

WEAVING ON THE "INKLE" LOOM

by MARY M. ATWATER

According to the dictionary an "inkle" is not — as one might suppose — a full-grown "inkling" but is instead a "tape or narrow band." And an "inkle loom", it follows, is a loom on which to weave these narrow textiles. A modern reproduction of an ancient English inkle loom is shown on the accompanying illustration. Such looms were used in the old day for the weaving of garters, galluses, belts, tapes and so on.

The loom consists of three stout uprights, with a brace across the back and cross-pieces to stand on; the uprights being bored with holes to take a set of seven large pegs. The pegs in the loom illustrated are 9/10" in diameter and 7" long. Four of these pegs, numbered 1, 2, 3, 4 on the illustration, serve to measure the warp. The three pegs set in the central upright are used to make the shed, and to give the desired tension to the warp. The one set lowest in the upright, which I have marked "T", is like the first four pegs. The other two pegs, however, have a special construction. The one I have marked "H" is the heddle peg. A lengthwise slot is cut in it for almost the entire length and loops of stout linen, to form heddles, are tied through the slot and around the peg. There should be from 30 to 60 of these heddles — the more there are the wider one may weave. The top peg, which I have lettered "N", is oval in section instead of round. Along the upper edge it is notched, and it serves as a spreader for the warp. All pegs are removable, though pegs 1, 2, H, and N, might be fixed solid in the frame if desired.

To warp the loom set it in a chair in a reclining position or lay it flat on a table. Tie the end of the warp-material around peg No. 1, using a loop-knot that can be untied easily. Carry the thread over peg 2, under peg 3, under peg 4, over peg 1, through the loop of the heddle nearest the upright, over peg N, over peg 2, under peg 3, under peg 4 and back to 1. The thread may then be cut, or — if a number of threads of the same color are to be warped the above process may be repeated till the desired number of threads have been warped. Now untie the knot from around the peg and tie the two ends of warp firmly together. As the warp moves over the pegs in weaving there must be no ties left around the starting peg when the warping is complete.

Fabrics made on the inkle loom are of the warp-face type, and pattern effects are introduced by setting the warp in several colors. Some interesting effects can be produced simply by the use of color, with all the weaving in plain weave, though for the more elaborate effects a pick-up technique is used.

The manner of weaving is as follows: sit either directly in front of the loom or at the end opposite peg No. 1. Insert the right hand between the two parts of the warp, behind the heddles, and press down. This makes a shed in front of the heddles — the shed with the heddle threads of the warp on top. Take the shuttle through this shed. To make the opposite shed lift the lower strand of warp, behind the heddles. This makes the shed with the free threads on

top. Take the shuttle through this shed. For plain weaving repeat these two sheds all the way.

A little belt-shuttle of the Norwegian type, with a knife edge, is a useful tool for this type of weaving as it serves for beater as well as shuttle. After each shot of weft the weft should be driven as close as possible, and the weft should also be drawn tight enough to bring the warp-threads together so that the weft is completely hidden. These points are of great importance. A loosely woven "inkle" is worthless.

Girdle No. 1, shown on illustration 2, is a piece in plain weaving done in a number of bright colors. It is very gay and pretty and extremely simple to make. The material used was perle cotton No. 5. The manner of arranging the colors of the warp is shown on the diagram at Draft (a). The upper row of squares in the draft, lettered "F", indicates the threads taken "free" around the pegs of the loom. The lower row, lettered "H" indicates the threads taken through the heddles and over the notched spreader. The hatching of the squares indicates the color of the warp-thread.

Girdle No. 2 is also in plain weave. It was made in a hard-twisted wool yarn in grey and "natural" after an Indian Navajo piece of belt-weaving. Threaded as shown on Draft (b).

Many other patterns can be produced in a similar manner. These examples will serve to show the method.

But of course the effects produced in pick-up weaving are more interesting.

