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### L-M BRIC News

#### SPIRIT BRIDGE OF CUNA INDIANS IN PANAMA

When thrown across deep  
arrows, the bridge permits the  
dead to cross many precipices  
in the long and danger-filled  
Journey of the Afterlife. It is  
said that for the virtuous in life  
the Spirit Bridge extends to the  
other side of precipices no  
matter how steep or wide they  
are, but for the wicked, the  
Bridge will never be long  
enough.

The Bridges are colored at  
intervals with red mudgize dye  
representing the fresh blood of  
the Great Earthmother.

真珠に似た多くの美しい羽根を  
本時に、この編みの間に打ちつけて  
向こう岸に投げ渡さる。この  
生きた時を渡り、死後の旅をする  
と喜び、死後の旅をする時  
が来るが、死後人は何故役でも  
向う岸に渡らないという。  
死の道、死の道を通るマカ  
ハの叫びで編み入る。

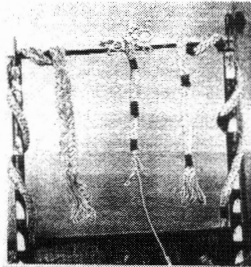


Photo 1. Spirit Bridges of Afterlife, spined around Spirit Ladder.  
Braid at far left: Spirit Bridge for the closed death hammock. It extends full length  
and hangs down over its end; center: For palm of hand; right: For women  
dying in childbirth.

写真1 真珠の帯へのスピリットブリッジ パナマのクナ族の葬儀儀式に用いられる3種の編み  
左: 遺体を包むハムモックの編みは縦方向に渡す編 中央: 掌につける編  
右: 出産で死じた女性用

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F. Sorber's search of the literature on loop-manipulation (l-m) techniques in 1998 revealed two kinds of braids used in the burial customs of Cuna Indians living in southern Panama and San Blas Islands, who are known better for the mola (Note 1 and 2). Called the Spirit Bridges of the Afterlife, using these braids for purposes other than burial is taboo (Photo 1 Left).

#### Photo 2 Making the Spirit Bridge of the Afterlife

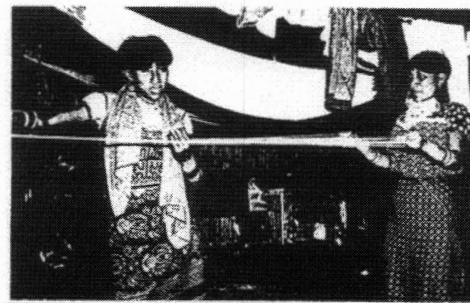
写真2 来世へのスピリットブリッジを組んでいる情景

The braider on the right and the beater at the fell of the braid. Today, only a few people knows how to make the Spirit Bridgere.

左の打ち手が打つ間、右の組み手は腕を開いて待つ。しかしこれを組める人も数少なくなったという。

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In Photo 2 (above) two women are making a Spirit Bridge; one woman holds the loops mounted on the fingers (finger-held method) with palms facing each other, the other beats at the fell to tighten the structure while holding the braid head. Although no description of the construction procedures has been given, we can discern from photo 1 that two braids on the right (Spirit Bridge1) are square braids made using 5 loops. One on the left (Spirit Bridge 2) looks like a braid with an unorthodox pattern (UO) made using 7 loops. Only one face of the braid can be seen, as it has been wrapped carefully around the Spirit Ladder. From the face shown, two possibilities can be surmised (Photo to be inserted)(Note 3). More than 5 or 7 loop ends seen on some braids are because the yarn was used in double.

### BURIAL STRINGS OF CUNA INDIANS IN COLOMBIA

A similar burial custom and taboo among Cuna Indians living in northwestern Colombia has been reported (Note 4). From the diagrams of the two construction procedures given in the report, one can discern that the finger-held (f-h) l-m in which the braider holds the "palms facing each other while operating with the index finger" (here, tentatively called Method #1) is used (Note 5).

One of the two, TYPE I, is a square braid, the same as Spirit Bridge 1. A point of interest here is that TYPE I is made taking the shed differently from the more common Method #1 square-braid procedure (See Illustrated Instruction Series=IIS No.1, Figs. 3a and 3b). We don't know which one of the two has been used to construct Spirit Bridge 1.

TYPE II is different from Spirit Bridge 2 (See IIS No. 1, Fig. 4) (Note 6).

