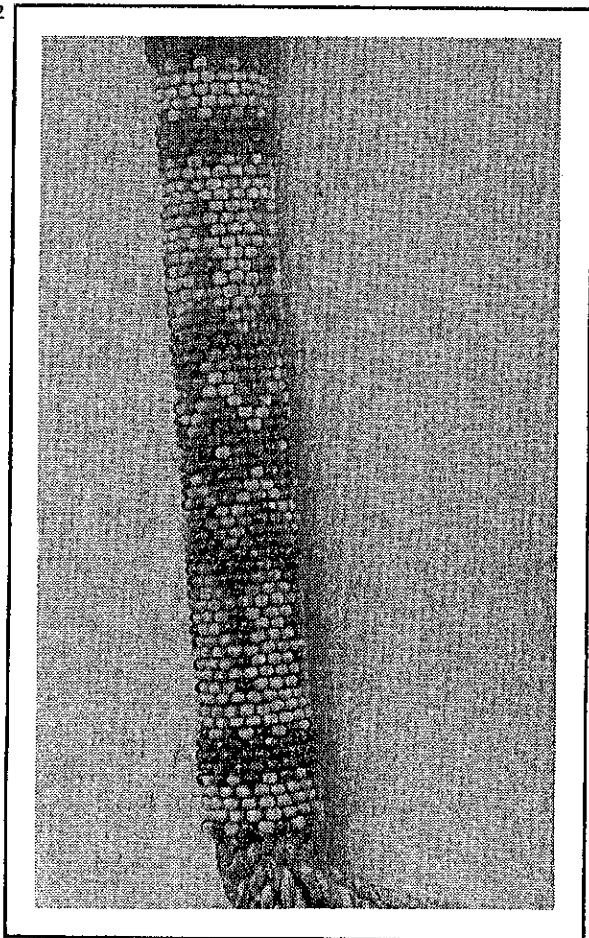
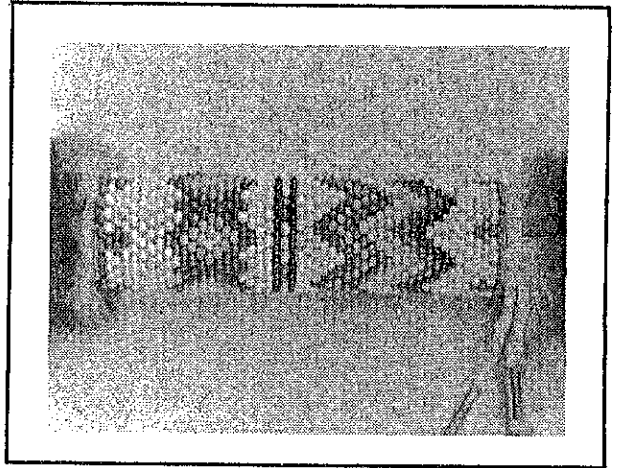