Girdle No. 3 is a reproduction of a Norwegian piece woven in coarse wool in red and orange with a touch of black in the border. The plan of the warp is shown on Draft No. 3. This manner of threading is typical of the Scandinavian belt-weaving and many different patterns can be worked out on it. It will be noted that in this form of weaving the weft is not drawn as close as for the pieces in plain weave, and it shows a little in the background part of the weaving. The weft should therefore be of the same color as the ground warp.

At the bottom of the illustration, on the left hand side, will be seen the effect of the threading when woven in plain weave. To start the pattern, as shown directly above this plain weave section, weave the "down" shed, which throws the heddled threads to the top of the shed. The middle pair of pattern threads it will be noted, is on this shed. Make the opposite shed, but before putting through the shuttle pick up the middle pair of pattern threads. Weave. Now make the "down" shed again, and pick up the pairs of pattern threads on either side of the center. Weave. Make the "up" shed and pick up the next pair on either side. On the following "down" shed, pick up as before, and also push down the center pair which comes up on this shed; and on the following shed pick up two and push down two. It should be easy to proceed from this point by following the illustration which shows the figure very clearly.

Girdle No. 4 was made of white linen for the foundation threads and a fairly coarse crepe silk in blue and green for the pattern threads. A border arrangement different from the one shown on draft (c) was used, but the center part on which the figure was woven was threaded in the Scandinavian manner and the method of weaving was as described above.

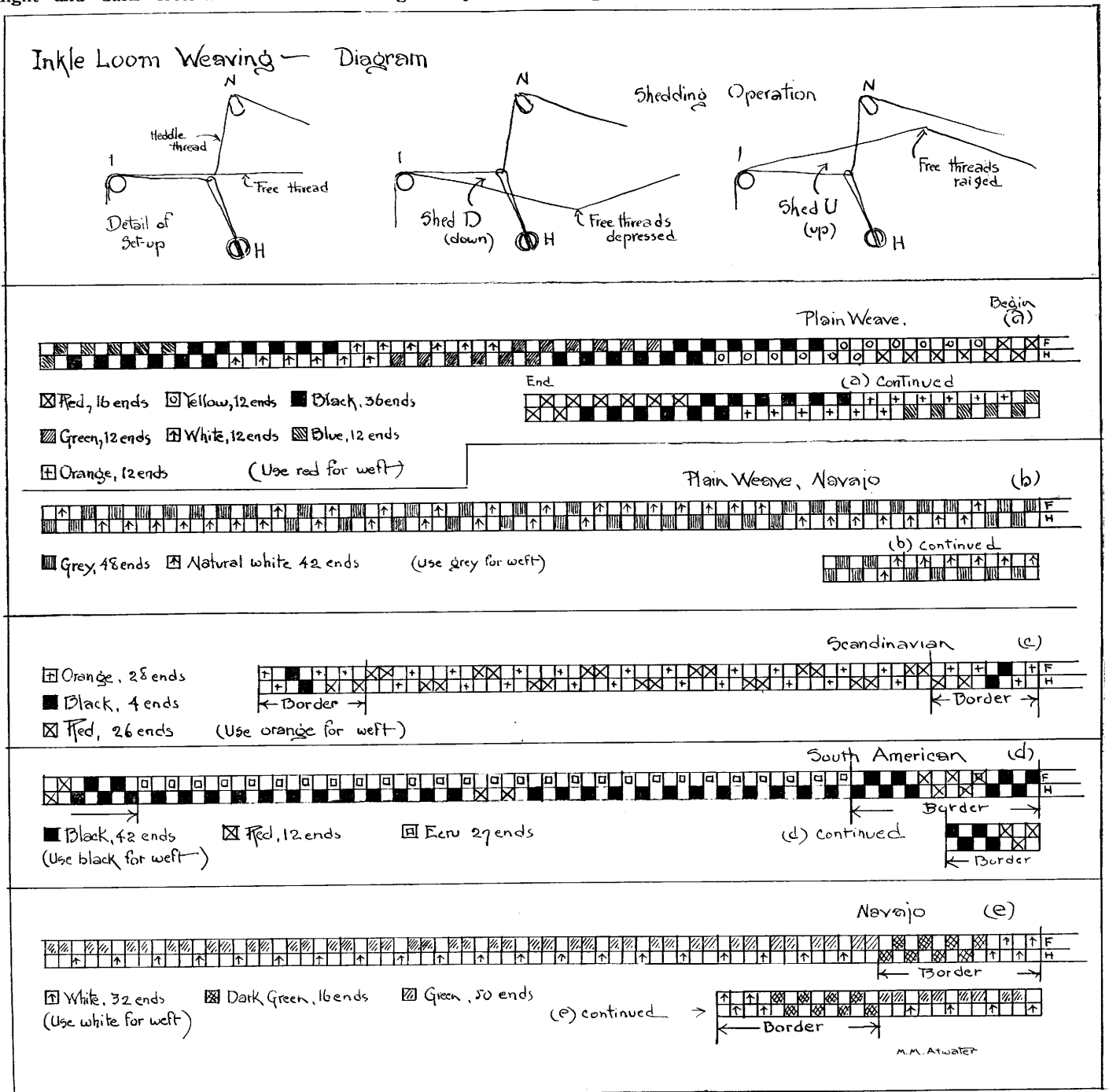
Girdle No. 5 was woven in a technique common to much South American and Central American belt-weaving. The threading is given on the diagram at (d). It will be noted that all the dark threads in this threading are taken through the heddles, and the light threads are taken through the loom free. The plain weave produces an effect of alternate light and dark cross-wise bars. In making the pattern

