

16 HARNESS PATTERNS

The Fanciest Twills of All

**From the Weaving Notebooks
of Fred A. Pennington**

*Written and Compiled
by Irene K. Wood
Minneapolis, Minnesota*

Published by Robin & Russ Handweavers
533 N. Adams St. McMinnville, Ore. 97128

In deep appreciation:

To the Des Moines Art Center for allowing me to
study the notebooks of Fred A. Pennington,
to Ruth and John Hunt who fed and sheltered me
while my dreams took form,
to my many other friends whose encouragement
has been invaluable,
and to Lowell whose patient understanding has
kept me working.

CONTENTS

Part I History

Sixteen Harness Point Twills

Part II The Man as a Weaver

Fred A. Pennington

Part III Techniques

My Interest

Two Drawdowns

One Hundred Fifty Swatches

Part IV Comparisons

Twenty Harness Point Twills

Sixteen Harness Point Twills

Twelve Harness Point Twills

Eight Harness Point Twills

Part V Conclusion

How To Create Your Own Patterns

Part I

History of
Sixteen Harness Point Twills

The fanciest twills of all were woven from about 1750 to 1850 by handweavers. The effects of our great industrial revolution which occurred at this time was momentous and far-reaching. The plain household textiles which had been formerly woven by handweavers were now being produced much faster and cheaper in the mills. The handweavers turned to more complicated weaves and designs, multiple harness coverlets, and linens.

Just as good chemists and good cooks can analyze products and reproduce them, so can good weavers analyze fabrics and reproduce them.

These twills were woven in many countries and by many weavers at about the same time. Drafts and tie-up patterns were either worked out simultaneously by many different weavers or they were analyzed, copied, or exchanged. Probably the most prolific weavers of these twills were in the Scandinavian countries, but there were other patterns coming from Germany, Switzerland, Scotland, and our own Colonies. So it is difficult to give due credit when several different weavers claim the same draft as their own original.

Part II

The Man as a Weaver

Fred A. Pennington

The fanciest twills of all, the sixteen-harness point twills, have had a special fascination for many handweavers. Mr. Fred A. Pennington, of Des Moines, Iowa, was one of these weavers.

The notebooks of Fred A. Pennington contain a lifetime of weaving. It would be impossible to reproduce here in one book all that his fifteen notebooks contain. So I have chosen the fanciest twills of all, the sixteen-harness point twills, because I believe them to be the loveliest part of his notebooks. The complex and compound point twills are not included here.

These sixteen-harness point twills have been defined by different authors as damask twills, pattern twills, or fancy twills. Mr. Anton Oesterle, one of Mr. Pennington's letter writing friends from Germany, describes the sixteen-harness point twills: "For the German swatches about 1840, it is woven in pointed, waved, or zig-zag twills. The twill run for as many threads to the right as to left, but they different zig-zag line ends. The underside is not other as the topside."

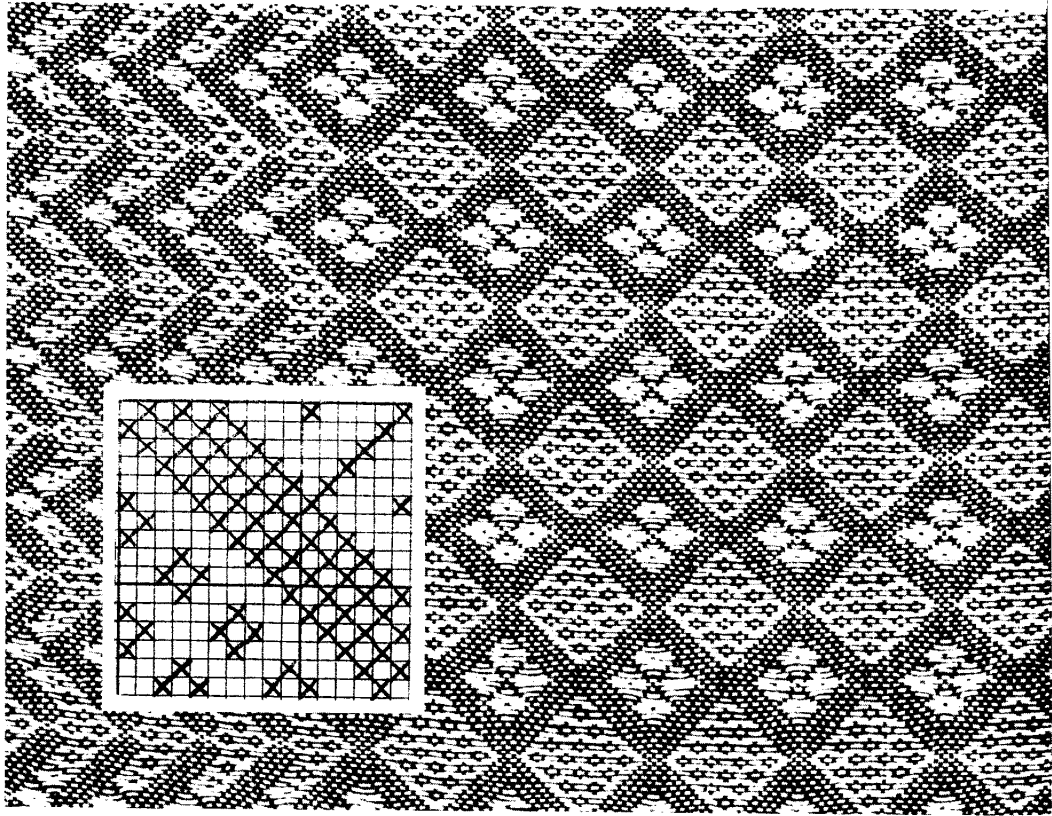
Mr. Pennington, who was a public school teacher in Des Moines, started weaving in 1937. He and his wife, Lulu, attended many summer weaving sessions at Fenland, North Carolina; Virginia City, Montana; Banff, Alberta, Canada; and other places. Starting in about 1948, for almost twenty years, Mr. Pennington wove mostly these interesting small twill designs in the traditional manner. He made a collection of multiple harness patterns and of actual swatches of old linens from all parts of the world. And he made up fifteen notebooks to contain them all. These notebooks were willed to the Des Moines Art Center in the last part of the 1960's.

Both Mr. and Mrs. Pennington were active for many years in the Des Moines Weavers Guild and in the Midwest Weavers Conference.

Mr. Pennington's notebooks were given to the Des Moines Art Center as a gift. They contain personal correspondence with his friends from many countries, all about weaving. He also put in exciting samples of old fabrics as well as his own and his friends' weavings. He saved papers and notes about his commissions and stories about his learnings, successes, feelings, and business arrangements.

These notebooks have no subject order nor chronological order, and this adds to their charm. Small stories are written around photographs and swatches. One story with a picture of Mr. Pennington and a woman who was spinning is: "This picture was taken in front of the Worst Craft House at Penland, North Carolina, in July, 1938. Aunt Harriet Conley is giving me my first lesson in spinning flax. She scolded me for getting the thread tangled, and said, 'You just spin a calf rope. Now take care and let me untangle what you have done.' After this process had been repeated several times, Aunt Harriet looked up at me in disgust and said: 'You will never learn to spin, you are just too dumb.' The spinning ended at this point but our friendship became richer as the years passed. Aunt Harriet was 84, chewed plug tobacco instead of snuff. She was a lovely person, a typical mountain woman."

A favorite sixteen-harness point twill was named by Mr. Pennington "Leaded Windows". (Figure 1) He writes: "I wove this in green and gold for drapes for the picture window in our weaving room. Younkers department store offered me \$540.00 for the twenty-seven yards."



In one of the notebooks is a newspaper clipping from the Des Moines Register announcing the dedication of some ecclesiastical textiles woven by Mr. Pennington. His comment: "I knew when I saw the minister's face that he did not like the altar cloth." This remark creates empathy from all weavers because we have all had our moments of discouragement as well as success.

A beautiful swatch of very old linen has this story around it: "This piece of linen was woven by Nabby Burr, aged seventeen, in 1806. Nabby Burr was a relative of Aaron Burr."

The last few projects of Mr. Pennington's weavings were for the Harriet Tidball Monograph, Portfolio, number thirteen, entitled "Thomas Jackson, Weaver," and linens for his and Lulu's golden wedding celebration.

The weaving philosophy of Mr. Pennington, found in one of the notebooks, was this: "Time is the cloth on the loom of life. What the pattern on that cloth will be depends on the individual. Many things contribute to the success or failure, the beauty or confusion of our plans. It is not often that anyone can weave a successful pattern alone. The results of his life's efforts depend on the help and encouragement, the cooperation and approval of his fellows. As time moves on, the pattern progresses. It is a good thing to weave something that will appear symmetrical at the close of the day, so that when the shadows fall on our loom, we shall have woven a tangible heritage that will be of value and encouragement to the oncoming weavers. Our accomplishment will promise that they too may make acceptable patterns in the cloth of time."

Part III

My Interest

Two Drawdowns

Selected Swatches

indicating that these six were all there were. So I hurriedly went through these six, copying the tie-ups for the eleven sixteen-harness point twills contained in those six notebooks.

During the following two years, the Des Moines Art Center was being remodelled, and the Pennington notebooks were unavailable to me. So I wove two samplers. One sampler was the eleven Pennington patterns, and the other was the seven sixteen-harness point twills from the Tidball monograph number Thirteen.

Early in 1971 while on a railroad trip around Switzerland, I found in a hotel a small linen doily woven in a sixteen-harness point twill. A nineteenth pattern! The hotel manager allowed me to buy two of these doilies. The pattern is reproduced in Figure 2.

For the next full year I thought about these fancy twills. In the spring of 1973 I made plans to spend a week in Des Moines to really study the notebooks of Fred Pennington. That is when I decided these fancy twills were worthy of an in-depth study.

The swatches that I have woven for this book were done on two warps, six inches apart, woven simultaneously.

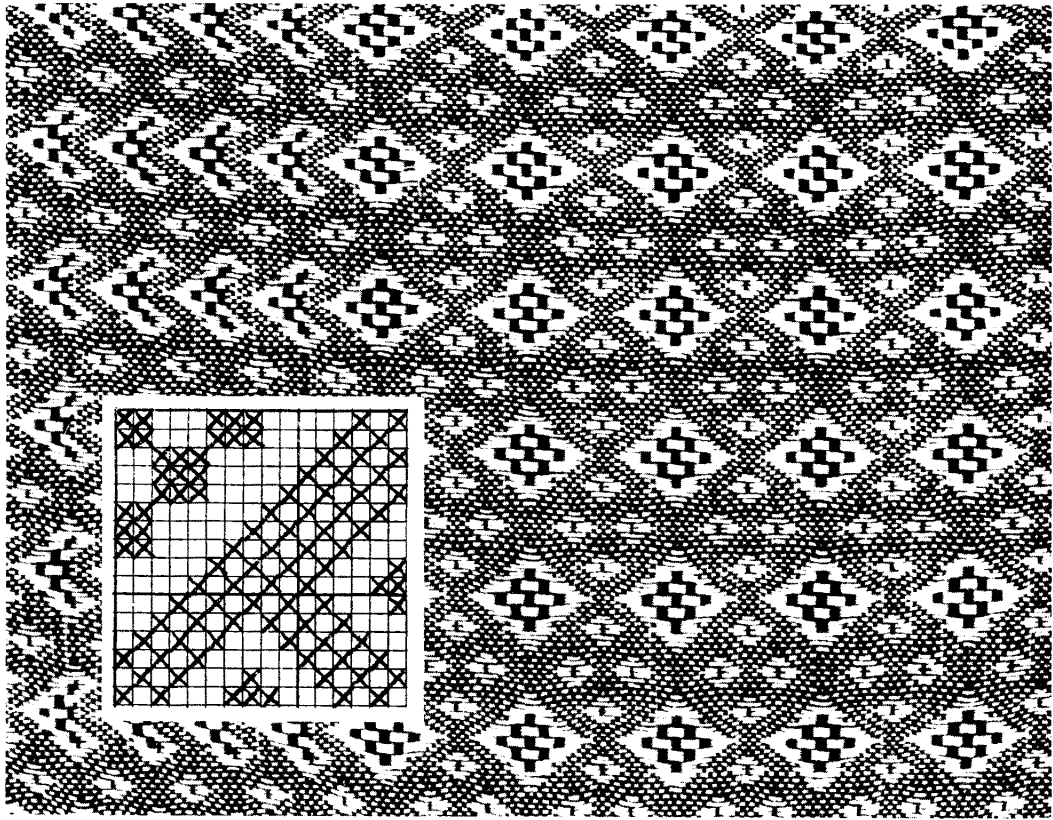
indicating that these six were all there were. So I hurriedly went through these six, copying the tie-ups for the eleven sixteen-harness point twills contained in those six notebooks.

During the following two years, the Des Moines Art Center was being remodelled, and the Pennington notebooks were unavailable to me. So I wove two samplers. One sampler was the eleven Pennington patterns, and the other was the seven sixteen-harness point twills from the Tidball monograph number Thirteen.

Early in 1971 while on a railroad trip around Switzerland, I found in a hotel a small linen doily woven in a sixteen-harness point twill. A nineteenth pattern! The hotel manager allowed me to buy two of these doilies. The pattern is reproduced in Figure 2.

For the next full year I thought about these fancy twills. In the spring of 1973 I made plans to spend a week in Des Moines to really study the notebooks of Fred Pennington. That is when I decided these fancy twills were worthy of an in-depth study.

The swatches that I have woven for this book were done on two warps, six inches apart, woven simultaneously.

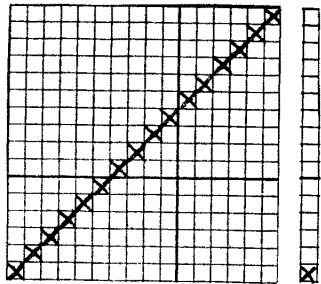


The warp on the left side was six inches wide, black, and the weft was white. These samples were for the photographer, the warp on the right side of the loom for myself, ten inches wide, half black and half white. The weft for the black and white warp, done in color. All threads are 20/2 mercerized cotton, sett 36 ends per inch. I used four warps, each thirteen yards long. The twenty-harness samples in the last part of this book were done on a loom owned by Betty Batzli who kindly allowed me to use it.

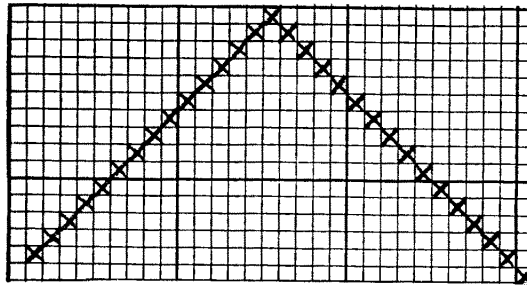
The uses for these small patterned textiles are many. They can be used for clothing, table linens, and household textiles such as draperies, curtains, and upholsteries. If one chooses a pattern with short floats, rugs could be included. The pattern could be emphasized by choice of color. When using these patterns for table linens, I urgently suggest that one use a singles linen -- to quote Alice Macdonald, "Damask is a fifty-fifty weave. Both warp and weft should be the same and singles to give the smooth satin identical texture on both sides."

To eliminate any confusion in draft, all of the sixteen-harness point twills here have the same threading:

Border

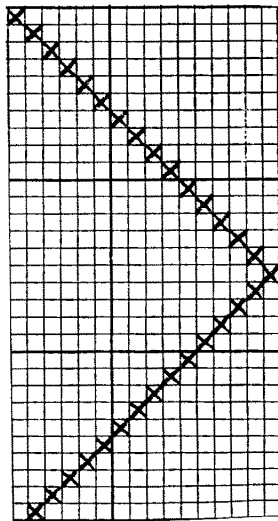


Pattern

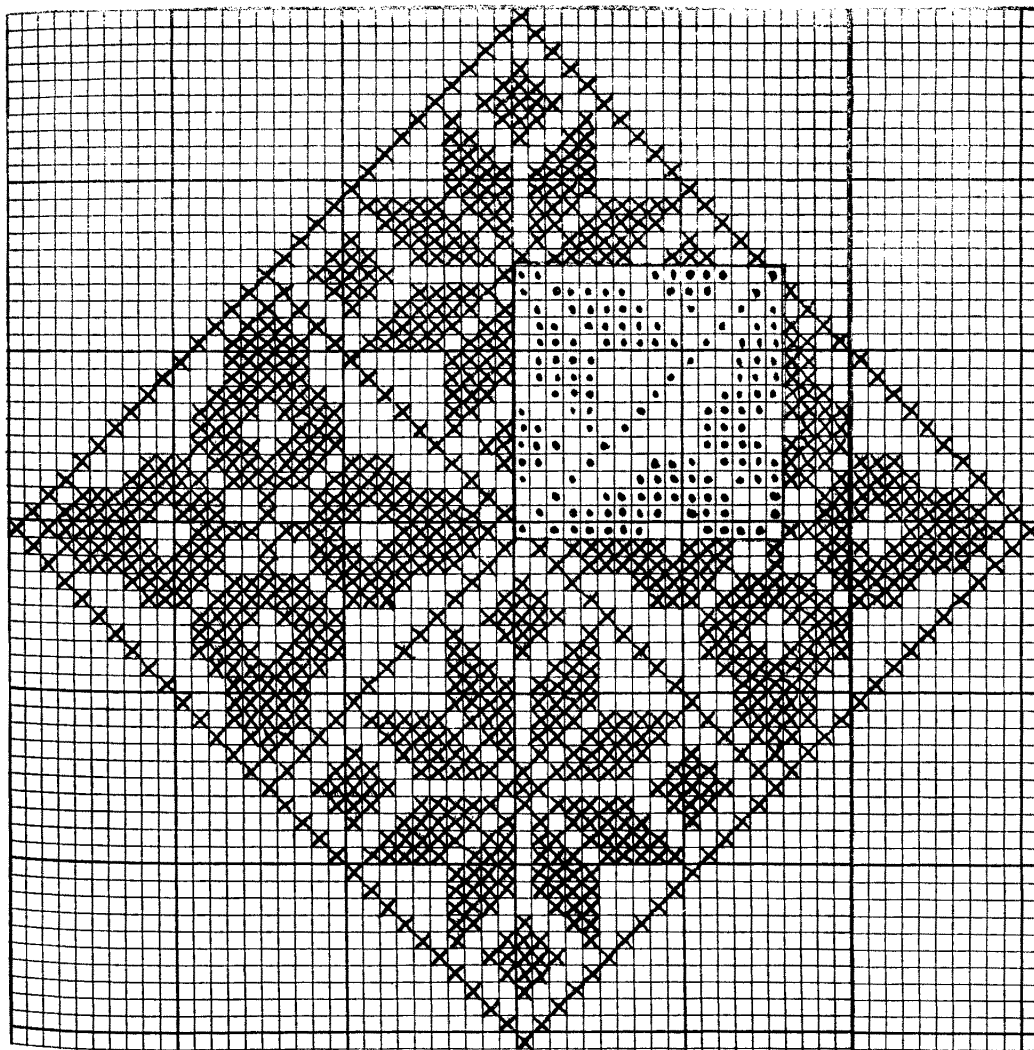


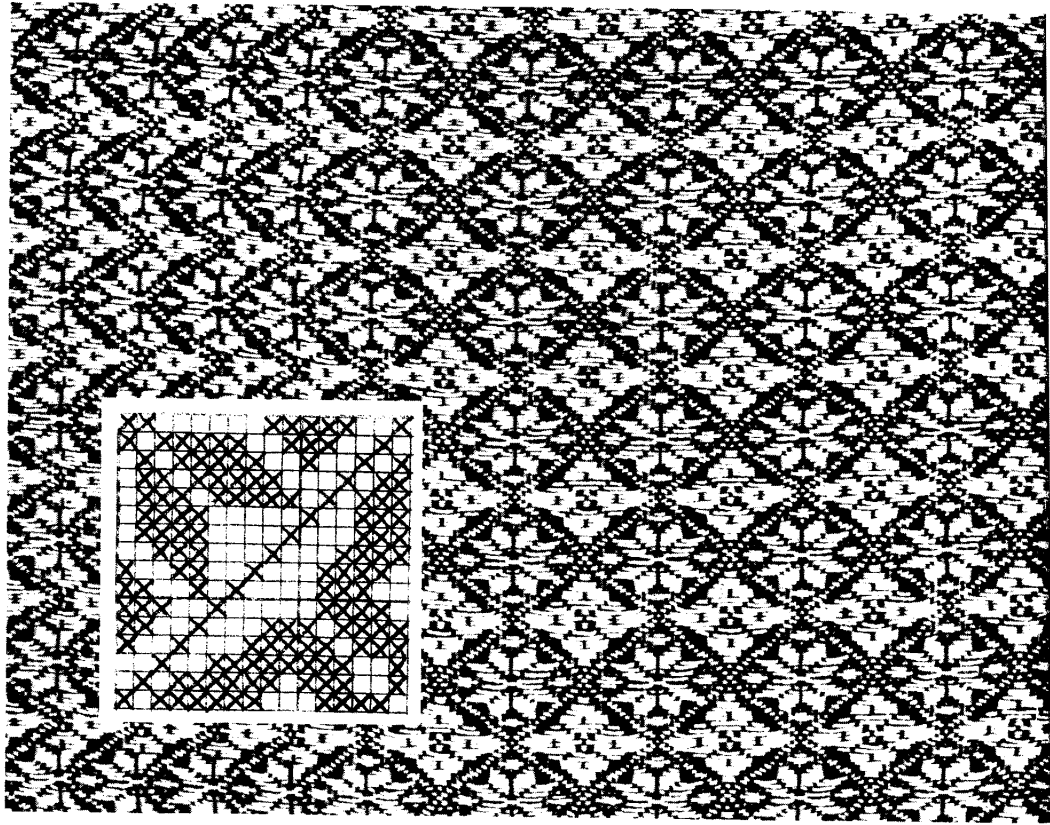
The treadling is the same sequence as the threading. The difference in design is entirely made up by the difference in tie-up.

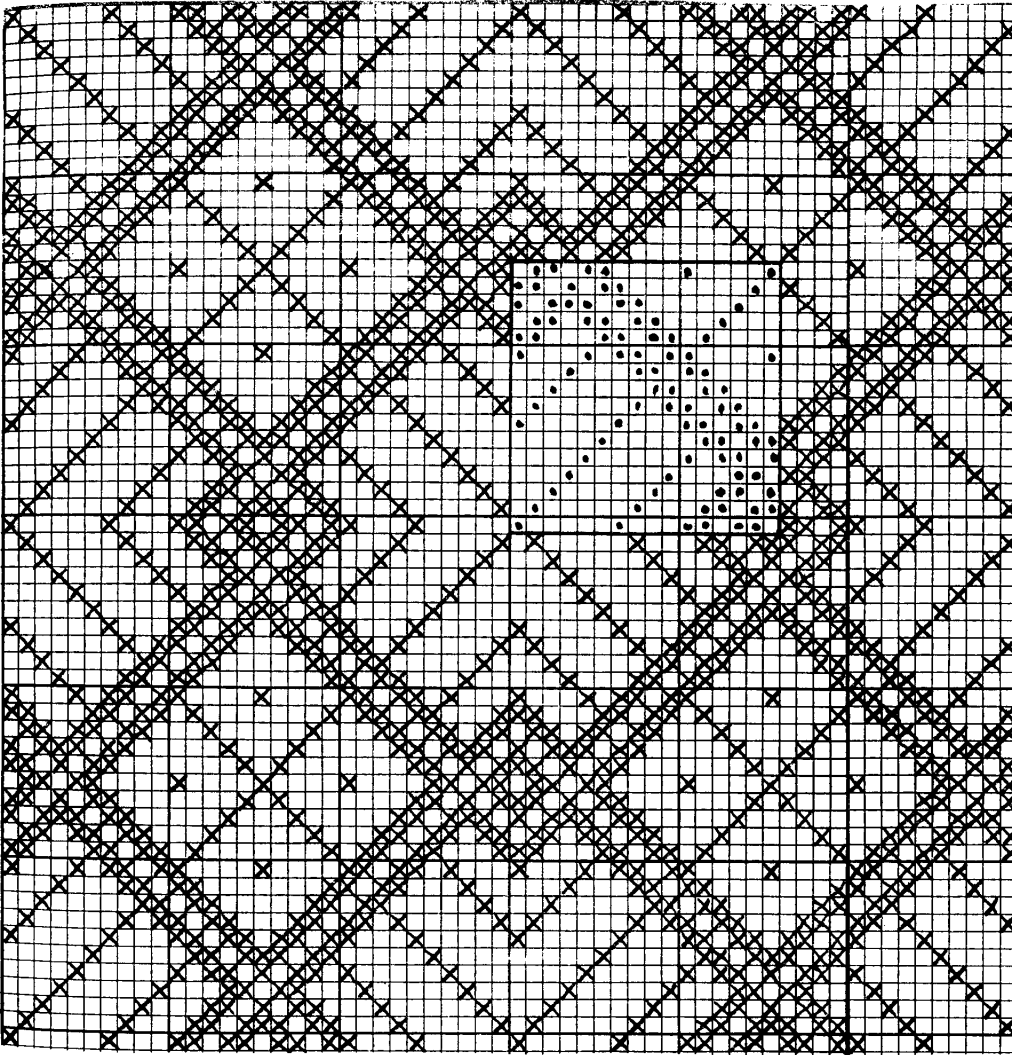
Treadling:

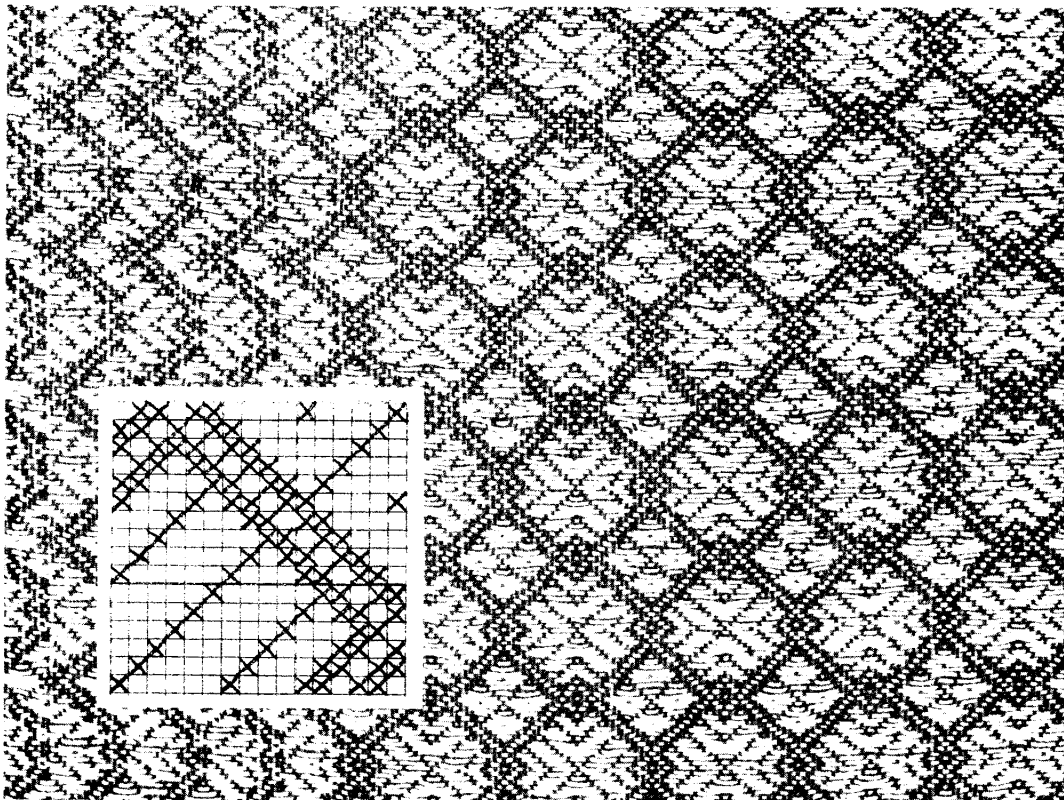


The following illustrations are to show how the tie-up is hidden in the center of a drawdown when the threading and the treadingling arrangement are as described. Please study Figures 3A, and 3B; and Figures 4A, and 4B.

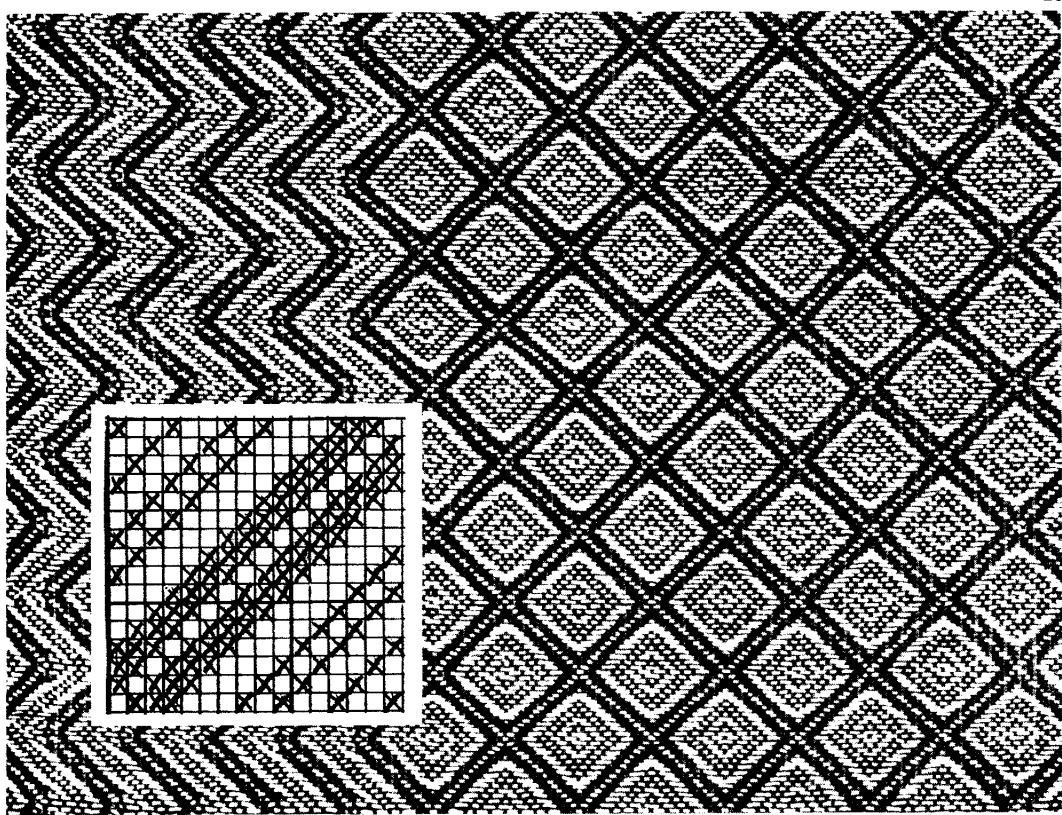
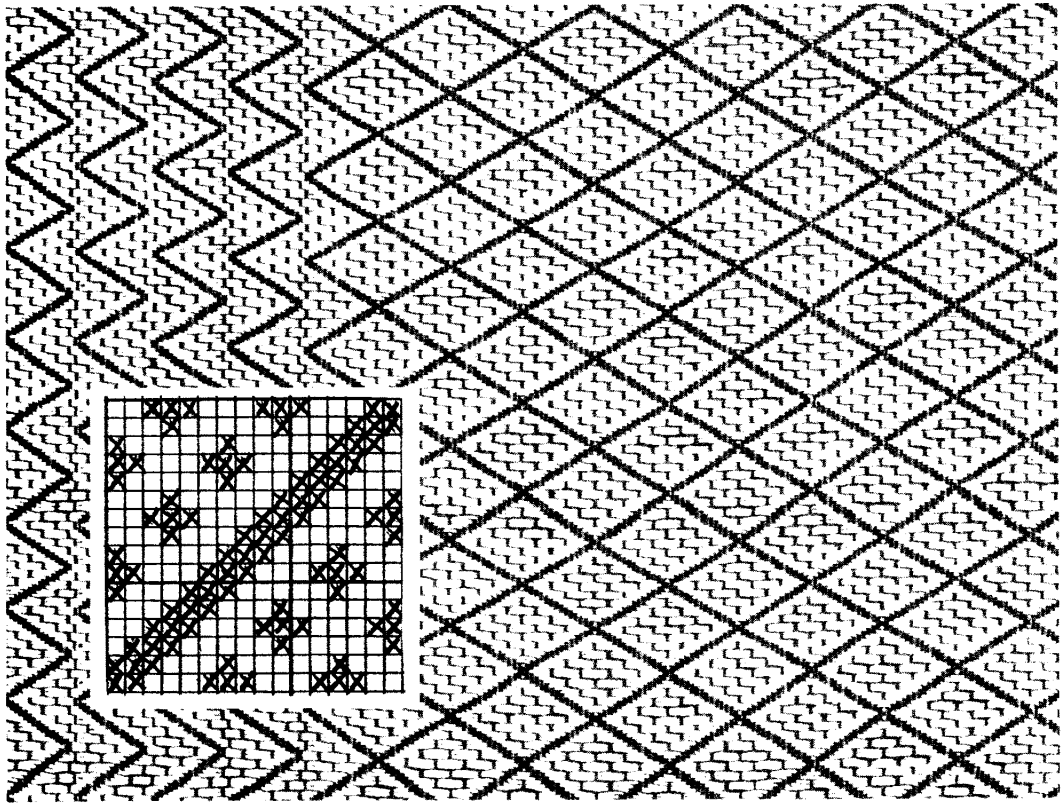


