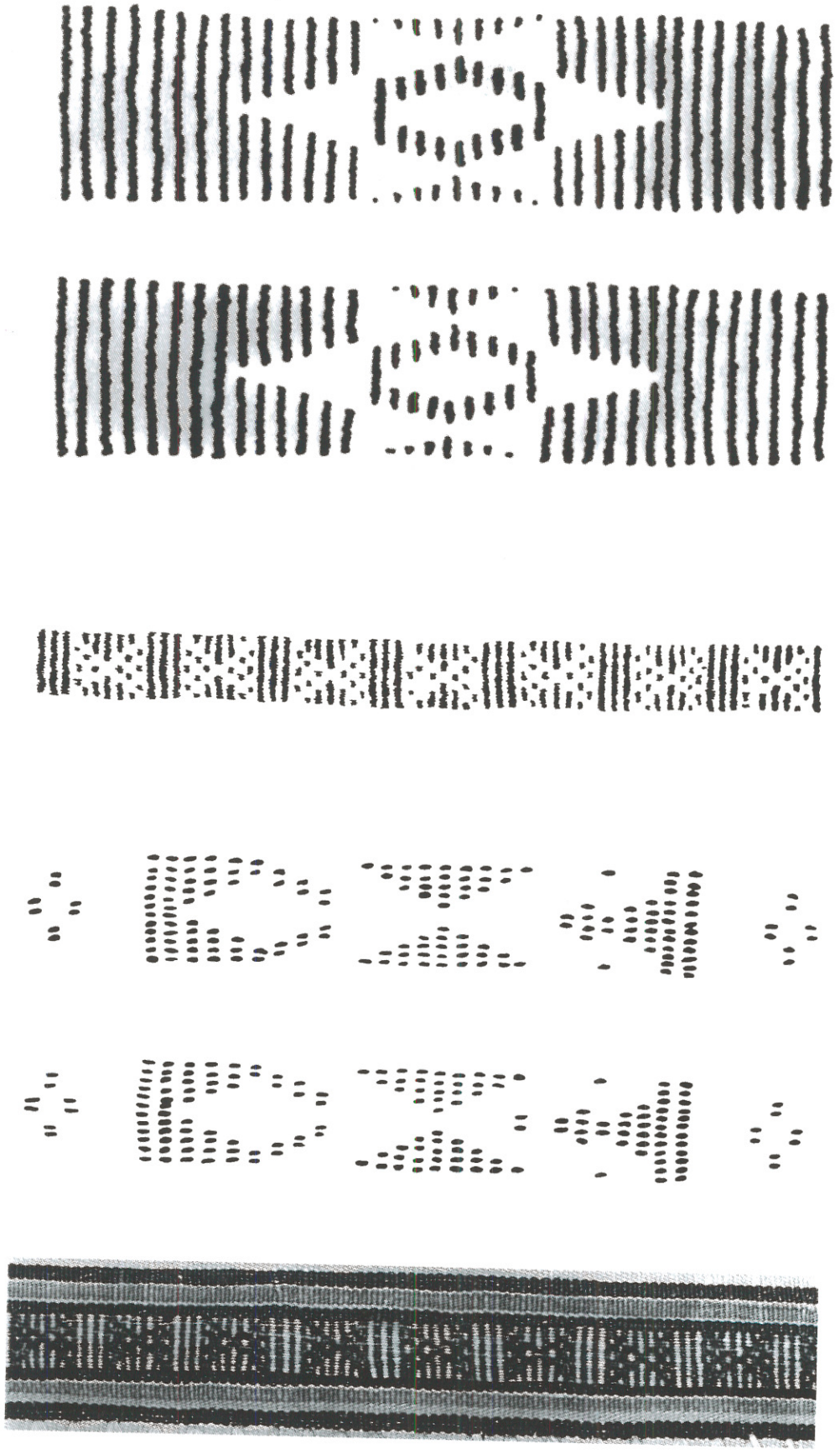




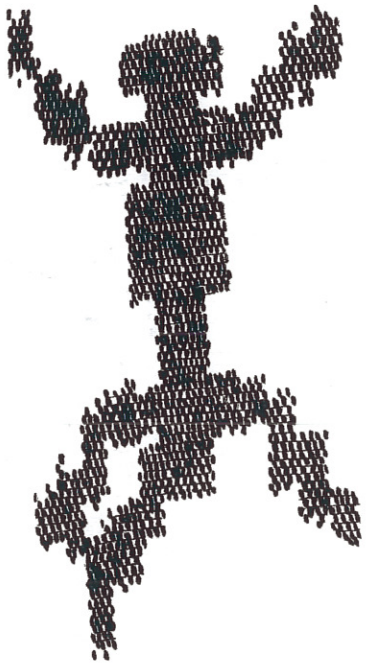


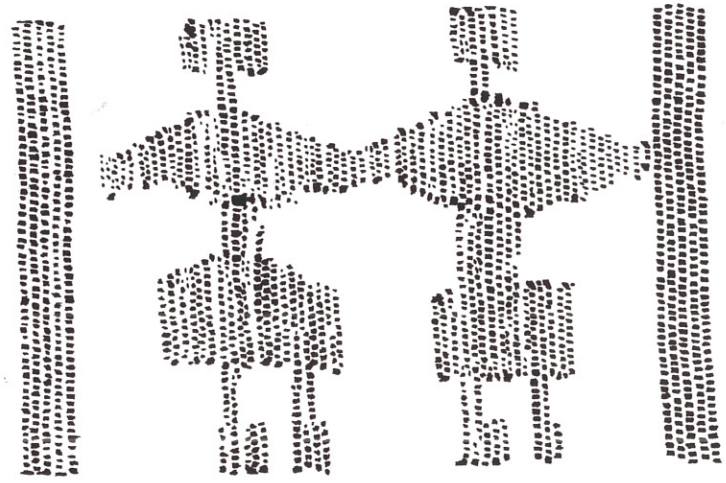


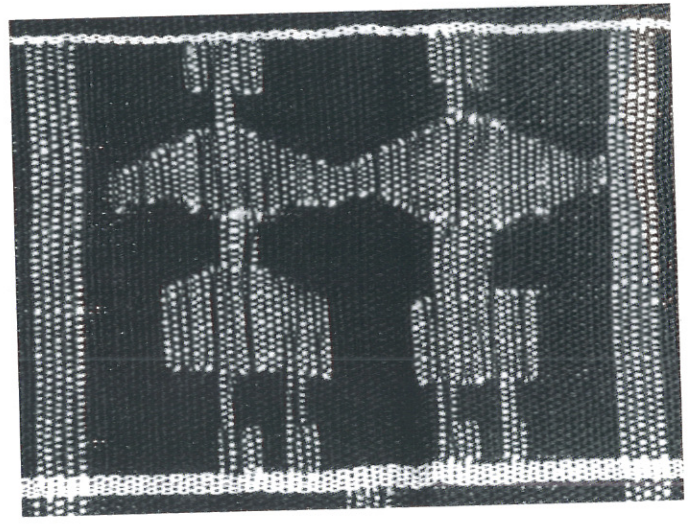


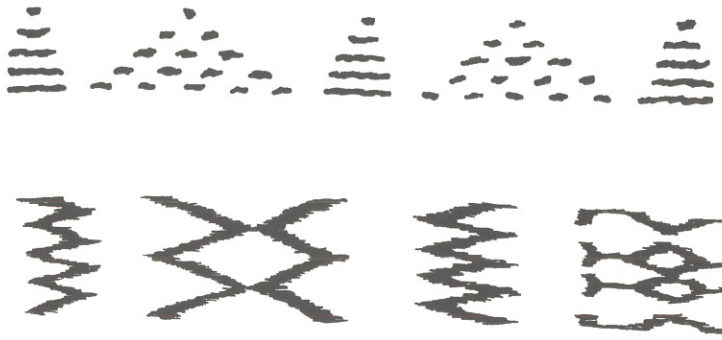


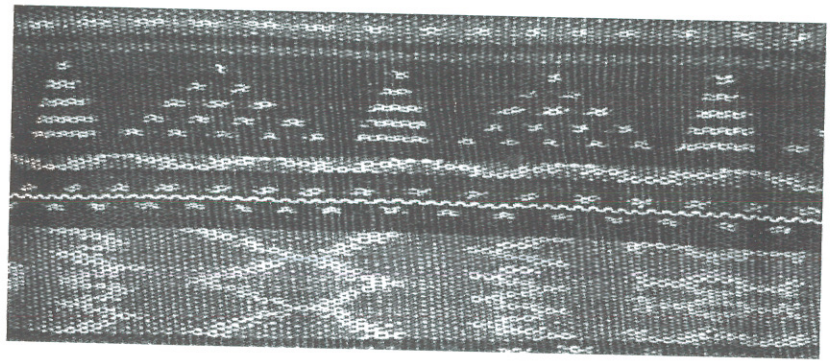
Ifugao



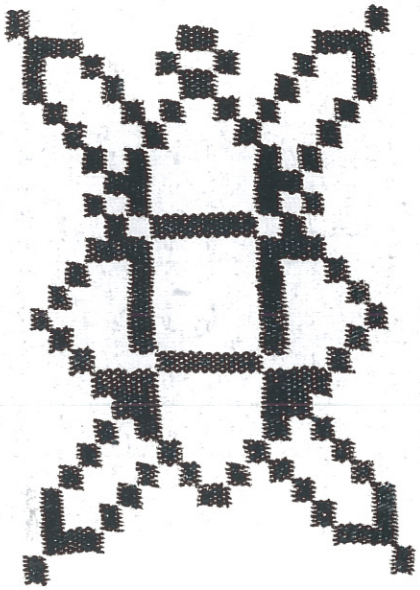


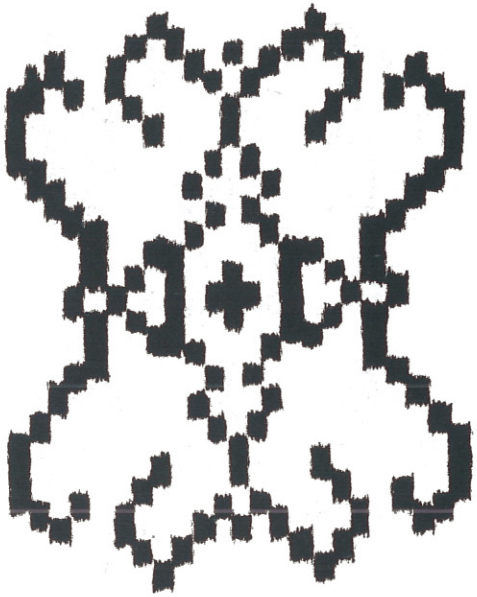


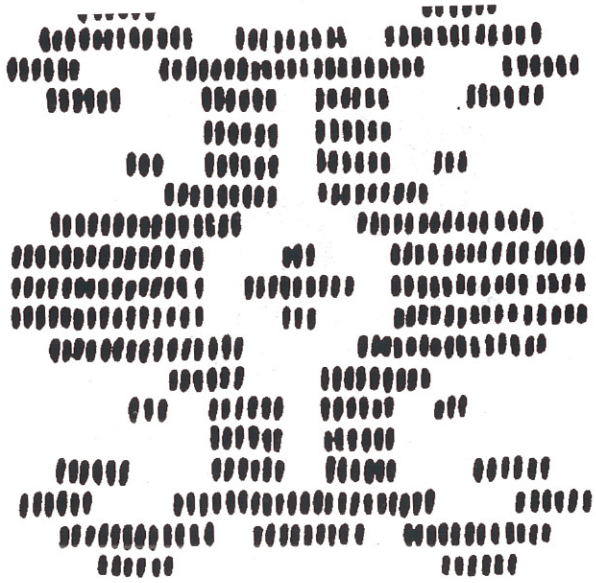


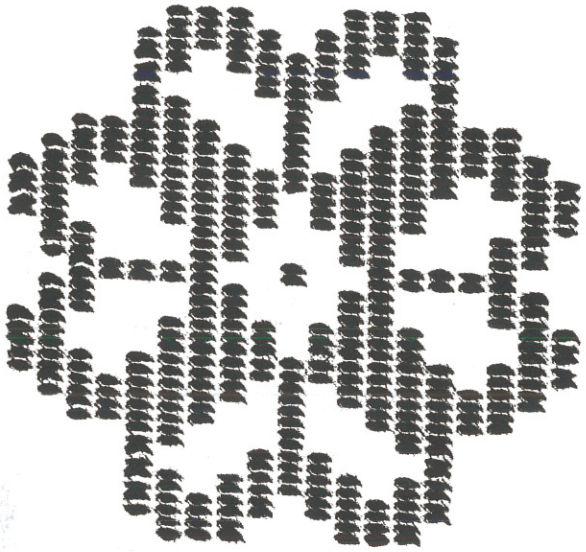


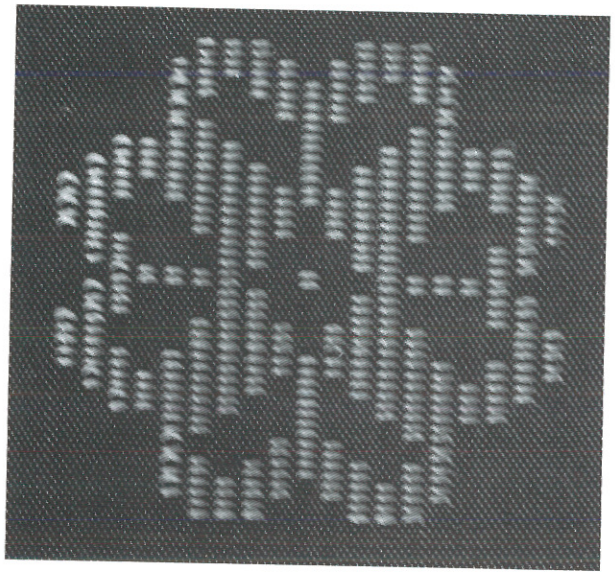
Maranao

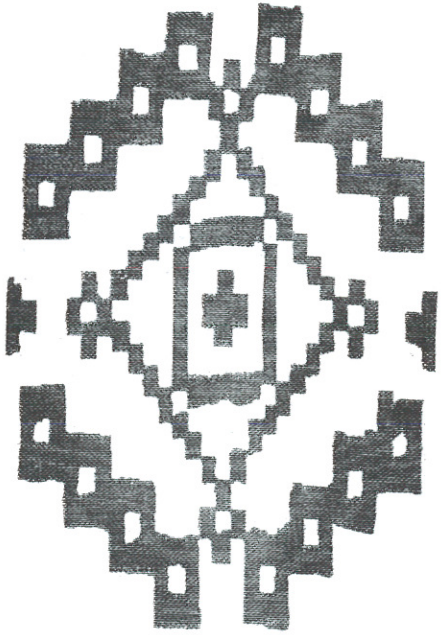


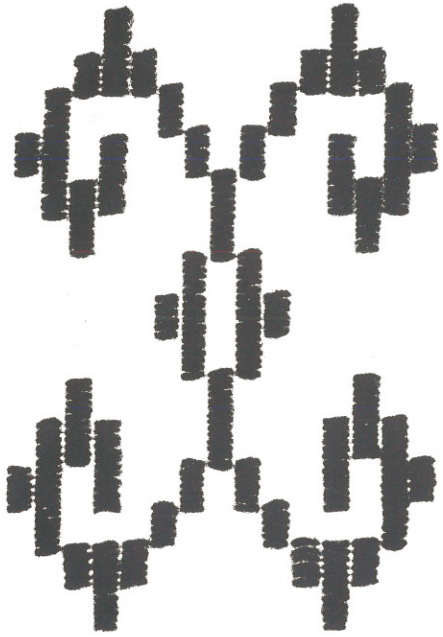


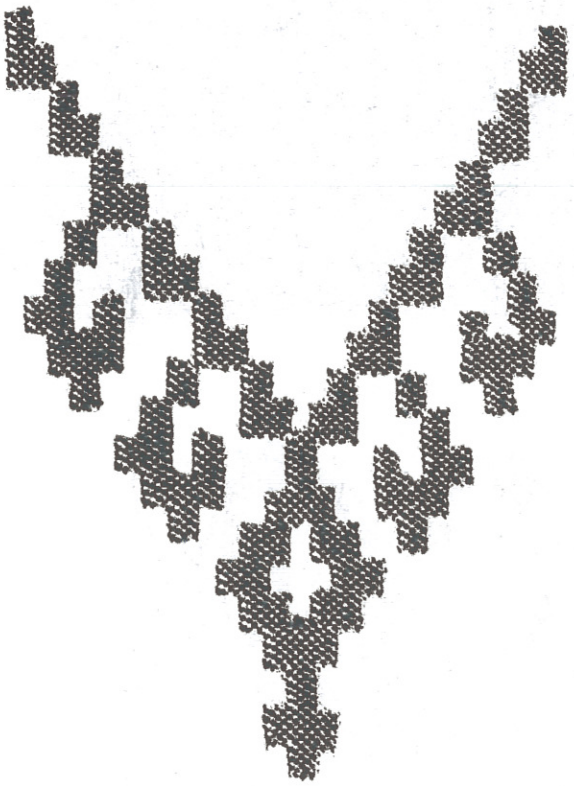


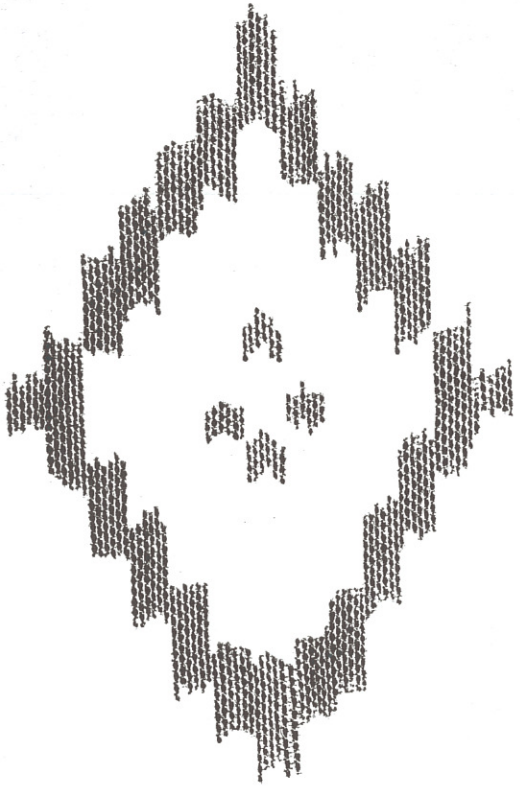


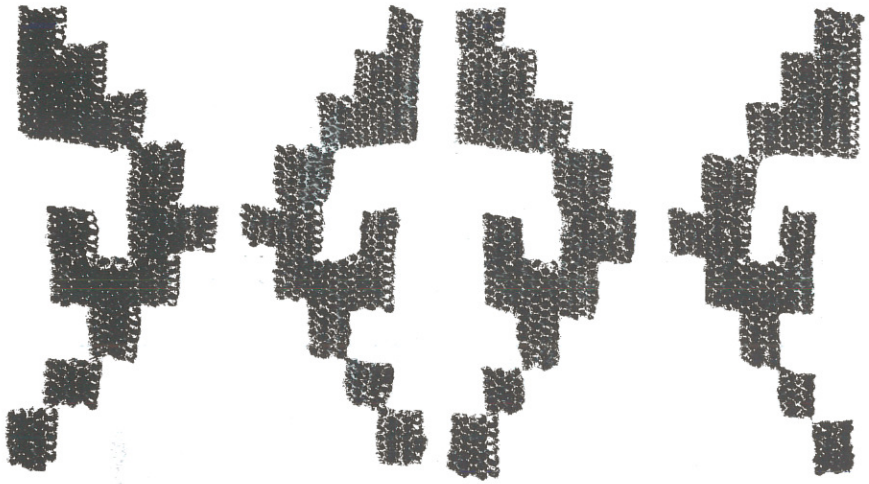


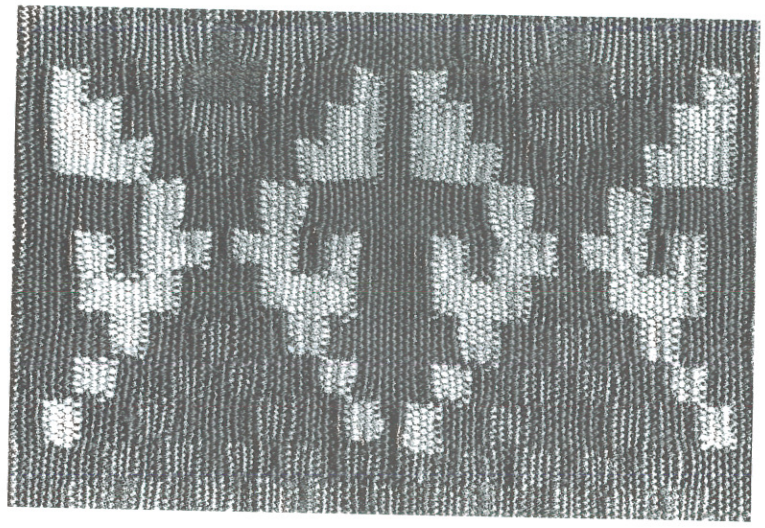


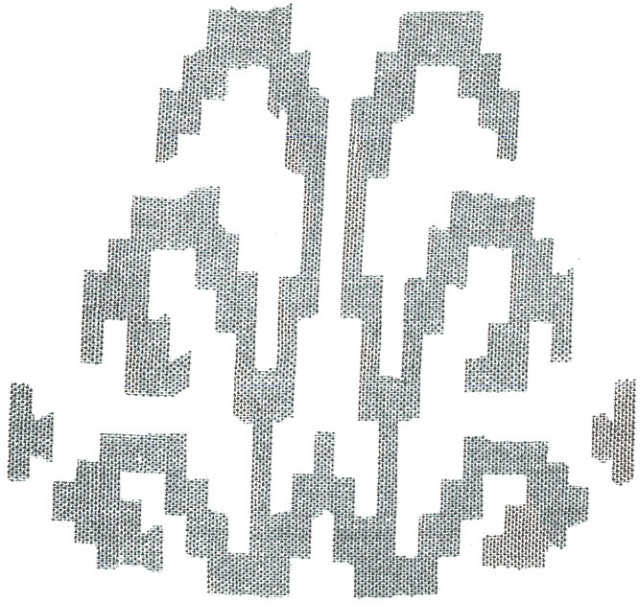


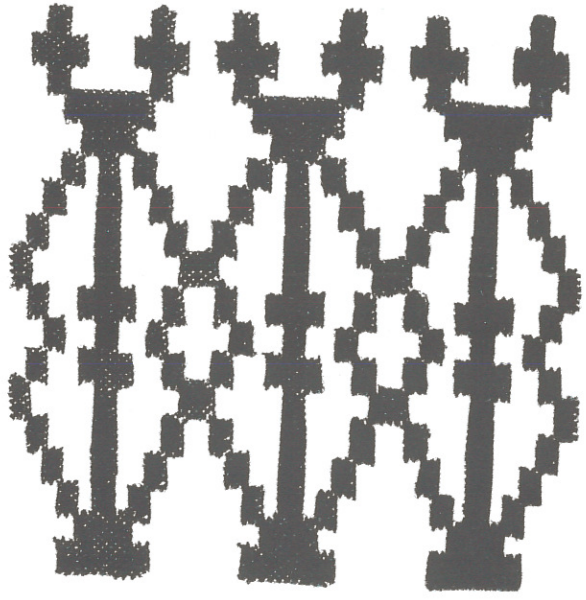


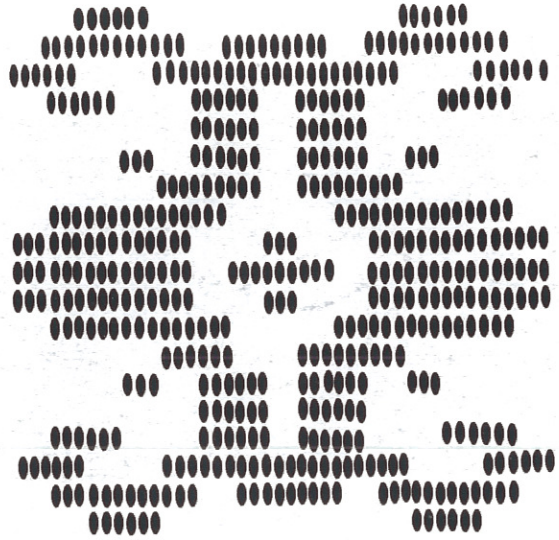


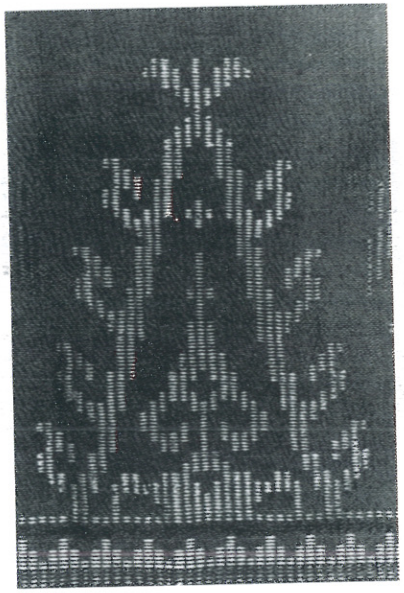


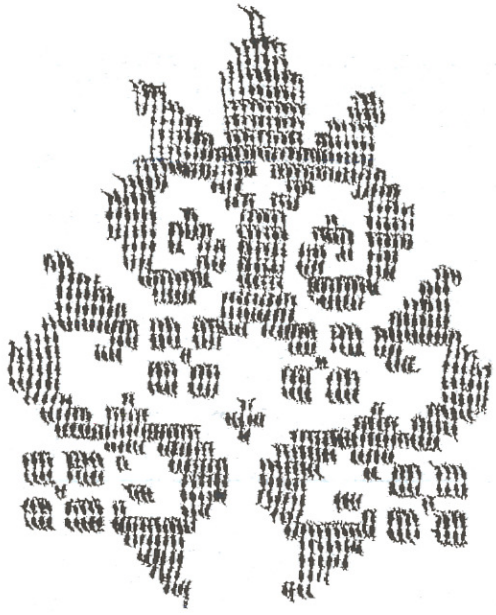


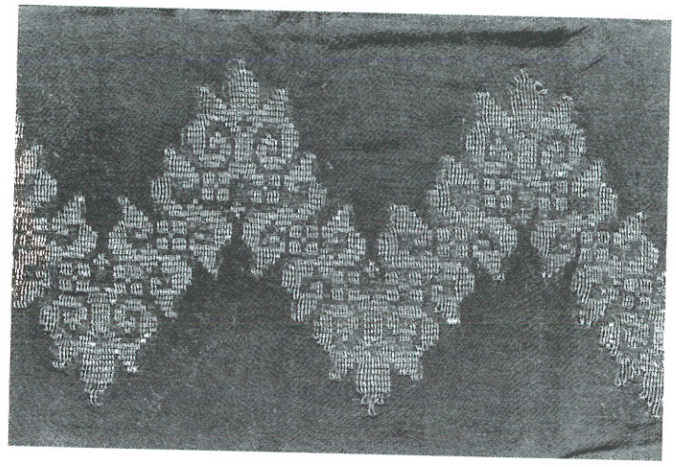


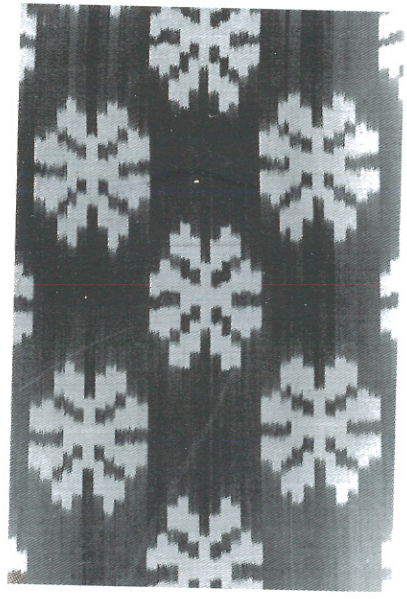


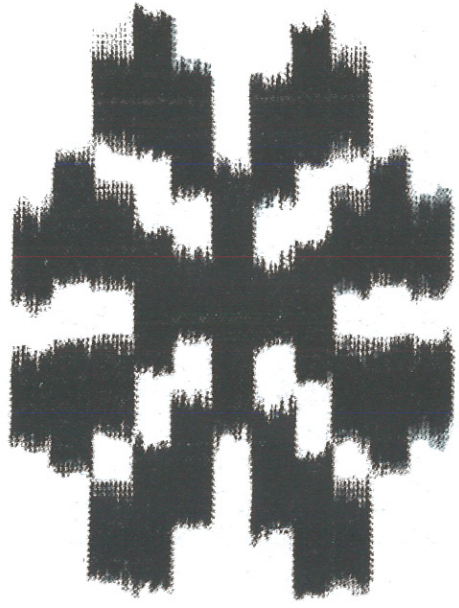




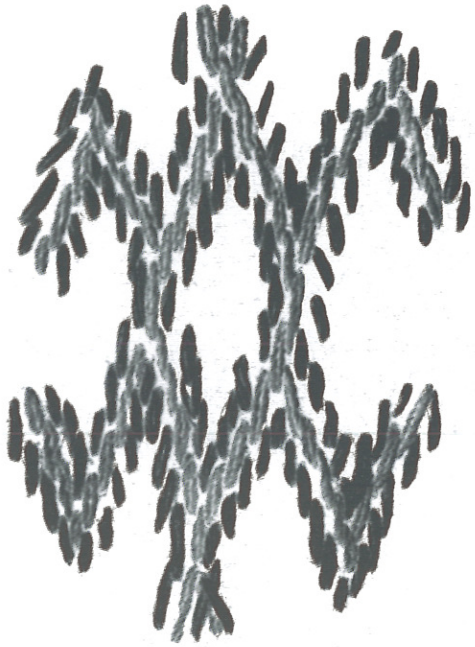


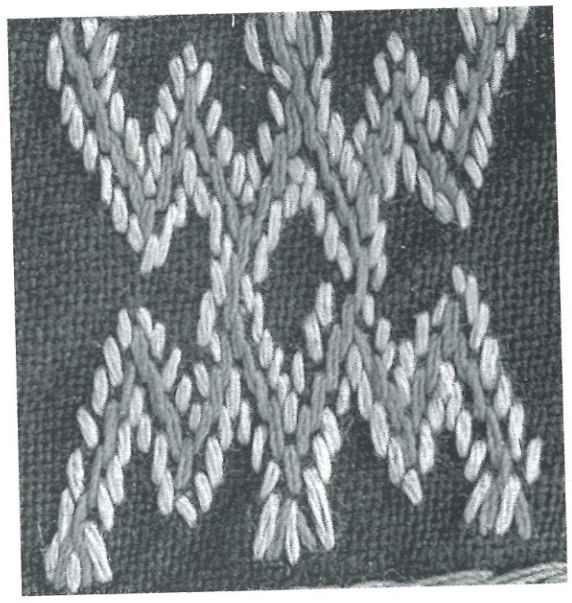


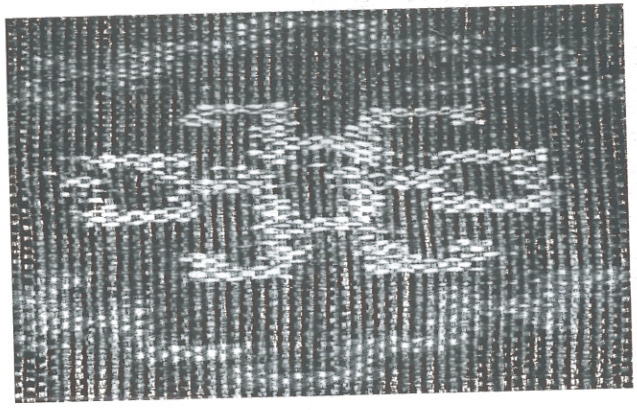


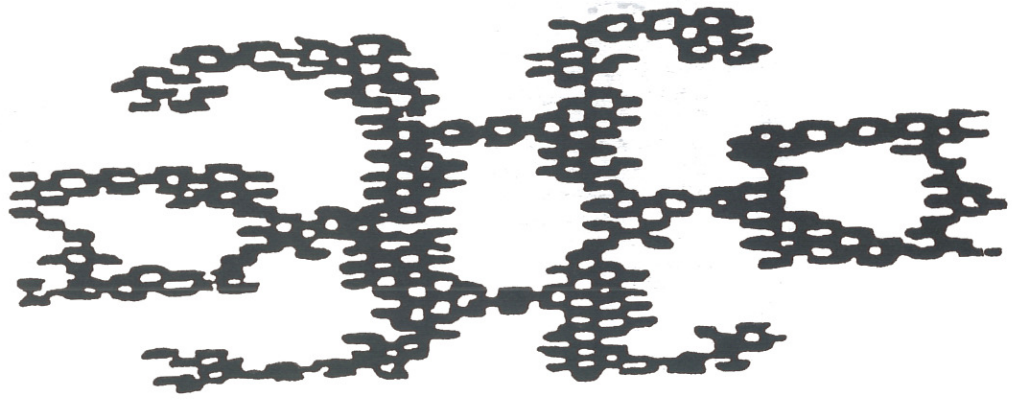


T'boli

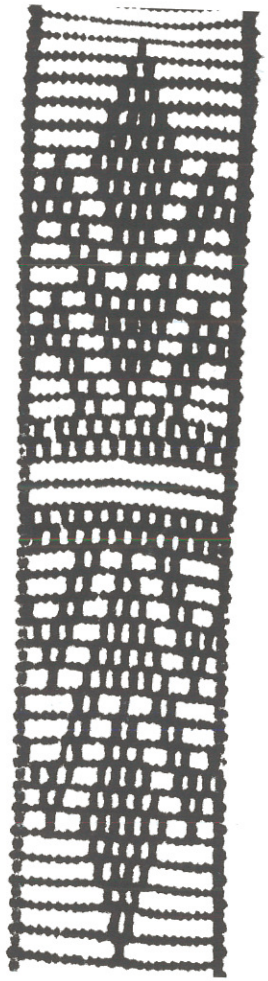


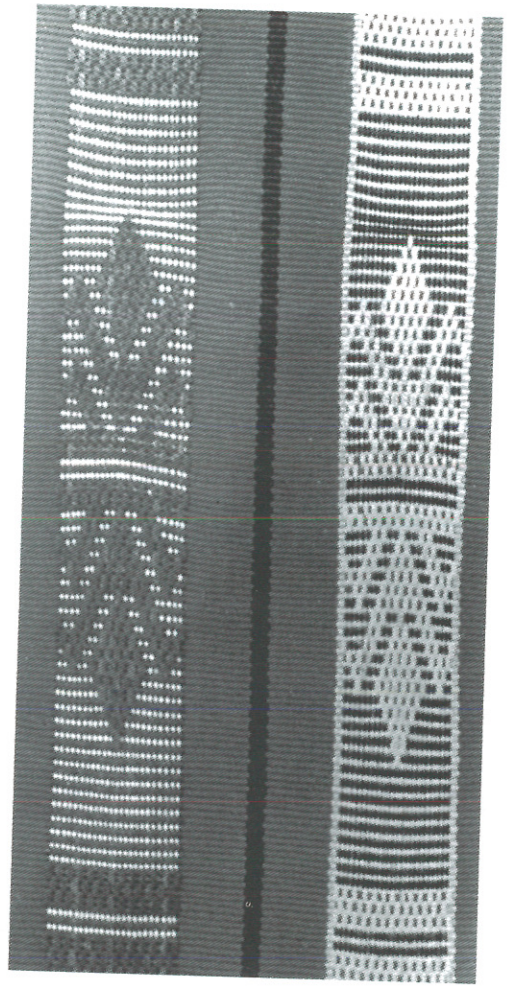






Yakan Badjao





Embroidery

By Jesus T. Peralta

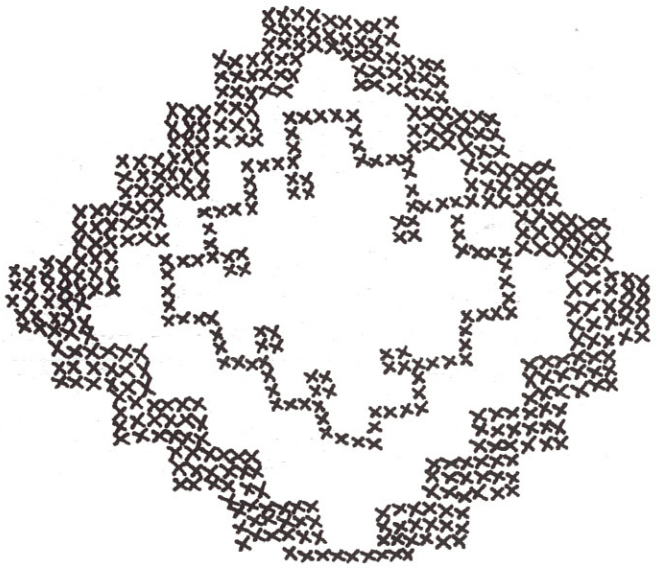
Ethnic embroidery is best exemplified among the indigenous peoples of Mindanao, principally the Mandaya, Bagobo, Manobo, B'laan, and T'boli. These are the same people who use abaca fiber in weaving textiles commonly used as lower garments of women. Embroidery is employed to decorate the upper garments, which are invariably of cotton. When the women are not weaving, they often sit before windows with an embroidery frame suspended against the light, embellishing a piece of cloth in patterns prevailing in the mental templates of their culture.

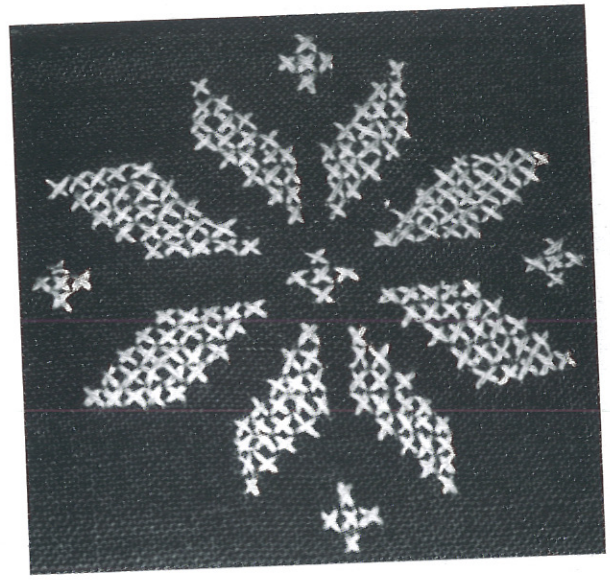
The patterns are combinations of motifs not necessarily broken down to single elements, such as the *binulan-bulan* of the Mandaya which consists of a nested series of diamonds placed in the middle of the back of the blouse. Often the patterns are derived from visible aspects of nature relevant to them. An example of this is *susuk ng kasili*, (scales of the eel). Other motifs like *Lugit, batata, maglabsug pamulupula, makalingi*, and *pabangat* are complex designs that have no English translations. The patterns are usually embroidered on dark colored plain cloth to provide a contrast to the cacophony of colors: red, yellow, orange, blue and green, white, even black.

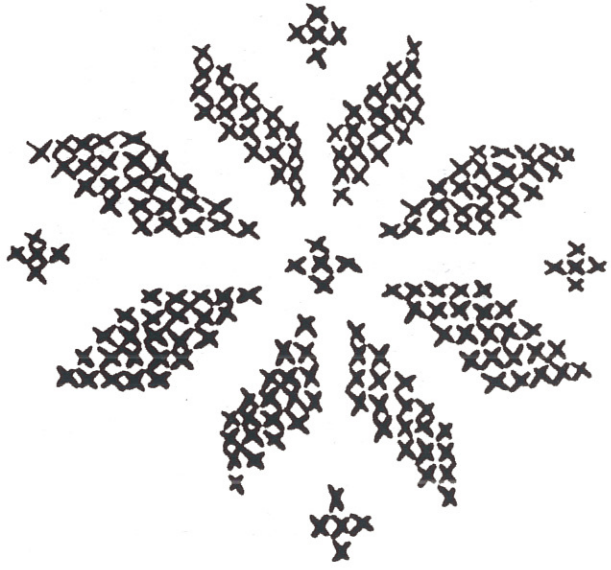
The most basic element in embroidery is the execution of an in-line running set of stitches to define a pattern, or to fill in a field whether this is done with bare colored thread or with beadwork or sequins. Beadwork combined with embroidery is highly profuse and appear to be the preferred mode. Lacking beads, elaborate patterns are resorted to using a basic "X" stitch in combination to create lines, fundamental design motifs, and color fields. In this manner, rosette, stars, basic geometric forms, animals, human forms, and abstract shapes are depicted.

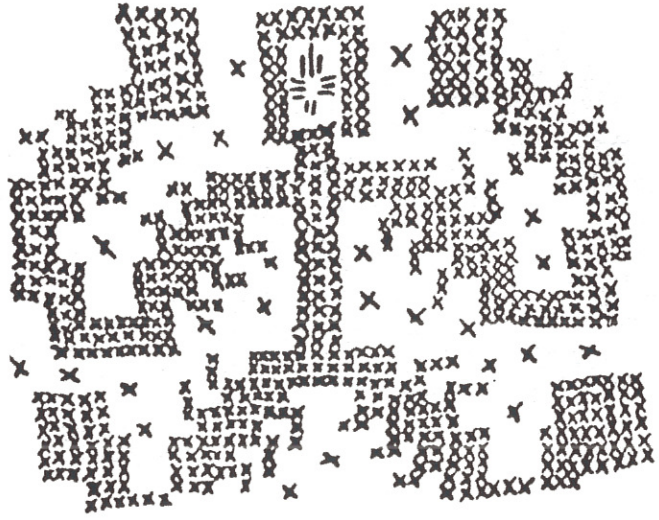
It is amusing to note that among the Mandaya, the prevailing mental template with regard to colors and ornamentation used in the traditional women's attire make them appear to be using a uniform, as in the military such that women from the lowlands who do not use such attire are referred to as "civilians".

