

THE BUFFALO MOTIVE IN MIDDLE CELEBES DECORATIVE DESIGN

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An acquaintance with middle Celebes design was derived from a study of a collection brought from that island in 1916 by H. C. Raven, explorer, and presented to the United States National Museum by Dr. W. L. Abbott. The collection is a general one illustrative of the material culture of the Malay groups on the middle Celebes, thoroughly labeled, and from its diversity and completeness reflecting great credit on the collector.

Especially interesting are the varied examples of bark cloth, differing in quality and character according to the uses to which they were put. Most of the bark-cloth specimens are costume or adjuncts of costume. There are, therefore, no great sheets of bark cloth as observed in the tapa of the Pacific islanders manufactured by pasting strips of the beaten bark together. The middle Celebes cloths are apparently a primitive type beaten out from a single strip of bark, thus forming pieces useful for turbans, loin cloths, and the like.

It was seen at once that the decorated cloth, principally jackets and turban strips, bore designs new to the Museum and of unique character not related to any art hitherto observed in Malaysia.

The contents of the designs are three elements or units, as circles, diamonds, and pairs of crescentic figures diverging outwardly from a base. These elements used in conjunction, sometimes in a definite order and again as units of design reaching the geometric, as suited the artist's fancy, formed an interesting problem. Based on a knowledge of Pueblo Indian designs, it was more than suspected that the Celebes designs were zoomorphic.

In studying other specimens in the collection this supposition became a certainty. Several hooks of horn and wood used for hanging articles in the house afforded the clue and themselves illustrated grades from the conventional to the realistic or vice versa, no assertions as to the order being stated. It will be seen that the realistic specimen represents a female figure standing between the horns of a buffalo (pl. 1, fig. 3). Another hook (pl. 1, fig. 5) shows a more

conventional treatment, a third (pl. 1, fig. 6) still more, while a fourth is quite conventional (pl. 1, fig. 2). Horn spoons (pl. 1, figs 1 and 4) are still more conventional. It became evident that the makers of the hooks used the same design displayed in the bark-cloth decorations. On the bark cloth none of the designs is realistic, the difference between sculptural and decorative treatment being easily determined. It is suggested that the relationship between sculptural and decorative designs is not close, and this is due to the fact that they are radically different in their beginnings.

The hooks also revealed several other interesting developments. The buffalo, on information of Dr. Gerrit S. Miller, jr., is the Indian *Bos Gaur* introduced into the Celebes art at some unknown time and not the small animal *anoa* with slightly curved horns native to that island. Another extremely interesting feature of the hooks is the female figure between the horns of the bull, which can be identified in Hindu mythology as *Durga*, the consort of *Siva*. There is evidently here the fact of the introduction of the Indian buffalo and the *Siva* cult and also the bringing of a particular art based on these motives.

As stated, it is not possible now to assign a date to this introduction. The development of the buffalo designs, which has proceeded rather far, has little bearing on the time necessary for its evolution, for the reason that a style may proceed to fruition at times quite rapidly and assume an indigenous aspect.

The exclusive use of the buffalo designs in this area of the Celebes brings up the question as to whether they displaced previous nature designs. In answer it can only be said that there is no mixture with the buffalo design and no traces of an anterior decorative art can be discerned in the ethnological collection made by Mr. Raven, none of which, except some parangs, are old. It would be expected that etching on cane tubes, widespread in the Pacific, would tend to preserve traces of older art, but specimens in the collection show only buffalo motives. (Pls. 8, 9.)

There remains the supposition that the middle Celebes tribes had no indigenous decorative art at the time of the introduction of the Indian buffalo. This is worthy of consideration when the paucity of Malay decorative art is observed. The great collections of Dr. W. L. Abbott in the United States National Museum from the Philippines and other collections from the Malay area are singularly limited in the use of color and decorative design. The collections present a monotony of the natural color of materials. From this circumstance they present a primitive aspect. Nevertheless, if the Celebes people could take up and develop a new decorative art like the buffalo designs, there is every reason to believe that they had a basal art of their own, but probably quite limited in content.

DESIGN

The proliferation of Celebes buffalo designs was facilitated by the presence of a suitable, receptive, and prevalent medium for placing and elaborating decorations. From these considerations the florescence of the introduced buffalo designs would be assured. No doubt the presence or absence of media or fields for decoration has profoundly affected the progress of decorative art in all stages of man's art history.

Decorations of the Celebes bark cloth medium offered to the artist all the interesting problems observed by the transmutation of designs enforced by the areas to be covered, broader fields taking bolder designs made up of complete figures, smaller fields, units or fragments for bordering bands, and limited areas.

Keeping in mind the process followed in the disintegration of designs in which presence and coherence of all the elements in juxtaposition is necessary at the beginning, we can trace the dissolution from the complex to the simple designs. The complex designs drawn on broad areas are not and never have been realistic like the carved hooks. They were put on the surface under rigid limitations belonging to decorative art, and only when there has been a high development do realistic drawings appear, and then are not connected with useful decorations but are a distinct branch of art.

The presence in the water-buffalo design of several elements capable of producing variety is especially noticeable. These are the eye, the curved horns, the ears, the standing figure, the forehead mark or diamond, which form the grammar of the designs. It is seen that the elements are not harmonious in the larger designs on account of the admixture of curvilinear and geometric elements in one design. This is especially seen in the cases where the horns remain in pairs with no terminus to the curves. Harmony is gained when geometrics reach ascendancy in the border patterns.

The complete buffalo designs were segmented by the Celebes artist into several decorative units, all freely used in the various sequences. It is evident that the art had not progressed to the state where a surviving element, for instance the eye, only remains as a clew to the zoomorphic origin of the designs. The segments used are the horns in pairs and singly; the eyes; the ears; the diamond figure placed in the area between the eyes and base of the bull's horns, apparently a sex symbol. The female figure seems to have suffered most from transmutation. Smaller adjuncts not clearly traceable to the key designs shown in the hooks are bands of solid color, hachuring, and series of short lines to diversify white areas.

With these elements the Celebes artists produced unified results, indicating what may be termed a school of design. A singular fact

in the progress of this school is that the artists did not discover or use interlocking running designs which the curving horns would patently suggest. The horns are freely used separately, as in the borders in Plate 2, *a* and *b*. The eyes have a tendency to be placed in pairs, as in Plate 2, *b*, and other plates. The diamond figure is used entire, separated into two triangles (pl. 4, *b*) or quartered (middle band in pl. 4, *a*). Hachured diamonds are seen in Plates 2, *a*, and 4, *b*.

