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**NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN**  
**Faculty of Design**  
**Department of Textiles**

**Changes in the design, display and use of Native American**  
**Basketry**

**by Vera Doherty**

**Submitted to the Faculty of Art and Design and Complementary  
Studies**

**in**

**Candidacy for the Degree of Bachelor of Design (Woven Textiles)**

**1997**



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## INTRODUCTION

Although Native American basketry derives from an unbroken traditional line running back to the most ancient times it is only in recent times that Native American material culture has come to be viewed and appreciated as one of the great arts of the world. Prior to this, knowledge of Native American baskets came primarily from archaeological sources where their aesthetic qualities were neither acknowledged nor understood.

Today they fuel the curiosity and capture the admiration of scholars, curators and artists world wide. In this world where mass communication is increasingly eroding the formerly isolated cultural enclaves, Native Americans through their primitive art and craft work offer society a unique insight into the spirit of man.

This thesis is an investigation into the material culture of Native North America focusing on basketry. My reason for choosing to discuss the Native American basketry is due to the great respect I have for their culture, having visited the National Museum of the American Indian in New York during 1995, and experiencing first hand their arts and crafts displayed innovatively through audio and visual means providing the viewer with an unforgettable and hauntingly beautiful glimpse at a culture which lives in harmony with nature and the land.

I feel that their spiritual awareness has a lot to offer modern Western society as does the belief that *"the land is not something that can be controlled and changed, it is something of which all human beings are a part"*, (Keesing, p 59, 1981).

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As Roger Keesing, a cultural anthropologist, has stated : ***“to seek to understand....non-Western peoples is to seek to understand ourselves..”***

***(Keesing, p 8, 1981).*** That is a statement I firmly believe in having been introduced to the Native American arts and crafts and which I intend to pursue throughout this thesis.

My aim is to explore and discuss the multifaceted role basketry has played in the culture of North American tribes. Given the wide range of habitats and the social and cultural diversity of the basketmaking tribes, one naturally expects to find differences in the technology, style, design and use of their baskets though not perhaps to discover the similar ways the basketmakers adapted their techniques after prolonged contact with non-Indian peoples.

A general overview of the history of basketmaking is dwelt upon in Chapter One. While commencing with prehistoric times I concentrate more fully on historic to contemporary, which in this thesis means ‘occurring now or, during the same period’. Contemporary work comes from a long tradition, this term also needs to be clarified, as tradition, the dictionary states is a ***“long established and generally accepted custom, or method of procedure, having almost the force of law.”***

For the modern native Americans tradition in their poetic views form the symbiosis between man and nature. ***“It is more than custom, belief or myth. It is an essence that explains to Indians what they are psychologically”*** (Hill, p,86,1986). Tradition is something Indians step into in order to be themselves and





is permanently changing and evolving.

An introduction to the main geographical regions of North America is presented with an in-depth look at two specific areas, namely the Southwest and the Great Basin as these areas have managed to retain their culture and keep it alive due to the country being too harsh, and the natives too unwelcoming, so that for a long time European settlers remained in Eastern and Northern regions.

Also due to the arid climate many examples of Native Basketry not in existence elsewhere have been unearthed almost undamaged allowing a deeper more in-depth study of the areas material culture to be conducted.

Due to the areas' rooted historical background a need for some research in the anthropology field was necessary as anthropology promotes the idea that "... *each culture represents a separate instance of human possibility, a different way of being human...*" (Keesing, p.176, 1981). Also a look into the ethnography field was obligatory as its aim is the accurate recording of the respective modes of life of various groups, and so ethnography can provide valuable contextual information.

Chapter Two is a continuation of Chapter One highlighting the technical aspects involved in the craft of basketmaking with special reference to both nominated regions. I use the subdivisions of construction, form, uses, materials, colour and symbolism in discussion. I also acknowledge two specific tribes in the work they have produced and the way in which they have survived European expansion with their traditional values and beliefs almost intact, although somewhat modified.

1. The first part of the document is a letter from the President of the United States to the Congress, dated January 3, 1862. It is a very important document, as it contains the President's annual message to Congress. The letter is written in a formal, dignified style, and it is one of the most important documents in the history of the United States.

2. The second part of the document is a report from the Secretary of the Interior, dated January 10, 1862. It is a very important document, as it contains the Secretary's annual report to the President. The report is written in a formal, dignified style, and it is one of the most important documents in the history of the United States.

3. The third part of the document is a report from the Secretary of the Treasury, dated January 15, 1862. It is a very important document, as it contains the Secretary's annual report to the President. The report is written in a formal, dignified style, and it is one of the most important documents in the history of the United States.

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5. The fifth part of the document is a report from the Secretary of the Navy, dated January 25, 1862. It is a very important document, as it contains the Secretary's annual report to the President. The report is written in a formal, dignified style, and it is one of the most important documents in the history of the United States.

6. The sixth part of the document is a report from the Secretary of the State, dated January 30, 1862. It is a very important document, as it contains the Secretary's annual report to the President. The report is written in a formal, dignified style, and it is one of the most important documents in the history of the United States.

7. The seventh part of the document is a report from the Secretary of the War, dated February 5, 1862. It is a very important document, as it contains the Secretary's annual report to the President. The report is written in a formal, dignified style, and it is one of the most important documents in the history of the United States.

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These groups are taken from the Southwest and Great Basin regions and are respectively the Hopi and Washar tribes particularly the work of Louisa Keyser.

There is a continuing debate on the art/craft issue, and as I am continually using these terms, their definitions need addressing. Natives not possessing the word 'art' in their vocabulary saw their work as functional, with decoration, although present, seen as a separate entity.

The European settlers, though, viewed art and craft differently due to their 'civilised' background, yet while on the harsh frontier with a lack of decorative arts they turned to the natives' utilitarian yet beautiful objects and promoted them as fine art pieces, creating a market, and thus improved their economic situation. The European settlers, being the dominant society, slowly absorbed the values of the 'periphery' society into their 'greater' one. The natives accommodated and adapted, while still retaining (especially in the Southwest) some of their cultural traditions. The natives as we tend to portray them are not static but are evolving in meeting the challenges European expansion is creating.

