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THE TECHNIQUES COVERED IN THIS BOOK ARE BASED ON THE TRADITION OF BACKSTRAP LOOM WEAVING FOUND IN THE ANDEAN HIGHLANDS OF CUSCO, PERU.

BACKSTRAP WEAVING IS BEST LEARNED THROUGH OBSERVATION AND PRACTICE. DEMONSTRATION AND GUIDANCE FROM A MASTER WEAVER IS THE MOST EFFECTIVE METHOD FOR ACQUIRING THE PHYSICAL AGILITY AND UNIQUE SKILLS NECESSARY FOR WEAVING ON A BACKSTRAP LOOM.

A WORKBOOK DESIGNED TO ACCOMPANY WEAVING LESSONS ON THE BACKSTRAP LOOM
CHAPTER 1
BACKSTRAP TOOLS

The backstrap loom is named for how it attaches to the body of the weaver.

A belt at the base of the loom wraps around the weaver’s waist allowing her to adjust the tension in threads of the loom by leaning forwards or backwards.

There are two kinds of backstrap looms: a large loom for weaving bigger textiles, and a small loom for weaving narrower bands.
The large looms are used for weaving the larger textiles of ponchos and shawls. These looms are only as wide as comfortably strapped to the body of the weaver. Completed weavings are sewn together to create wider textiles.

1. WARP THREADS / ORDIDOS / ALLUISCA*
Vertical yarn that is both the structure and design of the textile

2. TOP STICK / PARTI ARRIBA / AWAQASPI
Pole at the top of the loom around which the warps are wrapped

3. BOTTOM HEDDLE / HERRAMIENTA ABAJO / TOQORO
Thick pole separating the top and bottom layers of warp threads

4. TOP HEDDLE / HERRAMIENTA ARRIBA / ILLAWA
Stick around which threads are interlaced to separate warp layers

5. SWORD / HERRAMIENTA / KHALLWA
Flat stick used to beat the weft threads in place

6. WEFT THREADS / HERRAMIENTA / MINI
Horizontal threads that determine the structure of the textile

7. SHUTTLE / BATICOLA / KHUMA
Stick around which weft is wrapped to aid in passing through warp

8. BOTTOM PIECE / PARTI ABAJO / AWA C’ASPI
Pole at the bottom of the loom around which warps are wrapped

9. BACKSTRAP / HERRAMIENTA / AWA WATANA
Belt that wraps around body to secure loom to body

10. PICK UP STICK / HERRAMIENTA / PALLANA
Small pointed stick used for picking and dropping warp threads

11. BEATER / HERRAMIENTA / RUQI
Bone used to beat weft into place
THE SMALLER LOOM IS FOR
WEAVING THE NARROW
BANDS THAT ARE USED
FOR TEXTILE TRIM AND
BELTS. THIS LOOM IS EAS-
ILY CONSTRUCTED USING
SOME YARN AND A FEW
STICKS. YOUR HANDS AND
BODY ARE THE MAIN TOOLS.
THOUGH IT DOES NOT RE-
QUIRE ALL OF THE TOOLS OF
THE LARGER LOOM, MANY
OF THE COMPONENTS ARE
IDENTIFIED WITH SIMILAR
NAMES.

TOOLS FOR WEAVING ON A SMALL LOOM

1. WARP THREADS / ORDIDOS / ALLUISCA
   VERTICAL YARN THAT IS BOTH THE STRUCTURE AND DESIGN OF
   THE TEXTILE

2. BOTTOM HEDDLE / HERRAMIENTA ABAJO / TOQORO
   LOOP OF THREAD SEPARATING TOP AND BOTTOM LAYERS OF
   WARP THREADS

3. TOP HEDDLE / HERRAMIENTA ARIBA / ILLAWA
   LOOPS OF THREADS INTERLACED INTO WARP SEPARATING WARP
   LAYERS

4. WEFT THREADS / HERRAMIENTA / MINI
   HORIZONTAL THREADS THAT DETERMINE THE STRUCTURE OF THE
   TEXTILE

5. SHUTTLE / BATICOLA / KHUMA
   BALL OF WEFT TO AID IN PASSING THROUGH WARP

6. BOTTOM PIECE / PARTI ABAJO / AWA C’ASPI
   POLE OR THREAD AT BOTTOM OF LOOM AROUND WHICH WARP IS
   WRAPPED

7. BACKSTRAP / HERRAMIENTA / AWA WATANA
   BELT THAT WRAPS AROUND BODY TO SECURE LOOM TO BODY
CHAPTER 2
WARP & WEFT

ALL WEAVING IS AN INTERLACING OF HORIZONTAL AND VERTICAL THREADS.