In some cases a purer decoration is applied over the whole surface, as in Plate 3, *b*, which has a symmetrical 4-part design repeated on a background spotted with numerous eye circles. This specimen shows more freedom and simplicity in handling the design and also considerable taste in the use of color. The design in Plate 3, *a*, is in contrast and would appear to be only a slight departure from realism.

The figures in Plate 4, *a*, are disposed in panels and bandings. The designs are in four and the horn pairs arise from the base of the triangular half diamond. A cross figure like a flower and a commalike figure, apparently a stalked eye, are placed to produce variety and balance. A broader treatment is seen in Plate 4, *b*, where horns and eyes are combined into a treelike figure drawn in a triangular area and interspersed with similar alternating areas of bands and triangles.

Plate 5 shows almost the only circular design, also in four parts, with wedges at the axis forming a 4-point star.

Panel designs seem to be the most favored by the Celebes decorators, as seen in Plate 6, *a*, where a complete buffalo convention is surrounded by a border of horns and hachured diamonds and diamonds divided into four sections by two cross lines. The group of bars in the middle band appear as an addition to the customary units of design mentioned. Very few designs indicating motion are found in Celebes decorative art. One design whose axis is the St. Andrews cross is given the motion idea by four curving horns turning to the right (pl. 6, *b*). Apparently motion is indicated in a diagonal cross pattern shown on Plate 7, *a*. Examples of geometric border designs are shown on Plate 7, *b*, and varieties of these conventions may be seen on other illustrations (see pls. 2, *a*, and 4, *a*).

Gourd containers of bottle shape and bamboo or coconut boxes and flutes are well represented in the collection. Ordinarily such objects are prevalent over a vast area in Malaysia and the Pacific islands and are examples usually of the best and most accurate art of decoration. Gourd and bamboo containers shown on Plate 8 give examples of buffalo design executed with meticulous care. Espe-

cially instructive are the bands and panels of all-over geometric designs met with in many places over the region mentioned but which in this case are believed to be derived from the buffalo motives (pls. 8 and 9). Attention is called to the openwork projections at the ends of a weaving frame which shows the buffalo design at its highest excellence (pl. 9).

BARK CLOTH IN THE CELEBES

Bark cloth is quite generally used in the Celebes. It is made by the simple tools and processes accompanying the art wherever it is prosecuted. Naturally the art is of varying competency in different parts of its area of distribution. The contrast between the bark cloth of Africa, Malaysia, and Polynesia is very great. That of Africa is crudest, of Malaysia intermediate, and of Polynesia best. There is evident connection of Malay bark cloth with that of Polynesia and it is possible that bark-cloth making in Africa is remotely derived from East Indian sources.

Bark cloth seems to have an ancient and wide distribution in tropical and subtropical lands. The range of the art is seen to be limited by the distribution of forest elements having interlacing bark filaments capable of being softened and expanded by the universal process of beating practiced in the range of the bark-cloth art.

The tools necessary in the making of bark cloth are simple, but are the result of a knowledge that the expansion of the bark into cloth is facilitated by an implement having a succession of ridges on its surface. It was found that the ridged tool was essential to success in working the bark. This tool is therefore found wherever bark cloth is made.

In the zones of the New World where the bark of proper texture occurs grooved beaters are found. So far as they have survived only stone-age tools for bark beating are found in America as in Mexico, but wooden beaters may have been used. Ethnological specimens in the Abbott collections indicate that in Malaysia and in the islands off the coast of New Guinea stone beaters hafted in thong handles were the rule, but wooden grooved clubs were also used. In the Celebes the wooden clubs were required for softening the bark, which was then finished with the stone tools. Generally these are oblong-ovate slabs of stone grooved on one or both sides, or pestle shape as in some of the Papuan islands mentioned above. The Celebes form is a pounder of wood and stone (U.S.N.M. No. 301345, from Koelawi).

The material of which bark cloth is made in the Celebes has not been botanically identified. The bark used at Koelawi is from the

waringau tree, possibly a *ficus*. It appears from the specimens of cloth from different localities that several species of trees furnish bark, as some of the cloth is coarse and some quite fine; none, however, having the softness of Samoan or especially Fijian tapa. The refinements observed in Polynesian bark cloth are not found in the more primitive examples of Malaysia. The Malays have not discovered or perhaps needed the method of increasing the size of the cloth by pasting strips together as in Polynesia, where sometimes immense pieces are made in this way. The Malay economy did not require spreads or partitions or costumes of this material. Curiously, in the Congo tapa is joined by sewing together pieces of regular size as in our familiar patchwork quilts.

Some patterned tapa beaters are seen in the Celebes, but not of the fineness of those found in Polynesia, where the refinement of club pattern marks in the texture of the cloth is carried to a high point. The pattern marks resemble watermarks in paper and are likewise generally seen only by holding the fabric up to the light. Another refinement in Polynesia is seen in the perfuming of tapa cloths.

No decorating devices are seen in Malaysia as the Samoan printing blocks or the Fijian carved bamboo strips. The decoration of Celebes and other Malay tapas is simply done free-hand with sticks dipped in color. No continuous border lines appear. In most cases the designs are painted on the tapa as individual units, that is, sprigged as in Hindu muslins, and with no intent to produce an all-over decoration as in most Polynesian tapas.

The Celebes decorated bark cloth shows a limited range of color, soft red, yellow brown, and black being used. These are evidently vegetal colors derived from the plant environment. Aniline colors have found their way here and especially at Bada Toare are the foreign dyes seen. As a rule the colors are semiskillfully laid on. In some instances the drawing is rather good. In general, while the water-buffalo art has found itself in design, the execution has lagged. It does not compare with the sure and intricate art of Borneo, and this is a point bearing on whether the Celebes art discussed here shows traces of a comparatively recent origin. It has been stated that a large number of the specimens of bark cloth collected by Mr. Raven are for winding about the head; that is, turbans. This form of headdress which, so far as the writer is informed, has not been studied, is undoubtedly ancient. Its extension from its presumed points of origin in the Near East appears to be due to the Mohamadan conquest. The causation origin of the turban would be protection from a fierce sun. It is possible, then, that the Malay turban would come into use in this remote region some time after the ninth

century, though there is no data for this assumption. The turban in India could be assigned to the period of the Mogul invasion, but communication from the west occurred during ancient times.

