

ANYAM GILA (MAD WEAVE): A MALAYSIAN TYPE OF BASKET WORK.

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In the W. L. Abbott collections of basketry from southwestern Malaysia, in the U. S. National Museum, are a number of specimens made in a variety of technic not known in America.

It was first made public by Mrs. L. E. Bland, of the Penang Residency, Straits Settlements, in the *Journal of the Straits Branch, Royal Asiatic Society*, No. 46. Mrs. Bland studied the art among the Malay women of Tanjong Kling, Malacca, and also mentioned the same ware from the province of Wellesley, from Siamese territory, from elsewhere on the peninsula, as well as from Sumatra and other islands.

The baskets are made from narrow strips of pandanus, or screw pine, leaves, of which there are many species. In the specimens described by Mrs. Bland the "mengkuang" (*Pandanus fascicularis*) was used.

The material is prepared by the old women, who cut the long, prickly leaves with a woman's parang, or native knife,^a and carry them home in large bundles on their heads. They next dry, or "layor," the leaves over a fire of sticks and cut off the thorns that grow down the spine. This divides the leaf into two wide strips, for which purpose a smaller knife, called "pisau," is used.^b

The women then divide the half leaves into uniform strips by means of a rude gauge, or "jangka."^c This is a flat piece of wood with brass spikes fixed into one end at regular intervals, governed by the width of the required strips, varying from $\frac{1}{8}$ inch to 1 inch. At the same time the thorny edges are removed.

The strips are next made supple and smooth, or "lurut," with a "pulurut," a piece of hollow bamboo pulled over the leaf many times

^a See *Journ. Roy. Asiatic Soc., Straits Branch*, pl. 4, fig. *a*; and pl. 15, *Proc. U. S. Nat. Mus., XXXV.*

^b *Idem*, pl. 4, fig. *b*

^c *Idem*, pl. 4, fig. *c*.

by the left hand with a curling movement.^a The smooth strips are folded into compact bundles and soaked in cold water for three nights, changing the water twice a day. After this they are bleached in the sun for a day and are then ready for use.

Mrs. Bland's account of the preparation of the materials is most helpful, and, before giving a detailed description of the drawings and processes shown, an abstract of her description will throw much light on the native practice.

The basket starts from six strands crossed in the middle of the bottom and the fabric is built up by working in three directions, braiding, not weaving. The strands go from left to right in the process. After the work reaches the rim of the basket, the strips are turned back over a rattan split and inwoven, as will be fully explained.

The strips of pandanus are glossy on one side only. In this they resemble the split roots and cane of the Pacific coast Indians and of the tribes of the Gulf States. In order to have the basket smooth on both sides, the native women work their splits and strips in pairs.

But the "mad weave" maker proceeds on an entirely different plan. After the basket has been wrought from bottom to rim in single ply, the strips are inwoven backward to the center of the bottom by tucking under, the glossy side being outward and the ends of strips being cut off invisibly.

On the way back pretty designs are frequently made by curling and folding the strips between thumb and forefinger. Mrs. Bland speaks of these as "rice grains" and they are worked into stars or hexagons, which are further bunched into single or combined geometric patterns.^b

The "mad weave" is worked up into various shapes, but the hexagon is the prevailing form. All of them—square, oblong rectangular, oval, and diamond shape—start with the six-sided motive and are brought by skill into other designs.

In 1906 Henry Balfour, esq., of Pitt-Rivers Museum, Oxford, England, took up the "mad weave" and reproduced it in tapes of three colors. He described the system as an under-two-and-over-one ($\frac{1}{2}$) and an under-one-and-over-two ($\frac{2}{1}$) system of interweaving. The difficulty comes from having three sets of parallel strands.

In 1907 I was so fortunate as to secure the cooperation of some arts and crafts friends, with the result that Miss Edwina H. Fallis, of Denver, Colorado, through Mrs. Wright Jones produced a one-ply specimen, and Mrs. Mary Wright Gill, of Washington City, worked out the mad weave detail now to be described and illustrated.

^a Straits Branch Journal, No. 46, pl. 4, fig. *d*.

^b *Idem*. pl. 6.

The technic is from pandanus strips of various widths, in close twill, in three directions, to be spoken of as vertical, dextral, and sinistral; the terms right oblique and left oblique may replace the last two. When the work is finished the surface is made up of rhombs or diamond-shape checks, giving the appearance of cubes and six-pointed stars. As before mentioned, the fabric is twice wrought, or two ply, so as to have both the inside and the outside of the basket expose the glossy side of the leaf.

The technic here detailed is based on Cat. Nos. 219963 and 236282 in the U. S. National Museum. The former is in the W. L. Abbott collection from Rumpin River, Pahang, and the latter is from Malacca, sent to the Museum by Mrs. L. E. Bland.