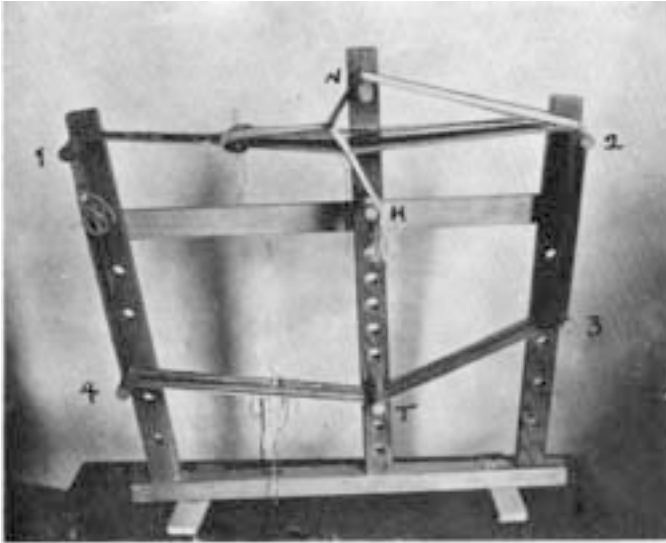
figures weave the light shed plain, and on the dark shed pick up alternate pairs of light threads.

The easiest way to make these pick-ups, I find, is to open the shed and put the fingers of both hands through the shed from opposite sides. Draw the warp apart where the pick-up is to be made, take up the desired thread, being careful not to drop the threads already over the fingers. The pick-up must be made with nicety or the effect is lost.

The material used for girdle No. 5 was perle cotton No. 5 in black, dark green and ecru.

Girdle No. 6 is in the same technique and material, the colors used being black, red and ecru. The borders are different from the plain border on draft (d) but the threading of the pattern part of the band is the same, the dark