Bark-cloth sarongs also prevail, often elaborately decorated. Jackets of bark cloth worn by women show skill in native tailoring and have some of the best examples of water-buffalo designs.

The localities from which bark cloth was collected by Dr. Raven are either political divisions or towns in central Celebes south of the Gulf of Tomini. They are Koelawi, Wiratoe, Piana, Tomado Lindoe, Bada Toare, and Jimpoa, located on the excellent Dutch map of the Celebes. Differences are observed in the cloth from these localities. Koelawi produces both coarse and fine cloth, as does Wiratoe. Piana makes plain cloth for coarser clothing, and from Tomado Lindoe and Bada Toare come the best examples of decorated specimens.

BARK CLOTH IN COSTUMES OF MIDDLE CELEBES

The extent to which bark cloth enters into the costume of the natives and the variety of the parts of costume worn is surprising. Most of the pieces of dress and the adjuncts of dress are of bark cloth. Formerly the exclusive use of bark cloth was the rule, but in the accelerating changes introduced from the outside in recent years other materials have appeared.

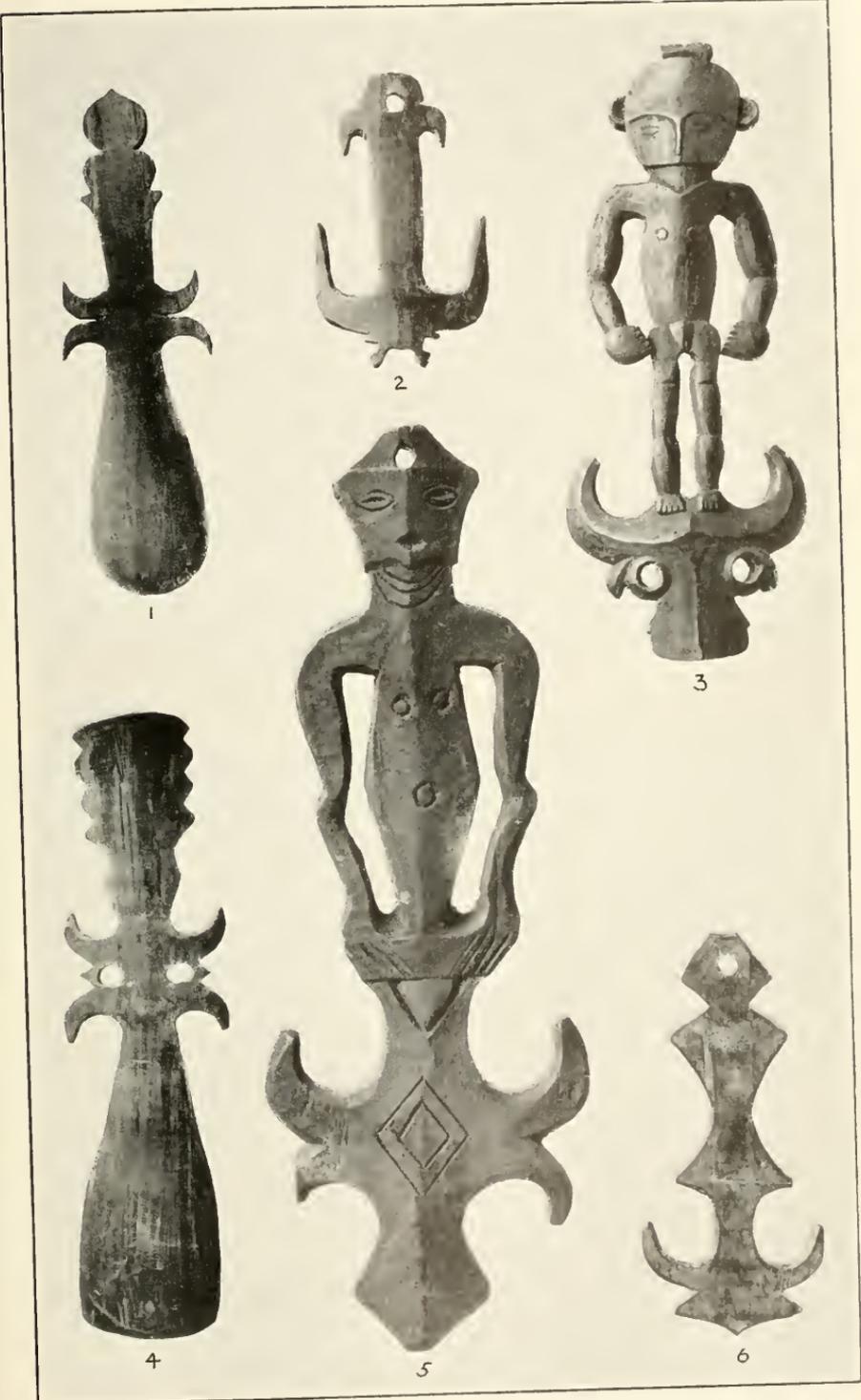
Cotton cloth especially has superseded the primitive bark cloth, dyed cloth of foreign origin. This has affected the traditional uses of bark cloth. Thus jackets, skirts, and headbands are now often lined with cotton and cotton is applied in various ways to bark-cloth garments. The people of the middle Celebes generally practice tailoring; in fact, in this grade are expert tailors. In this respect they are far beyond the Polynesians who wear primitive dress.

The costume of the middle Celebes tribes must be divided into utilitarian and special—that is, the clothing when at work and that on gala or other occasions. Social or official standing also present some modifications of dress.

