

## The Story Of Philippine Cloths

### The Moro Cloth

**M**ORO weaving has been largely influenced by tattoo designs. A long time ago, Mohammedan and Pagan tribes wore tattoo marks on their bodies instead of clothing. Tattooing, however, has been early discouraged, because it is a very cruel practice. Then the inhabitants of Mindanao and Sulu turned their attention to weaving, using the same designs that they like so much as tattoo marks. The principal designs are based upon the crocodile, man, butterfly, flag and flower.

The Moro process of weaving is very primitive. The loom in common use is very crude. It has no frame or treadle. It is made of bamboo and simple pieces of wood. Raw materials of cotton and silk are used by the Moros when they weave on their primitive looms to produce a distinct type of Philippine cloth.

Vegetable dyes are much used by the Moros when coloring their cloths. The *katurray* bark supplies the weavers with brown or dark red dyes. The *dilao* is also used, but the Moros are not as fond of yellow as they are of brown or red.

The Moro weavers use a very interesting process of dyeing cloths. This is called the "tie and dye" process. This is done by transferring the threads from one frame to another. The threads are spread to appear as they will be when on the loom. Then the designs desired are determined and the threads are covered with buri strips. As soon as all the designs are arranged and tied with buri strips, the threads are ready to be dipped in the dye. Sometimes, the de-



signs appear like figures in the Moro religious book, and the weaver consider this a good omen.

There are many types of Moro cloth. Some of them, as those woven in the Cotabato Valley, are of plaid designs, or designs of squares set in many lines of different colors. In the Cotabato also, a cloth known as the *kasuri*, is woven. The cloth manufactured in the province of Zamboanga is very pretty. It is known as "fancy double cloth," a kind that is produced only with machines in other countries. This cloth is usually made into head dress by the Moros. Being very pretty, this cloth commands a high price and is liked greatly by Mindanao visitors.