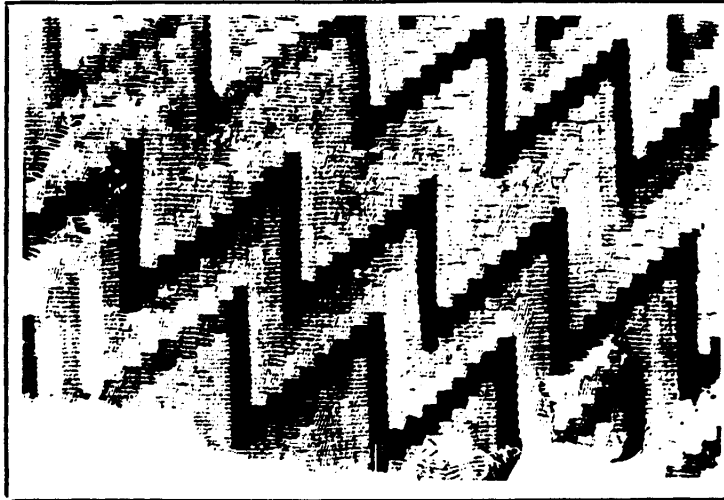


HANDWEAVING NEWS



Ancient Peruvian Slit Tapestry.

The photograph above is of a fragment of one of my ancient Peruvian tapestries No.T38. There is no joining of the weft colors as they meet each other, but a slit is left. However the wefts are so fine and closely beaten together that these slits are not very obvious. This type of technique is often called "kelim". And it has been much used for rugs and carpets from many countries bordering the Mediterranean as well as in other parts of the world.

This technique may be woven on any two harness loom or in fact on any loom which allows a plain weave shed, and many different warps and threads can be used. But the warp must always be spaced far enough apart, or the weft used be fine enough, so the weft will completely cover the warp threads. In the piece above, the warp is about the size of 24/3 cotton, firm and tightly twisted. It is set about 16 threads to the inch and is of natural color cotton. The weft used was very fine wools, and the colors two shades of red, and tan and yellow. The latter color is faded so it almost looks like the tan in some places.

The design of this piece is a simple all over repeat of geometric forms, and the slits are all about the same length. Some of my other fragments in this same technique show very short slits built up to form triangular shapes, horizontal lines with diagonal ends, and small squares. These small squares often have still smaller squares inside of them. Another feature of many of these fabrics is the single wrapped warp thread always of another color than the adjoining wefts. Sometimes these single wrapped warps are an inch or more long. The color is carried along as in the diagram at Figure No.3, and is usually, in the samples I have, of much finer weft than that of the squares on each side of it. The time it must have taken to weave these very fine textiles, and the infinite amount of patience is one of the things which make one marvel today at these interesting ways in which technique was used by these ancient Peruvian weavers. At Figure No.4 is another way in which a diagonal figure was built up. In this case the weft was carried back down, interlocked as I have drawn out, and then another figure started with the same weft as before.

The drawing below at Figure No.1 is the design of the original piece. This can be used as is, and would give a very modern effect, or suggestions taken from it, for another entirely different design if desired. One square of the cross section paper design equals three warp threads, and is the same plan as in the original piece. Of course the slits may be woven as long as desired. But in this piece they are woven to square the 3 thread warp unit. However in the design below I have only drawn the weft across four times and back. These lines indicate the dark red color, the two short verticals indicate the rose color weft, the X's the yellow weft, and the O's the tan weft. And of course where two X's etc are drawn, it means that the weft goes over 6 warp threads, back and forth enough times to make the unit.

On page 3 Figure No.2 is the detail of the method of working the technique as I have worked it out. Open the shed which brings the edge warp thread on the right down. I call this the down shed. Always begin and end a color on this down shed. Note that where the colors turn back around the warp thread, one color is always over the warp and the meeting color is under the adjacent warp thread. It is easier to have all of the wefts go in the same direction, from right to left in the down shed, and left to right in the up shed.

Note on Figure No.2 the stars *'s. These places indicate the way the weft advances to the left and to the right when the pattern design changes. You will see that the two wefts come in the same shed for a short distance. If well beaten down, this will not show.

Figure No.1 Drawing of the Design of Ancient Peruvian Slit Tapestry T 38.

