THE BAQUI-BAQUI SCHOOL BAG.

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THE baqui-baqui school bag, now extensively made in many of the hand-weaving classes of the Philippine public schools, but not widely known by this term, derives its name from the material from which it was first fabricated. The bag is the result of numerous trials and experiments in the evolution of raffia and lupis bags, until now a strong, serviceable, and perhaps commercial bag has been fabricated.

Numerous materials may be utilized in its fabrication, among which abaca, lupis, tikug, balangot, buri midribs, and baqui-baqui are to be noted. The proper preparation of these materials has been taken up in detail in a previous number of THE PHILIPPINE CRAFTSMAN (Vol. I, No. 4).

PREPARATION OF MATERIAL.

For convenience, the following brief description of baqui-baqui and its preparation is given.

Baqui-baqui is a sedge so far reported only from Capiz; it may, however, be found in other parts of the Philippines. It is over 2 meters high and, like balangot, grows in swampy places. The base of the stalk is as large as a pencil and sends forth a few leaves. At the base it is more or less round, but as a whole the stalk is three-sided and tapers to a compound cluster of flowers. Baqui-baqui appears much like balangot (*Cyperus malaccensis*), except that it is taller and the stem is harder and more rigid.

The triangular stem of this sedge is split lengthwise into two or three segments in such a manner as to leave an angle of the stem on each. The soft pulpy substance adhering to the interior of the stem is then removed by scraping and the strips are made uniform in size.

To bleach baqui-baqui, it is dried in the strong sunlight for two or more days. Care should be taken to protect this material from dampness for if such precaution is not taken inferior results will be secured. Quite often baqui-baqui becomes brittle a few days following its preparation, but this difficulty may be overcome by leaving it in a dry place for several days, at the end of which time it becomes tough and pliable and is ready for working.

The last step in its preparation is the process of flattening, done in a simple manner by pulling each segment several times

over a round stick, exercising care that the sides of each are so folded as to insure uniform width throughout.

TECHNIC.

For beginning the bottom see figures 1 to 4. From these figures it is noted that two bamboo strips of equal dimensions

Plate I. Baqui-baqui hand bag.

Dimensions: Length of base, 23.5 cm.; width of base, 7 cm.; height at corner, 21.2 cm.; height at center front, 23.5 cm.

Materials: Baqui-baqui, tikug, balangot, buri rattia, buri midrib, abaca cord, or abaca lupis.

throughout and running lengthwise of the bottom form the foundation over which the split segments of baqui-baqui are interwoven or bound. Over this foundation doubled strips of baqui-baqui are laid in pairs, one pair on the upper side and one on the under side. These too are bound securely by four weavers or strips of the same material running lengthwise between the

two bamboo strips. This process is continued until the bottom is finished. In hand bags of the size given herein (Plate I) 29 double strips are required for each long side of the bottom, and 28 double strips for each end. The end segments are added as the bottom of the bag is made, and are securely bound in place by weavers of baqui-baqui running horizontally around the bottom. These strips form the rib or foundation work of the sides and are purposely laid double in order to procure the necessary number of strips for the openwork of the sides, incidentally making the bag stronger and more durable. (Figures 5 and 8.)

Upon the completion of the bottom, a simple weave or pairing is begun by which all straws are securely bound and held in their proper positions. Care should be taken that the strips

