

Saraguro Beadwork

by Diane Fitzgerald

High in the Andes mountains of Ecuador, the Saraguro valley is home to more than 10,000 people, the Saraguros, who traditionally raise cattle and sheep and grew corn and beans. Their clothing is distinctive: women wear black pleated skirts and men wear long black shorts. Both braid their hair in a single long braid and wear a fedora type hat daily.

One of the hobbies of Saraguro women is making bead jewelry primarily with open netting techniques. These lacy broad collars are not only an attractive part of women's clothing, but also a creative outlet. According to Linda Belote, whom I visited with in October 2002, since the 1960's patterns have steadily evolved from a single style of collar made with cotton thread and no needle to beautifully elaborate designs made with Czech beads, nylon thread and beading needles.

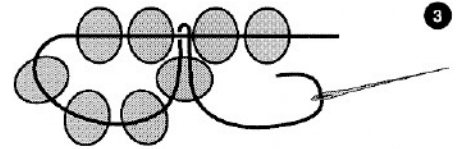
In Saraguro there are no written/ illustrated instructions, graph paper, or pictures of finished necklaces. There are no copyrights either. When one woman creates a new design, she freely and happily allows others to copy it. In fact, she is likely to be pleased that others wish to do so.



Linda, now a resident of Duluth, Minnesota, lived in Saraguro during the 1960's as a Peace Corps worker. She earned her Ph.D in Anthropology and has maintained contact with the Saraguros and returned many times since then. Although not a beadworker herself, she appreciates the beauty of these collars and has collected several throughout the years.

The necklaces are usually worked back and forth, row by row, along the neck edge. At first glance, one might think the work proceeded up and down, perpendicular to the neck edge, but don't be fooled.

As each row is worked, the thread is looped over the thread in the preceding row, then passed through the last bead strung. (See fig 3) This results in the 'point' or 'shared' bead having its hole perpendicular to the neck edge.



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References

For more information about Saraguro beadwork see the following:

Belote, L. S. & Lorenz, C. 2002 *Ecuadorian Bead Weaving* **Bead & Button** 49, 88-92

Lightner, K. & Korach, A. 2002 *Ecuadorian Lace Weaves: Complex Techniques from Saraguro* **Bead & Button** 50, 94-98

or visit: www.saraguro.org/beadwork.htm

Saraguro beadwork may be purchased from the Tweed Museum at the University of Minnesota, Duluth www.d.umn.edu/tma

Contact Linda at lbelote@d.umn.edu



Photos: 1, 2, 4 & 7 © Jim and Linda Becho; 5 & 6 © Diane Fitzgerald; map Graeme Morris

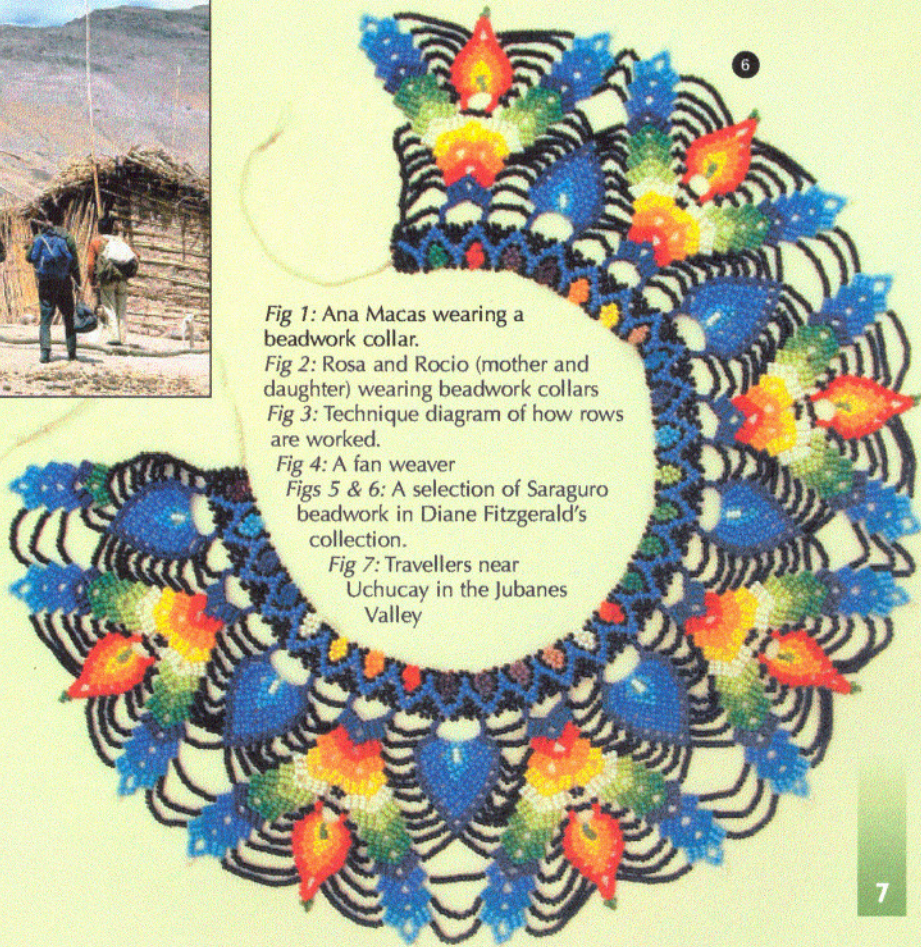
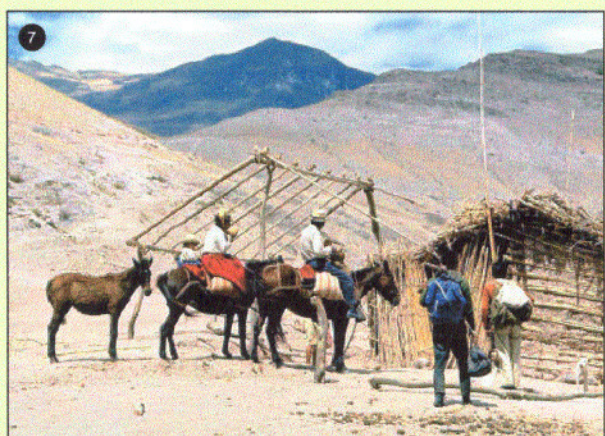