### TIE STRINGS ON A COAT OF THE KHANTY PEOPLE IN SIBERIA

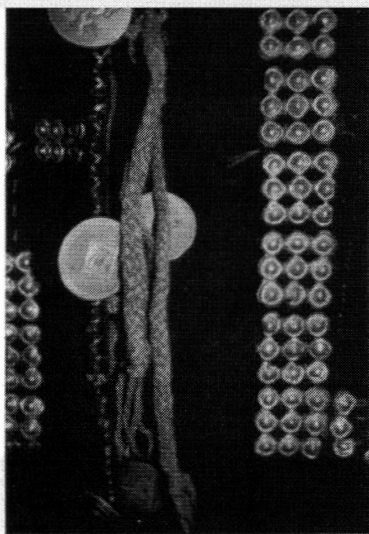


Photo 3 Tie Strings on a jacket of Khanty People in Siberia.  
写真3 シベリアに住むハンタイ族のコート前開きの結び紐

Photo: Masako Kinoshita ©

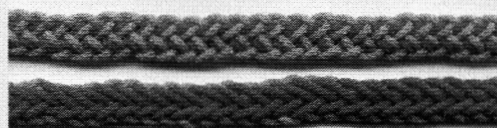
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Another l-m braid specimen to add to the World Distribution Map of L-M Braids was found among the ethnographical costume collection of the National Archeology and Ethnology Institute in Novosibirsk, Russia. They are a couple of pairs of front closure strings attached to a jacket of the Khanty people who lives in northwest Siberia, along the River Ob. The braid made of wool-like fiber exhibited the most obvious characteristics of an UO braid, having a 2-ridge braid on one face and a 4-ridge braid on the other (Photo 3 Left). The Khanty braid, however, is round on the four-ridge face and flat on the two-ridge face in contrast to the most often reported UO (here I tentatively call UO No. 1), which is flat on the four-ridge face and round on the 2-ridge face (Photo

4).

Although I could not examine the braid further, I suspect it to be a combination tubular braid of two-ridge and four-ridge flat braids. This tubular braid can be made using either Method #1 or #2 (See IIS No. 1, Figs. 6a or 6b) (Note 7).

Realizing that there has been no report of UO No. 1 made using Method #2, I made a sampler by myself. To my surprise, I got a perplexing result; the sampler had a U-shaped cross section, entirely unlike the half-moon shape of that made using Method #1 (See IIS No. 1, Fig. 5a and 5b) or Method #3. Could this unexpected outcome be utilized to identify the construction method of specimens for which no information is available? While this phenomenon warrants careful probing, at this moment, it should rather serve as a warning not to rely too heavily on the appearance to identify a braid.



UO1, using 2-color loops. Made by Masako Kinoshita, 1998.

Top: The top side as the braid is made.

Bottom: The bottom side as the braid is made.

Material: Machine braided cord, nylon.

不正規組織編組 No. 1 木下雅子作 1998

上: 組織中の上面、下: 組織中の下面



**FINGER-HELD LOOP-MANIPULATION (F-H L-M) TECHNIQUES**

In l-m techniques a 5-loop procedure, for instance, produces a ten-element braid because each shank of a loop is individually interlaced into the mirror-image spots on the braid. A braider handles only one half as many yarn ends as needed for the structure of the braid. This is an important feature, resulting in the ability of l-m techniques to produce structures with complexity far exceeding what is expected from a purely hand-manipulated technique.

Among historical as well as present day usage of the l-m studied to date, the number of incidence of finger-held (f-h) methods far exceeds that of hand-held (h-h), those in which loops are slipped around the hands and held in a sequential order,

**BRAIDS WITH AN UNORTHODOX PATTERN (UO)**

The UO can be called the **MARKER OF THE L-M BRAIDING TECHNIQUE**, because its structural characteristics are rarely seen in those made by any other braiding technique.

In UO procedures, the operating finger (OP) goes "through" and skips "over" the loops to make a shed, such as seen in Figs. 2, 5 and 6. The resulting structures contain a mixed interlacing of single and double elements. The structure of UO is easy to make if f-h l-m is used, but is cumbersome if other braiding techniques are employed. The UO is a unique development of the f-h l-m and does not belong to the group of braids that have developed naturally from other braiding techniques including the h-h l-m. This is why one can be almost certain of the existence of l-m technique wherever the UO is found.

So far, only Japan and Thailand have no report of UO production among the societies where the practice of f-h l-m has been reported.

I hope readers would take the diverse and sometimes confusing topics in this issue in the spirit of field research and enjoy the contrast with a course study.

**ILLUSTRATED INSTRUCTION SERIES:****INTRODUCTION;**

**NO. 2** Braids with an unorthodox pattern used among the Cunas in Colombia and Panama, and the Khantys in Siberia.

**Contents:**

Assumed procedure (1) for the 7-loop Spirit Bridge  
Assumed procedure (2) for the 7-loop Spirit Bridge

TYPE I (square braid) used in Colombian Cuna Indian burial: Regular Method #1 square braid  
TYPE II braid used in the Colombian Cuna Indian burial  
UO No. 1 using method #1  
UO No. 1 using method #2  
Proposed procedures for a Khanty braid by Kinoshita  
Method #1  
Method #2

**LIST OF OBSERVATION POINTS FOR RECORDING L-M TECHNIQUES**

The list shows what to look for when you happen to encounter a person who knows l-m braiding and is willing to answer your questions. It will be greatly appreciated if you take such a record and send it to us.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

Thanks are due to: F. Sober, who diligently continues bibliographical search and contributed the latest find to this issue; N. Speiser, who always willingly share her expertise with me; S. Berlin, M. Dusenberry

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ILLUSTRATED INSTRUCTION SERIES: No. 2

Braids with an unorthodox pattern used among the Kunas in Colombia and Panama, and the Khantys in Siberia

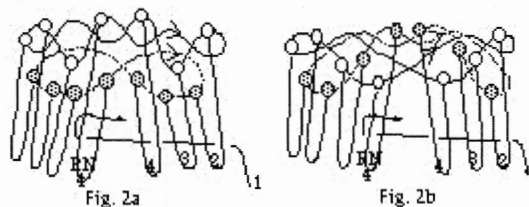
This page specially deals with the braids appearing in Issue No. 2.