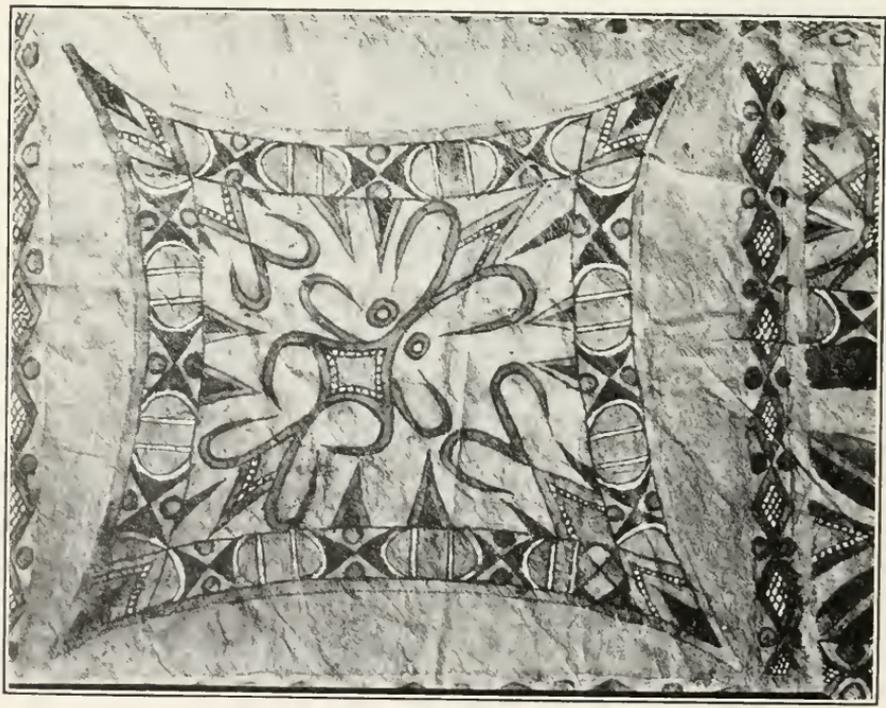
Men wear on the head a turban consisting of a square of bark cloth decorated and folded so as to encircle or cover the head with points projecting at the sides. A sleeveless tailored jacket covers the trunk, and a sarong or waist cloth of bark is wound about the loins. No foot covering is worn. Men carry attached to the loin cloth a squatting mat cut from anoa buffalo skin or woven of palm strips. The above, omitting the jacket, describes the man's work costume. He would also carry a pouch or pouches for small articles and a work parang. War parangs have long been obsolete in the middle Celebes.

Women wear a headband and a skirt of coarse bark. A basket and a hoe would be carried, or whatever implements of labor were required.

Both sexes wear high-pointed palm-leaf hats, and women at work in the day provide a sunshade of bark cloth hung to the hat. Women's skirts are gathered and are bordered with bark cloth of a different color or sometimes openwork and appliquéd with white, red, and yellow bark cloth as in girls' fancy dress.

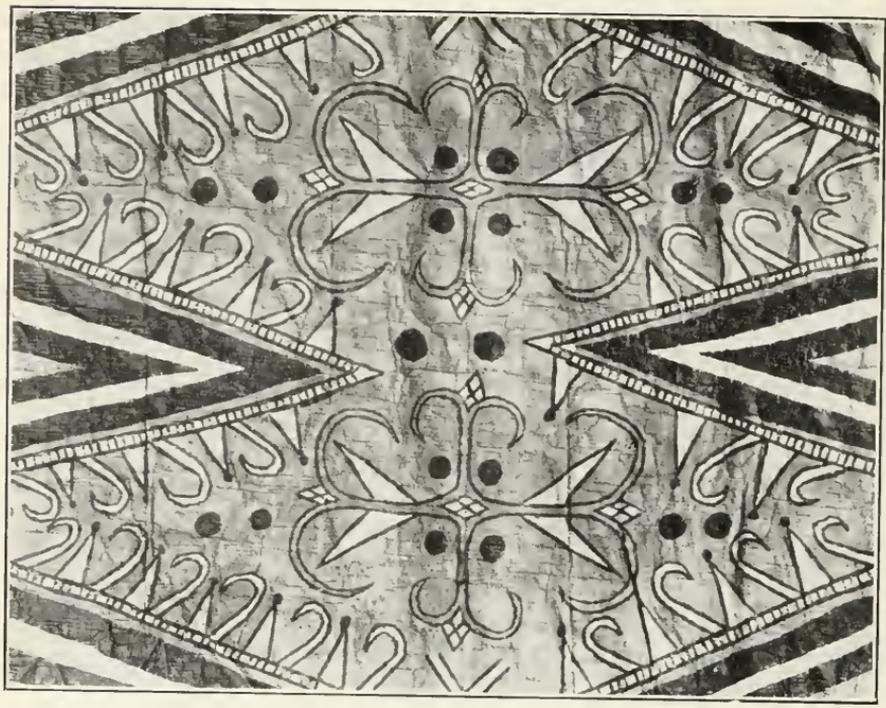


CARVED HOOKS AND SPOONS FURNISHING KEY TO BUFFALO DESIGNS
 66994-32-2



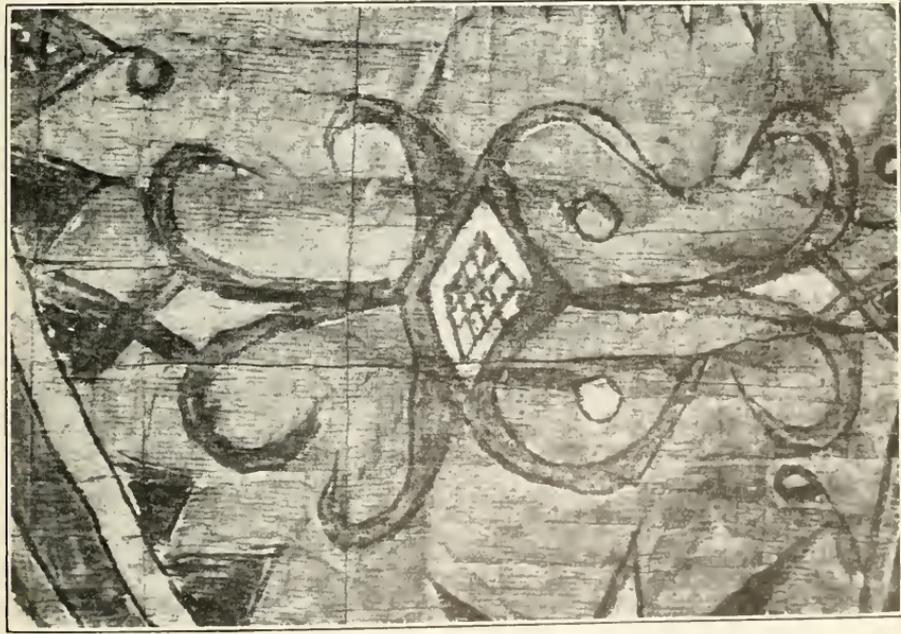
a, BARK CLOTH SHOWING COALESCENT AND INTEGRATED UNITS

U.S.N.M. No. 304102, Bada, Tonre.