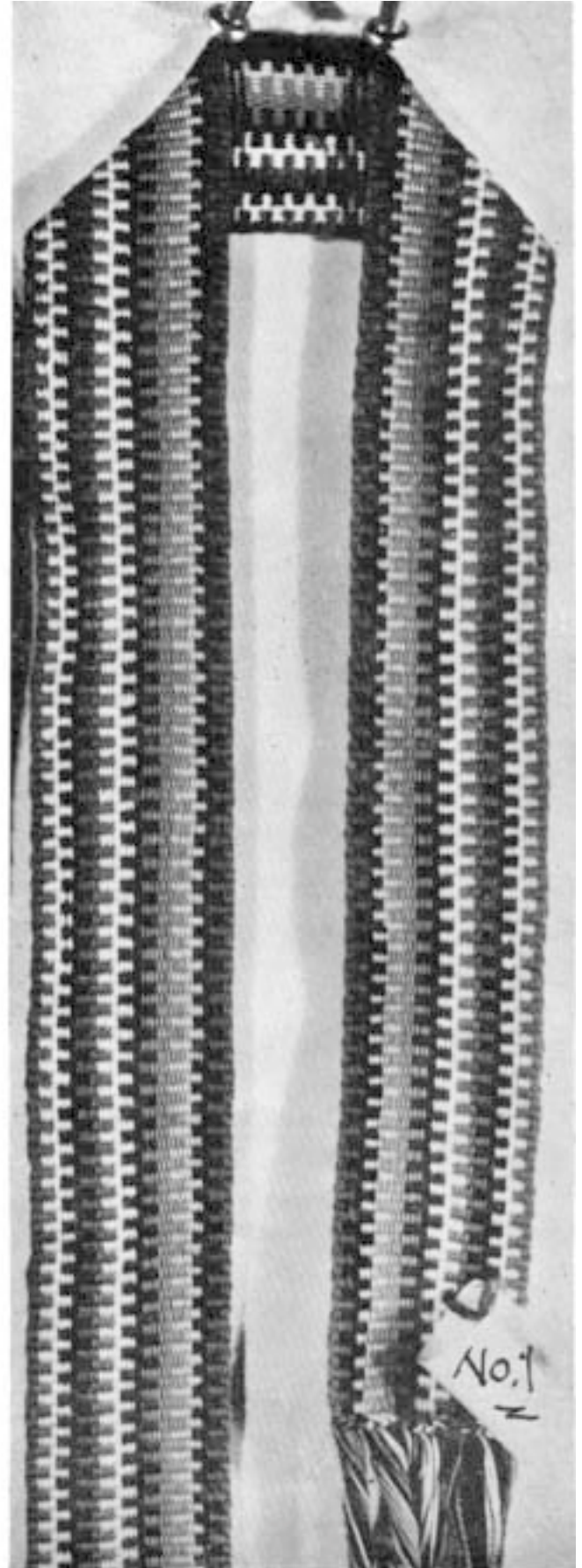
part of the threading through the heddles and the light threads free. The dark threads are black with a stripe of red through the center. In this piece the main figures were picked up in the light color, with small intervening figures picked up in the dark color. The effect is very striking and handsome.