General instructions are given in the ILLUSTRATED INSTRUCTION page.

Fig. 2a. Assumed procedure (1) for the 7-LOOP SPIRIT BRIDGE

a b c d RN  
OP thr ov thr opn

This braid is a combination of a 2-ridge flat braid (2-eye track, better known as pigtail braid) and a 6-ridge flat braid (6-eye track) as shown.



Two assumed procedures for the 7-loop Spirit Bridge.

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Fig. 2b. Assumed procedure (2) for the 7-LOOP SPIRIT BRIDGE

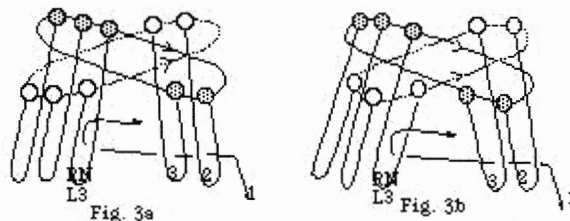
a b c d RN  
OP thr ov updn opn

This braid is a combination of two 4-ridge flat braids (4-eye tracks).

Fig. 3a. Burial String TYPE I of Cuna Indian in Colombia. (5-loop square braid)

a b c d RN  
OP updn updn - cr

This braid is a combination of S and Z helixes (one-eye track). A typical square braid.



Two kinds of the procedures for making a square braid:  
a. Method used by Kuna Indians in Colombia for making the burial braid TYPE I.  
b. Method used for the majority of people.

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Fig. 3b. The Method #1 procedure seen more often for the square braid

a b c (d) RN

OP thr thr (thr) cr

Fig. 4 Burial String TYPE II of Cuna Indian in Colombia.

a	b	c	d	RN
OP	updn	thr	-	opn

This braid is a combination of two 4-ridge flat braids.

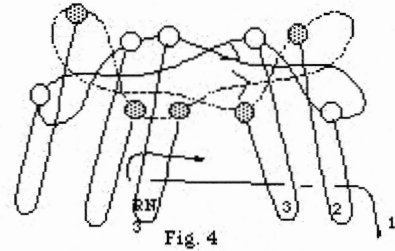


Fig. 4

TYPE II braid used in the Colombian Cuna Indian burial.

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Fig. 5a. UO No. 1 using method #1

a	b	c	d	RN
OP	thr	ov	-	opn

Two- and 4-ridge braids are combined by the middle two ridges of the latter.

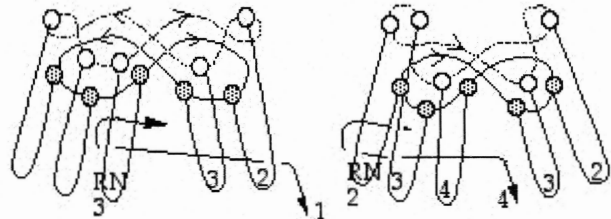


Fig. 5a

Fig. 5b

Procedures and track-plans for UO No. 1

a: Method 1 b: Method 2

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Fig. 5b. UO No. 1 using method #2

a	b	c	d	OP
-	opn	thr	ov	rd

Fig. 6a. Proposed procedure for the closure string of a jacket of the Khanty tribe of Siberia: Method #1 by Kinoshita.

a	b	c	d	RN
OP	ov	thr	-	opn

Two- and 4-ridge braids are combined by the selvage ridges.

Note the difference from the braid in Fig. 4b.

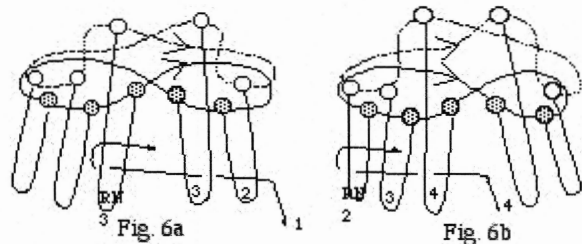


Fig. 6a

Fig. 6b

Procedures proposed by M. Kinoshita for making a braid of the Khanty Tribe of Siberia.

a: Method 1, b: Method 2

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Fig. 6b. The Method #2 procedure to make the Khanty braid proposed by M. Kinoshita.

a	b	c	d	Rd
-	opn	ov	thr	OP



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