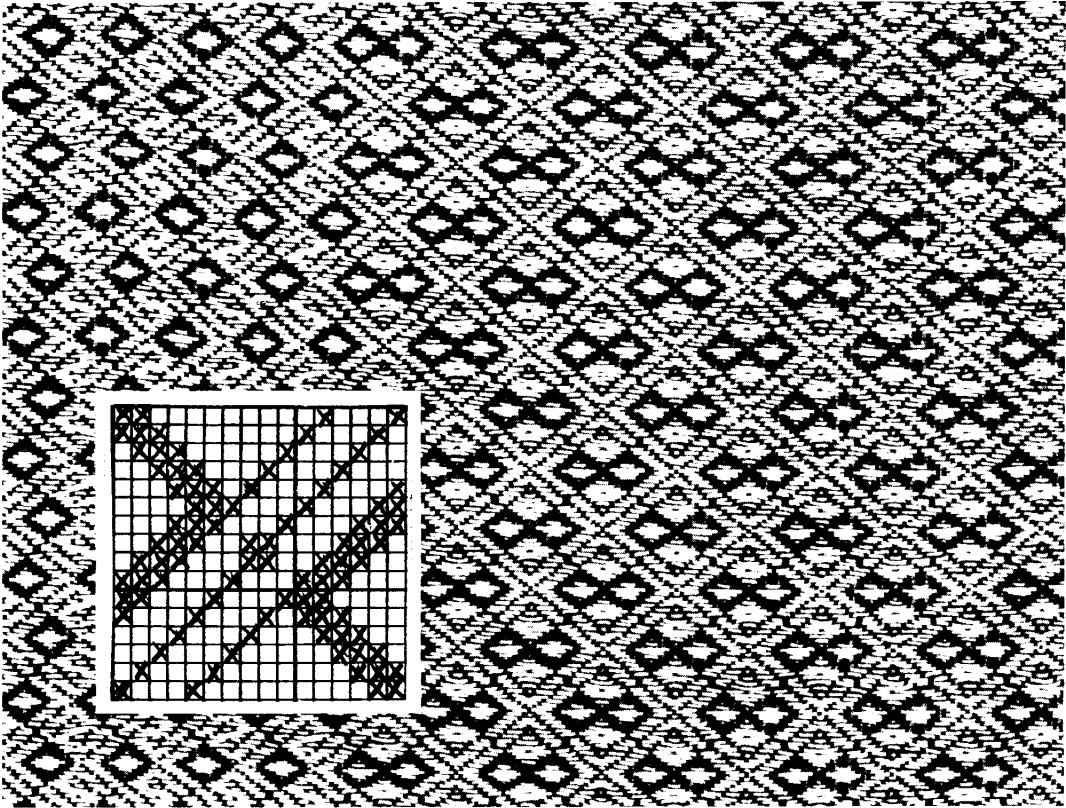




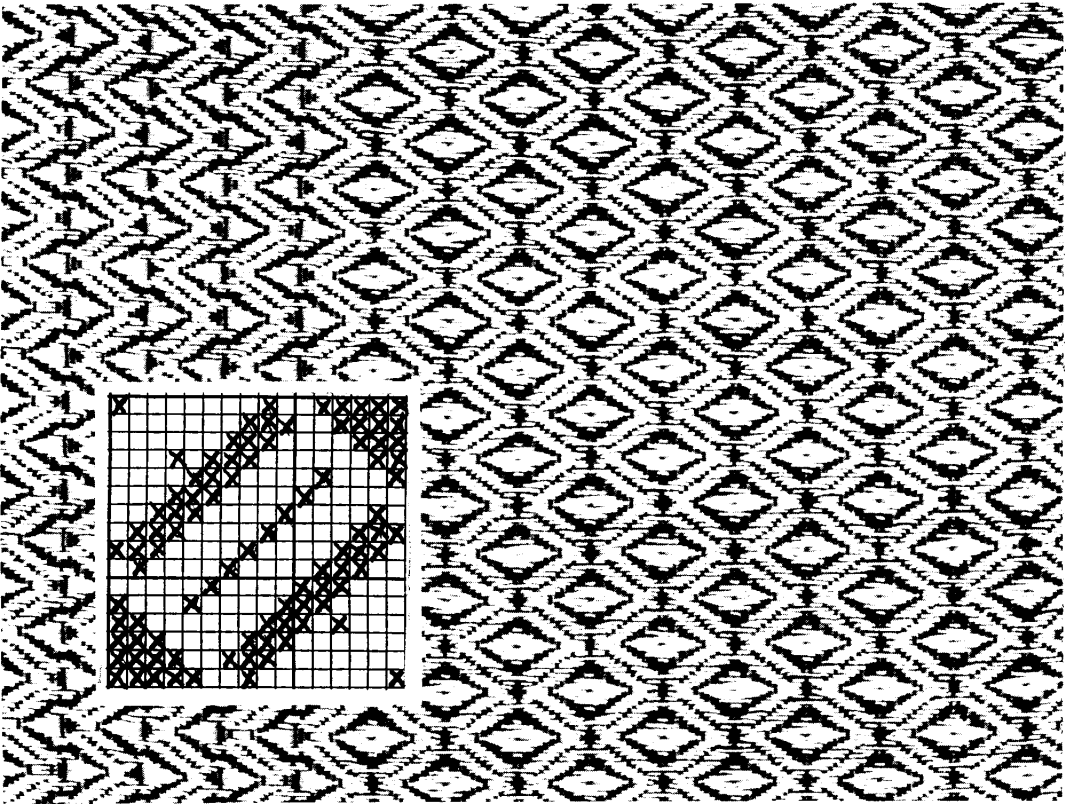


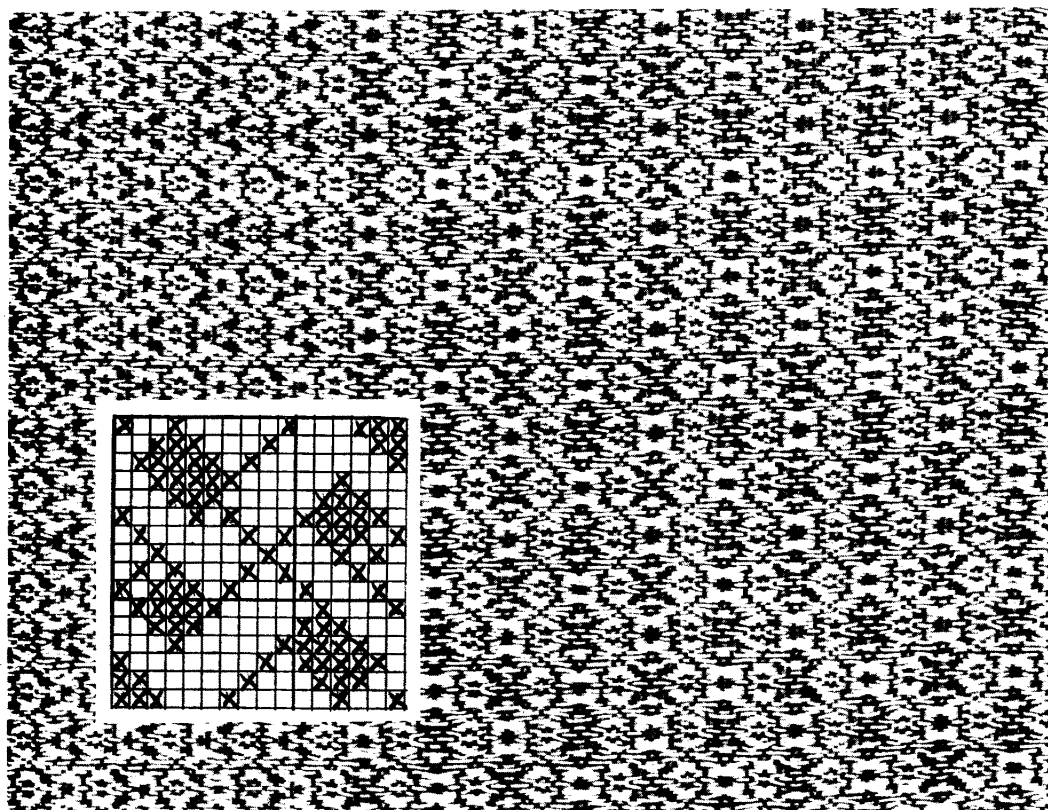
All of the following photographs are woven samples of sixteen-harness point twills, woven in 20/2 mercerized cotton sett 36 ends per inch. They are all threaded and treadled the same, as shown on page eighteen.