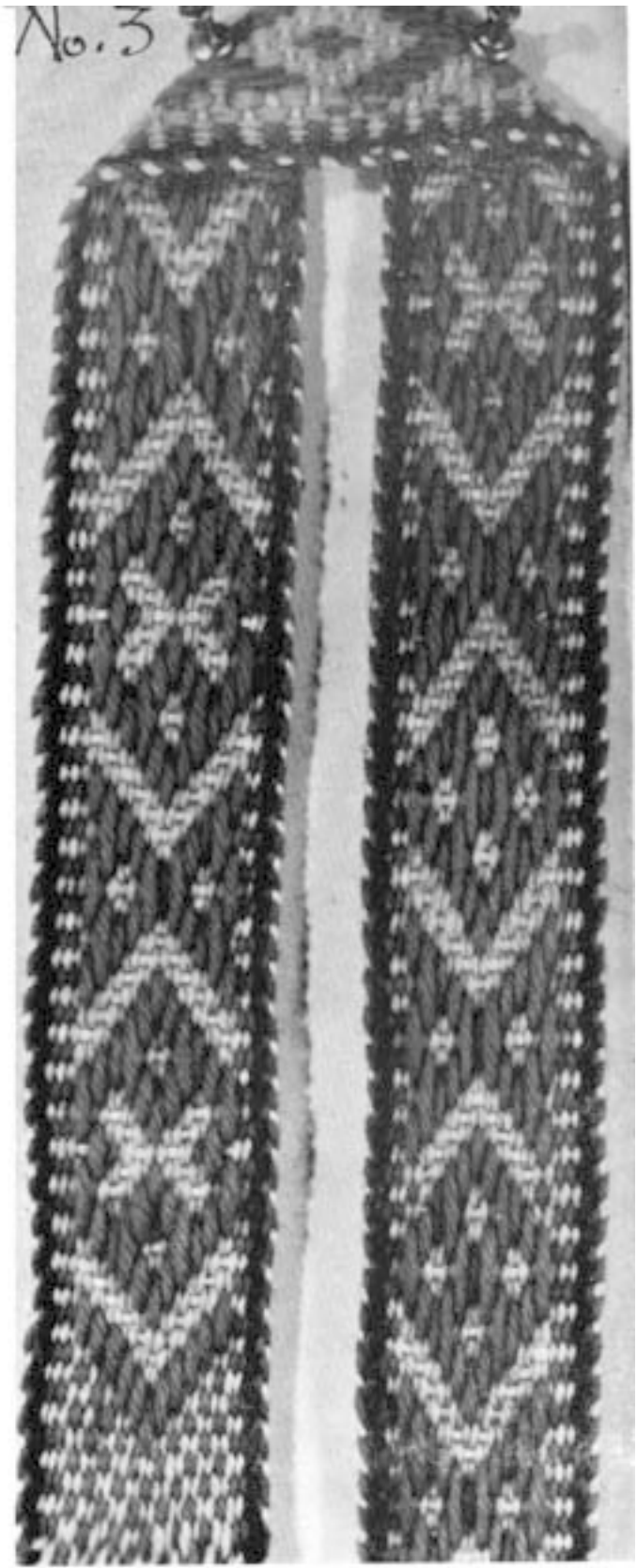
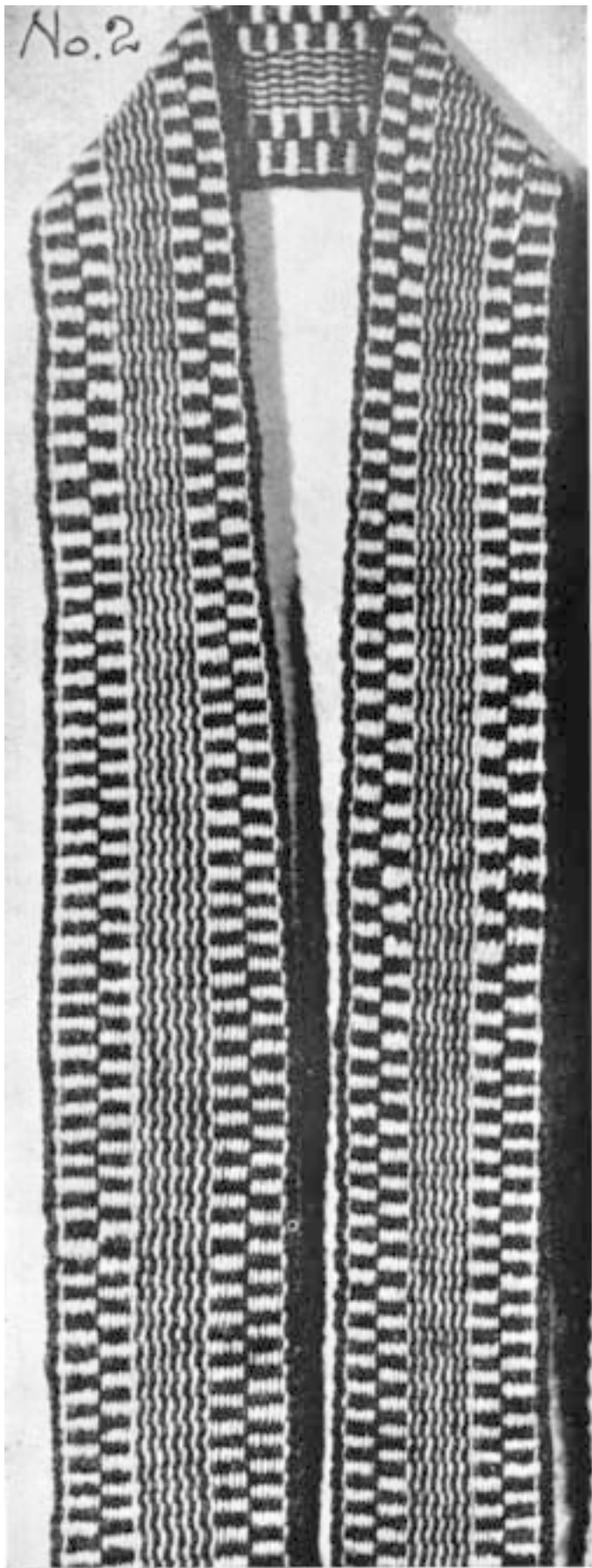
Girdle No. 7 is another piece in the same material and technique, the colors used being black and gold. The particularly striking and handsome figures were adapted from a piece of native Bolivian Indian weaving.