Fig 1: Ana Macas wearing a beadwork collar.
Fig 2: Rosa and Rocio (mother and daughter) wearing beadwork collars
Fig 3: Technique diagram of how rows are worked.
Fig 4: A fan weaver
Figs 5 & 6: A selection of Saraguro beadwork in Diane Fitzgerald's collection.
Fig 7: Travellers near Uchucay in the Jubanes Valley

How to ... A Saraguro Six-Petal Flower

by Diane Fitzgerald

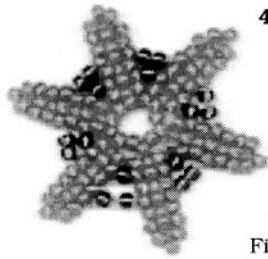
This six-petal flower is recreated from a flower pattern in a necklace from Saraguro, Ecuador (see fig 5 top right, p.7).

Supplies

- Size 11/0 seed beads
- nylon thread

Method

- 1 With 1.5yd of thread in needle, string on 12 beads and tie in a ring (Fig 1)
- 2 Make the first picot: pick up three beads and go right to left through the bead to the right of the knot and through the next two beads (Fig 2)
- 3 Make five more picots as you did in step 2. After making the last one, go through the first bead of the first picot (Fig 3)



- 4 Add one bead between the first and second beads of the first picot. Add three beads and go through the tip bead of the picot again from right to left. Add one bead and go through the third bead of the picot. Add one bead and go through the first bead of the next picot. New beads are shown in darker grey in Fig 4. Repeat this step five more times.

- 5 Repeat Step 4 once more, adding two beads between each picot.

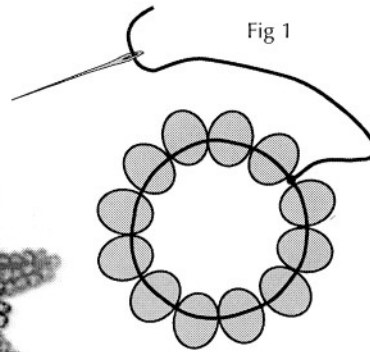


Fig 1

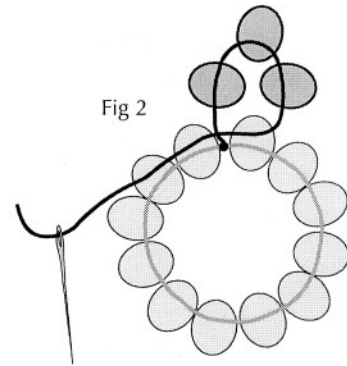


Fig 2

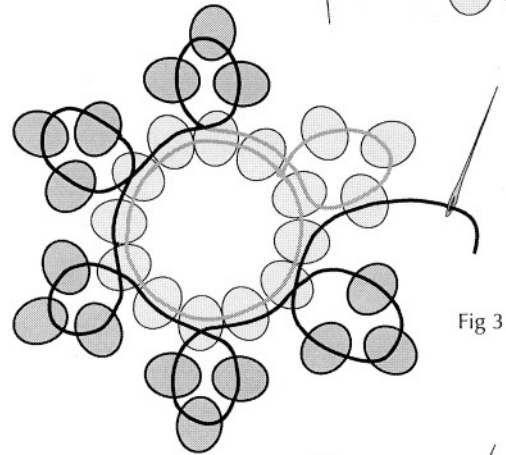


Fig 3

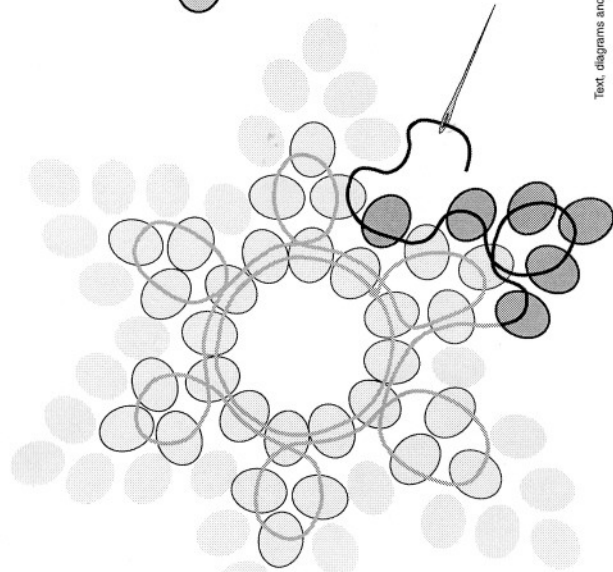


Fig 4

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