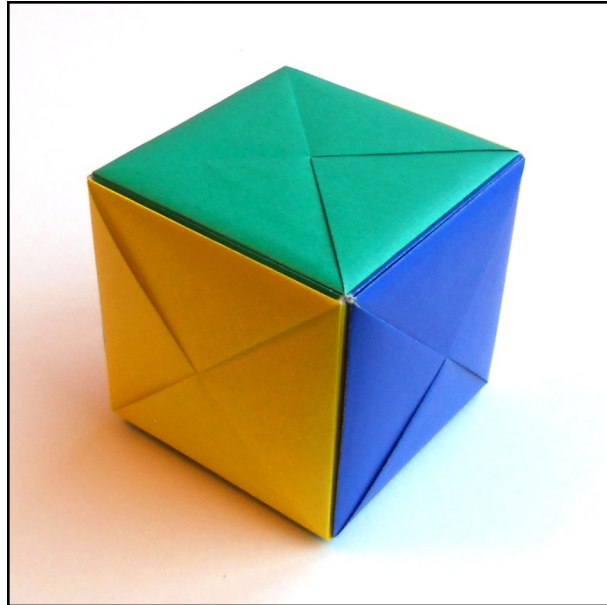# The Tematebako

The Tematebako is a cube developed, using cuts, from the traditional Menko or Thread Container. It is the earliest known modular design, first appearing in a wood print in the book 'Ranma Zushiki' by Hayato Ohoka which was published in 1734. The name Tematebako means ' treasure chest '.


Once the Tematebako is assembled each of the faces can be partially opened up to reveal a pocket in which thread or other small items can be stored. Opening up the face almost completely gives access to the much larger space inside the cube, It is not known in which of these two areas the 'treasure' was stored.

The Menko is folded from a square divided into a 3x3 grid of smaller squares. You will need six squares for the Tematebako and another square of the same size to act as a template to help you with this division.
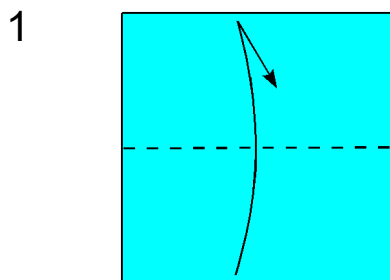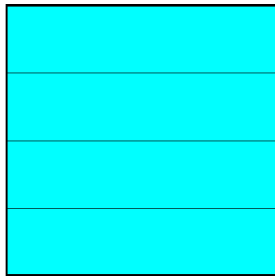

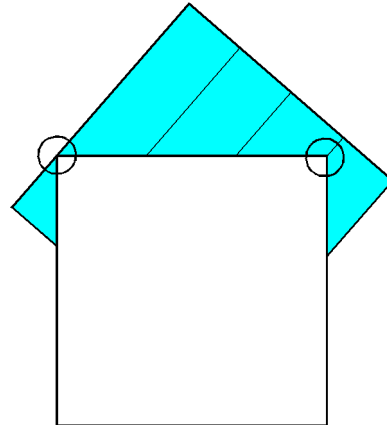1. Fold the template in half upwards, crease, then unfold.
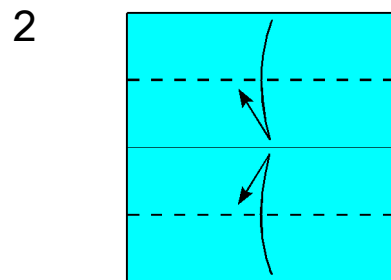
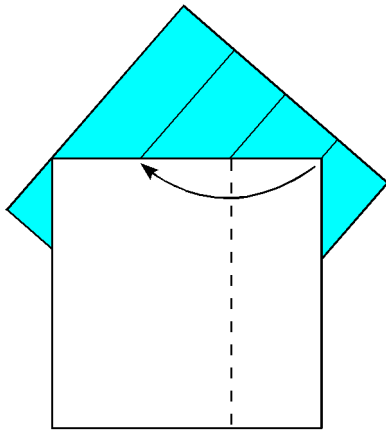2. Fold both the top and bottom edges to the middle, crease, then unfold.
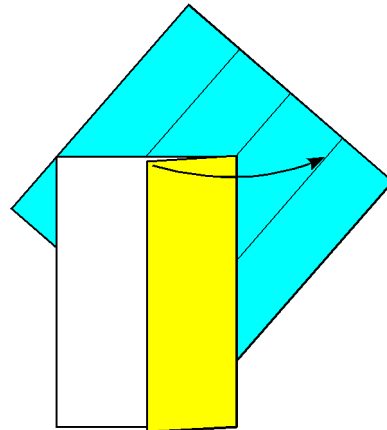
3

3. The template is finished.

5

5. Fold the right hand corner inwards as shown. Make sure the two squares don't slip out of alignment as you make this fold.