In the concluding chapter I focus on the alteration of native American basketry due to external forces. I show how native material culture was influenced by early contact with European Americans through trade, exchange and war. I detail how European designs, forms and materials were adopted by the Natives due to colonisation and its resulting white institutions and markets. Furthermore, I discuss the place of native arts in society from the Transitional period to the present.



## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **Historical and Geographical contexts for Native American Baskets.**



At the time of the first European contact there were roughly three hundred tribes speaking many different languages in the area between the Arctic Ocean and the Mexican border. It is obvious that there must have been considerable variation in their needs and opportunities for material culture to develop. Therefore it is necessary to my thesis to outline the five historical periods of basketmaking which range from the Early Historic period to contemporary times.

A general view of the nine geographical regions in North America is given, with more detail on the Southwest and Great Basin regions. This chapter is an introduction for the thesis providing a basis for an overview of North America in terms of geography and history.

The Native Americans were a single people of a mixed Asian stock who, over a period of thousands of years, developed many different cultures and languages in a response to a variety of geographical and climatic circumstances without significant contact with the rest of the world.

At the time of first European contact there were roughly three hundred tribes in the area between the Arctic Ocean and the Mexican border. It is obvious that there must have been considerable variation in their needs and opportunities for material culture to develop.





It is fundamental to my thesis to outline the history of basketmaking in Native America which consists of five major periods which have, to varying degrees, influenced each geographical region of which there are nine. Of these, I have chosen to deal with in-depth the Southwest and the Great Basin.

### **History**

One of the most common and useful arts of the Native American is that of basketmaking which is primitive in the extreme as it has changed little since the days of its introduction. Within ancient cemeteries, mounds, caves, ruins and lake dwellings of Southern Colorado, Arizona and New Mexico archaeologists have unearthed many baskets which demonstrate this unbroken line of workmanship on the American continent. As Col. James Jackson an American archaeologist states:

***“Potterymaking and basketmaking are as old as the human race. As far back as there are any relics of humanity are found the traces of these industries, supplying no doubt a very positive human need ... when we look upon the baskets and pottery ... we behold the results of an industry that ... has been continued with but little change down to the present time” (Quoted in G.W. James, p.13,1972).***

There are five major basketmaking periods in North America as defined by Sarah and William Turnbaugh in **Indian Baskets** (1986). These are: Early Period, Classic Period, Transitional Period, Hiatus and Contemporary Period.





The first Native American baskets were created during the Early Period and were made up until the first contact with Europeans. This varied throughout the continent occurring in the seventeenth century along the Atlantic Coast and in the eighteenth century for much of the inland and western areas. The remains of these baskets consist of archaeological specimens such as charred remains or actual fragments of baskets, Illustration 1 is a rare example of a twined basketry fragment from prehistoric Northeast work which was found in Massachusetts. Other evidence of Early Period basketry consists of impressions on pottery which has led scholars to believe that basketry unquestionably preceded pottery. As Professor Holmes in George Wharton James's Indian Basketry (1972) declares: *"The clay vessel is an intruder, and usurps the place and appropriates the dress of the predecessor in wicker"* (Quoted in G.W. James, p.18,1972).

Archaeological excavations have recovered in the Southwest desert of North America where the dry environment and sheltered location of many sites combined to preserve some archaeological basketry examples including this 1500 year old twined Anasazi bag (See Illustration 2). Anasazi are the probable ancestors of the modern day Pueblos, and are among the best known prehistoric basketmakers in America.

The Classic Period of basketmaking began in early post-contact times after first contact with the Europeans but before the rapid acculturation of native peoples. Most basketmakers from this time continued to make the same basket types they had produced at the close of the early period. Intertribal influences are evident





**Illustration 1 - This twined basketry fragment is a rare example of prehistoric Northeastern aboriginal work found in Massachusetts.**



**Illustration 2 - Anasazi bag. Southwest prehistoric bag C.400 A.D.**





somewhat but non-native European influences are absent as these baskets are fashioned with native materials, designs, motifs and natural dyes. There are few undamaged examples of Classic Period basketry today.