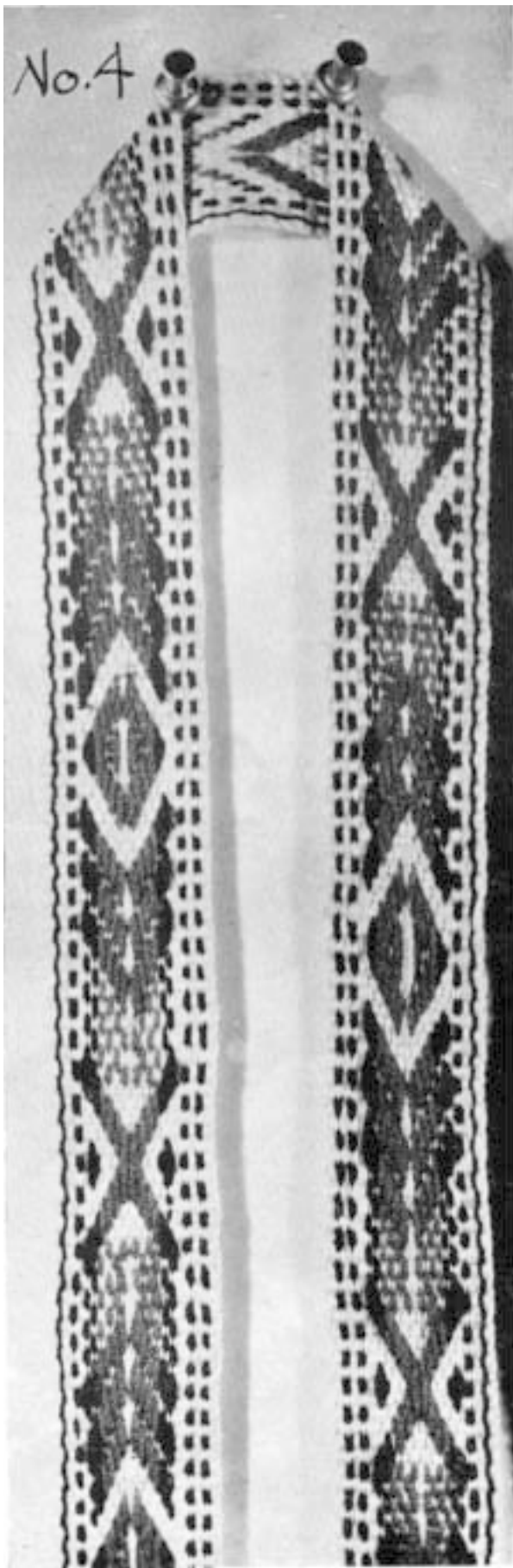
Girdles 8 and 9 are in a somewhat similar technique common in Navajo Indian and in Mexican Indian belt weaving. The manner of threading, shown at (e) on the diagram is similar. As a rule in this weave the foundation threads are in white or natural cotton and the pattern threads in a wool yarn, doubled. Plain weaving on this threading produces crosswise bars as in the previous technique and the pattern figures are produced precisely as in the previously described technique. The difference is in the texture of the background.