7

7. Fold the left hand edge onto the crease made in step 5, crease, then unfold.

4

4. Lay your paper in front of the template like this. Make sure the side you want to form the inside of the bowl is facing towards you.
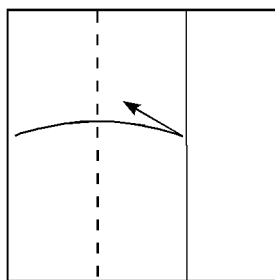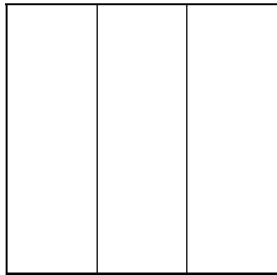
6

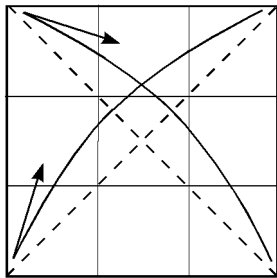6. Open out the fold made in step 5 and remove the square from the template.

8

8. Your paper is now divided into thirds. To divide the paper into thirds in the other direction as well, rotate through ninety degrees and repeat steps 4 through 7.
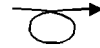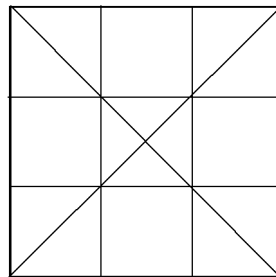
9
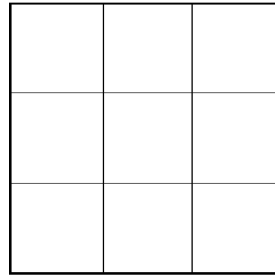
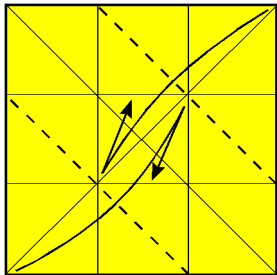9. This is the result. The paper is now divided into 9 smaller squares.

10

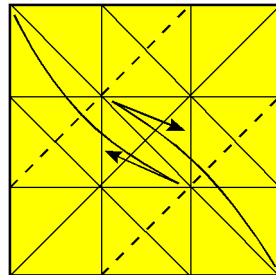10. Fold in half diagonally, then unfold, in both directions.
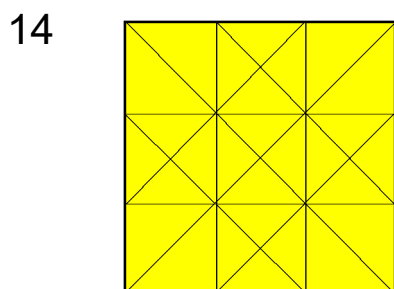
11

11. Turn over sideways.

12

12. Fold the top right corner inwards as shown, then unfold. Fold the bottom left corner inwards as shown, then unfold.
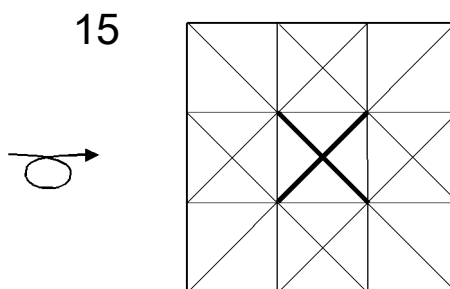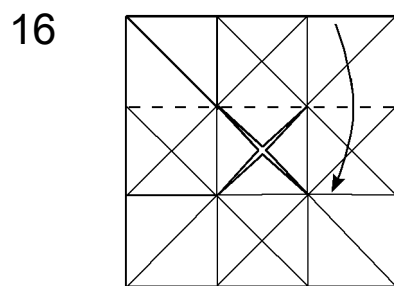
13