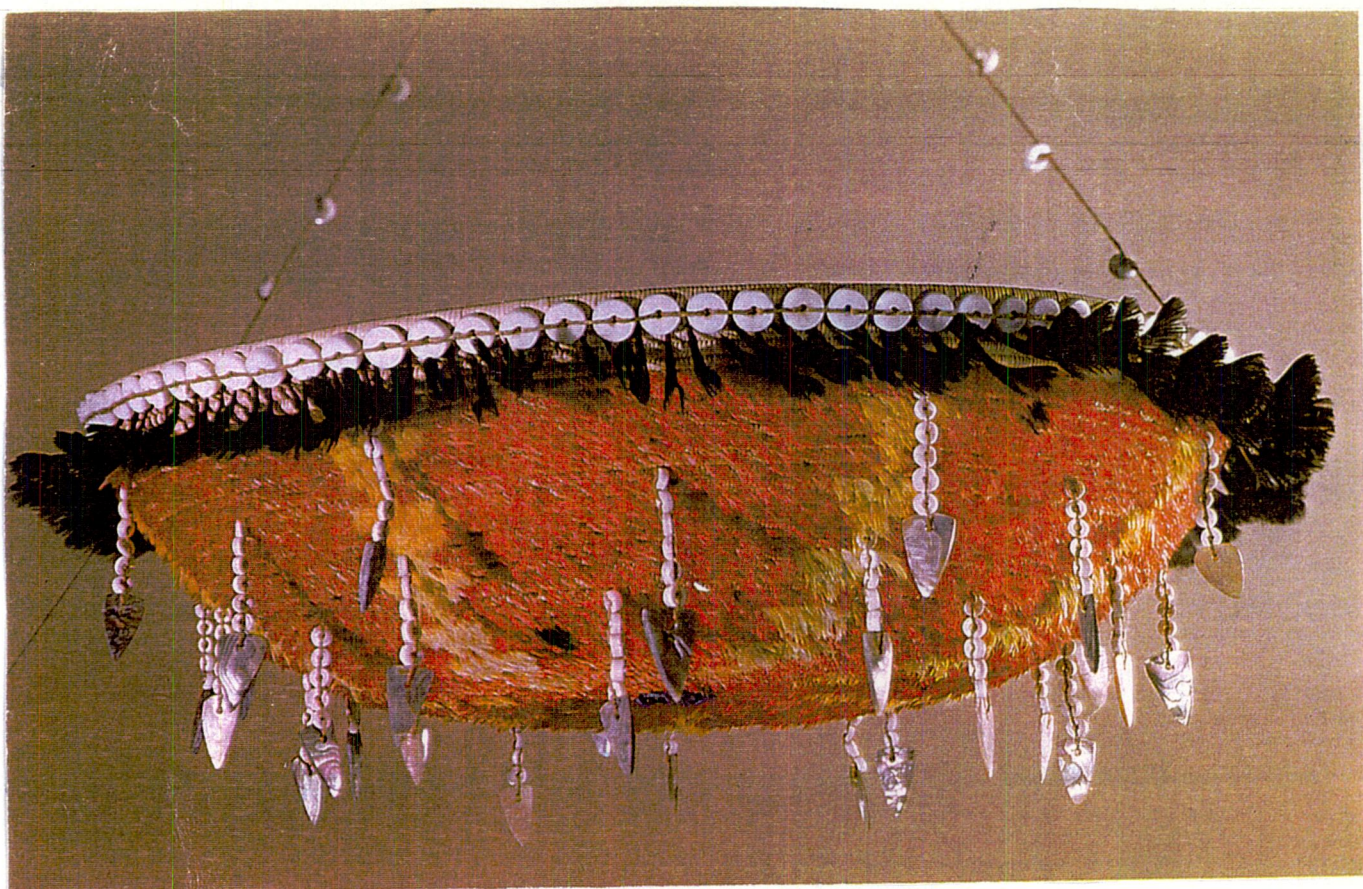
Most of the baskets in modern collections are from the Transitional Period which generally spans the century from 1775 to 1875, although the dates again vary due to time, place and degree of contact with European settlers and explorers. During this period the influence of European basketry forms and materials are increasingly evident as native basketmakers experimented with these new materials including glass beads and aniline dyes, (See Illustrations 3,4). In most areas basketmaking flourished at this time reaching new levels of decoration.

I have chosen to study this period in depth for a number of reasons. Firstly, it was the serious beginning of basket collecting, and information gathering of Native North American crafts. Also for a time before the colonists assumed power, European technology and tourist industry invigorated tribal creativity.

During the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, namely the Hiatus Period traditional basketmaking declined as native cultures were absorbed into the melting pot of mass acculturation. The Indian woman being the traditional weaver of baskets found that for a few cents she could purchase pots, pans and other utensils from her civilised sister that formerly took days, or even months to weave. As a result few baskets were made during this time.







**Illustration 3 - New materials in evidence during the Transitional Period. California basket C. 1900 (Feathers and shell beads).**







Illustration 4 - New forms of basketry fashioned during the Transitional period



In the Contemporary Period (from the early twentieth century to the present) there was a revival of interest in Native American basketry. Baskets are woven today essentially for trade or commercial sale, while few are being produced for heavy utilitarian use. 'Ethnic art' originated at the height of Native American popularity to satisfy foreign tastes. Native technologies were employed yet less restrictions by traditional conventions and functions were encountered. Form and decoration in 'ethnic art' tends to be a mixture of native and European designs. The renowned Washo basketmaker Louise Keyser (Datsolalee) was one of the best known women in this respect to create baskets for sale (through her patrons the Cohns) to non-natives (See Illustration 5). Her baskets commanded a high price as they purposely reflected the buyer's personal preferences rather than purely traditional native emphasis (Illustration 6).

Datsolalee is discussed more thoroughly later as her work was groundbreaking in inspiring others to create more commercially viable products. *"She took Washo basketry from its traditional restrictive native heritage to a more innovative yet beautiful traditional contemporary basket", (Wade p.209, 1986).*

In this period Pan-Indian art was also introduced by Native Americans who no longer feel exclusively bound to the values and customs of their original tribal societies. They work for the art market of the dominant white society and consequently regard themselves as artists which is a very important shift in the history and evolution to the present day native basketmaking; today, baskets are mostly viewed as aesthetically pleasing art objects (a European term)

1. The first part of the report deals with the general situation of the country and the progress of the work during the year. It is divided into two main sections: the first section deals with the general situation of the country and the progress of the work during the year, and the second section deals with the specific results of the work.

2. The second part of the report deals with the specific results of the work. It is divided into three main sections: the first section deals with the results of the work in the field of agriculture, the second section deals with the results of the work in the field of industry, and the third section deals with the results of the work in the field of commerce.

3. The third part of the report deals with the conclusions and recommendations. It is divided into two main sections: the first section deals with the conclusions and the second section deals with the recommendations.

4. The fourth part of the report deals with the appendix. It contains a list of the names of the persons who have taken part in the work, a list of the names of the persons who have given assistance, and a list of the names of the persons who have given advice.





Illustration 5 - Louisa Keyser (Datsolalee 1850-1925) weaving in 1921-1922.