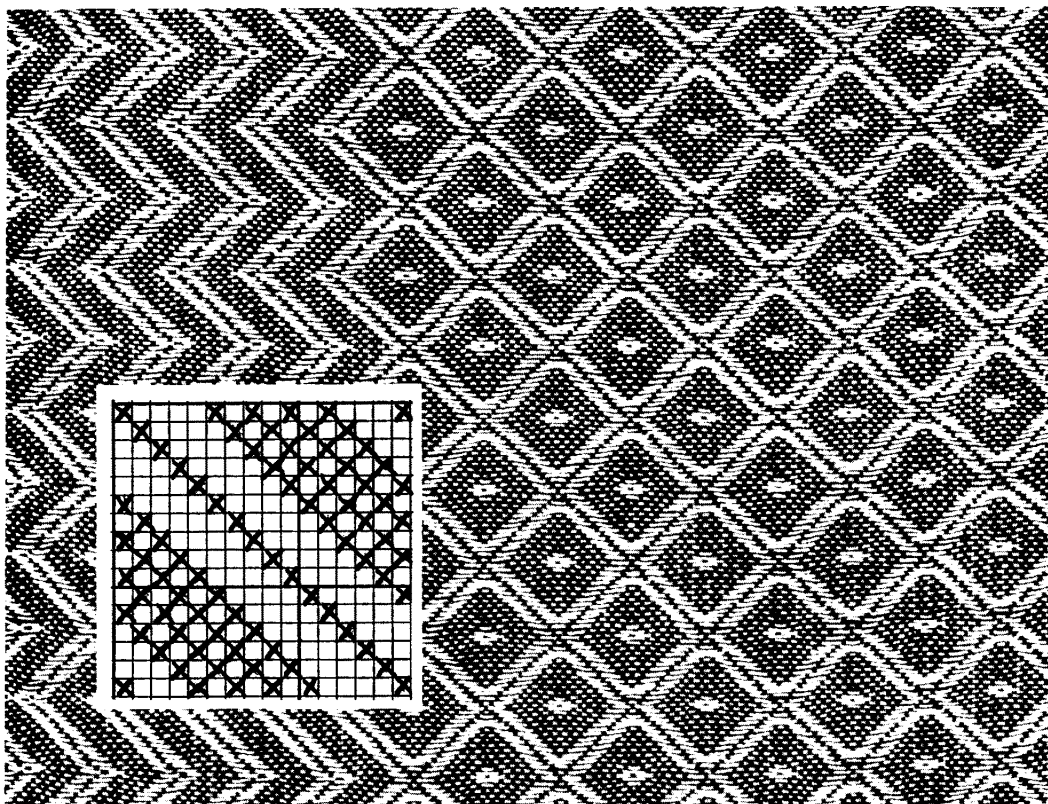


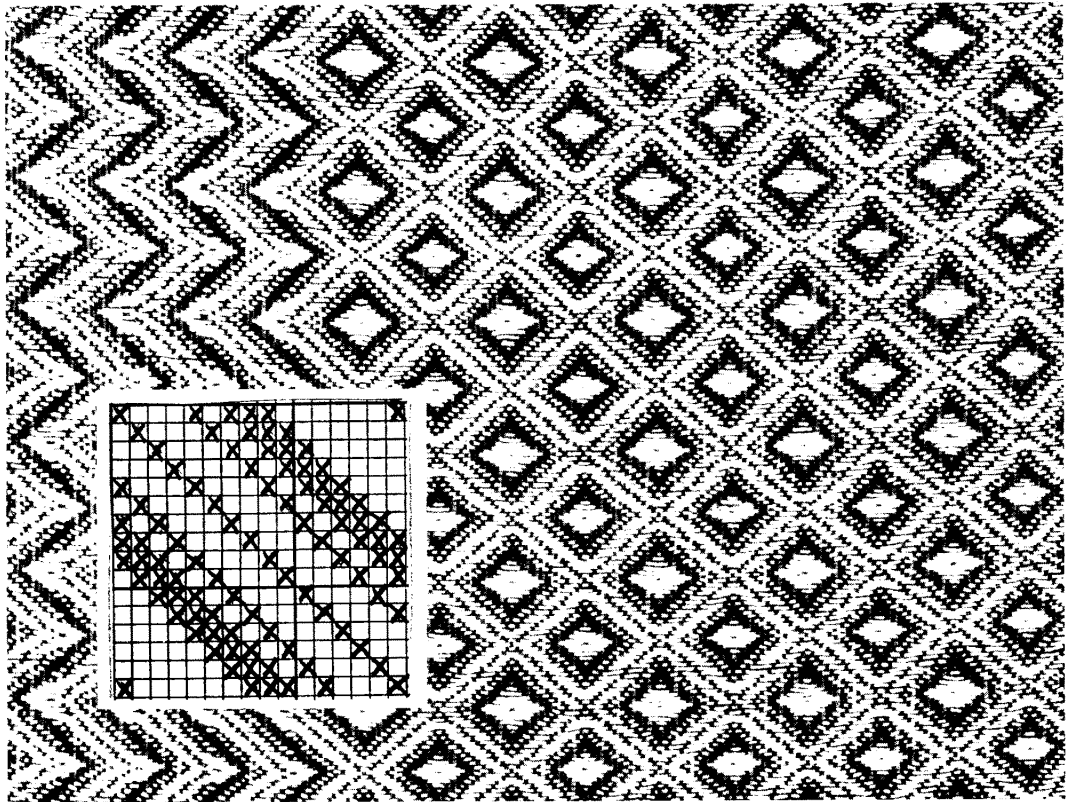
24



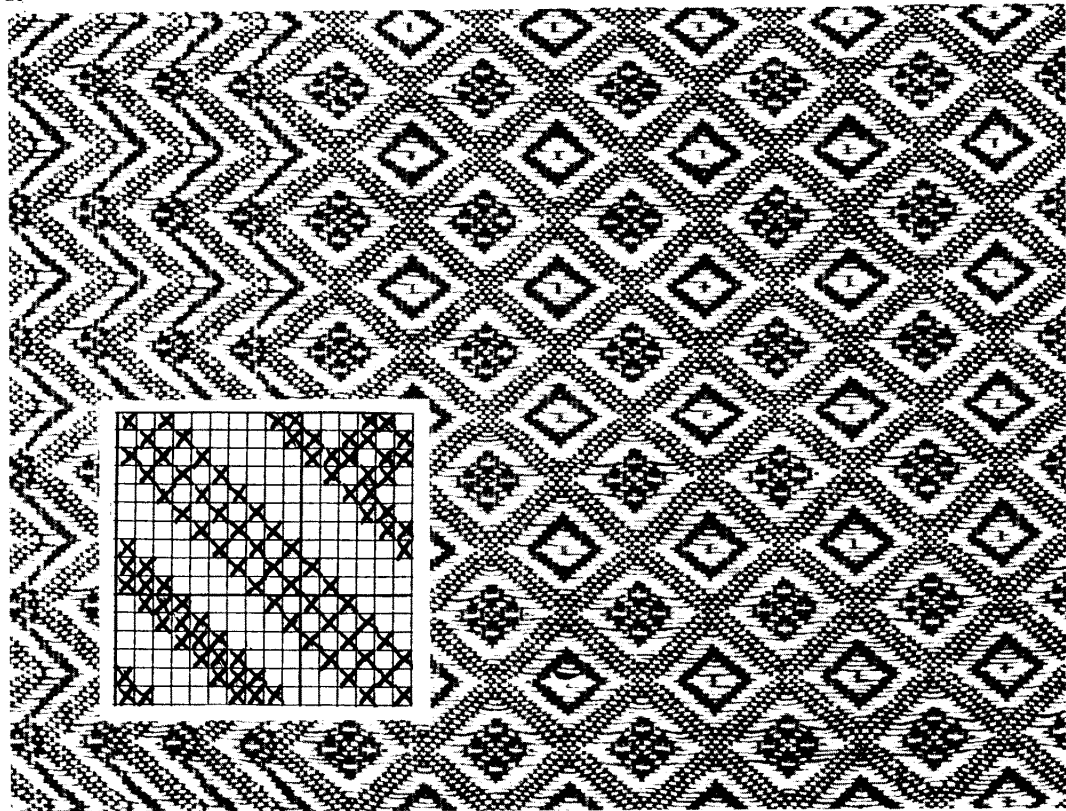


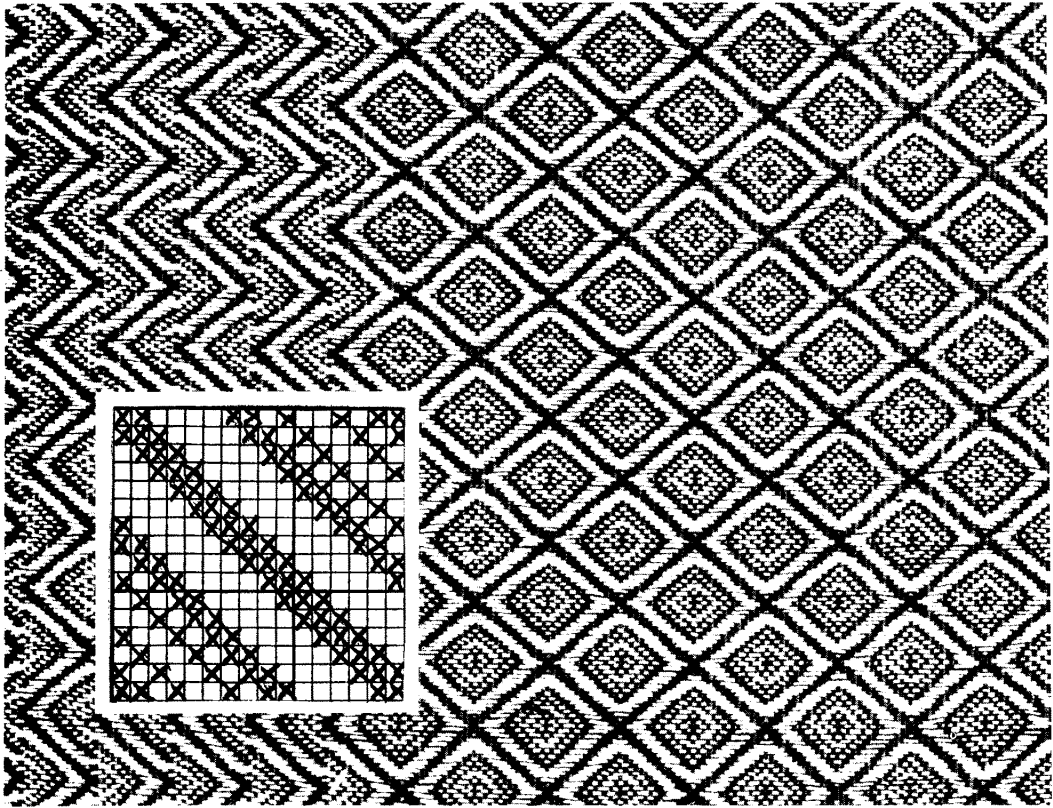
25



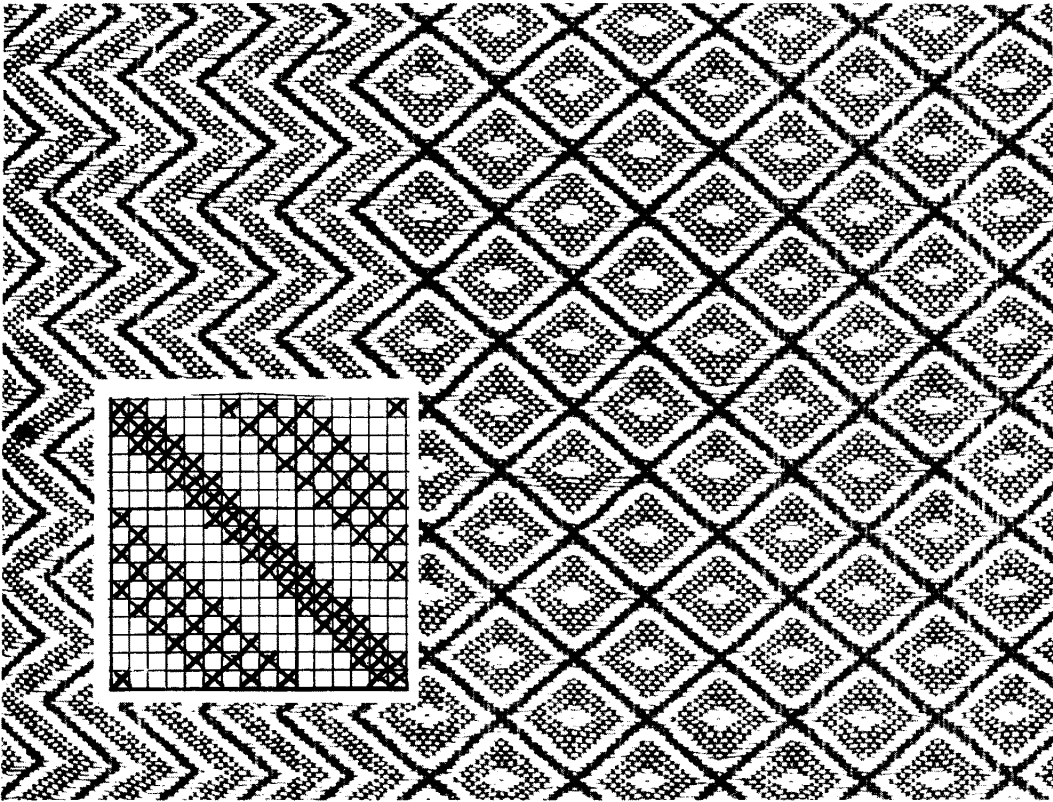


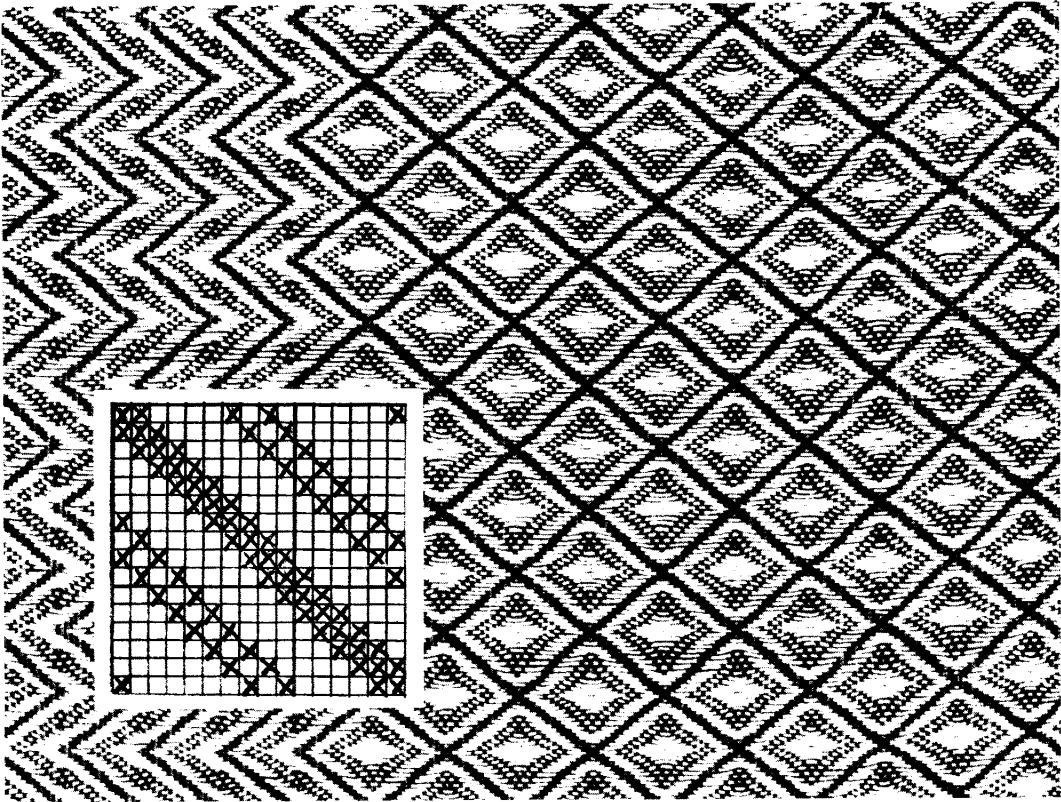
26



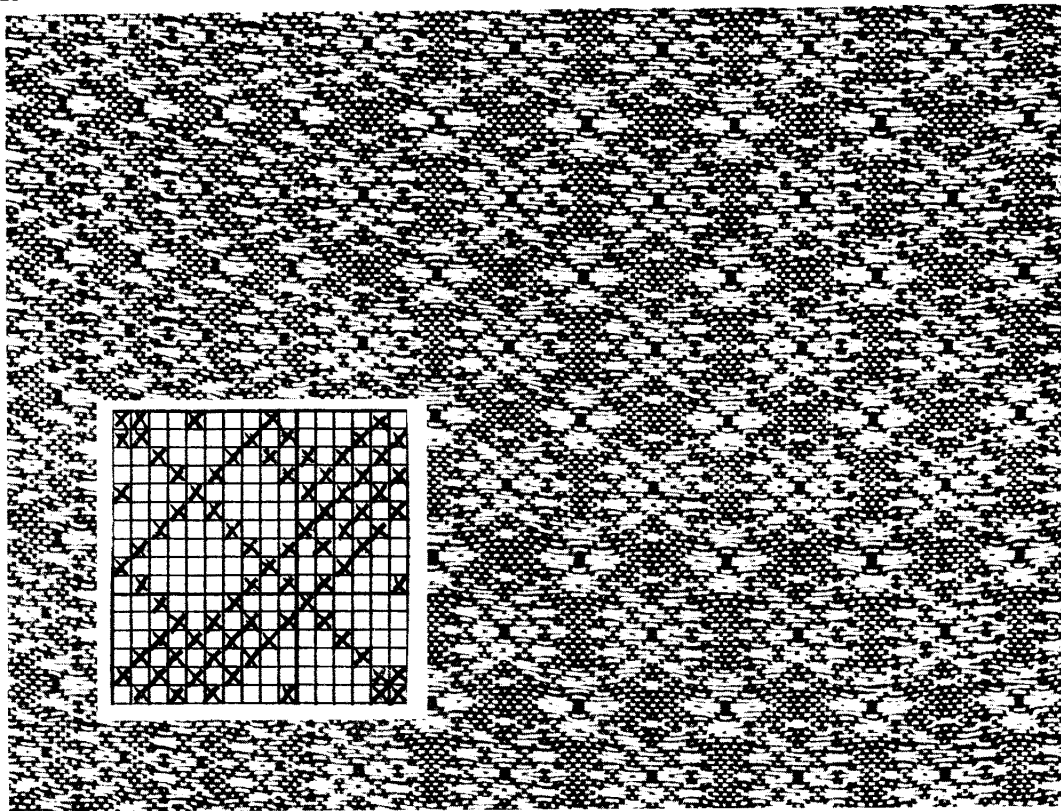


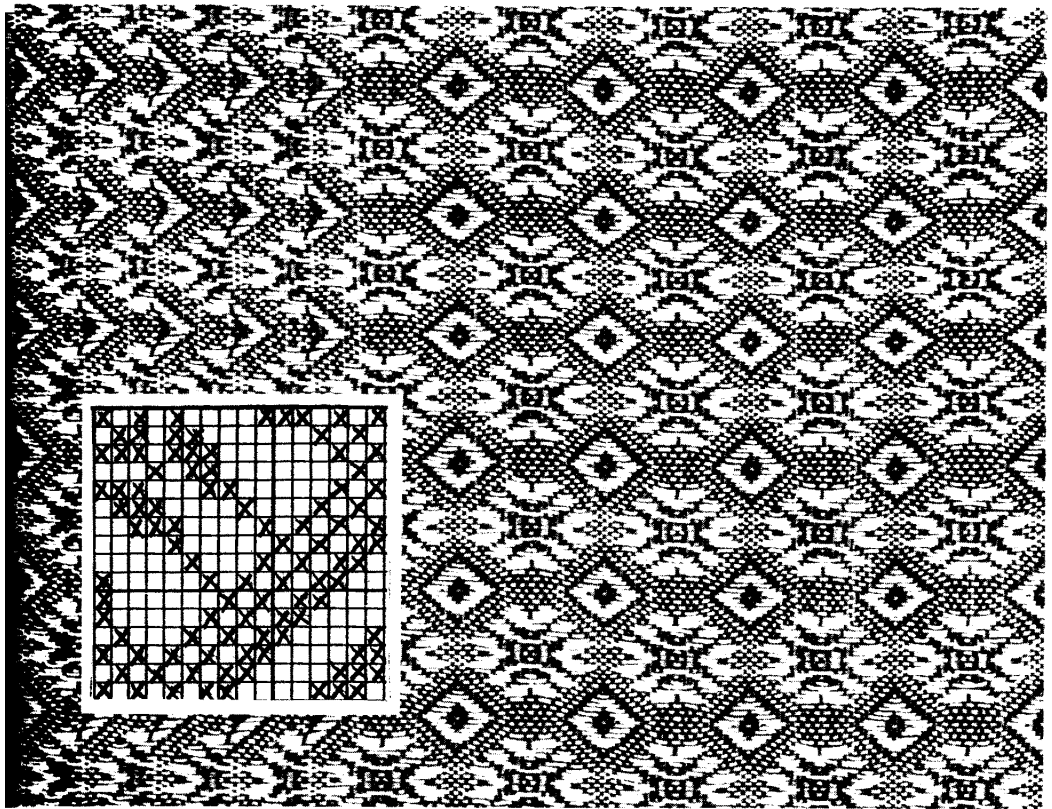
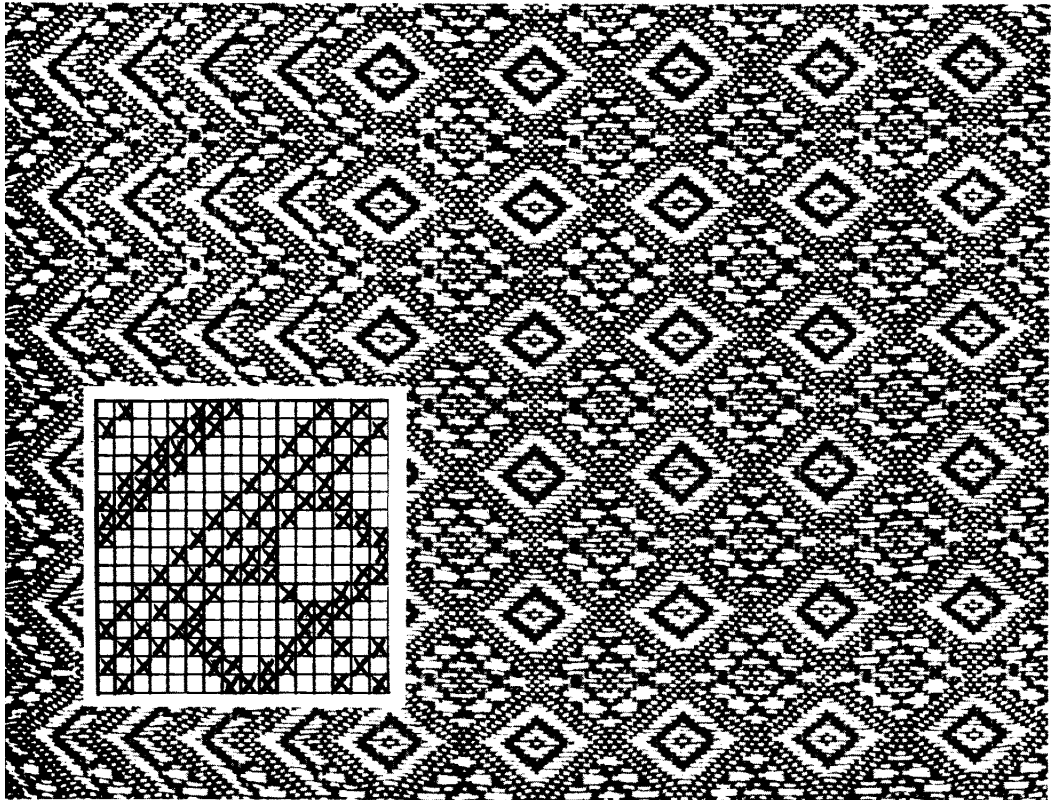
2

