

AKIN NOTES

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① Intro para -
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SIKAIANA LOOMS

J.L.O. Tedder was
D.C. Malaita 8/6/60 - ? (make
June 1966 stamp below)

yes
edit

③ The looms are used for the construction of fine mats made in varying designs but usually of standard 1 fathom length x approximately 2 feet. The mats were used in former times as wearing apparel and today they are occasionally to be seen on women. The women wearing them on this occasion were nursing new born babies and it is possible that the mat has some special significance. From a purely utilitarian point of view the mat being of fine weave and well knit acts as an extremely efficient body belt which would be extremely beneficial to Polynesian women in general, and those recovering from childbirth in particular. Polynesian women in view of the restricted facilities for exercise are inclined to be somewhat flabby. Unlike the Melanesians they are not required to carry loads of food over long distances as their islands are small and the chief diet is coconuts which men carry and fish which men catch. Whatever the original intention it is only in women's wear today that the mat survives and from a probably high origin it has become the corset of such Polynesian women as feel the need for it.

② Mat making in Sikaiana is performed by the women although the men have knowledge of the mechanics of the art. In (Iuanina) on the other hand men perform this work but on more crudely constructed looms and with less skill.

The first step is to prepare the fibres or threads, which are obtained from the inner bark of a tree, named tehan. The bark of this tree is stripped off and after soaking in salt water for 3 days the outer skin becomes detached leaving the inner bark which is thin, almost transparent, and is usually made up in $\frac{1}{2}$ " width. It resembles raffia and is probably of similar origin. This is dried out in the sun (not over fire) and is bleached to a yellowish white colour. It is extremely tough when new but after a few months becomes brittle and will not stand the strains of weaving. The bark is divided into strands of approximately $\frac{1}{8}$ " across. According to the desired pattern sufficient strands are dyed. In the present era the dyes are imported - usually green, blue, yellow and magenta. The native dyes are black (as for tattooing and ?).

? identify?
dyes?
identify?
How prepared

When the strands have been prepared they are placed in two small round baskets (Te kele), and a handful or two of dry white coral sand (kelekele) is placed on top. This is to prevent the strands from becoming tangled when they are drawn out of the basket for use.

The preliminary setting up of the loom takes place in the open air. Two stakes are placed in the ground approximately three feet apart. The stakes are 4 to 5 feet in height and 4 inches wide, flat on one side and slightly curved on the other. The flat sides face each other with the curved sides facing outwards. The reason for the curve is to prevent the threads from being snapped or cut as they might be on a sharp edge. The sticks are called Te ko. A short distance from the top of Te ko a round stick is inserted to keep the upright sticks firm and parallel. This strainer is called Haite and is bound firmly on to Te ko making the structure rigid.

A round $\frac{1}{2}$ " diameter upright stick (Te palono tauko) is then placed firmly in the ground about 1/3rd of the distance between Te ko and nearer the left hand Te ko. From a convenient overhanging branch a thick $\frac{1}{2}$ " strand of raffia is attached and extends down the front of Te palono tauko. The purpose of Te palono tauko is to separate the threads of the woof.

The preliminaries have now been set up and the apparatus at this stage is as follows:-

first stage?



