

Analecta et Additamenta.

String-bags of Mekeo Papua. — The string-bag of Mekeo is an article highly estimated by the coastal tribes of Lokou, Waima, Roro and Motu, whose women are generally inexpert in the art of ornamental knitting. A string of nassa shells, a bundle of turtle ear-rings, a small arm-shell or a 12 i. knife is the current price they offer for it. The neighbouring mountain tribes of Lopiko and of Kuni do also valuable knitting in black patterns, the latter more than the first; [also the Inaofagau clan, a part of the Amoamo Inaokina tribe, make skilfully coloured bags, using a graduate tinting in yellow, red and blue, but not with such variety of designs as the Mekeo women have.

There are several kinds of bark from which the fibres are taken for string-making, each more or less estimated, according to their whiteness: *minaka*, *mouga* and *ki'e* are the most common ones. The bark is stripped off and brought down to the river, there the filmy inner part is separated from the outer bark by means of a *oka* shell, *ke pagea*, it is then dipped in the water and bit by bit scraped and cleaned with the same shell, *ke agina*. Back at home it is hung to dry and then shred into fine strands which are tied up in bundles and put aside for twining. The *ofuguka*-climber, which is only found far inland, gives an unfading black filament, and when the natives prepare it for twisting, it is steeped first in the water for a few days. The white or colourless strands, as also the colourless bag, are called *fuke*. Some filaments are cooked together with the leaves of the *ava*-tree, or of the *amu*-tree, to become red: the strands have been bitten by the plants, as the natives call it, and therefore the name of this red dye means "bitten", *'aga'aga*. The blue, *omimi*, is obtained by rubbing the string with *omimi*-seed. As the *omimi* is a very common plant and that the *ofuguka* is rather scarce, the latter, which is very much preferred to the former, is only used for small bags.

The general name for bag is *ve'a*. The *ve'a ioga* is a plaited bag, made only by men with the help of a needle of palm-wood. It serves to conseal sorcery and charms. One kind of *ve'a ioga* is the size of an ordinary men's bag, the other is very small, and is carried round the neck over the chest. The *ve'a ikauga* is a knit bag which the women manufacture on their rest-days, or after gardening and cooking before nightfall. *Kina Aape ganga e pageva aiama, papie ve'a ke pa'inapaga*: "when the sun lets Aape's boy dance, and the horizon is bright with his dancing-plumes, the women work at their knitting."

Ki'e gegevaga e inopakaina

Gave inapaga e afimuagaina.

She is twining the coloured *ki'e*,

She is twisting the dyed *gave*.

The knitting consists in a "figure-eight" stitching-work; the sling sometimes makes an exception and is in a doubled figure-eight pattern. The border is made of tight meshes: a thread fastened to the bag is stitched through a mesh of the upper row, then brought-back through the first loop, stitched again through the next mesh of the bag and brought back by the same first loop; after several stitches have been made, the first loop is dropped, when stitching back, and forthwith after every new stitch a loop is dropped and pulled tight. [A bag may be begun with a the top or at the bottom indifferently, and the first meshes are laid on a string (*agigil'a*), which is slung round the knee and the big toe of the left leg. This string helps to hold the bag as long as the knitting goes on. The left hand holds the bag at the part which is worked at, and determines the size of the loops by pinching the thread between the fingers while it is stitched through the hole and pulled on. The right hand does the stitching, without needle, and gets the thread through the loop by winding it up crosswise over the small finger and the thumb. The knitting is always done with one thread only, except for the