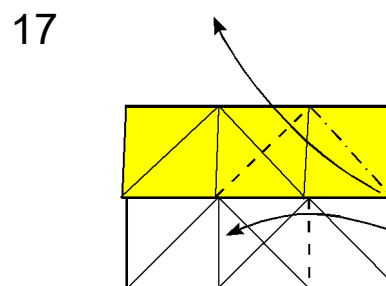13. Do the same thing on the other two corners.
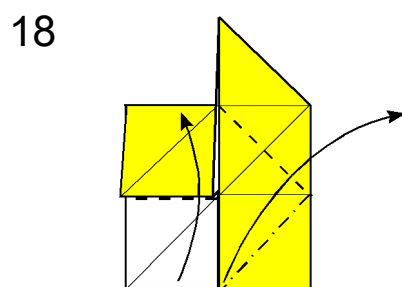
14

14. Turn over sideways.

15

15. Cut along the creases marked with thick black lines to create short diagonal slits.

16

16. Fold the top edge downwards using the existing crease.

17

17. Fold the bottom right corner of the front flap diagonally upwards to the left using the existing crease, then collapse the paper into the shape shown in picture 18.
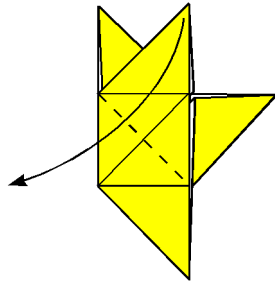
18

18. Fold the bottom left corner of the front flap diagonally upwards to the right using the existing crease, then collapse the paper into the shape shown in picture 19.
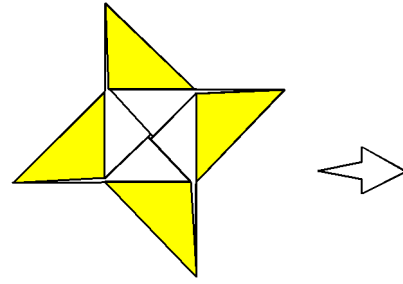
19
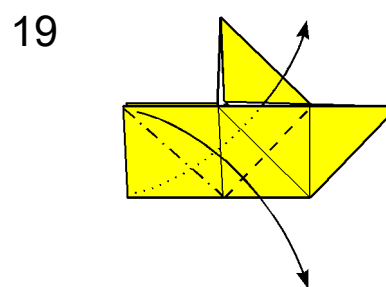
19. Fold the top left corner of the front flap diagonally downwards to the right using the existing crease, then collapse the paper into the shape shown in picture 20.
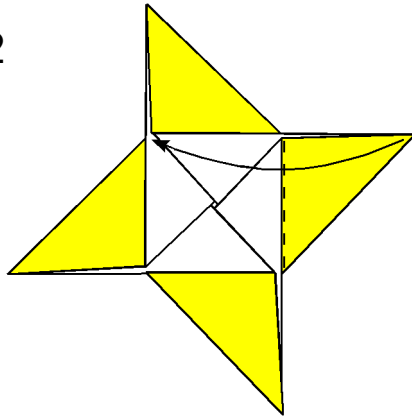
4

20

20. Fold the top point of the front flap diagonally downwards to the left using the existing crease.
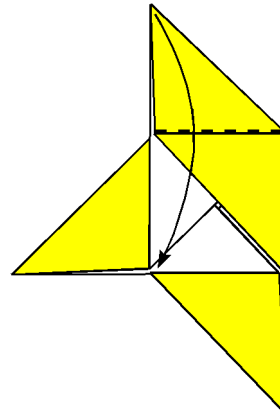
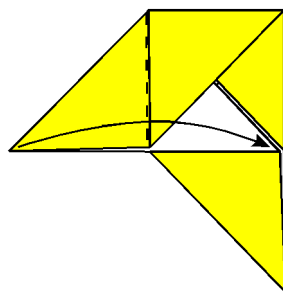**21**

21. The next picture is on a larger scale.

22

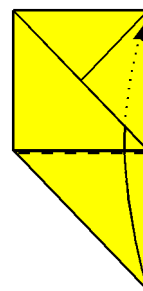22. Fold the right point inwards using the existing crease.

23

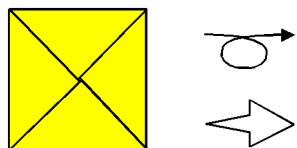23. Fold the top point downwards using the existing crease.

24

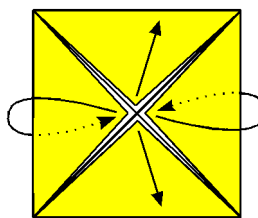20. Fold the left point inwards using the existing crease.