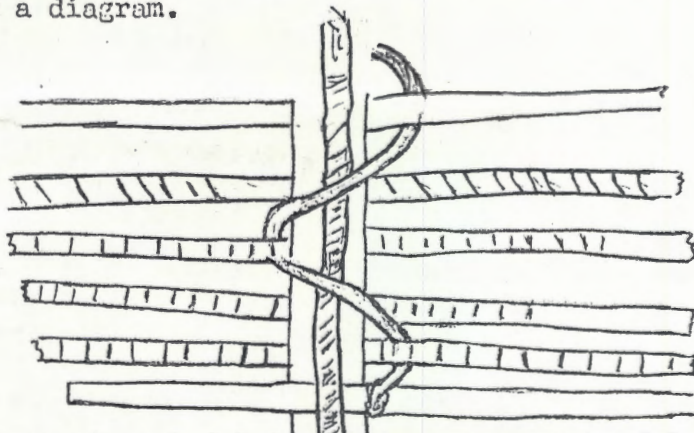
25 JUN 1966

The next process is the setting up of the woof. The thread is taken from Te kete and wound round the outside of Te ko and in front of Te palono tauko. It is then tied to itself, it is not very taut but tight enough to keep it in place. The first strand is about 1 ft. from the ground. The thread is then wound again anti clockwise and this time placed behind Te palono tauko. The action of winding is called Takitaki. At the level of the first thread a string is attached to Te palono tauko. The string is bound round a small heart shaped object made of coconut shell which looks like this:



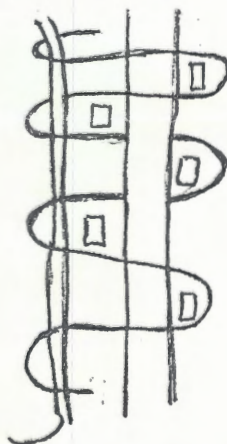
and is called Te oko malu.

The threads of the woof are alternatively in front of te tolo and behind te uka, te palono tauko. When the thread passes behind the operator inserts te uka malu and encircles the thread alternatively on the left hand and right hand side of te palono tauko. This may best be described in a diagram.



All the threads are inserted between te nauko and te palono tauko, te nauko being bound in only by the string of te uka malu. The reason for this appears at a later stage.

Threads of the woof are bound round then alternatively in front and behind te palono tauko, but all behind te nauko, which is bound in place only by the string of te uka malu. A side view of the structure will explain this.



(At a later stage te palono tauko is removed and a stick (te nauko) is inserted in place of te nauko.

The woof contains in the normal size of mat about 360 threads. If a

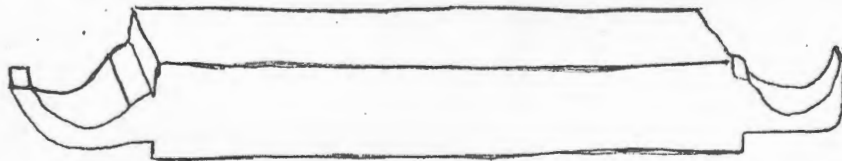
design is included as it usually is then coloured lengthwise strands are included at the appropriate place, the main white thread being broken and an approximate length of coloured thread tied in. If the pattern requires 2 strands of coloured thread then 2 fathoms of coloured thread is attached - the circumference of the woof and . . . length of mat being one fathom. When the 360 threads of the woof have been set up the first phase is concluded.

2nd Stage:

When the woof is prepared the next stage is to set up the loom indoors for the actual weaving. The large unwieldy te ko are removed together with the crossbar haite and in their place are put two batons of hard wood. One is called te atu, 2' 4" in length, 2" x 1 1/2" with grooves at the end to accommodate a rope. The baton is shaped:



The other is called te papa and is of similar dimensions but in place of the grooves at the end has two substantial hooks (kaisu).



Te palono tauko is withdrawn and the strings are held separate by te nauko and the string of te uka malu. The nauko is detached from the tree. The loom is rolled up and taken indoors.

Stage 3:

In the house* used for weaving there is a long circular hardwood pole horizontal placed about 1 foot above the floor. This pole is called tauna. It is firmly attached to the upright wall posts as it takes most of the strain in weaving. It is noticeable that all posts, batons and implements are well made of strong hard materials, this to ensure that they do not bend under the considerable strain of weaving. Any flexibility would ruin the shape of the mat. Strong coconut fibre ropes (te kavei) are attached round the grooves of te atu on to the wall pole (tauna). The woof is then unwound at right angles to the wall, and the operator sits on the floor about 4 feet from the wall with te papa in front of her, hooks facing forward, and with te nauko on top about 9" in front of te papa. She then takes a coconut fibre body belt shaped thus -



which she affixes round her back onto the hooks (kaisu) of te papa. She keeps her legs flat along the floor and places a block of wood between her feet and the wall to give her leverage with her legs. The position is thus:



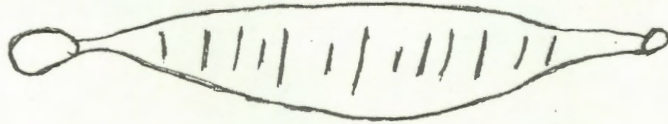
? special
?oomni
?domicile?
?enlarge?