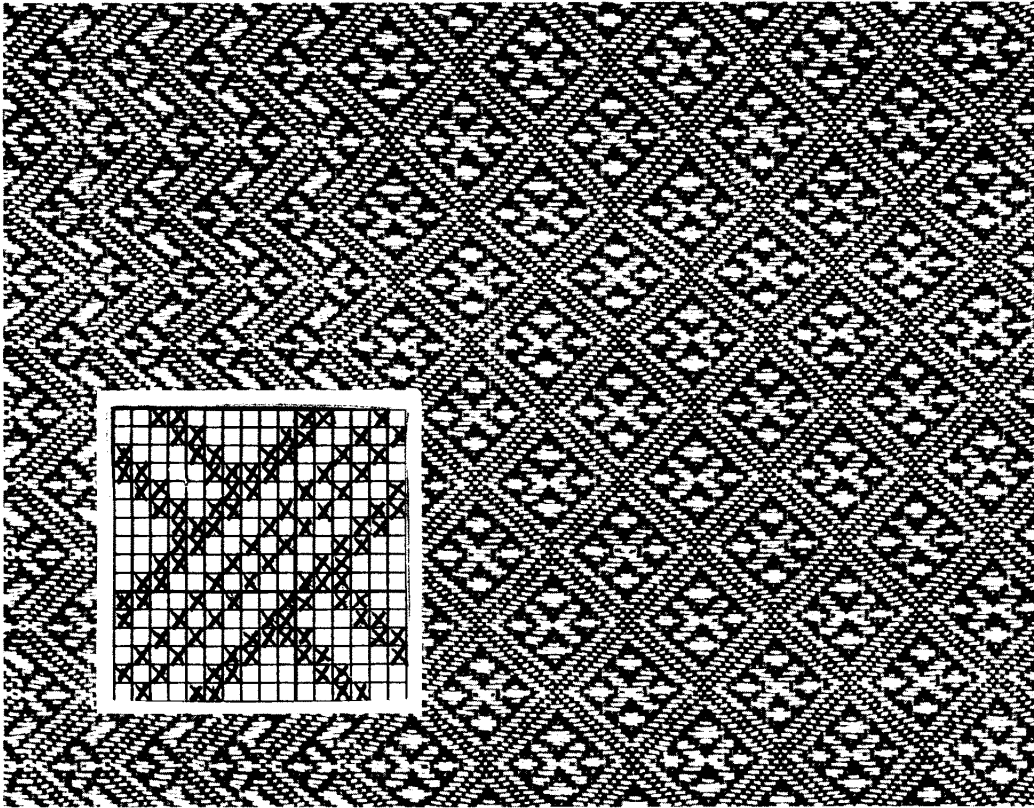




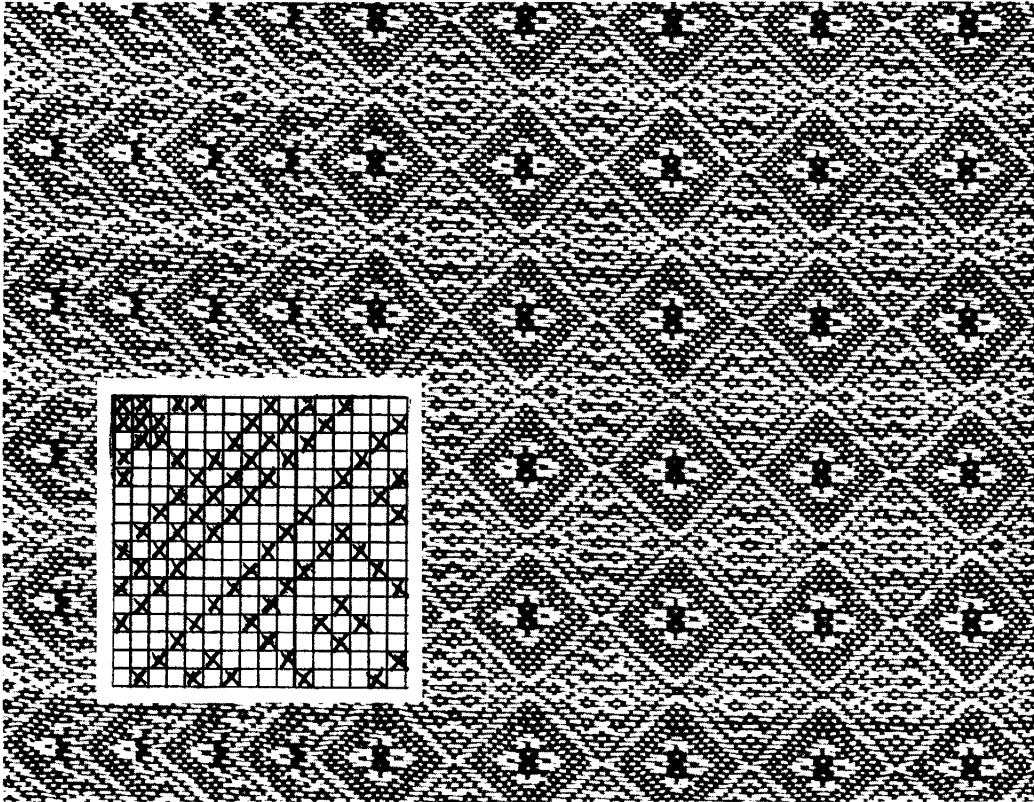
28

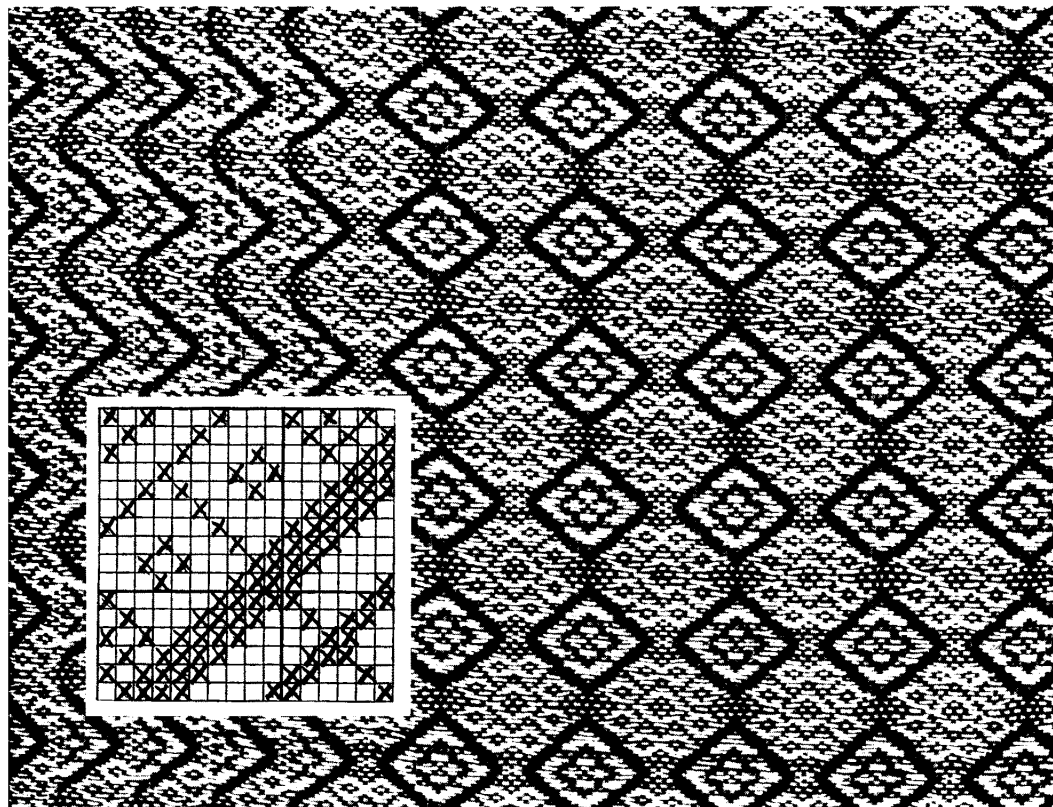
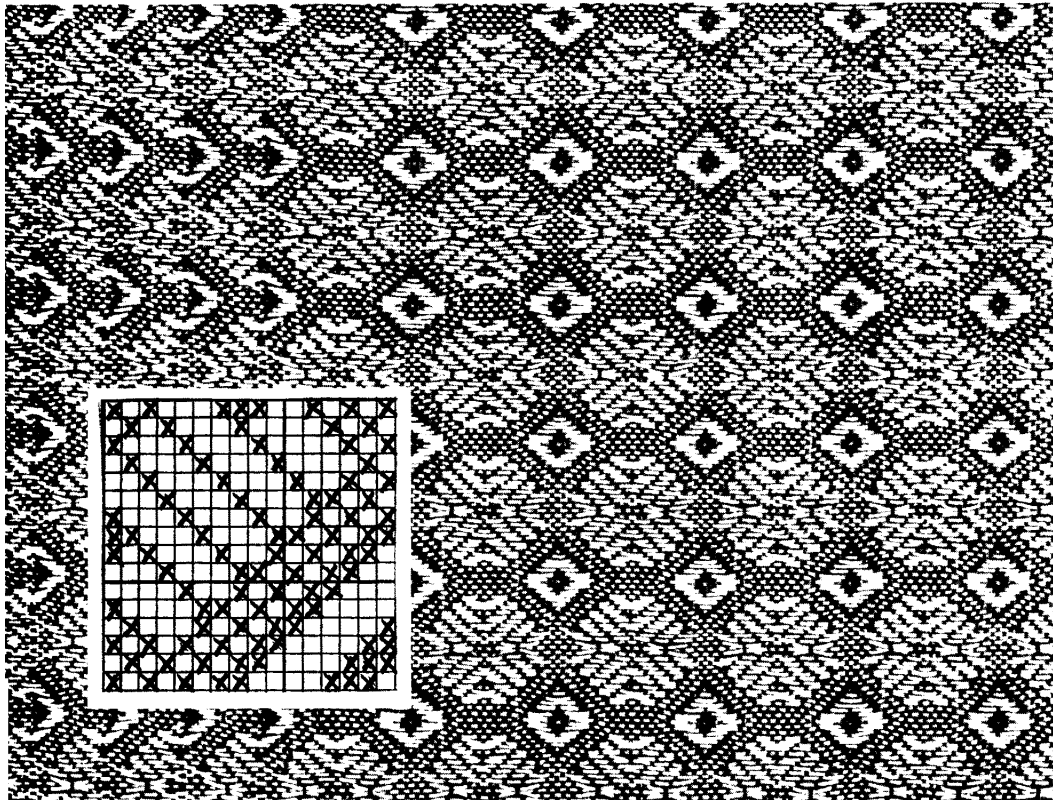