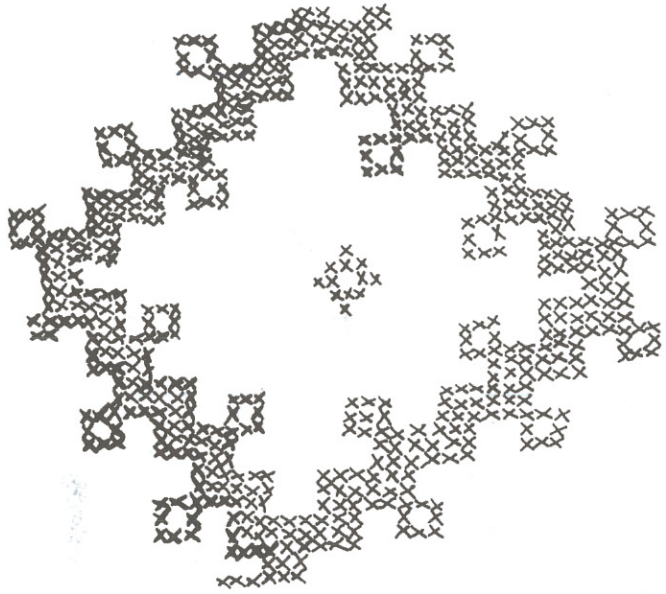
Bagobo

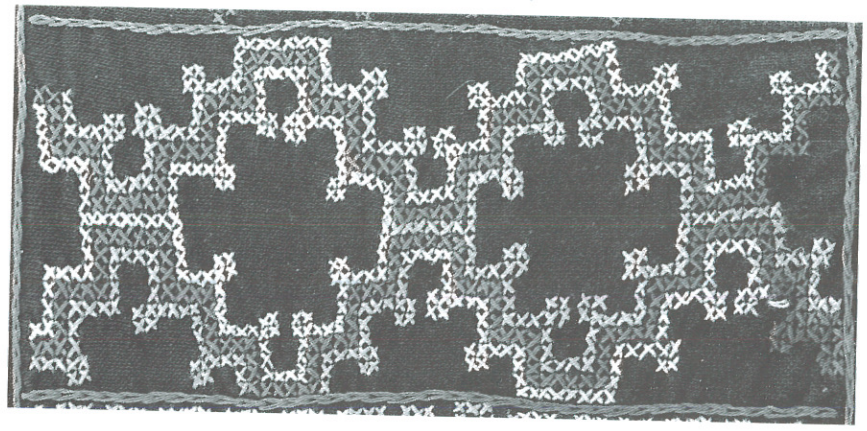


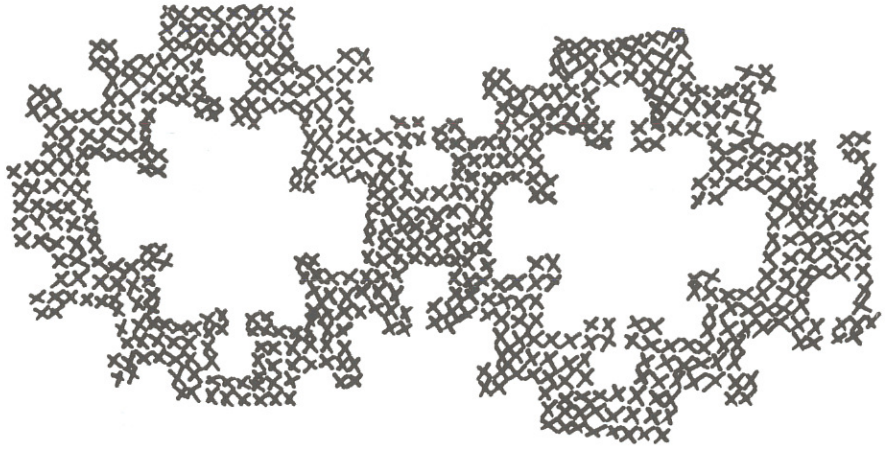


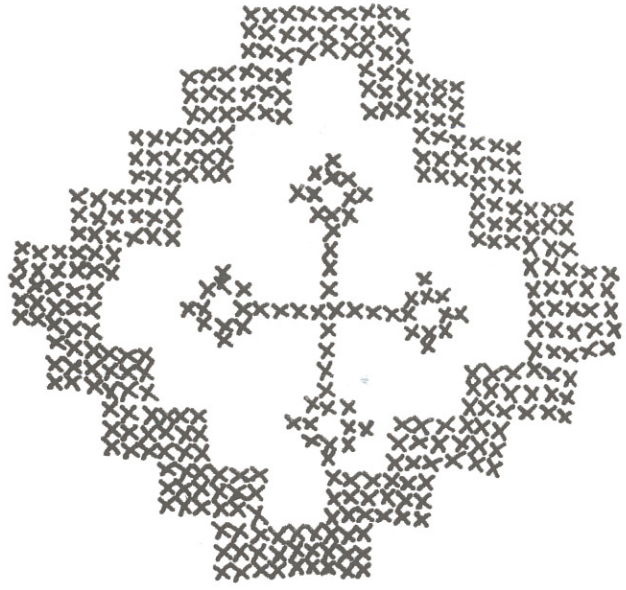


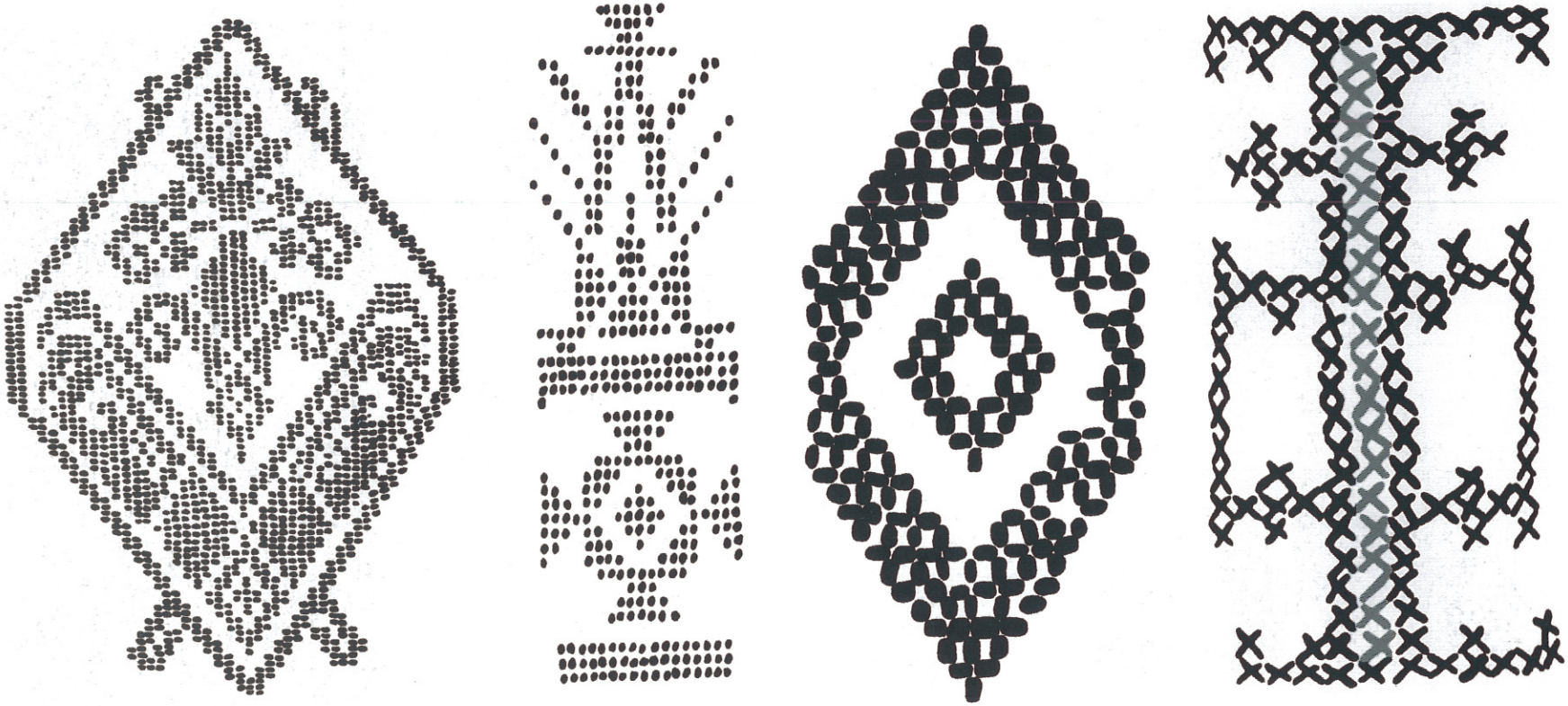


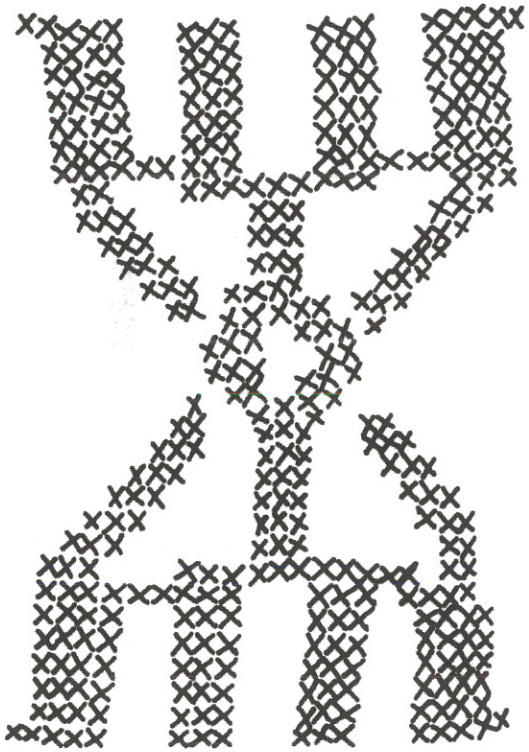


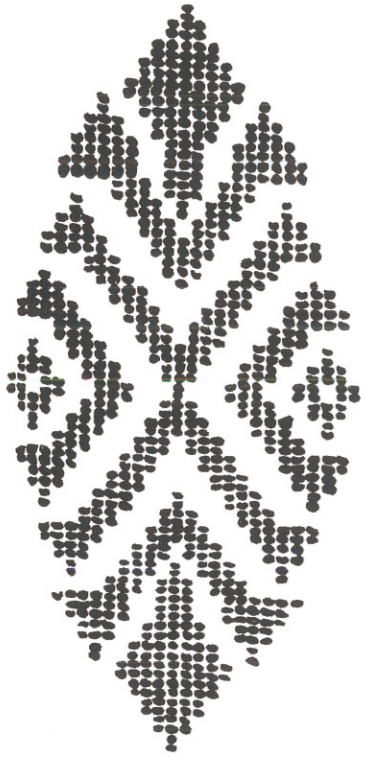


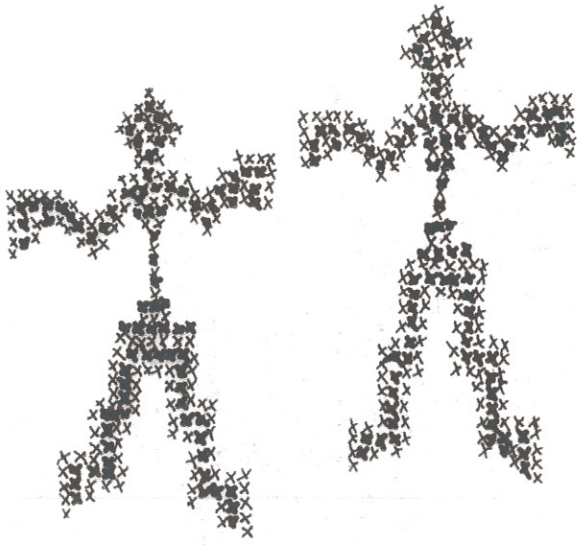


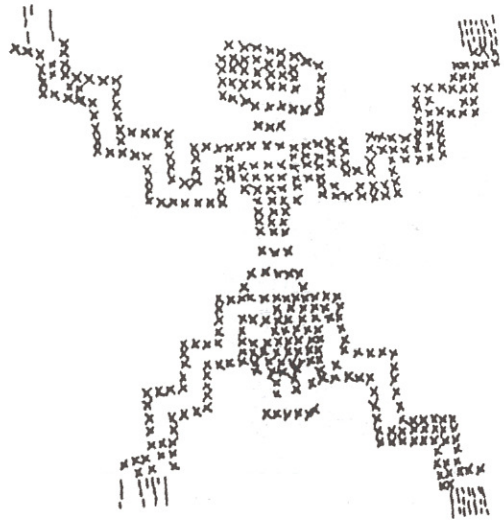


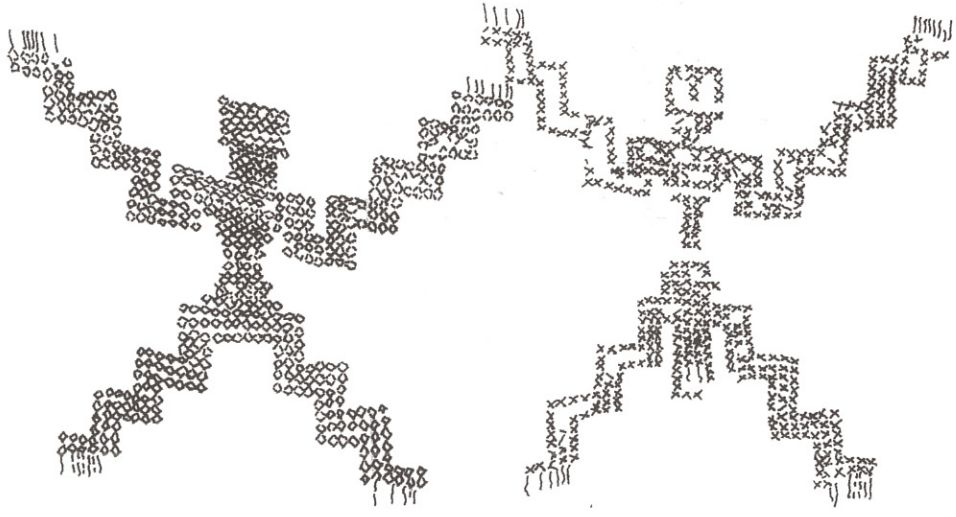


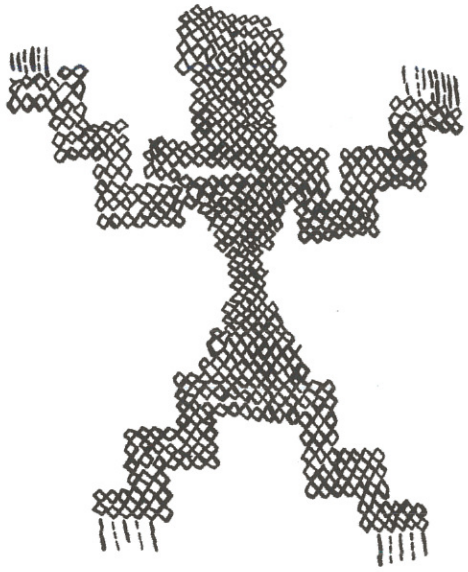


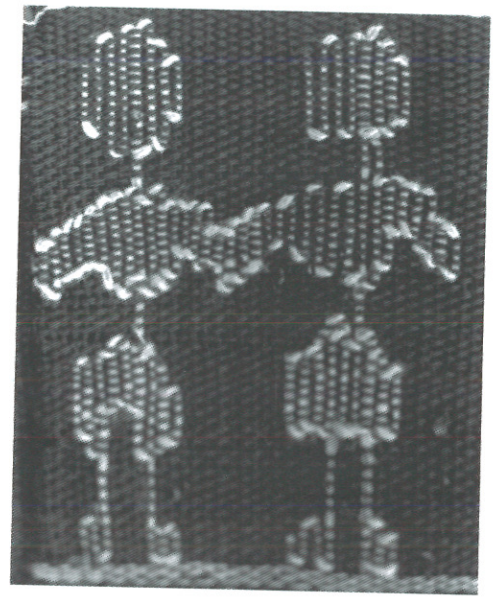


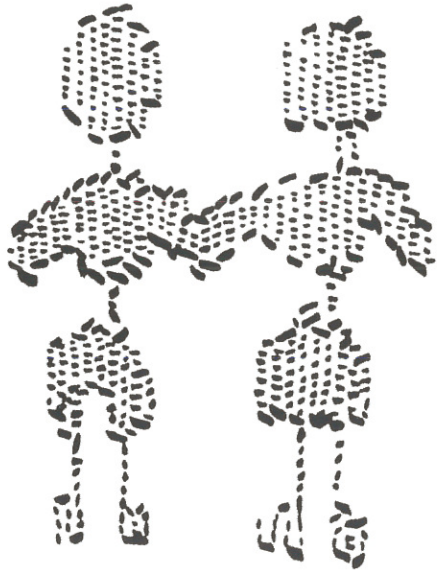


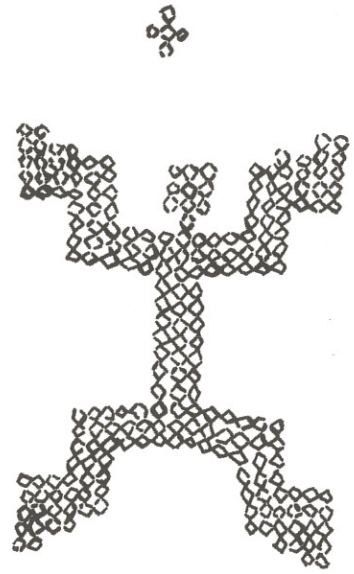


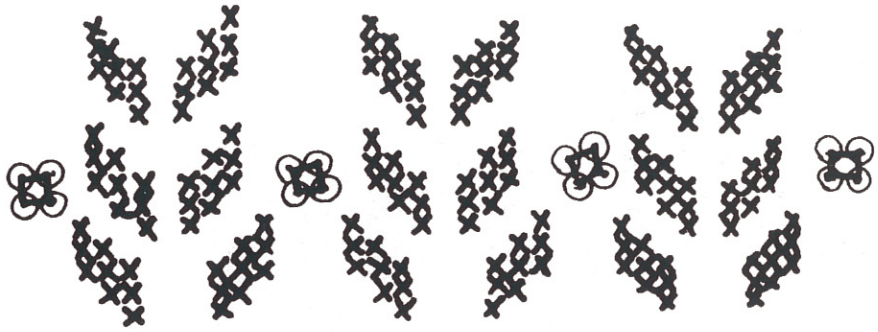


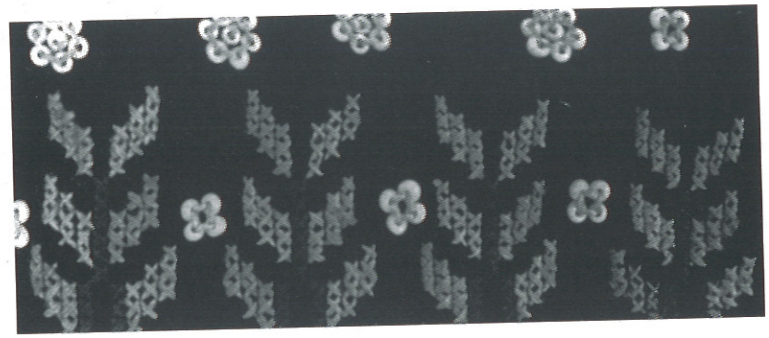


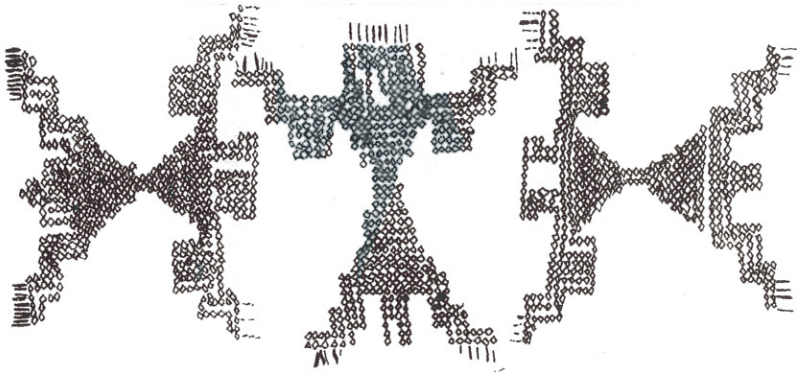


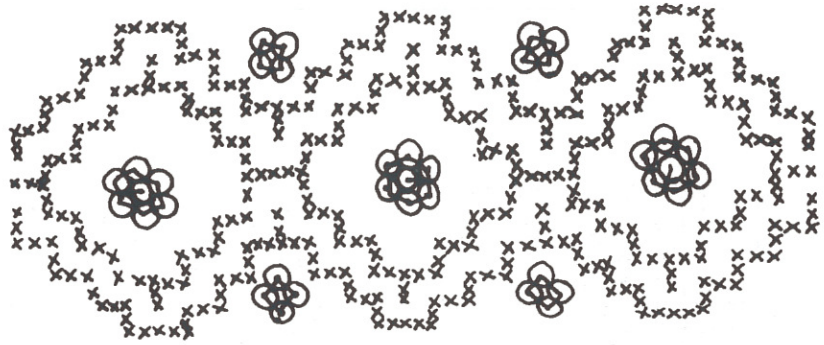


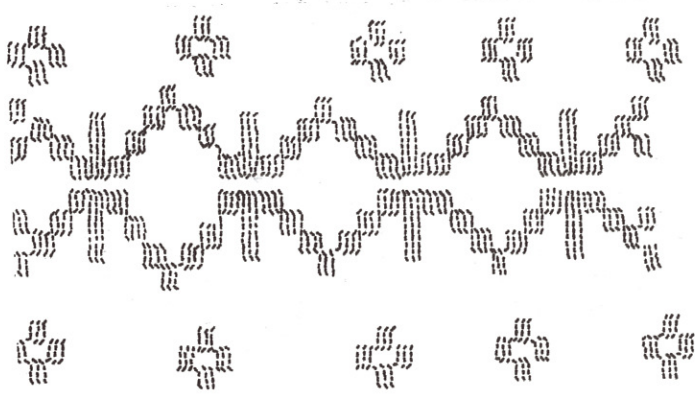


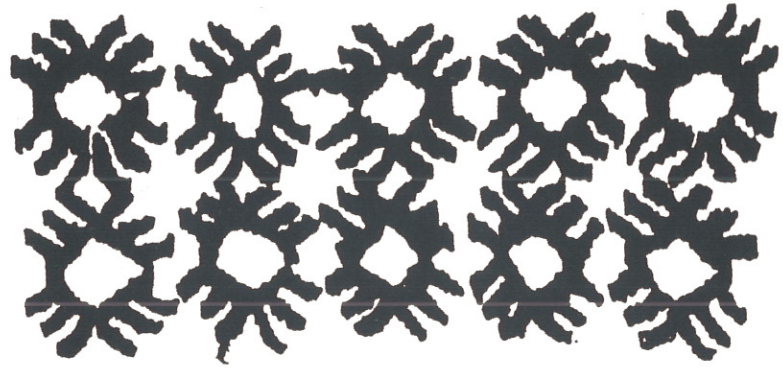


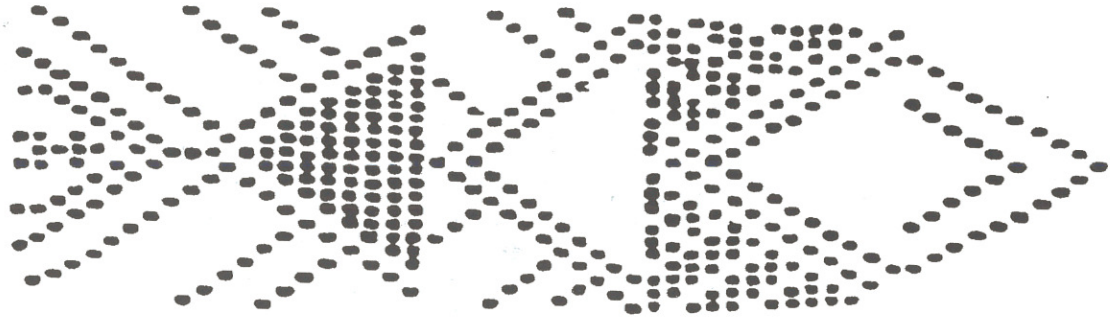


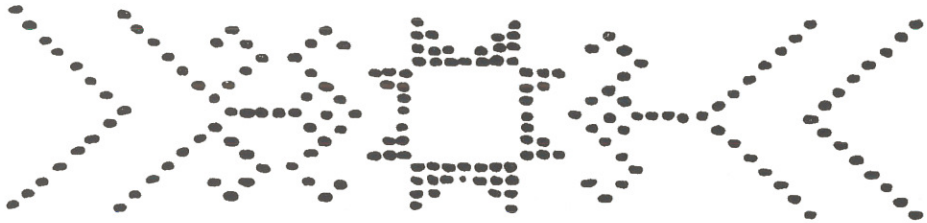


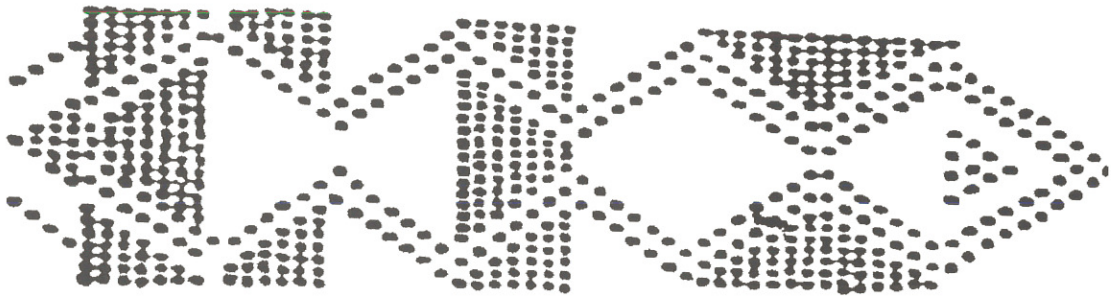


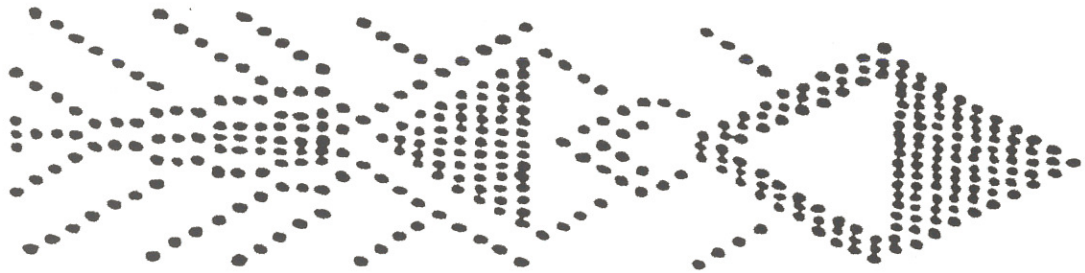


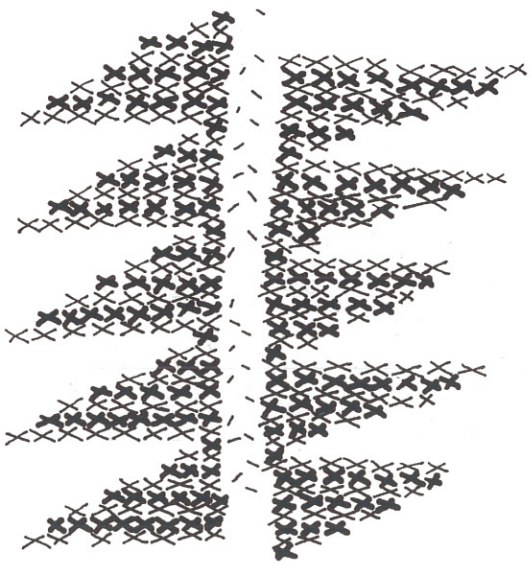


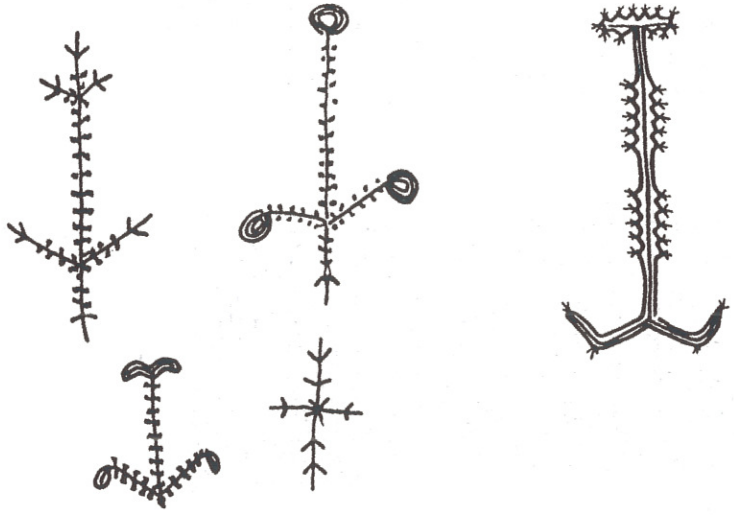


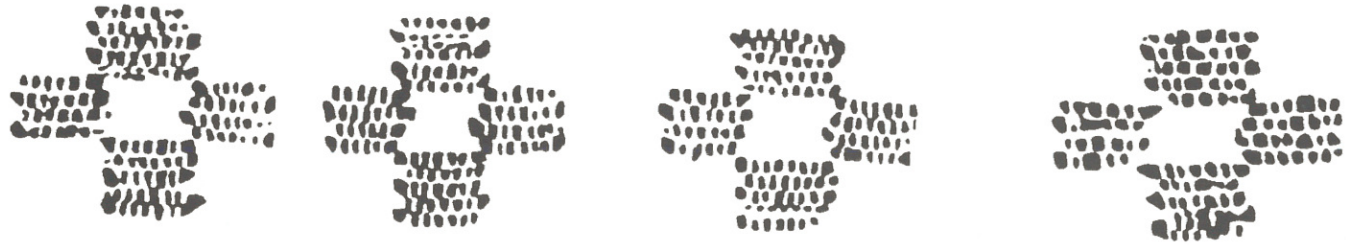


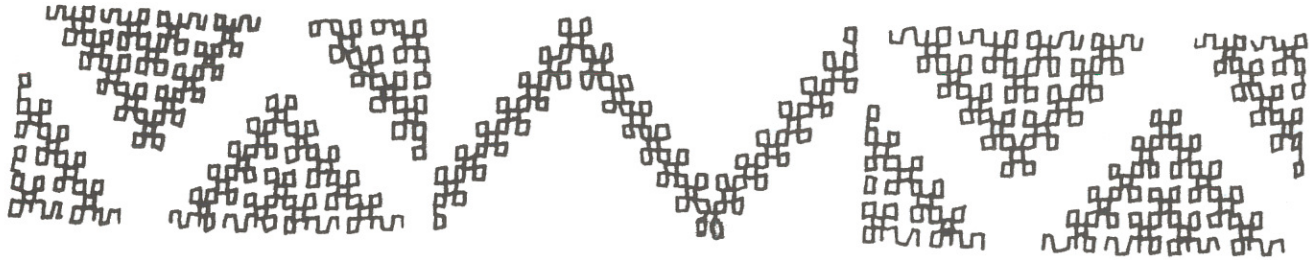


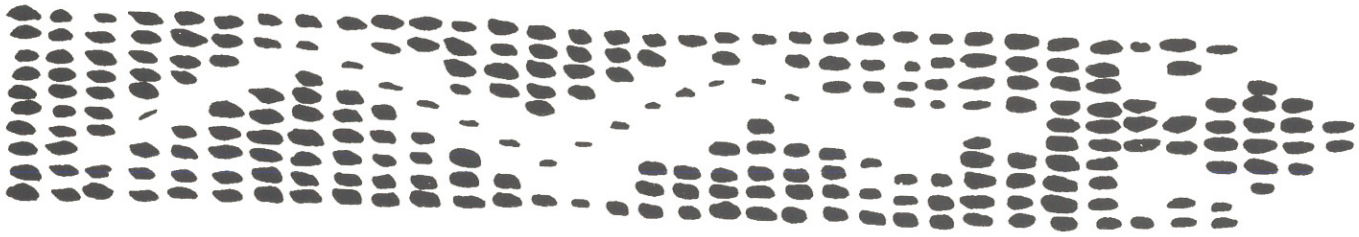


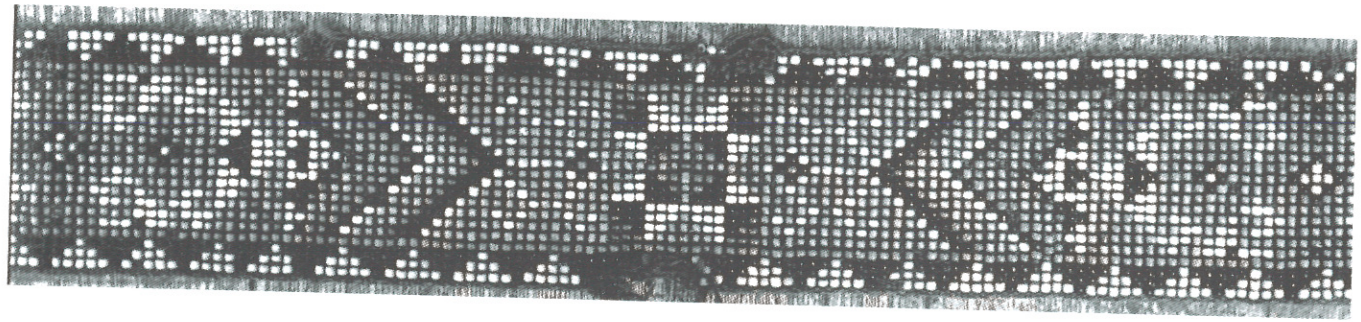


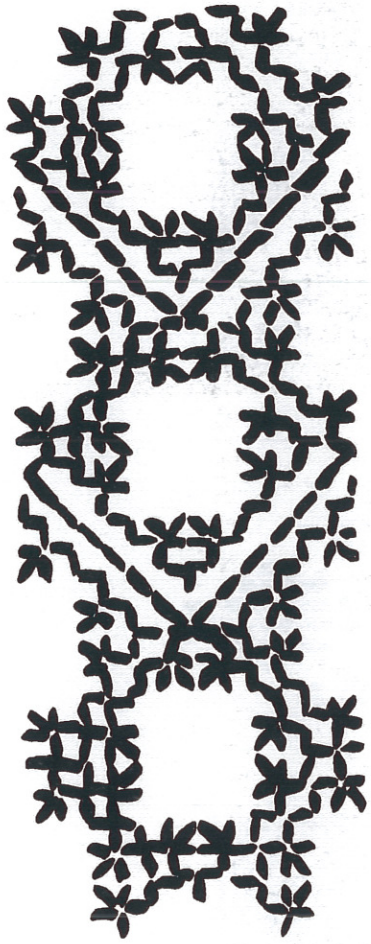


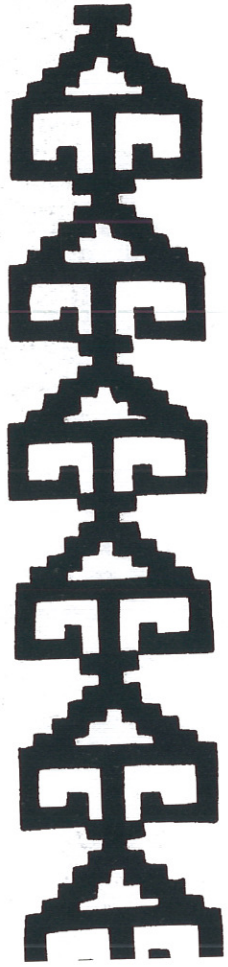


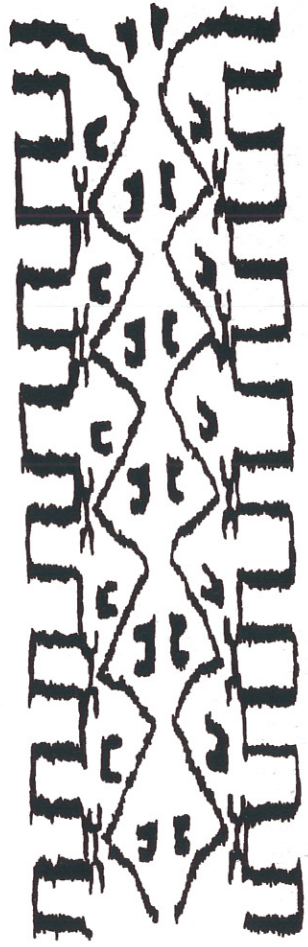


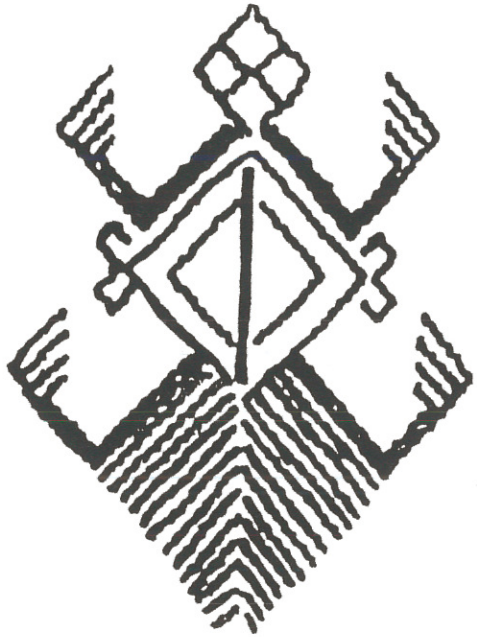


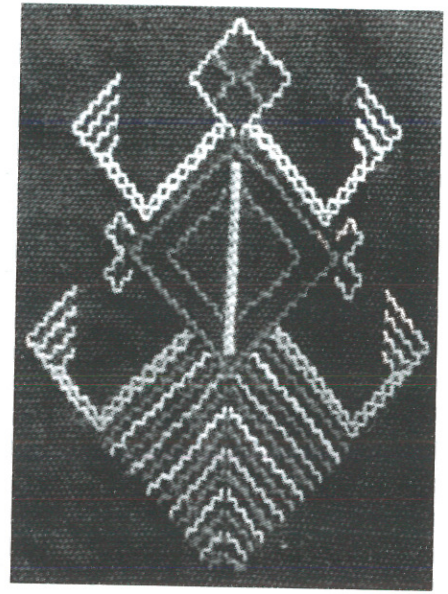


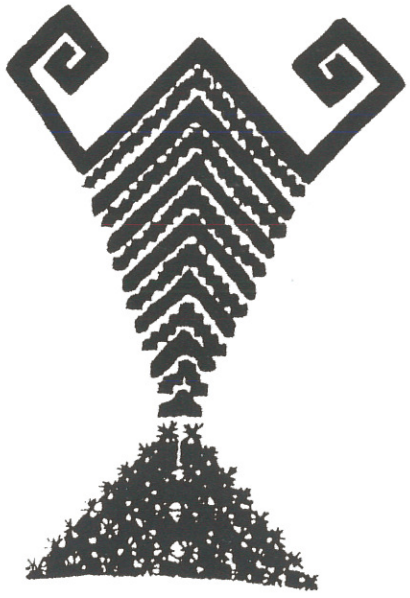


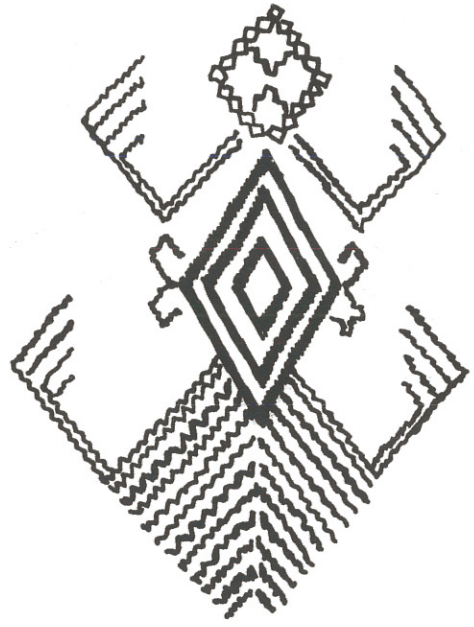


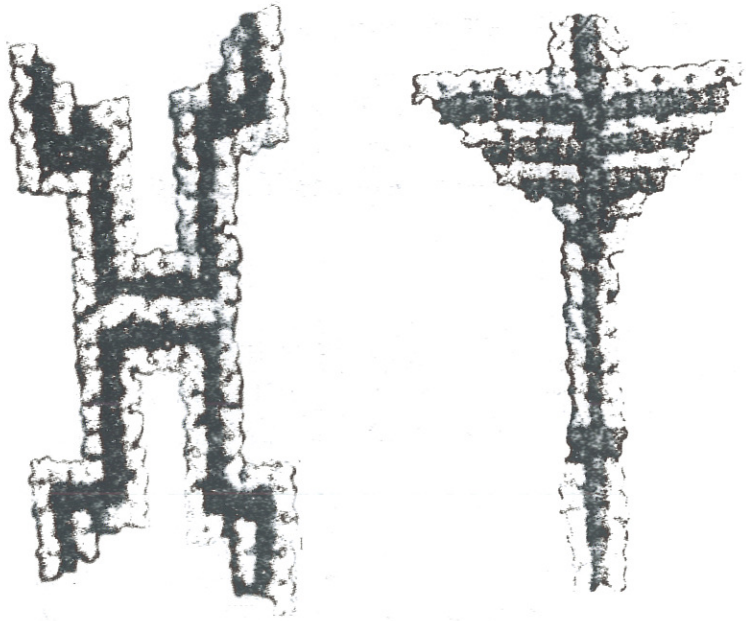


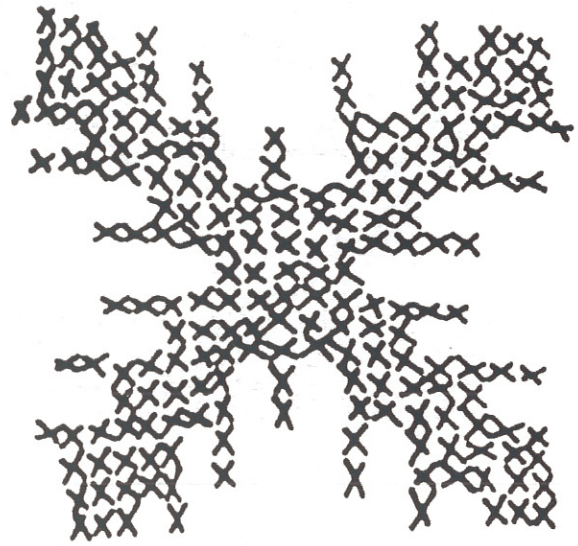


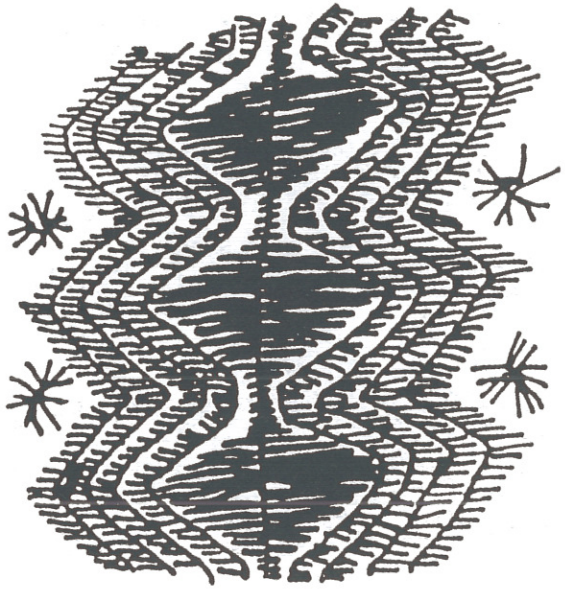


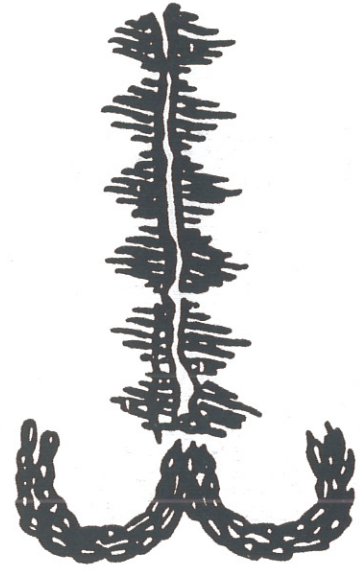


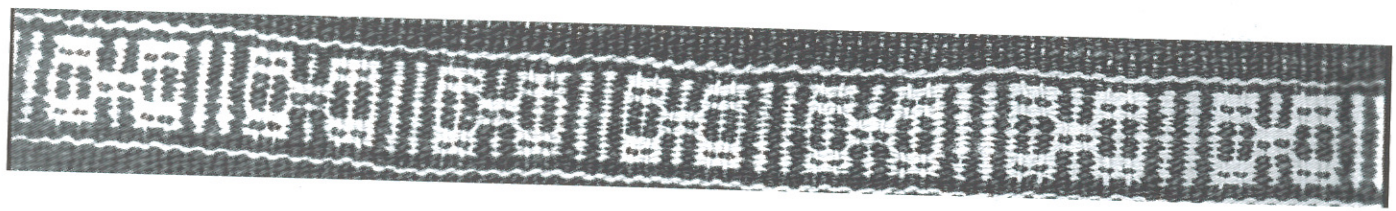












Floor Loom Weave

By Jesus T. Peralta

In the Philippines, evidences of weaving go far back in time to the Late Neolithic, some 4000 years ago, in the open sites of Lallo and cave sites of Penablanca, Cagayan province. These come in the form of spindle whorls or weighted beads used in the spinning of thread. The early loom type used all over the archipelago is the back-strap loom with its many variations. The foot-treadle floor loom is a later introduction into the Philippines, probably from China or India, and later, from Spain.

The most useful discovery in the evolution of weaving was the realization of the shed. This is the opening through the warp threads through which the weft thread could be introduced more rapidly than by raising the warp threads one by one by hand. In time, weavers found more ways to make more sheds. One way is to insert a rod, called a shed stick, which can be lifted to reveal a clear passage through the warp threads for the weft thread to be pushed through by means of a shuttle.

Today, weavers in Abra, the Ilocos and Benguet use looms with at least four and as many as eight shafts or harnesses, each containing a set of heddles through which threads can be inserted. By raising the harness in different combinations, a variety of patterns can be achieved. The harnesses on the loom are controlled by a series of foot pedals (treadles), leaving the weaver's hands free to manipulate the shuttle and to easily raise and lower the warp threads in selected combinations.

This loom enables weavers to easily create different kinds of weave, such as the chevron and the like, aside from the simple one-over-one-under pattern. This they can do while using a continuous weft thread and even without the introduction of color.

Other colored threads may be used as discontinuous weft to introduce some chromatic contrasts in broad panels. In cases where disparate design motifs like birds, animals or stars, are woven into the cloth, discontinuous supplementary wefts are again used.

The introduction of this loom created a weaving revolution in the Philippines. It enabled the unprecedented production of textiles, even the manufacture of galleon sails during the Spanish period.

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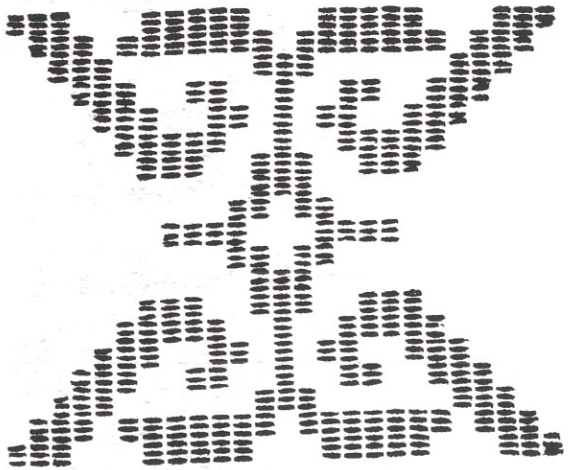
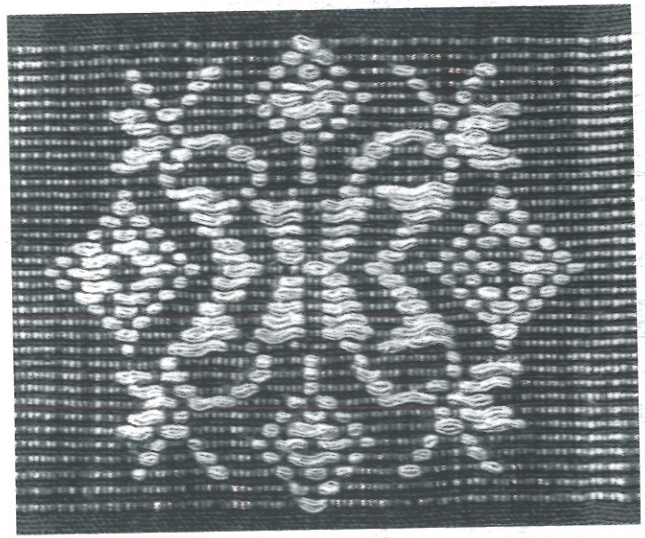
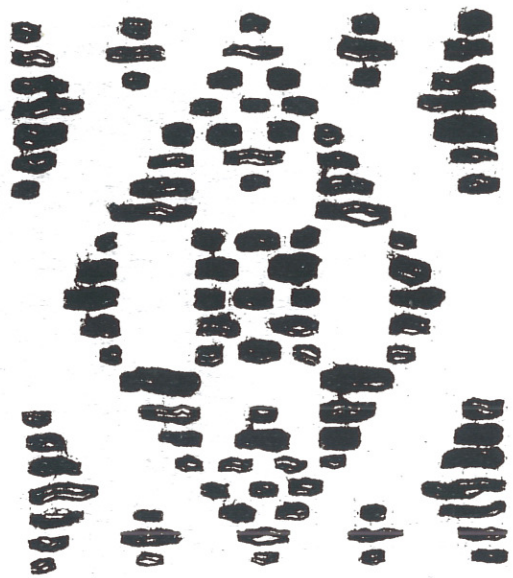
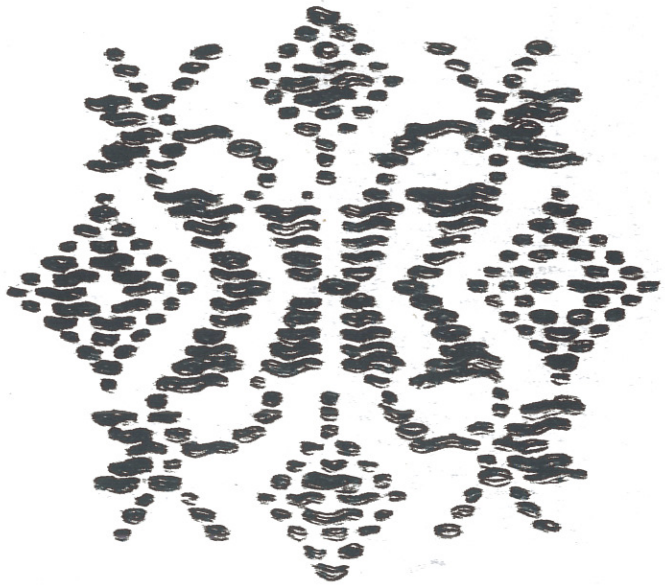
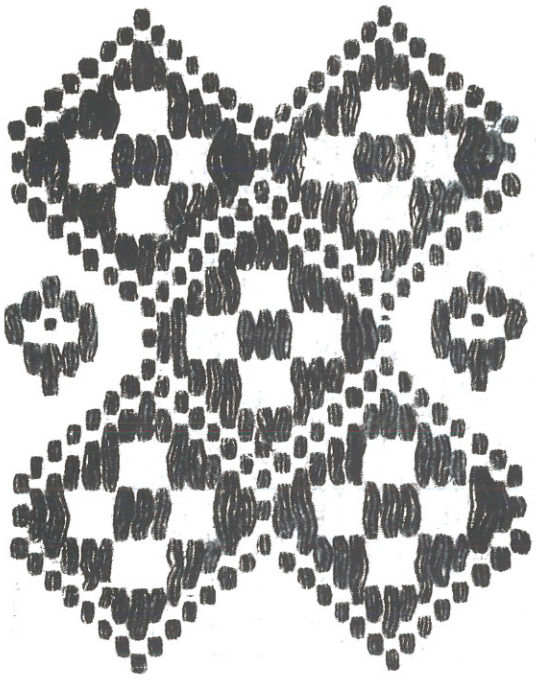
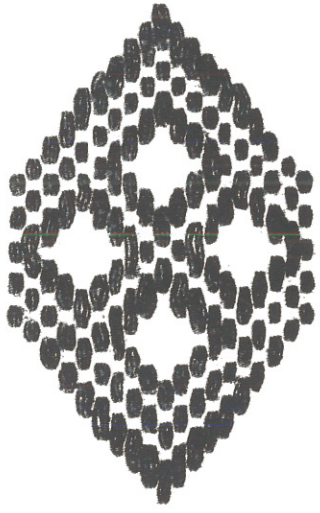