*174
intidz*

Put te lana on end behind te nauko to separate fibre.

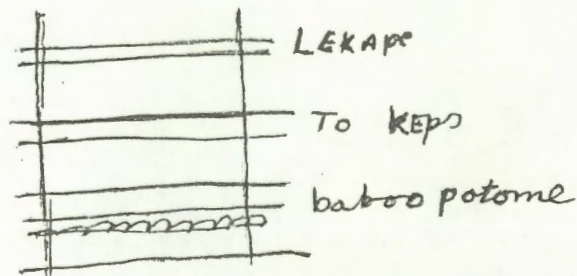
Te lana hard timber 2' x 3"

Woman sits on floor with hand tetu made of coconut fibre,



tied to kaisu (loop) on the te papa bar. Other bar te atu.

Insert te kapi cross sticks, two sets. (te kapi)



(Te sikau - shuttle).

*? steps in
shuttle
well*

Insert te nauko at end with shuttle, press down, insert te kapi and tie to te kapis close to te papa.

1. put shuttle through - take out te lana.
2. knock palono tauko back.

1. tighten with te lana
2. put te lana on edge
3. shuttle through
4. out te lana
5. back tauko
6. through te lana on low level
7. tighten (3) string
8. te lana on end
9. shuttle through
10. out te lana
11. raise tauko
12. te lana through high level. Then on end.

13. through shuttle
14. out te lana
15. back tauko
16. shuttle through as 6

Notes on early stages of loom weaving Sikaiana

*Eliminate, Page
Cut? all these
fed into text or
attached to
diagrams*

Vocabulary

Te ko	Broad planks forming upright portion of frame in original position
Te haite	Cross stick bound between 2 te ko
Te palono tauko	Upright stick bound to haite, used to separate and guide the threads
Kelekele	White sand
Te kete	Baskets
Te uka malu	The guide thread bound in and out of the basic weave during the first position of the loom.
Takitaki	The action of winding the basic thread around te ko.
these terms used loosely	(Metutaki (Te hakata The basic thread when round te ko. The basic thread before winding
Meatau	The loom
Meahau	The finished mat
Te nauko	An instrument for keeping te uka malu loose - in first position of loom, a thread of bark; in second position of loom, a stick.
Te tolo	The thread which runs in front of te palono tauko
Te uka	The thread which runs behind te palono tauko

Second Position

Te atu	A square batch of wood nearest the wall to which the loom is fastened, used to keep the loom steady and square.
Te kapi	Flat lengths of white wood across loom separating and binding the thread
Palonu	Roller
Te lana	A flat broad blade of black wood, shaped to a point, used to adjust the relative positions of the thread.
Te papa	Corresponding to te atu, but next to the body of the weaver
Te kaisu	Two wooden hooks at the end of te papa
Tetu	A body belt of rope fastened to te kaisu, placed round waist of weaver, thus steadying te papa.
Te sikau	Shuttle

Taula
Wall stick

Wall

Rope te Kavei

Te atu.

Tied

Tied

Te Kape.

To take strain
and keep strings
in place.

Tied

Sepacts top
thread.

Bamboo roller
Palona

String catcher
Every 2nd. string.

Bamboo
palona
tauka.

Sharp end.

Telana

Tenal fibre
Tonaulu.

Start weaving
Tied. Te kape
Sepactes string
Kaiusu

Lean and back
for pressure.



Te Sikau.

PA