1



2

# COMANCHE STYLE NET BEADWORK



3

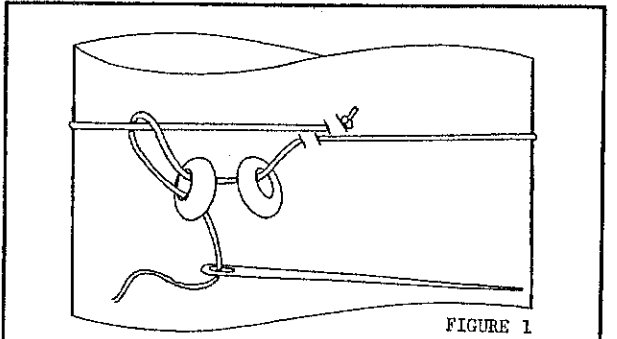


FIGURE 1

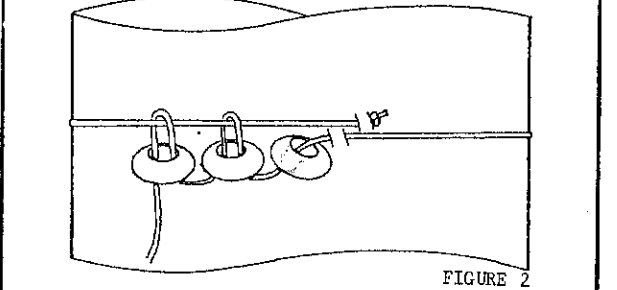


FIGURE 2

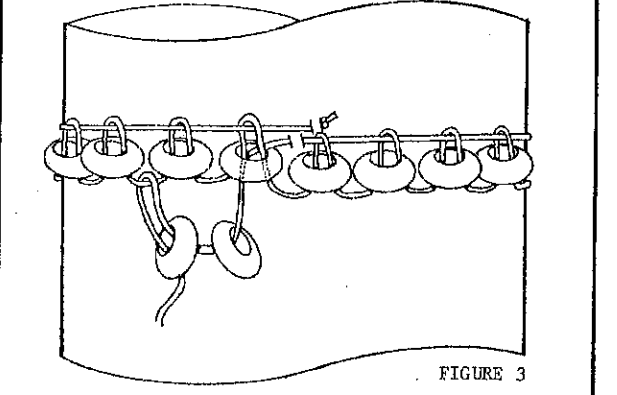


FIGURE 3

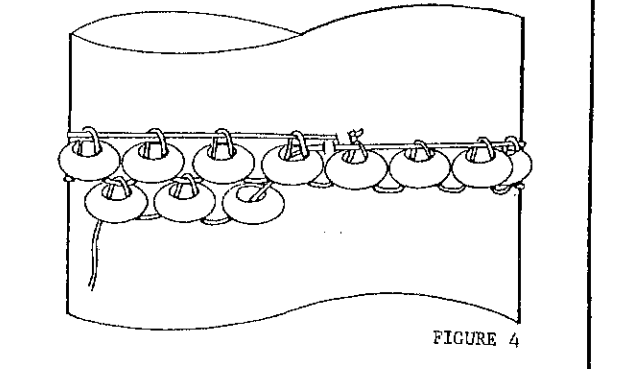


FIGURE 4

# Part 1 BASICS

A text on the subject of an art or craft may be either aesthetic or technical in its perspective. Many technical subjects vary in depth from the simple to the most sophisticated, the latter usually being an elaborate or synthesis of the former. This series too, will detail more developed techniques in subsequent issues. As technical subjects can be rather dry, I'm going to take special precautions to string you along (you and the beads). "Look, Jimmy, you get me a lock of your sister's lovely hair, and I'll give you a dollar." Jimmy: "You some kinda nut? For five dollars I'll get you her whole wig." Those who choose to study only the photos and drawings have missed that and they probably will also not comprehend all of the insights which the copy elaborates upon. Perhaps the style of writing may taste to you like prime rib covered with lemon pudding. But that's OK: it's not intended to be read beyond this point. For those who want only pictures, I've tried to make them self sufficient. If that's a reference to you, you probably will learn only as quickly as me (?). The captions and highlighted sections are included to supplement and clarify the graphics for those who are content with skimming. So what all of this writing is for is first to get down to the nitty-gritty details, second to keep you readers happy with some interesting, light reading and third to provide you with an awareness that the fella on this side of the typewriter has a little concern for the human side.

From your preview you have probably already noticed besides the photos and drawings, the headings "Definitions", "Technique", "Designs" and "Principles". I've placed the "Principles" at the end in order to not scare anyone off prematurely, but that's really where the basics are and if you try to neglect it, your moccasins won't be comfortable in the tracks ahead.

## DEFINITIONS

One reason is sufficient to prescribe some definitions. I will be repeatedly making references to features, concepts and abstractions which otherwise would require numerous adjectives to verbally describe or repetitive reference to a figure. Use of the definitions will result in greater brevity, clarity and enhanced comprehension for yourself.

## TECHNIQUE

Refer to block for starting. You can use almost any light-weight thread. I prefer dacron. Many prefer nylon. I've tried monofilament nylon which some people use but found it to sever quite readily. Waxing the thread not only helps to get it through the needle eye but gives it more firmness to help prevent tangling. Depending on the size

of the needle's eye, the tip of the thread will probably need flattening as well as trimming clean. Regular beading needles can be used but I have a preference for #12 Sharps (1-1/8" long) because they don't get bent as easily. Anytime you have to add a new thread, do it at the completion of a basic row, otherwise, to continue you have to carry the thread around a full cycle to where you dropped off. After tying on a new thread, skip just a few beads to clear the knot and begin the next base row on any of the last base row beads. When you come to the edge or end of the item simply "bury" the thread several inches along the beads in the last ap row. Tie another new thread onto the starting "tail" you wrapped around and work your way toward the other end.

## DESIGNS

Typical examples are shown. With beaded areas not being as large as an armband, for example, designs are usually small and simple. Commonly, simple design elements are disjointed or joined to become flowing, integral bars, zigzags, parallelograms, etc. I don't believe designs are normally "laid-out" as they are for loom-work, but usually a minimal amount of planning may be done in order to fit and locate a particular design. I suspect that many artists execute their designs spontaneously; that is, without any planning other than what they can retain mentally. Feather designs are popular as are flags. As the style of beadwork is found among a great variety of tribes, particularly on prayer materials, the uses of color are not really according to tribal traditions. A certain amount of integration has been taking place. Any colors are used, the most pleasing combinations of colors being desired. Rainbow color combinations are very popular. I've found greatest satisfaction with colors when I choose those which give optimum contrast; deep or dark colors against light colors, or combining colors which are opposite on the color wheel.