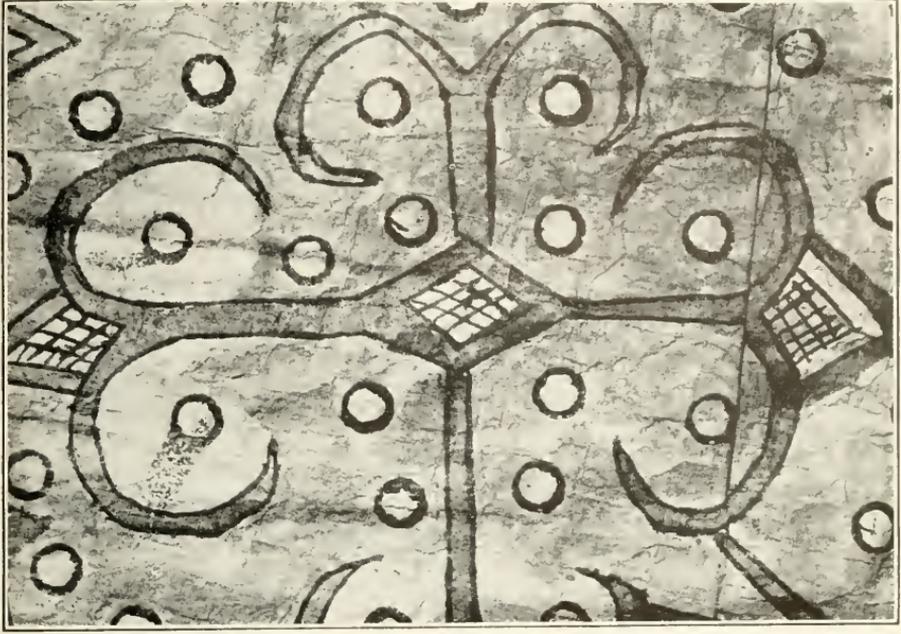


b, BARK CLOTH BAG WITH DESIGNS DEMARDED IN LARGER UNITS

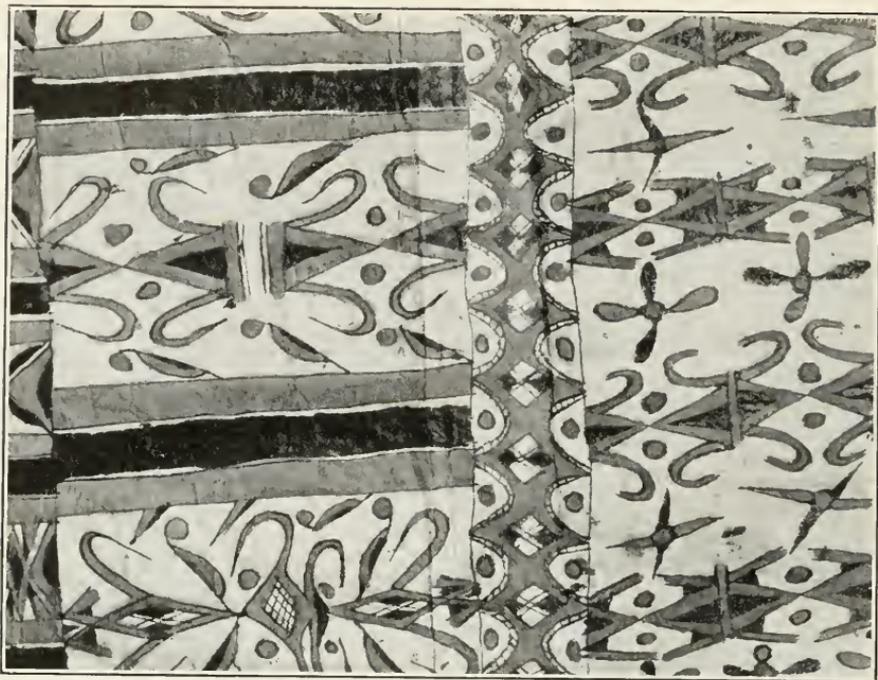
U.S.N.M. No. 304103, Bada, Tonre.



4, DESIGN DOUBLED, BUT WITH ONLY TWO EYE SYMBOLS
U.S.N.M. No. 301102.

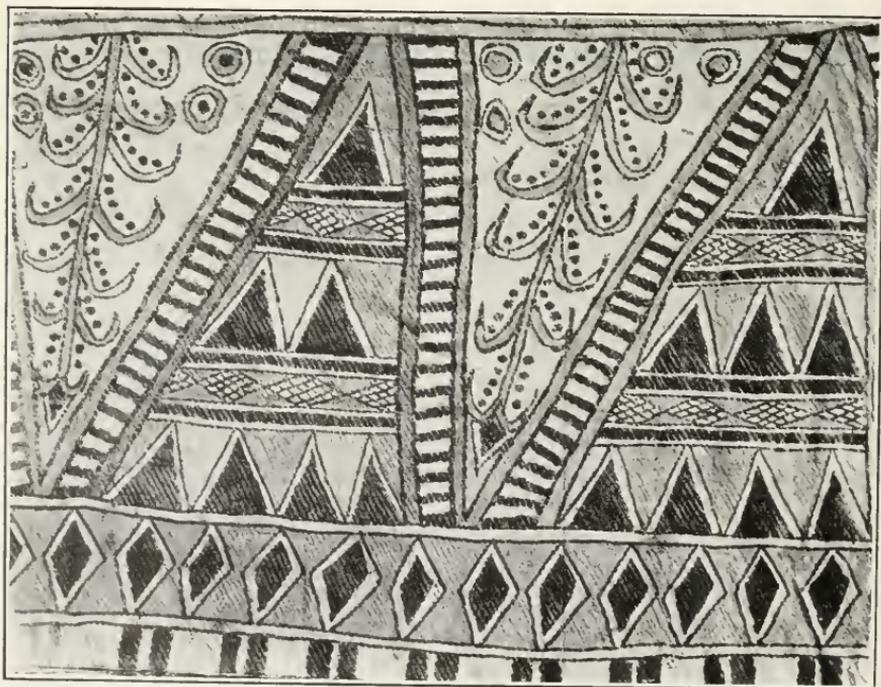


4, DESIGNS ON 4-PART BASES WITH MANY EYE SYMBOLS
U.S.N.M. No. 301103.