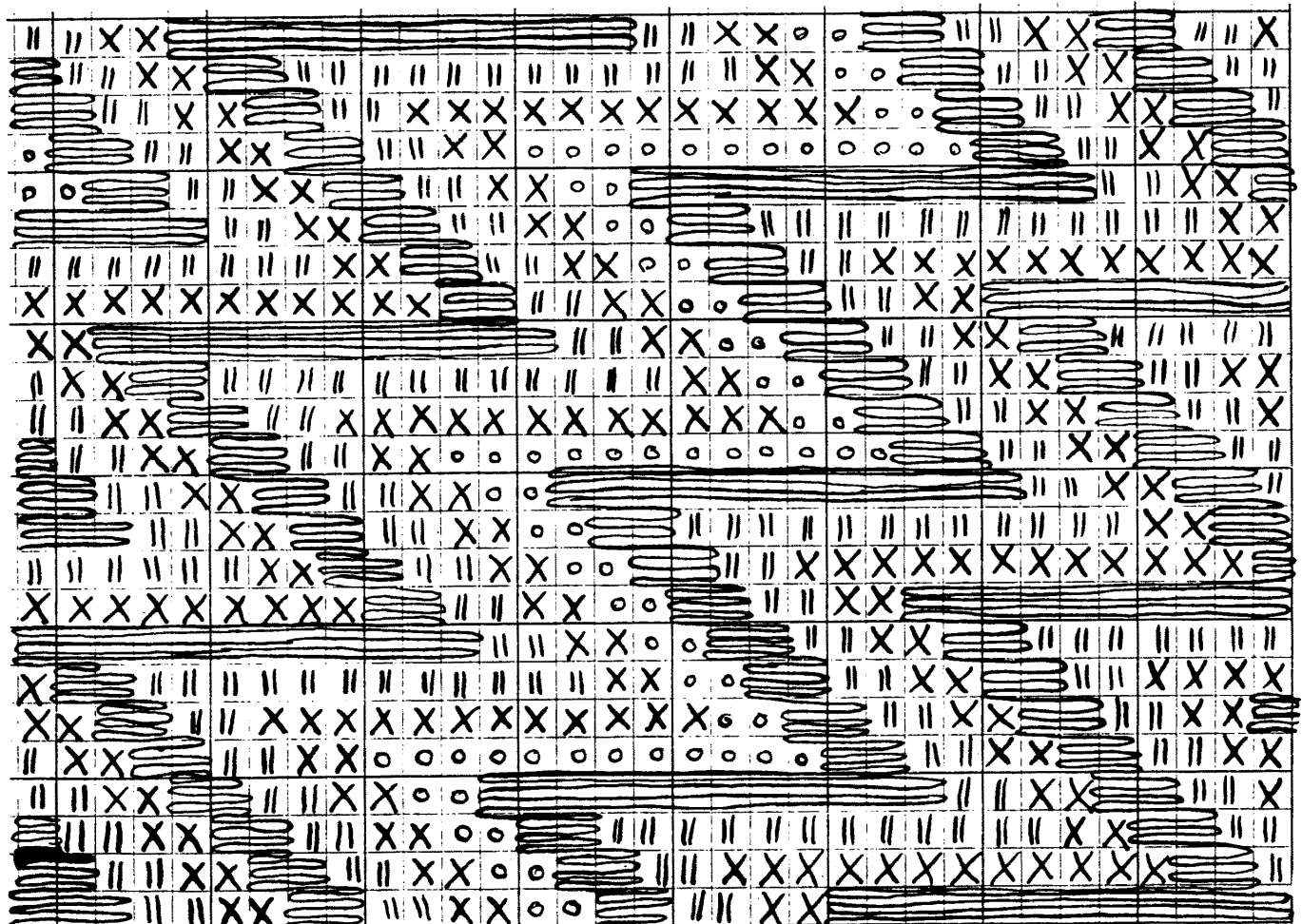


Figure No.2 Detail of method of Working Slit Tapestry Technique.