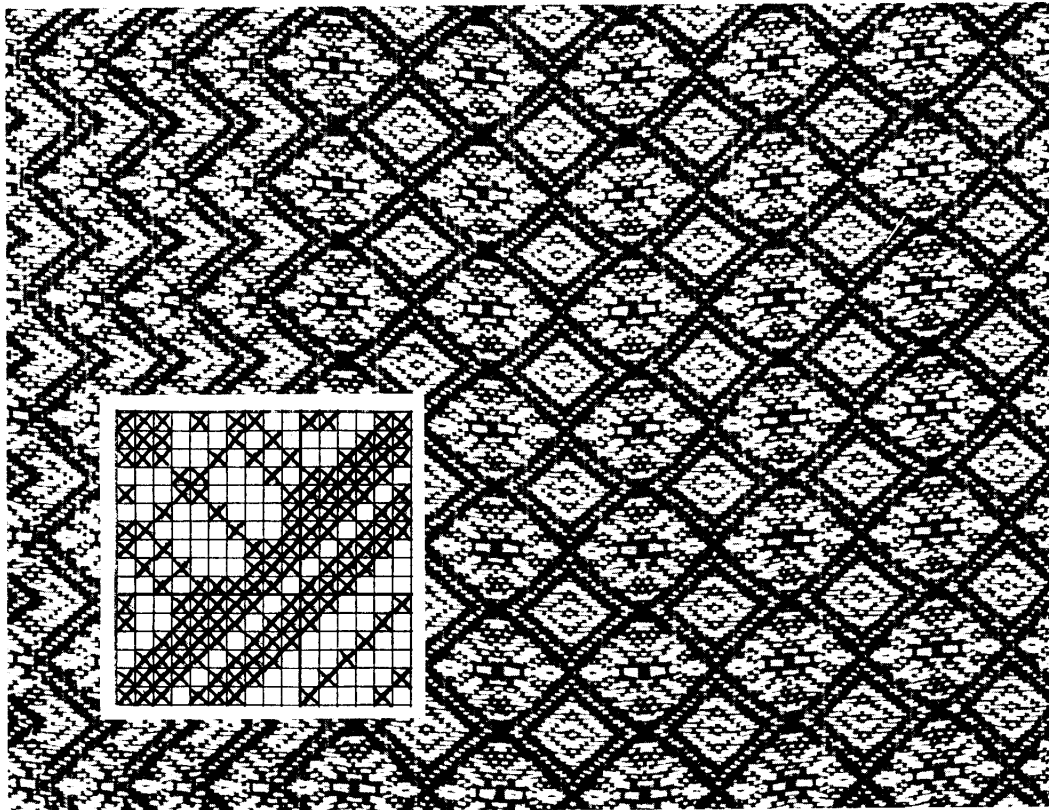




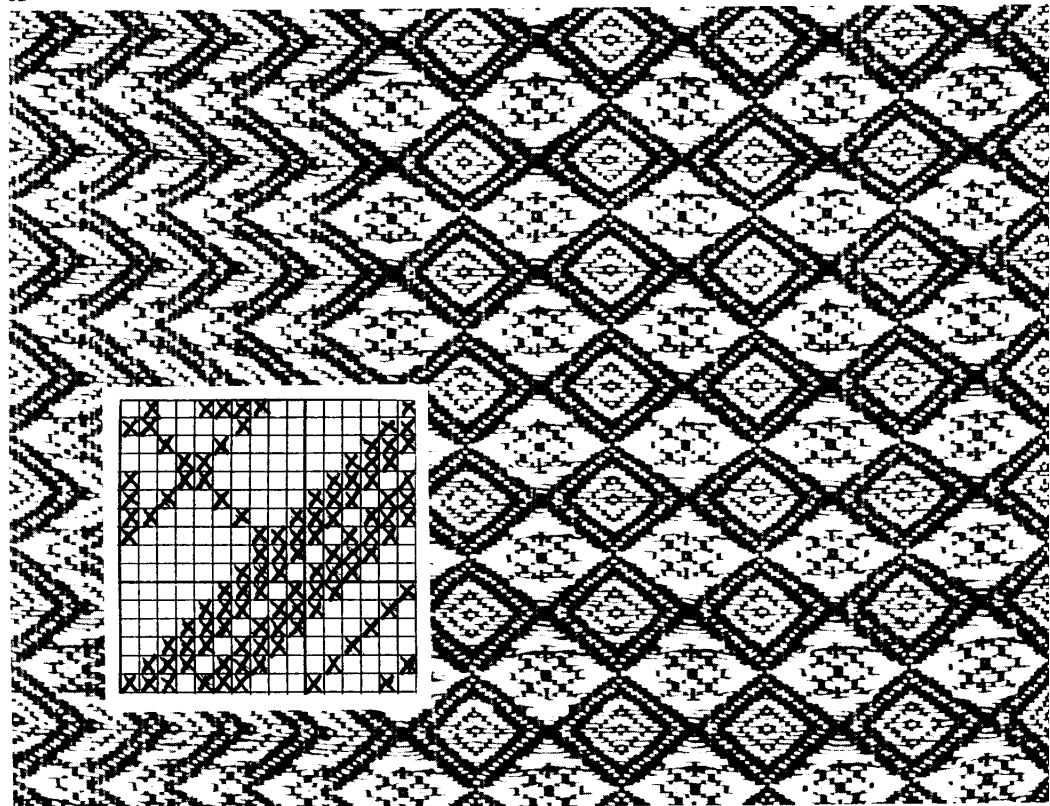
30

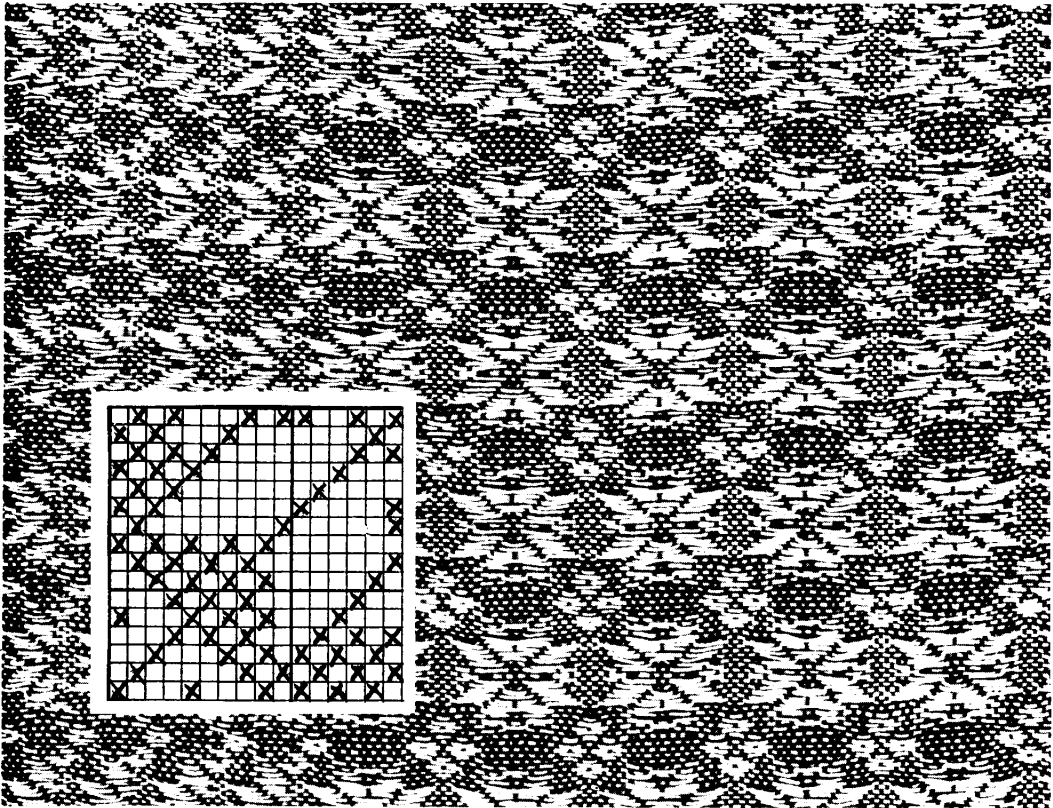




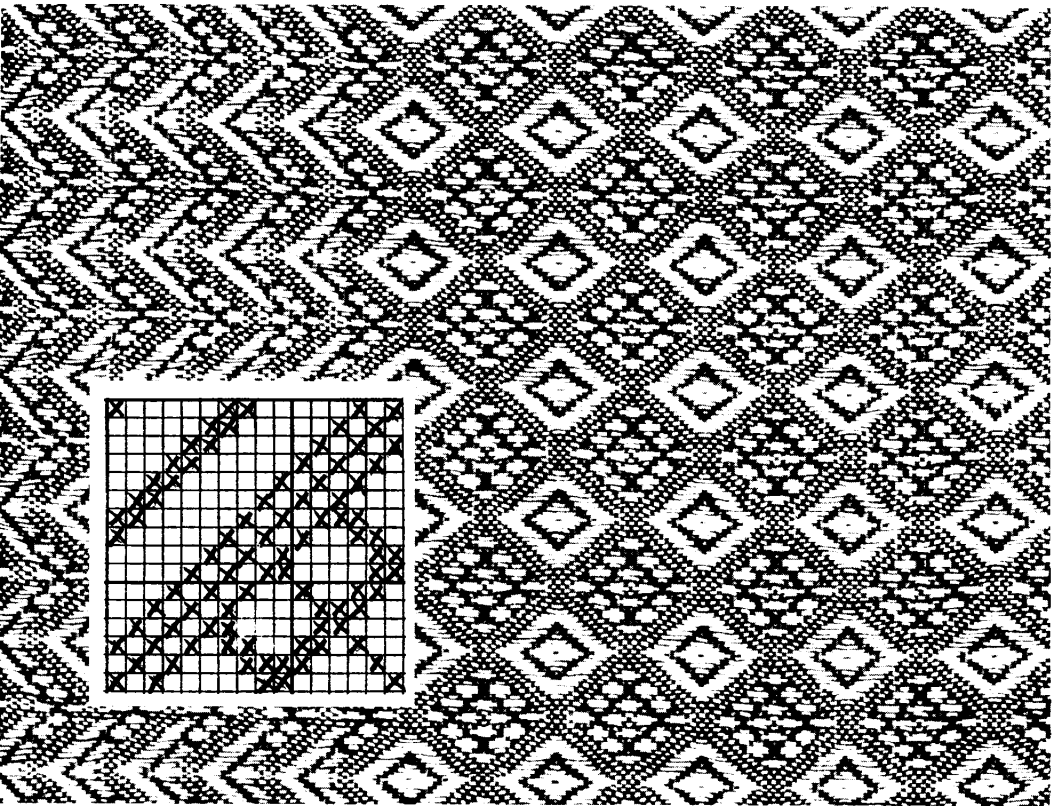


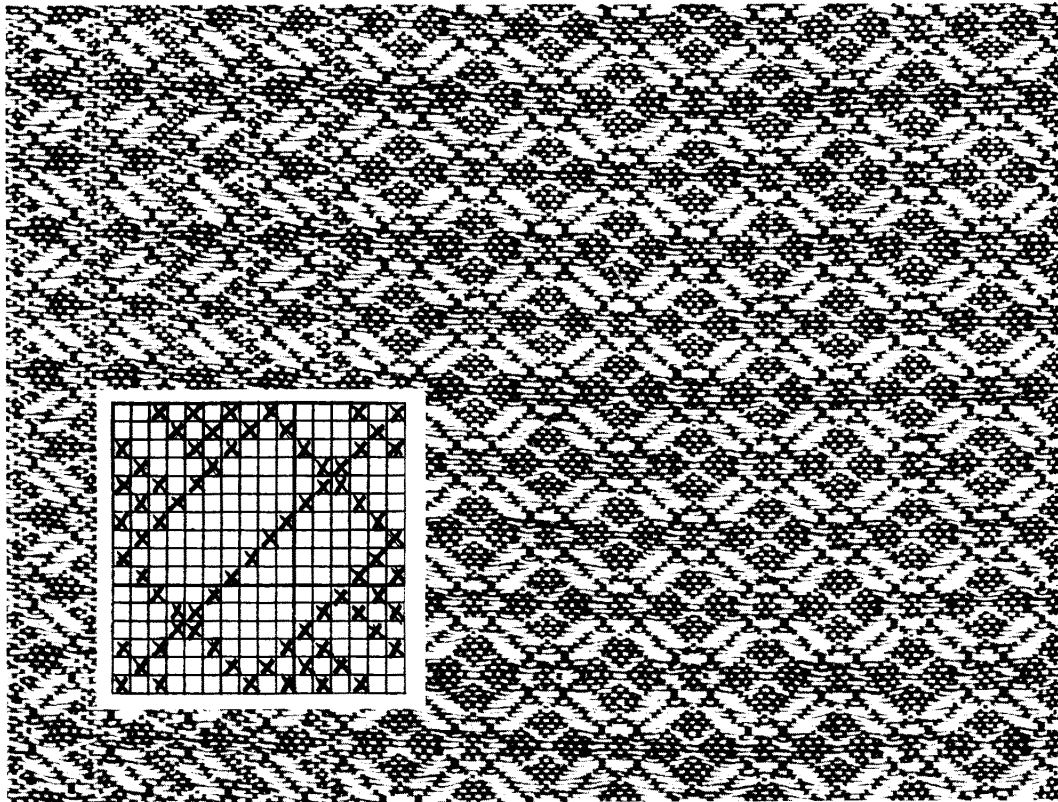
32



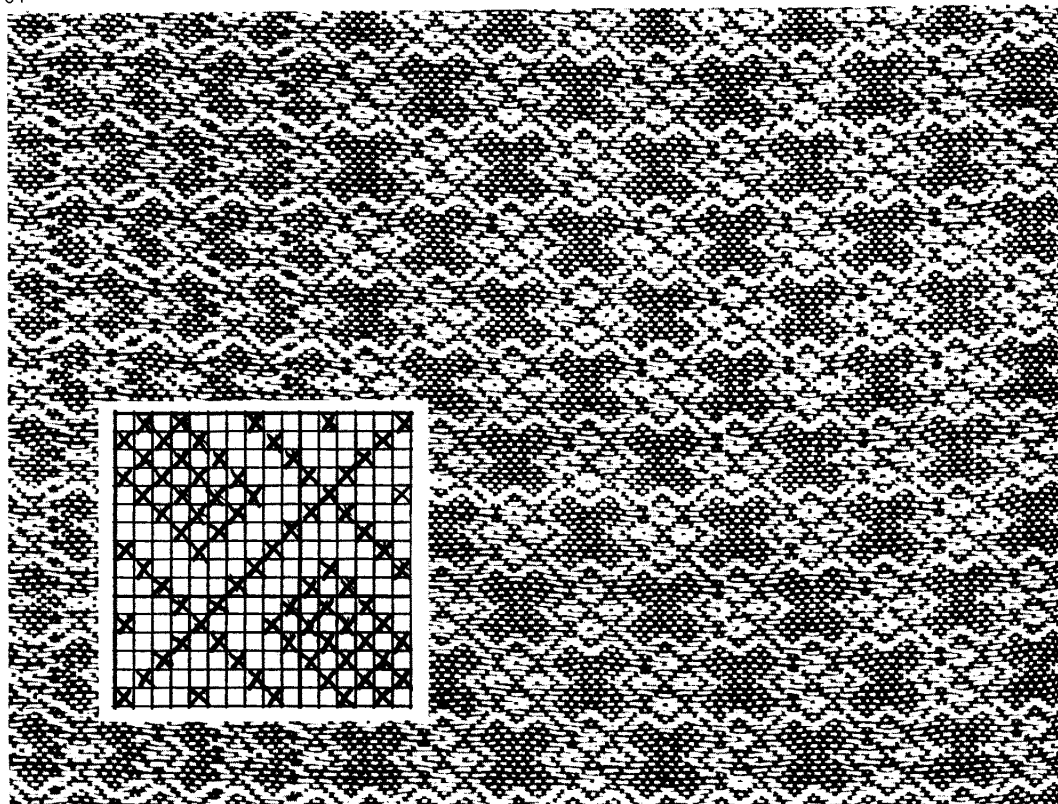


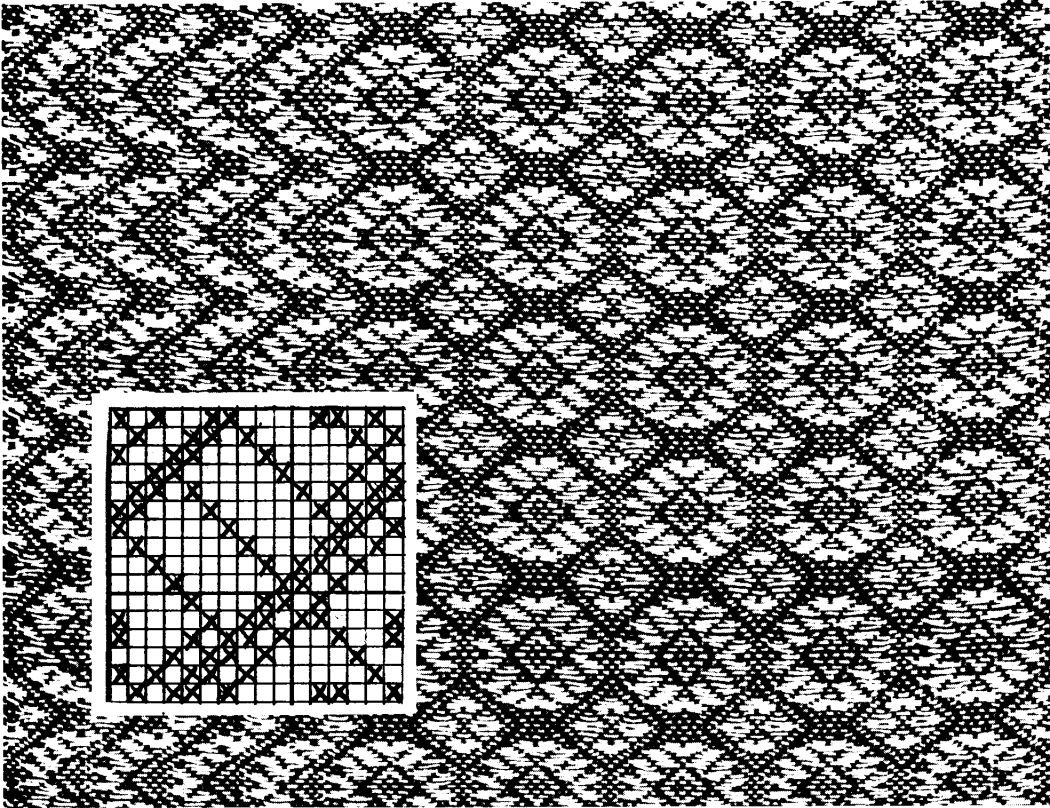
33



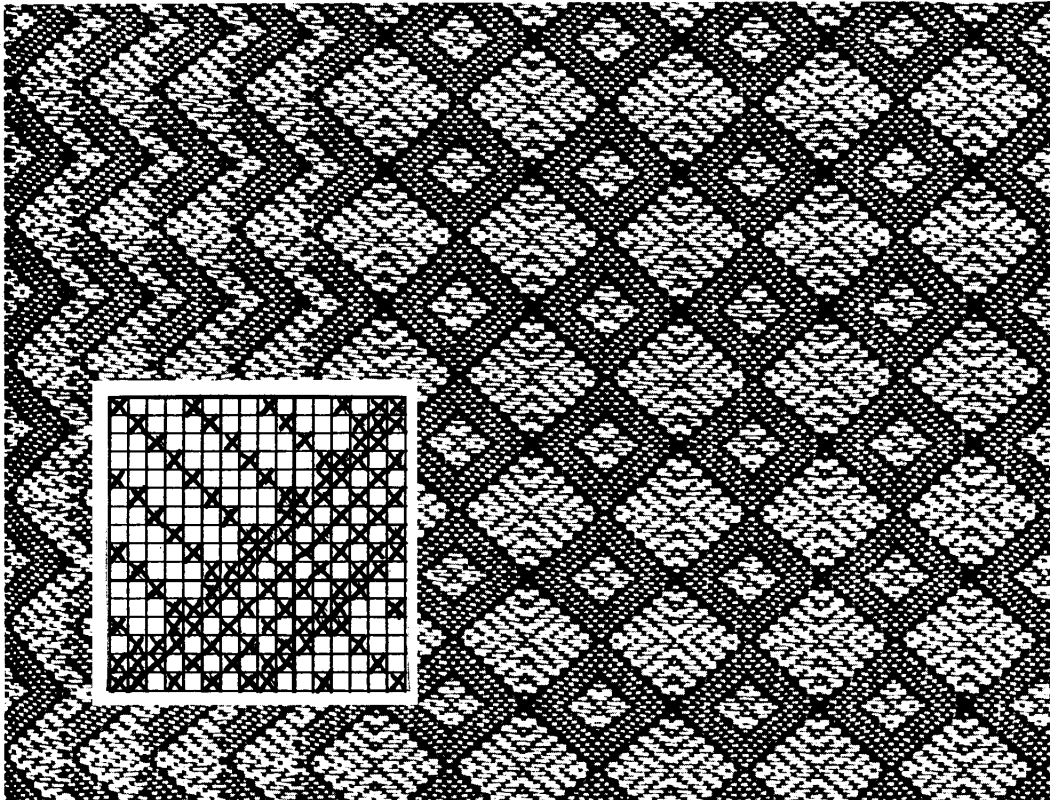


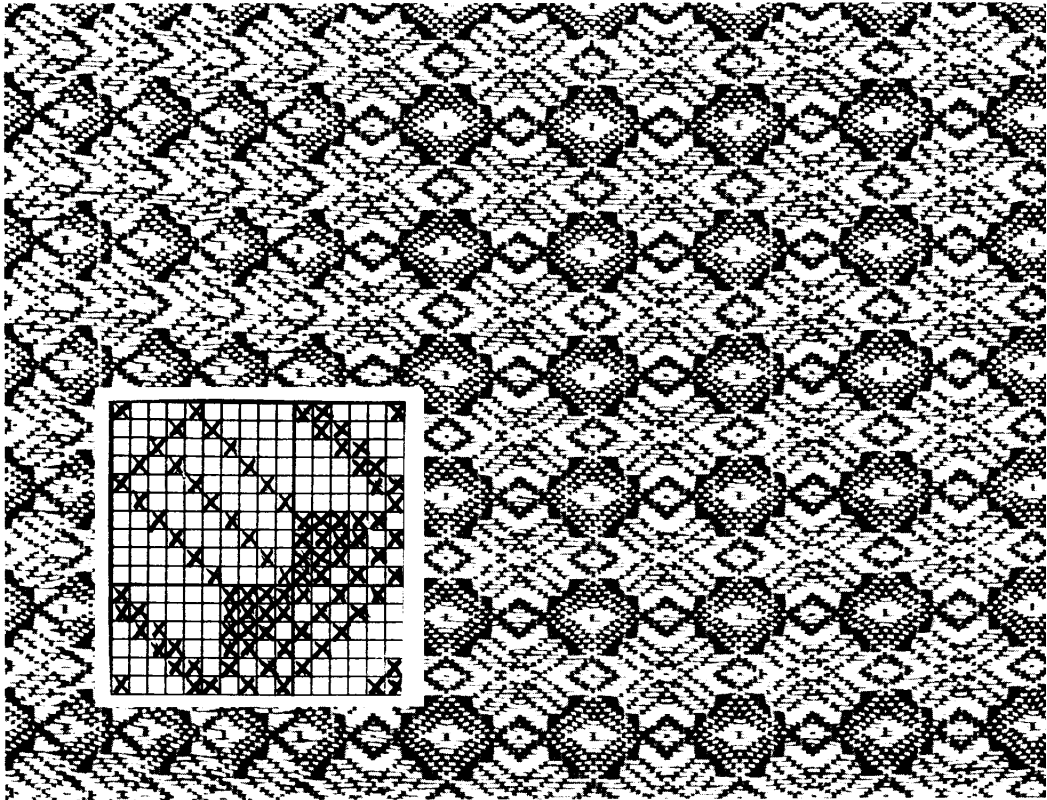
34



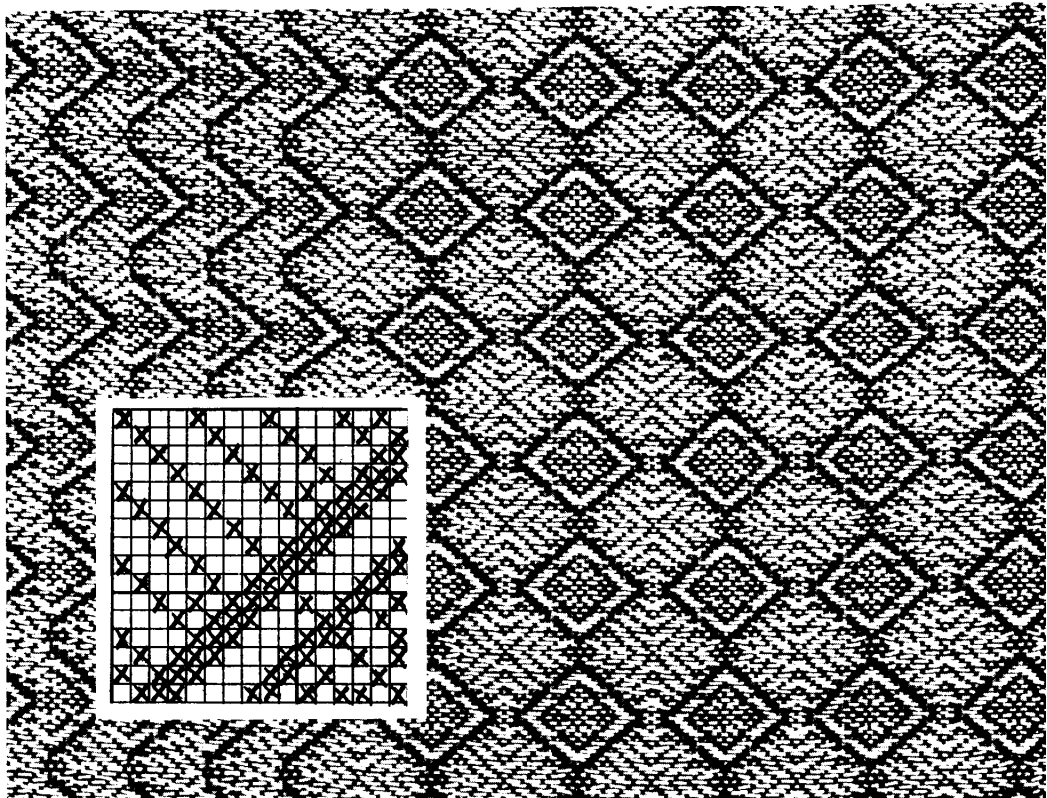


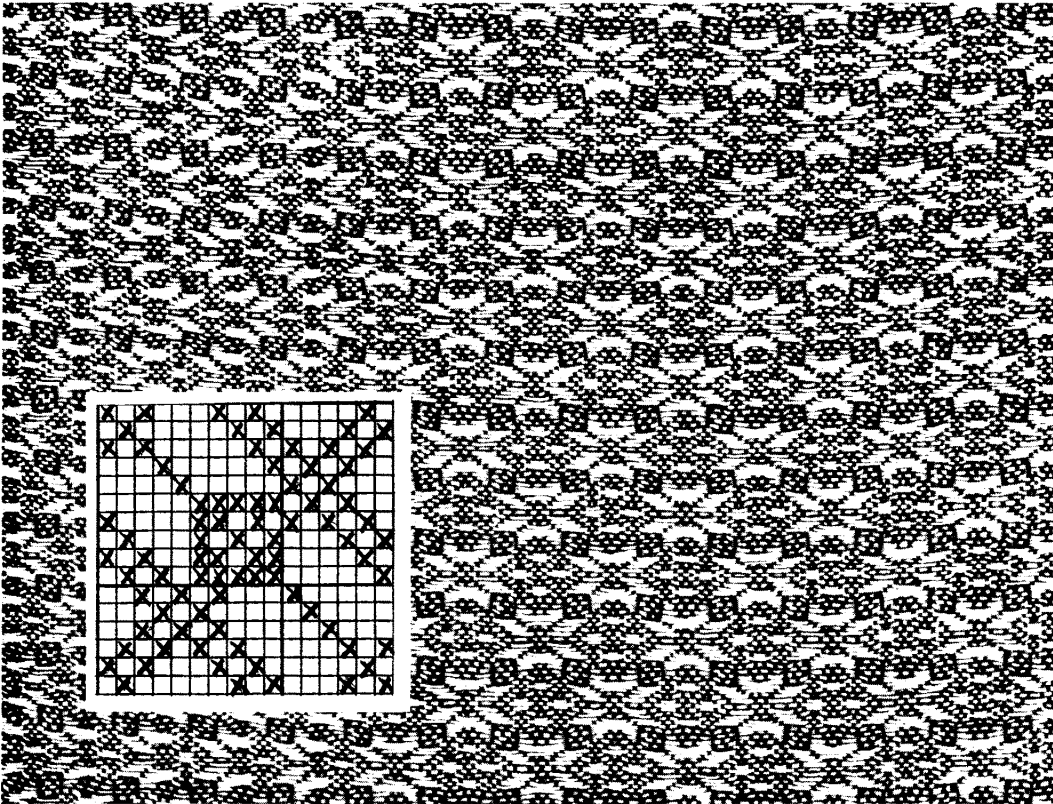
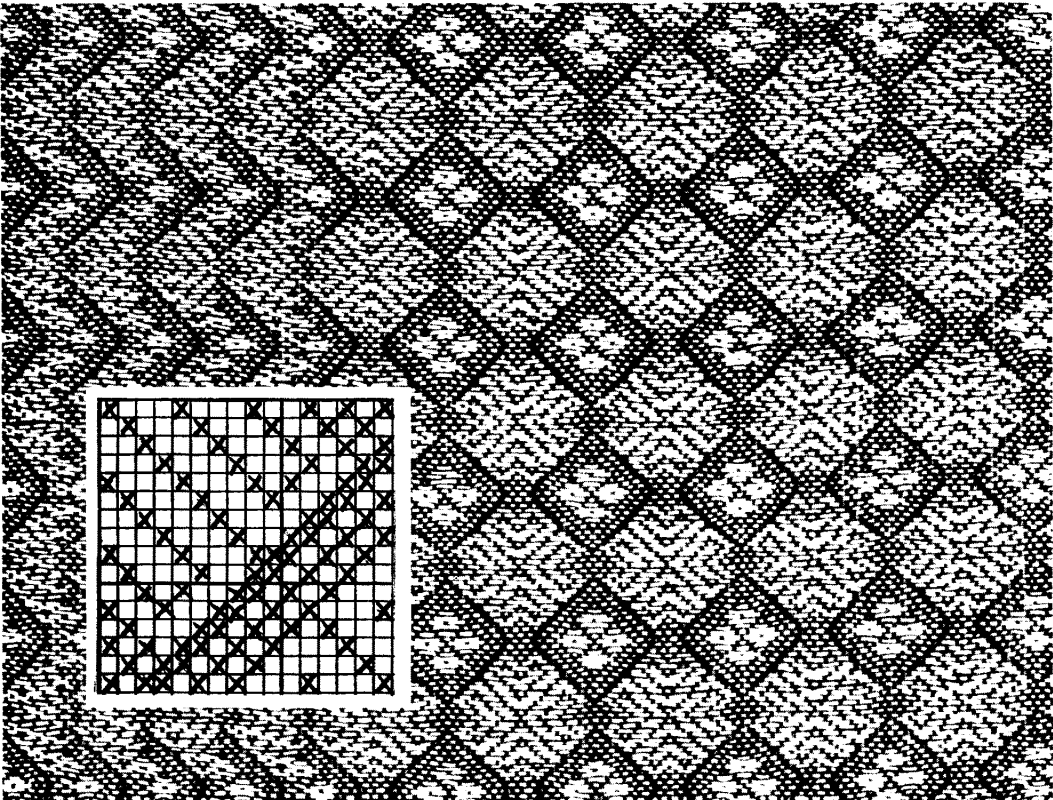
35