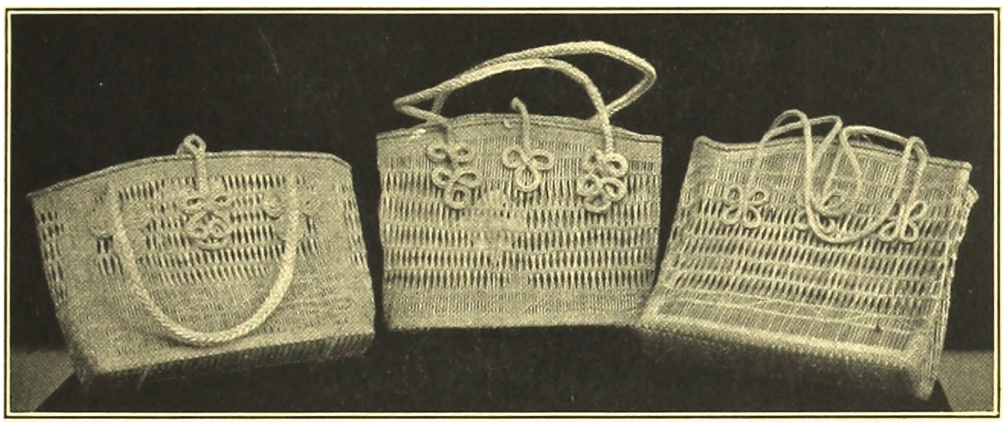

Plate II. Types of baqui-baqui hand satchels fabricated from buri midribs and abaca.

or segments of baqui-baqui are kept perpendicular while the first few horizontal side weavers are being interwoven with the perpendicular ribs. After one or two rows of the horizontal weavers have been completed these strips will hold their proper positions.

The finish at the top of the bag is important but not difficult. (See figures 16 to 19.) A start can be made at any of the four corners. The rope effect common to all finished bags of this nature can easily be secured by following the figures referred to above. After the desired number of rounds have been completed, it will be noticed that the remaining ends of the perpendicular strips are pointing toward the bottom of the bag. (See figure 18.) These are tightly pulled to make sure that they are firmly fastened, after which they should be evenly trimmed to a uniform length with a sharp knife. (Figure 19.)

THE HANDLES.

For beginning the handles, figures 6 to 10 should be studied for the process of making the rosettes from which the handles are hung. In order that the load or strain may be distributed as equally as possible, these rosettes are placed near the top and middle of the sides. For the attachment of handles see figure 11 and for their fabrication note figures 12 to 15. These handles are very simple in fabrication, a foundation of baqui-baqui being used which is wrapped with narrow twisted strips of the same material making a durable handle binding with an

Plate III. A simple baqui-baqui hand satchel fabricated from abaca and liku-

appearance similar to that of rope. These handles may also be made of abaca, which is serviceable and durable.

No set way is given for the fabrication of these bags; however, for a suggestion, see Plate I, showing a neat standard bag of approved dimensions.

It is believed that school bags of this class can well be made into a commercial article of importance; however, in doing so endeavor should be made to limit the cost of production to the minimum. At the present time, bags as shown in Plate I are produced at 50 centavos each; while those shown in Plate II