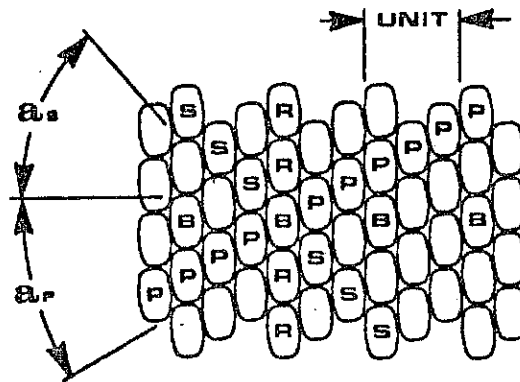
This is all you need to get started on something simple like a fully-beaded tail-stick. If you've gotten a proper start with the first three base rows (starting rows) you should have no problem. Remember that each base row is independent from the next, or complete in itself. You have to "step up" to the next row through two beads. See you next issue with the technique for fans or other items with flaired handles.

# DEFINITIONS

**BASE ROW:** The interrupted row of beads indicated "B" (base); a single peripheral row of beads attached in one cycle around the article.

**$a_p$  ROW or APPARENT PRIMARY ROW:** The continuous, angular row of beads indicated "P" (primary); the apparent row of beads at the smaller angle ( $a_p$ ) to the base row.

**$a_s$  ROW or APPARENT SECONDARY ROW:** The continuous, angular row of beads indicated "S" (secondary); the apparent row of beads at the larger angle ( $a_s$ ) to the base row.



**UNIT:** A section of  $a_p$  beads or  $a_s$  beads, the span of which is the same as that for base row beads (three-bead unit or unit of three, shown).

**RUNNING ROW:** The continuous row of beads indicated "R" (running); a row of beads "running" the length of the article and perpendicular to the base rows.

**PEONIES:** Oriental peasants.

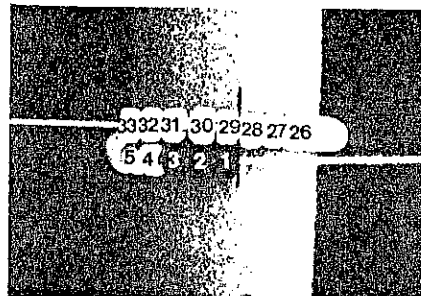
**PATTERN:** The continuous form determined by the apparent primary rows; ie., spiral, reversed spiral, chevron, "W", etc., as differentiated from.....

**DESIGN:** The forms determined by changes in bead colors, usually following  $a_p$  rows,  $a_s$  rows and running rows; ie., zigzags, triangles, bars, parallelograms, diamonds, etc. See examples.

# TECHNIQUE

Study the following captions and graphics thoroughly before starting to string the beads. Don't be particularly concerned about the appearance of the starting rows as long as the steps are followed correctly and the thread is kept snug. Some beads will appear to be improperly positioned but they can be correctly arranged after the starting rows are applied.

Thanks to Mr. Ray Douglas of Argo, Illinois for the loan of trade beads for the photo modelling.



1

String a quantity of beads and wrap them around the item to determine its periphery in terms of number of beads. Sample shows 28.

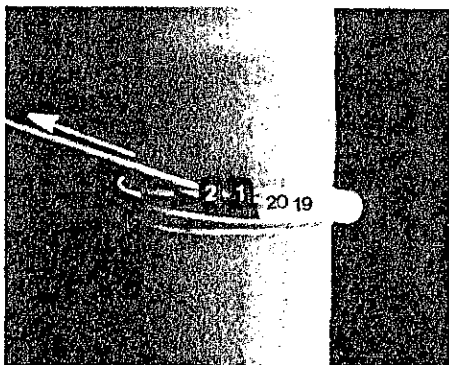
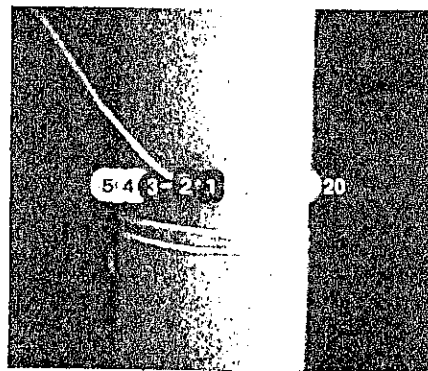
$$2 \times 28 = 56$$

$$\begin{array}{r} 18 \\ 3 \overline{)56} \\ \underline{3} \\ 26 \\ \underline{24} \\ 2 \leftarrow \text{remainder} \end{array}$$