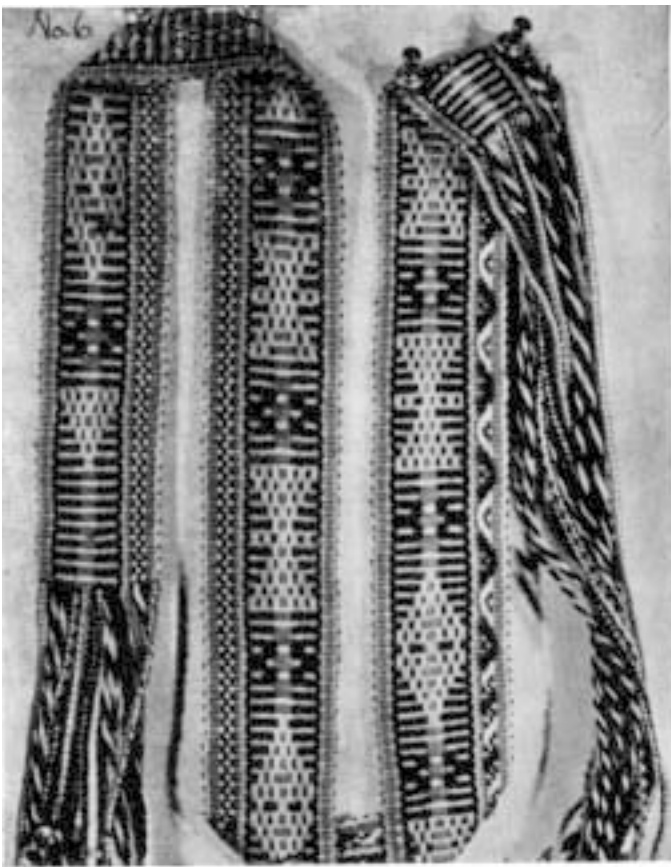
It is not entirely simple to produce this weave at first, and it is a good idea to practise first the pattern effect and then the background effect till both are clearly understood. For the pattern effect weave the dark shed plain. Make the light shed and pick up alternate pairs of pattern threads all across, beginning with the pair closest to the border. Weave the resulting shed. Weave the dark shed plain. Open the light shed and pick up alternate pairs of pattern threads, beginning with the second pair. Repeat these four shots as desired.

For the background effect reverse the process: weave the light shed plain. Open the dark shed and drop every other pair. Weave. Weave the light shed plain. Open the dark shed and drop every other pair beginning with the second pair instead of the first. And repeat these four shots as desired.









In weaving the figures combine these two processes: On the light shed pick up the pattern. On the dark shed drop alternate pairs of pattern threads across the background. It is really simple enough after one gets the "hang" of it and the result is handsome.

Belts and girdles woven on the inkle loom may be finished in any manner one prefers, — with buckles or other fastenings. However the more usual finish is to leave long ends of warp that are braided or twisted, as shown on girdle No. 6. The girdle may be made long enough to tie and hang down, or it may be made to fit exactly around the waist and be fastened by knotting the braided fringes together.

Narrow fabrics woven on the inkle loom have other uses than as belts, of course. Bag-handles, sandal-straps, pack-straps, bindings, and so on. These warp-face fabrics are very strong in the lengthwise direction, which makes them useful for many purposes for which a weft-face fabric is unsuitable.

There is also the fun of making them, which is also a consideration.