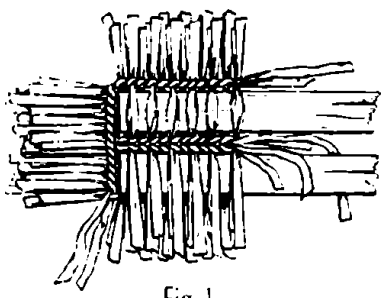

Fig. 1

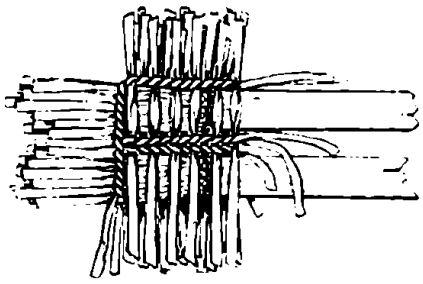

Fig. 2

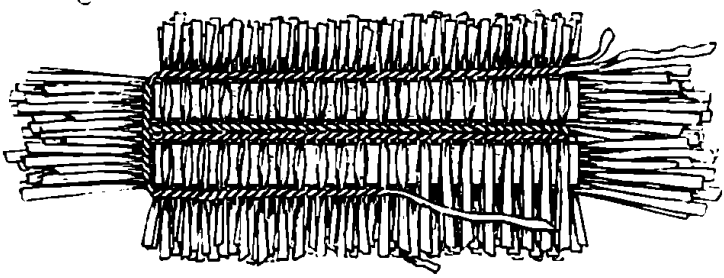

Fig. 3

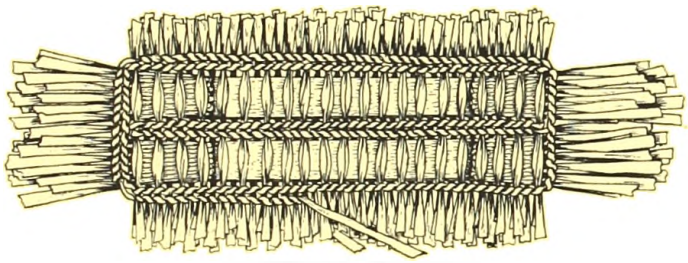

Fig. 4

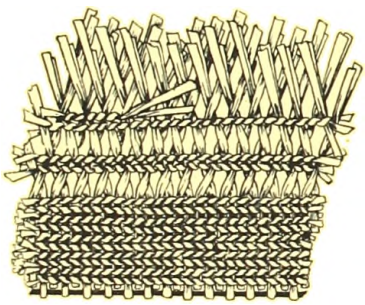

Fig. 5

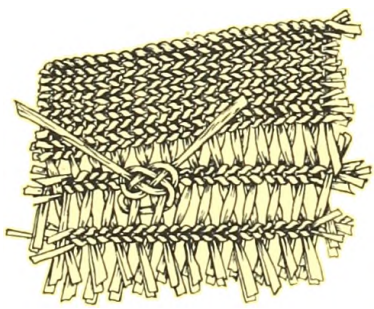

Fig. 6

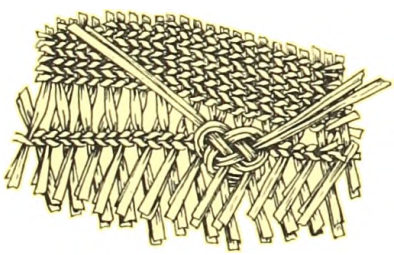

Fig. 7

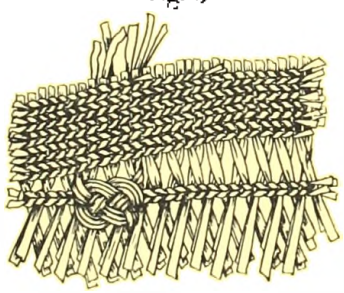

Fig. 8

Plate IV. Steps used in making baqui-baqui hand bags.