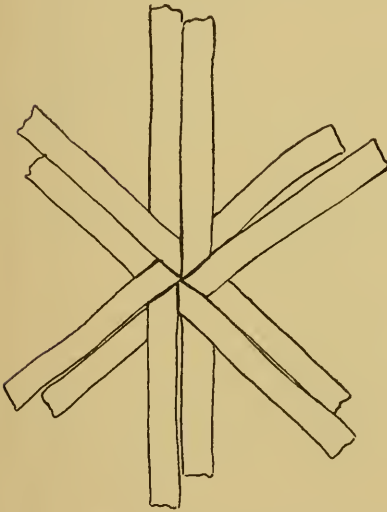


FIG. 1.—METHOD OF BEGINNING MAD WEAVE.

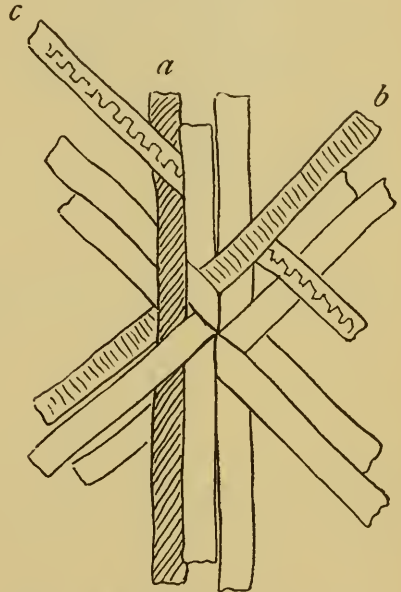


FIG. 2.—METHOD OF ADDING ADDITIONAL STRIPS.

Fig. 1 shows how the work is started from the center of the bottom, with six prepared strips, two sinistral, two vertical, and two dextral, crossing at the middle, one of each pair passing over and under one strip in each of the other pairs. This is the foundation.

Fig. 2, *a-c*, illustrates how strips are next added. A vertical strip (*a*) passes down over two sinistral, under one dextral and over one dextral. The dextral strip (*b*) passes upward over one sinistral, under one sinistral, and over two verticals. The sinistral strip (*c*) passes upward over two dextrals, under two verticals and over one vertical.

Fig. 3, *a-i*, shows the result of adding more strips in the three directions and fig. 4, looking from the inside of the basket is fig. 3

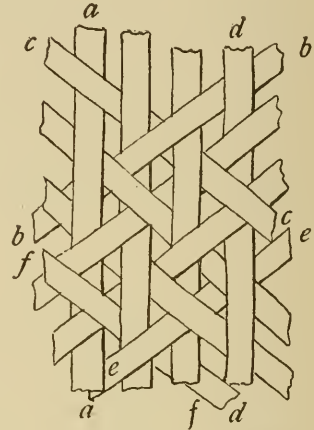
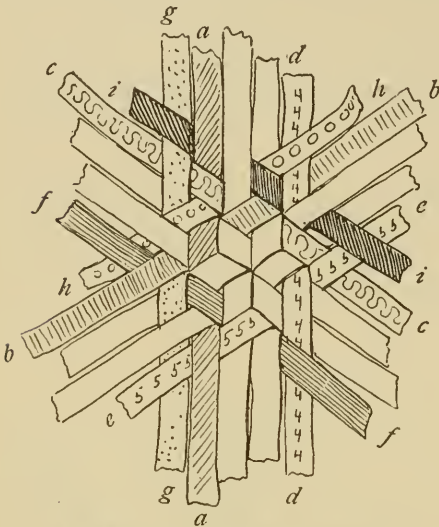


FIG. 3.—RESULT OF ADDING NEW STRIPS IN THREE DIRECTIONS.

FIG. 4.—FIGURE 3 DISSECTED (INSIDE).

dissected. The sinistral strips are uniformly under two and over one vertical and over two and under one dextral (figs. 5*a* and 5*b*).

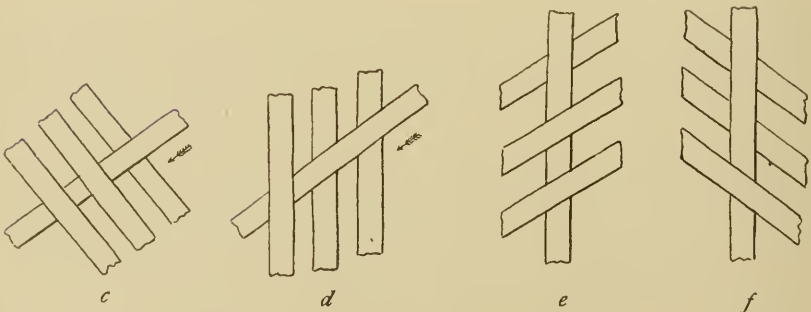
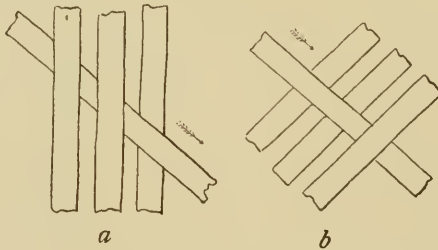


FIG. 5 *a*, POSITION OF SINISTRAL STRIP; *b*, POSITION OF SINISTRAL STRIP; *c*, POSITION OF DEXTRAL STRIP; *d*, POSITION OF DEXTRAL STRIP; *e*, POSITION OF VERTICAL STRIP; *f*, POSITION OF VERTICAL STRIP.

