
ABACA SLIPPERS.¹

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DATING back to the year 1906, the present industrial course, which has since been modified to conform to the advanced industrial instruction now being given, found its place in the curriculum of the Philippine public schools. Since then, native industries have been improved and in some instances developed. New industries and handicrafts have been introduced and the bountiful storehouse of Philippine grasses, sedges, etc., has been liberally drawn upon to furnish school children with suitable materials for their industrial work.

Perhaps no other raw material has been so widely used in industrial instruction as has abaca. Extensive articles describing abaca and giving directions for its preparation appeared in Volume I of *THE PHILIPPINE CRAFTSMAN*. Of the numerous lines of industrial work using this material, slipper making appears as one of the more important possible industries.

In the division of Capiz, a few years back, endeavor was made to fabricate a sandal from native sedges and grasses, similar to those sold in many of the Chinese and Japanese "tiendas" throughout the Islands. The work at first was crude, and as more "nobby" and up-to-date slippers were desired the making of grass sandals and slippers was partially discarded and in their stead abaca slippers with plush tops were experimented with. (Plate I.) This type at once became popular, but as the consensus of opinion was that "all abaca" slippers should be made, the slippers with plush tops were soon discarded for slippers of that class.

In addition to the interest taken by the division of Capiz, the divisions of Bulacan, Sorsogon, Camarines, and Batangas have gone quite extensively into this line of industrial instruction, and have also shown marked advancement.

It is a rather difficult matter to classify the slippers now being made in the Philippines, as all contain one or more similar points. In consideration of their noticeable divergences, and from their



Abaca sandals, Batangas type.

¹ Acknowledgment is due to John C. Cudoba, division industrial supervisor, Camarines, and to C. E. Wright, division superintendent of schools, Iloilo, for some of the material embodied in this article.

prominence at recent Philippine carnivals, it is believed that slippers might well be classified as types of (1) Capiz, (2) Bulacan, (3) Sorsogon, and (4) Camarines.

A brief description of each follows:

CAPIZ TYPE.

The various steps in the making of the Capiz slippers are shown by Plates I and II. In making the upper sole a piece of galvanized iron No. 16, and a piece of rattan the same length are used in forming the outline of the sole. The wire is fitted snugly within the strip of rattan, so that when the rattan frame

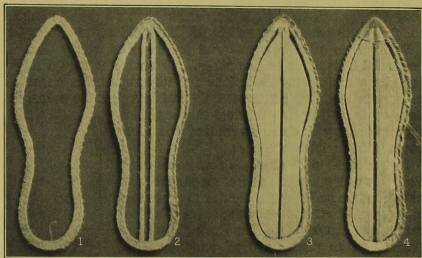


Plate I. Steps in the making of Capiz slippers.

Upper sole: (1) Rattan and wire outline to which abaca braid is basted; (2) abaca braid bisecting sole outline; (3) showing addition of areca and bamboo filler; (4) showing beginning at toe and wrapping of filler.

is once worked into the shape desired, that shape is retained. To the inner outline of the sole a strip of heavy abaca braid is firmly basted to the rattan. (Plate I, fig. 1.) A piece of doubled abaca braid, the ends of which are fastened firmly about 1 centimeter apart at the toe, bisects the sole outline. These strips of braid (Plate I, fig. 2) run parallel to each other and are fastened at the heel.

Two strips of areca or bamboo are used for the filler. These are cut into shape, each corresponding to $\frac{1}{2}$ the outline of the sole and are fastened to the central abaca braid of the foundation. (Fig. 3.) Care should be taken that these strips are not too heavy and are prepared in such a manner as to be flexible, yet

firm. The foundation of the sole (filler) is now ready for the wrapper or binding of abaca cord. (Plate I, fig. 4.) For interlacing or interweaving the cord over the foundation and

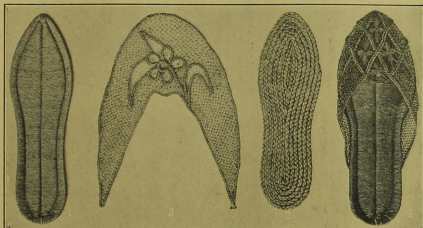


Plate II. Some steps in the making of Capiz slippers.

(1) Upper sole; (2) toe covering; (3) lower sole; (4) finished slipper.

outline, note Plate I, figure 4. This process is continued until the upper sole is completed and is finished at the heel.