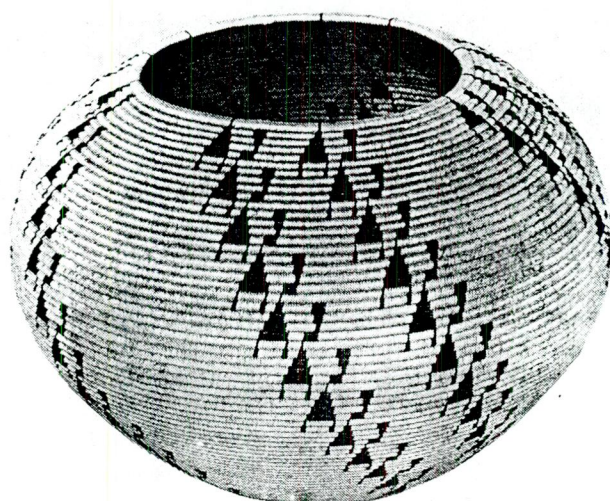


Illustration 6 - Coiled basket by Datsolalee 1924





whereas prior to the Contemporary Period a basket was almost always created for its utilitarian use, with natives not viewing decoration in isolation from the object.

This has become a central move in native basketmaking since the European settlement of America and will be detailed in Chapter 3. Today; *“Pan-Indian artists still draw on the experience of their specific cultural background yet their styles are no longer unique to the tribe but are largely shaped by White expectations about Indian style” (Feest. C.F, p 15, 1992).*

‘Tribal art’ still exists today which satisfies the spiritual needs of the tribesmen but limited freedom for individual expression is allowed. ‘Tribal art’ continues the individual tribes collective art work. Having set the scene from a historical point of view I turn to North America in a geographical sense to provide information on its inhabitants’ lifestyles and need for basket containers.

### **CULTURAL REGIONS**

The area of North America is vast with over three hundred distinct peoples living in this territory. From popular usage all are called Indians or Eskimos which has led to a general misconception in understanding both Indian history and culture. In reality it is impossible to make such a bland generalisation and therefore the concept of ‘culture areas’ has been defined by anthropologists. A culture being *“an organised system of knowledge, more or less shared by all individuals that enables them to communicate, share meanings, and do things toward common ends” (Keesing,p93,1981).*



anthropologists have devised four to twelve cultural areas which were developed according to geographical regions in which a number of ethnic groups live, sharing comparable, but not identical, cultural traits. This approach was adopted by the U.S. National Museum of Natural History for storage and research purposes as well as for organising public exhibitions.

These cultural areas remain the conventional means for organising similar Indian artefacts together. However, they can only serve as approximate sorting devices as in some instances each tribal group should be considered a separate entity as there are some styles typical of one culture area which do not occur throughout it. Aside from this, owing to the experimental nature of the native artist - trying new materials, forms and designs learned not only from acquisitions by gift, trade or capture an accurate identification of a baskets provenience is sometimes difficult to ascertain.

Nevertheless these 'regions' being in such common usage today are the most reliable way in which to classify a native American Basket and therefore are the basic guide I have employed in doing so. I have decided to follow Feder's example in **American Indian Art (1965)** in dividing North America into nine regions, (Illustration 7), although these areas contrast slightly to those in name. These culture regions are the Southeast, the Northeast, Plains, Arctic and Subarctic, the Pacific Northwest, Plateau, California, Great Basin and the Southwest. Since this thesis is not long enough to give an in depth study into each region, the Southwest and Great Basin will be considered in depth due to the indomitable spirit and drive of the natives in the preservation of there *"identity"*





*systems that have as an important element the symbol of roots in the land - supernaturally sanctioned, ancient roots regarded as unchangeable" (Taylor p.59, 1995).* Also, due to the arid climate in these regions many baskets have survived, as already mentioned (See Illustrations 1 & 2). This allows a broader view and sense of these peoples' symbiosis between man and nature which is the core of their tradition when compared to other areas.

### **The Southwest**

The Southwest is comprised of the states of New Mexico and Arizona. This area is characterised by a common arid environment yet the land varies considerably from mountains and mesas to deserts. This vast but harsh landscape has required many adaptations from its inhabitants while also engendering a love of place that is common among Native Americans.

This love of place and oneness with the land permeates Southwest Native American thought and culture as strongly today as it did three hundred years ago. These natives are of the land and do not exploit it, it is a region rooted in the land and in ancient traditions.

While modern society had a great impact on their traditional lifestyles the Southwest natives provide the strongest and most thriving Native American cultural community on the continent. Unlike other culture regions of North America, twenty five Native American groups have survived the onslaught of European expansion and have been able to remain on their traditional homelands.