HORIZONTAL THREADS ARE CALLED THE WEFT. VERTICAL THREADS ARE CALLED THE WARP.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF TEXTILES ARE CREATED DEPENDING ON HOW THE HORIZONTAL AND VERTICAL THREADS INTERWEAVE.

THE TEXTILES WOVEN ON A BACKSTRAP LOOM ARE CALLED WARP-FACED WEAVINGS.

PLAIN WEAVING
WARP AND WEFT ARE WOVEN OVER AND UNDER ONE ANOTHER TO CREATE THE FACES - FRONT AND BACK - OF THE TEXTILE

WARP FACED WEAVING
IN WARP FACED WEAVING THE THREADS ARE PACKED TOGETHER SO TIGHTLY THAT THE WEFT THREADS ARE COMPLETELY COVERED BY THE WARP THREADS.
TO CREATE THE LOOM, WARP THREADS ARE WRAPPED AROUND TWO RIGID POLES IN A FIGURE 8 PATTERN.

WHEN REMOVED FROM THESE POLES, THE WARP THREADS FORM THE BODY OF THE LOOM. THEIR FIGURE 8 FORMATION ESTABLISHES THE FRONT AND BACK OF THE TEXTILE.


THESE TWO LAYERS OF WARP ARE IDENTIFIED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE NAMES OF THE TOOLS THAT KEEP THEM SEPARATED DURING WEAVING:

TO CREATE DIFFERENT PATTERNS DURING WEAVING, INDIVIDUAL WARP THREADS ARE ISOLATED ONE AT A TIME TO WRAP IN FRONT OF OR BEHIND THE WEFT THAT IS PASSED HORIZONTALLY THROUGH THEM. THE INDIVIDUAL WARP THREADS ARE “PICKED UP” (ARRIBA) AND BROUGHT TO THE FRONT OF THE LOOM OR “DROPPED” (ABAJO) AND PUSHED TO THE BACK. THE DESIGNS THAT THIS CREATES ARE CALLED THE PALLAY.

As the layers of ILLAWA AND T’CORO warps are interchanged, the Pallay pattern emerges.
CHAPTER 3

PATTERNS OF PALLAY

PALLAY IS THE NAME FOR ANY PATTERN WOVEN IN THE VERTICAL BAND OF ANDEAN TEXTILES. THE WORD PALLAY MEANS “TO PICK UP” REFERRING TO THE PICKING AND DROPPING OF THE WARP THREADS DURING WEAVING.

THERE ARE COUNTLESS VARIETIES OF PALLAY. EACH PATTERN CARRIES A UNIQUE MEANING THAT VARIES FROM REGION TO REGION.
THE BASIC VOCABULARY OF PALLAY

Pebbles
Horizontal
Solid Shapes
Diamonds
Diagonals
Spirals

CREATE ENDLESS VARIETIES OF PATTERNS AND SHAPES
CHAPTER 4
USING THE DIAGRAMS

THE DIAGRAMS IN THE FOLLOWING TWO CHAPTERS ARE DESIGNED TO ASSIST THE WEAVING BEGINNER IN VISUALIZING THE PROCESS OF CREATING A WARP FACED TEXTILE.

THESE DIAGRAMS SIMPLIFY THE PALLAY INTO GEOMETRIC PATTERNS.
In order to understand how a textile was constructed, we “read” the grid of a weave horizontally and vertically.

**Horizontally**

Each horizontal row represents one pass of either the T’coro or Illawa warp threads.

**Vertically**

Each vertical row represents one warp thread as it passes from the front (visible in the diagram) to the back (not visible in the diagram).

When “picked up” or “dropped”, a warp thread can extend vertically across multiple horizontal rows.
Each diagram in the back of the book is partially completed. Using a pen or pencil, you can complete the diagram.

**Top** fill in the patterns of the Illawa and T’Coro

**Middle**: fill in the design of the pallay - raised warp

**Bottom**: use this as a guide

In the top section, fill in the repeating pattern of single warp threads from the alternating Illawa and T’Coro.