~~18 + 19~~ 18 + 2 = 20

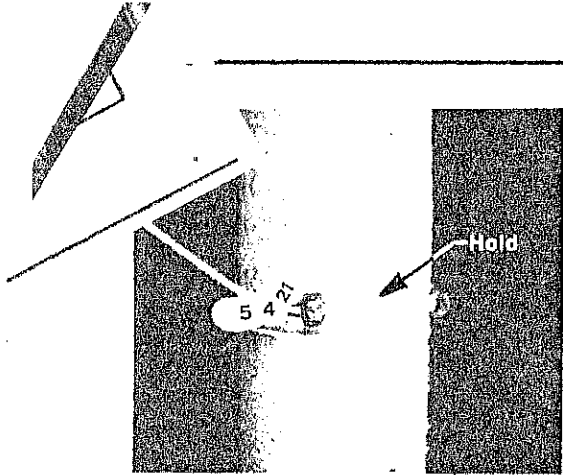
1A

Determine twice the number of units to be used by multiplying the measurement by two and then dividing by three. If there is a remainder, increase the number to the nearest even digit.



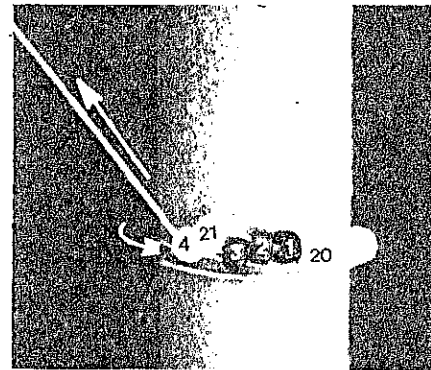
3 Pull the thread snug, sliding the first two beads down toward the last bead. Be very careful when sliding any of the beads around that you keep the previously applied beads snug. Usually you have to slide them with an extra push with your finger-nail.

2 Remove enough of the beads from the thread so that only the quantity determined mathematically (20) will remain. Wrap the tail of the thread around the item several times. Do not start on the end of the item because the beads and thread will slip off. Stitching the thread is unnecessary because friction from the wrapping will hold it secure. Pass the needle and thread through the first two beads. **MOST IMPORTANT: The need to start with an even number of beads is little understood and is most frequently the cause for problems and unsatisfactory results.** These constitute the first two basic rows.



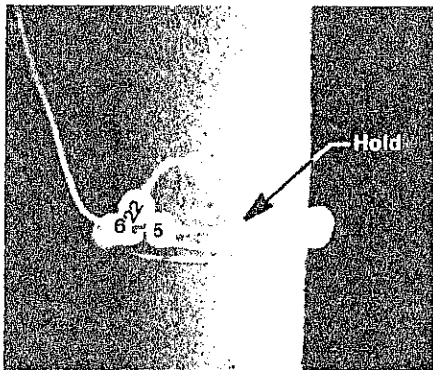
4

Holding the thread secure, string a bead (#21) to the fourth, skipping the third.



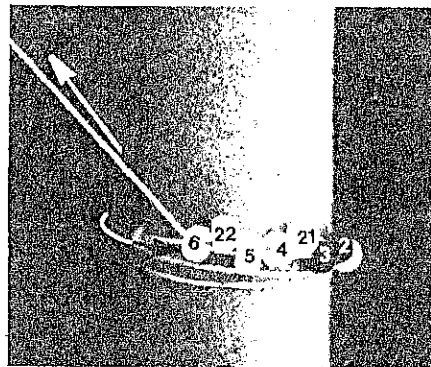
5

Pull the thread snug, sliding the third, fourth and added (21st) beads down toward the second.



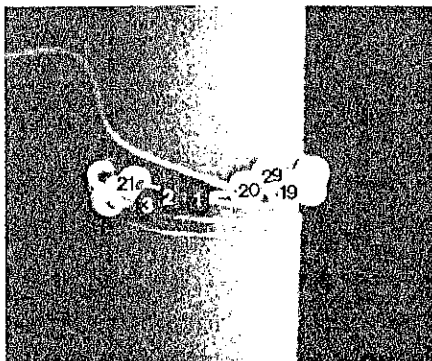
6

Again holding the thread secure, thread a bead and, skipping the fifth, string it to the sixth.



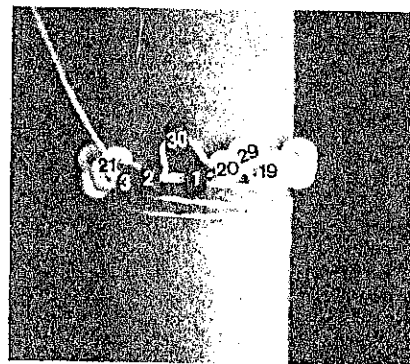
7

Pull/slide the beads up to the fourth bead.



8

Continue around, stringing a new bead to each even numbered bead up to the last.