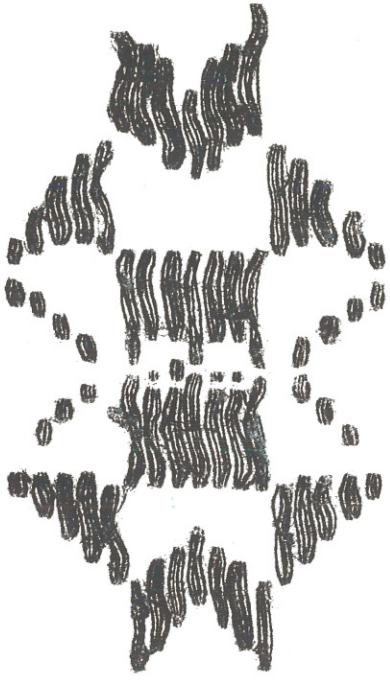


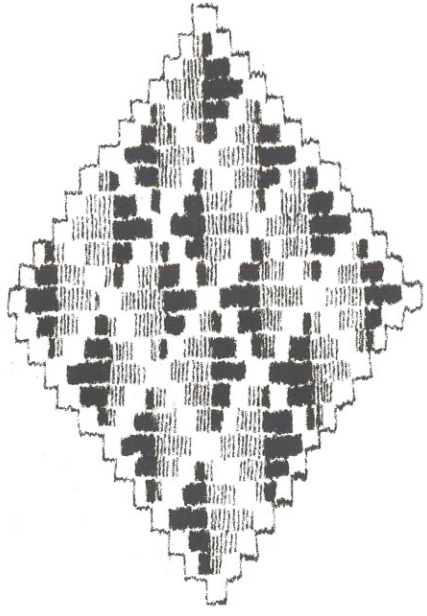


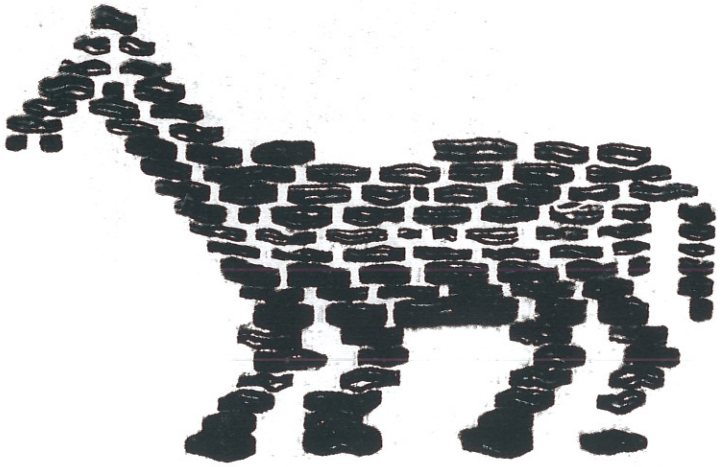


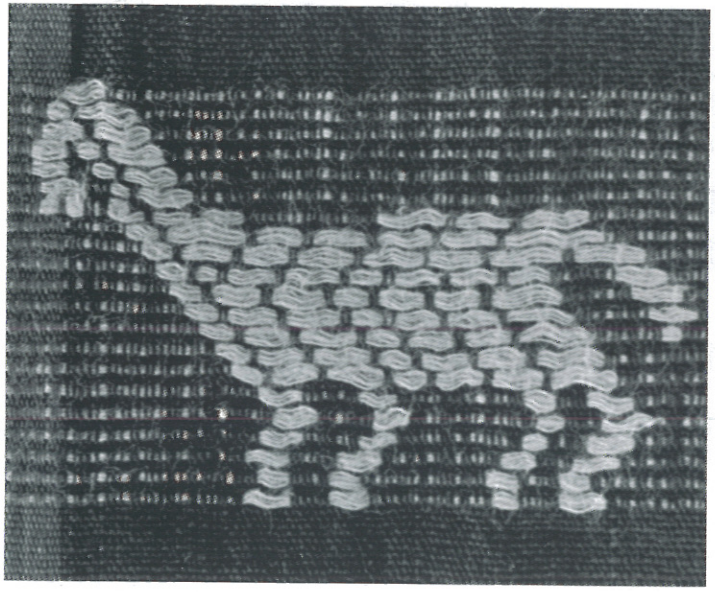


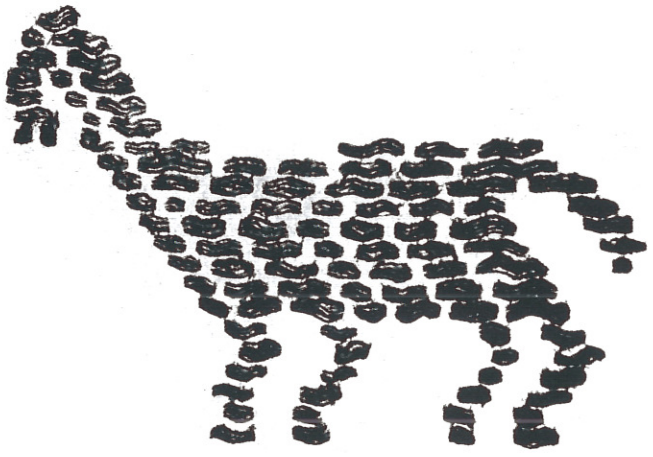


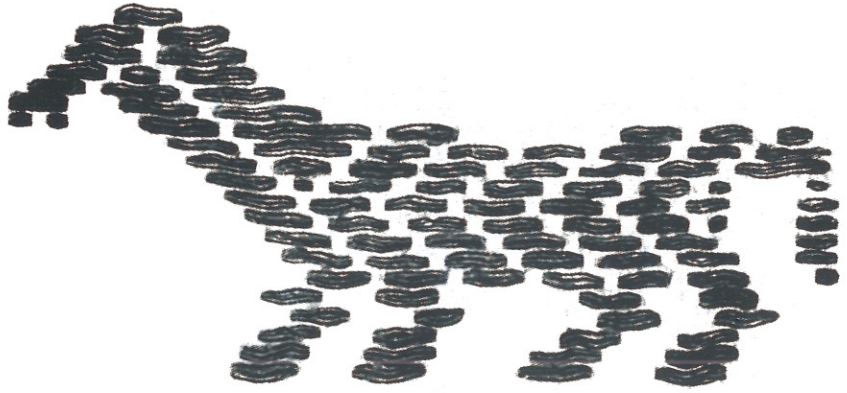


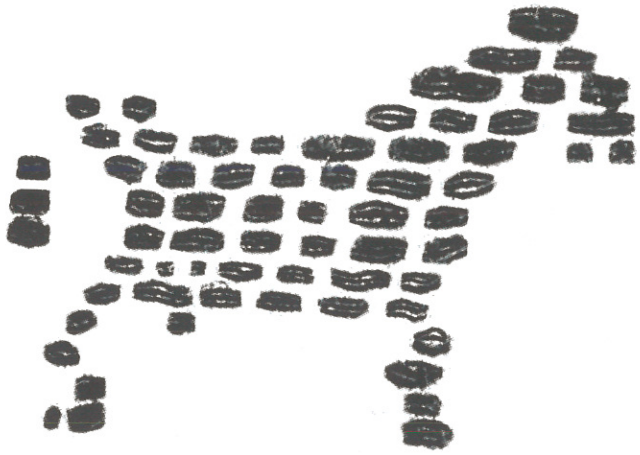


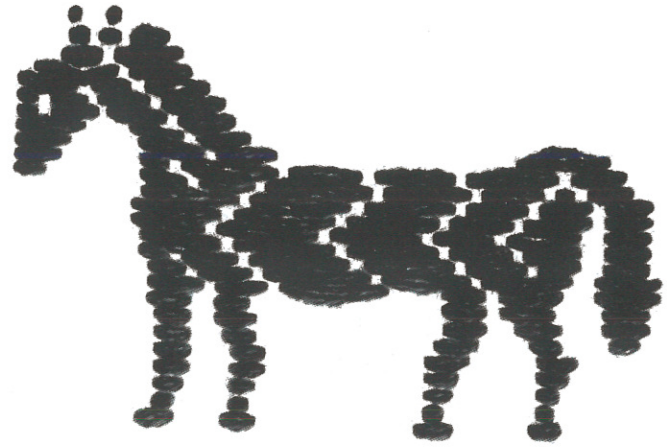


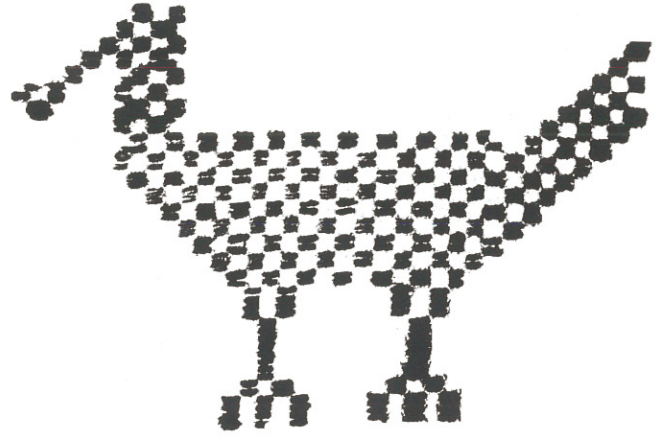


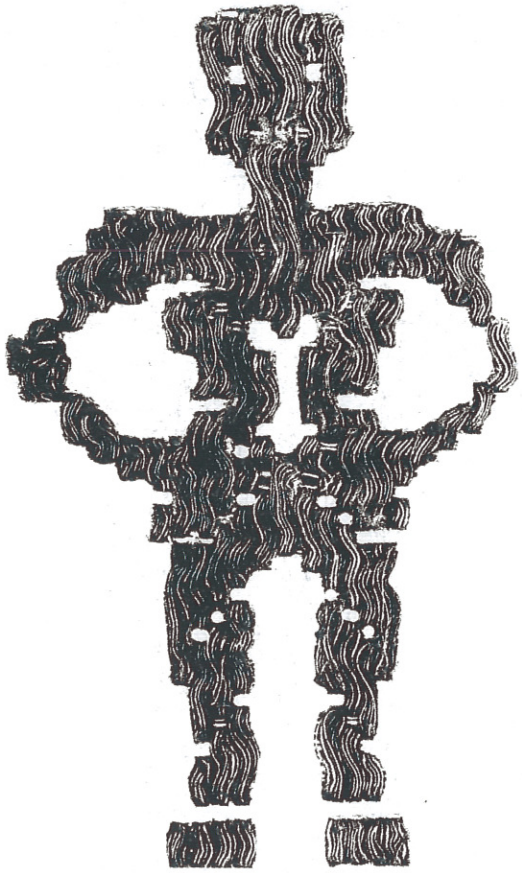


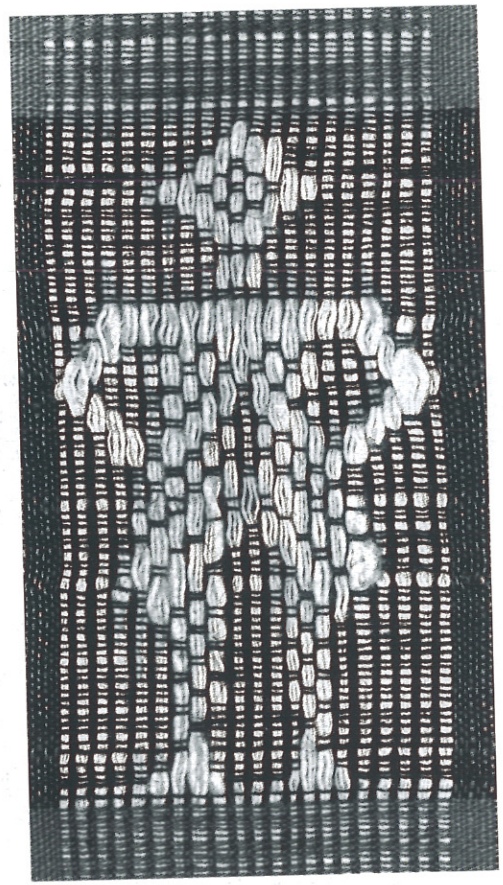


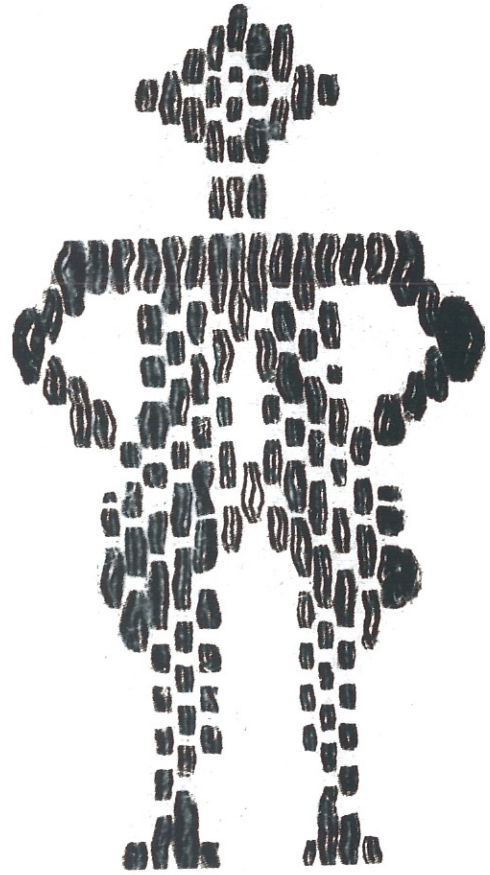


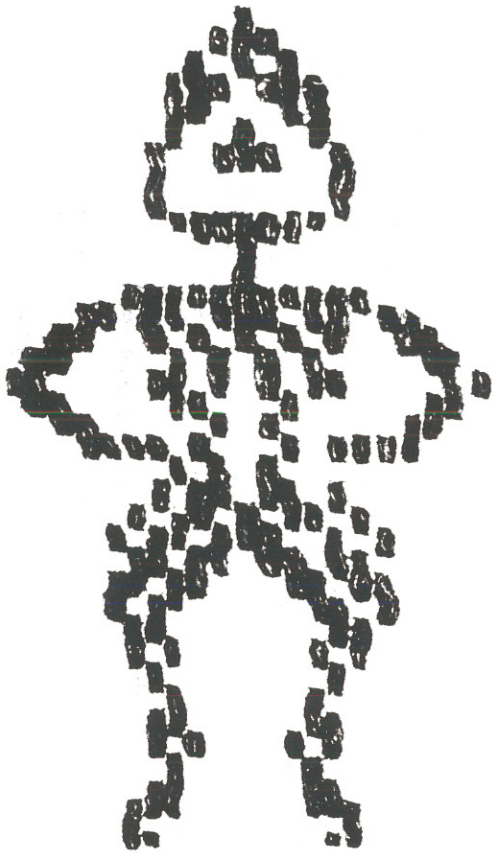


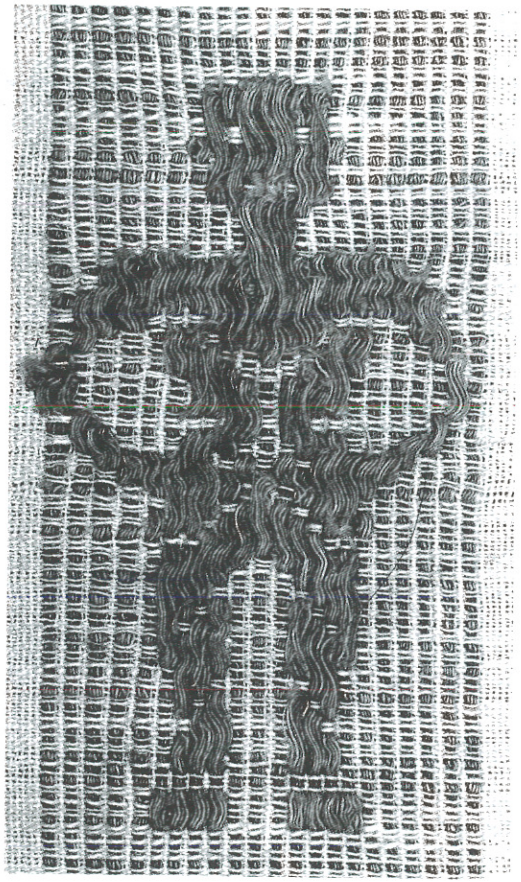


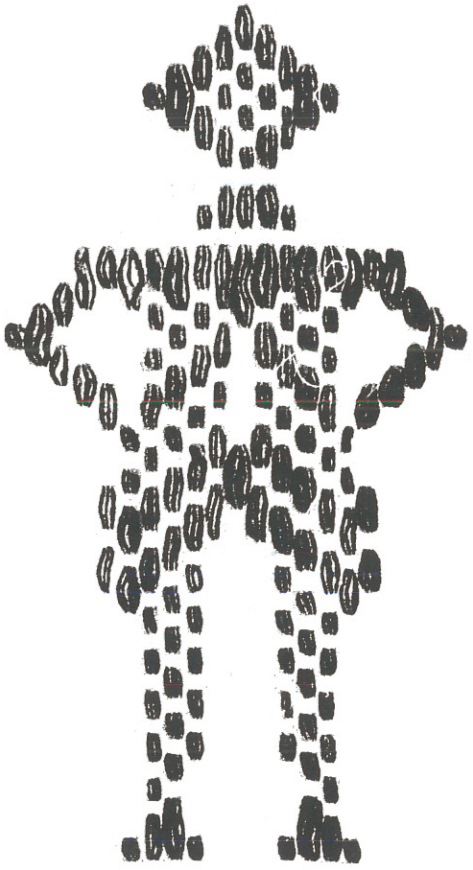


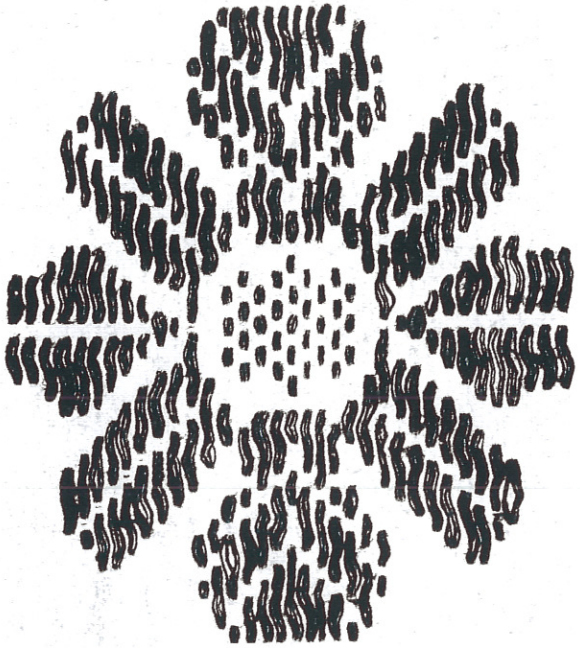


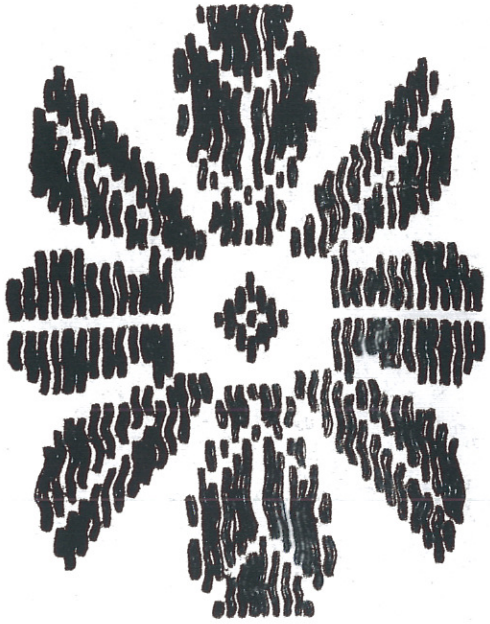


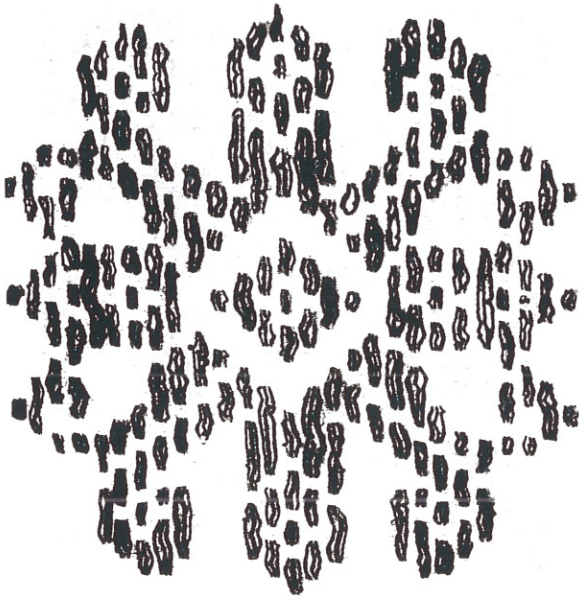


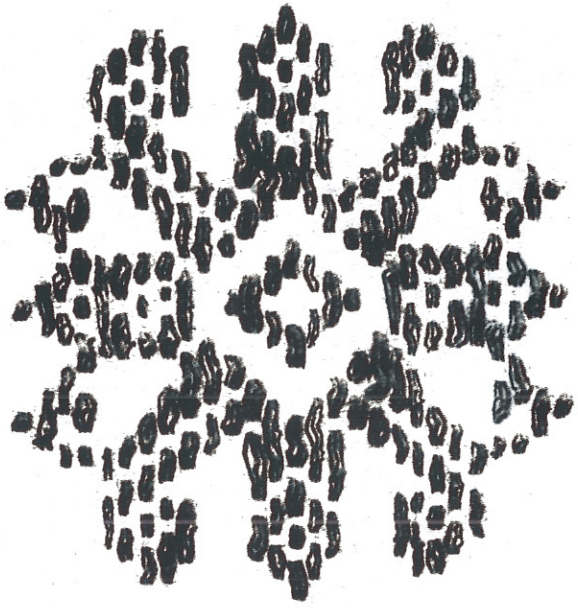


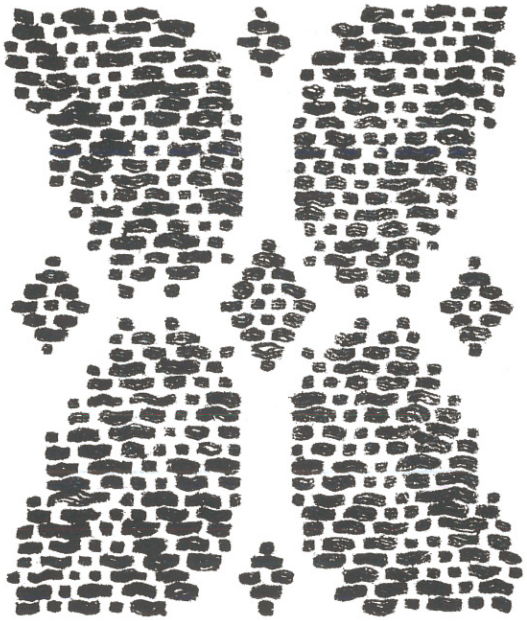


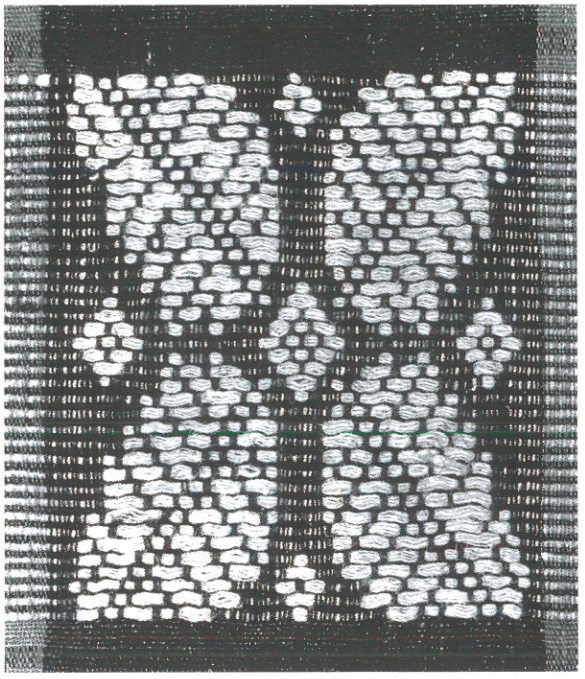


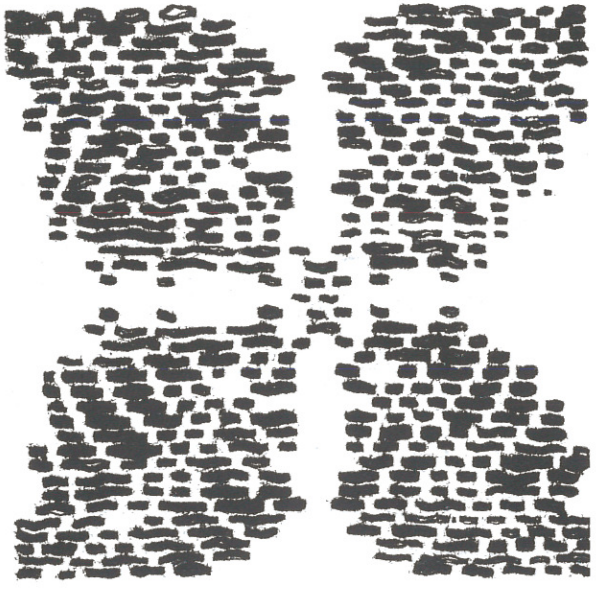


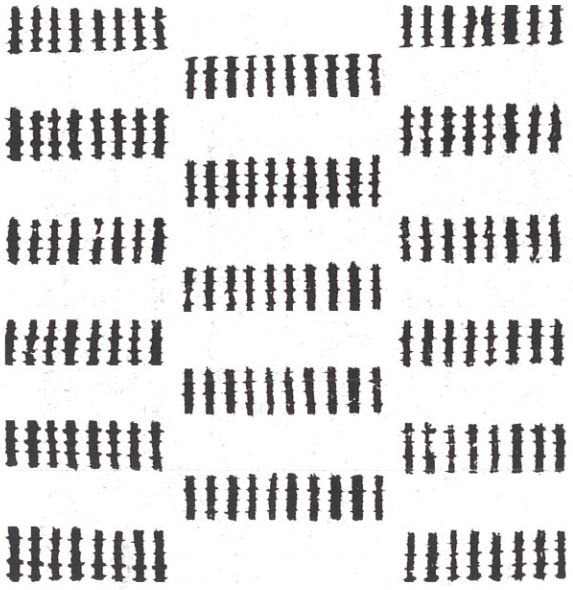


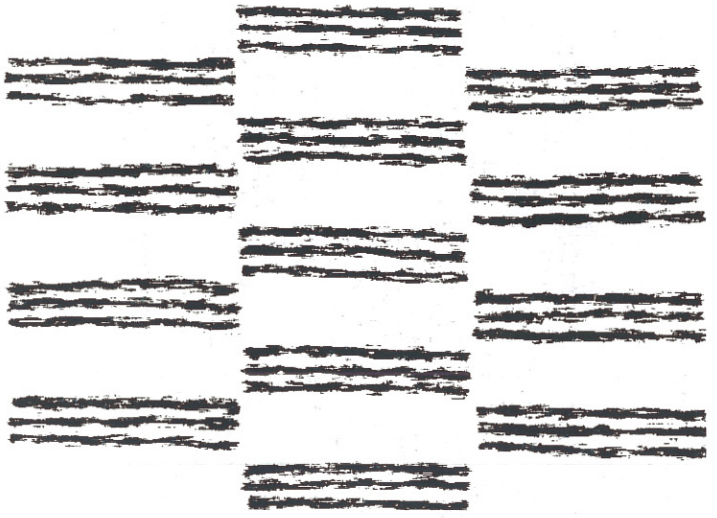


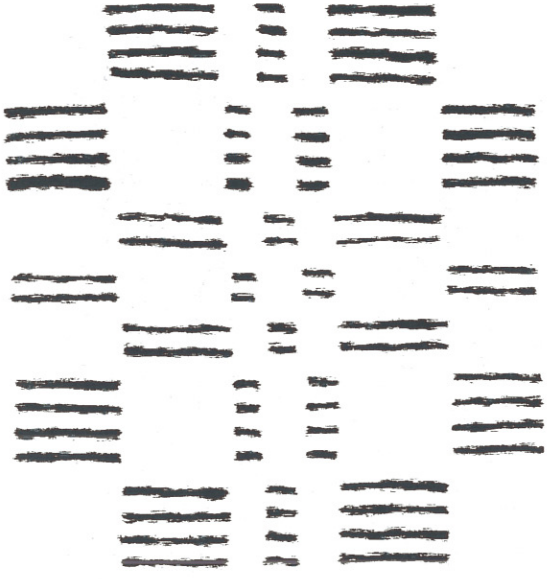


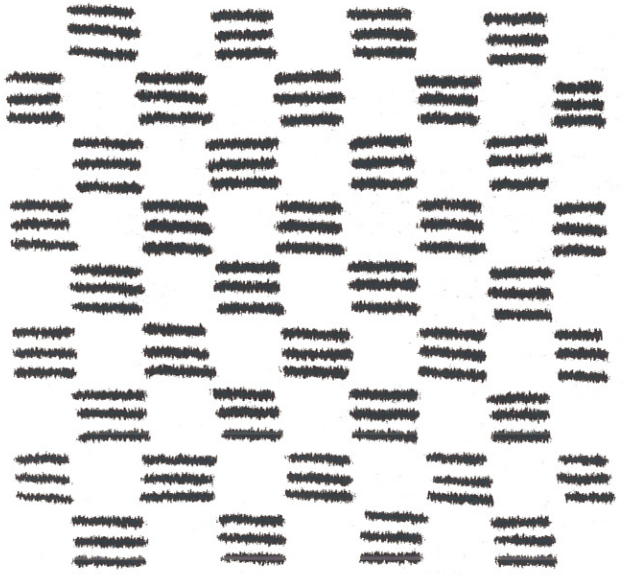


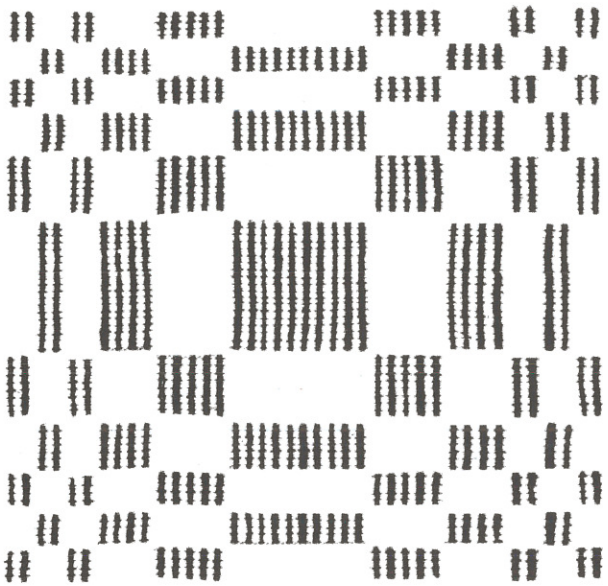


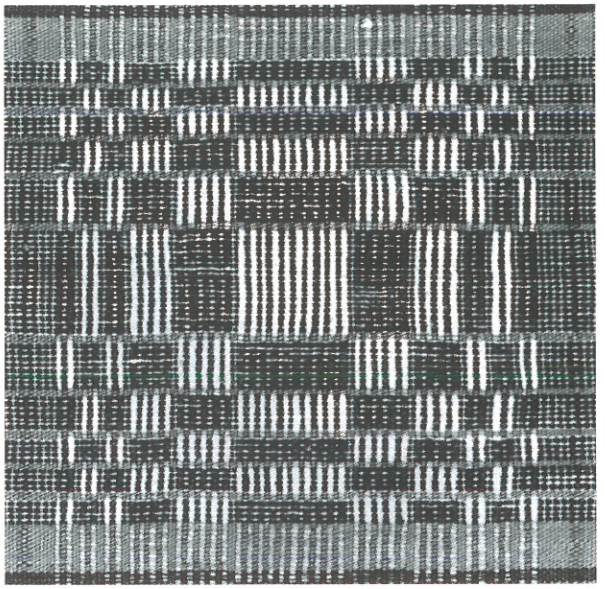


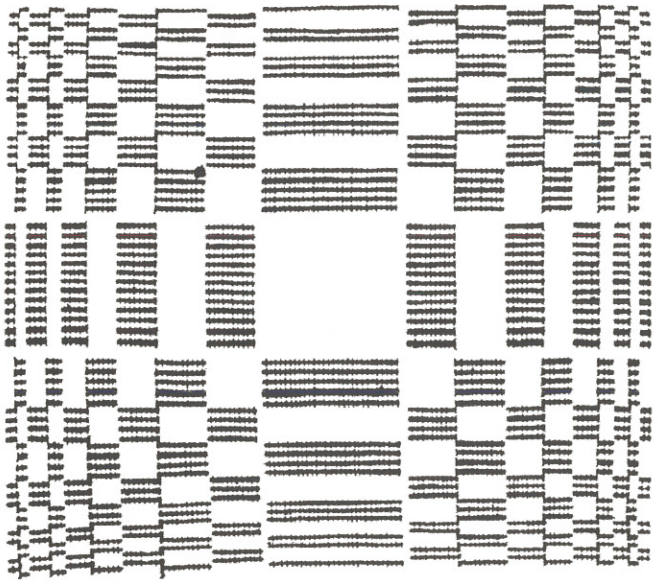


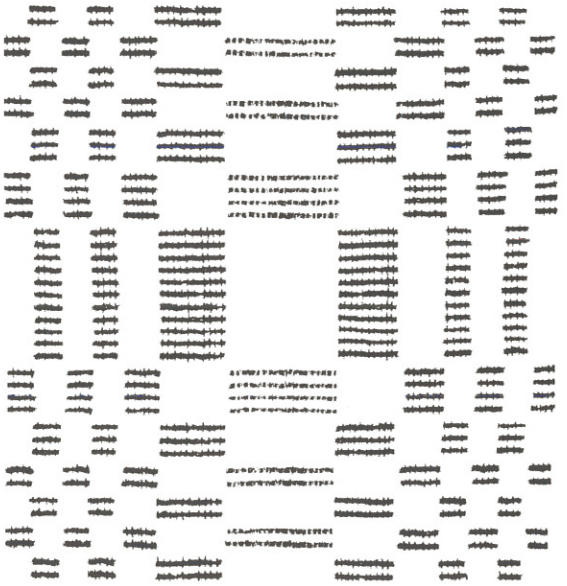


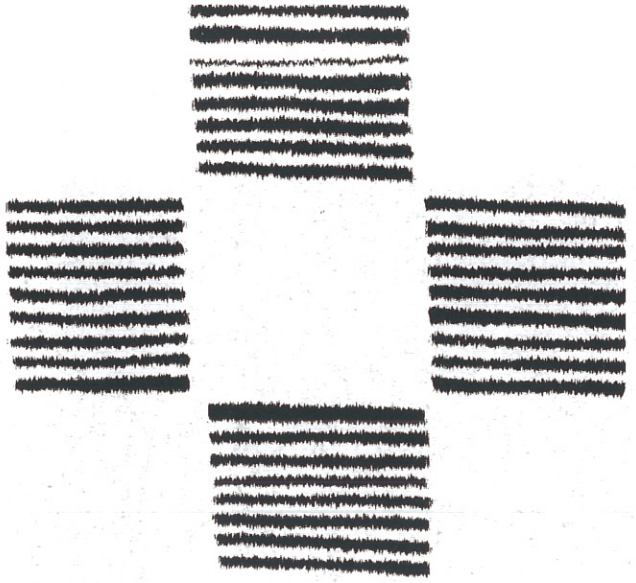


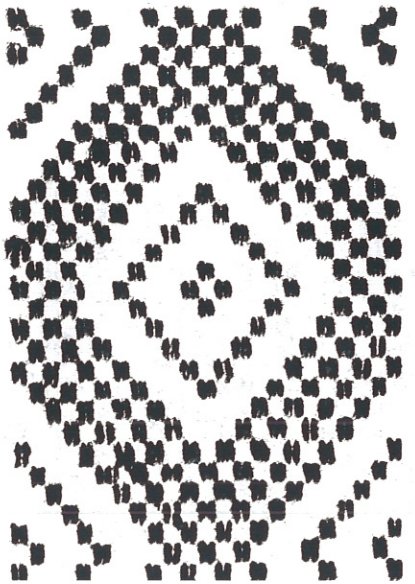


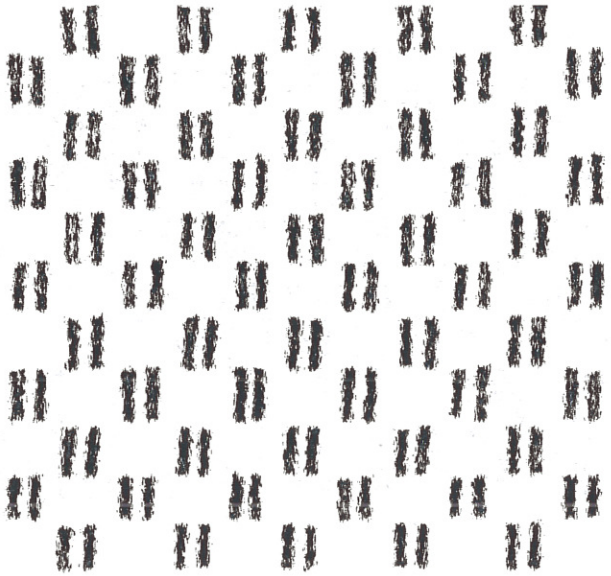


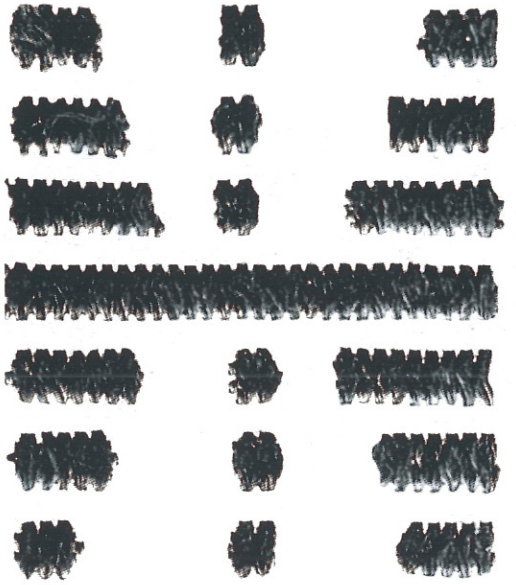


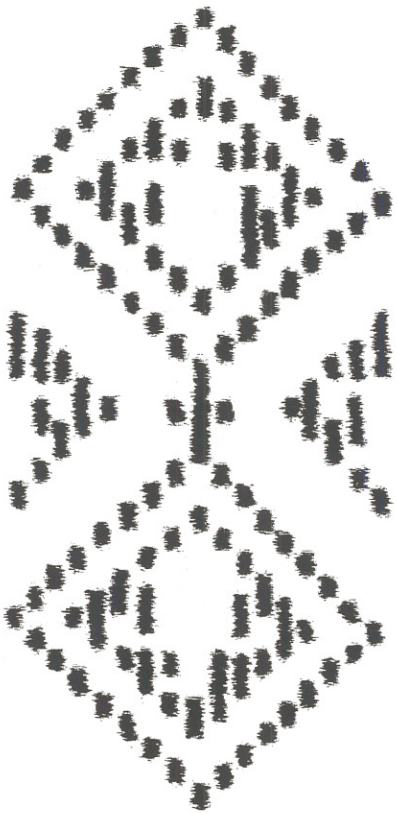


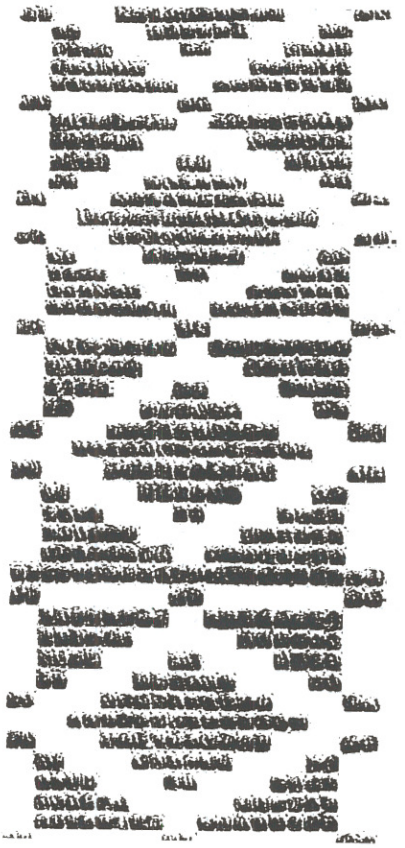


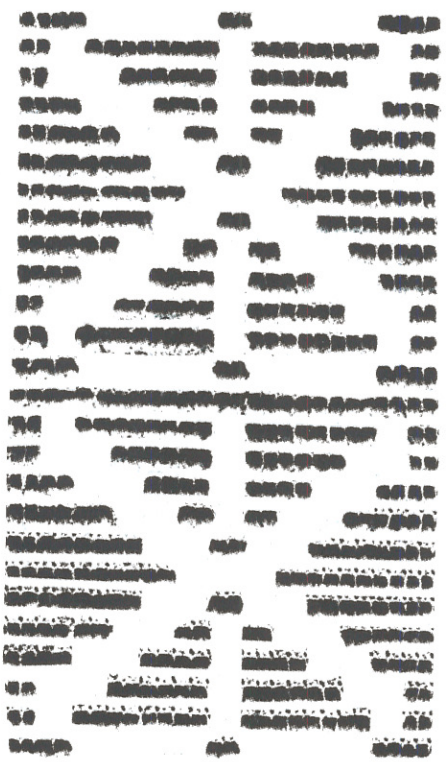


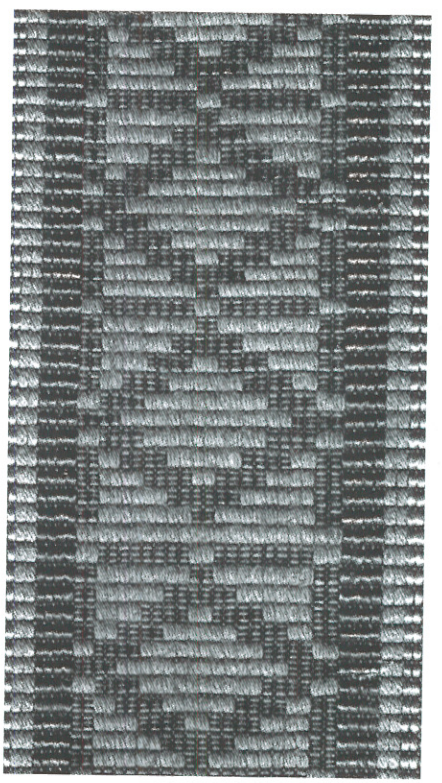


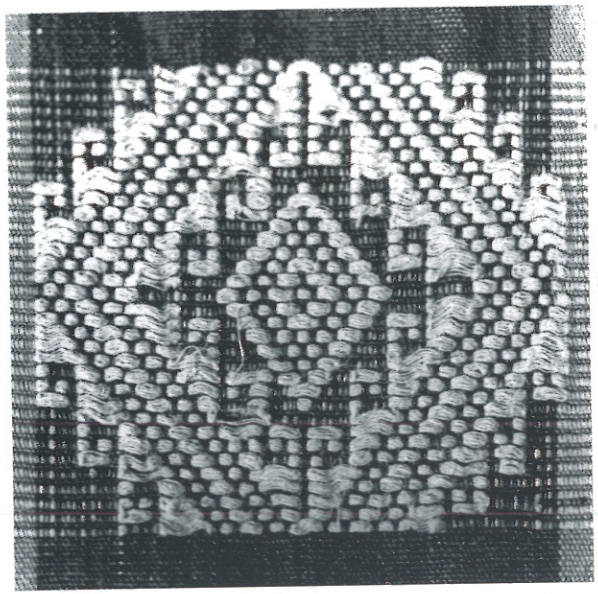


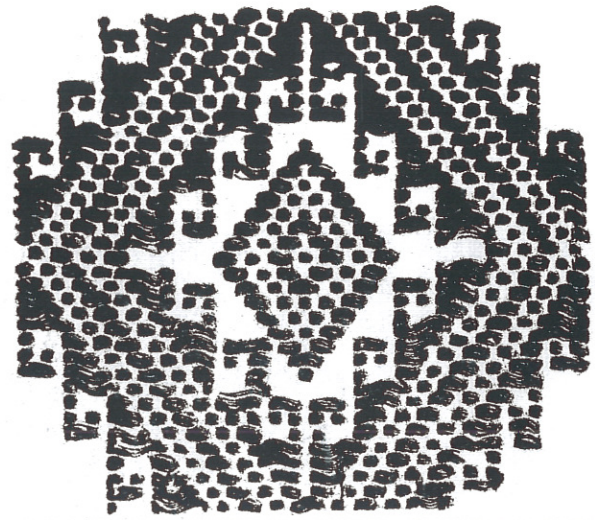


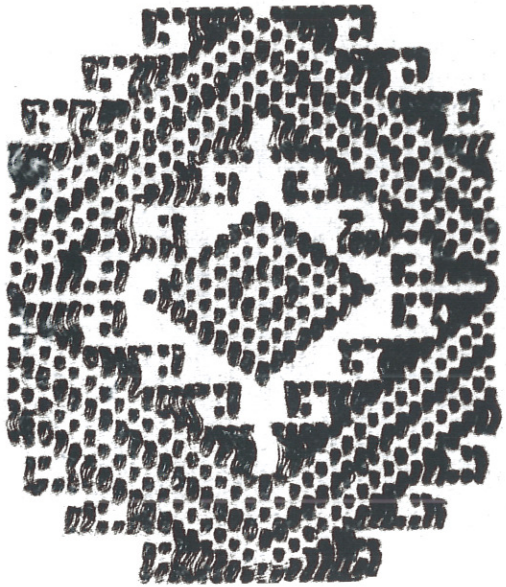


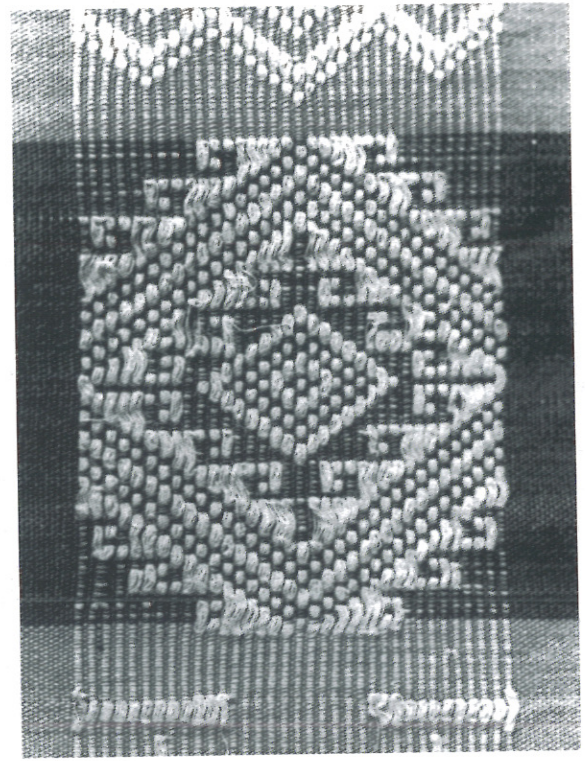


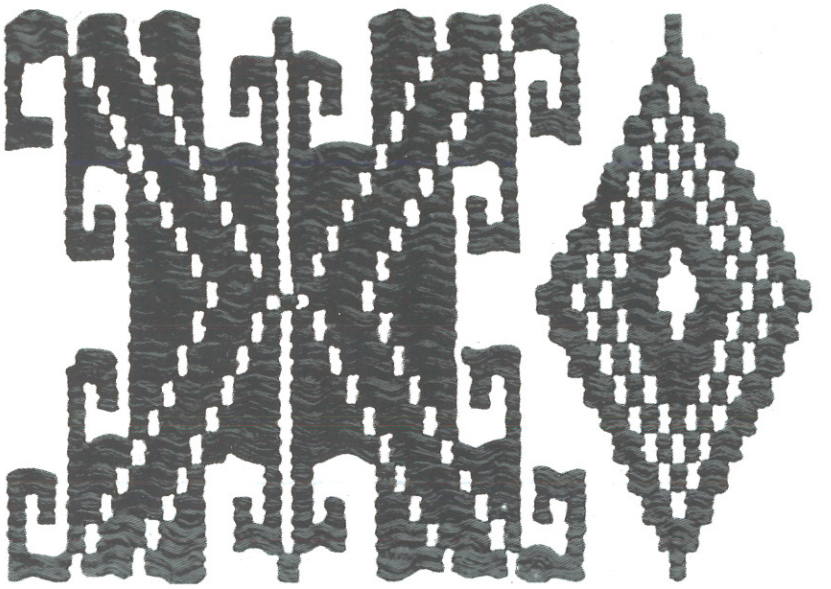


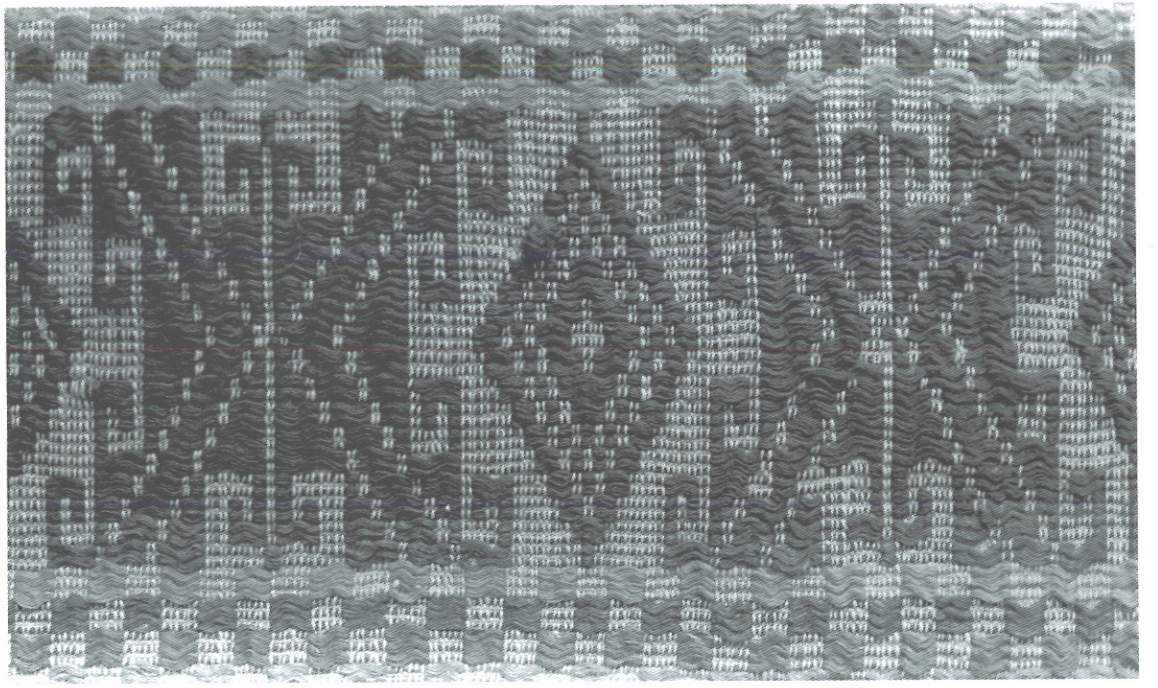


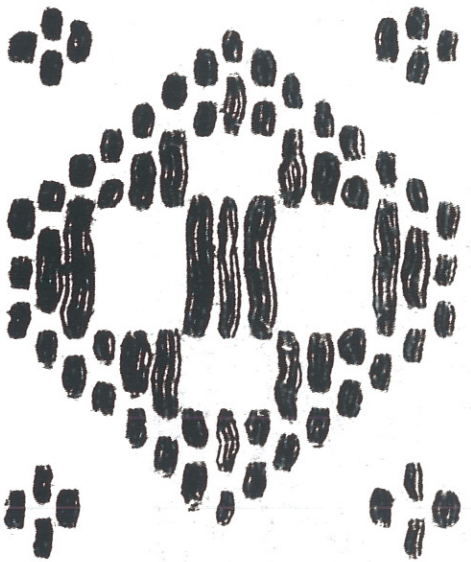


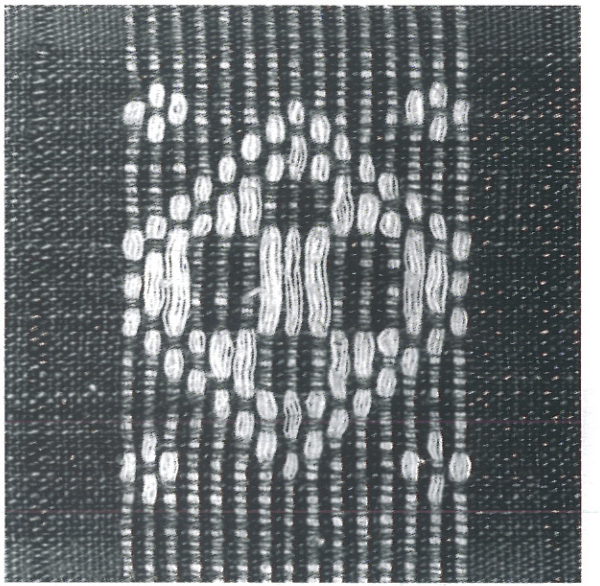


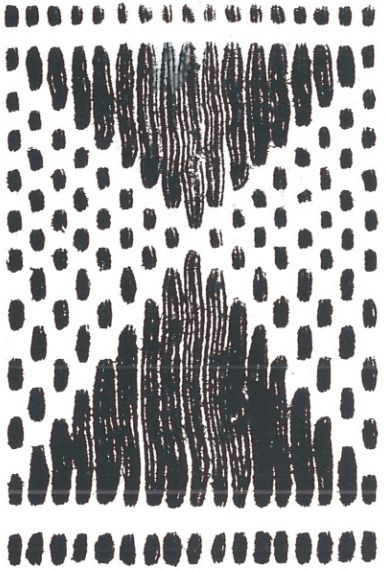


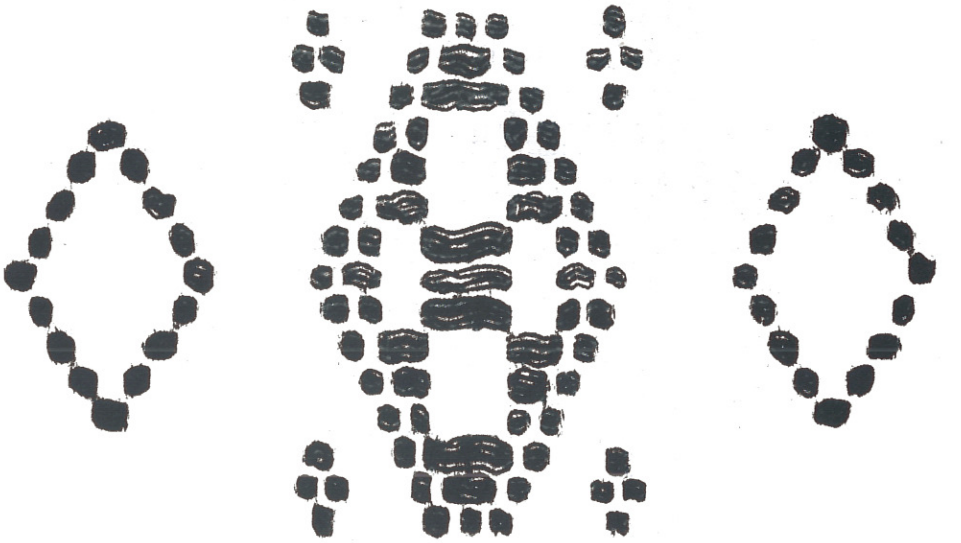


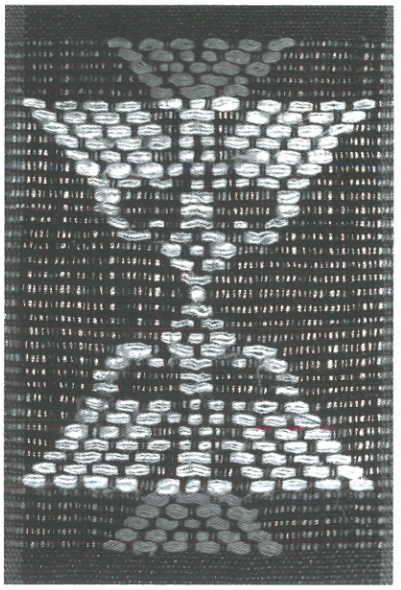


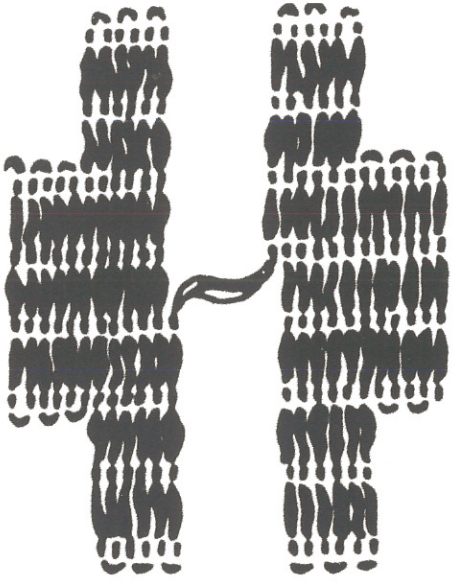


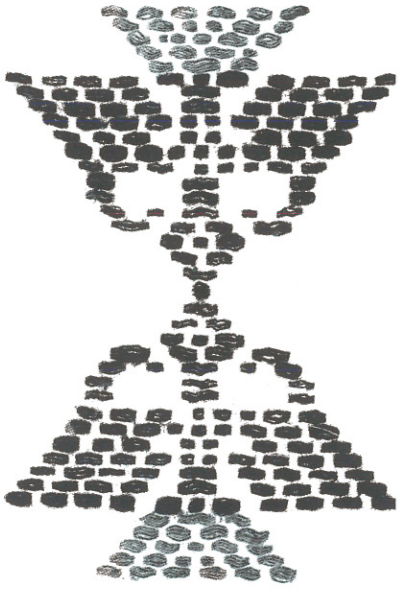












Ikat

By Jesus T. Peralta

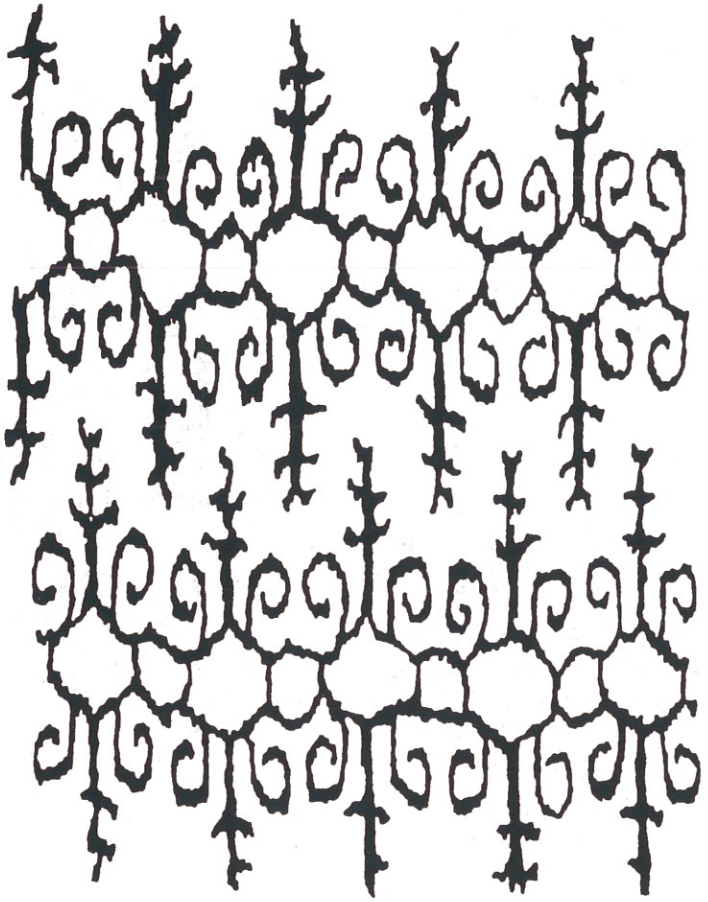
In the Philippines, the tie-dye (*ikat*) method of introducing patterned designs on textile is associated with the use of the back-strap loom. There are basically two types: warp *ikat* and weft *ikat*. As the name implies, this has to do with the resist-dyeing process employed in introducing colors to the textile designs.