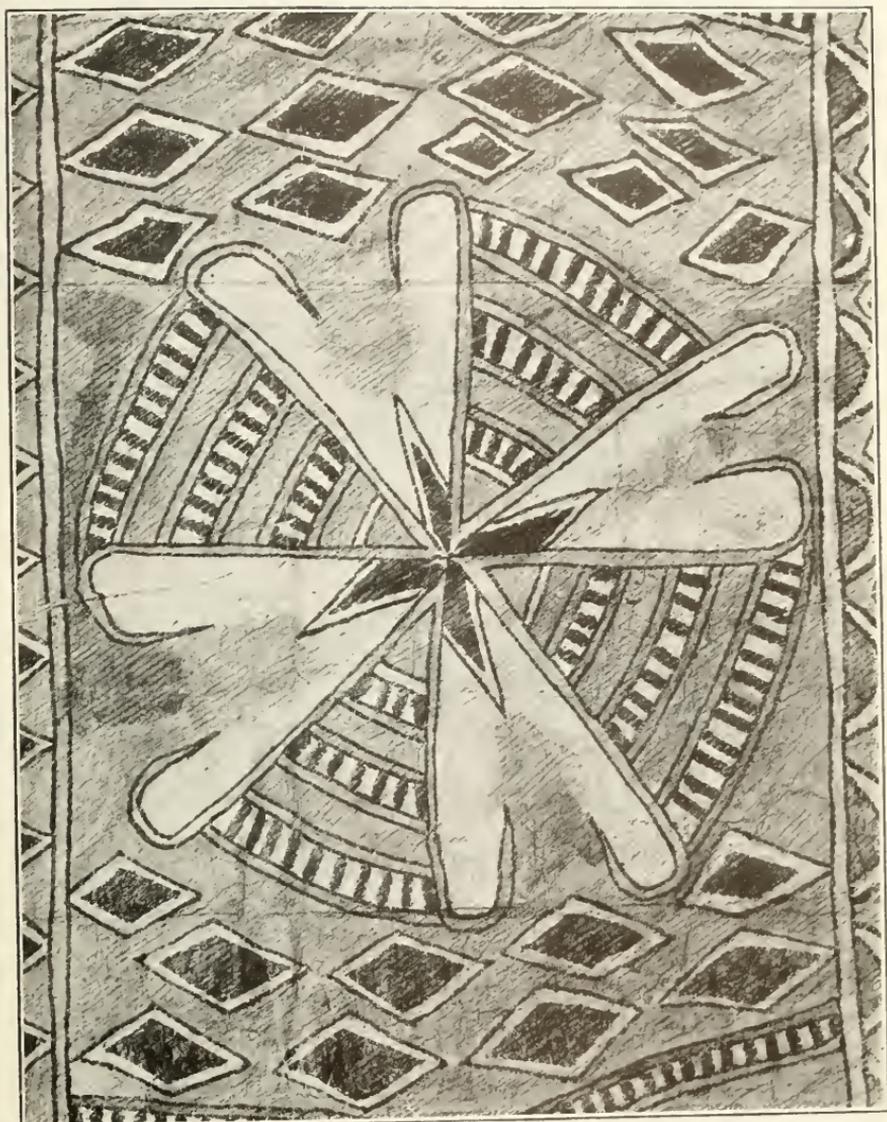
a, DESIGNS OF GREATER PROLIXITY USING ALL ELEMENTS

U.S.N.M. No. 304119.



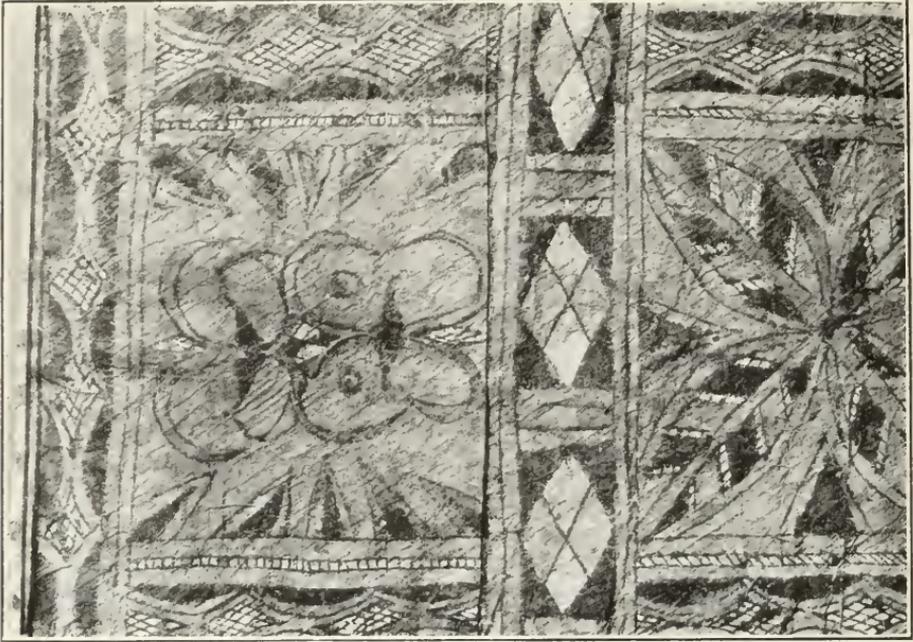
b, WEDGE-SHAPE DESIGN OF HORNS AND EYES AND GEOMETRICAL FIGURES

U.S.N.M. No. 304117, Bada, Toare.