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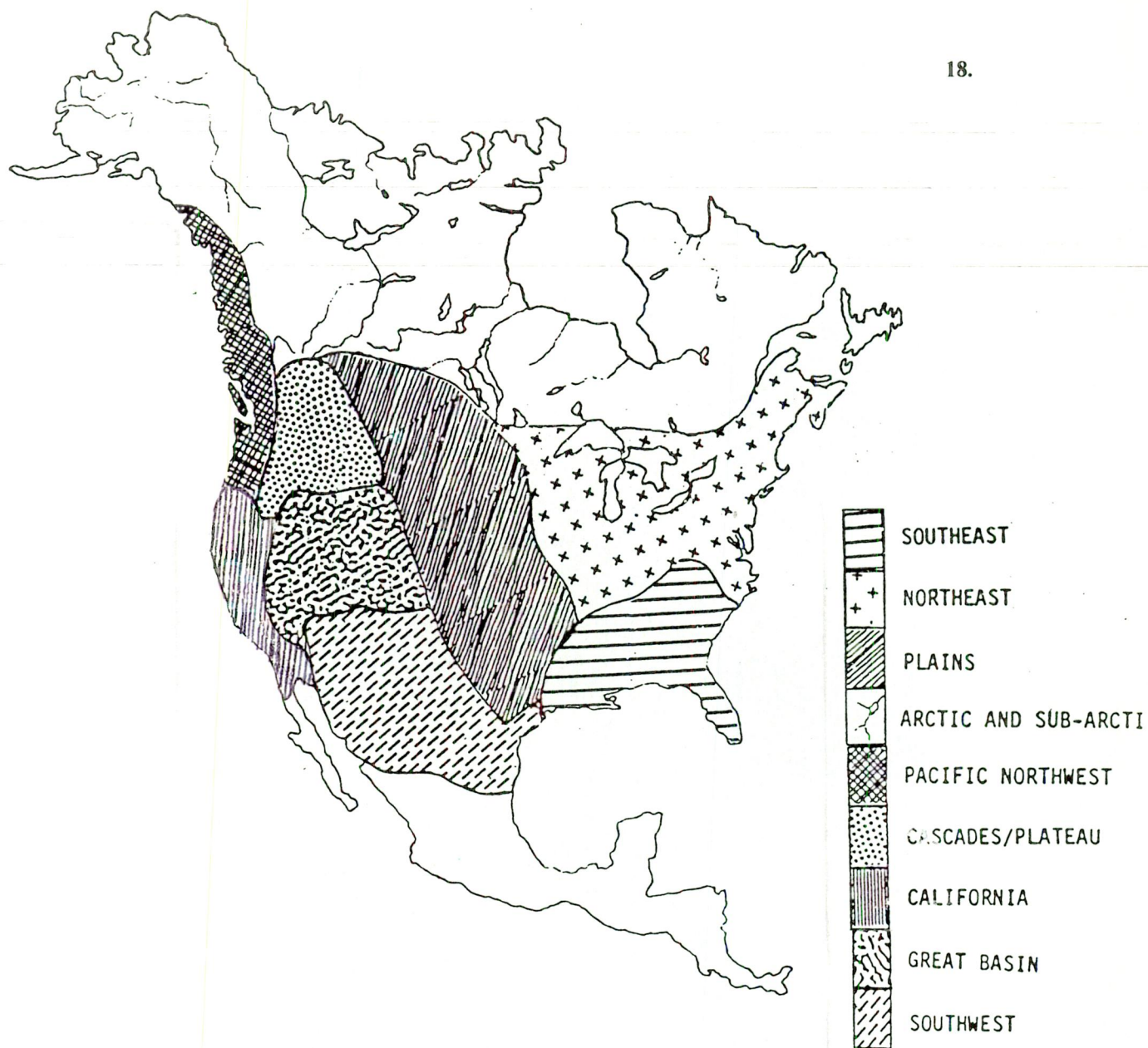
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Of these diverse peoples three distinct cultures have emerged in northern New Mexico and Arizona, on the Colorado Plateau the Puebloan peoples were most in evidence. Pueblo meaning 'village dweller' accurately reflected their lifestyle as these people developed a sophisticated agricultural town dwelling (Illustration 9). The Pueblo Indians did not constitute a tribe as each Puebloan culture was a village that functioned as an independent entity yet they traded with one another and also recognised a common ancestry.

With the Pueblo Indians religion transcends and permeates all aspects of life - arts, crafts, economics and the family. They have developed rich cultural traditions on the simple belief that people must live in harmony with nature. Through their arts their central values are given outward expression.





**Illustration 7 - The culture regions of Native North America**



**Illustration 8 - Southwest region of Native North America**





In the Southwest basketry continues to be made for traditional utilitarian and ritual uses as well as for sale to tourists. Some of the most colourful basketry has been fashioned by Puebloan groups, in particular the Hopi tribe who produce many baskets for sale as well as making them for native daily use (Illustration 10). A detailed study of Hopi basketry is presented in Case Study one, Chapter 2.

With the exception of the utilitarian ring basket most Puebloan and Hopi baskets were woven by men due to their importance in ceremonial roles. Today it is the woman who continues the basket making tradition using all major techniques of construction.

The Athabascan speaking Navajos and Apaches inhabited areas around the Pueblo villages and survived by hunting and gathering. The Navajos also relied on agriculture while the Apaches added to this base, raiding the local Pueblo villages. With this reputation for war the Apaches kept small communities that could be moved quickly because of retaliation. They lived in protected highlands, canyons and mountain valleys, and lived a semi - nomadic life.

Most of the Navajos lived in widely scattered groups herding and farming until the U.S. government captured and banished them to a reservation. When they were allowed to return to their homeland they quickly established their way of life and developed economic pursuits where they became famous weavers and silversmiths.

Although the Navajo's are related to the Apaches, much of their material culture resembles that on the Plains and Great Basin. True Navajo - made baskets







Illustration 9 - A pueblo town dwelling







Illustration 10 - Colourful Hopi baskets produced for sale to the non-native market.





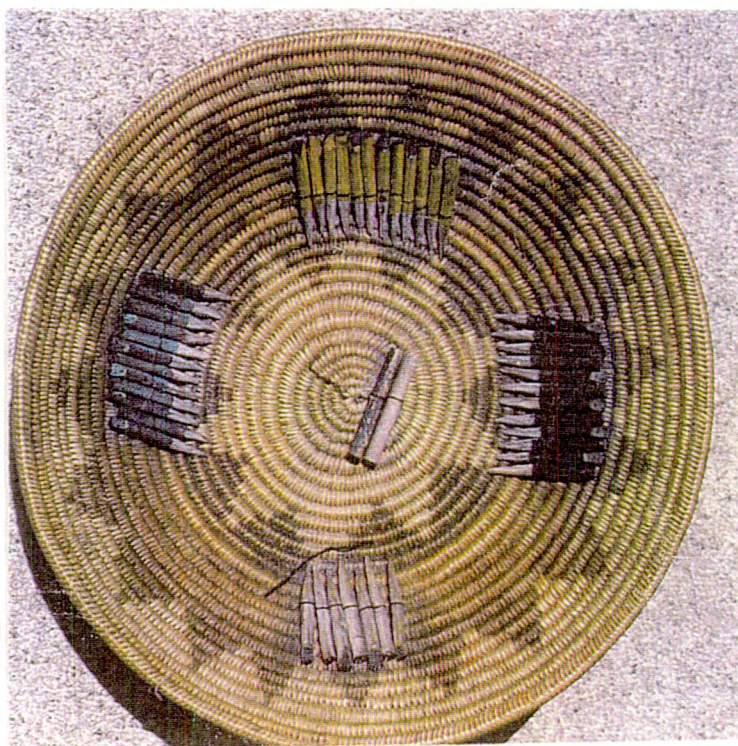
are rare today as the Transitional Period taboos surrounded the making of Navajo ceremonial baskets. Therefore, through trade with the Ute and Paiute of the Great Basin, the Navajo wedding basket (Illustration 11) continued in production. The Paiute - made Navajo wedding baskets usually are less finely made than the older Navajo Wares.