The fabrication of the under or lower sole is made in a more simplified manner than the one described in the preceding paragraph. A shape conforming to the upper sole is cut from cardboard. Strips of abaca braid

are basted to it, the first starting at the outside and gradually working toward the center. Each strip is securely basted to the preceding one. (Plate II, fig. 3.)



Capiz slippers with plush toe strap.

The tops of these slippers are usually made of abaca macramé and are most generally woven over a cardboard form (Plate II, fig. 2) upon which the design has been previously worked out.

In assembling these various steps or parts, let us first begin with the upper sole. The toe covering is securely fastened on the under side of the upper sole with either abaca or cotton thread. The lower sole is so fastened to the upper as to completely hide the fastening of the top. Care



Fancy Capiz slipper.

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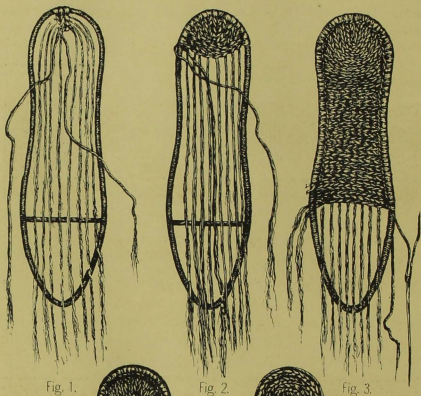


Fig. 1.

Fig. 2.

Fig. 3.



Fig 4



Fig. 5.

Plate III. Showing foundation work of upper and lower soles of Sorsogon slippers. Figures 1, 2, 3, and 4, fabrication of upper sole; figure 5, lower sole of abaca braid.

should be taken not to expose the threads which bind these two soles.

The slipper is now completed. (Plate II, fig. 4.) It is reported that the time required by one who is proficient to make one pair of slippers conforming to the above description, is

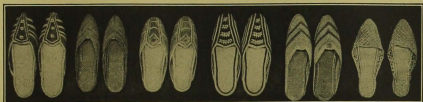


Plate IV. Styles of Sorsogon all-abaca slippers.

approximately thirty hours. These are neat, attractive and serviceable as house or bedroom slippers.

SORSOGON TYPE.

The Sorsogon type differs materially from that of Capiz. The divergences of the sole are to be especially noted.

For the making of the bottom a rattan frame 4 mm. in diameter is used, its length varying according to the size of the

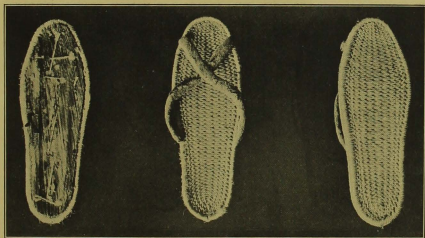


Plate V. All-abaca slipper with plush top—Bulacan.

slipper. The ends of the frame forming the outline are joined by a lap joint, some 5 centimeters long. The frame is then bent into shape, and held in position by cross pieces of rattan temporarily tied into place. (Plate III, figs. 1, 2, and 3.)

In the upper sole, six cords (more or less) running lengthwise

of the sole, form the foundation or warp. Interwoven with these are a number of abaca cords or weavers woven back and forth through the warp strings and brought around the sole

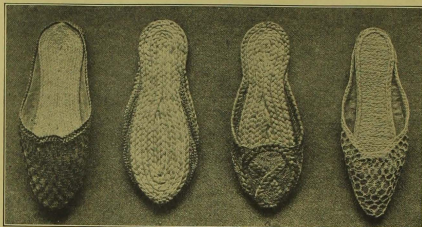


Plate VI. Camarines type.

outline each time. Thus the rattan frame is wrapped, and in due time the upper sole is finished at the heel. (Plate III, figs. 3 and 4.) When the above operation is finished a row of stitches is sewed around the edge just inside the rattan frame, incidentally giving a more finished appearance to the slipper and hiding

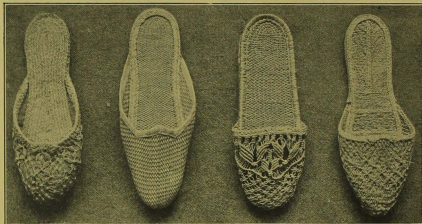


Plate VII. Camarines type.

the small depression caused by the cords passing over and under the frame outline.

The toes of Sorsogon slippers offer considerable opportunity

in originality of design. (Plate IV.) The abaca thread and braid used in their making are fastened to the lower side of the upper sole in the same manner as in the Capiz type. The lower sole is fabricated practically in the same manner as that of Capiz.