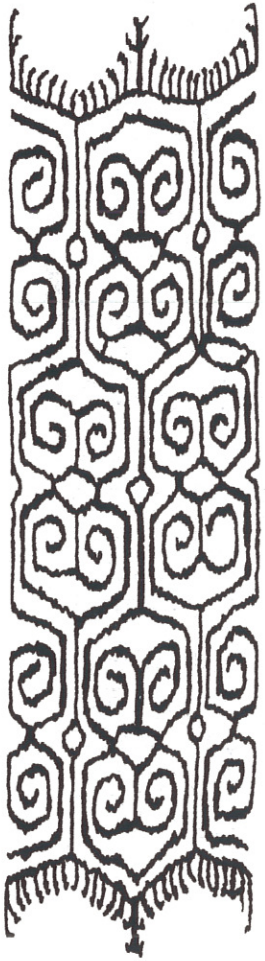
In warp *ikat*, the lengths of thread are not dyed directly. The threads are first strung along parallel lines on a frame. Depending on where the weaver wants certain patterns to appear on the cloth, bunches of thread are bound together tightly to prevent the dye from penetrating and coloring it. When the threads are soaked in the dyeing solution, those sections secured tightly together retain their original or natural color. This results in a cloth dyed in one color, but with patterns formed by the areas unaffected by the dye. After the dyeing process, the threads are strung on the back-strap loom in a preconceived order. Any number of color patterns may be obtained by tying different segments in anticipation of the final results of the design. As many subsequent dyeing may be done, untying segments to expose these to different colored dyes. The dyes used are earth and plant dyes. The resulting cloth is polychromatic when the weft is finally introduced. Although uncommon, the introduction of the tie-dyeing of the weft further adds to the intricacy of the design and the multiplicity of colors.

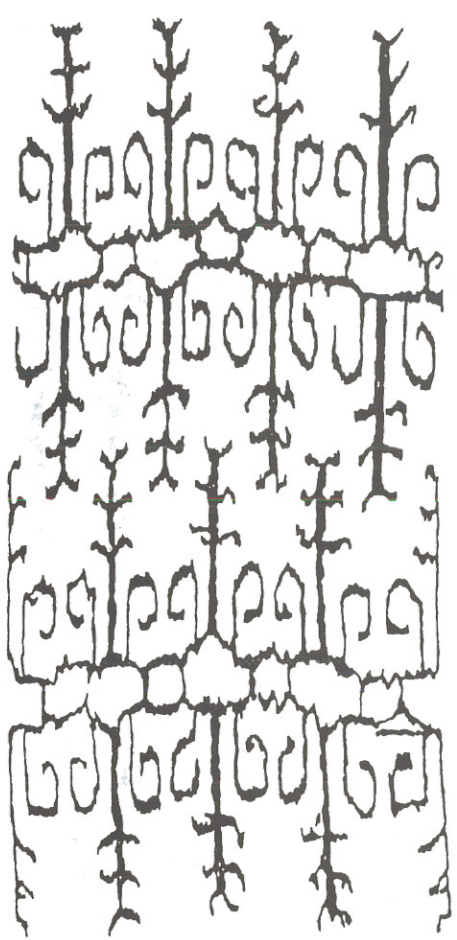
Central Mindanao is well known for its tie-dyed textiles woven from *abaca* (*Musa textiles*) fiber like the *t'nalak* (T'boli), *dagmay* (Mandaya), *inabal* (Bagobo), *inabu* (Manobo), *mabual* (B'laan) and *habulan* (Higaonon). With the natural ecru of the abaca fiber, red, brown, and black become brilliant on the textiles, which are further rigorously polished to a high sheen with the use of a smooth shell. The *andon* style of the Maranao malong, usually made of silk, is woven using resist dyeing.

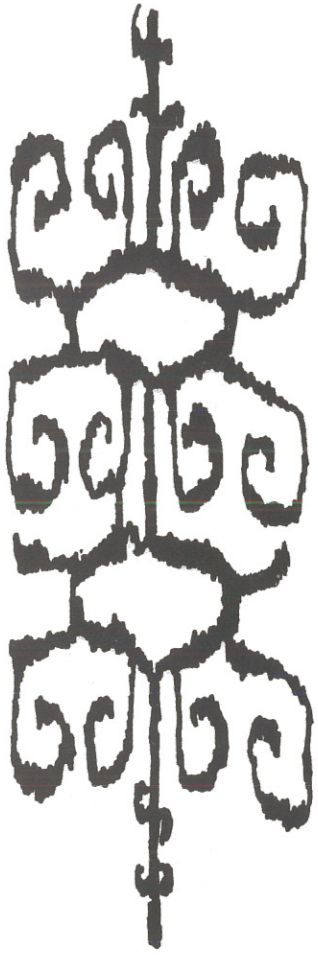
Different patterns of design are achieved by combining the natural fiber with various colors. The patterns are repetitive and are often mirror images of stylized geometric forms like diamonds, squares, triangles and natural forms such as crocodiles, the human form, butterflies, palm leaves, and others derived from nature. These different forms are embellished with curlicues, spirals and other ornamental details. Motifs and designs are named and categorized. The Mandaya for instance have the *bulinglangit* (clouds), *bangkiring* (hair bangs), and *kabangi* (butterfly).

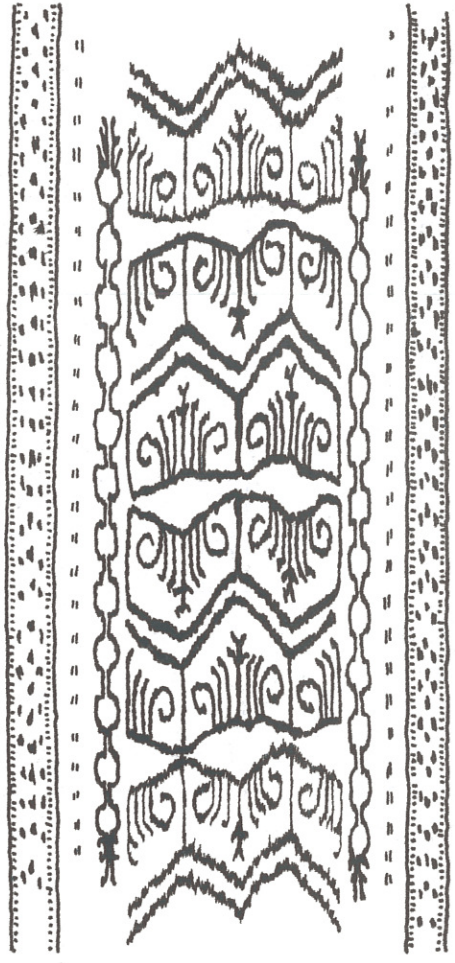
B'laan

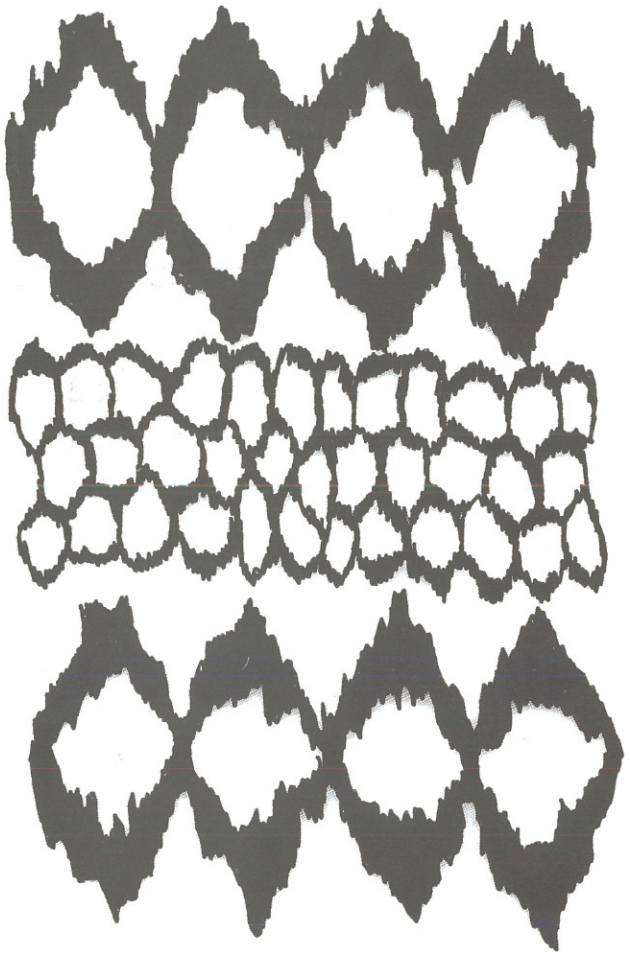


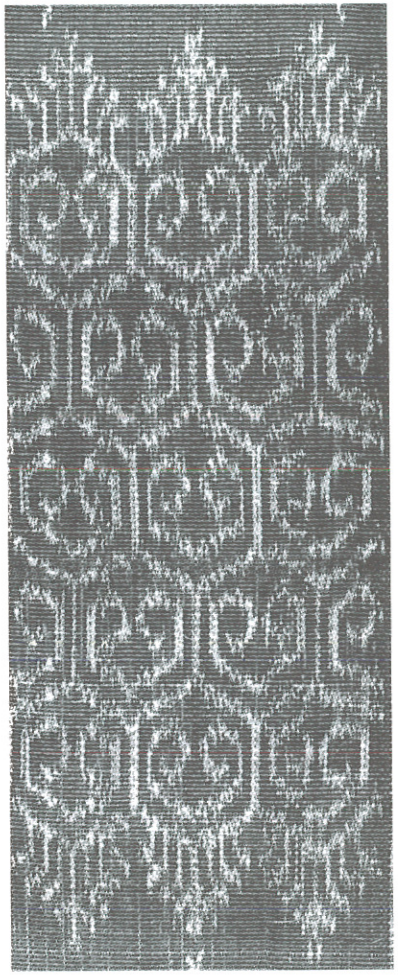




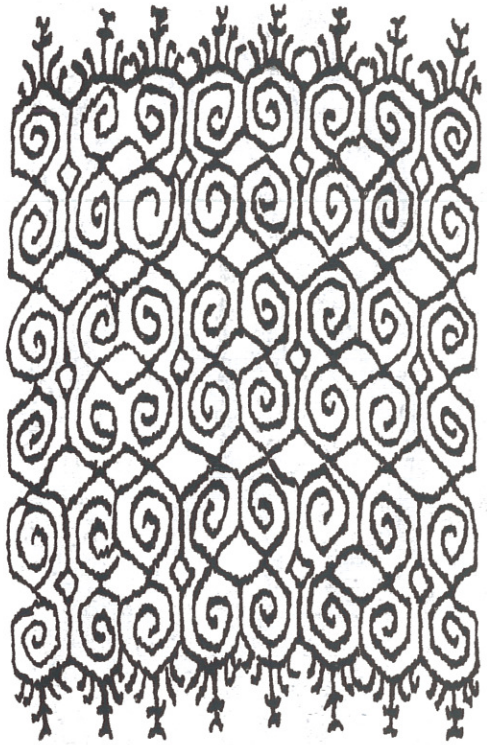


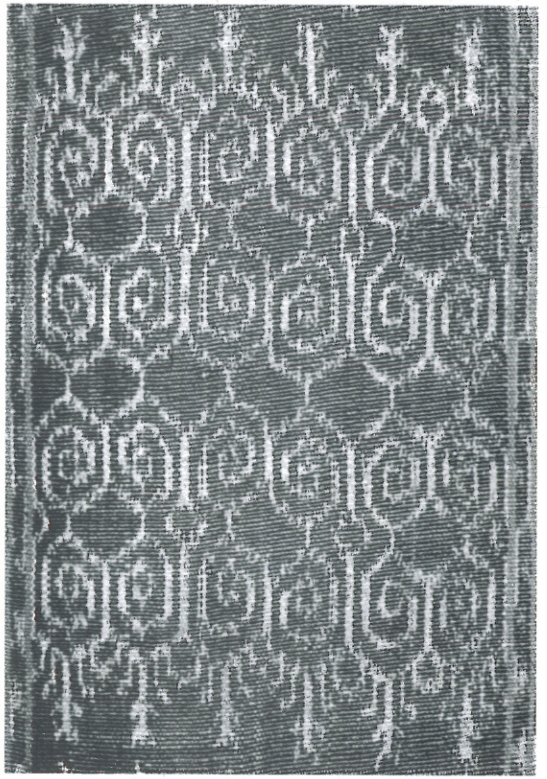


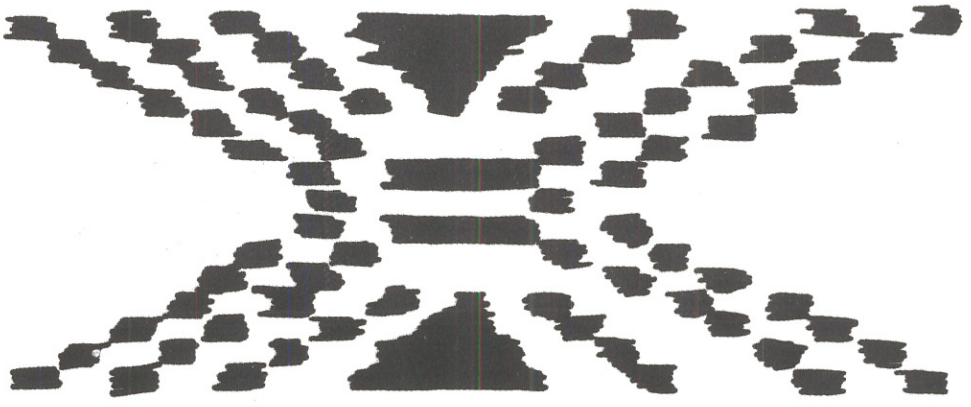


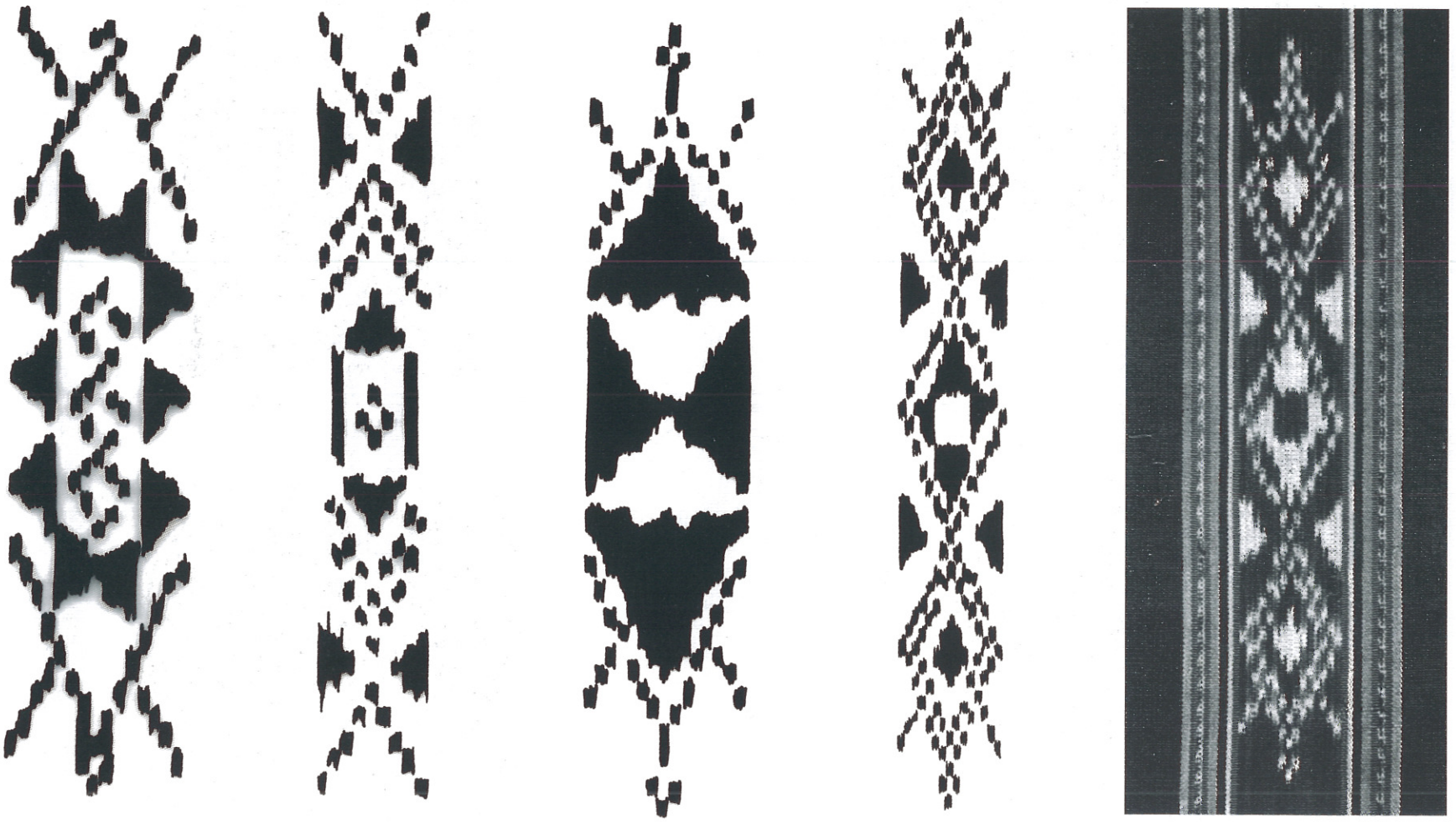


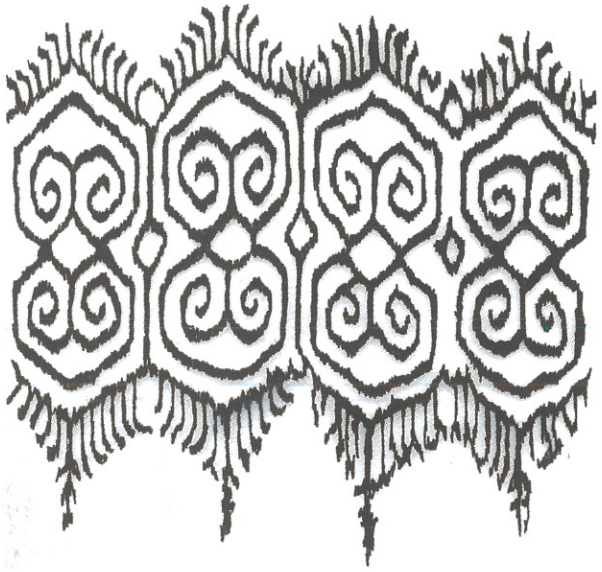
Bagobo

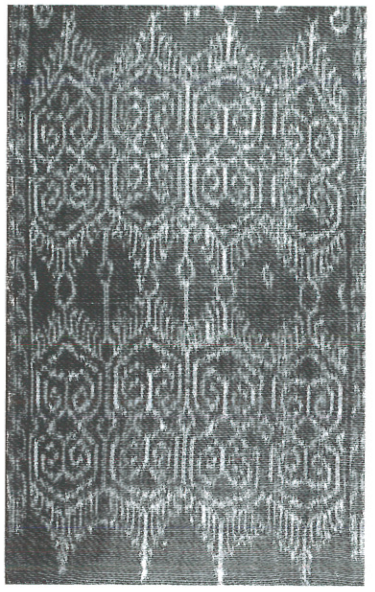


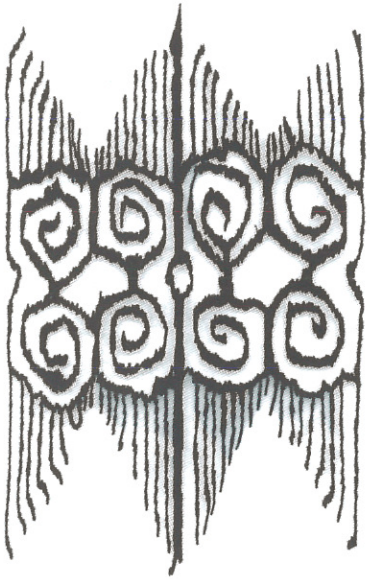


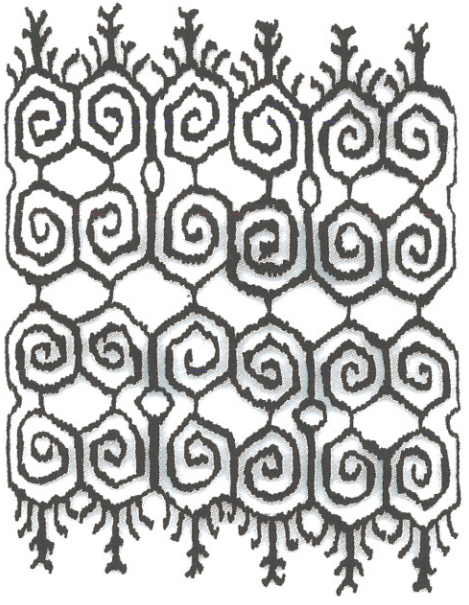




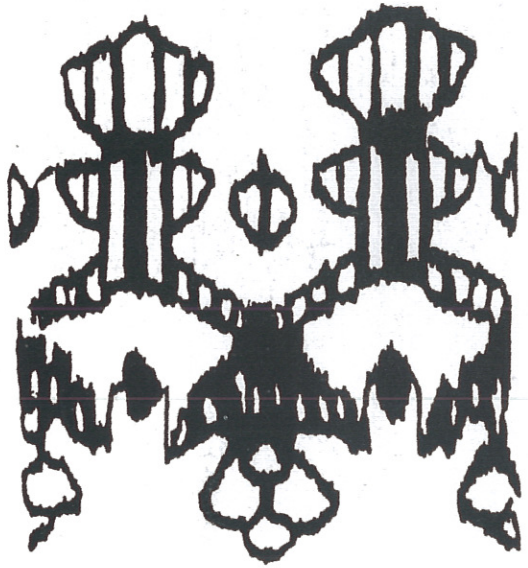


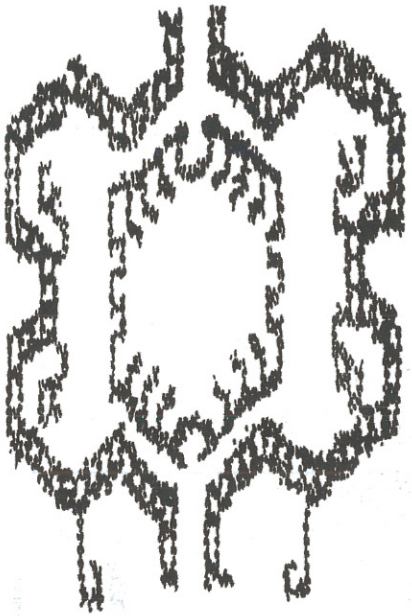


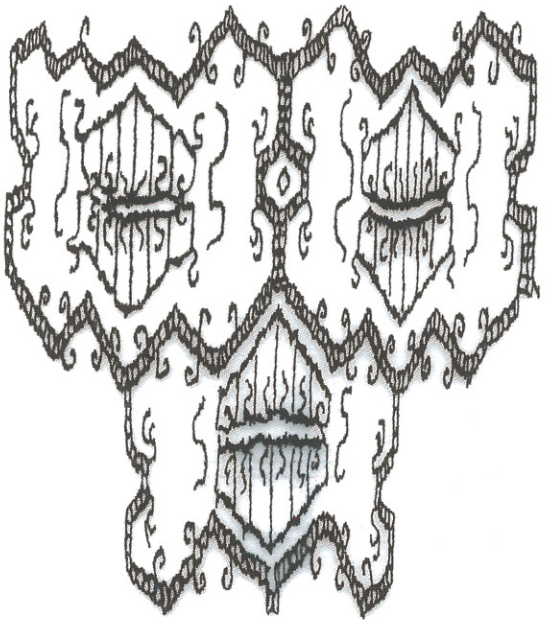


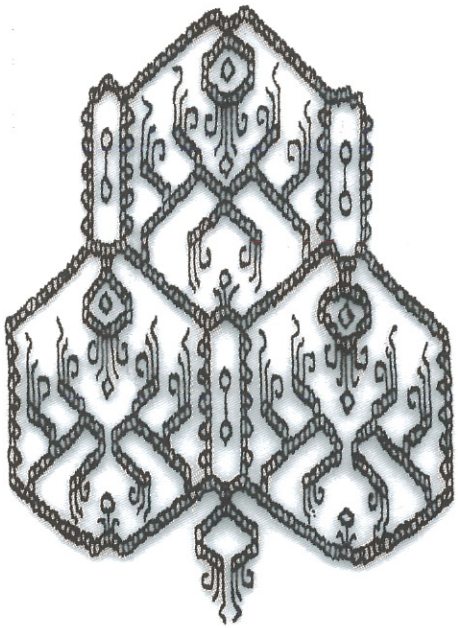


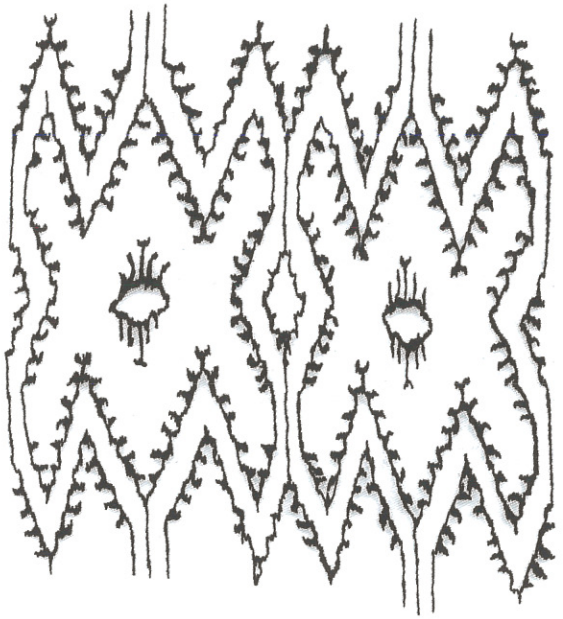
Mandaya

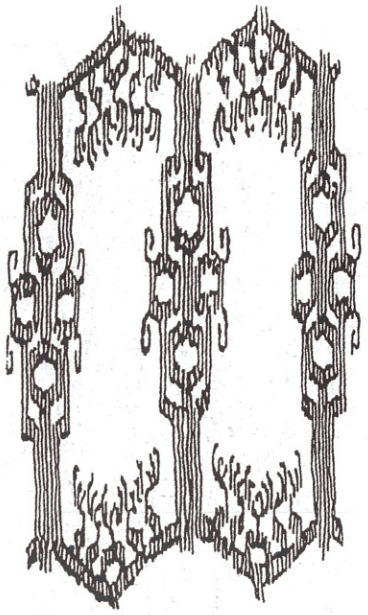


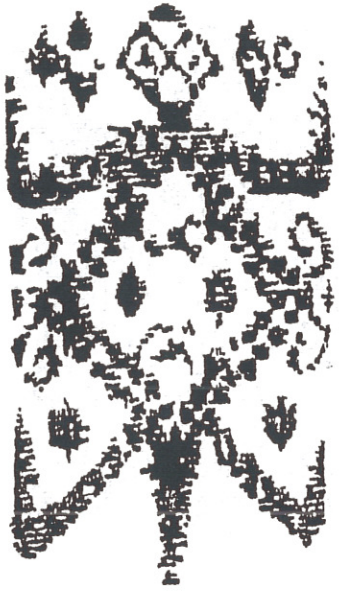


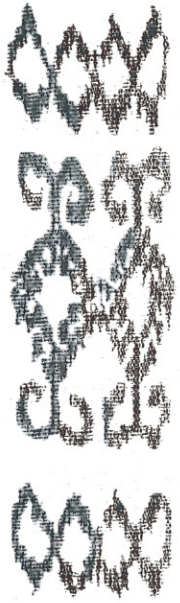


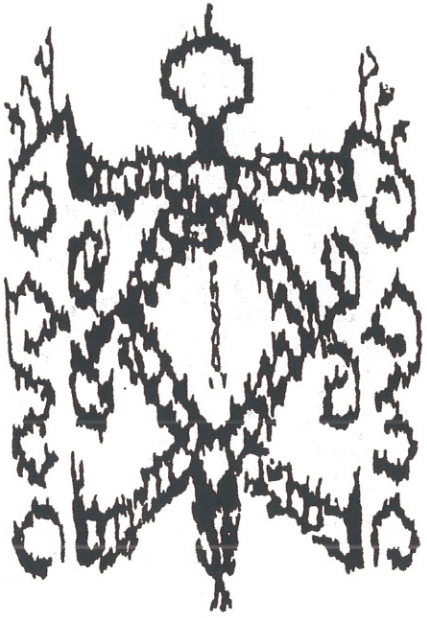


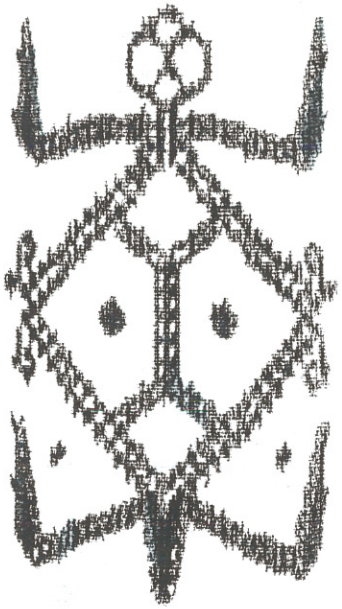


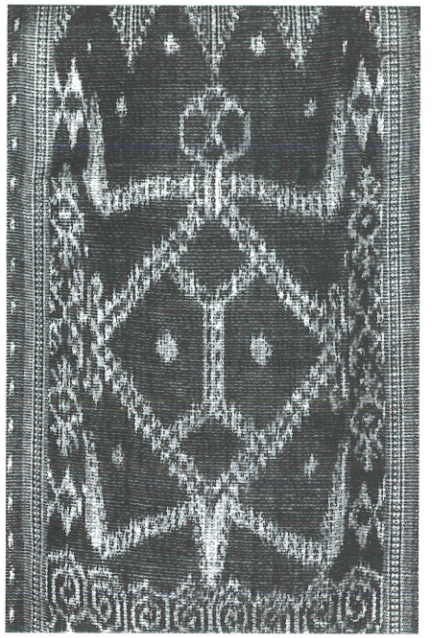


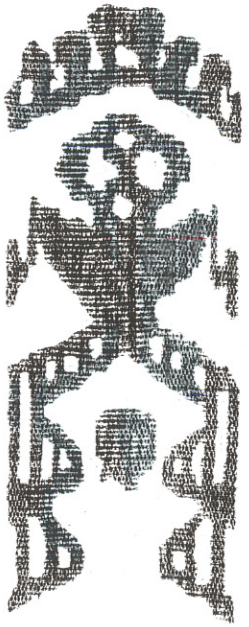


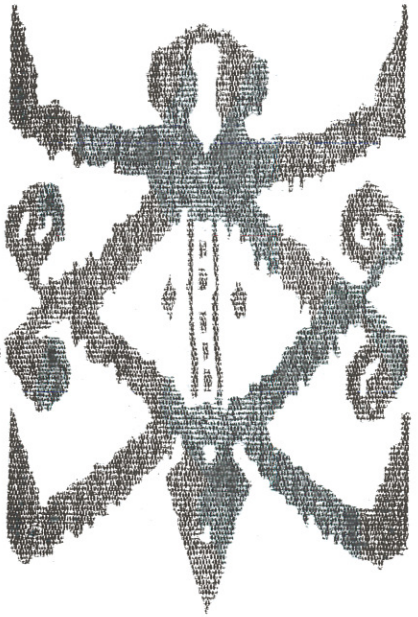


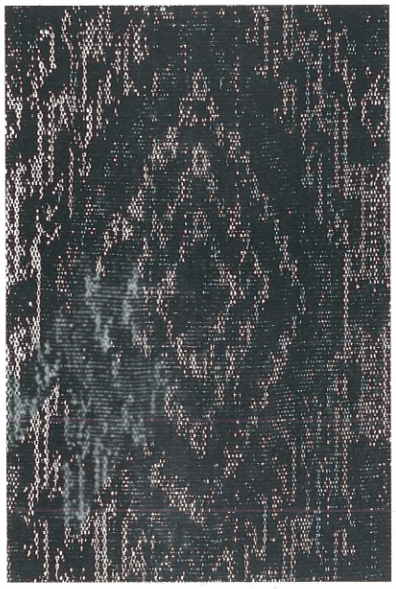


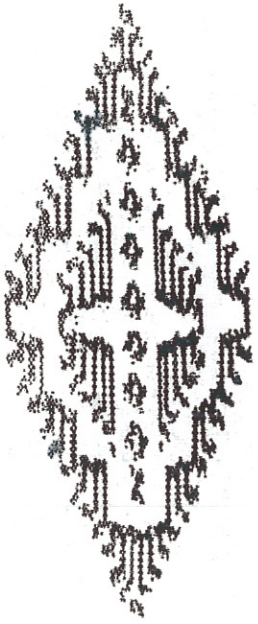


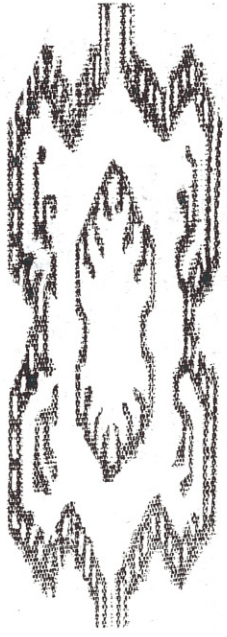


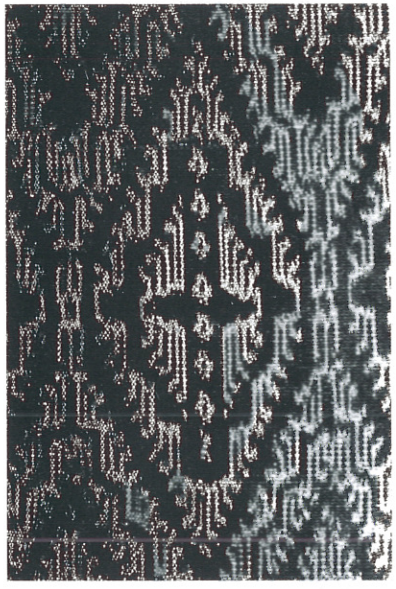


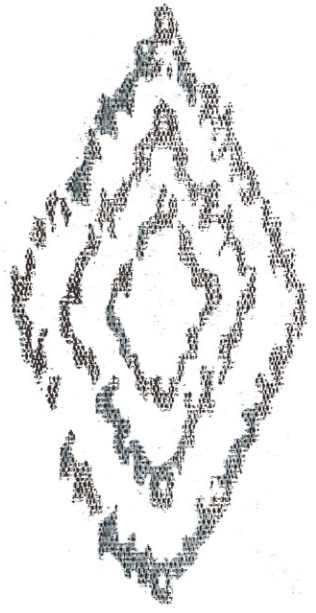


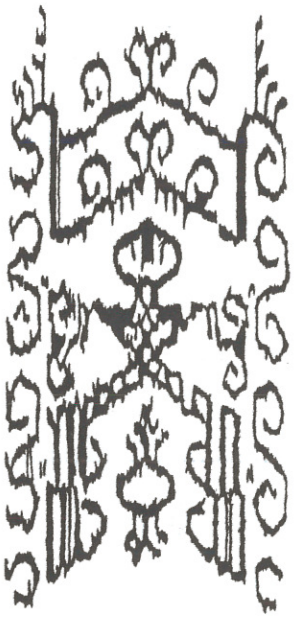


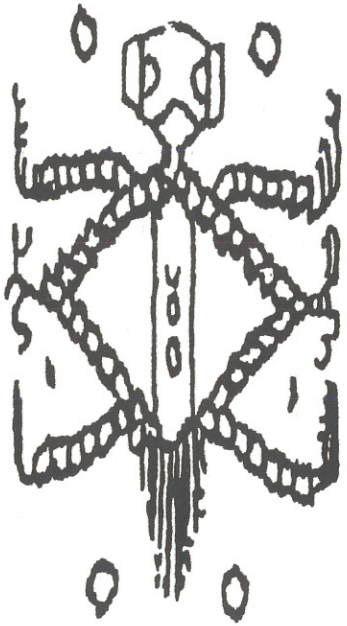


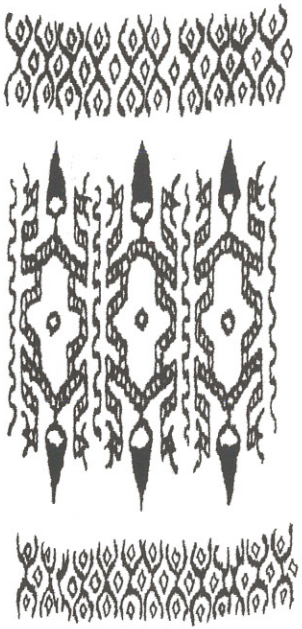


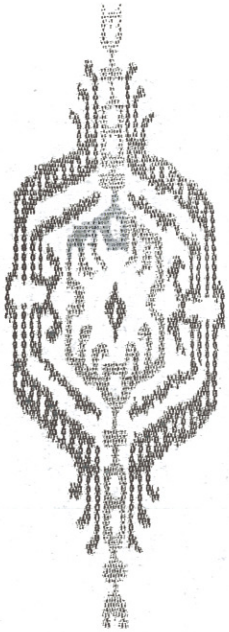


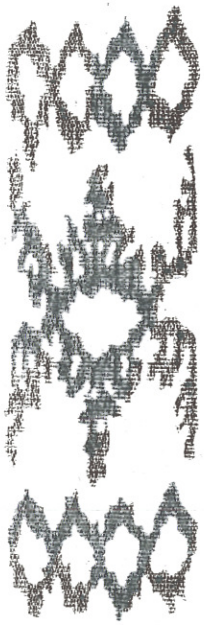


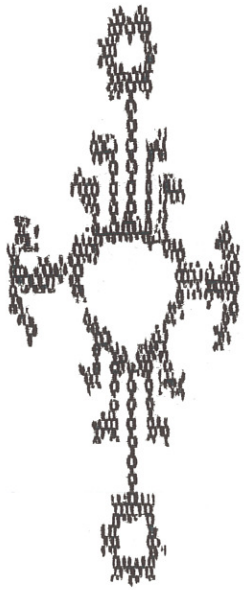


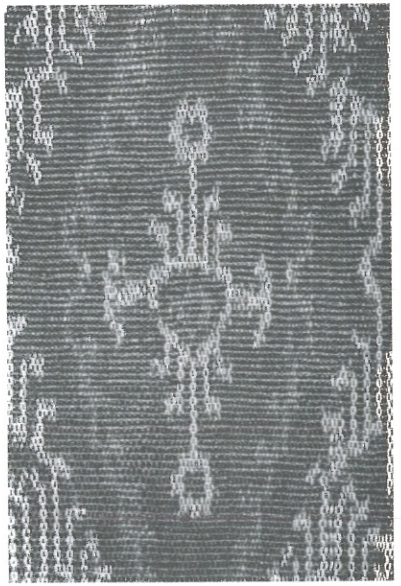


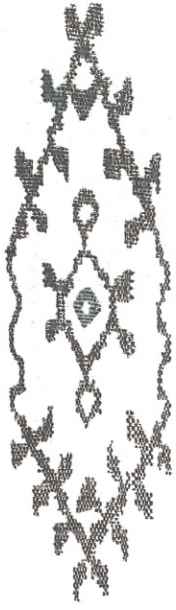


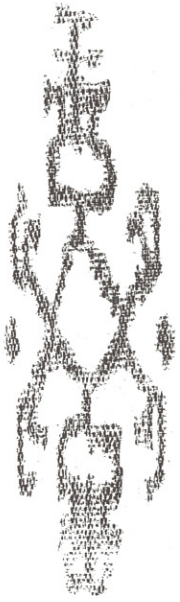




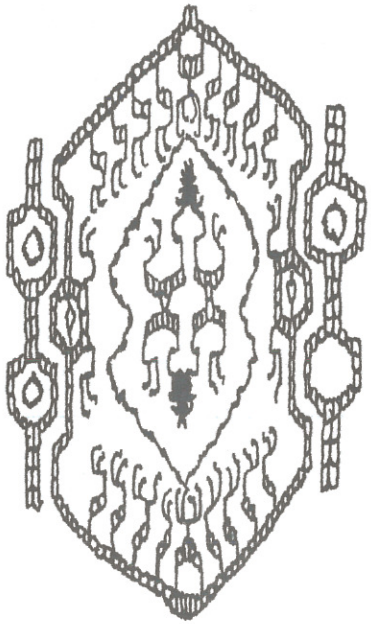


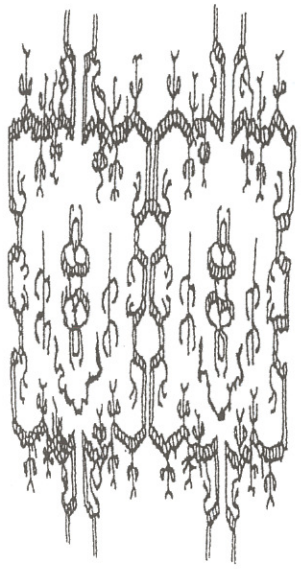


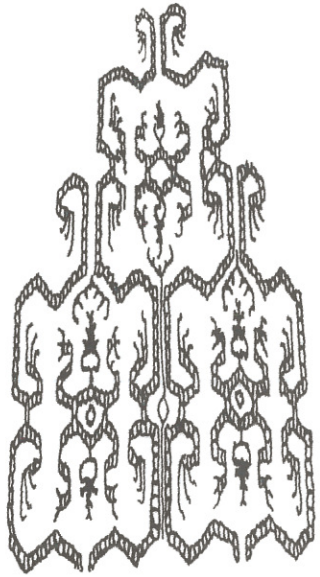


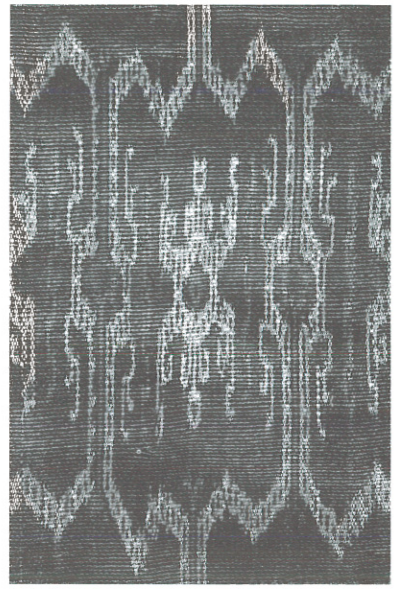


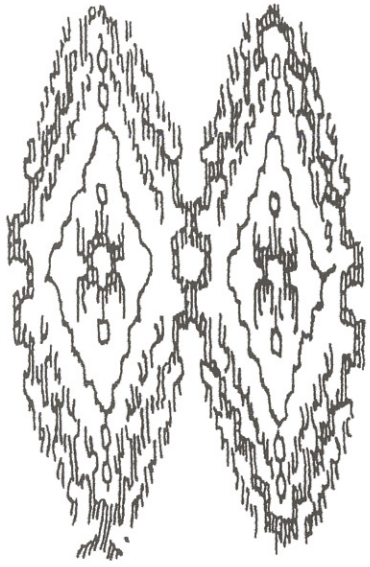
T'boli

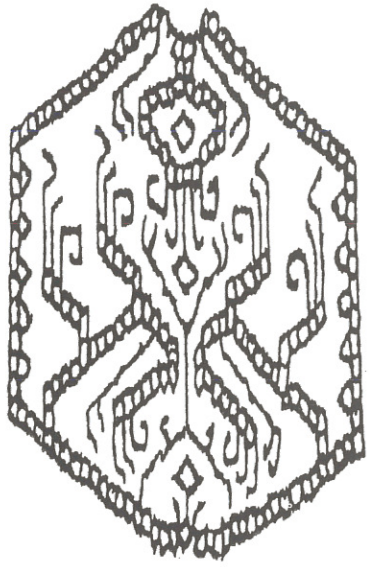


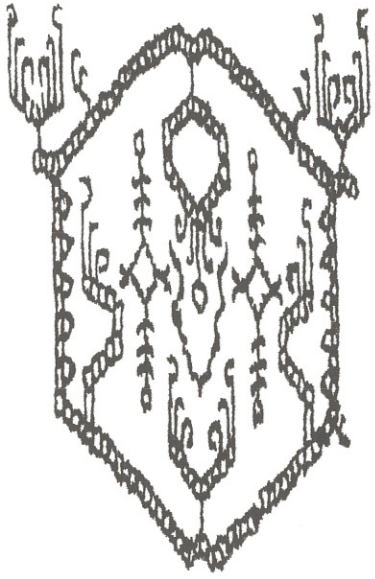


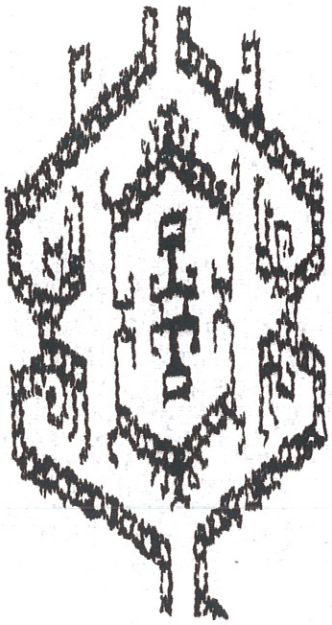


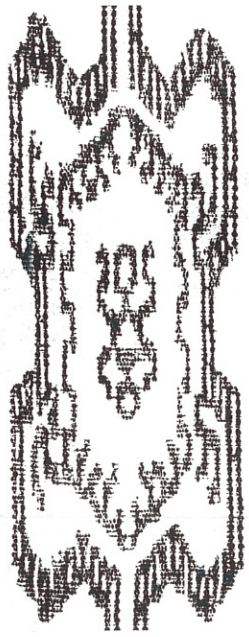


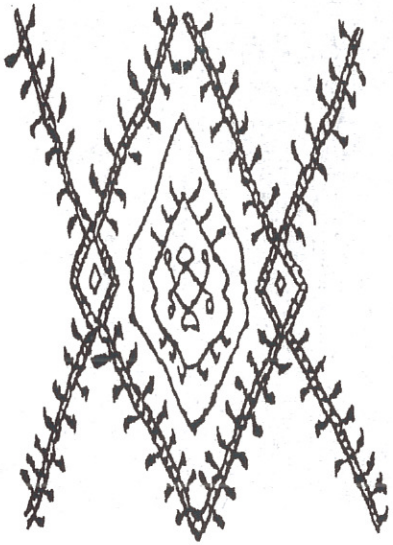


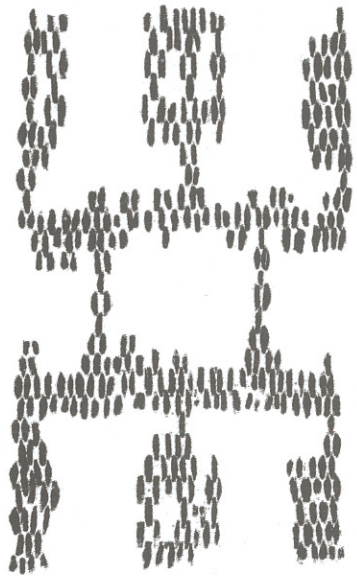


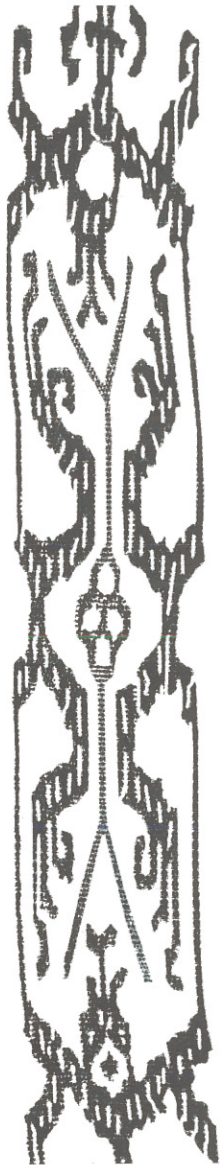


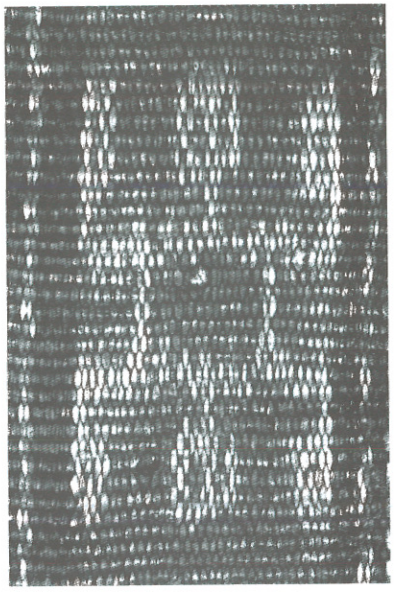


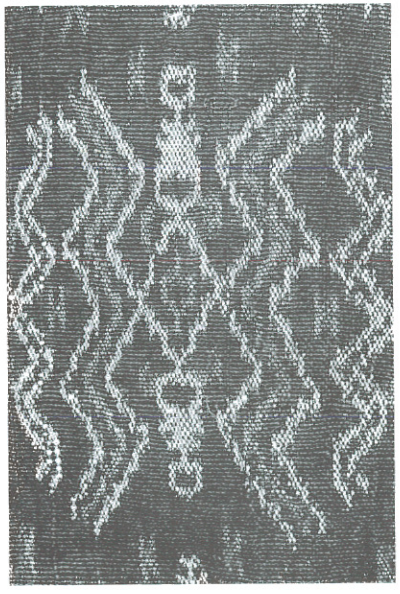


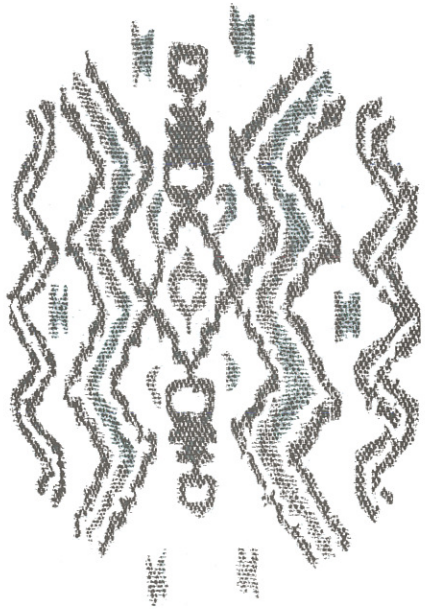


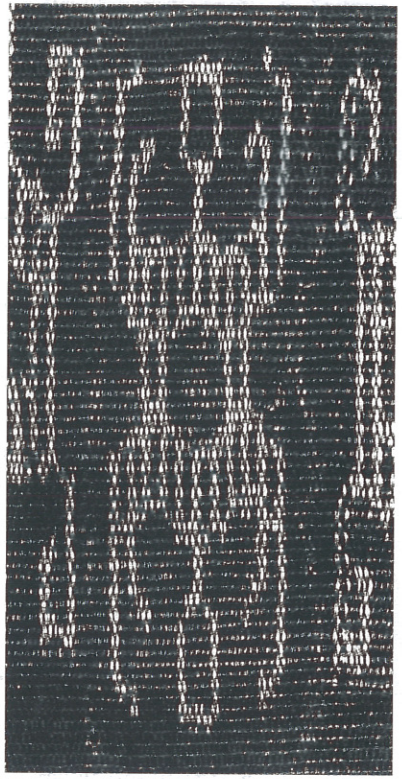


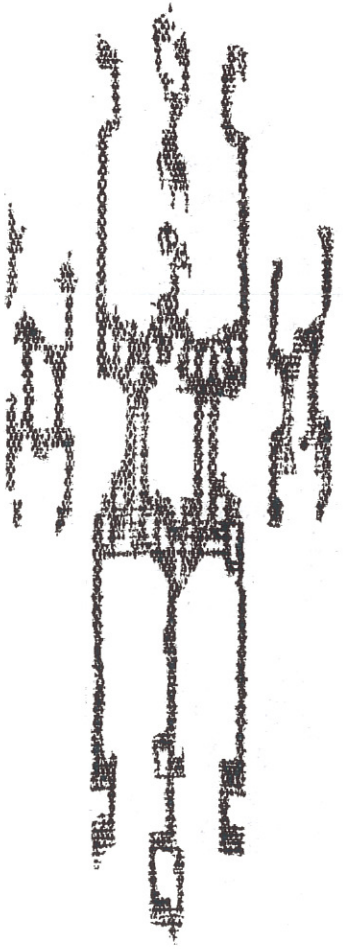


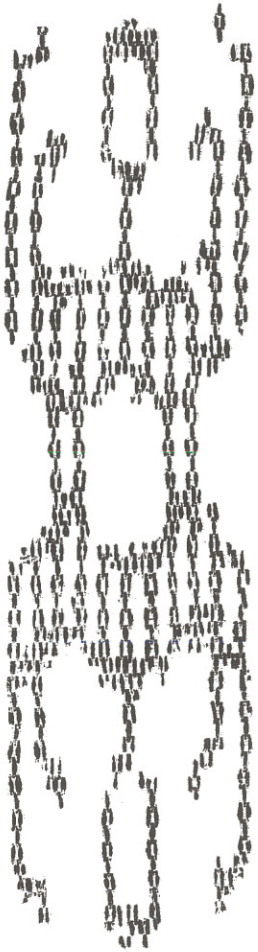


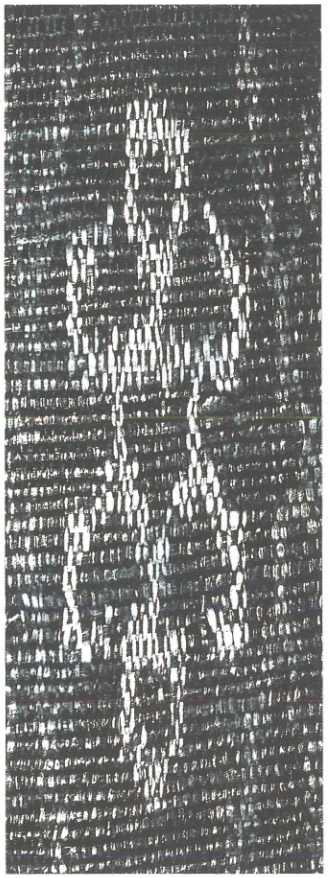


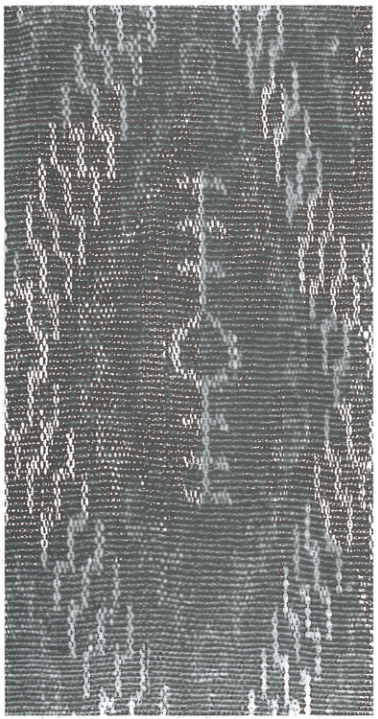


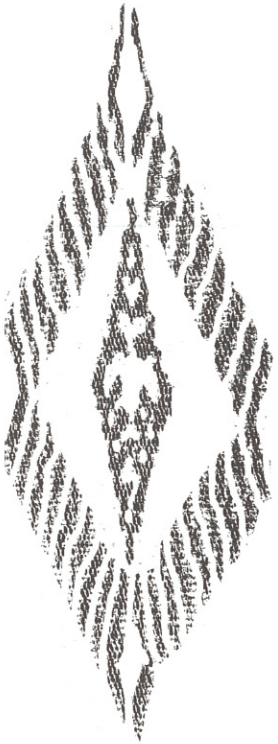


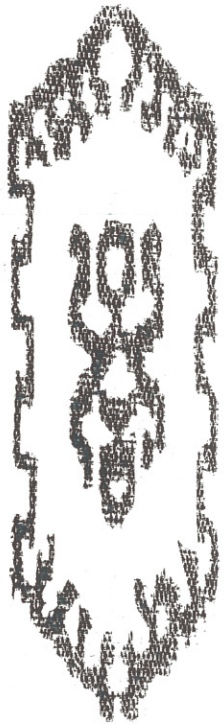


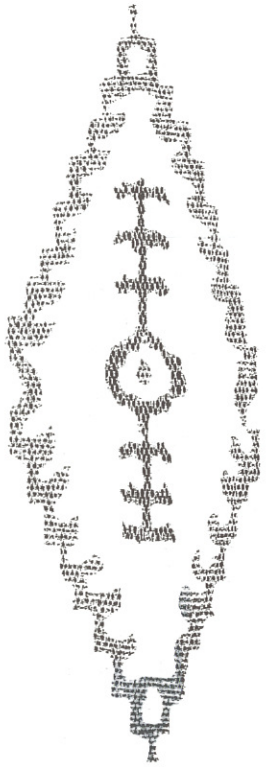












Langkit

By Jesus T. Peralta

The Maranao of the provinces of Lanao del Sur, Lanao del Norte and parts of north Cotabato wear a traditional tubular lower garment called *malong*.