The burden basket was a necessity in the every day life of the Apache due to their semi-nomadic lifestyle. The burden or pack basket was used for carrying heavy loads. Illustration 12 displays an Apache carrying basket which is often decorated with rawhide fringe. Simple geometric design bands are also often woven into the basketry fabric. Today this basket has become a symbol of the Apache woman's great workmanship.

Along the Colorado river lived the Papago, Pima and Yuma of the Hokan speaking people who had a primitive farming and gathering existence. The Walapai, Yavapai and the Havasupai also of the same linguistic stock lived primarily by hunting and gathering on the upland areas of western and northern Arizona, living in small groups that moved in an established round. These peoples created coiled and twined basketry which at times was wrongly identified as Western Apache due to technological similarities acquired from forced internment on Apache reservations around 1900. Illustration 13 is a Papago jar created during the Transitional Period in response to the influence of white traders and the desire to participate in a mercantile economy. This jar is a typical 'new type of basket' which uses non-traditional materials, form and design elements. The stylised form of the waterbird is characteristic of the twentieth







**Illustration 11 - "Navajo" ceremonial basket. Southwest late 19<sup>th</sup> century. This sacred meal basket or 'wedding basket' also has been used in Navajo healing ceremonies and chantways, it occasionally has been used upside down to serve as a drum. During the Transitional Period the Paiute of the Great Basin supplied many of the ceremonial baskets for the Navajos.**





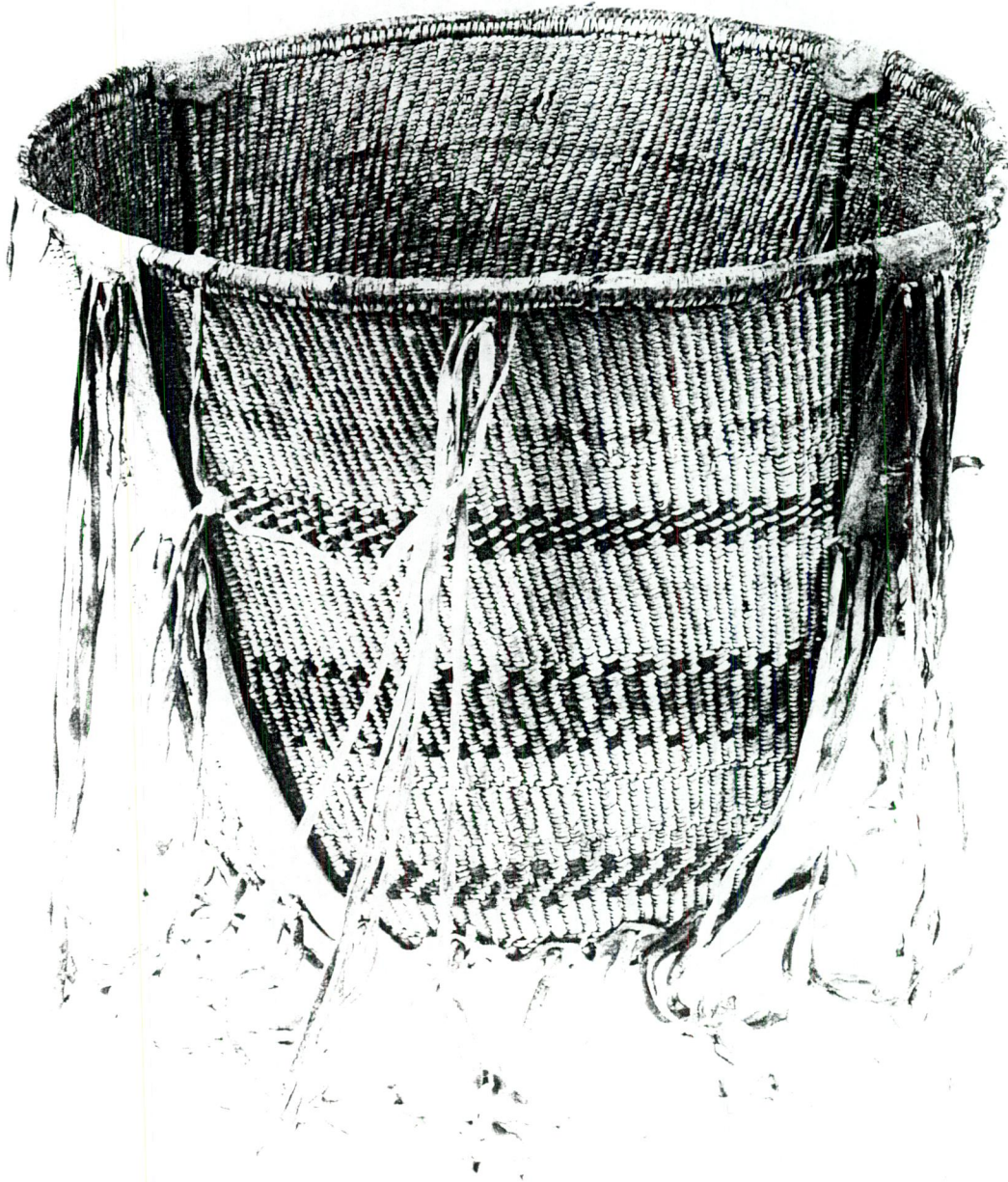


Illustration 12 - Western Apache Burden Basket, Arizona Southwest Region. Method of manufacturing: Twined





century Papago's reliance on objects in their natural surroundings for design elements.