BULACAN TYPE.

In the Bulacan type larger rattan frame work and heavier abaca cords are used. A noticeable distinction lies in the fact that the upper and lower soles of these slippers are fabricated in the same manner. (Plate V.) In some of the Bulacan slippers this distinction does not apply as the lower sole is of braided or platted abaca. Another difference lies in the filler, this being generally a mat of buri or pandan woven and cut to fit snugly within the sole outline between the upper and lower soles. In weaving these slippers the maker shapes the foundation



Lady's slipper. Camarines type.

as the slippers are woven, beginning first at the toe and working toward the heel completing all operations as she goes along. The toes are generally made of abaca braid or plush, few macramé or needlework toes being utilized. The process in making the soles is practically the same as the Sorsogon type, but loose abaca strands are utilized instead of abaca cord. These are twisted as desired giving a heavier or lighter body to the braid. This type of slipper is practically the heaviest one made in the Philippines, and is suitable for outdoor use.

CAMARINES SLIPPERS.

The groundwork in all Camarines slippers is practically the same. This is especially noted when comparing types of the Camarines slippers with those mentioned herein. However, a wide divergence lies in the styles of the toes and soles. (Plates VI and VII.)

Again another pertinent difference is noted in that in some Camarines slippers the toes are lined with abaca cloth, sinamay or other native fabrics.



Camarines type.

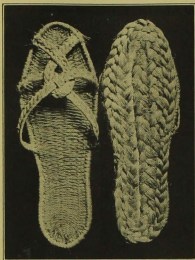


Plate VIII. Heavy abaca slipper, Bulacan type—home industry.

A double sole is made for each slipper from the sheath of the beetle-nut palm called locally "tatolo" or "talupac." The toes of this type vary in form. The shape desired is cut from a piece of native cloth over which macramé or similar needlework is worked. In some types the native cloths are not used. The cloth gives strength to the tops, and protects the foot from the rough surface of the abaca.

In binding the upper and lower soles together another point of interest is noted. A strip of heavy abaca braid is firmly sewed to the outlines of the two soles, thus joining them.

In other Camarines types the soles are fabricated practically in the same manner as those of Sorsogon and Bulacan. The

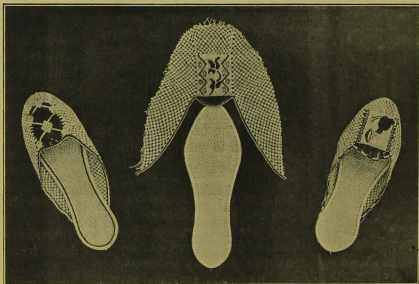
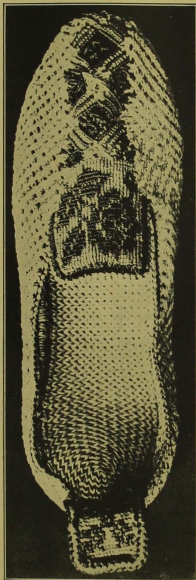


Plate IX. Philippine Normal School types.

uppers or toes are either of macramé or of a similar openwork. In some instances tops are woven on simple hand looms or ordinary square embroidery frames. These tops when completed are cut into crescent shapes, the edges of which are strengthened by bindings of cheap, native cloths. Slippers in this division have a large local consumption and excel in that they are fabricated in suitable sizes and shapes to meet the fancy of purchasers. It is reported that these slippers retail for ₱1 to ₱1.50 per pair locally, and that an experienced worker can complete a pair of slippers in two weeks, working only during the industrial period at school. As a household handicraft, where the work is continuous, two pairs of slippers can be made in three days.

In many municipalities in the Province of Camarines, school children are unable to supply the demand for slippers. Those made in the schools are superior in wearing qualities and are cheaper than the ordinary slippers or chinelas turned out by the native workmen. This condition exists in a number of other provinces.

In taking up slipper making a child should possess an elementary knowledge of weaving, braiding and macramé work. The manner of dyeing is also an important factor as well as accuracy, exactness in measurement, choice of material, cleanliness, and neatness in workmanship.



Abaca sandal with leather sole—Philippine Normal School.

A class should be supplied with a number of model soles of commercial sizes, also with standard wooden lasts. The toe,

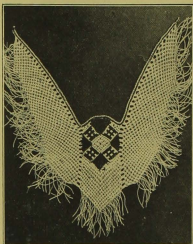


Plate X. Toe covering of macramé.