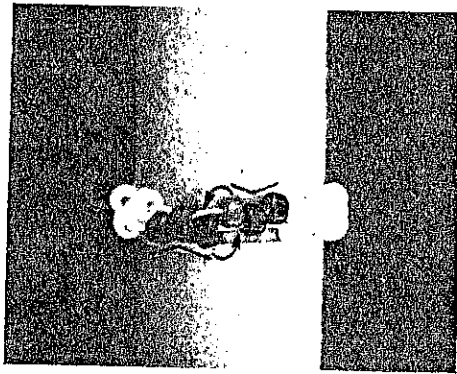


9

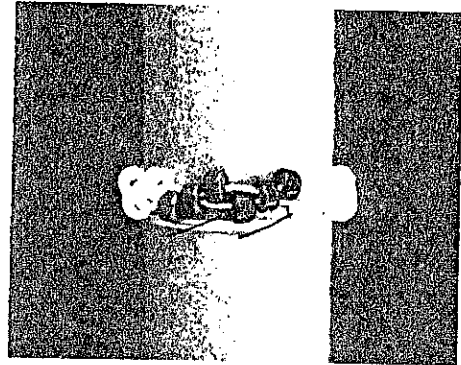
Add the last bead (30) of the row and pass the needle and thread up through the second bead again and the twenty-first (21) bead again. End all base rows in this manner by passing the needle and thread through **two** beads; through the first beads of the presently applied and previously applied base rows.

STEPS 10 & 11 CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE.....

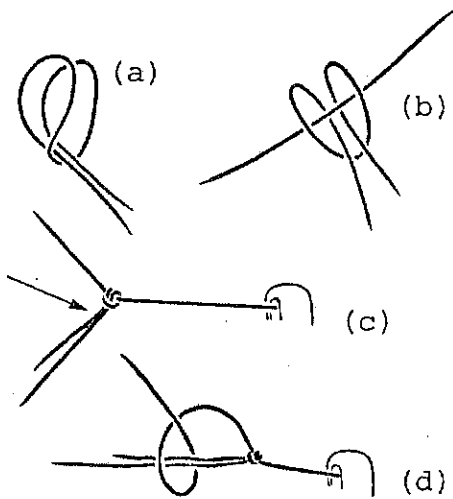
## TECHNIQUE (continued)



10



You probably will find some beads to be apparently out of place. Unless you have already introduced an error in your counting and stringing, adjacent first-row and third-row beads can be easily transposed past each other to achieve the same angles all the way around. This completes the starting technique with three "base rows".



11

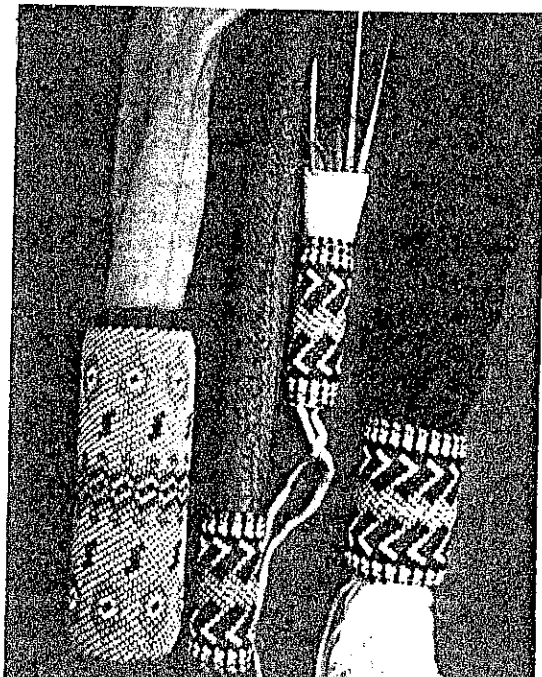
There is no need for stitching the end of a thread. I'll guarantee this knot will not slip.

a) Double loop. b) Slip it over tail of "Old" thread. c) Pull it tight, sliding it down towards the last bead. d) Double the half-hitch to secure the knot.

Continue adding base rows to make your design, ending each row by passing the needle and thread through the first beads of the presently applied and previously applied base rows.

Continued on page 14 .....

*Gourd dance rattle and sash ends.  
G. Hoyt (set), Joe Kazumura.*



## COMANCHE STYLE NET BEADWORK

The Comanche style of net beadwork is a common means by which to bead a round fan handle, rattle handle or other such ritual or dance piece. (Staff, dance cane, scalp feathers, etc.). The style of beadwork is sometimes referred to as "brickwork" in accordance with the alignment of the beads. This technique is not as prevalent among the various tribes as the 3-drop gourd stitch or "Peyote" gourd stitch described by Stewart (A.I.C.C., 1969) possibly because it is more time consuming. The needle must pass through each bead twice when being positioned in the Comanche style compared to once for the peyote technique. However, this style certainly lends itself to the incorporation of the spectacular rainbow color motifs and design elements such as zig-zags, crosses, diamonds, flags, waterbirds and feathers present in the peyote style.