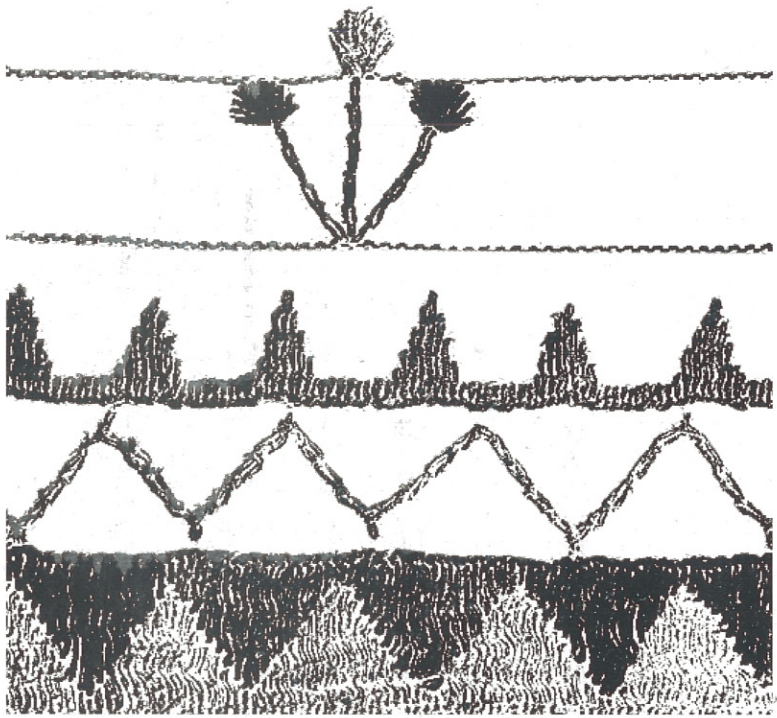
There are several types of *malong*. One of these is the *landap*, meaning "pure". This garment is essentially made up of three pieces of plainly woven cloth of solid colors, usually of green, magenta or purple, and yellow. Sometimes the panels are all green (*gadong*), or all black (*pangelemen*), and the most sought after, all yellow (*binaning*). Narrow strips of tapestry cloth woven to form a single and wider piece join these three pieces of cloth together. The ends of the cloth are then joined together by another tapestry-woven strip to form a tubular garment. These tapestry panels joining the pieces of plainly woven cloth are called *langkit*.

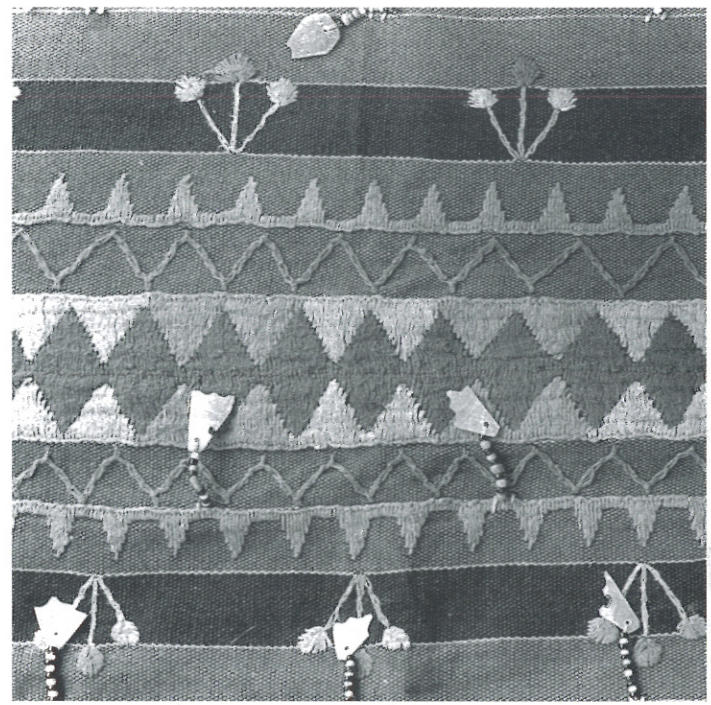
The *langkit* is of two kinds: a narrow kind, the tobiran and wider one, the *lakban*. The *tobiran* joins the three panels of cloth, while the *lakban* joins the two ends to form the tubular garment. Both are highly ornamental and colorful specially when set off against the solid colors of the plain-woven panels. The intricate designs are in orange, blue, yellow, green, magenta, purple, and are usually in curvilinear male design and in the female geometric configurations of the Maranao okir. A narrow, specialized kind of tapestry loom is used to weave the *langkit*. Discontinuous weft is used to introduce the colors and design into the cloth. Two general types of design are hooked into the warp. In the first, female *okir* approach, the basic design element is the solidly and variedly colored square, with variations, such as a diamond. These squares are then arranged into straight lines, or diagonals which eventually form motifs like an outline square, diamond, zigzags, crosses, and other forms. Digressing into the male domain, the squares can also be formed into jagged but curving lines of a circle or a spiral.

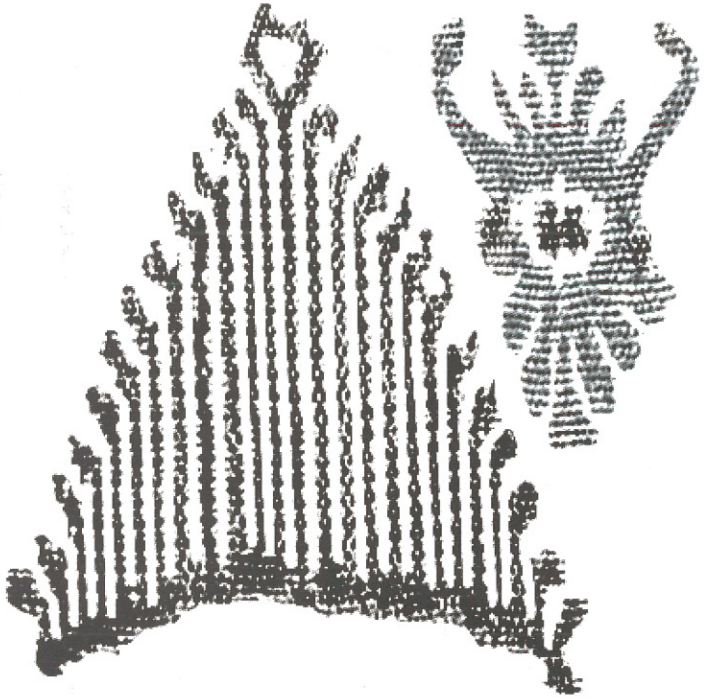
The second type is done in the curvilinear style, without the jagged configuration of the first. The lines are smooth and flowing and are distinctly floral in contrast to the more geometric of the former. At times, the larger motifs are outlined in lighter color and then filled in with darker colors. Some motifs are in solid colors. Clearly depicted here are the decorative motifs of the Maranao such as *potiok* (bud), *dapal* or *raon* (leaf), *pako* (fern), *pako rabong* (growing fern), *katorai* (flower). The continuous and repeated chain of a *pako* into a complex motif like the *magayoda* is an added motif along the edges of the *langkit*, sometimes.

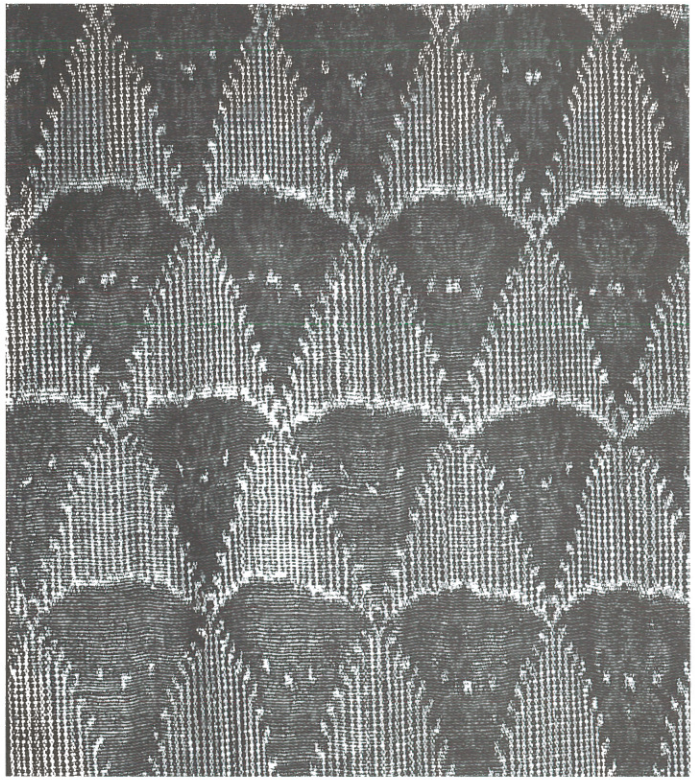
The brilliantly colored *langkit* makes the *landap malong* unique among the garments of the peoples of the Philippines.