25

21. Fold the bottom point upwards using the existing crease, tucking the point inside the pocket above it as you do so.
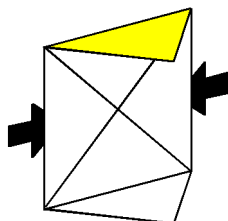
26

26. This is the traditional Japanese paperfold known as the Menko or Thread Container. Turn over sideways.
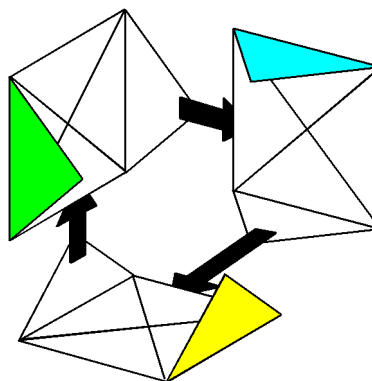
27

27. Lift up the top and bottom front flaps at right angles. Tuck the other front flaps away into the pockets behind them.
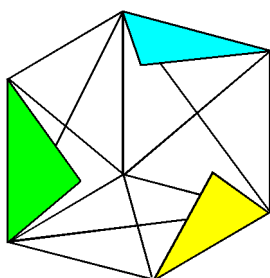
28

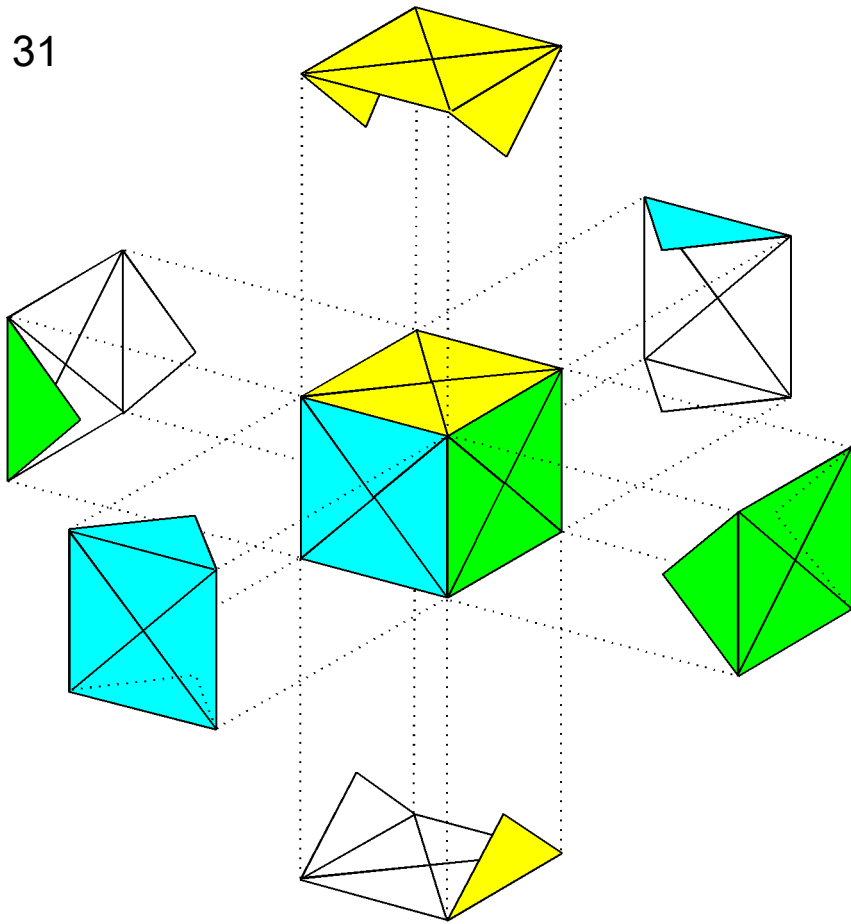28. The first module is finished. The arrows show the location of the pockets. Make all six.
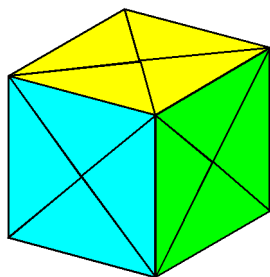
29

29. Three module sgo together like this ...

30

30. ... To create the back corner of the cube.

31

31. All six fit together like this.

32

32. The Tematebako is finished.