The smaller cut (faceted) beads are preferred when using the Comanche style beadwork, but the size bead (13/0, 11/0) used depends on the object being beaded and the availability of beads.

### STARTING

Comanche style of net beadwork is very simple to do - it is just like doing single-bead edge beading. Cover the object to be beaded with buckskin. Glue it or sew it in place cutting off excess leather. Start with a waxed thread knotted at the end. Use double or single thread, nylon or cotton. Sew through the buckskin cover and wrap the thread less than snugly around the object and then pierce through the leather again as in Figure 1. Pick up and slide two beads onto the thread to start the first row. Pass the needle under the base thread and back through the second bead, Fig. 1. The remaining beads of the first row are put on one at a time by passing the needle under the base thread and back through the bead, Fig. 2

If you have needle, thread and beads in hand and are following step by step, your concern is that the

bead holes are pointing in towards the center of the object and not as they should be as in the photos or Figures. Do not dismay, they will be "turned" as the second row of beads are sewn in place. However, to facilitate this turn, the base thread will have to be somewhat loose.

After the last bead of the first row is in place, pass the needle up through the first bead. (Fig. 3) under the base thread and back through the first bead. To start the second row, slide on two beads and pass the needle under the thread connecting the second and third bead of row one, Fig. 3. Then continue adding one bead at a time passing the needle between the thread connecting the beads of the previous row. This method centers each bead over the point at which the two beads meet above it and so the beads lie as if put in place by a brick mason. Fig. 4 and photos. To start each new row, thread two beads then continue one at a time.

### EXPANDING

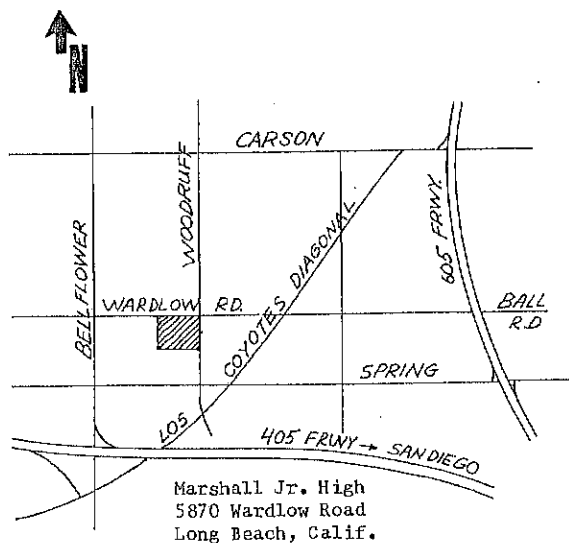
If you are beading a flat fan handle that tapers out, beads must be added to cover the surface of the object. As the handle begins to taper, simply hook in an extra bead over the thread connecting two beads of the previous row instead of one. Fig. 5. Do this at the side of the fan and add an extra bead on the other side of the fan at the same position to balance the design. The beads can be pulled with the thread towards the first beads in the row to aid in providing the extra space.

Comanche style does take more time and it is frustrating at times to get the needle through that first bead the second time; however, it is impressive and a technique to be learned by each beadworker.

### REFERENCES

Past, Richard E.; "American Indian Net Beadwork, Part III, Variations," Powwow Trails, Oct. 1969.

Stewart, Tyrone; "'Peyote' Beadwork Technique, Part 1 & 2", AICC vol. 3 No. 1 & 8, 1969.



## FUTURE POWWOWS:

*Witayapi - May 23-26*

# NEXT POWWOW

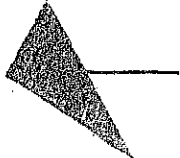
SAT., APR. 19, 1980

It's already here folks. The last powwow of the season to be held at Marshall Jr. High. Where has the year gone. The annual Spring Witayapi is next and then we have the annual Picnic-Park Powwow in June with the singers' hamburger fry.

Don't miss out on this last powwow and that final chance to tune up for the dance contests at the Witayapi. Speaking of contests, we will have a preliminary contest for the straight dancers at this powwow. All ages can compete and there is a \$5.00 prize for the winner. We will raffle off a fantastic color print donated by Carol Theroux along with several other items. Come share this evening of good songs, good dances and good times with your friends.