Having discussed the Southwest's three distinct culture areas from a geographical sense it is apparent that the natives adapted in order to preserve the core of their lives; their relationship to the land. They have retained a strong sense of who they are despite European expansion which has transformed much of Native American life unevenly and differentially yet the Southwest natives do not regard themselves as deprived members of society instead they recognise that they have much to offer others if these others continue to listen.

### **GREAT BASIN**

The Great Basin area is predominantly inhabited by Uto-Aztecan speaking gatherers and hunters. The Great Basin includes the arid interior basin between the Sierra Nevada and Cascades Mountains of Eastern California. The native tribes followed two basic lifestyles, some being semi-sedentary farmers on the lower Colorado river like the Chemehuevi tribe while other occupants of the basin wandered continuously through the semi-desert in order to acquire enough food to survive. Due to this lifestyle choice the Great Basin peoples became known as "*superb resource generalists*" (Taylor p.118,1994).

These remarkably adaptable and practical people represented a culture sustained in the arid regions of the Great Basin for thousands of years largely shut away from the outside world and little influenced by the Plateau and Plains people in their culture.

Due to the dominant wandering pattern of these people, burden baskets, water



jars, bags and bowls were continuously fashioned, decorated with simple designs that were geometric in appearance. Illustration 15 is a Paiute water bottle proofed with pitch and is a common type of utilitarian basket. The Paiute (Chemehuevi) tribe excelled at basketry producing conical burden baskets and close coiled and twilled trays.

This tribe, as previously mentioned, supplied the Navajo with ceremonial wedding baskets which were essentially mass produced for trade (See illustration 11).

Today the Paiute and the Washo still practise several of their traditional arts and crafts. The Washo peoples have created a new style of basketry which evolved to meet the demands of the marketplace and is a result of the 'art of acculturation'.

This basketry owes little to traditional techniques, forms and designs as they appeared in the nineteenth century. These baskets and their innovative makers will be discussed in Chapter 2, Case Study Two.

1. The first part of the paper is devoted to a general discussion of the problem of the origin of life. It is shown that the problem is one of the most important and most difficult in the history of science.

2. The second part of the paper is devoted to a discussion of the various theories of the origin of life. It is shown that the most plausible theory is that of spontaneous generation.

3. The third part of the paper is devoted to a discussion of the evidence in favor of spontaneous generation. It is shown that the evidence is overwhelming.

4. The fourth part of the paper is devoted to a discussion of the objections to spontaneous generation. It is shown that the objections are unfounded.

5. The fifth part of the paper is devoted to a discussion of the implications of the theory of spontaneous generation. It is shown that the theory has far-reaching implications for the history of life on earth.

6. The sixth part of the paper is devoted to a discussion of the history of the theory of spontaneous generation. It is shown that the theory has a long and illustrious history.

7. The seventh part of the paper is devoted to a discussion of the future of the theory of spontaneous generation. It is shown that the theory is still a subject of active research.

8. The eighth part of the paper is devoted to a discussion of the conclusions of the paper. It is shown that the theory of spontaneous generation is the most plausible theory of the origin of life.

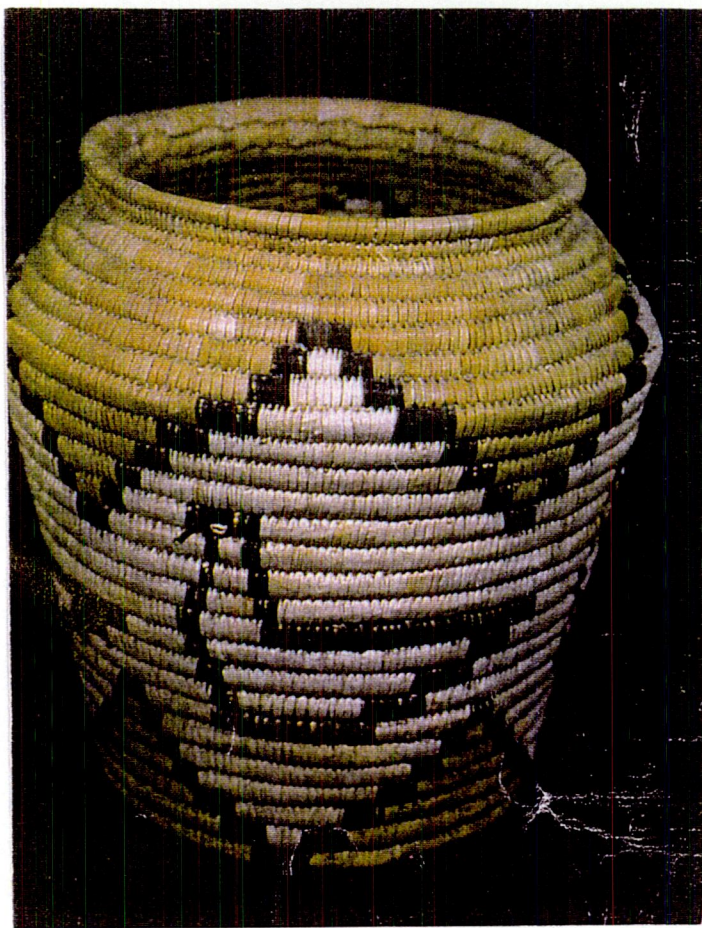


Illustration 13 - Papago jar. Southwest 20<sup>th</sup> century.







**Illustration 14 - The Great Basin region of Native North America**





**Illustration 15 - Paiute coiled water bottle, Great Basin early 20<sup>th</sup> century.**





## **Chapter Two**

**Construction, decoration and use of Native American  
Basketry, with special reference to the Hopi and Washo  
tribes.**

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In this chapter I consider construction methods which play an important role in identifying a baskets provenance or origin and I look at how these methods vary according to culture regions throughout North America. In the area of construction I deal with structure, materials, colour, uses and symbolism in basketry. In the final section I use the information researched to help analyse Hopi and Washo basketry particularly the work of Louisa Keyser.