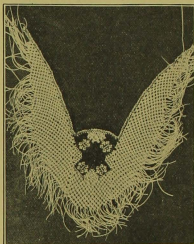


Plate XI. Macramé toe covering—Philippine Normal School.

shape and size of the sole are essential points, and should be given ample consideration. Slippers in plain and standard colors are generally the most salable ones. However, two or more colors can be easily combined with the natural color of abaca making pleasing and harmonious color effects.

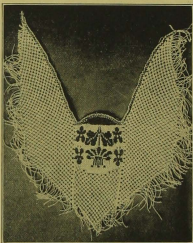


Plate XII. Macramé toe covering—Philippine Normal School.

It is not intended that workers should not receive a fair wage for their services. Yet on the other hand, providing the work was reduced to the minimum, slipper making would provide employment at remunerative wages.

Proper supervision should be exercised over colors and color schemes. In a general way, slippers should be neat and nobby, but should not be produced with such a view of perfection as to make the slipper expensive, unserviceable, and noncommercial.

Slippers are desirable articles to make, and can be conscientiously recommended to receive careful attention and consideration in our school industries, and as such will lead toward the extension of this industry into the homes of the people in many provinces where it can be successfully carried out.

HOME INDUSTRIES.

In the municipality of Bulacan, Bulacan Province, a factory manufacturing slippers of heavier type and less attractive than those made in the school (Plate VIII) is in operation. It is interesting to note that the abaca utilized in this factory is imported from Davao, Mindanao. This hemp is used because it is long, has great strength, and is a better grade of white fiber.

The factory consists of some twenty workers and is financed by the Philippine Sales Agency which takes the entire output, some 250 pairs per month. An estimated average daily wage of some ₱0.60 is paid which it is believed is in excess of the daily wage for that locality.

These slippers are sold on the Escolta in Manila, and the writer has been advised that they seem to find a ready sale. Another interesting phase is that these slippers are to be tried out thoroughly in the United States in order to determine their commercial possibilities there. A similar factory has been opened in the Province of Albay in which it is planned to produce slippers of the same type.

It would seem that all the school types of slippers could be cheapened in construction without detracting from their strength or beauty. If this be done it is believed that they will be as thoroughly commercial as those made in Bulacan. Our slippers are too fine to be commercial in a large sense.

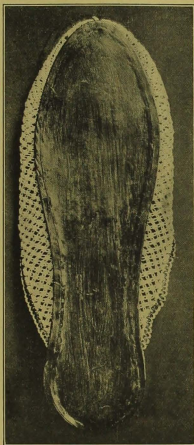


Plate XIII. All-abaca slipper with leather sole—Philippine Normal School.

In bringing abaca slippers up to the present standard, the Philippine Normal School has helped materially. While the processes involved in all types are similar, the Normal School has added a number of improvements which, although the cost of production has been increased, produce superior articles with more lasting wearing qualities. (Plate IX.)

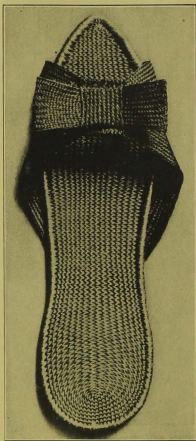


Plate XIV. Application of abaca braid in the making of toe straps.

The uses to which macramé may be put, and the application of the several stitches of macramé have been exceptionally well worked out by this school. The macramé toes are constructed in such a manner that ample space is provided for the foot. This has been one of the noticeable defects of all slippers in the past. In some instances, the coverings are lined with pinolpog or similar materials in order to protect the foot from the rough surface of abaca strands or cords. (Model toes, Plates IX, X, XI, and XII.)

Another improvement which may be noted here is the addition of a leather sole to the ordinary abaca slipper. (Plate XIII.)

At present there are available at the firm of Aguinaldo & Co., 813 Misericordia Street, Santa Cruz, Manila, abaca braids ranging in width from $\frac{1}{8}$ to 1 inch. These braids can be used to advantage in fabricating the toe straps of various types of abaca and sedge slippers. Braids are inexpensive and may be dyed

any color desired. Their use should reduce the cost of an ordinary slipper and at the same time enhance the beauty of the same. (Plate XIV.)

It is believed by the writer that in the past, too much time and energy have been placed on this line of industrial work in that slippers have reached such a degree of perfection and neatness that they cannot be fabricated and sold at a gain by the maker.