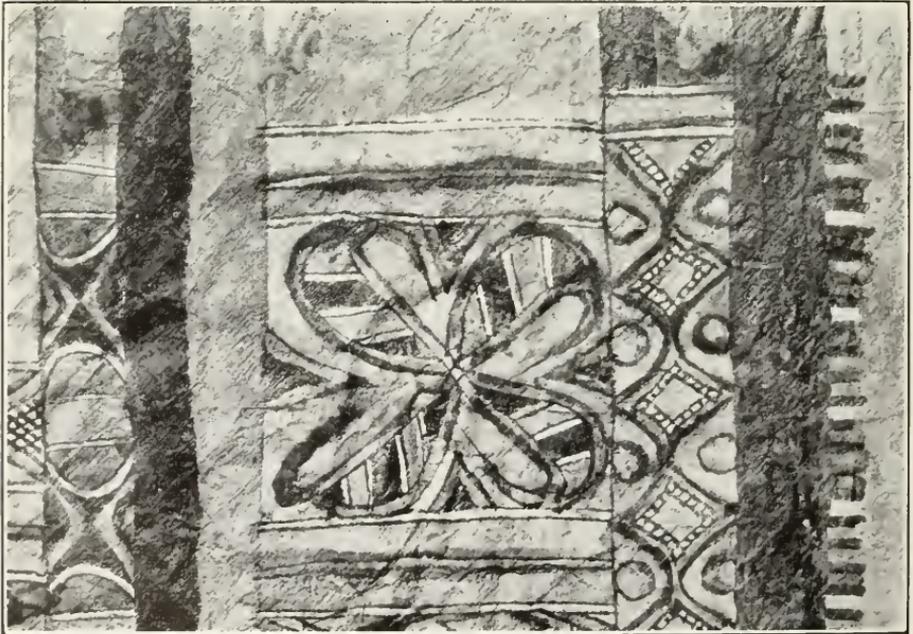


FOUR-PART DESIGN SURROUNDED BY GEOMETRIC UNITS

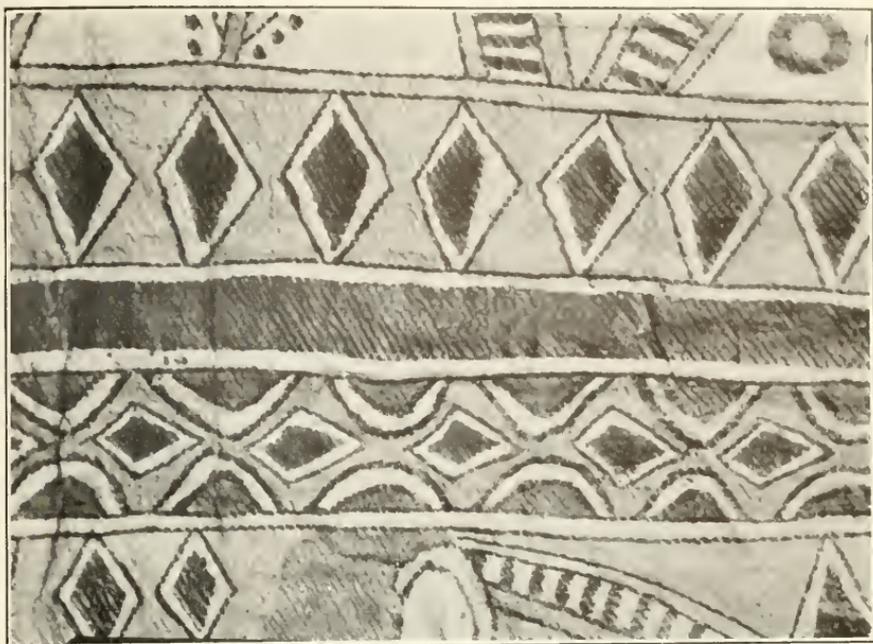
U.S.N.M. No. 304117, Bada, Toare.



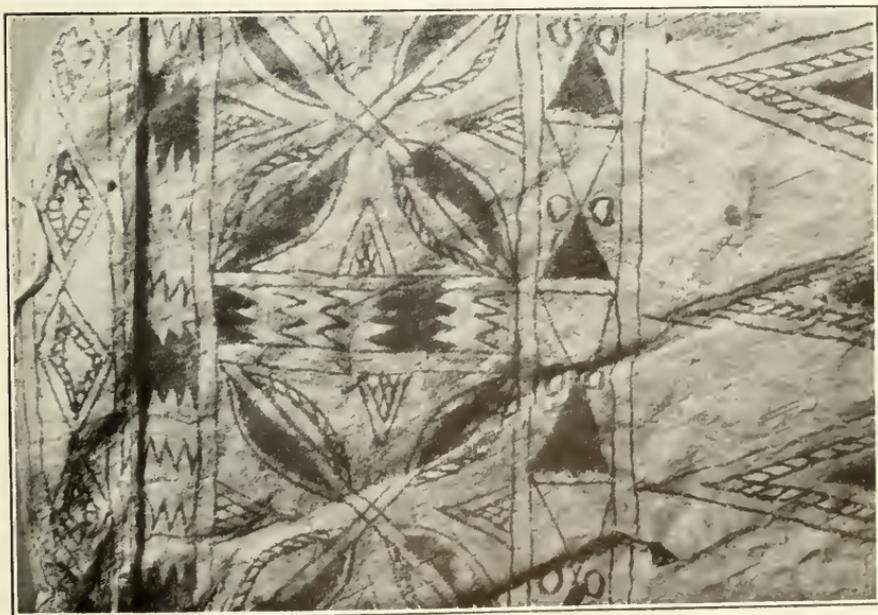
a, paneled designs surrounded by geometric borders
U.S.N.M. No. 304121.