The dextral strips are uniformly over one and under two sinistral and over two and under one vertical (figs. 5*e* and 5*d*). The vertical strips are uniformly over one and under two dextral and over two and under one sinistral (figs. 5*e* and 5*f*).

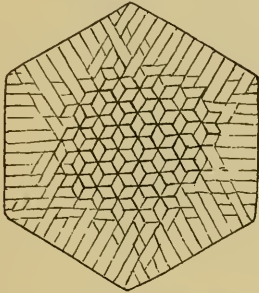


FIG. 6.—METHOD OF GIVING HEXAGONAL FORM TO BASE, AT UPSET.

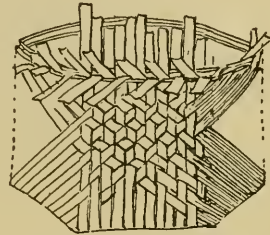


FIG. 7.—METHOD OF FINISHING AT THE BORDER, WITH TWO HOOPS OF RATTAN.

In fig. 6 is shown a continuation of the bottom in single technic, with the rough side of the strips outward, indicating the method of giving the hexagonal form to the base at the upset. Fig. 7 illus-

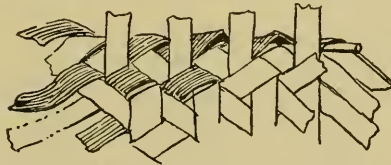


FIG. 8.—METHOD OF TURNING STRIPS AT THE BORDER, POLISHED SIDE OUT.

trates the interweaving of strips to form sides and the turning at the border over two hoops of rattan. At the lower end of these hoops the dextral and sinistral strips cross (fig. 8) and are inwoven

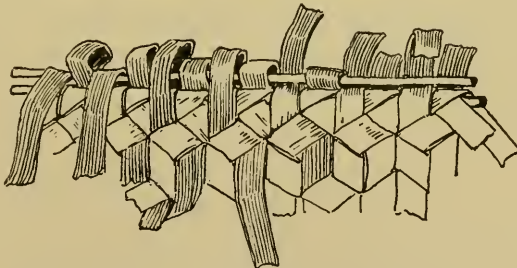


FIG. 9.—METHOD OF TURNING VERTICAL STRIPS AT THE BORDER, POLISHED SIDE OUT.

back with the polished side out, over the whole surface of the basket and are cut off where they meet, usually at one side of the bottom, or at the upper edge of the design, if there be one.

The vertical strips are carried over the upper hoop—the alternate ones moving from outside and from inside—and are inwoven

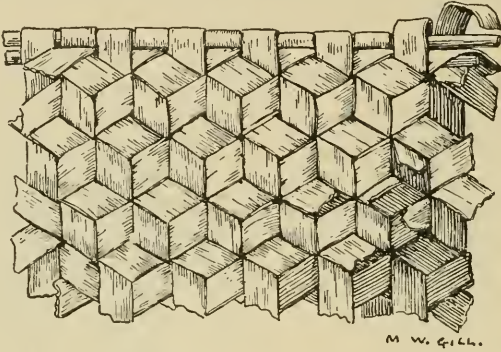


FIG. 10.—METHOD OF FINISHING AT THE BORDER.

back over the rough surface, leaving the polished side out (figs. 9 and 10).

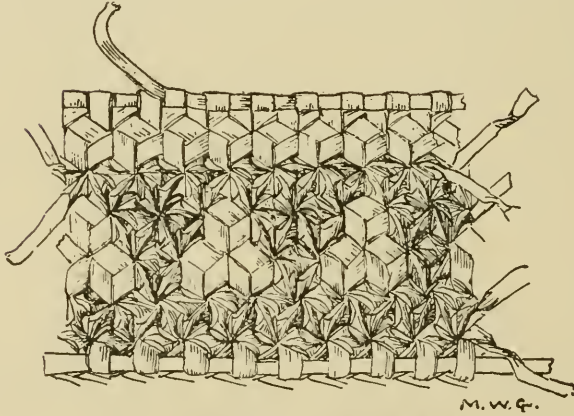


FIG. 11.—METHOD OF ORNAMENTATION.

The ornamental designs, which are not common in the Abbott collections, are formed, as mentioned, by curling or twisting the outer layer of strips as they are inwoven (fig. 11).