Manobo

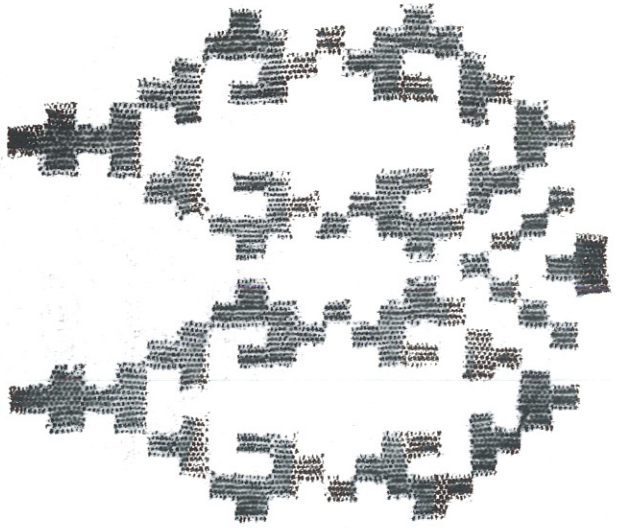


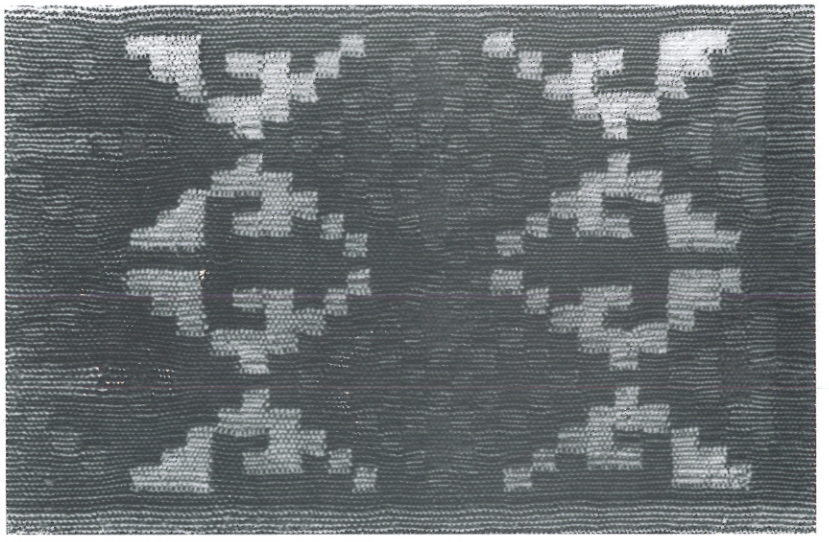


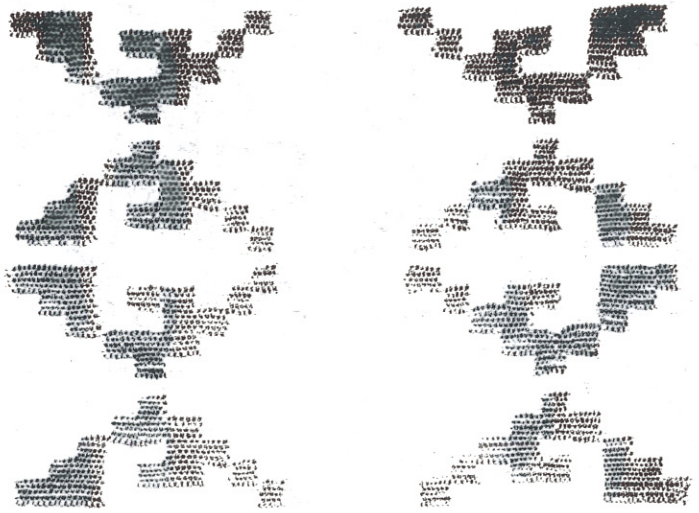


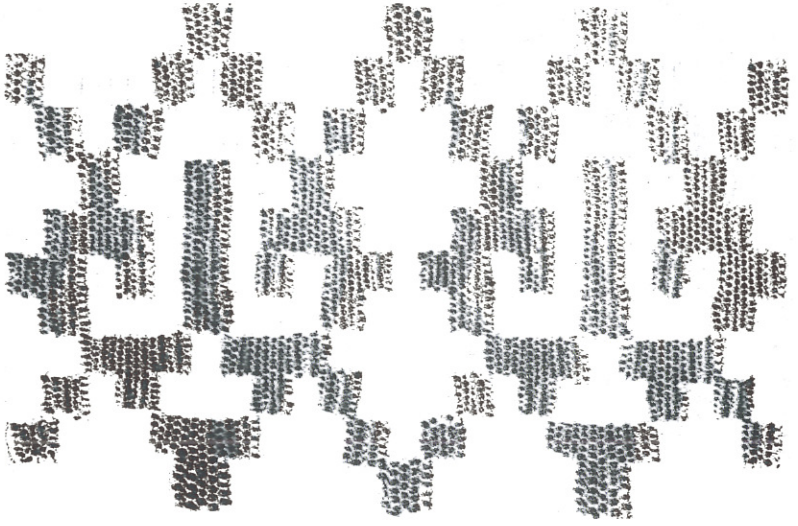


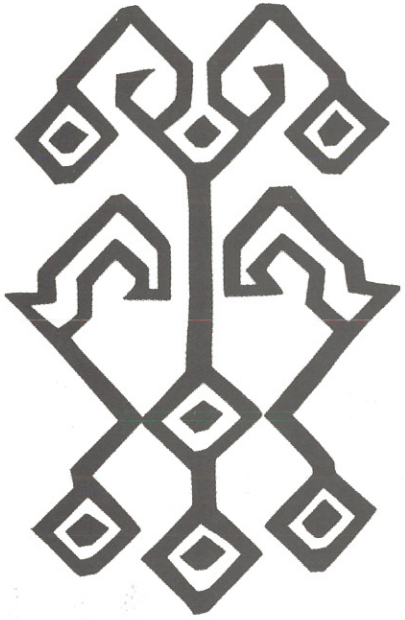
Maranao

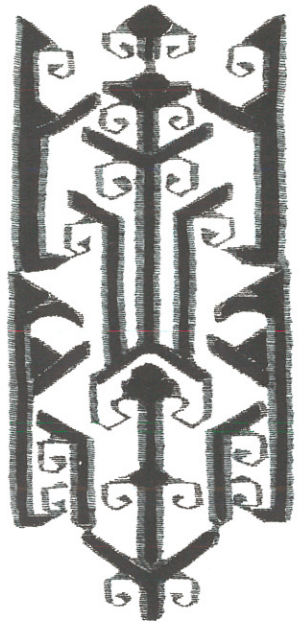


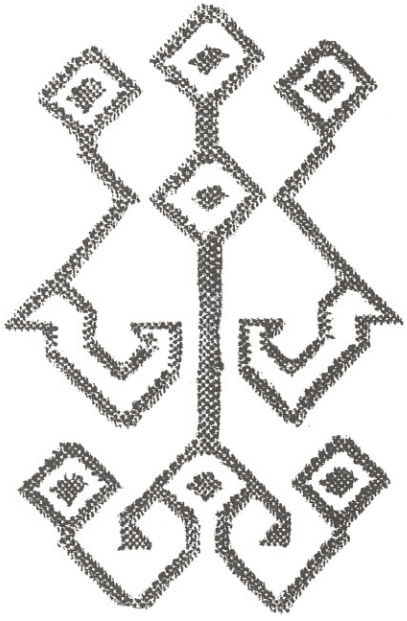


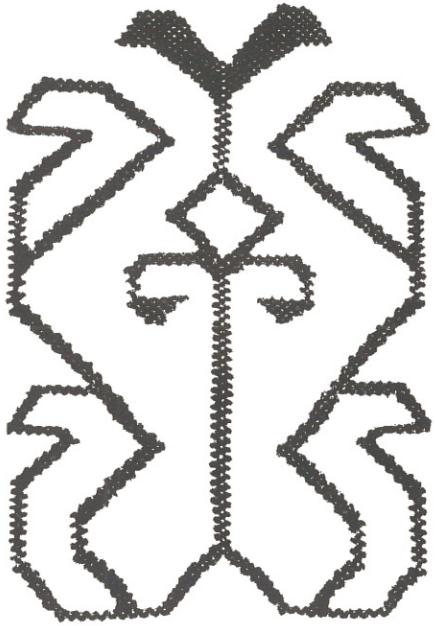


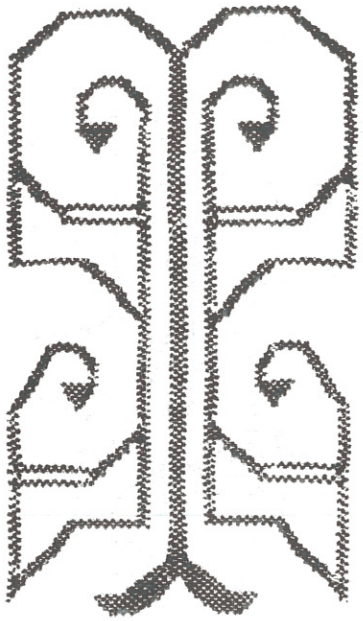


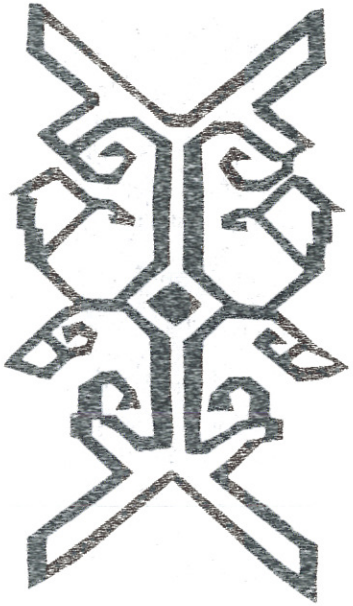


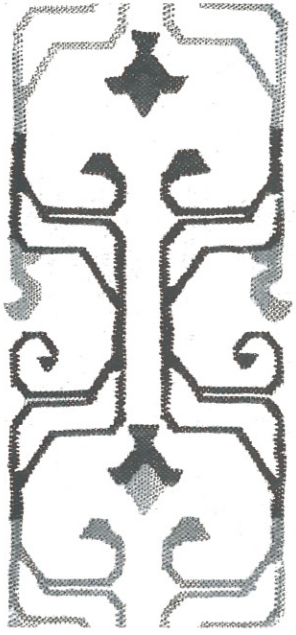


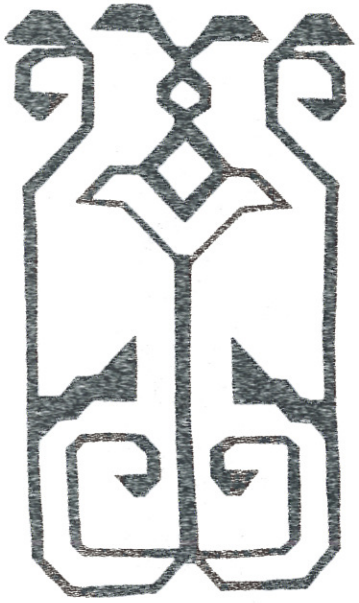


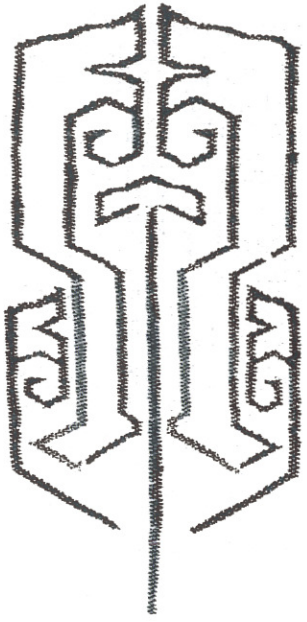


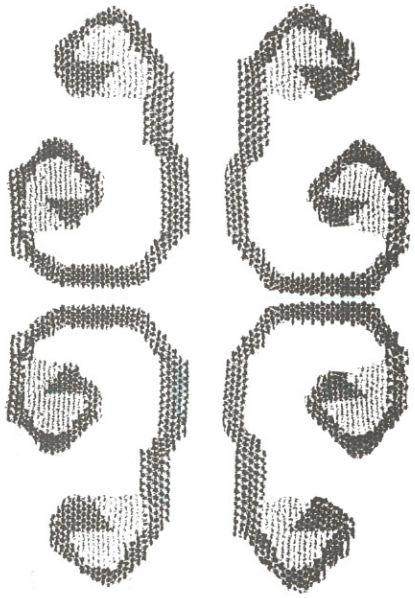


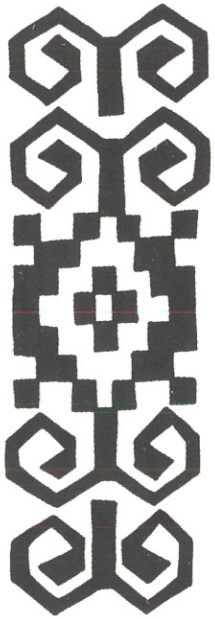


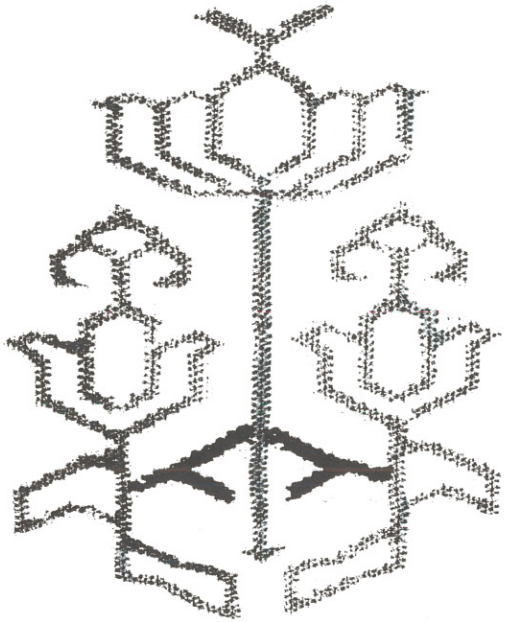


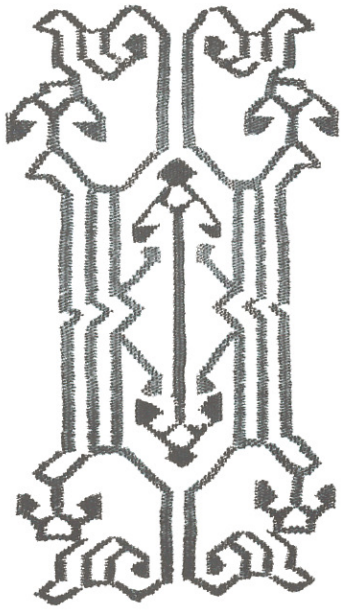


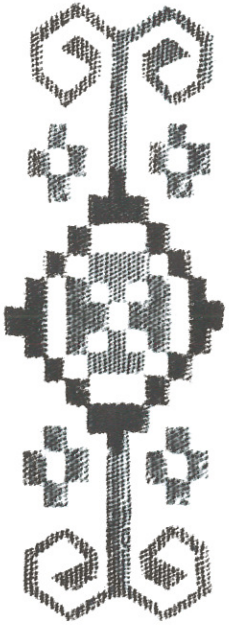


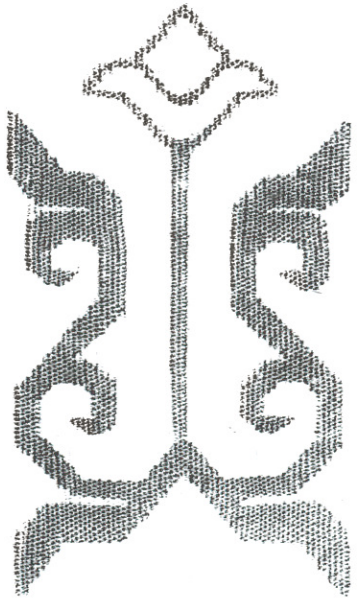


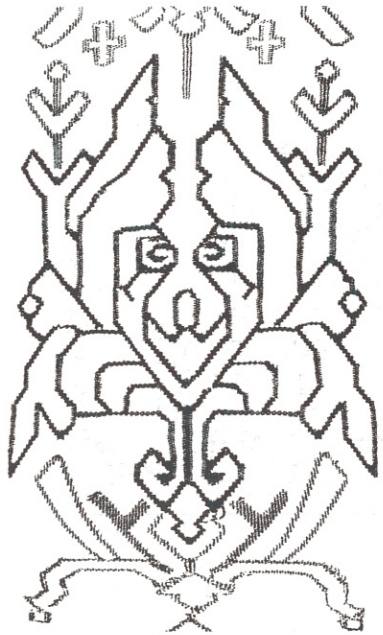


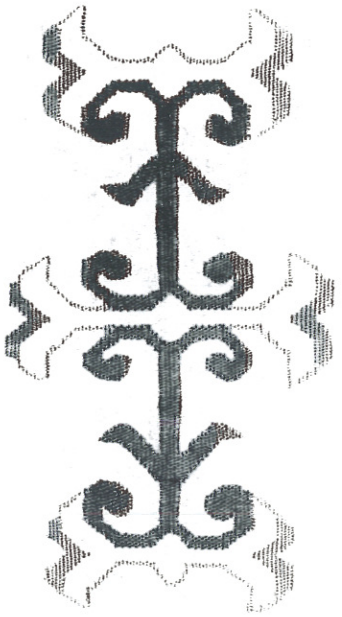


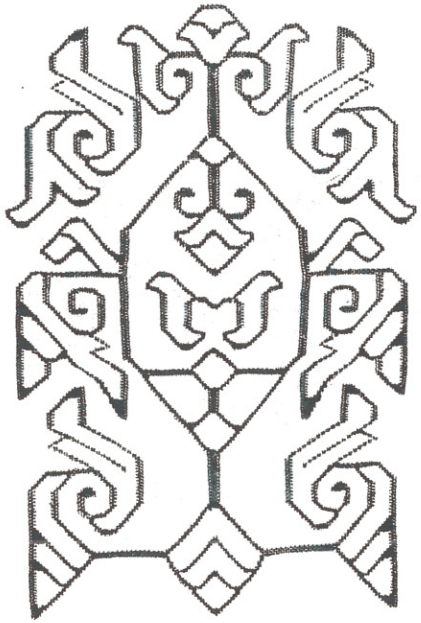


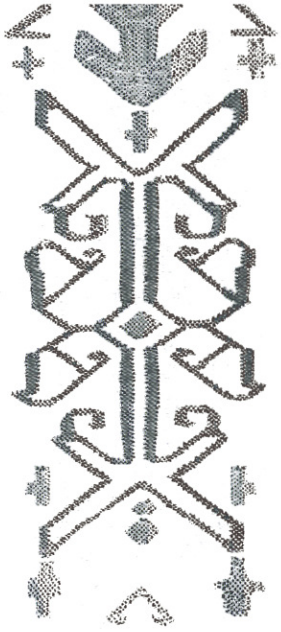


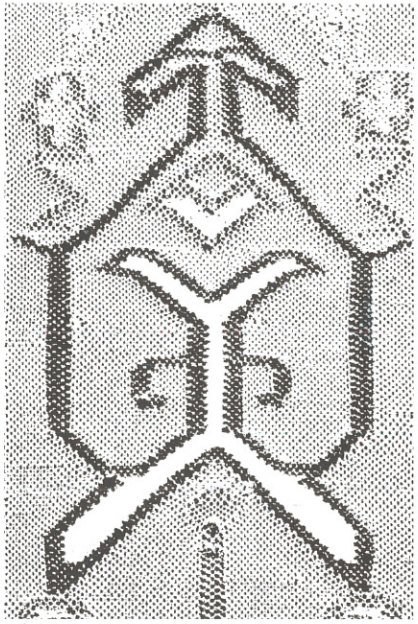


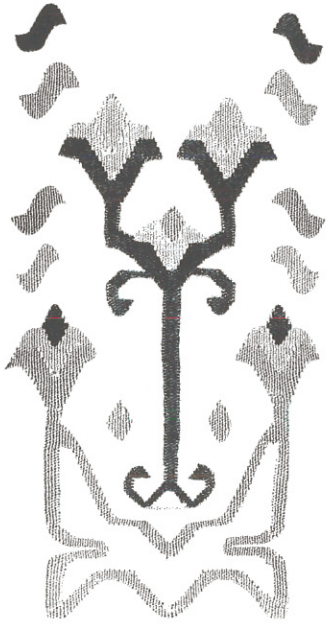


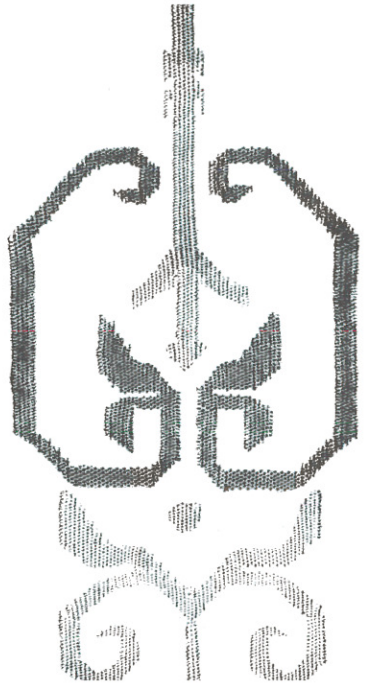


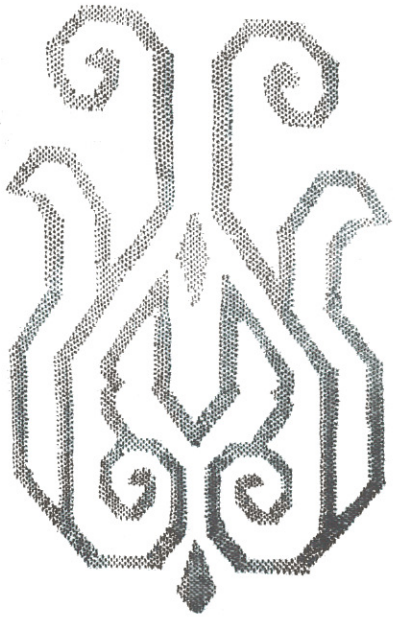


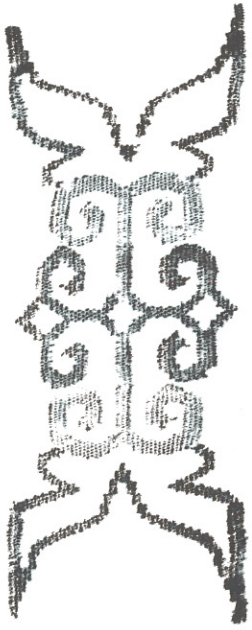


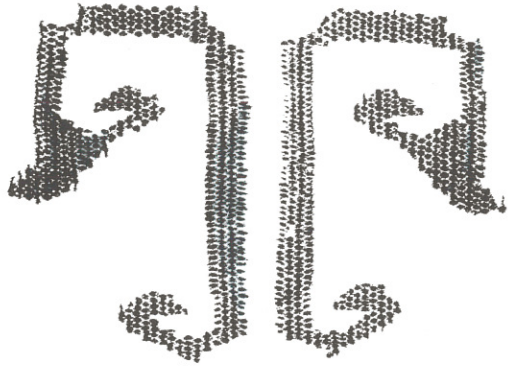


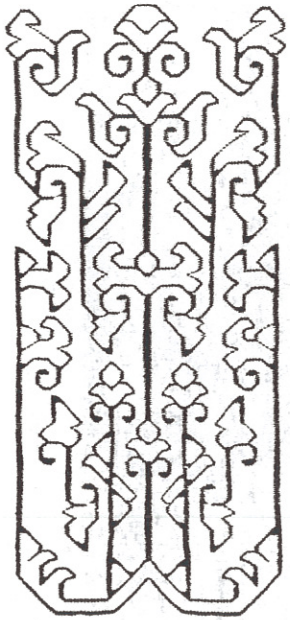


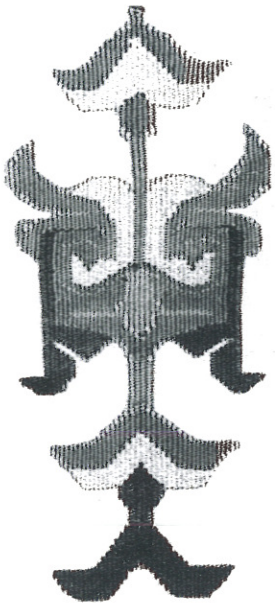


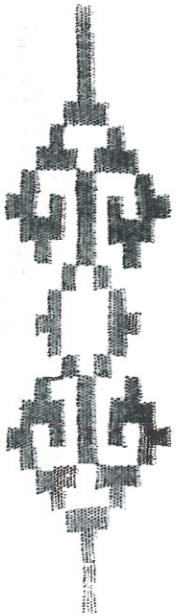


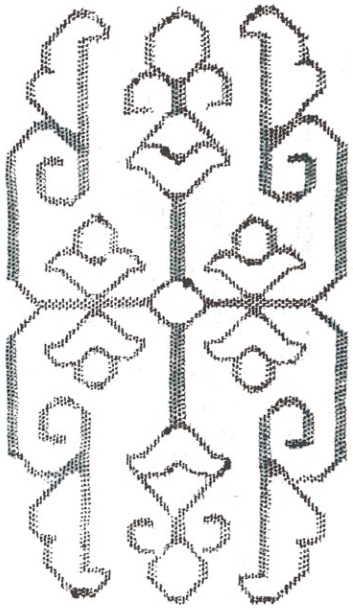


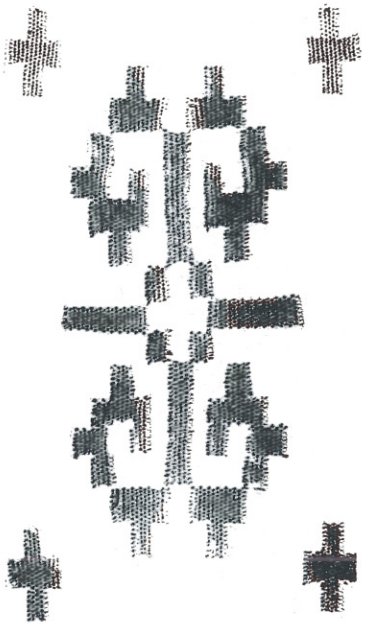


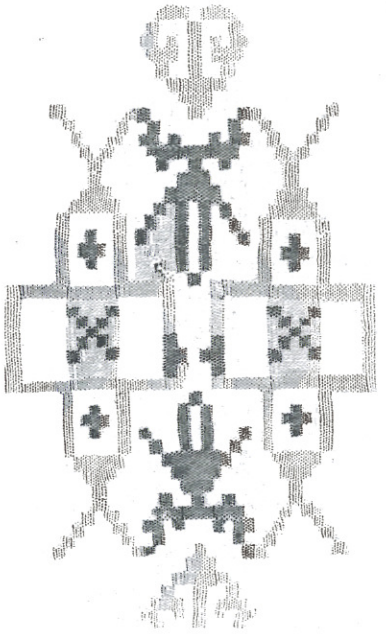


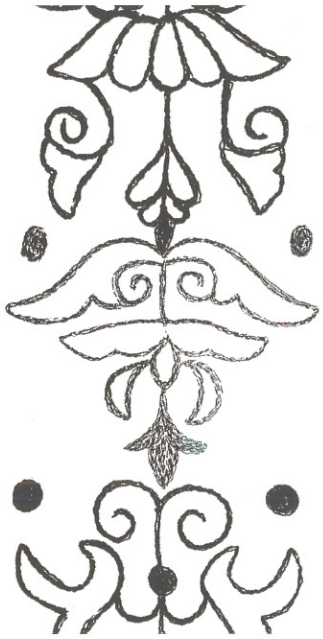


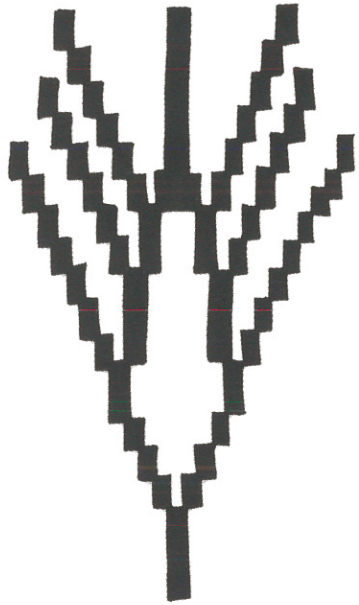


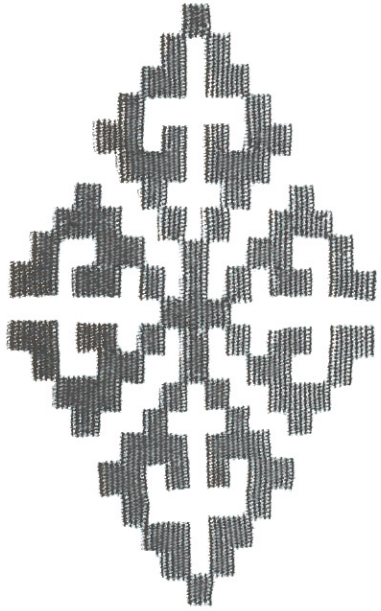


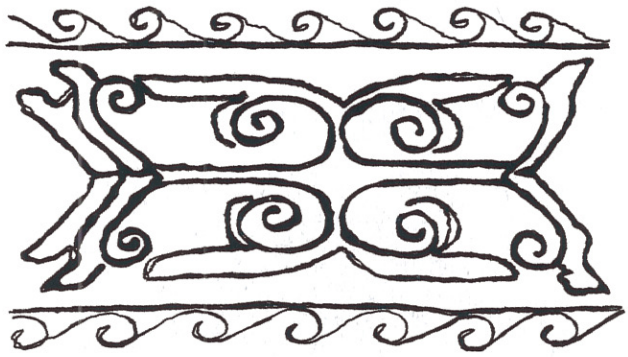


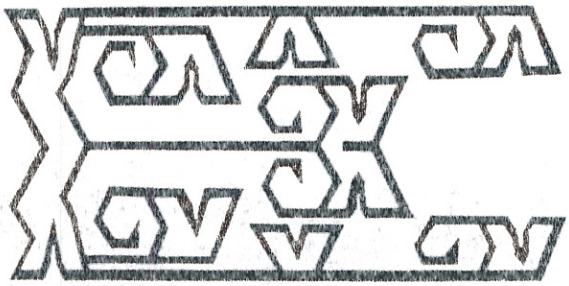


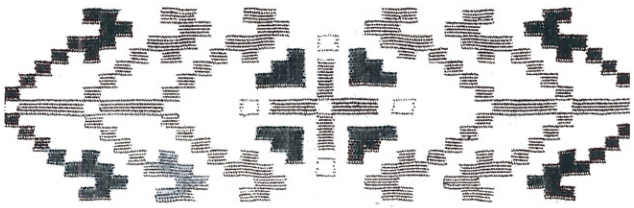


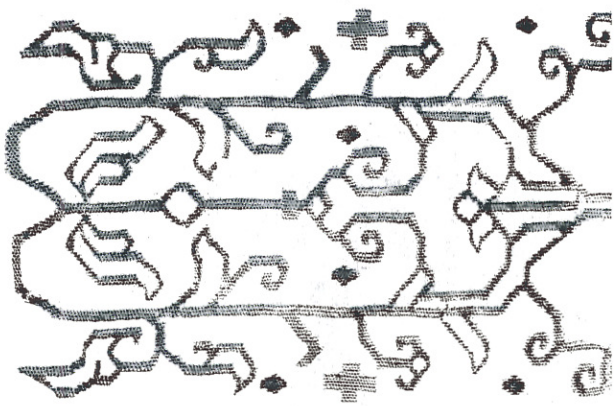


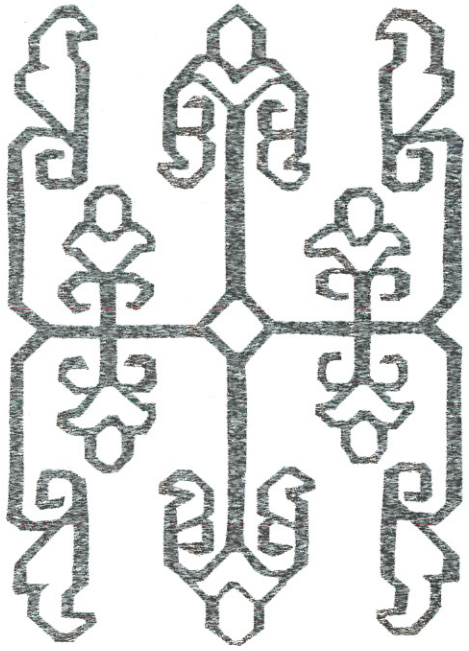


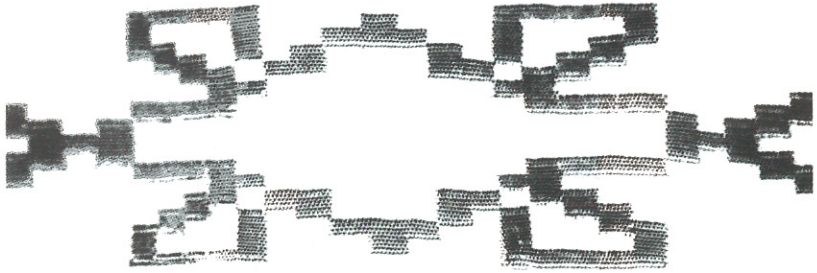


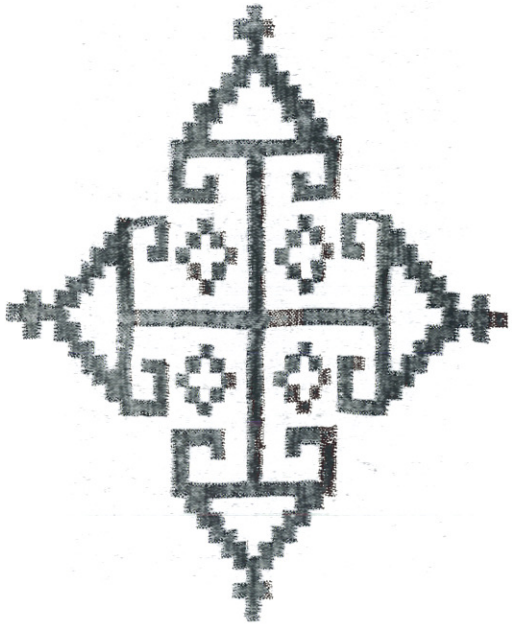


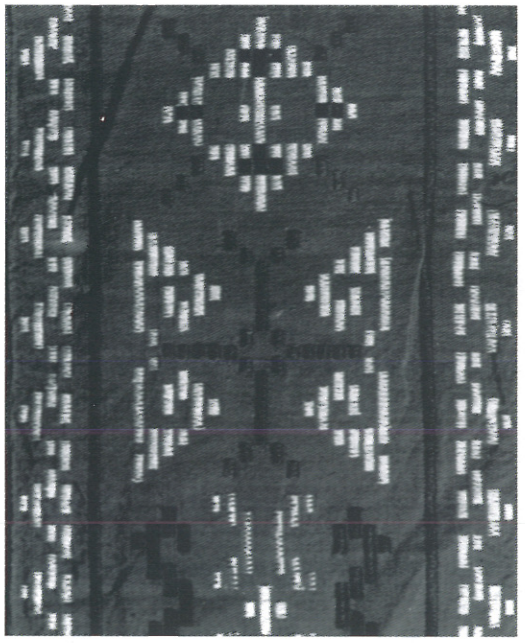


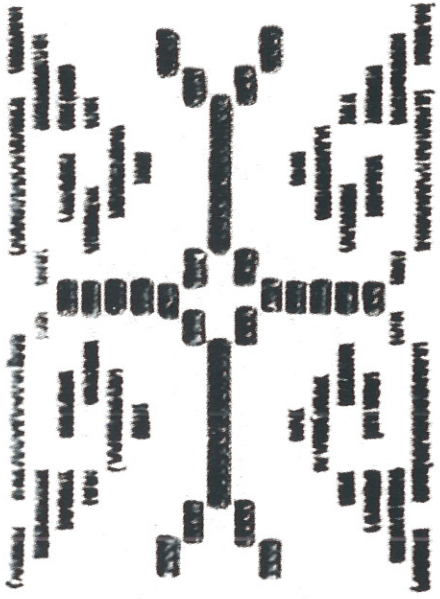


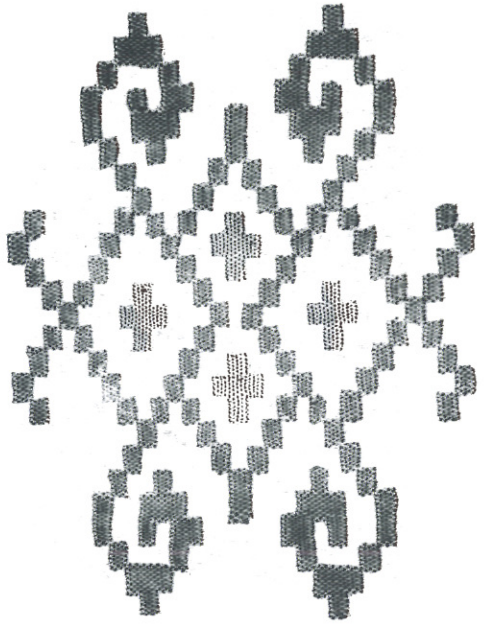


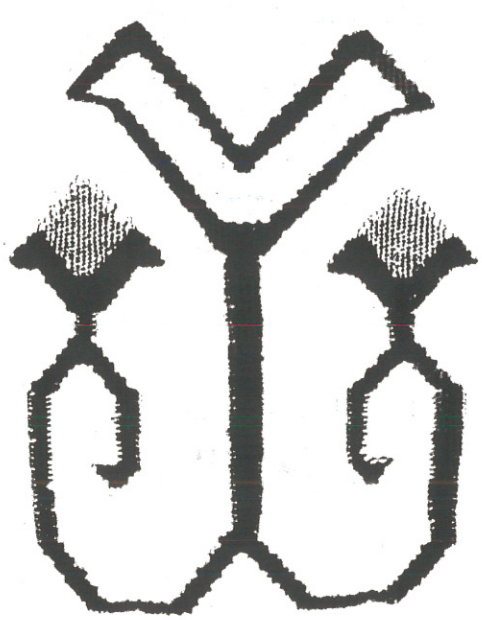


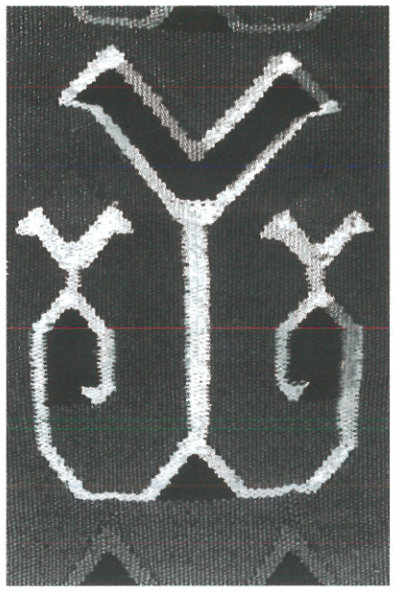


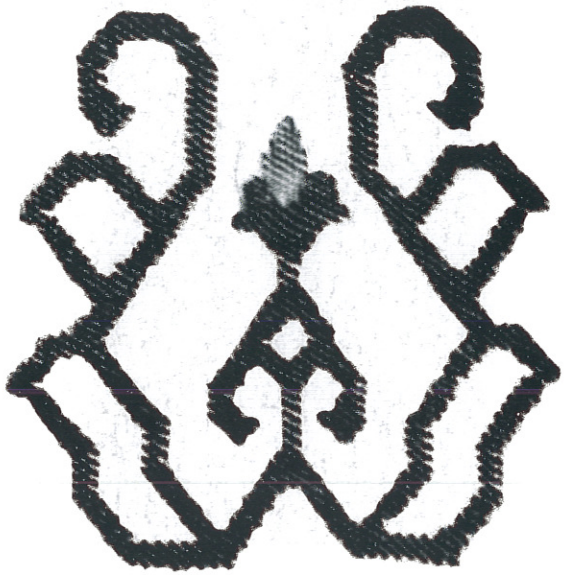


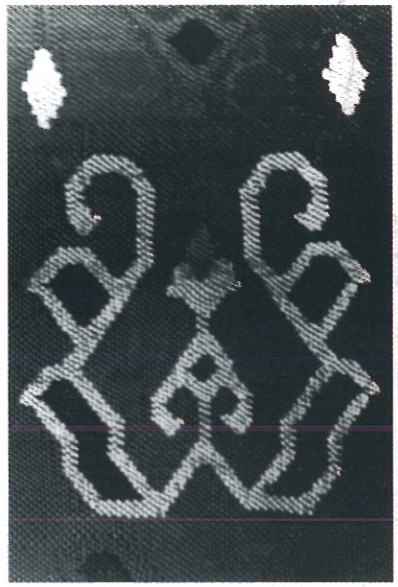


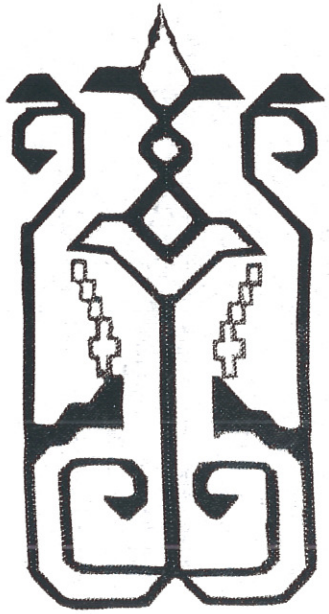


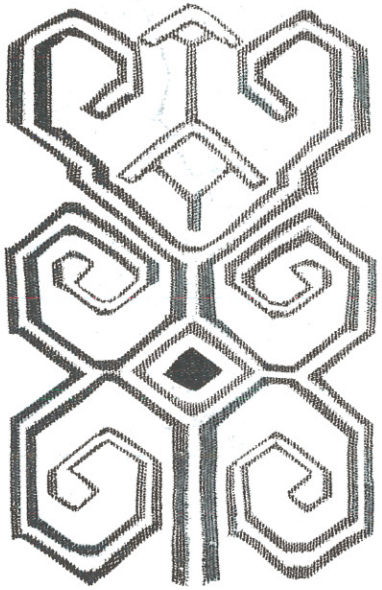


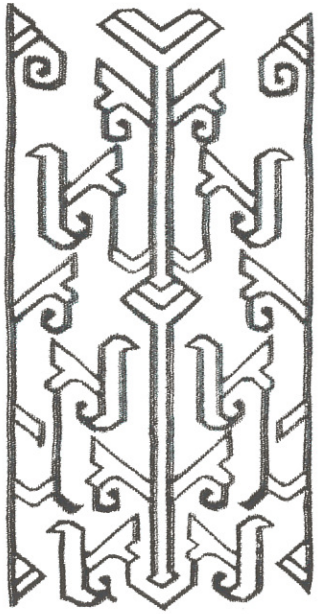


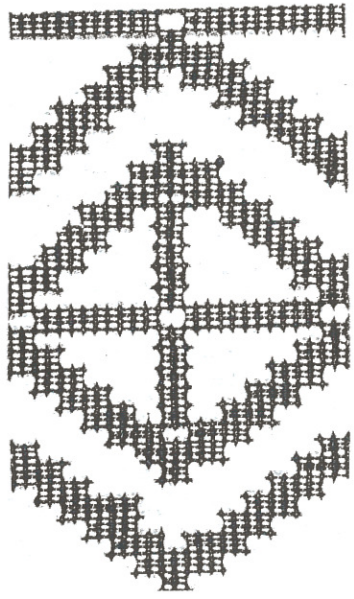


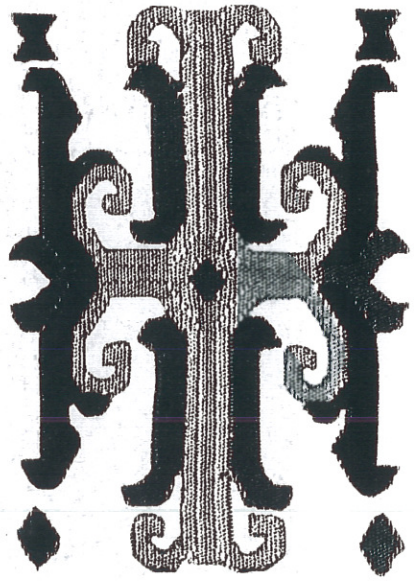


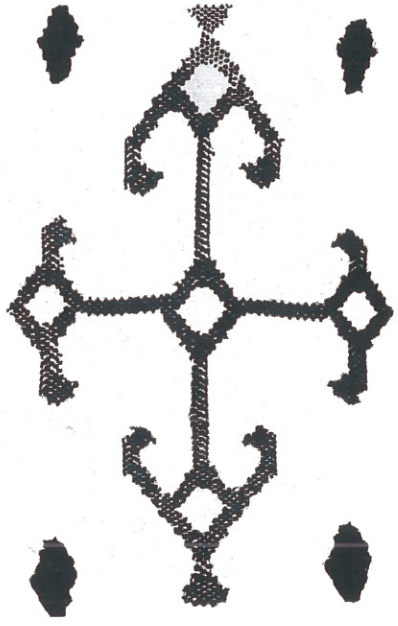


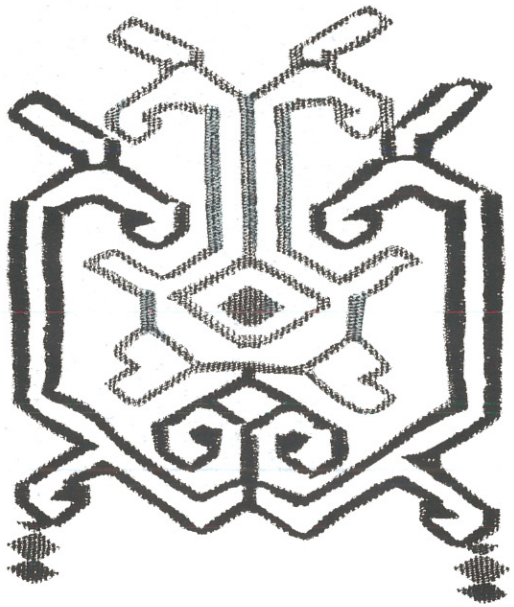


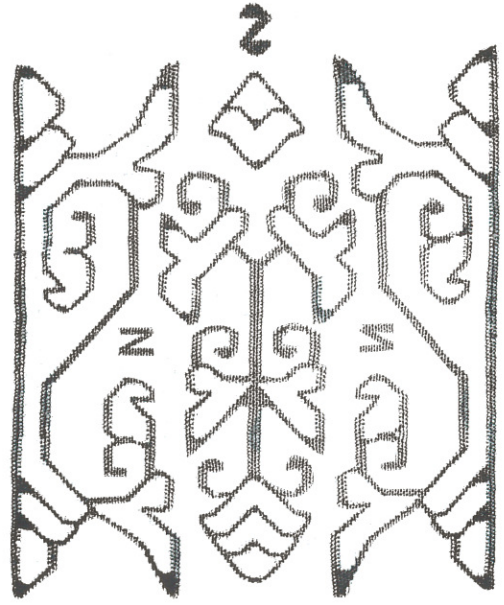


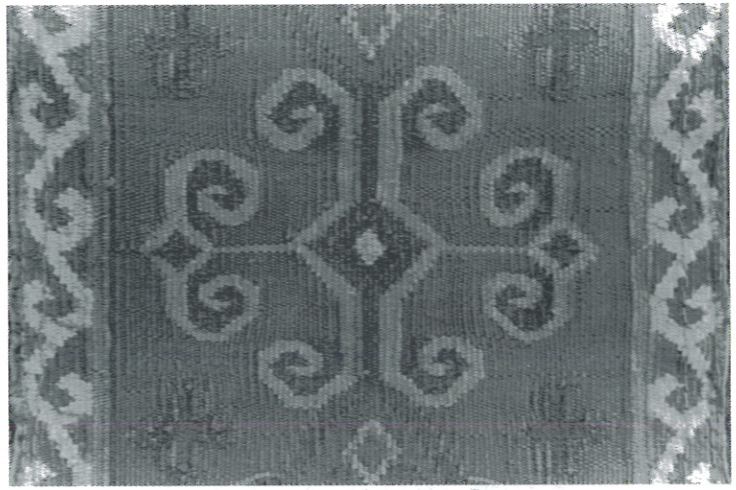


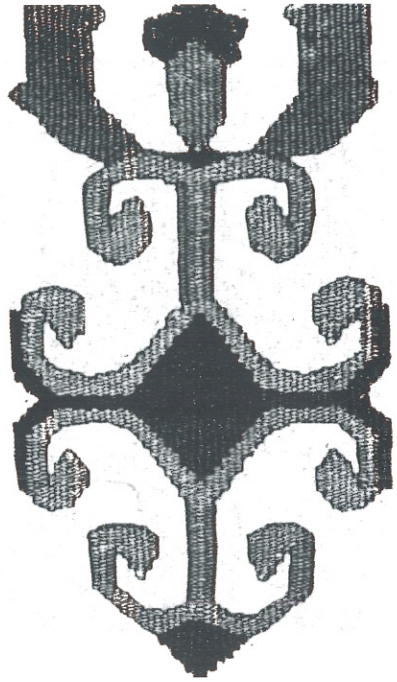


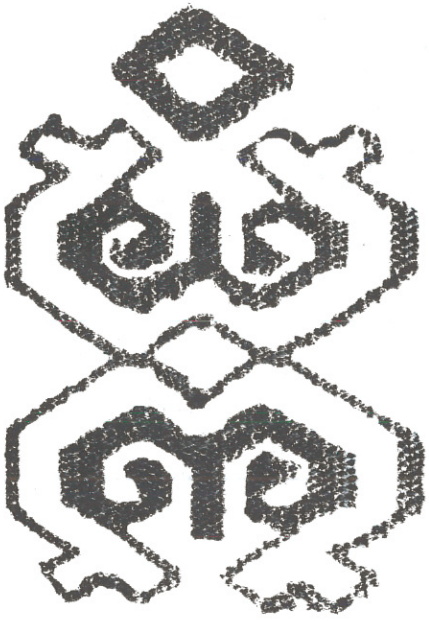


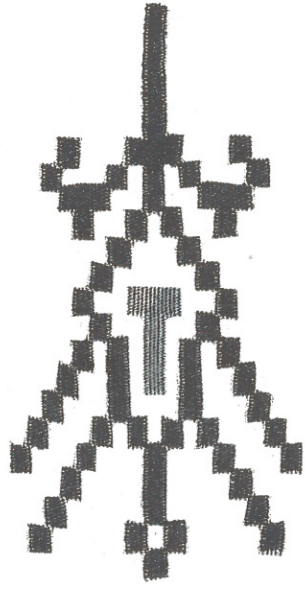


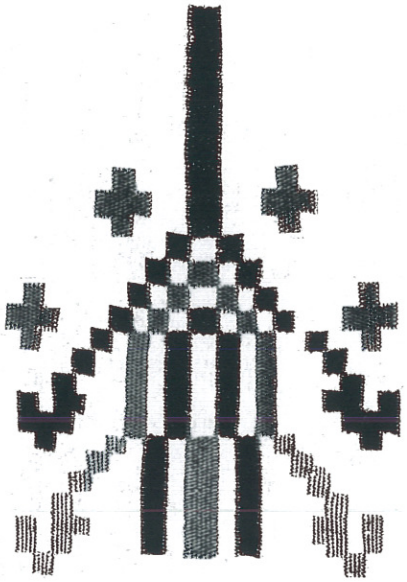


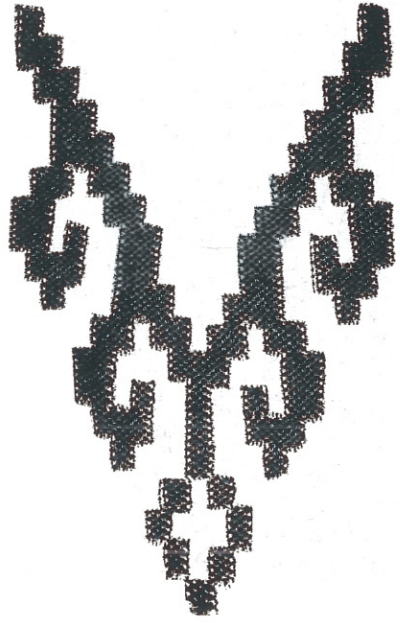


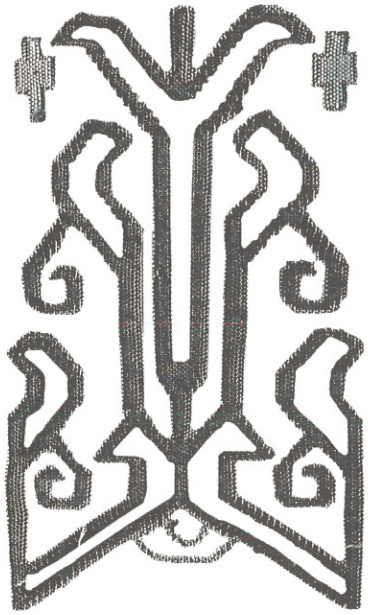


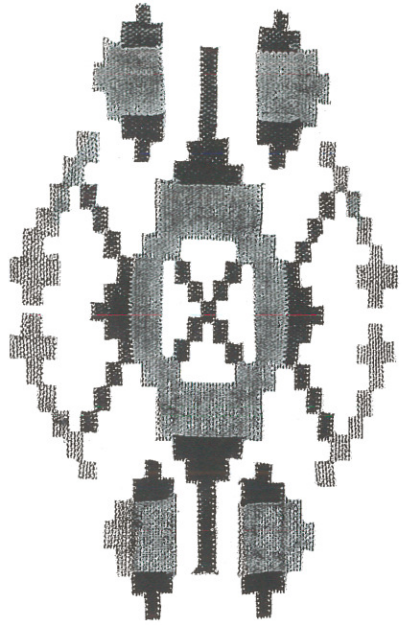


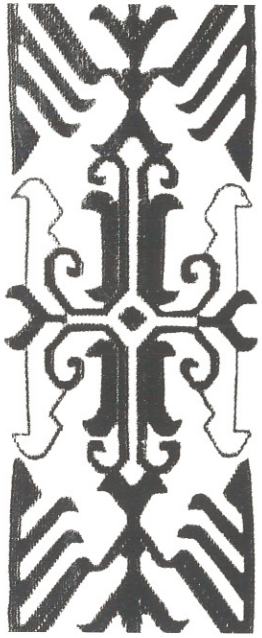


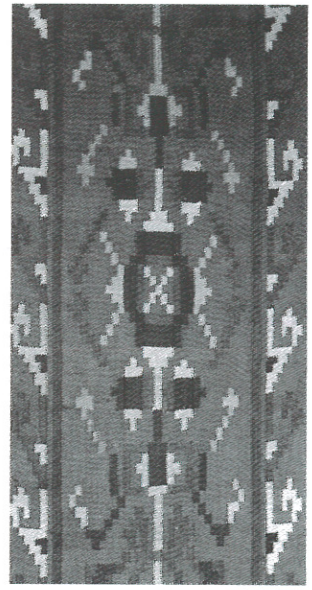


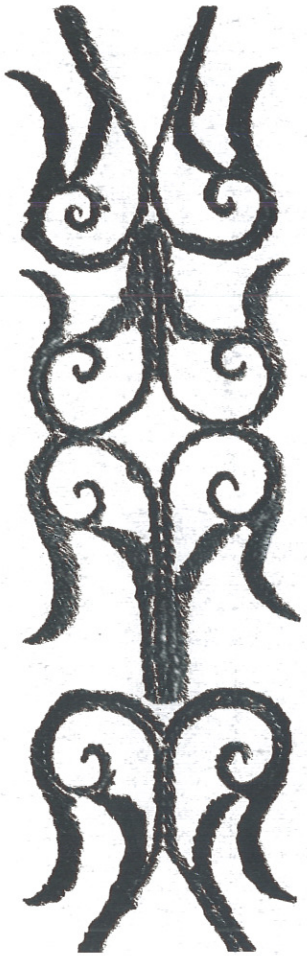


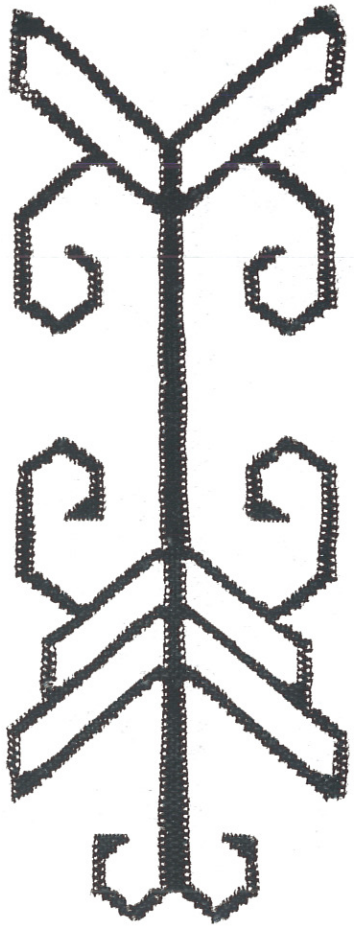


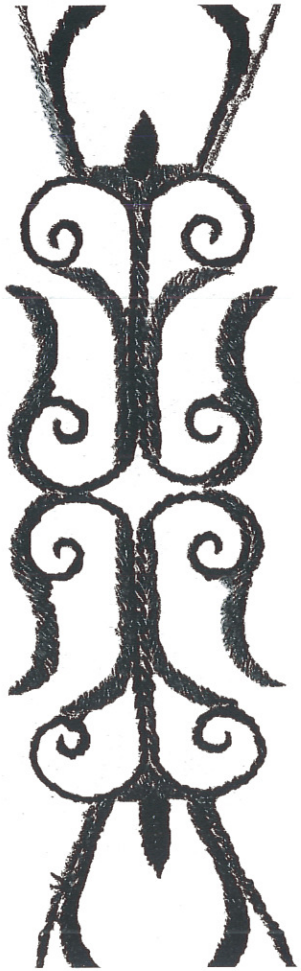


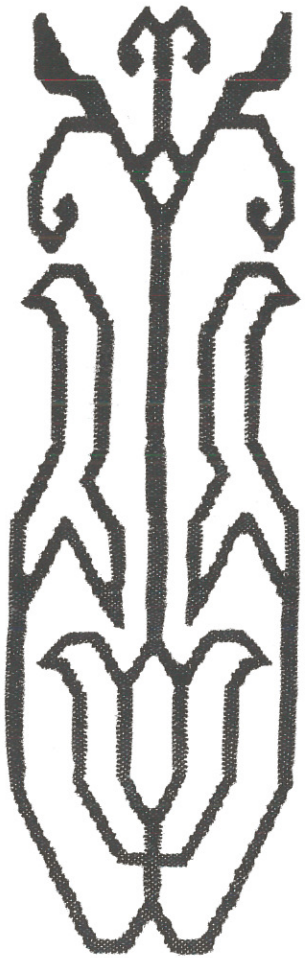


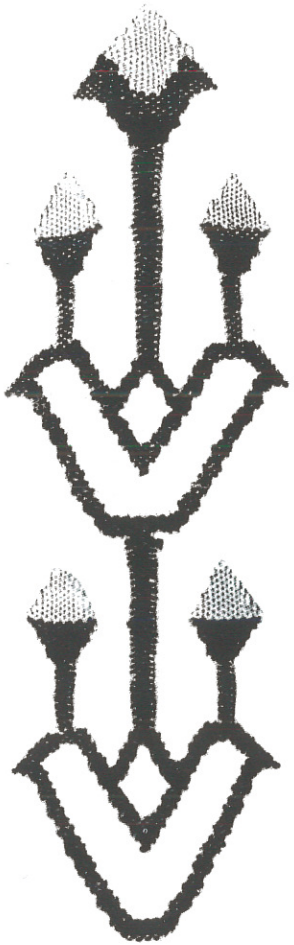


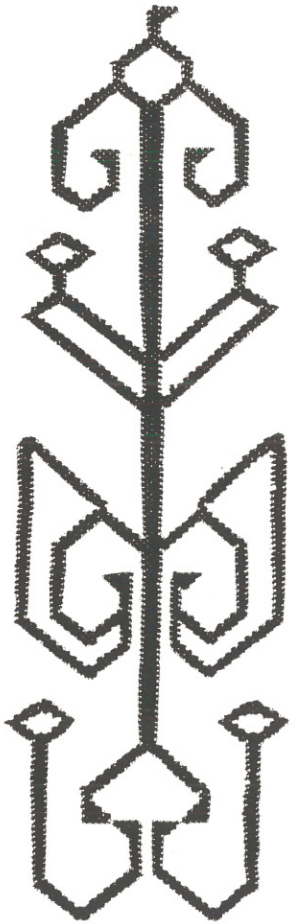


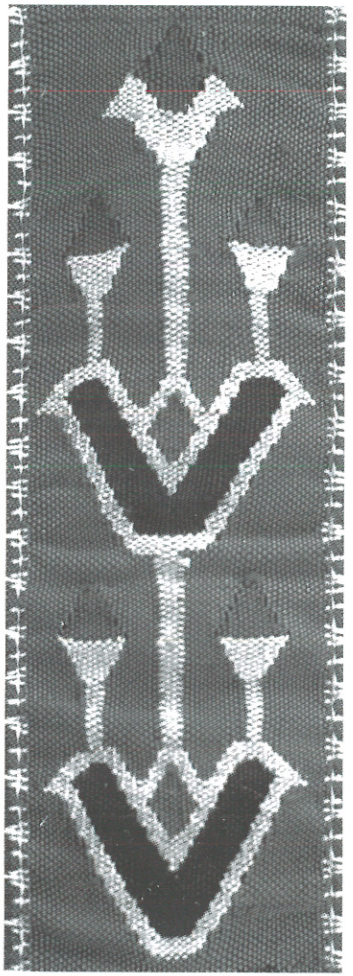


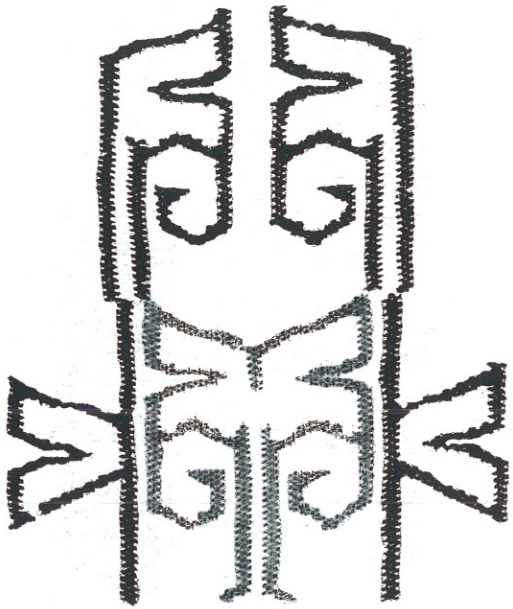


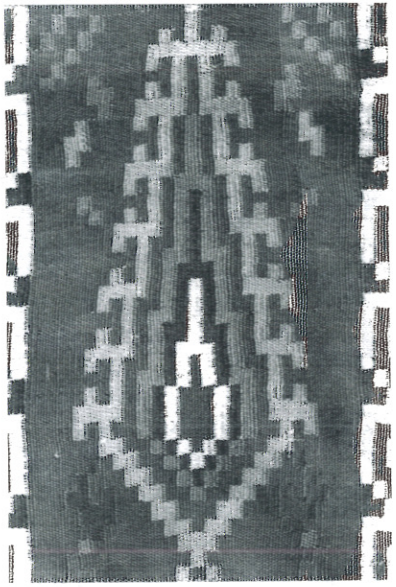


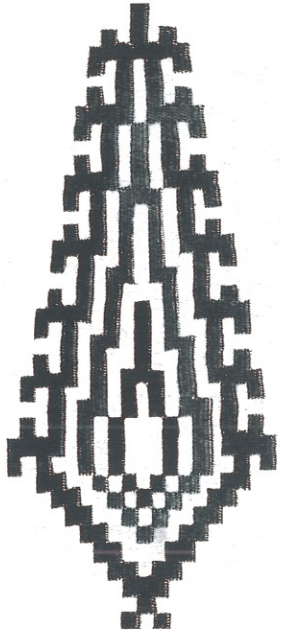


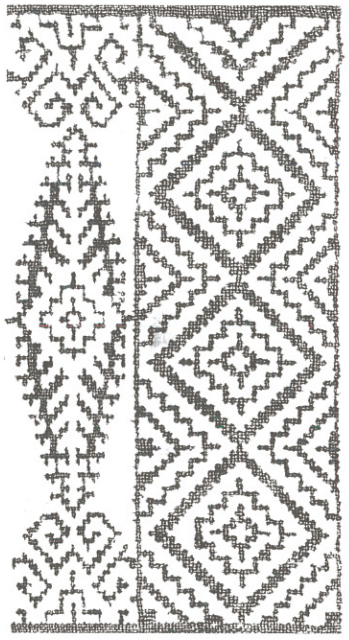


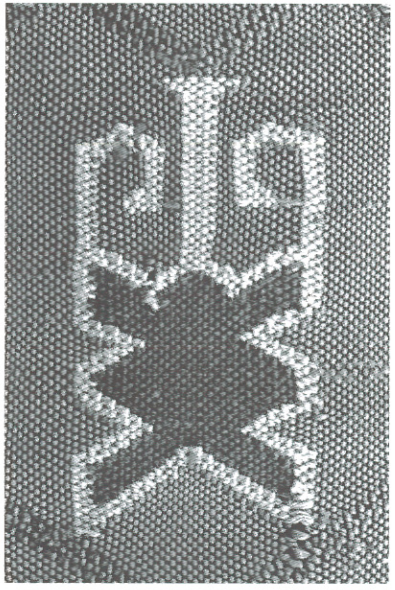


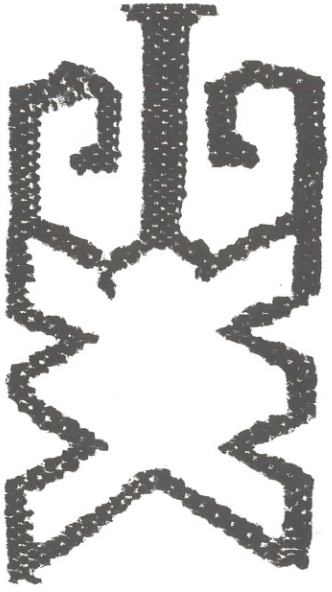












Tapestry

By Jesus T. Peralta

The most demanding kind of weaving in the Philippines is done in the South, principally among the Maranao of Lanao del Sur, the Yakan of Basilan, and the Tausug of Sulu. This is tapestry weaving, which is limited in its spread due to the difficulty and intricacy of the techniques involved in the manufacture of the cloth.

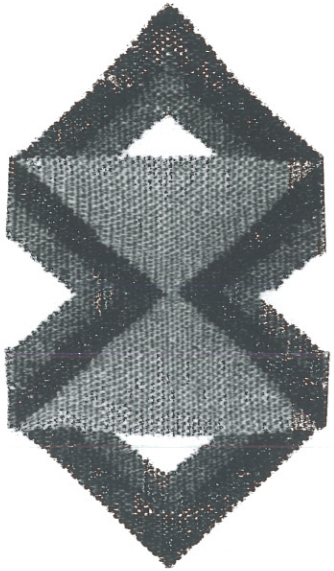
An example of this complex kind of weave is the Tausug *pis* or *pis syabit*. This is a square piece of cloth measuring a square meter, more or less. The *pis* is one of the most important accessory of the Tausug male attire. It is used traditionally as a head dress, and social rank is shown by the way it is tied and arranged on the head. Nowadays the *pis* is more often than not used as a scarf draped over one's shoulder. The term, *syabit*, means to hook, describing the technique in introducing the weft threads to produce intricate patterns into the warp threads.

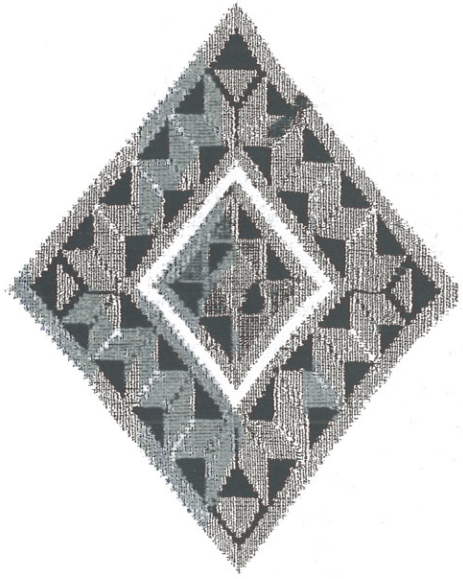
The design is a composite pattern of geometric forms of squares, diamonds, crosses, hexagons and polygons, all locked within a tightly organized grid. Usually, there is a design axis about which are spatial divisions that contain the myriad centimeter-sized geometric forms. Although highly geometric and non-representational, the weavers identify certain design elements that have objective correlatives in nature, such as mountains (*bud-bud*), fruits like the jackfruit (*bunga-bunga*), bats (*bali-kabod*), a kind of fish (*tiamban-tiamban*), stars (*gintong*) or butterfly (*kaba-kaba*). There is an entire cacophony of colors used in the intricate patterns. Across the generally dark warp threads, the more multicolored weft threads are introduced. The most commonly used are red, blue, yellow, black, pink, green, orange, with much of the tiny geometric form outlined in white.

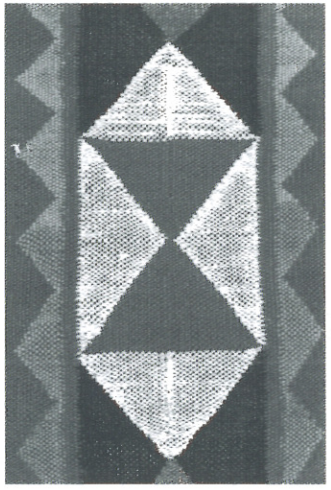
Tapestry weaving differs from plain weaving technique in many ways. For one, the four to five meter warp threads are stretched between a section of bamboo and a rounded piece of wood that is pulled tightly to spread the warp threads. The top bamboo is lashed onto the floor beam of the house. The weaver starts at the lower end where there is comb with very fine slats. What makes the weaving distinctive is that it does not use a continuous weft thread but discontinuous ones. The weft threads are inserted by hand with the use of a finely carved wooden tool. There is no principal weft and all weft threads are discontinuous. The weft threads in cones, usually eight, conforming to the number of colors to be used, are placed just above the weaver's place for easy access when shifting to another colored thread. Traditionally the threads are of silk.

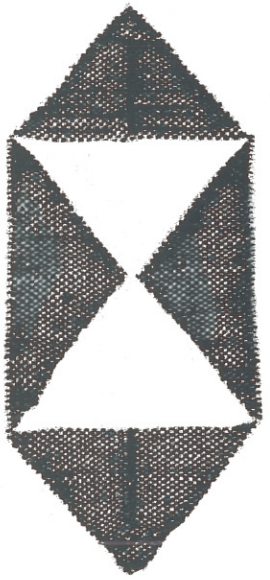
The Maranao *langkit*, the Yakan, *saputangan* and *inalaman*are all made using this technique.