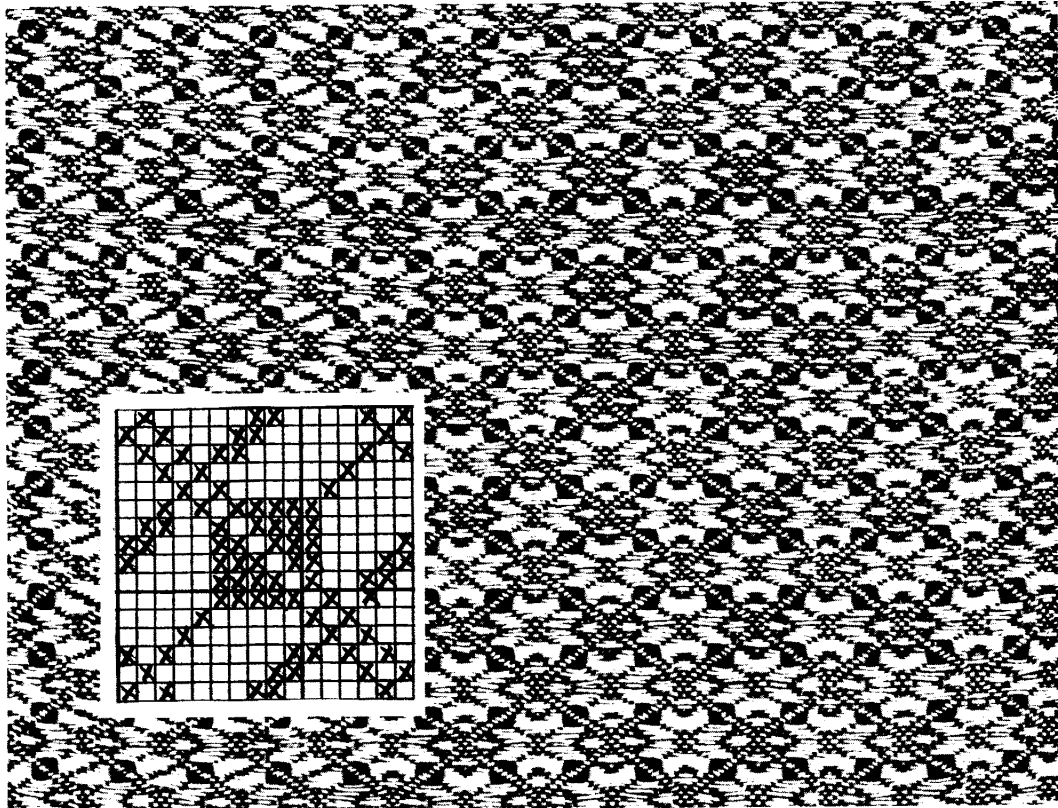




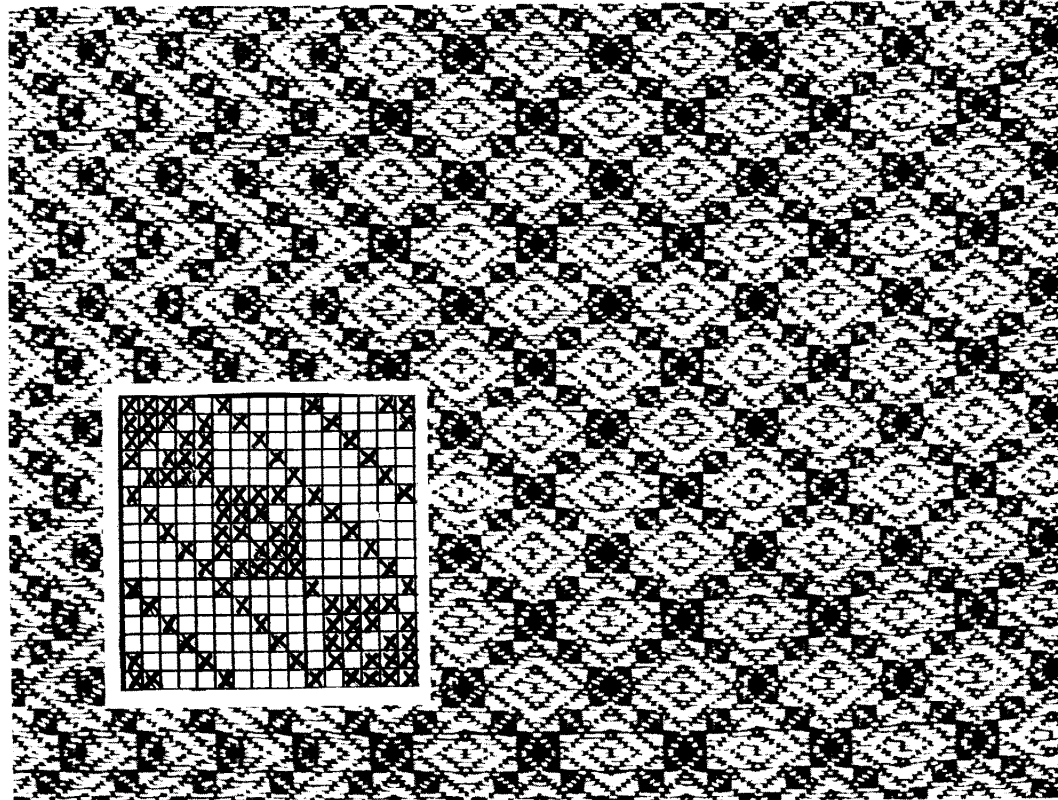
36

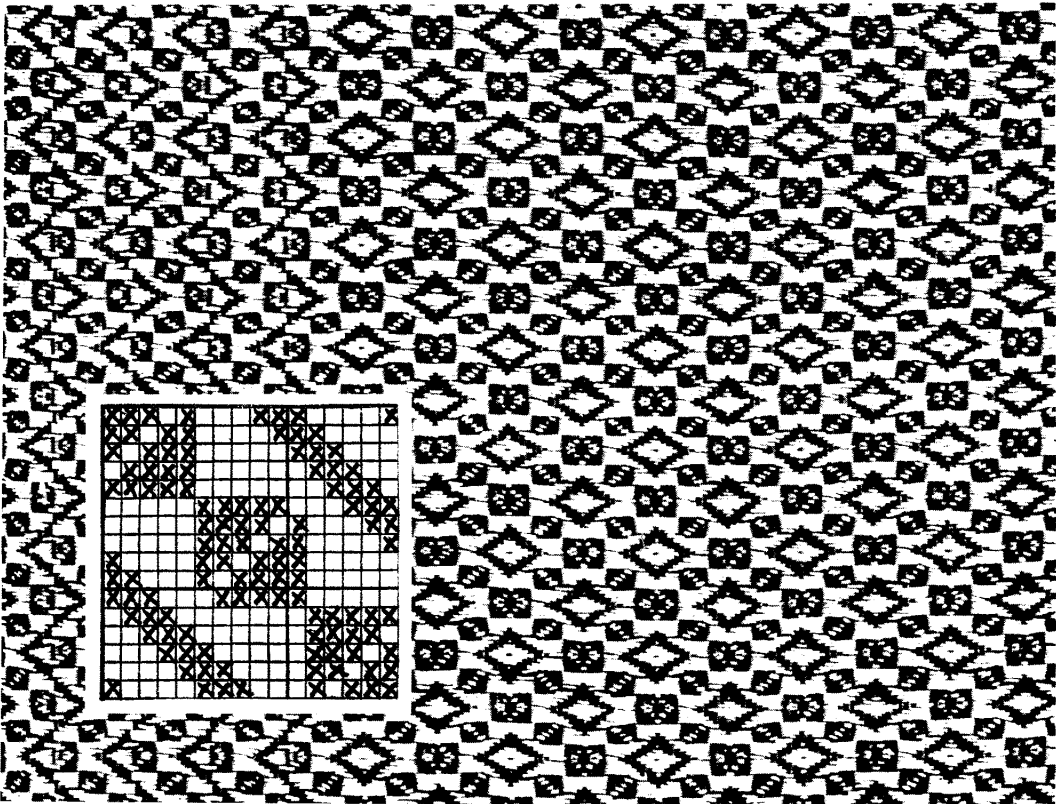
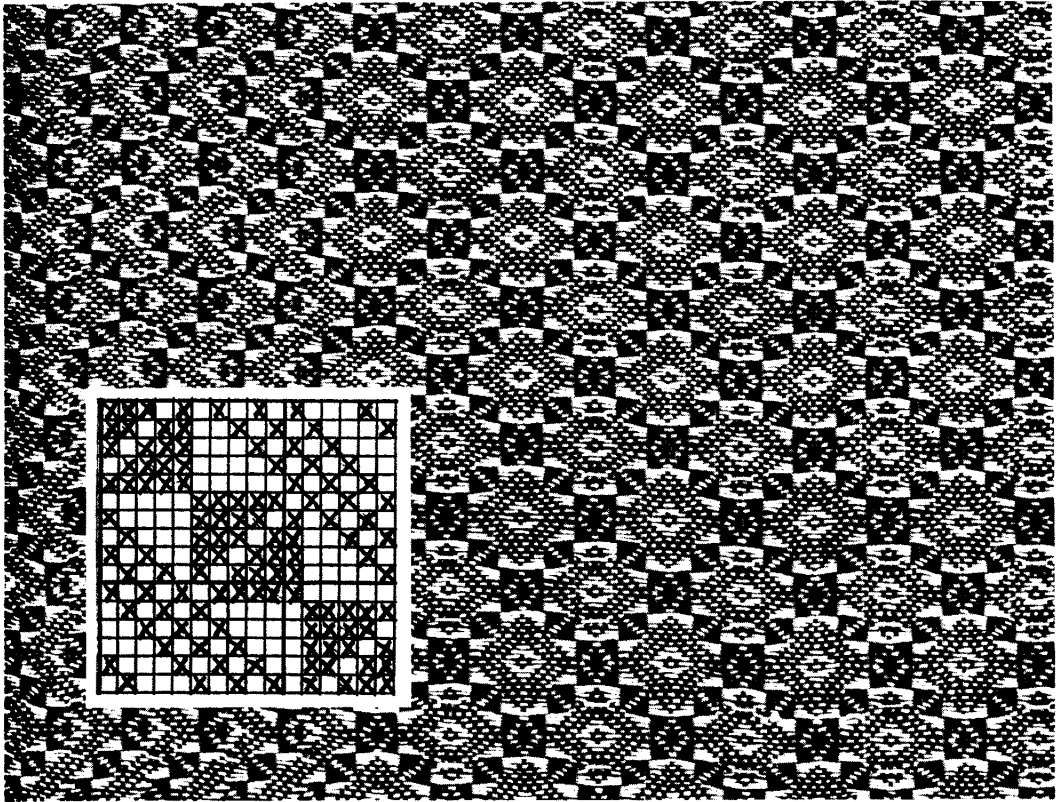