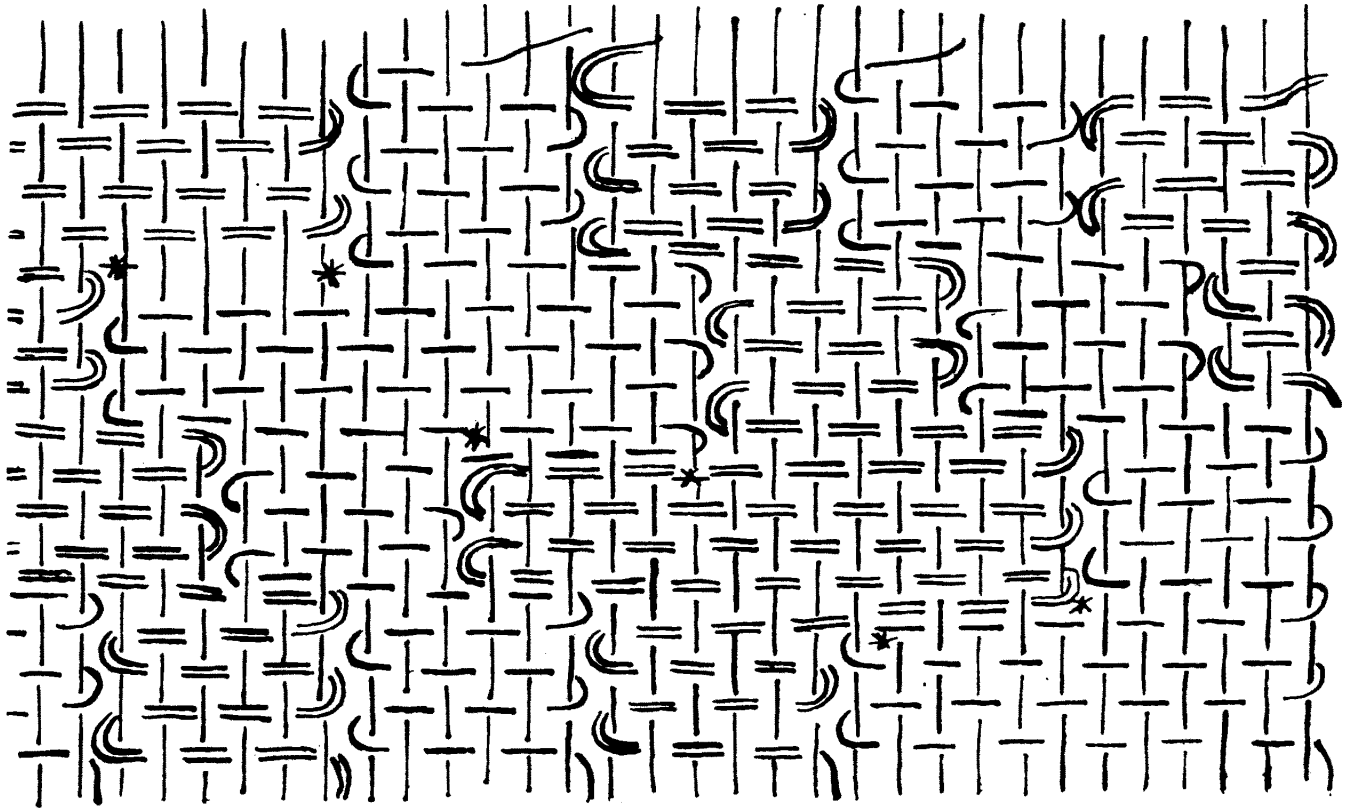


Figure No.4 from T #32.

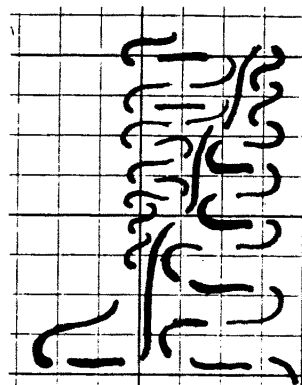
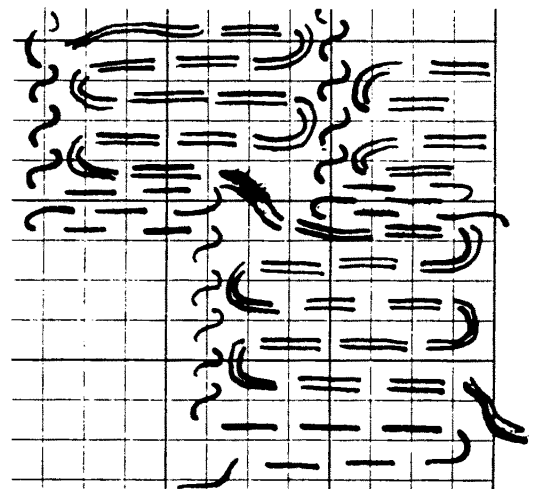


Figure No. 3 from T #30



The variations shown at Figure No.3 and 4 are two ways in which the technique can be used, as was found on two more of my Peruvian fragments. I believe they should be clear from the drawings, but if they are not, let me know and I will try and explain them further. I might also add that as far as I know the above techniques have never been described in any other place. If any one knows of a place where this same material has been given, I would like very much to know of it. I have two pieces of the piece shown on Page 1. One of these I shall be glad to sell if anyone is interested and wishes to own a real ancient Peruvian mummy textile. Price is \$20.00.