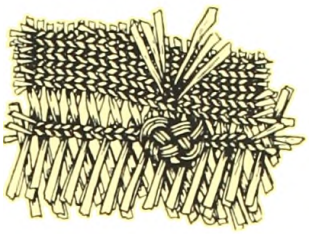

Fig. 9

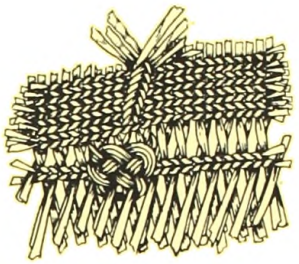

Fig. 10

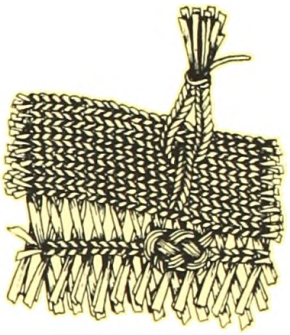

Fig. 11

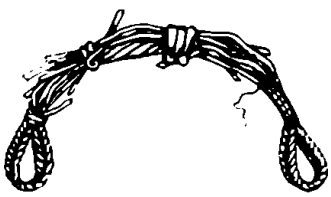

Fig. 12

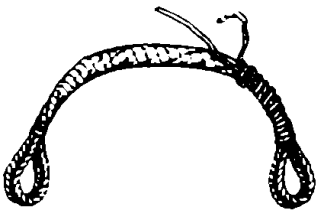

Fig. 13

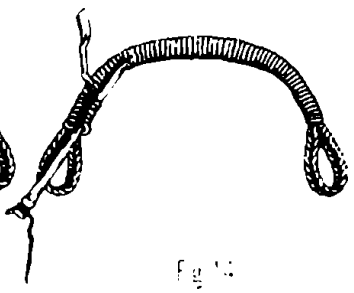

Fig. 14

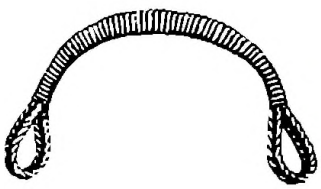

Fig. 15

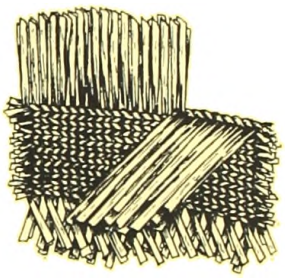

Fig. 16

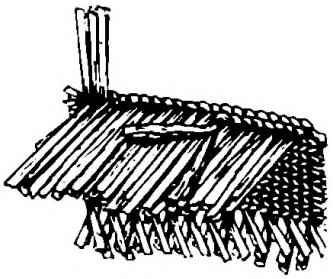

Fig. 17

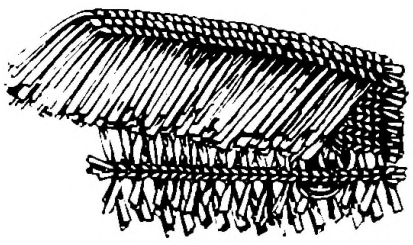

Fig. 18

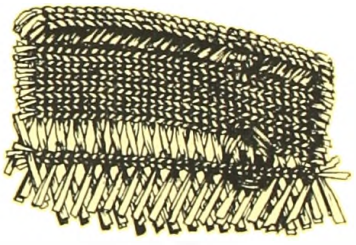

Fig. 19

Plate V. Steps used in making hanui-hanui hand bags.

retail at ₱0.50 to ₱1 each. These prices are rather high when considered from a commercial viewpoint; however, by fabricating the bags in large quantities and leaving off much of the overcrowded decoration it is believed that these prices can be reduced considerably.

Baqui-baqui bags are of economic importance in school life. The matter of taking care of schoolbooks is an essential feature of daily school life, and if for no other reason, these or similar school bags could well be utilized.

EVOLUTION OF WOVEN FURNITURE.

In all probability there was a time when no woven furniture was made, but a review of past eras shows that something in this line, if no more than the weaving of splint and reed bottoms of primitive seats, has long been known. Such reed bottoms may have been the precursors of the frames of hickory withes, or the modern, elegant, bent woods, though these may hardly be termed woven. It is very likely that the most primitive form of industry in the domestic manufacture of household equipment tended to the use of pliable vegetation, like rushes, which would stiffen into a permanent form when dry; hence it is certain that woven furniture is by no means modern in its origin. Primitive peoples are said to have made bridges by twisting together tough vines, just as the children in country districts make swings of grapevines. These ropes of vines were swung across streams or ravines and formed supports for the boards or logs used for flooring. This construction became the model for the suspension bridges of to-day. That chairs, tables, beds and other furniture were evolved from the same material is a plausible theory. (A. W. Adams.)

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"Technical instruction must be regarded in the first place as a means of character-training, and it must be supplemented by other forms of instruction with a view to making it as many-sided as possible. In the life of great economic groups and of nations there are moments, and they are the critical moments, in which neither knowledge nor skill, but character, decides the day—character that has learned to regard its own egoistic interests as of no account when their sacrifice is demanded by the welfare of the community to which we belong, the welfare of the service that we have chosen, the welfare of the subordinates intrusted to our care." (Dr. Georg Kerschensteiner.)