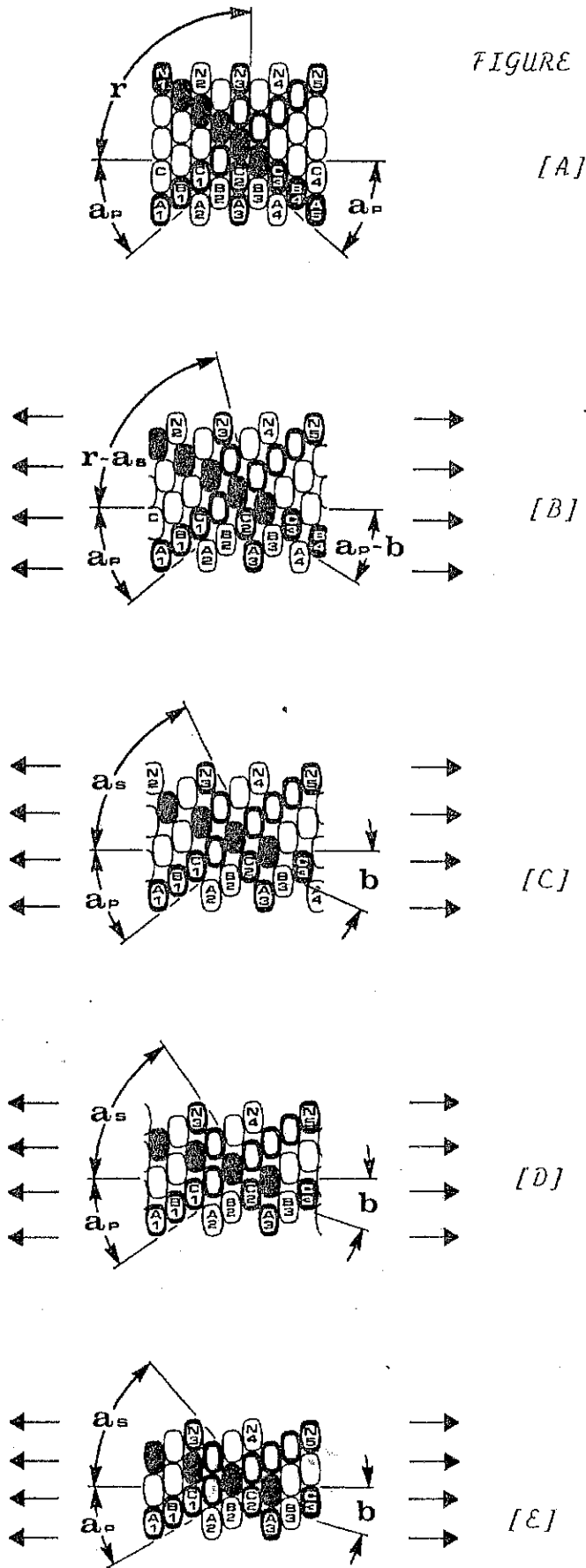
POWWOW OFFICIALS - HEAD DANCERS: Jim & Ellen Swope  
HEAD SINGERS: Keith Acker  
Rolf Clements  
MASTER OF CEREMONIES: Bill Wantz





# PRINCIPLES

FIGURE 1



The most immediate available study source I had when I first approached this craft over twenty years ago was Ben Hunt and J.F. "Buck" Burshears' American Indian Beadwork. I tried the technique and achieved satisfactory results. Becoming intrigued with it, I tried perhaps several more articles. When I later had the opportunity to see some of the "real thing" at trading posts, museums and powwows I noticed there was something that appeared to be fundamentally different: rows were not aligned in the same directions as the authors showed. With further comparison and thought the basic arrangement of the beads became apparent.

Refer to Figure 1(a) through (e). The diagram shown by Hunt and Burshears was comparable to 1(a). By contrast, most of what I had seen looked like 1(e). On occasion, I also had noticed that unlike either of these, some beadwork showed no "running rows" but showed slight, regular and consistent gaps between beads. They looked more like 1(b) or 1(c). Most notably, every sample I examined showed the same net-like structure; one bead attached on each side to two other beads.

What became evident to me was that the only difference was the span between "base row" beads. Compare the relative position of base row "A" beads labeled "A1", "A2", "A3", etc. In 1(a) there is one "running row" in-between each of them and in 1(e) there are two; the span is increased by one bead. The intermediate drawings show the span at various intermediate stages. They show too, the slight gaps and absence of running rows. The difference was definitely not in the technique but in the span between base row beads.

The span, or "unit" can easily be established by how many beads I choose to use in each base row. If I choose more beads, they are crowded more closely together making a narrow span and if I choose less, they are spread apart. Considering that most of what I had seen looked more like 1(e), a three-bead unit, that became my model as "Technique" shows.

It is important to note that there is a transformation process between the two sizes of units; and the transformation can go in both directions. If we are beading an item with a two-bead unit and the item flairs-out, the base row beads will spread apart as we progress ahead. Being careful that progressive beads are always located toward the same side of the widening gap, left or right, we will find that we will proceed through a transformation to a three-bead unit. The same will be true if we start with a three-bead unit and bead along a decreasing taper: transformation to a two-bead unit. Study the photo of the church gourd (Gondeck) where there are tapers opposite the gourd end.