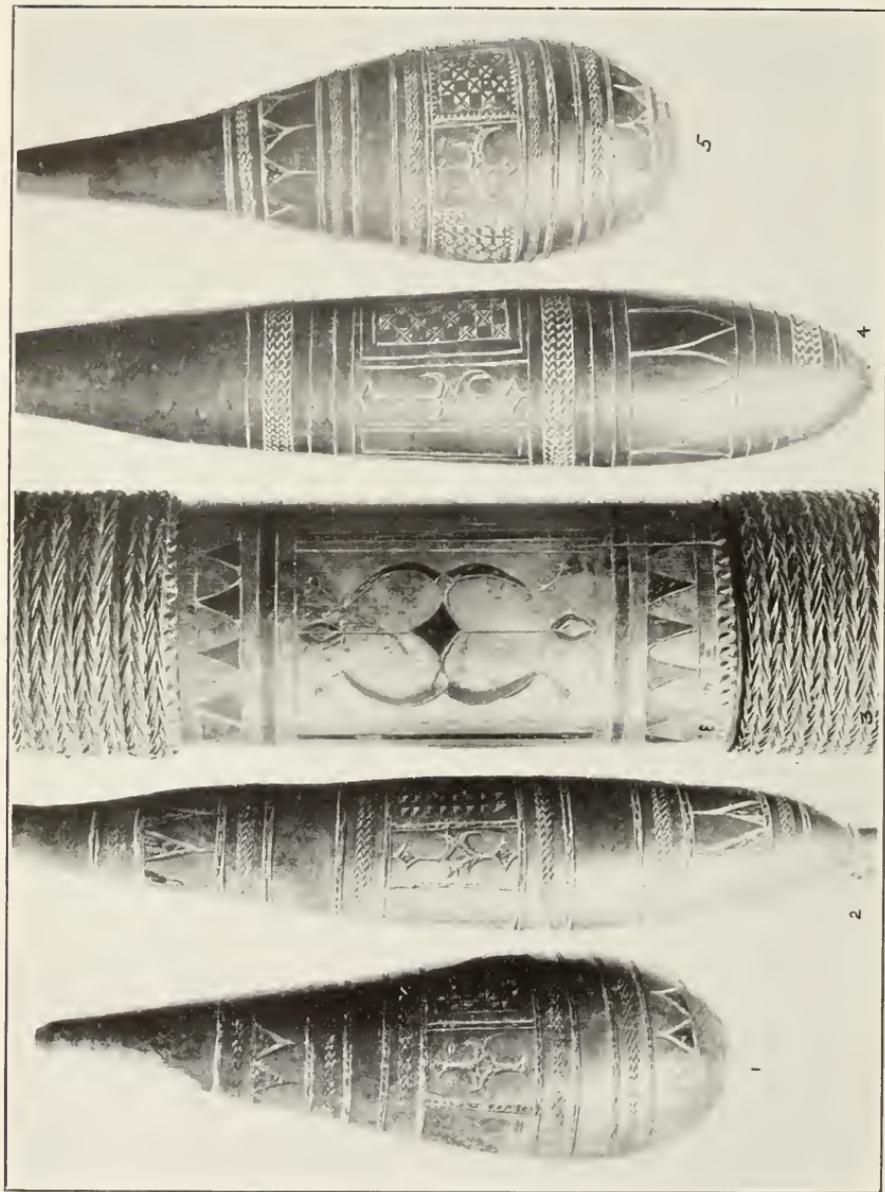
b, square design showing motion figure
U.S.N.M. No. 304107.



a, CONVENTIONAL 4-PART DESIGN WITH GEOMETRIC BORDERS
U.S.N.M. No. 304121.

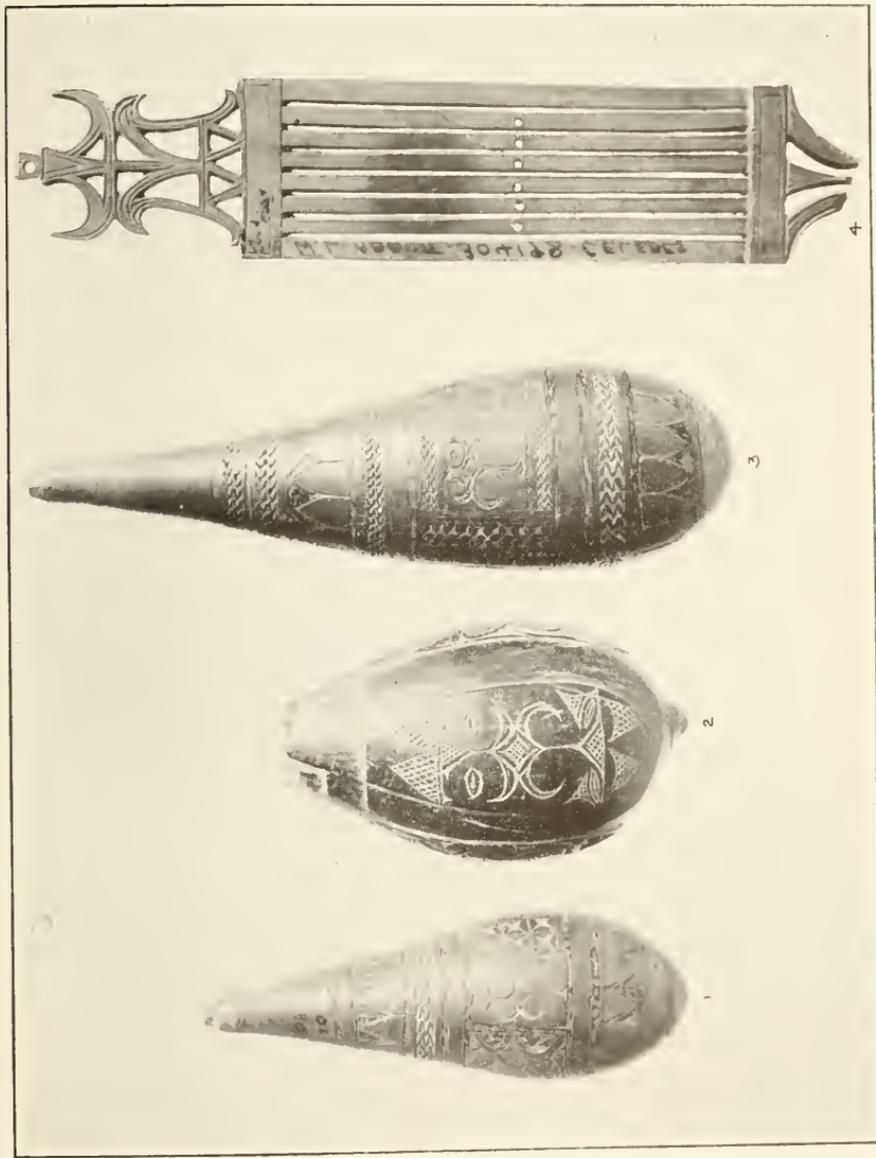


b, GEOMETRIC BORDER BANDS



GOURD AND BAMBOO CONTAINERS ETCHED WITH BUFFALO DESIGNS

U.S.N.M. Nos. 304151 and 304153, all from Bada, Toare.



GOURD AND COCONUT CONTAINERS AND HORN WEAVING FRAME. BUFFALO DESIGNS ON GOURDS
SHOW PRECISE ETCHING

U.S.N.M. Nos. 301151 and 301198, Bada, Toure.