Maranao

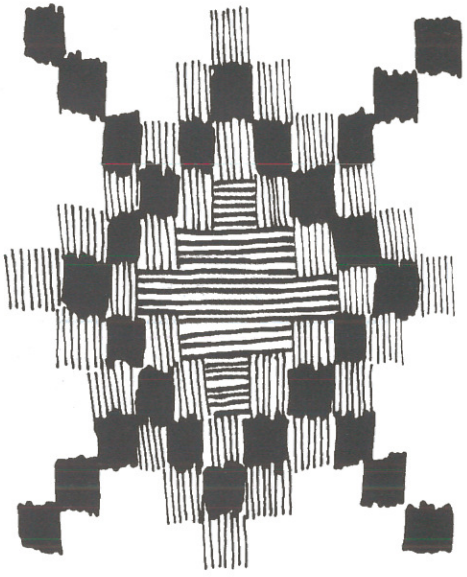


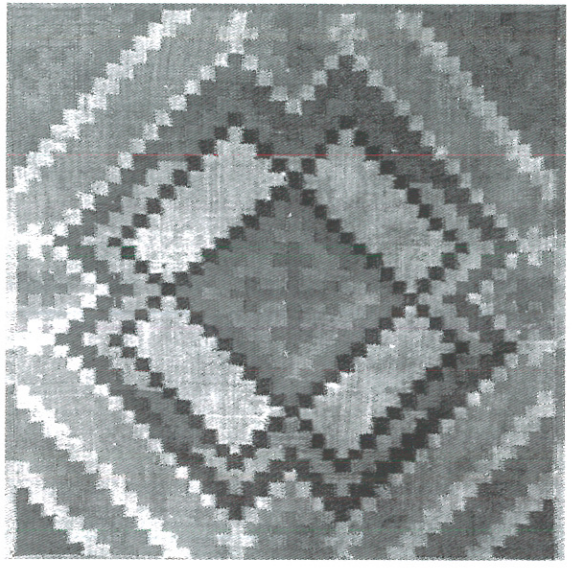


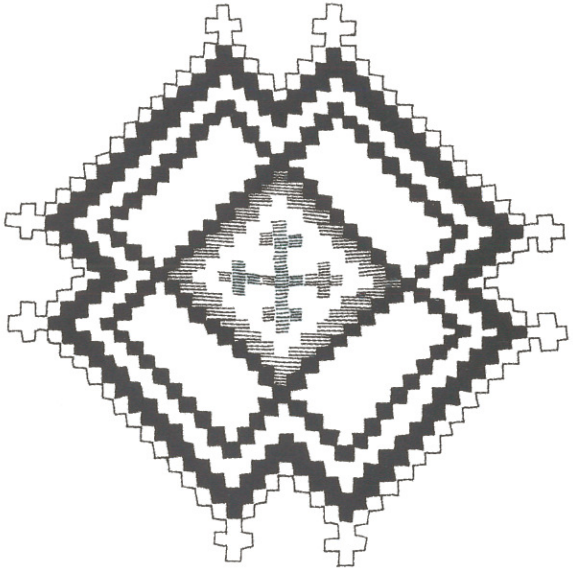


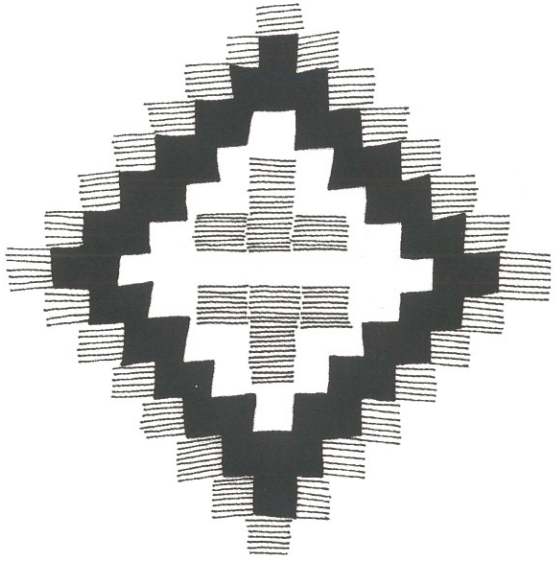


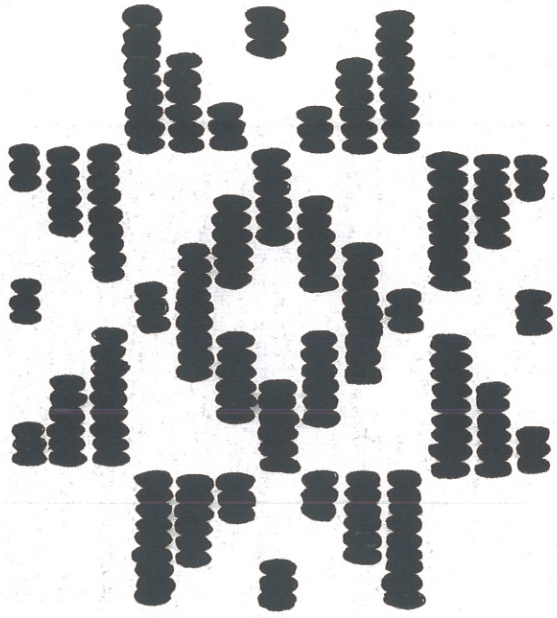
Tausug Sama

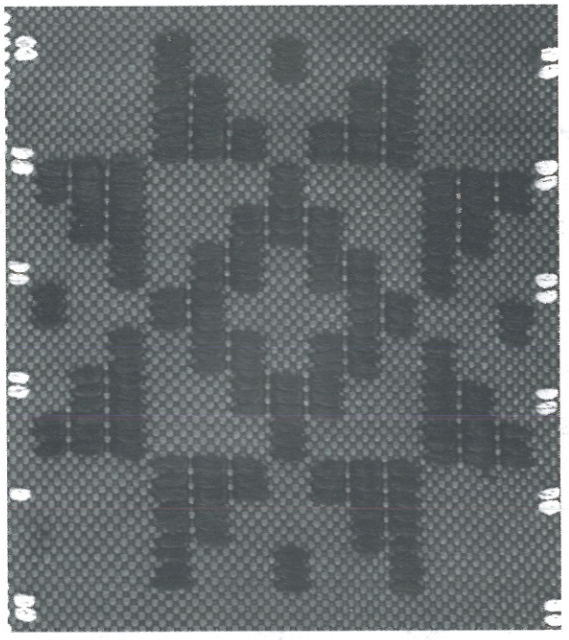


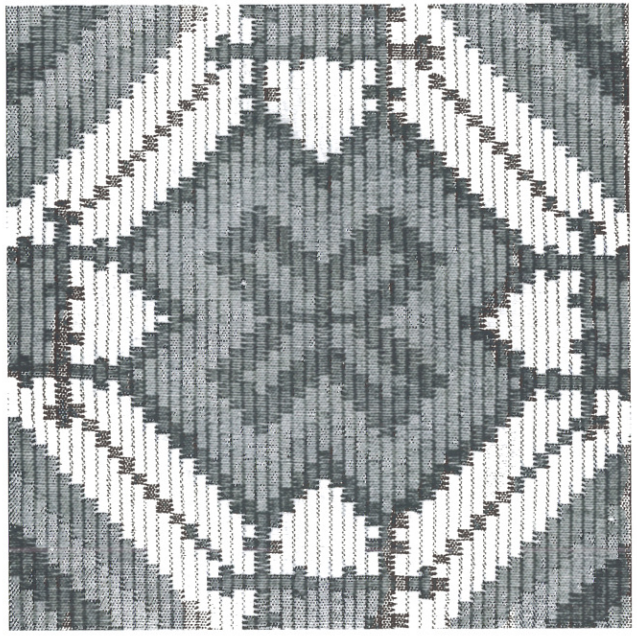


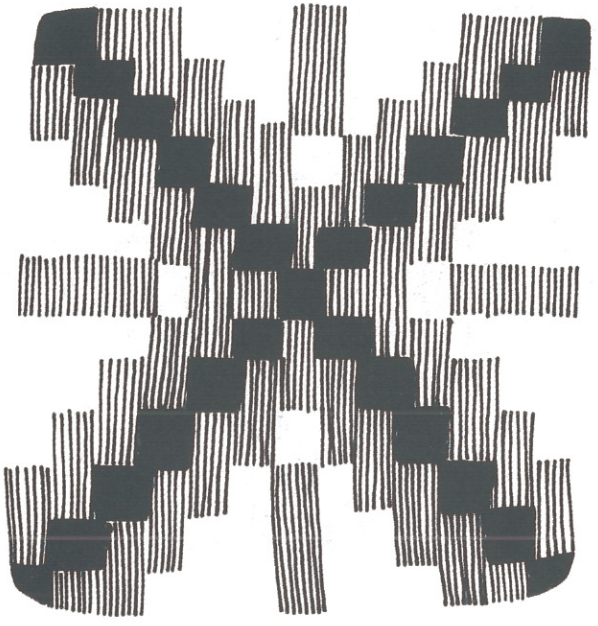


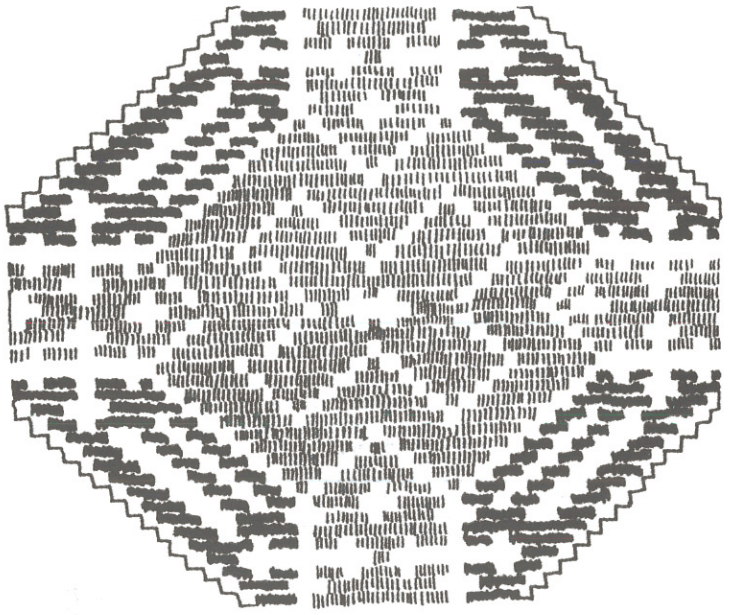


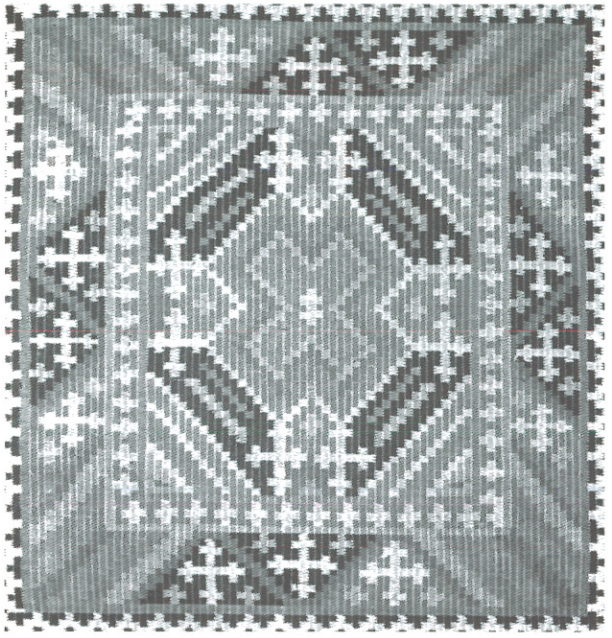


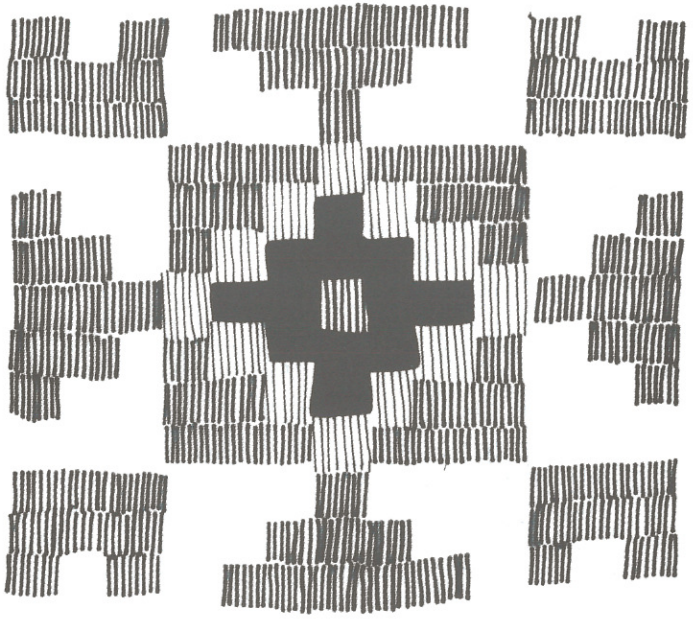


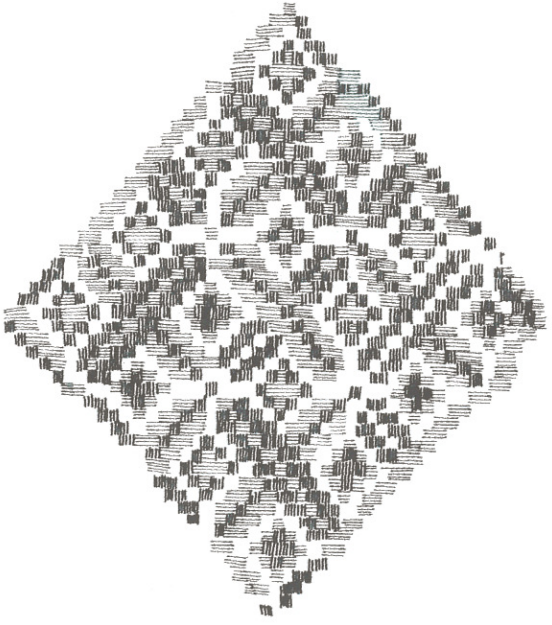


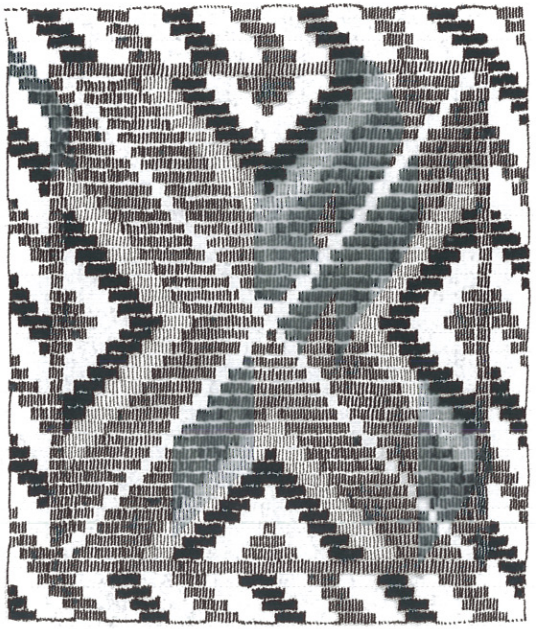


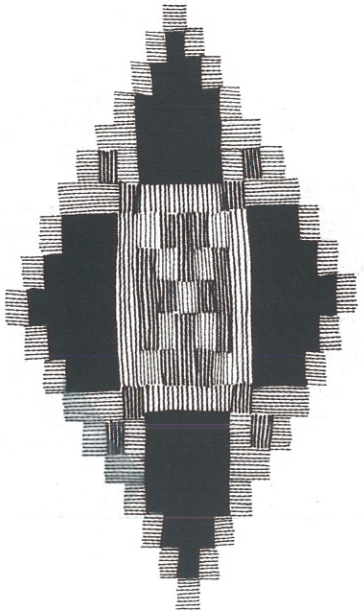


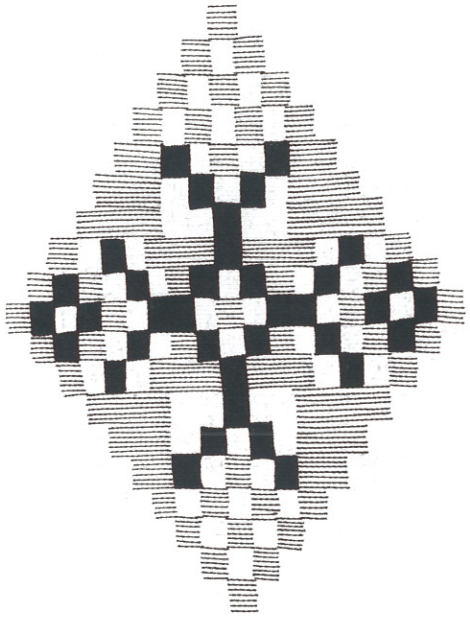


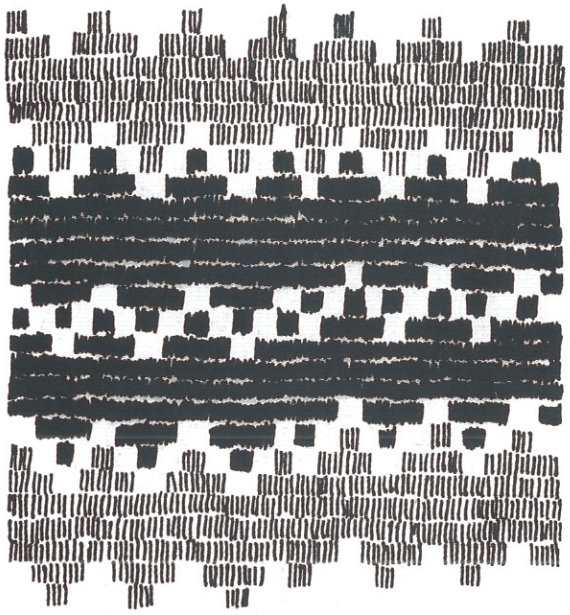


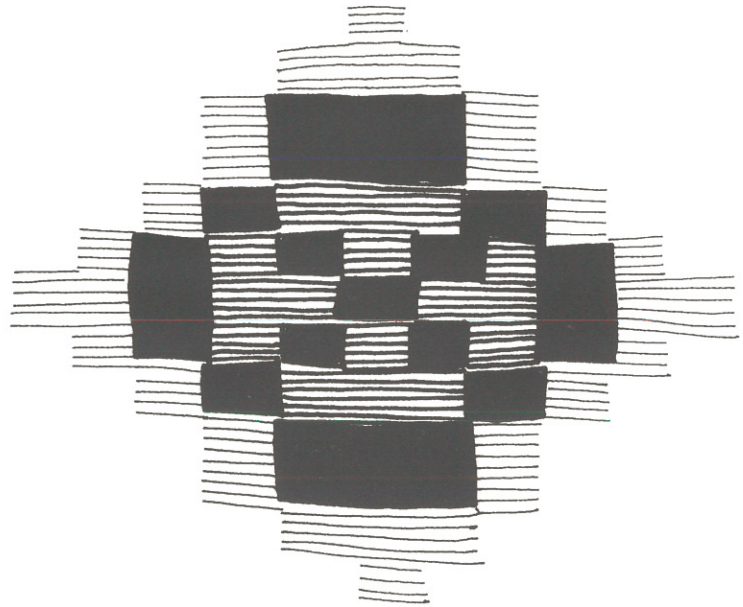


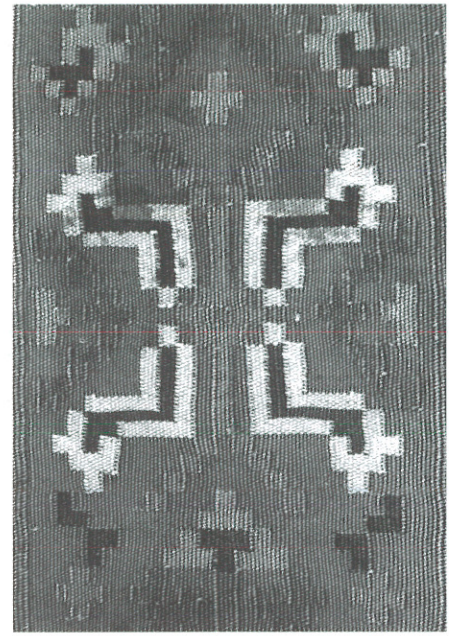


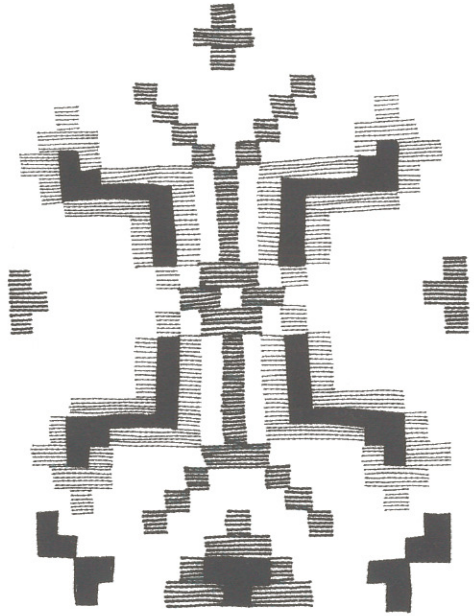


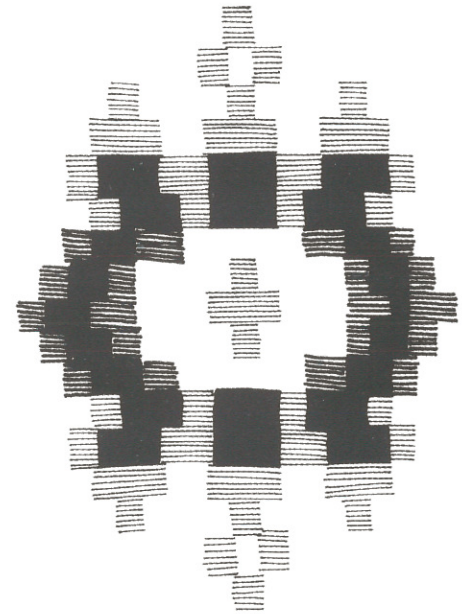


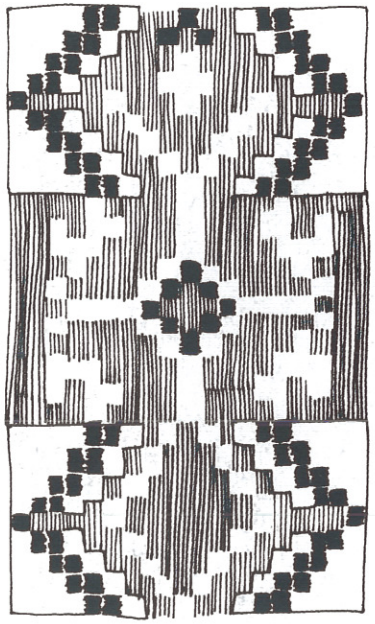


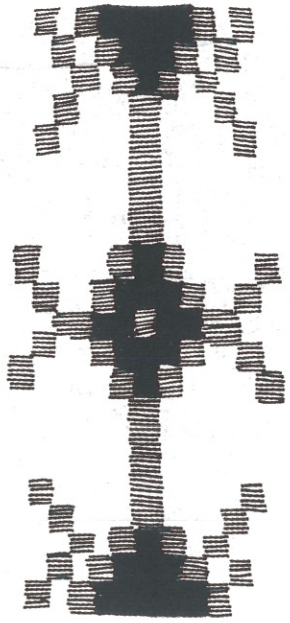


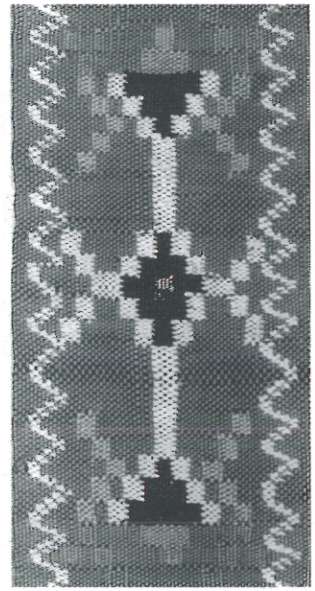


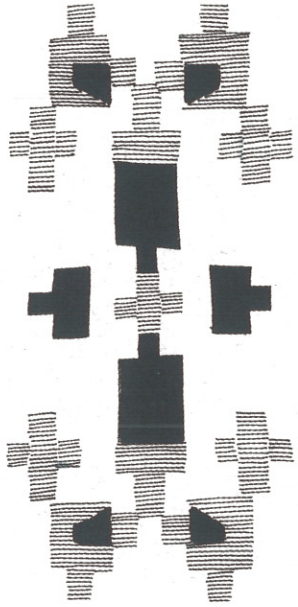


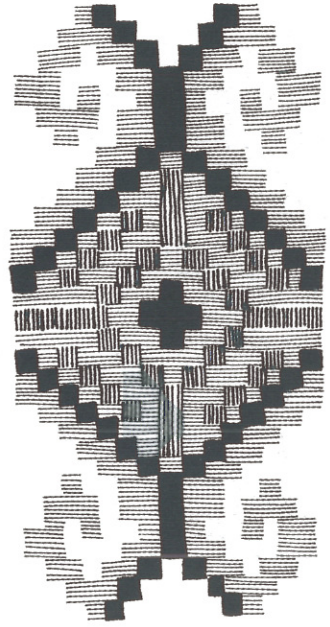


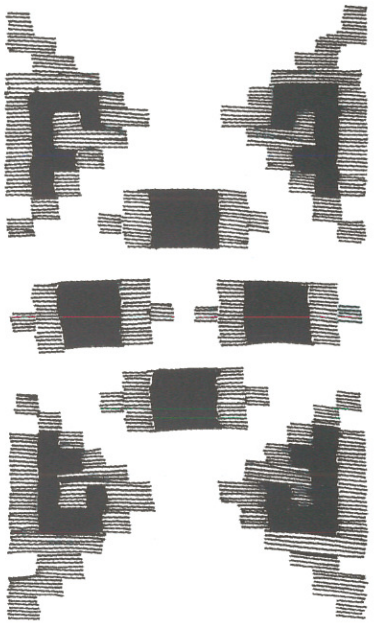


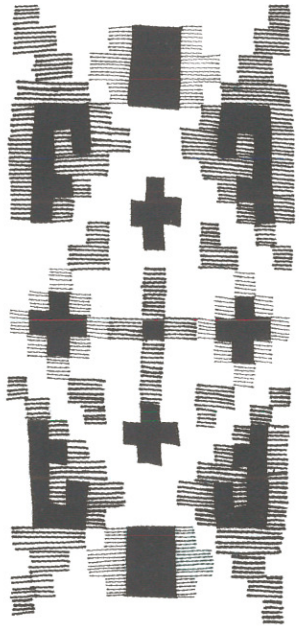


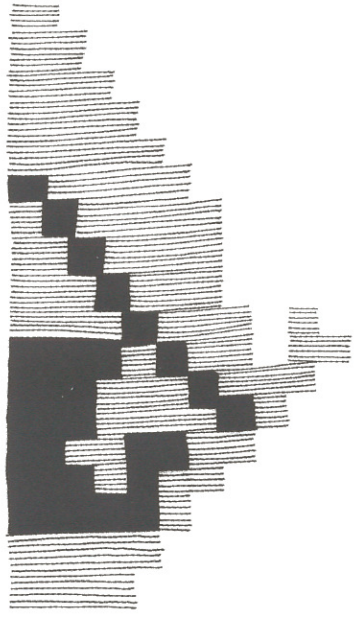


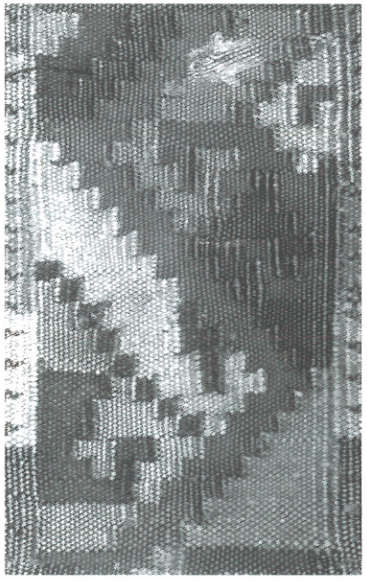


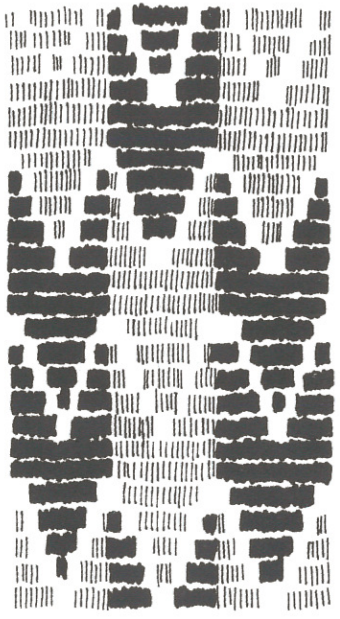


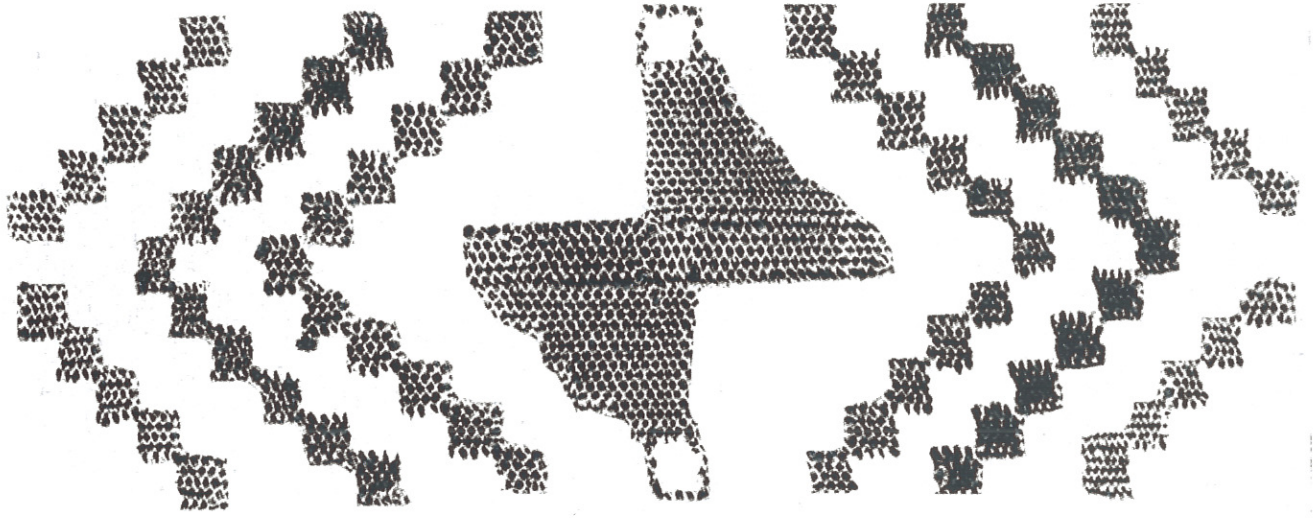




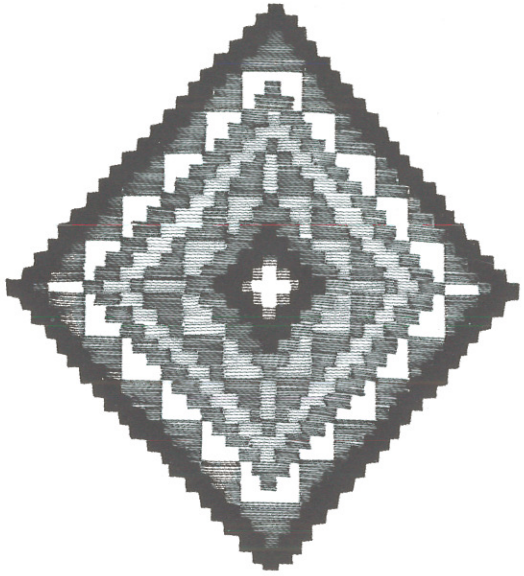


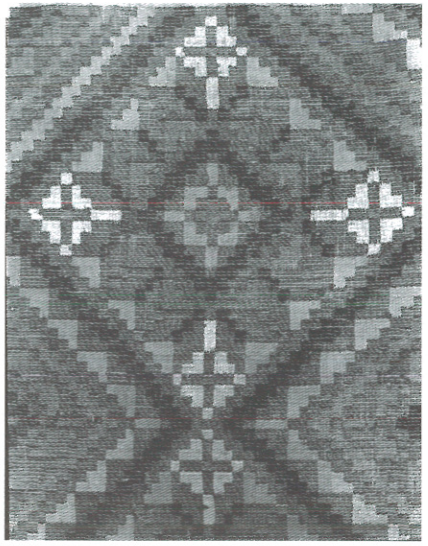


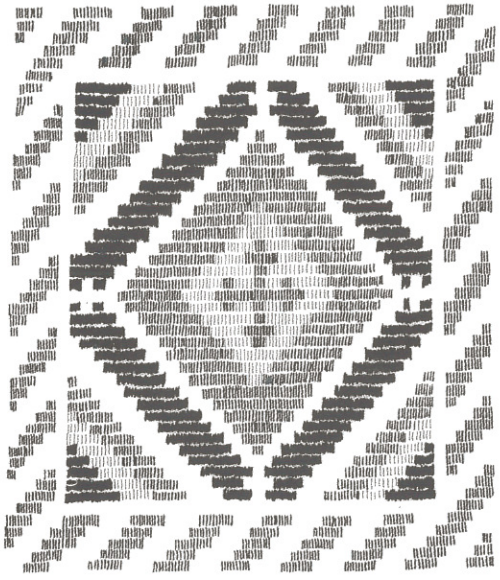


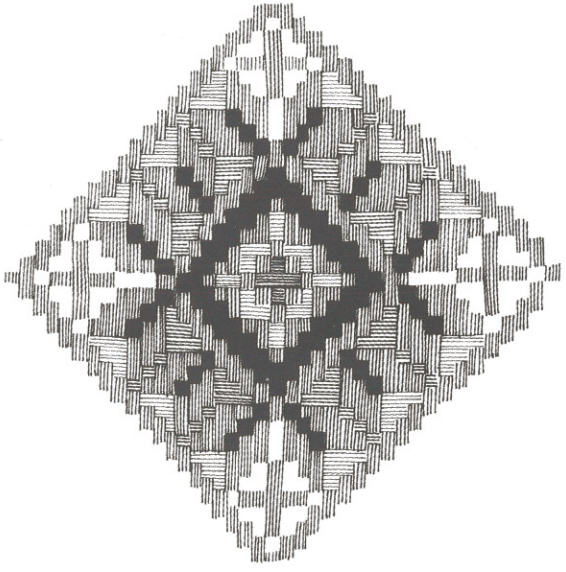


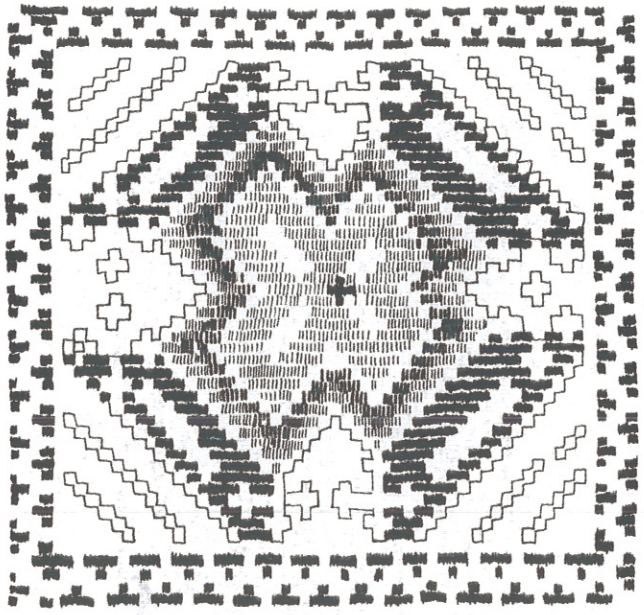
Yakan

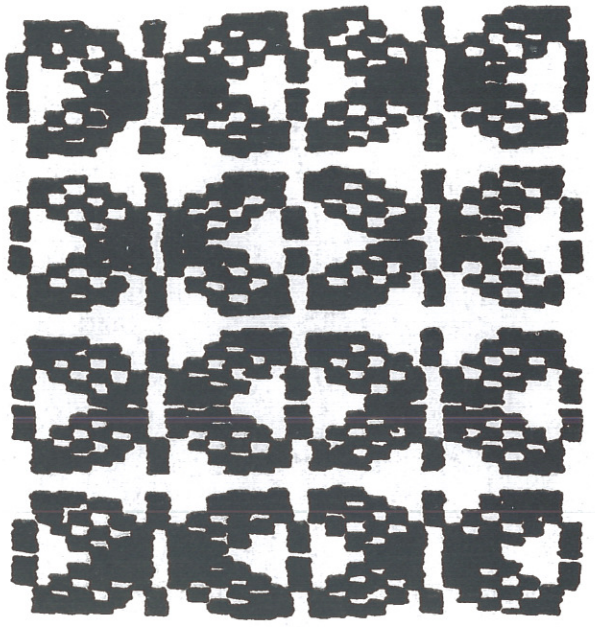


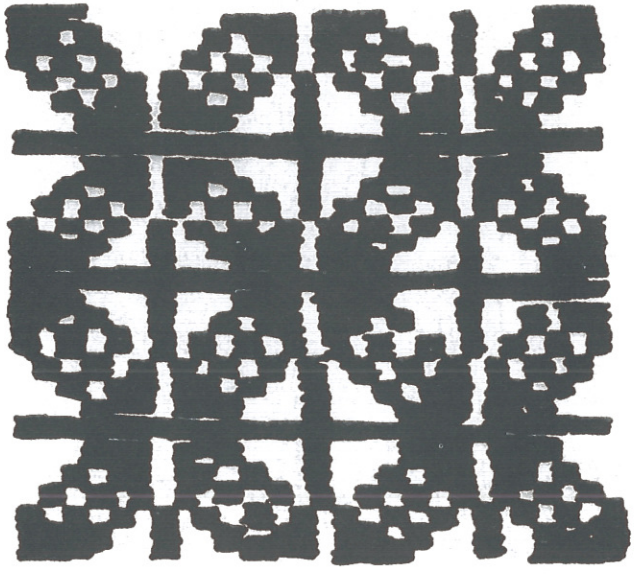


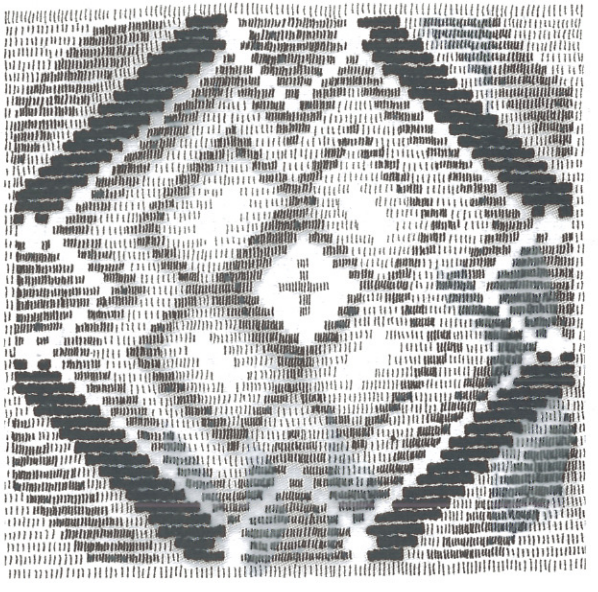


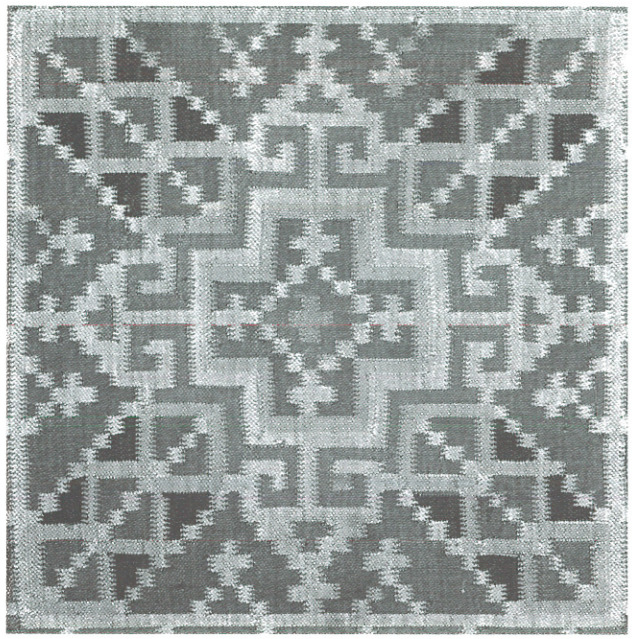


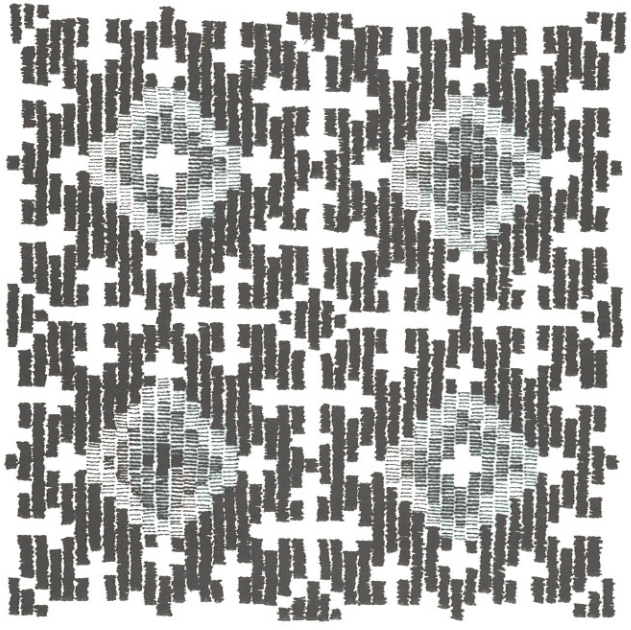


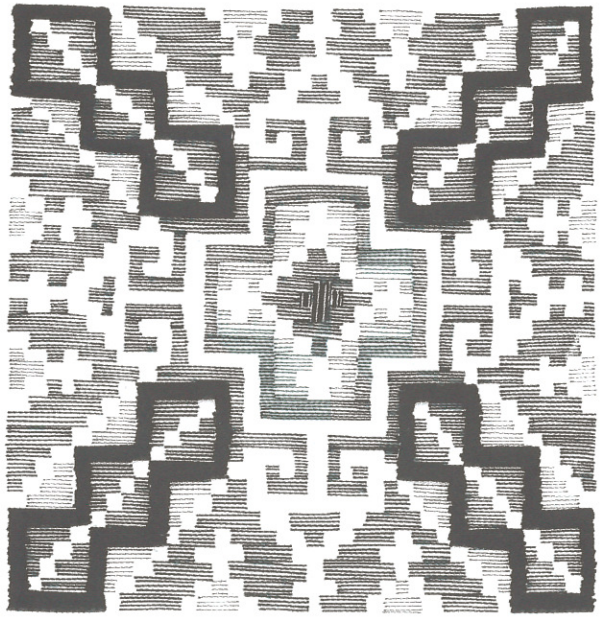


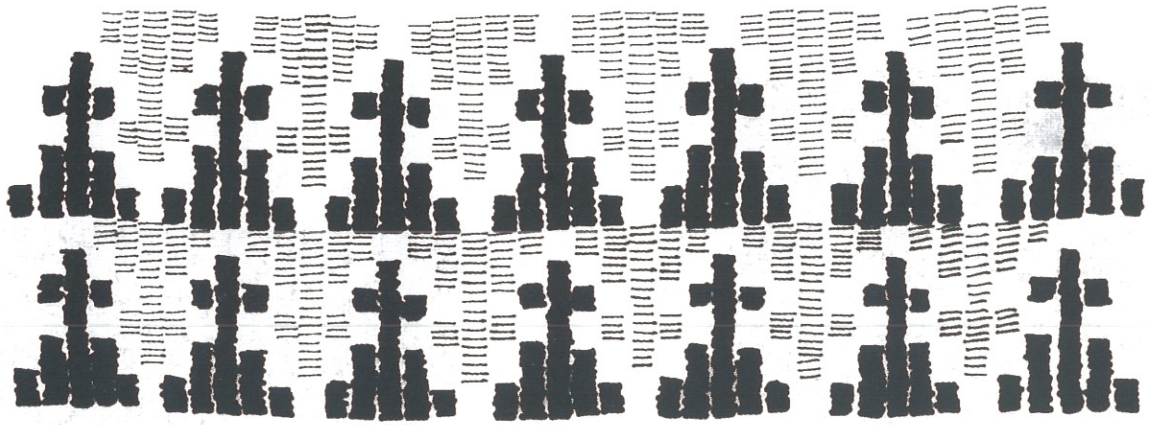


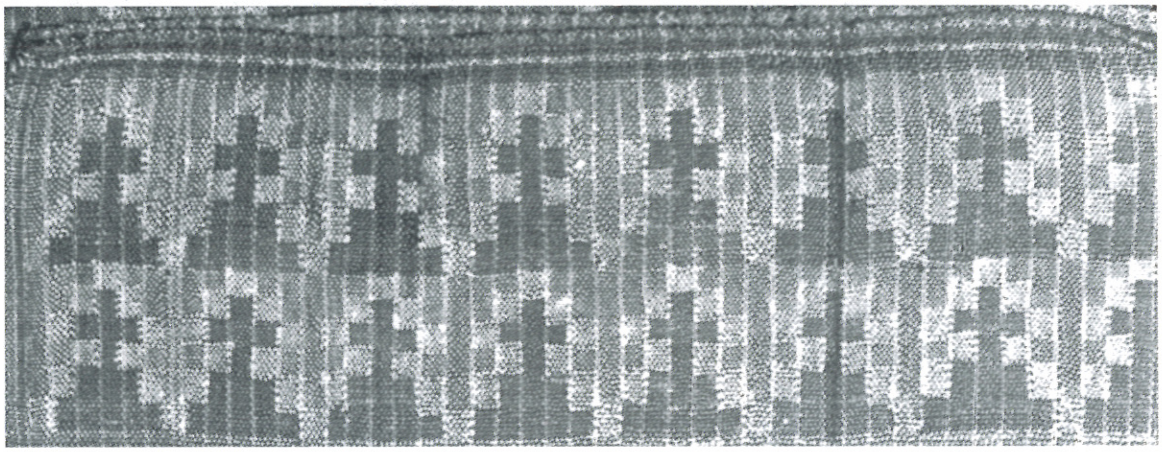


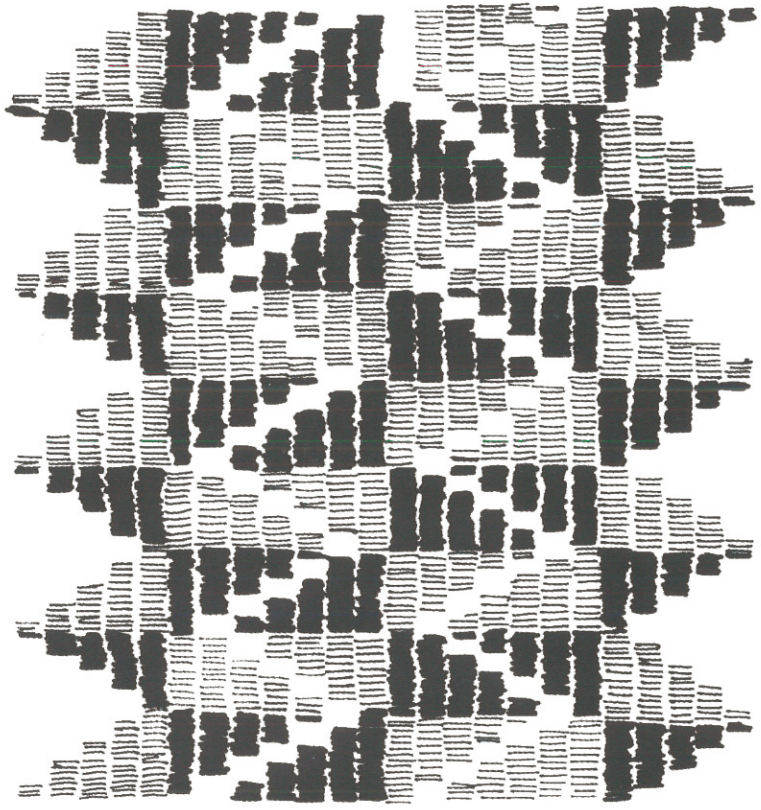


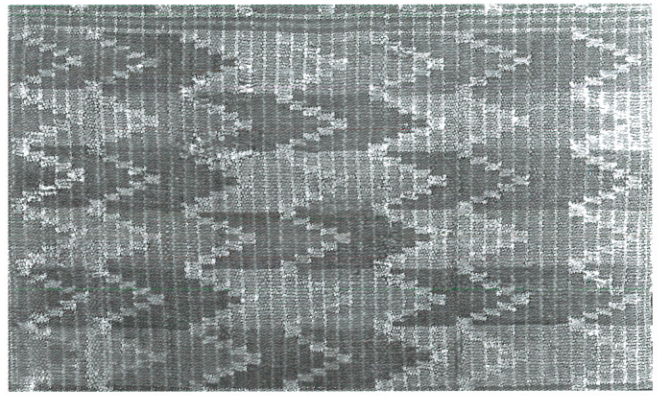












Woodcraft

Woodcraft

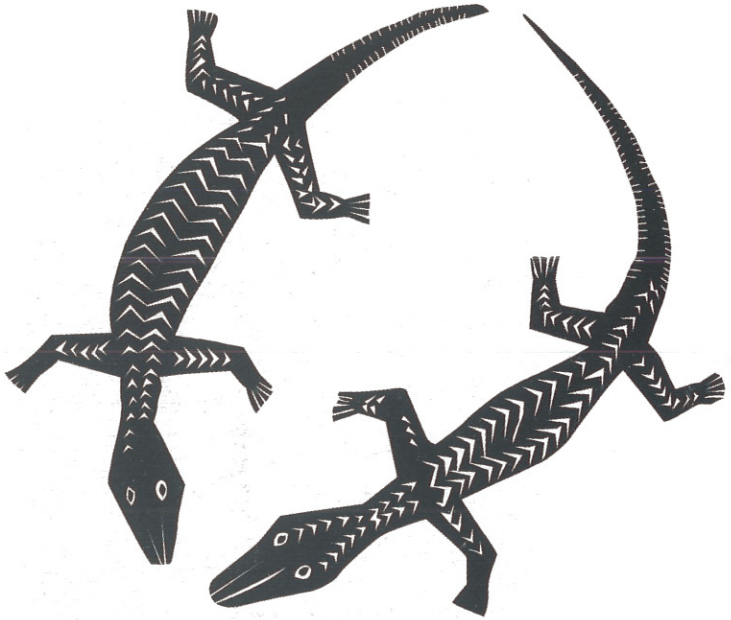
By Jesus T. Peralta

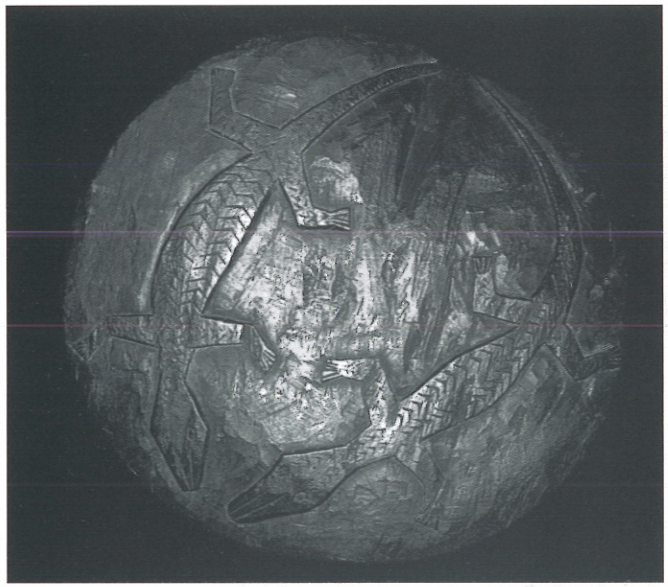
The most inveterate artistic wood carvers in the Philippines are the Maranao of Lanao del Sur. This is not to say that woodworking is not common elsewhere in the country from end to end, wood being one of the most ubiquitous indigenous materials. Depending on the culture, wood becomes an artifact that reflects the lifestyle of each group of people. The Maranao is flamboyant in all the forms of art they conceive, stemming from their lifestyle. "Okir" is their word for art, which connotes carving, as in the Tagalog word, "ukit". This suggests that carving preceded the appearance of painting.

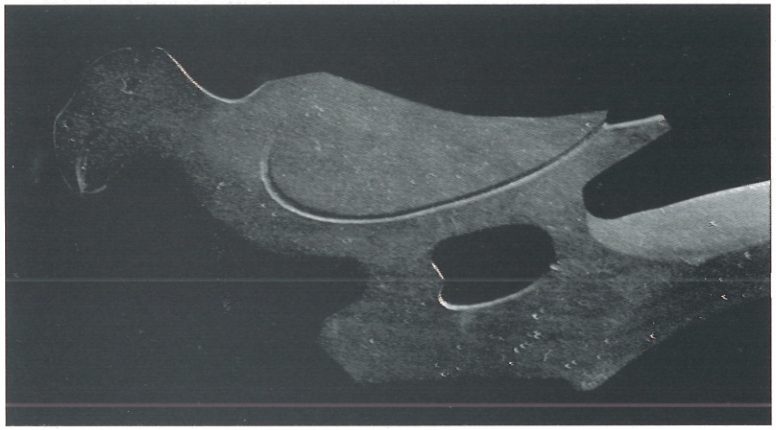
The most common woodcarving is left without the application of any color. Many representative images of deities are often left this way, such as the coffin pegs of the Ibaloy and Kankanay in the north, or the *manangs* on the walls of Manobo houses in the south. Further depiction includes the incision of facial and other bodily features. Later these are filled in with soot for contrast. Incisions, too, are carved into surfaces as symbolic representations if not, decoration. A reversal of this is the blackening of entire images, whether deliberate or not, as the *binullul* or the *binabbuy* of the Ifugao. The Tagbanua and the Pala'wan carve votive animal and bird figures. They blacken these by rubbing the surfaces with sweet potato sap then singeing them over fire. Then, they go a step farther – they incise, excise or scrape off some of the blackened surface to introduce different patterns of design. As a more sophisticated technique to provide contrast, patterns are excised from a broad and flat surface like that of the sides of trunks or the finial of a comb and inlaid with bits of shell or bone.

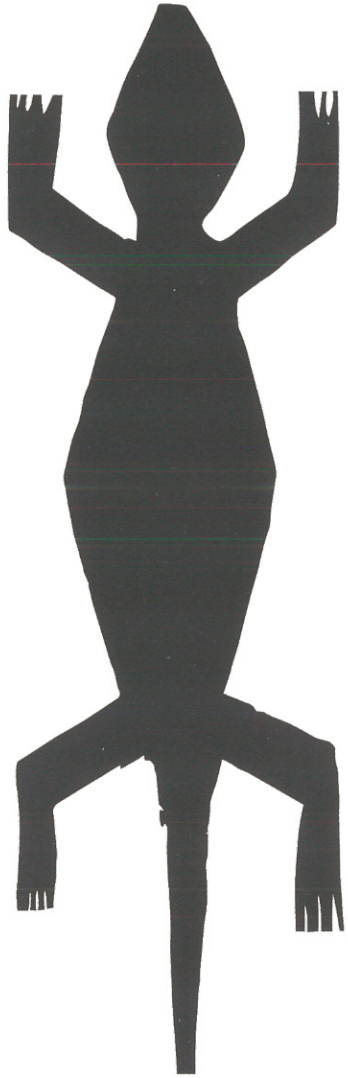
Maranao woodcarving exemplifies the most exuberant. Samples of this are found in the *torogans* – the royal houses – in their *panolongs*, or butterfly-wing like floor beam ends, the *rampatan* – the main roof beam or intestine of the house, in the posts, walls, or any open area that can accommodate decoration. The decoration conforms to a highly conventional art composed of named and distinct fundamental motifs life *pako* (fern frond), *dapal* or *raon* (leaf), *potiok* (bud), and others. These are assembled into different combinations that are again named precisely – *armalis* (an asymmetrical arrangement), *birdo* (vertical and symmetrical arrangement), *magayoda* (horizontal arrangement), and so on. The more intricate combinations are the most appreciated and very popular *sari manok* and *niaga-naga*. A peculiarity of carving among the Maranao is that when the surface of a piece of work is beveled, this is not painted; but when the surfaces are flat, coloring is applied.