In the middle section, fill in only the warp threads that have been “picked up”.

The bottom section illustrates the completed Pallay. Use this as your guide.

**Chapter 5**

**Coloring Book**

The following four diagrams teach the fundamentals of Pallay from which many different designs can be made.

By practicing filling out these diagrams you can begin to visualize how the patterns are created.

The logic of repetition and symmetry in each pattern will reveal itself as you work.
Mar combines two diagonals to create an alternating X and diamond pattern.
WHEN TYING UP THE LOOM FOR THE MAR PALLAY, 4 COLORS ARE USED
ONE COLOR FOR THE BORDER ON EITHER SIDE & THREE FOR THE INTERIOR PATTERN

NOTICE HOW THE 3 COLORS OF THE WARP THREADS ALTERNATE IN A REPEATING PATTERN
COUNT HOW MANY OF EACH COLOR ARE IN EACH ROW.

FILL IN THE DIAGRAM AT RIGHT.

FIRST
USE A PENCIL TO FILL OUT THIS ALTERNATING PATTERN AT THE TOP OF THE DIAGRAM

NEXT
USE A BLACK MARKER TO FILL OUT THE PALLAY PATTERN THAT IS CREATED BY THE WARP THREADS THAT EXTEND VERTICALLY ACROSS MULTIPLE ROWS.

NOTICE HOW THESE EXPANSES OF THREAD BEGIN AND END AT SINGLE UNITS OF THE SAME COLOR WARP.
USE THE DIAGRAM ON THE PREVIOUS PAGE AS A GUIDE.
RYUDA

Ryuda combines two diagonals to create an alternating X and diamond pattern.
SETTING UP FOR RYUDA

When tying up the Loom for the RYUDA pallay,
4 colors are used
One color for the border on either side
& Three for the interior pattern

Notice how the 3 colors of the warp threads
alternate in a repeating pattern.
Count how many of each color are in each row.

ON THE FACING PAGE:

FIRST
USE A PENCIL TO FILL OUT THIS ALTERNATING PATTERN
AT THE TOP OF THE DIAGRAM

NEXT
USE A BLACK MARKER TO FILL OUT THE PALLAY PATTERN
THAT IS CREATED BY THE WARP THREADS THAT EXTEND
VERTICALLY ACROSS MULTIPLE ROWS.

Notice how these expanses of thread begin and end
at single units of the same color warp.
Use the diagram on the previous page as a guide.
Chaka Ligi combines two diagonals to create an alternating X and diamond pattern.
SETTING UP FOR CHAKA LIGI

When tying up the Loom for the CHAKA LIGI pallay,
4 colors are used
One color for the border on either side
& Three for the interior pattern

Notice how the 3 colors of the warp threads
alternate in a repeating pattern
Count how many of each color are in each row.

ON THE FACING PAGE:

FIRST
USE A PENCIL TO FILL OUT THIS ALTERNATING PATTERN
AT THE TOP OF THE DIAGRAM

NEXT
USE A BLACK MARKER TO FILL OUT THE PALLAY PATTERN
THAT IS CREATED BY THE WARP THREADS THAT EXTEND
VERTICALLY ACROSS MULTIPLE ROWS.

Notice how these expanses of thread begin and end
at single units of the same color warp.
Use the diagram on the previous page as a guide.
N’AWI CHAKA

N’Wi Chaka combines two diagonals to create an alternating X and diamond pattern.
SETTING UP FOR NAWI CHAKA

When tying up the Loom for the NAWI CHAKA pallay, 4 colors are used
One color for the border on either side & Three for the interior pattern

Notice how the 3 colors of the warp threads alternate in a repeating pattern
Count how many of each color are in each row.

ON THE FACING PAGE:

FIRST
USE A PENCIL TO FILL OUT THIS ALTERNATING PATTERN AT THE TOP OF THE DIAGRAM

NEXT
USE A BLACK MARKER TO FILL OUT THE PALLAY PATTERN THAT IS CREATED BY THE WARP THREADS THAT EXTEND VERTICALLY ACROSS MULTIPLE ROWS.

Notice how these expanses of thread begin and end at single units of the same color warp.
Use the diagram on the previous page as a guide.
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