During the transformation, there is a change of the rate in which we progress in the direction of the running rows. Note in 1(a) the running row A3 through N3. As the units S-P-R-E-A-D to a three-bead unit, their relative position changes.



The running row transforms into an Apparent secondary row ( $r - a_s$ ), initially greatly oblique [1(b)]. In 1(e) it becomes the least oblique. The  $a_p$  row (A1 through N5), incidentally, becomes less oblique also. Because the beads A3 through N3 remain continuous or in contact, the increasing lateral displacement results in a decreasing longitudinal (running row) displacement. N3 is not as far "ahead", even though it takes just as many beads to get there. In 1(e) the bead density is about the same (gaps are about the same; minimal). But unlike a budget, as you stretch it, it goes less far.

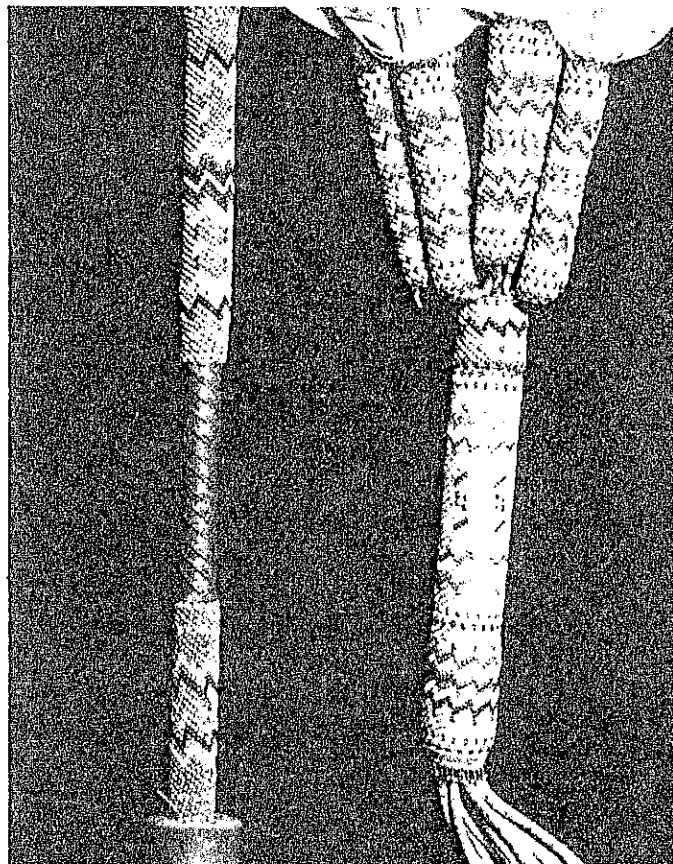
Now I'll tell you why I call a section a "unit". The smallest element composing the beadwork is, of course, a single bead. We cannot fit a half-bead or a bead-and-a-half into a void between whole beads. We have to live with the spaces that are there. Let us also presume the requirement for symmetry around the beaded item. Each base row is independent from the next and having "n" beads, symmetry requires that they be evenly spaced or spread. Again referring to Figure 1(e), beads C1 and A2 and again C2 and A3 determine  $a_s$  rows. The  $a_p$  and  $a_s$  rows form zigzags: A1, B1, C1, A2, B2, C2, A3, B3, C3, etc. In 1(a) the zigzags are formed by A1, B1, A2, B2, A3, B3, etc. 1(e) is essentially the same as the series of photos for "Technique". Each zigzag is a cycle and the third bead is required to complete the cycle. We cannot have two zigzag cycles with those  $a_p$  and  $a_s$  rows within that span. Therefore the three beads are the smallest design element or unit.

If we have particular numbers of units (or beads per base row) on different items, we can combine the units to make larger but fewer design elements. For example, if eighteen units are used, we could have nine design elements of two units each or six design elements of three units each. Twenty-one units could be divided into seven design elements, with three units each. Only prime numbers of units cannot be scaled up to larger design elements. If you divide up your units into design elements, make sure you divide them up equally, otherwise you'll have a section where a design element (and design) is incomplete. All of the photos show design elements of two or more units.

This has been rather lengthy but I hope not too cumbersome. It is important that you understand the transition of unit size and the concept of the unit, particularly as the unit relates to designs. This portion shall have been the most abstract and therefore probably the most difficult to comprehend. As you practice with different numbers of beads per base row, the concept will become very simple as it really is. Mathematics, physics and music are all technical subjects which adhere to various fundamentals or laws. The techniques I will discuss (mechanical discussion; less abstract) in final installments will require that these fundamentals or principals be understood.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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American Indian Beadwork, Collier Books



*Church Gourd Rattle and Fan; G. Gondeck*

*Dance Fan and "Tail" Stick; R. Wrona*