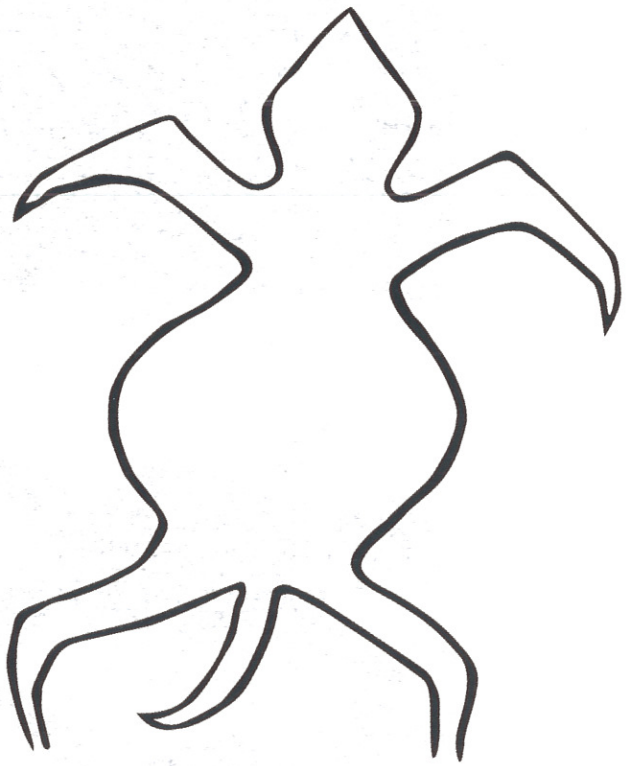
Bontoc



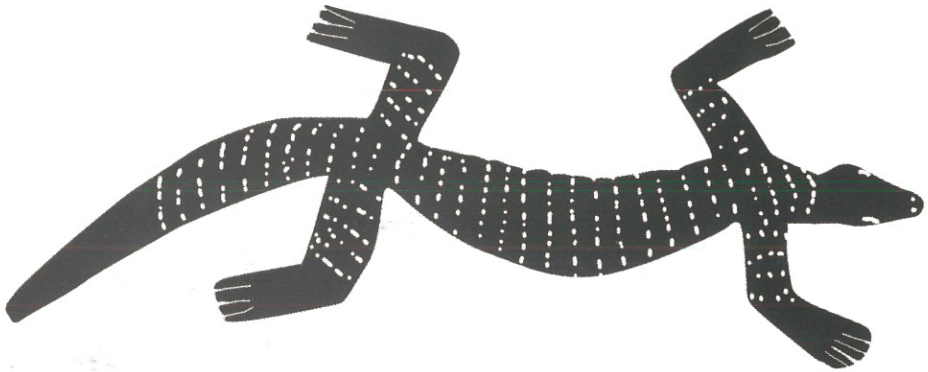


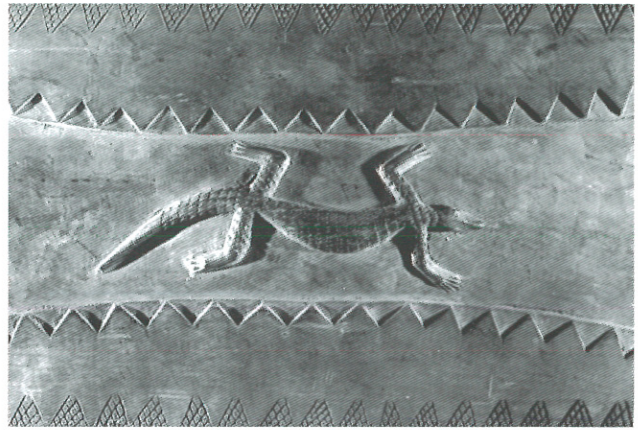


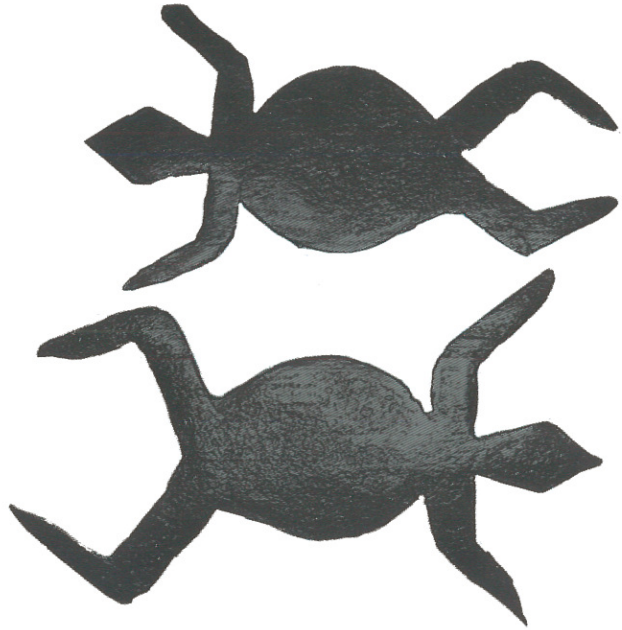


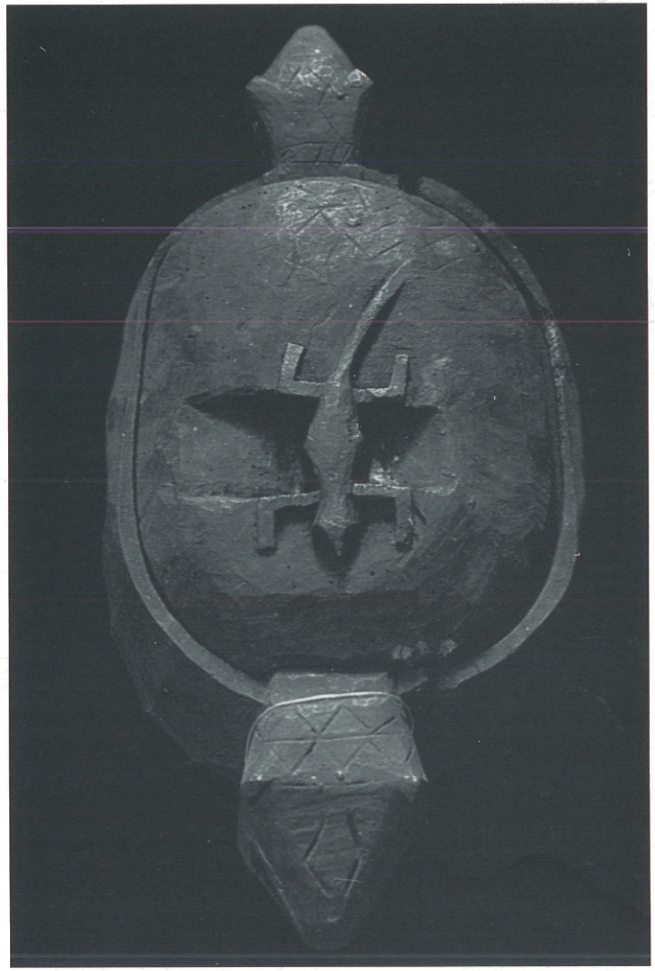


Ifugao

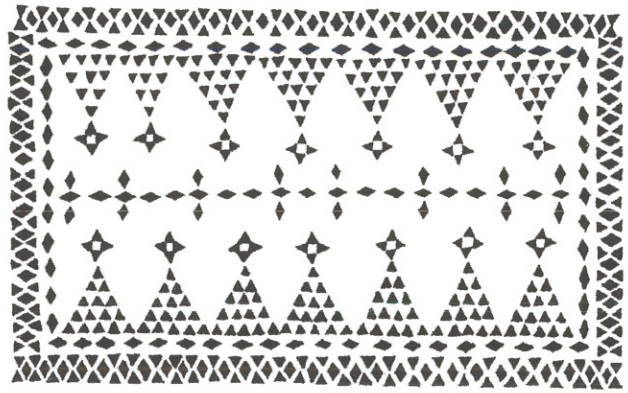


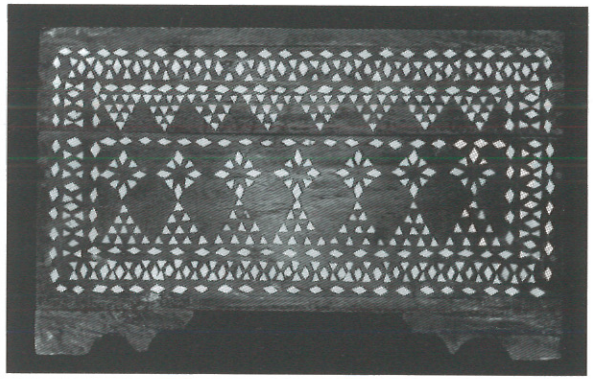


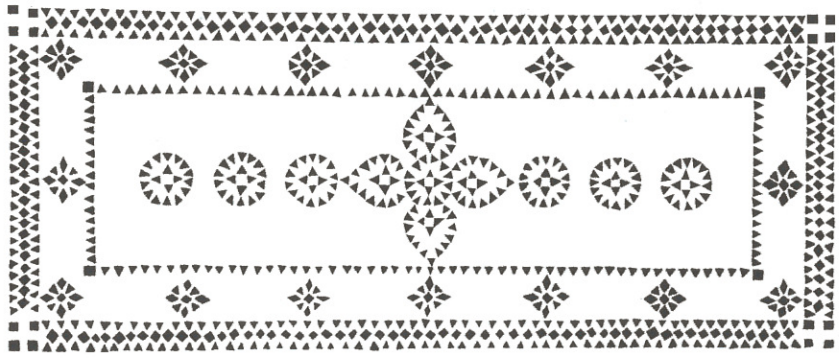


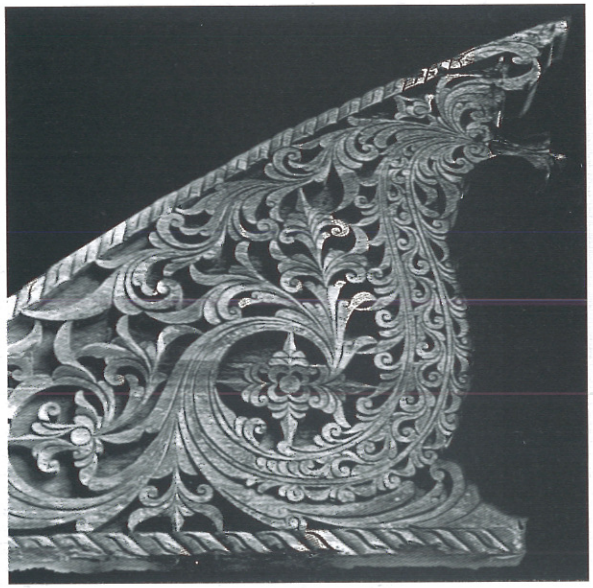


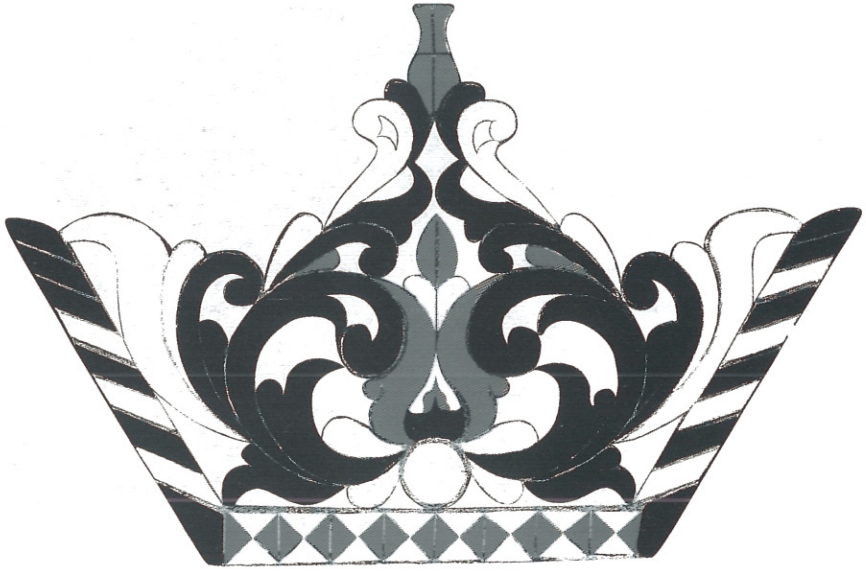
Maranao

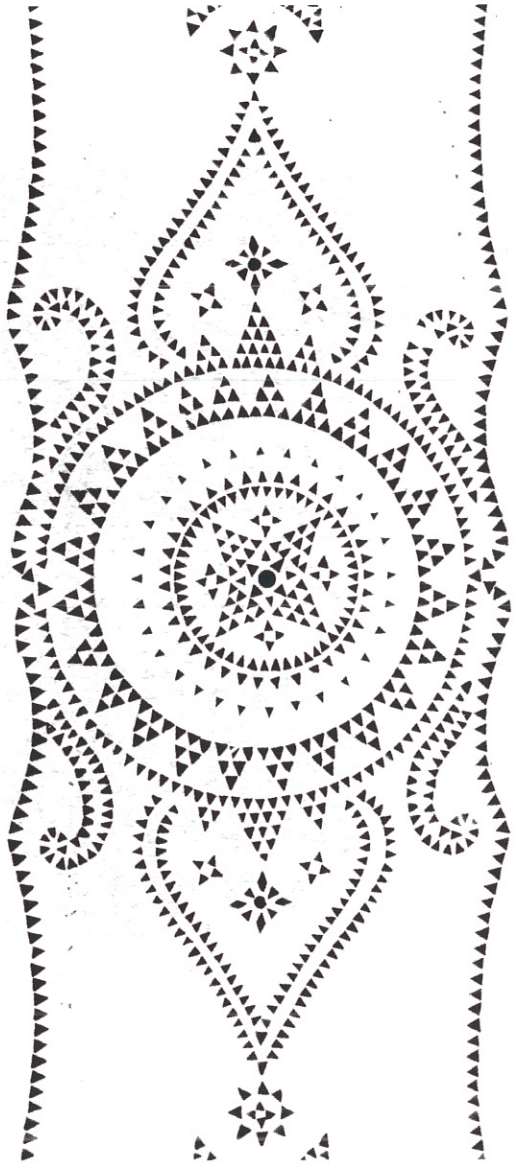


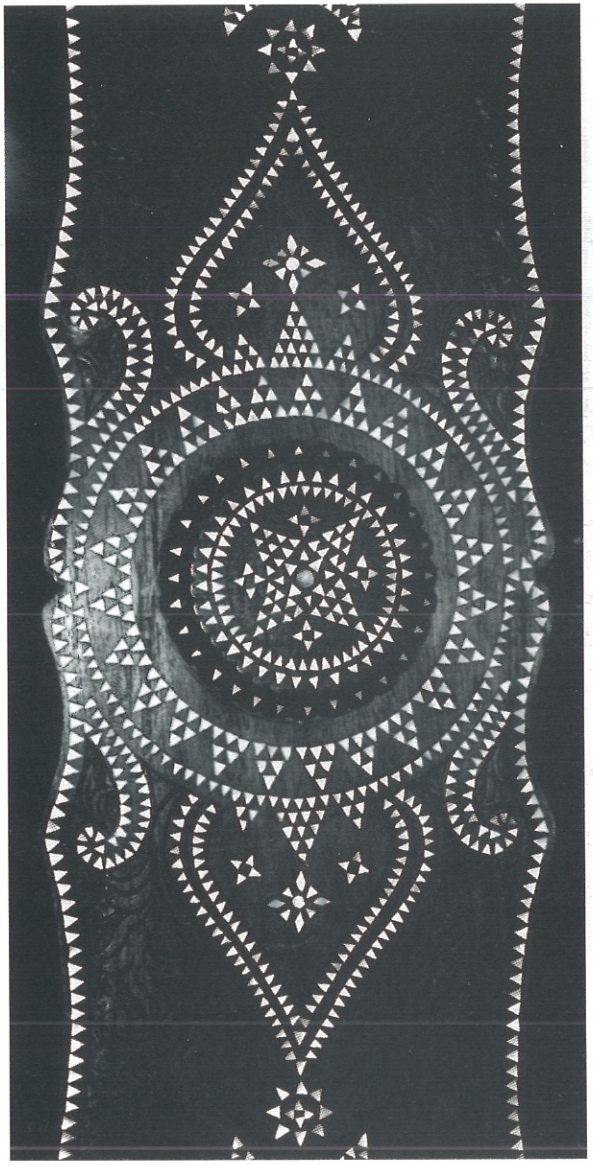


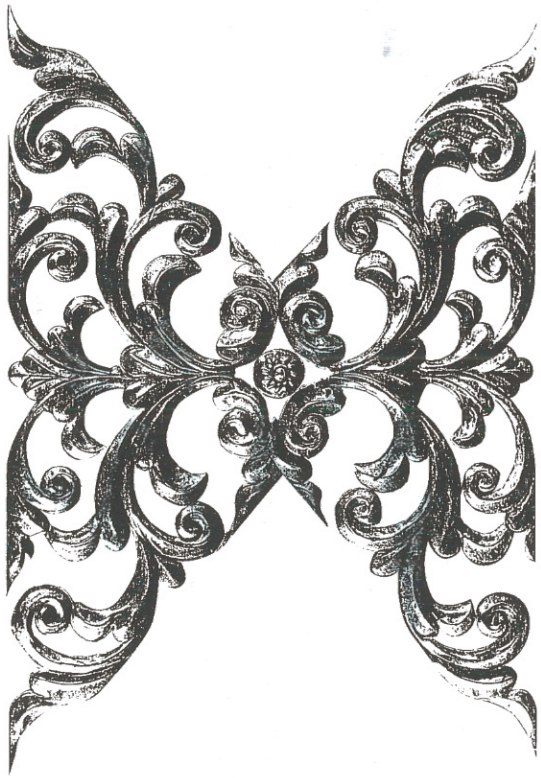


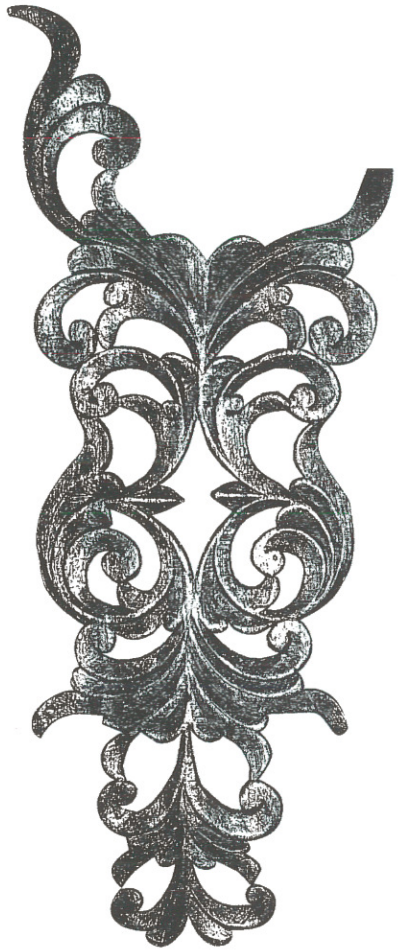


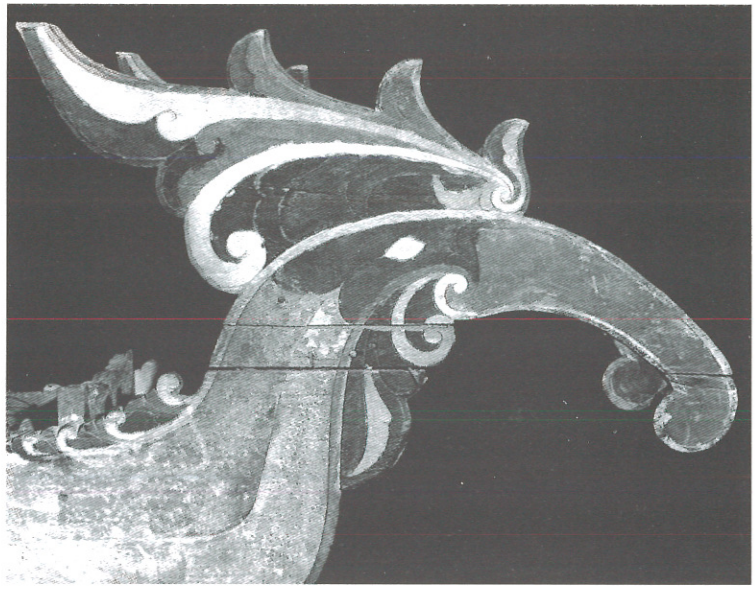




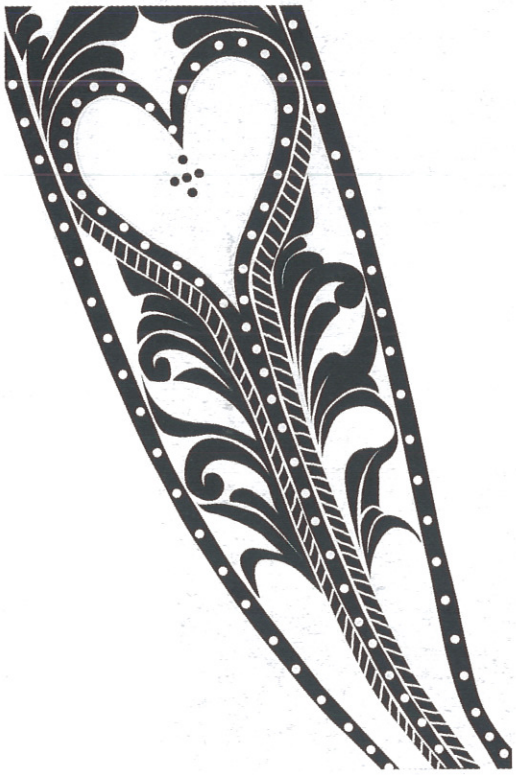


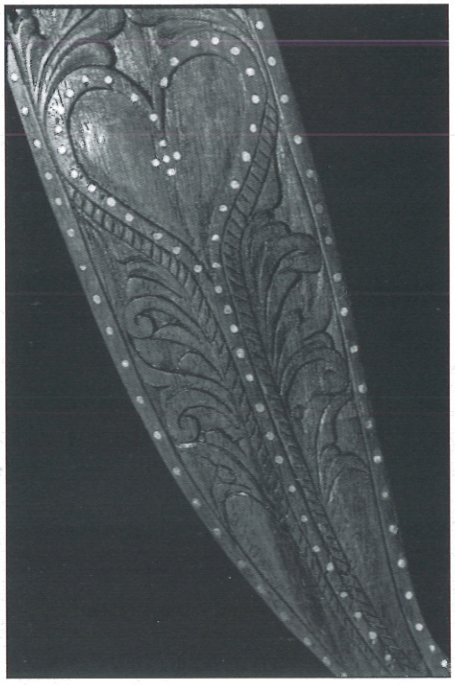




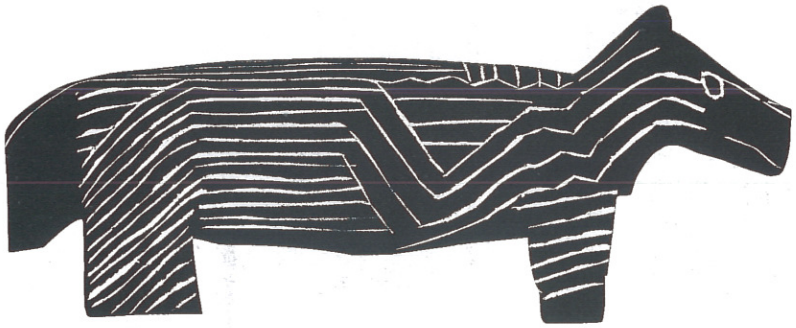


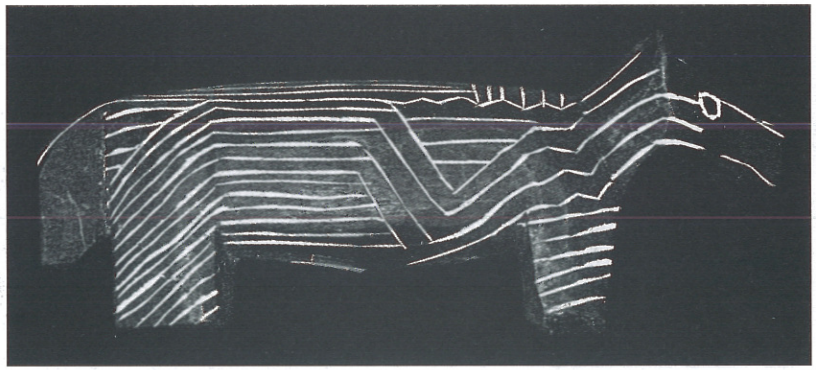
Sama

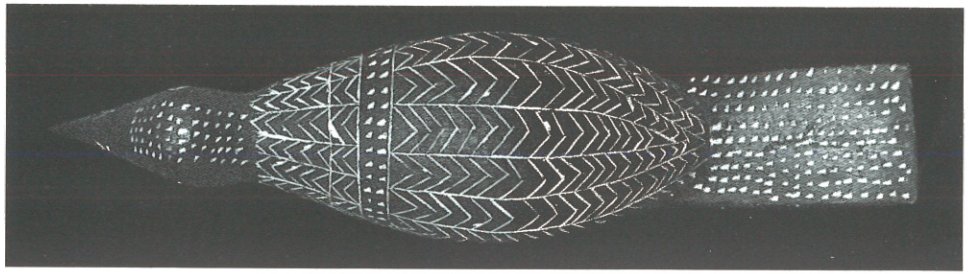


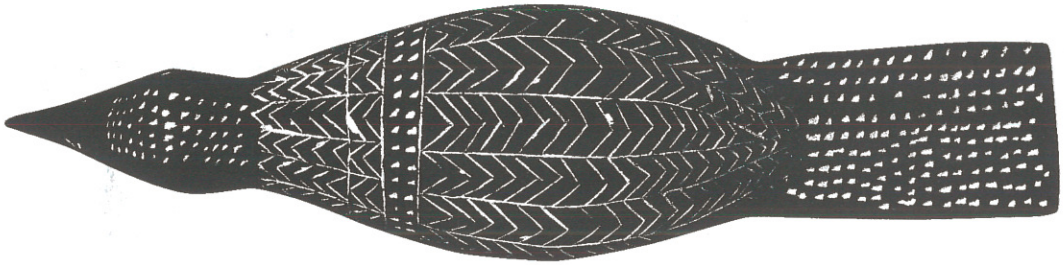


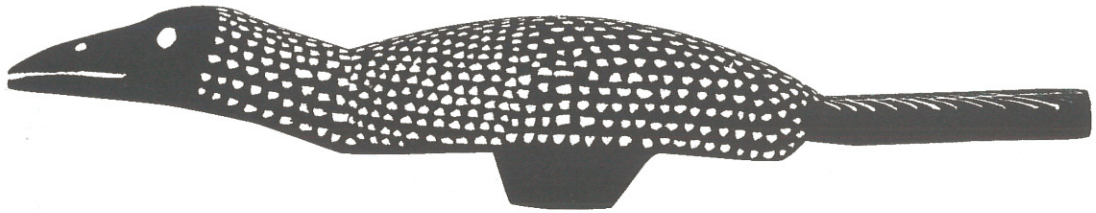
Tagbanua

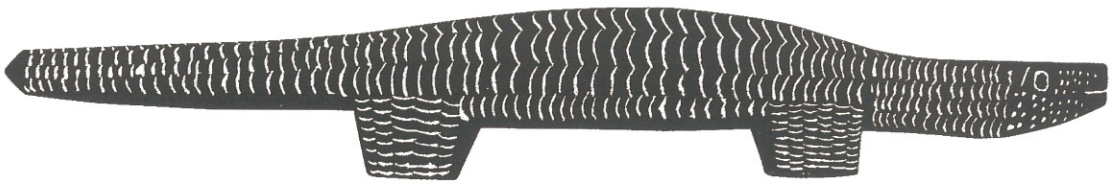


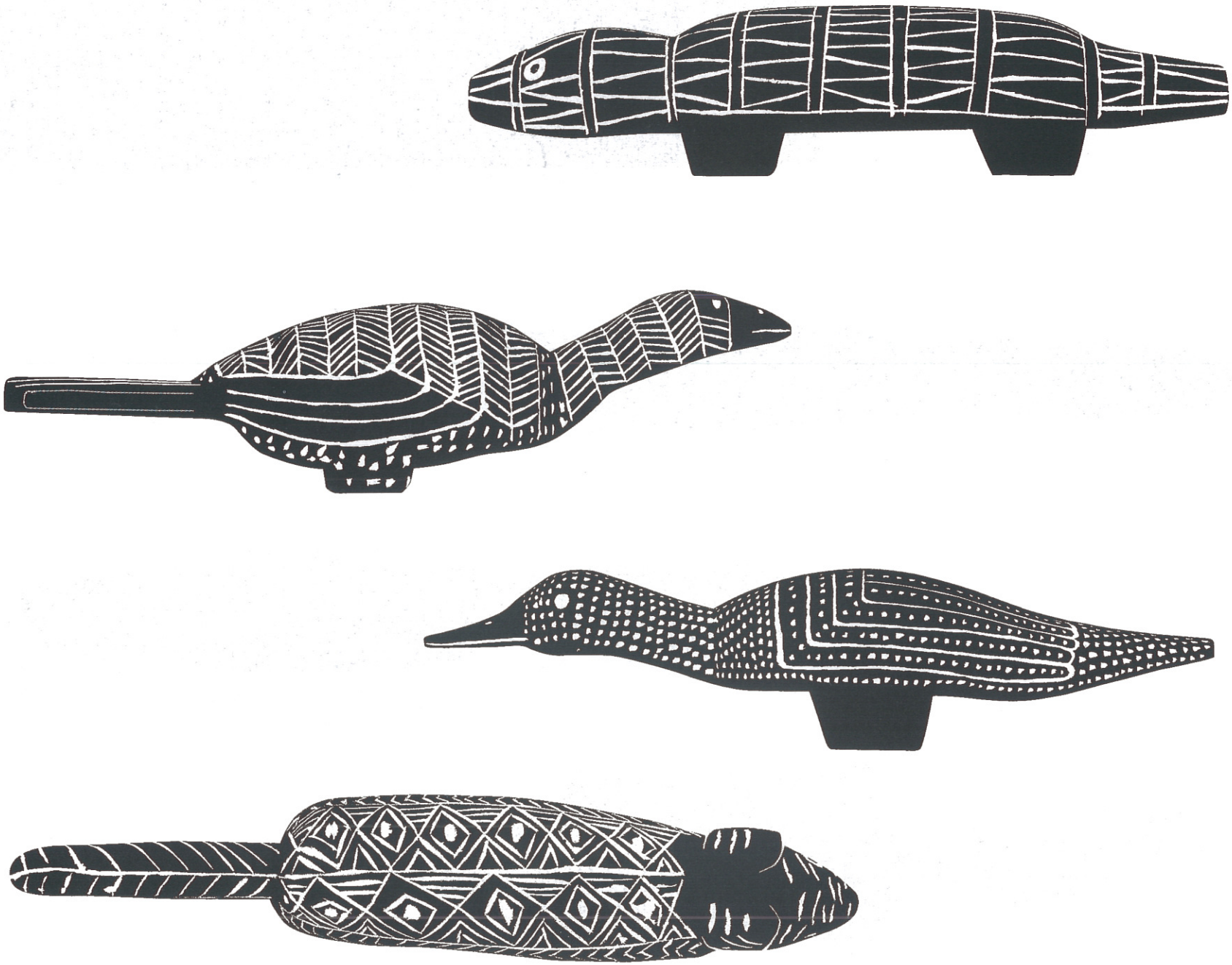


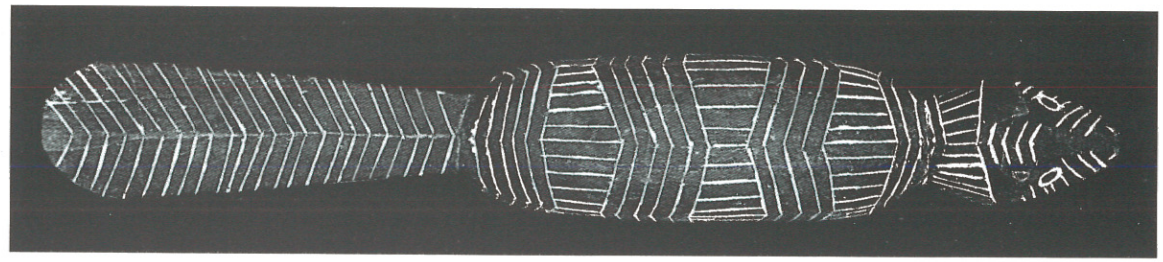


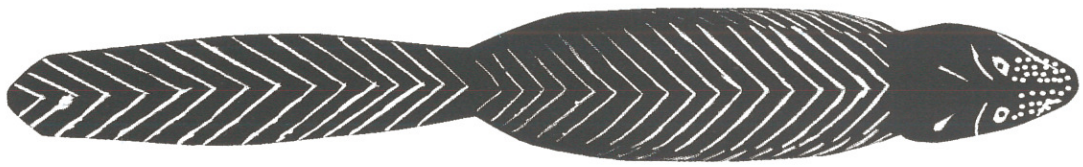


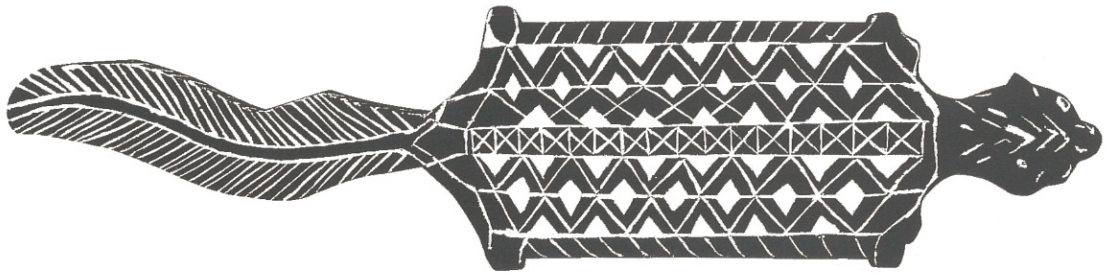


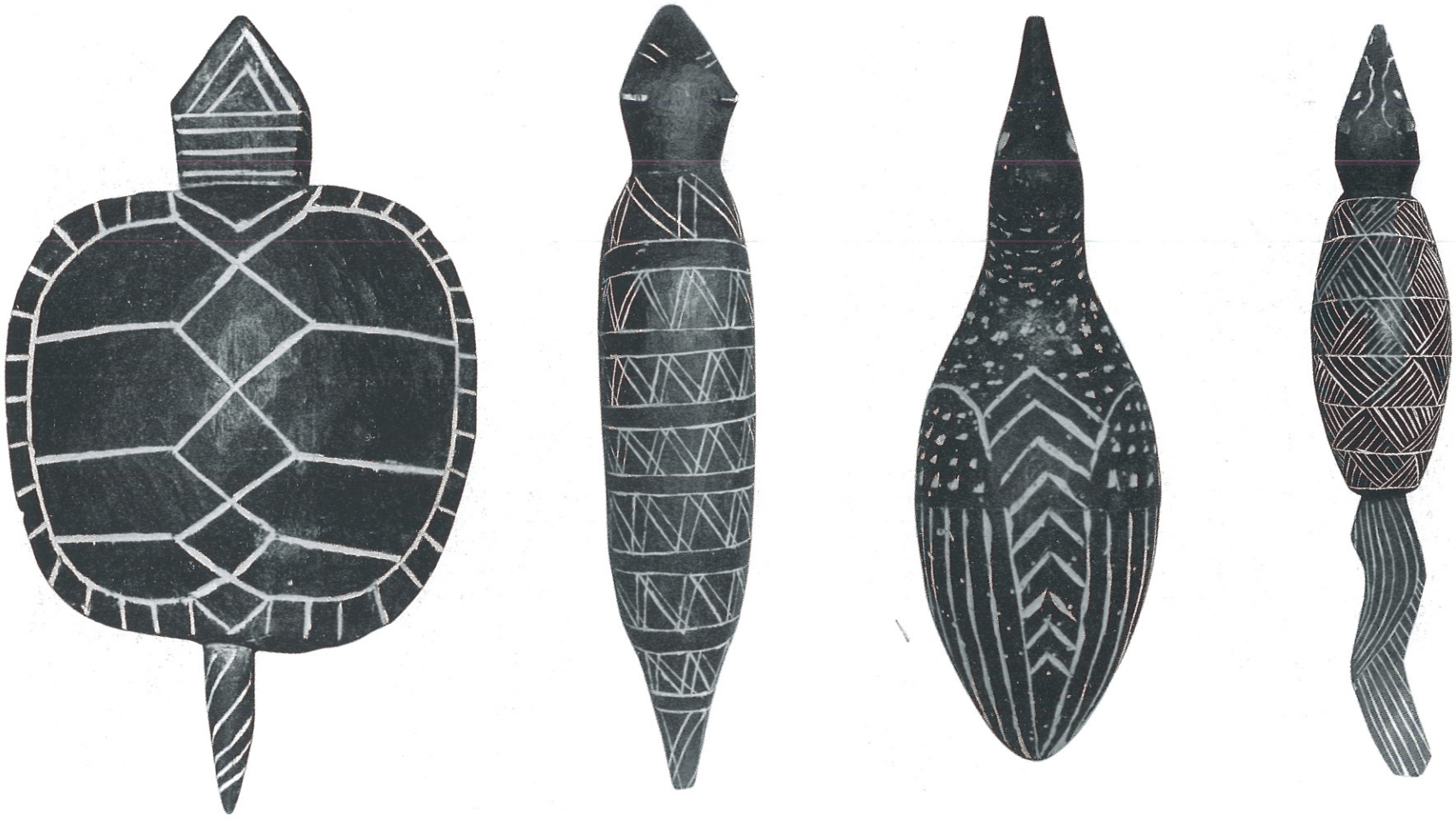




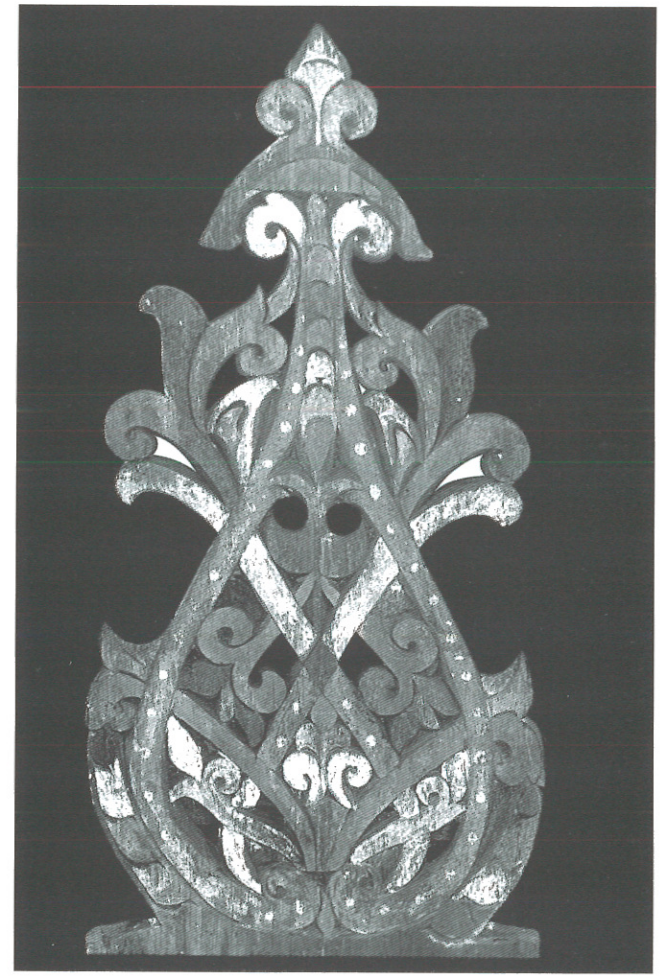








Yakan Badjao



Glossary

Glossary

By Jesus T. Peralta

Abaca

A large herbaceous Asian plant of the banana family, yielding Manila hemp. [*Musa textilis.*]

Andon

A type of tubular skirt or *malong* of the Maranao made through the tie-dye method

Aesthetic

Concerned with beauty or the appreciation of beauty: of pleasing appearance.

Analogous

Comparable in certain respects; in painting, colors that are in the same range of hues

Anvil

A block upon which a pot is paddled to thin and shape the walls.

Aperture

A variable opening.

Artifact

An object made by a human being.

Bas-relief

In art, a method of molding in which the design stands out from the surface

Bellows

A devise for blowing air into a fire to intensify the heat.

Binabbuy

Among the Ifugao, a carved wooden likeness of a pig.

Binary

Composed of, or involving two things.

Binullul

Among the Ifugao, the consecrated wooden granary anthropomorphic figure infused with *bullul* deities.

Blowpipe

A weapon consisting of a long tube through which a dart is blown.

Bobbin

A cylinder, cone or reel holding thread or yarn.

Cast

To shape a material by pouring into a mold while molten.

Channel

In metal craft, the depressions, canals, grooves on a surface where other materials are introduced.

Chase

In metal craft, pursuing the path of a line in a design using a punch or similar tools.

Chroma
Purity or intensity of a color.

Color
The property possessed by an object of producing different sensations on the eye because of the way it reflects or emits light

Crosshatch
To shade with intersecting sets of parallel lines.

Culture
The customs, institutions, and achievements of a particular nation, people, or group.

Cyan
A greenish-blue color which is one of the primary subtractive colors, complementary to red

Design
A decorative pattern. A plan or drawing produced to show the look and function or workings of something before it is built or made. The art or action of conceiving of and producing such a plan or drawing.

Earthenware
Artifacts made of fired clay

Ecru
The light fawn color of unbleached linen.

Embroidery
The sewing of decorative needlework patterns on textile.

Ethnic
Of or relating to a group of people having a common national or cultural tradition. Denoting origin by birth or descent rather than by present nationality.

Excise
In pot making, the removal of materials from the clay matrix.

Finial
A distinctive section or ornament at the apex of a roof, pinnacle, or similar structure in a building. An ornament at the top, end, or corner of an object.

Forge
A furnace, or an air-pumping devise for increasing the heat in melting or refining metal.

Gadur
A bronze/brass covered jar often silver inlaid of the Maranao

Gong
A metal disc with a turned rim, giving a resonant note when struck.

Gukum
A rounded cosmetic container of the Maranao.

Heddle
A looped wire or cord with an eye in the centre through which a warp yarn is passed in a loom.

Hematite
An iron ore, often red, used in coloring materials

Hue
A color or shade. The attribute of a color, dependent on its dominant wavelength, by virtue of which it is discernible as red, green, etc.

Ikat
A fabric made using an Indonesian decorative technique in which warp or weft threads, or both, are tie-dyed before weaving.

Impress
In pot making, a mark or design made on the clay surface using a stylus or stamp.

Impressionism
A style or movement in painting characterized by a concern with depicting the visual impression of the moment, especially in terms of the shifting effect of light.

Inalaman
A short over-skirt of the Yakan that is tapestry woven.

Incise
To cut a mark or decoration into a surface using a stylus.

Inlay
To ornament by embedding pieces of a different material in a surface.

Iris
The flat, colored, ring-shaped membrane behind the cornea of the eye, with an adjustable circular opening in the centre.

Kalis
The double edged sword, with either a straight or wavy blade, commonly used in southern Philippines among the groups practicing Islam.

Kulintangan
A set of five to eight graduated gongs used in a musical ensemble in southern Philippines.

Landap
A kind of tubular skirt among the Maranao, the pieces of which are pieced together with strips of tapestry woven cloth called *langkit*.

Lakban
The wider kind of *langkit* that joins the ends of a piece of cloth to form the malong a tubular skirt.

Lakub
The tubular tobacco container of the Maranao made of bamboo decorated with minute geometric forms dyed in many colors.

Langkit
A strip of tapestry woven cloth used in joining cloth panels to form the *malong*, the Maranao tubular skirt. There are two kinds: *lakban* (wide) and the *tobiran* (narrow).

Lens
The transparent elastic structure behind the iris by which light is focused on to the retina of the eye.

Loom
An apparatus for making fabric by weaving yarn or thread.

Lotoan
A generic term for a container of betel-nut chewing ingredients.

Magenta
A light mauve-crimson that is one of the primary subtractive colors, complementary to green.

Malong
The tubular skirt used in southern Philippines.

Manang
A Manobo deity represented by a roughly carved anthropomorphic image.

Matrix
An environment or material in which something develops.

Metallurgy
The branch of science concerned with the properties, production, and purification of metals.

Modulate
To modify, regulate, or vary the strength, tone, or hue. In art, to alter the hue, chroma or saturation of colors in accordance with the variations of a second set of colors.

Mold
A hollow container used to give shape to molten or hot liquid material (such as wax or metal) when it cools and hardens.

Mordant
A substance that combines with a dye or stain and serves to fix the color.

Motif
A single or recurring image forming a design.
A distinctive or dominant theme in a work of art.

Niaga-naga
A Maranao term literally meaning made in the likeness of a *naga* (serpent). The design is usually in a generalized "S" form.

Okir
Maranao term for art.

Ongletter
A burin or a narrow engraving tool.

Operculum
A disk that closes the aperture of a gastropod mollusk's shell when the animal is retracted.

Paddle
A short-handled bat such as that used in pot making to thin and shape the pottery walls; used against an anvil inside the pot.

Panalagadan
An elaborate bronze/brass holder with a pedestal to hold large pots or jars.

Panolong

The butterfly-like floor end beams projecting from the front walls of the Maranao royal house, the *torogan*. Floriated, these are usually of two kinds in terms of ornamentation: *niaga-naga* (serpent-like) and *pako rabong* (growing fern).

Pasiking

A kind of backpack woven from rattan (*Calamus sp.*) or bamboo.

Pattern

A repeated decorative design. An arrangement or sequence regularly found in comparable objects. A model or design used as a guide

Permeable

A property allowing liquids or gases to pass through a material.

Pis

A piece of tapestry woven cloth used often as a headdress or scarf among the Tausug.

Pitch

A mixture of wax, tar and a filler or the sap of a tree used to support a metal piece that is being worked.

Platina

A breastplate used as an ornament by Mandaya women that is elaborately decorated with chased designs.

Rampatan

The main roof support beam in a Maranao *torogan*, or royal house. The beam is ornately carved and painted, and is considered the "intestine of the house".

Rattan

The tropical climbing palm which yields these stems. [*Genus Calamus.*]

Refraction

The changing of the direction of a ray of light when it enters a material at an angle, causing this to travel at a different angle.

Repousse

In metalwork, hammered into relief from the reverse side.

Retina

A layer at the back of the eyeball that contains cells sensitive to light, which triggers nerve impulses that pass via the optic nerve to the brain, where a visual image is formed.

Saputangan

A piece of tapestry woven cloth used as headcloth or sash by Yakan men.

Sarimanok

An art object of the Maranao in the form of a fowl with a fish in its mouth. It is ornately decorated in abstract floral forms and is placed atop poles during festivities.

Saturation

In painting, the amount of black pigment mixed with a hue to change its characteristics from the lightest to the darkest.

Shed

The opening between the warp threads through which the weft threads can be introduced more rapidly with a shuttle.

Shuttle
A bobbin with two pointed ends used for carrying the weft thread across between the warp threads in weaving.

Slip
In pottery making, the solution of clay used to cover the outer surface of a vessel to make it smoother and red when dried.

Spindle
A slender rounded rod with tapered ends used in hand spinning to twist and wind thread.

Tapestry
A piece of thick textile fabric with motifs or designs formed by weaving colored discontinuous weft threads, or by embroidering.

Template
A shaped piece of material used as a pattern for processes such as cutting out or shaping. Something that serves as a model or example.

Tobiran
The narrow kind of *langkit* that joins pieces of cloth in a *malong*.

Torogan
The cavernous royal house of the Maranao that is ornately decorated, and is characterized by *panolongs*.

Treadle
A lever worked by the foot and imparting motion to a loom.

Triad
In art. a group or set of three related colors.

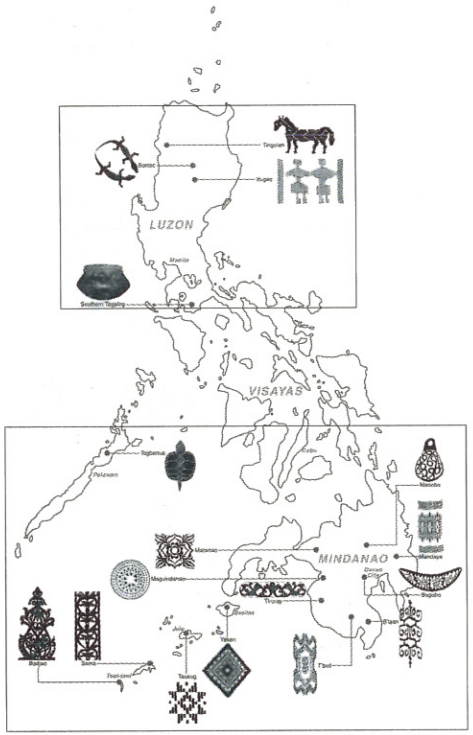
Turntable
In pot making, a circular revolving platform for turning a piece of pottery while it is being worked.

Warp
The lengthwise threads on a loom over and under which the weft threads are passed to make cloth.

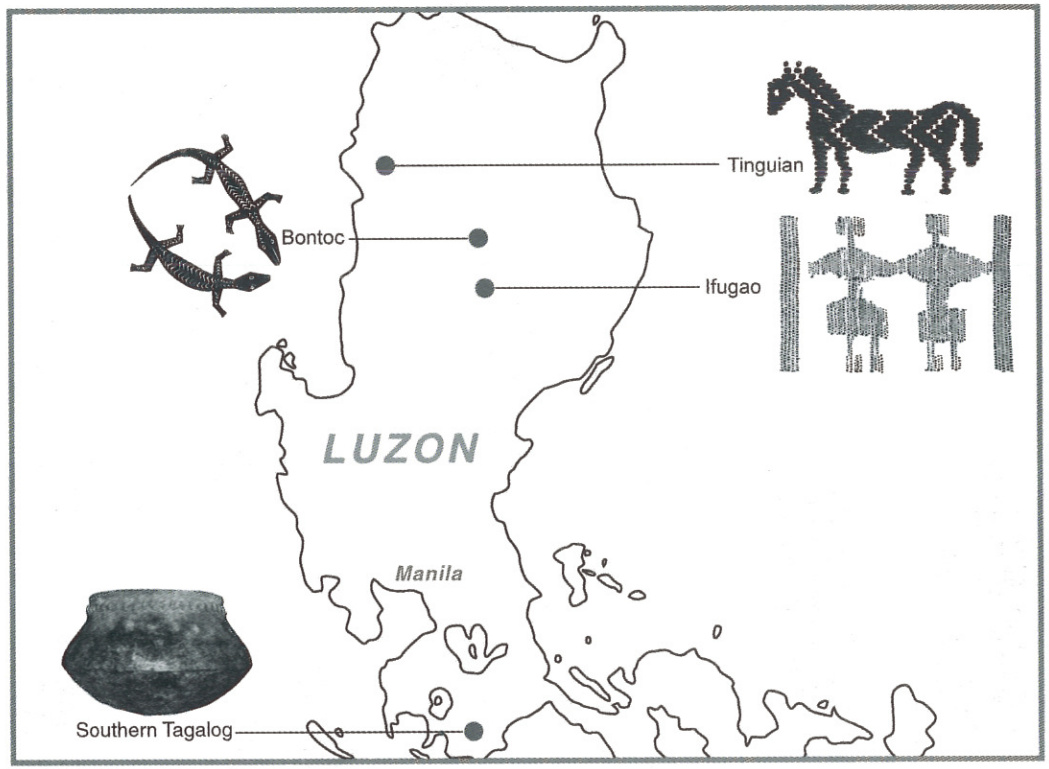
Wax
Beeswax. A white translucent material obtained by bleaching and purifying this; used in making molds in metal craft.

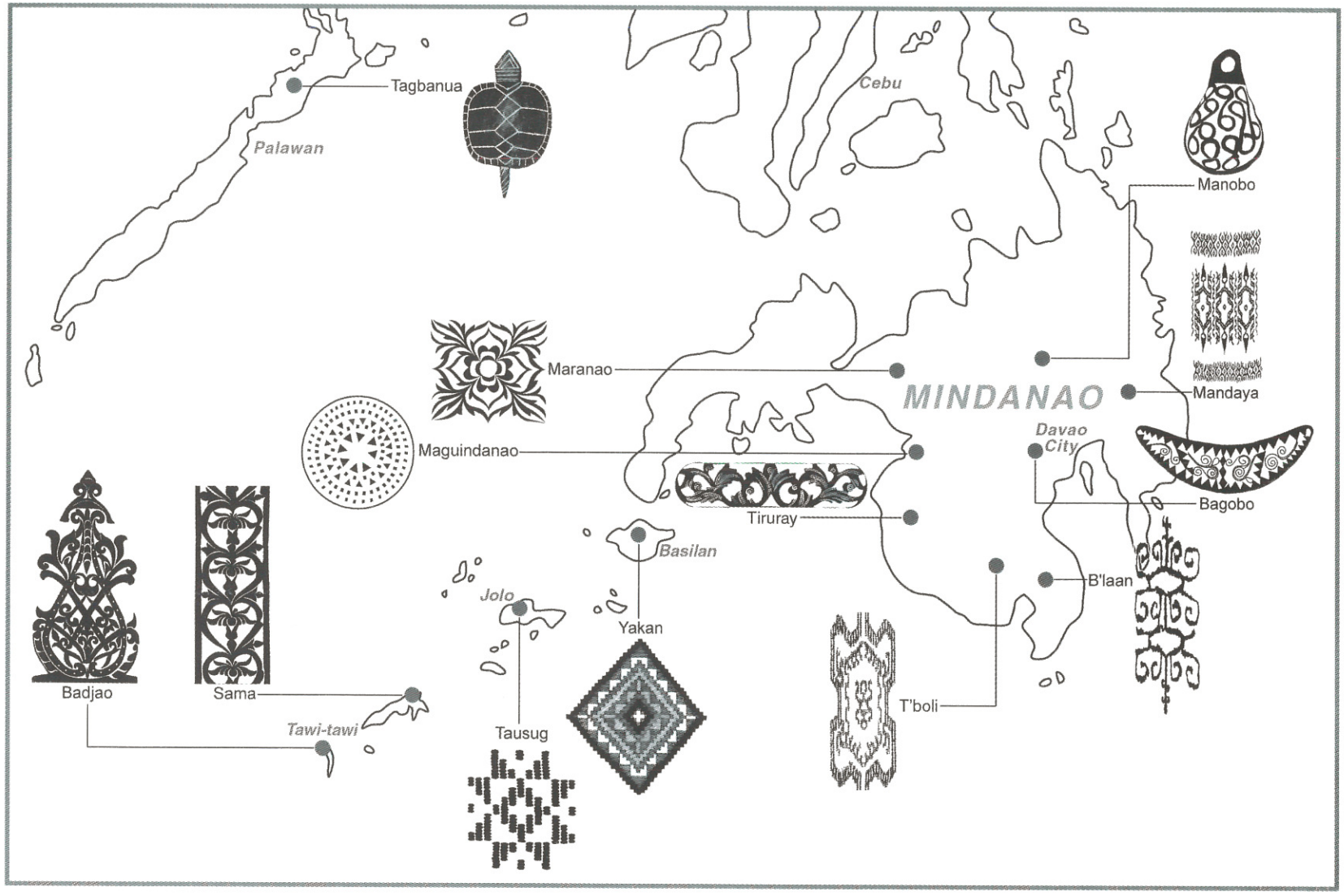
Weft
In weaving, the crosswise threads that are passed over and under the warp threads on a loom to make cloth.

Whorl
A small flywheel, or weight on a spindle



Locator Map of Ethnic Communities
Represented in this Book




Tagbanua
Palawan
Cebu
Manobo
Maranao
MINDANAO
Mandaya
Maguindanao
Davao City
Bagobo
Tiruray
Basilan
B'laan
Jolo
Yakan
Badjao
Sama
T'boli
Tawi-tawi
Tausug

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PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT AND DESIGN CENTER OF THE PHILIPPINES

Arturo R. Luz, *National Artist, former Executive Director*
Ricardo L. Aranas, *former Deputy Executive Director*
J. Elizalde Navarro, *National Artist, former Graphics Department Director*
Glicerio Sambo, *former Cultural Research Chief*

Research:

Amado Alvarez
Elvira R. Baltazar
Francisco Boado
Fe Q. Gonzales
Mercedita De La Cruz
Emma Y. Kasilag
Nicasio I. Marte
Angelina Sotto

Documentation:

Antonio Arcega
Jesus Blanco
Ramon Blanco
Tony Blanco
Leonardo Cepeda
Romeo Corporal
Teresita De Los Santos
Ramon Reyes
Ciriaco Sumpo

Neal Oshima

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PHILIPPINES

Godofredo Alcasid
Artemio Barbosa
Eric Casiño
Adela Escober
Alfredo Evangelista
Jesus T. Peralta
Amelia Rogel-Rara

MINDANAO STATE UNIVERSITY

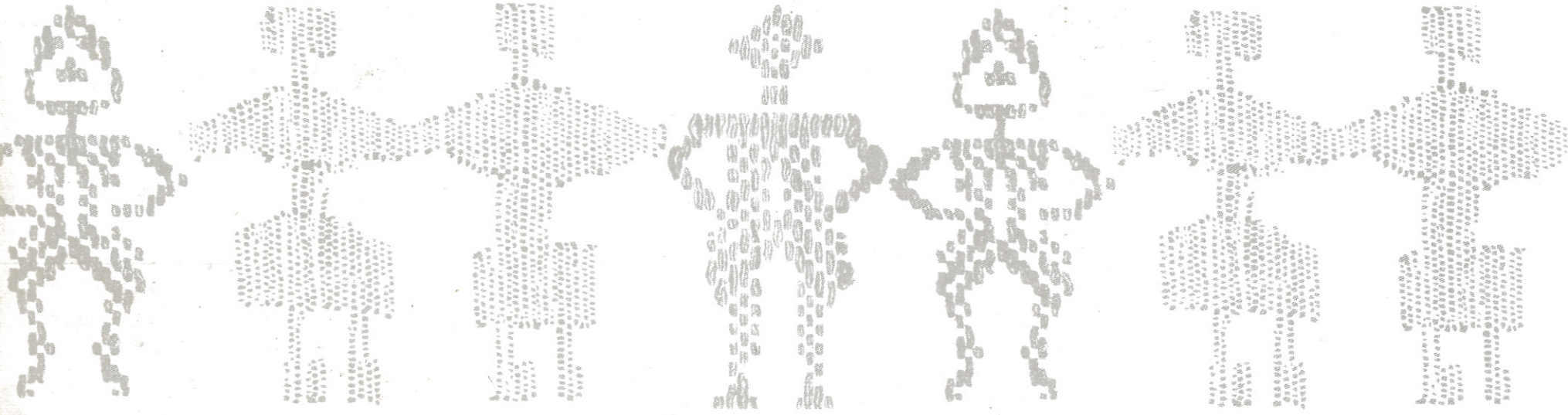
Ligaya Fernando-Amilbangsa
Addullah Madale

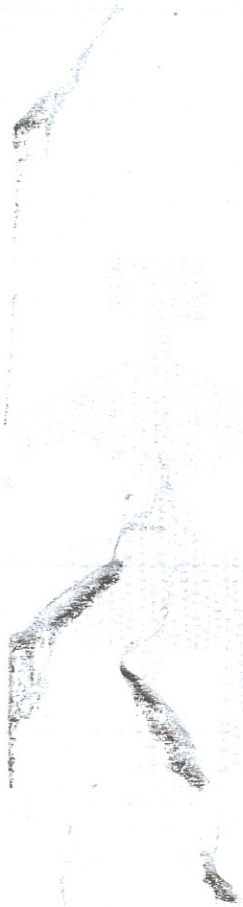
DEPARTMENT OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Creative Industry Task Force

Zorayda Amelia Capistrano-Alonzo, *Undersecretary, DTI SMED Group*
Felicitas R. Agoncillo-Reyes, *Assistant Secretary, DTI and Executive Director, CITEM*
Rhea O. Matute, *Project Manager, Creative Economy, CITEM*

Araceli Maria Pinto-Mansor, *former Executive Director, CITEM, who was passionate about this book and encouraged its production*





Arturo R. Luz

Arturo R. Luz is a Philippine National Artist for Visual Arts. A renowned painter and sculptor, he has exhibited in major art centers worldwide. His works, which include paintings, sculpture, graphics, and photographs, are in private and institutional collections.

Mr. Luz was Executive Director of the then Design Center Philippines from 1973 to 1987, the Metropolitan Museum of Manila from 1976 to 1986, and the then Museum of Philippine Art.

Augusto F. Villalon

Augusto F. Villalón practices professionally in the Philippines and overseas with award winning projects in architecture, heritage conservation, tourism planning, and crafts preservation.

He is the author of the book Lugar, and has co-authored several other books on Philippine architecture and cultural heritage. He has written for several newspapers and currently has a weekly column on heritage conservation in the Philippine Daily Inquirer.

Jesus T. Peralta, Ph.D.

Jesus T. Peralta has the distinction of being an anthropologist of note and an award-winning writer as well. He was Director III of the National Museum until he retired in 1997 and is presently a Consultant of the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA).

Dr. Peralta has participated in several international conferences and has written more than 120 scientific papers and books on anthropology, archaeology and general culture. He has received numerous awards in recognition of his professional accomplishments.

PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT AND DESIGN CENTER OF THE PHILIPPINES (Design Center)

The increasing competitiveness in the world market for products of superior craftsmanship has made ethnic quality a primary factor in market acceptance. Through the years, handcrafted products have achieved a high degree of sophistication the world over. What distinguishes one product from another resides in the characteristics that relate a product with a particular culture or origin.

For more than three decades now, **THE PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT AND DESIGN CENTER OF THE PHILIPPINES**, a technical agency of the **DEPARTMENT OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY**, has been continually researching, utilizing, and promoting the limitless potential of our cultural and traditional material which our local craftsmen, designers, and manufacturers can explore to create, develop, and produce market-acceptable products identifiable with the Philippines.

The PHILIPPINE ETHNIC PATTERNS, A DESIGN SOURCEBOOK, shows the fruition of the extensive research undertaken by the Design Center with the National Museum and the extent of Design Center's efforts to sustain this endeavor.

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