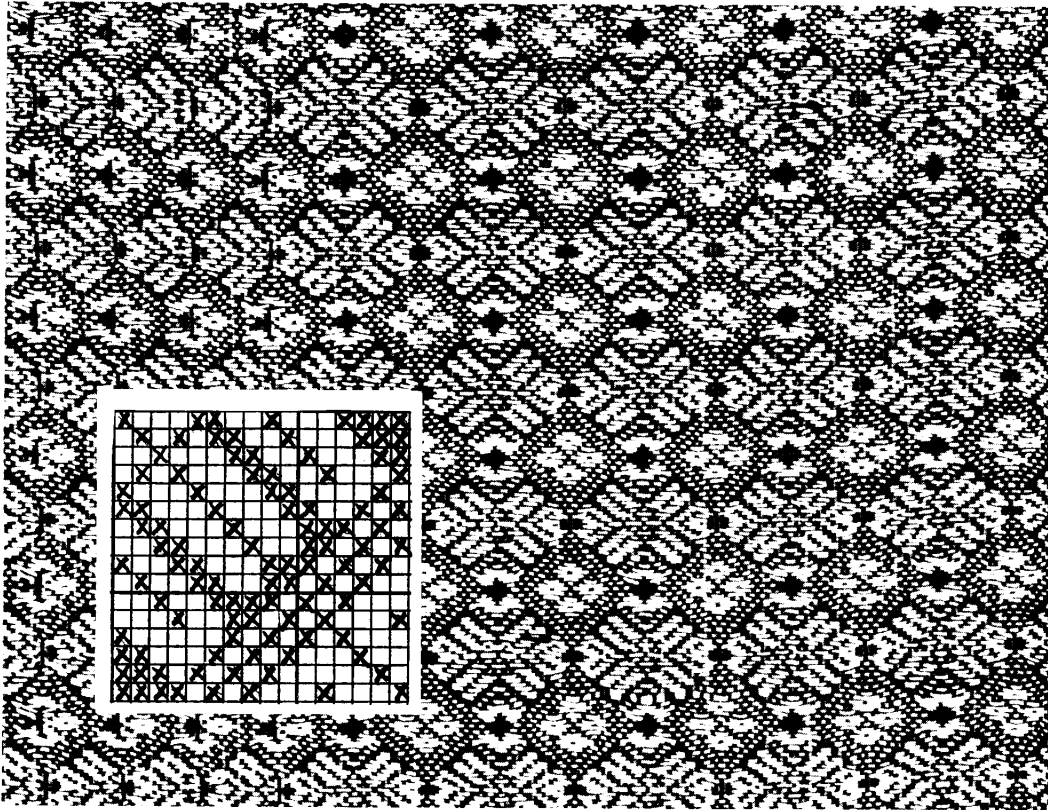




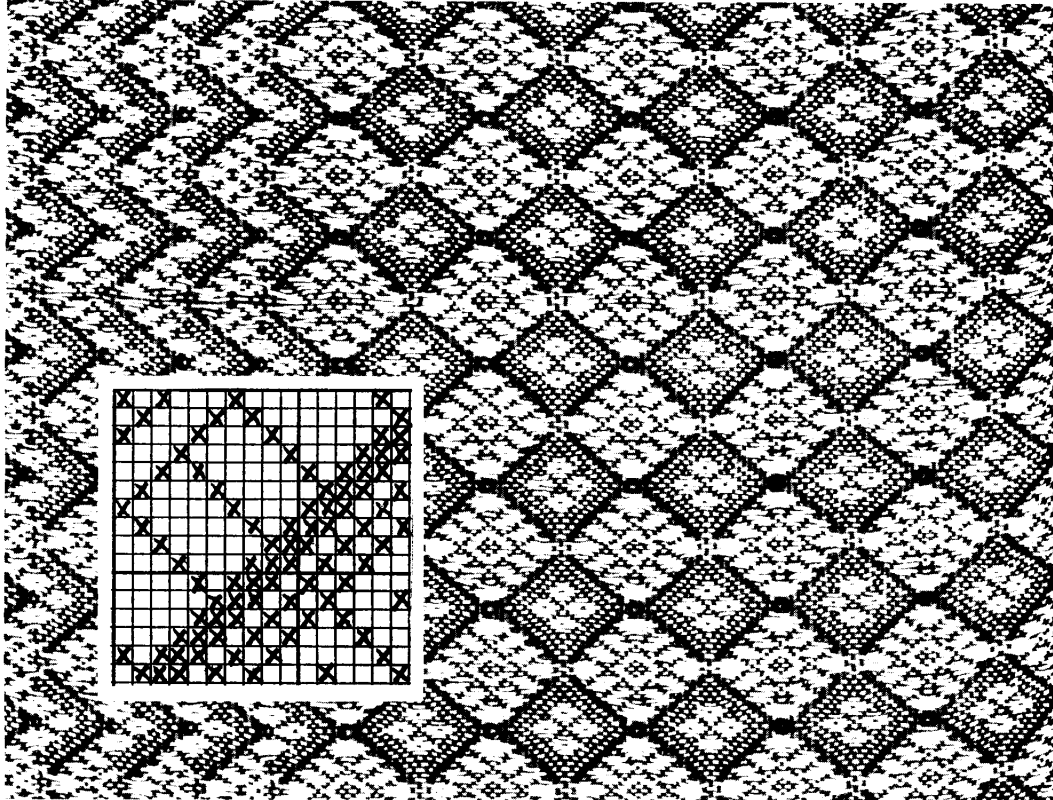
38

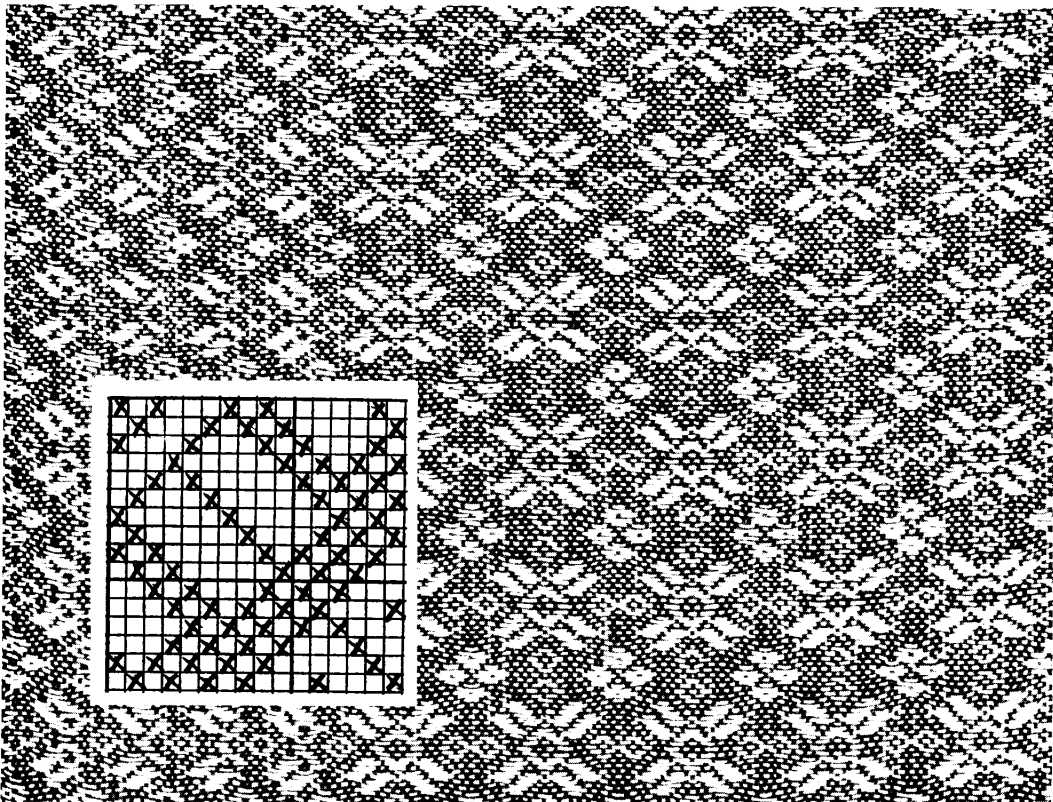
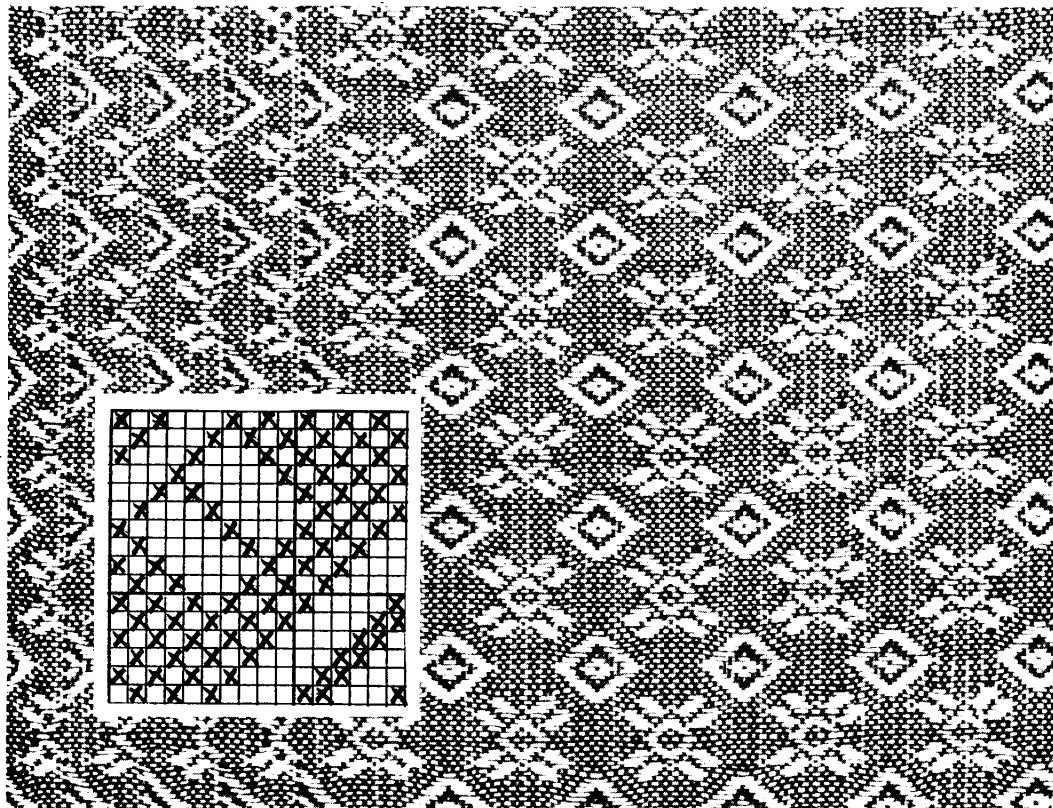


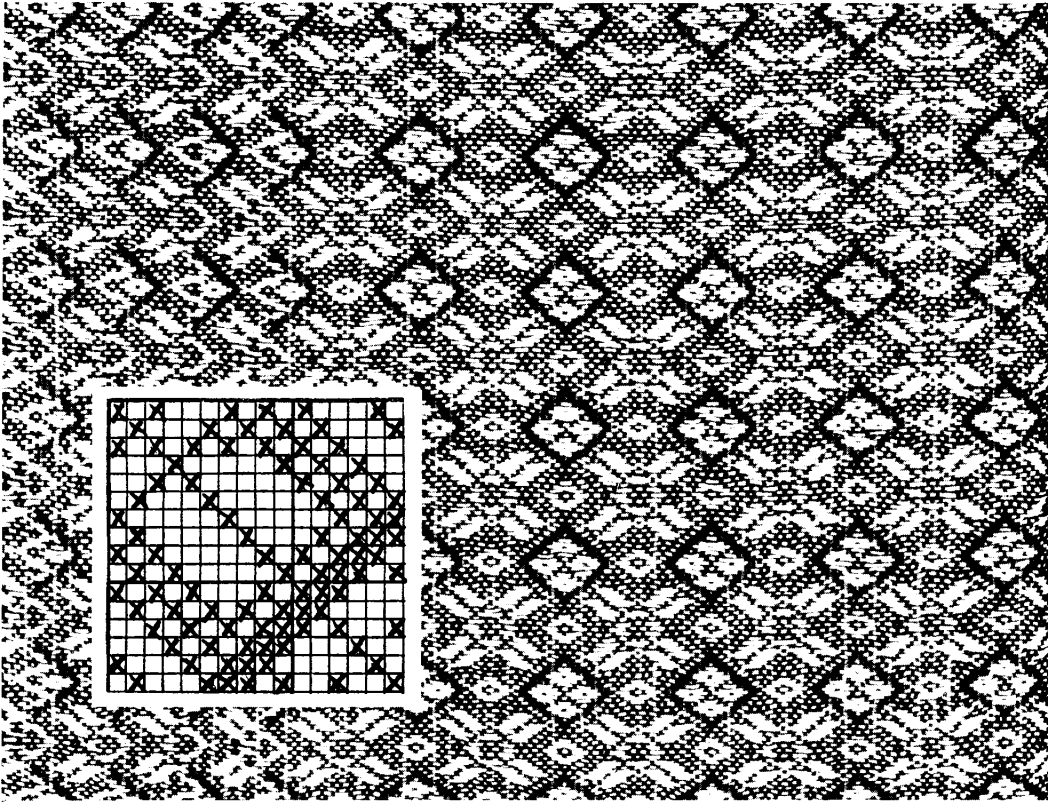




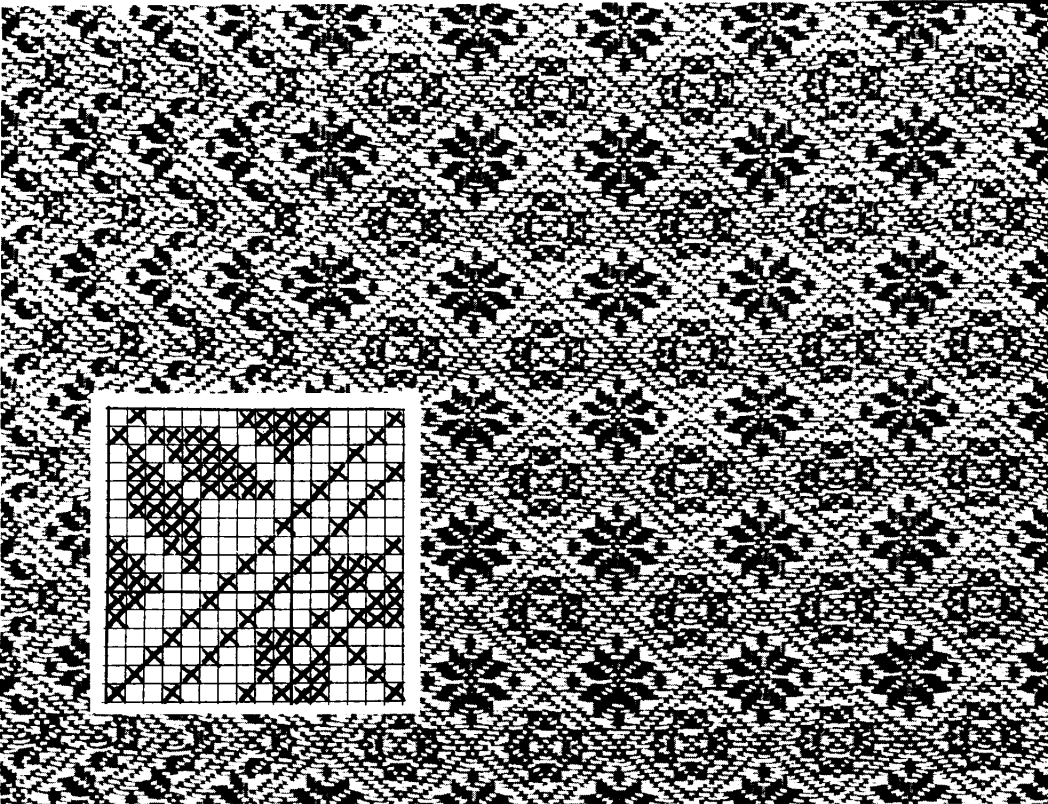
40

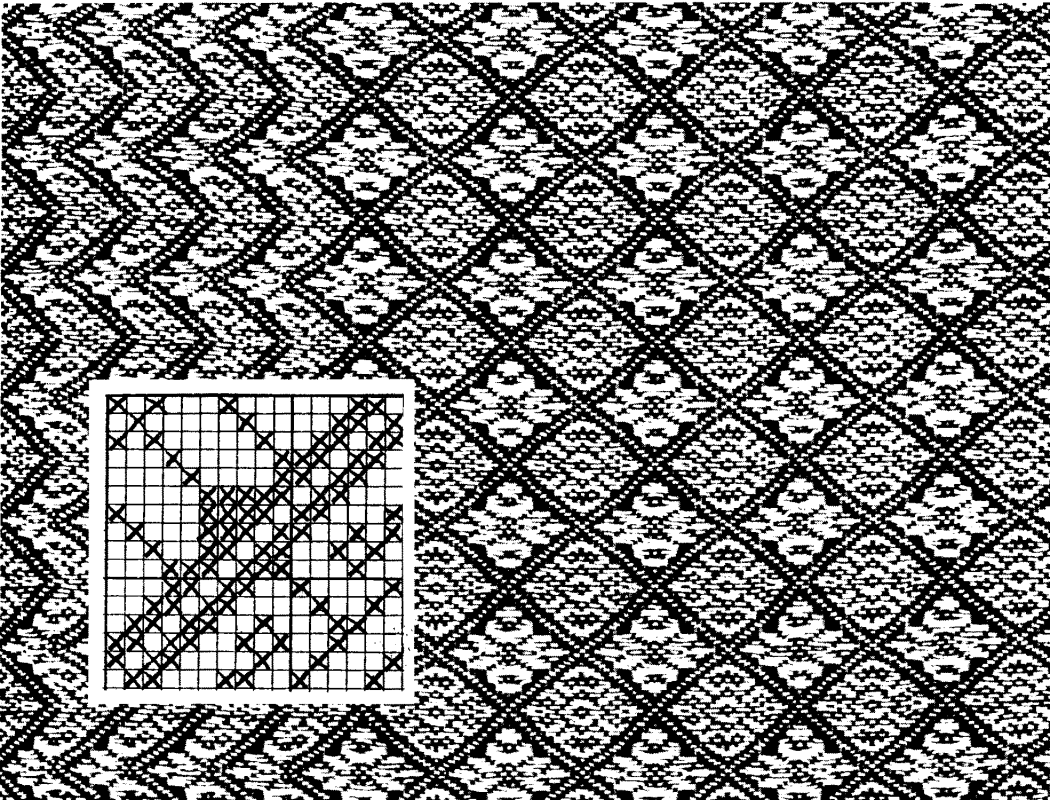
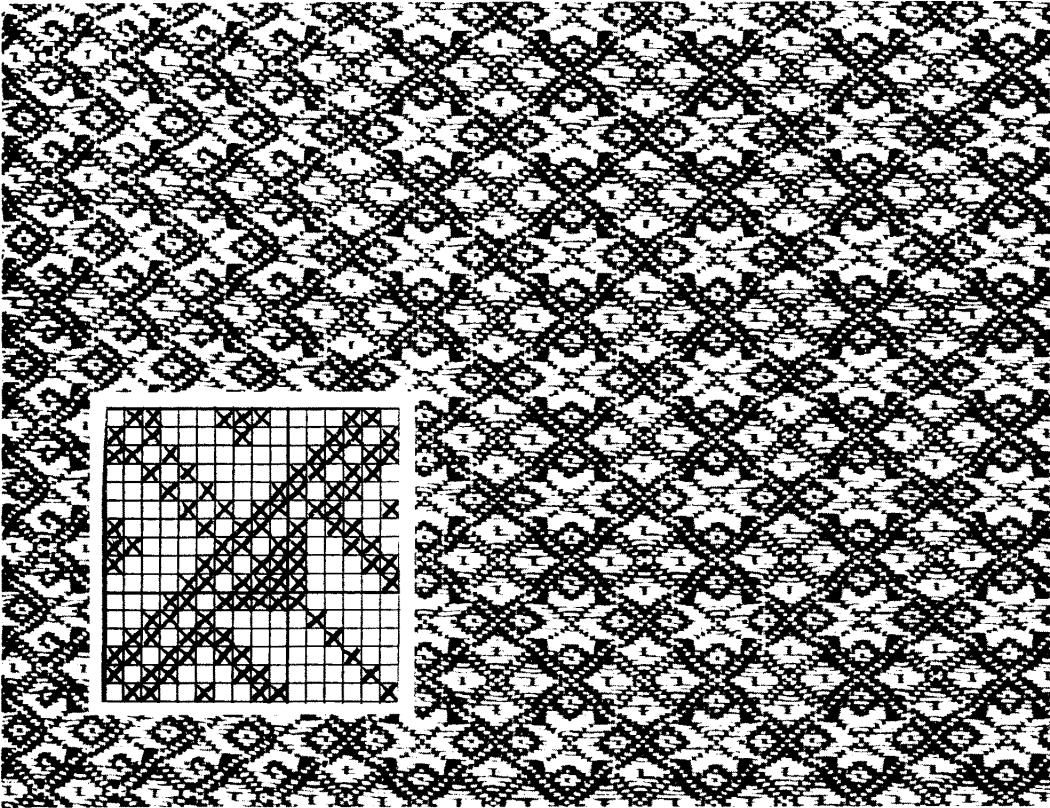


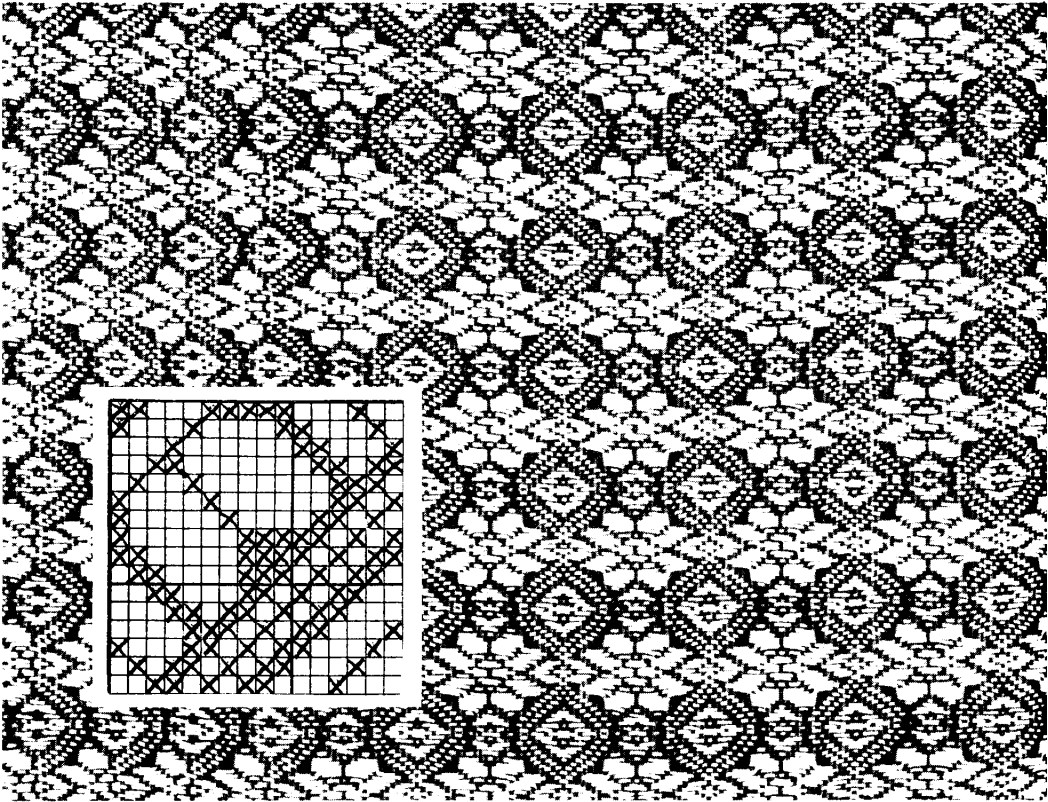




42







44