## **STRUCTURE**

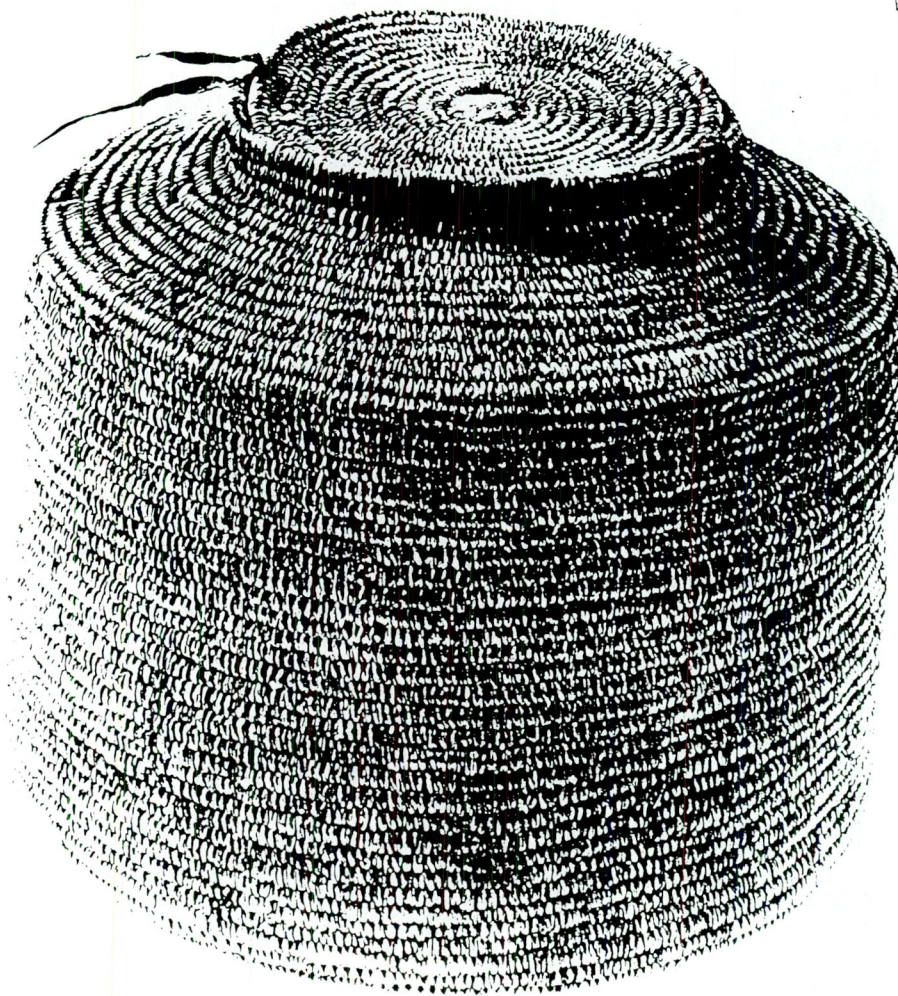
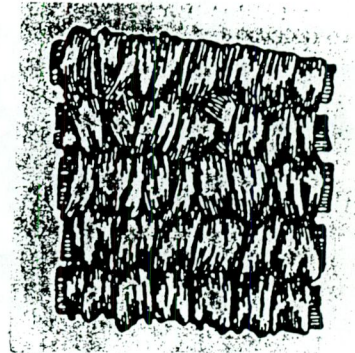
Most traditional basketmakers use single untwisted mainly vegetal fibres in the making of a basket. Twined elements in basketry are made from twisted strands for extra strength. Basketry may be either sewn or coiled and there are three basic techniques used in the construction of basketry. The sewn or stitched method is called coiling while the two woven techniques are plaiting and twining (Illustrations 16, 17, and 18). These basic methods had early prehistoric roots in North America.

Coiling is a type of basketmaking in which a continuous spiralling foundation is bound together by overcast sewing with a flexible material, (Illustration 16A). The tool almost universally employed in the manufacture is a bone awl or pricker. This coiling technique produces a distinctive spiral structure with a pattern of horizontal grooves. During the Early Period coiling was practised by prehistoric peoples such as the Anasazi in the Southwest. Today the coiled weave commonly appears in basketry of California, the Southwest, Great Basin, Plains and Northwest.





**Illustration 16A - Detail of Coiled technique**



**Illustration 16 - Coiled Apache basket (around 1850)**





Variation occurs in both the types of foundations and stitches used to construct coiled basketry. The foundation is the structure of a basket and either a number of grass stems or straight rods are used to give alternatively large flexible coils or thin firm coils. Stitches are the individual elements which hold the coiled basket together and they may be placed close together or spaced apart.

Plaiting is a form of woven basketwork in which the warp and the weft elements are interwoven at right angles to each other (See Illustration 17A). In most plaiting warp and weft materials are indistinguishable from each other, being of equal size and flexibility. Native Americans of the Southeast and Northeast regions have created plaited basketry almost exclusively in recent periods. Variation in the spacing between two warp elements enables a basketmaker to produce different types of plaiting.

Twining is a technique that interweaves two or more flexible weft elements between vertical warps (Illustration 18A). Peoples in the Northeast, Northwest, California and Great Basin have often used twining to produce basketry. This method can be identified by either vertical or diagonal ribbed grooves. Twining can have many variations in the warp and weft as the weft may be woven in either a closed or open method depending on the spacing between the warp material.

### **MATERIALS**

The materials used for the basketry of any particular people is largely determined by that peoples environment though vegetal elements continue to be the traditional materials used throughout Native North America along with mineral and animal. A great many of the dyes with which the baskets are coloured are

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...the hundredth of the ...

Illustration 17A - Detail of Plaited technique

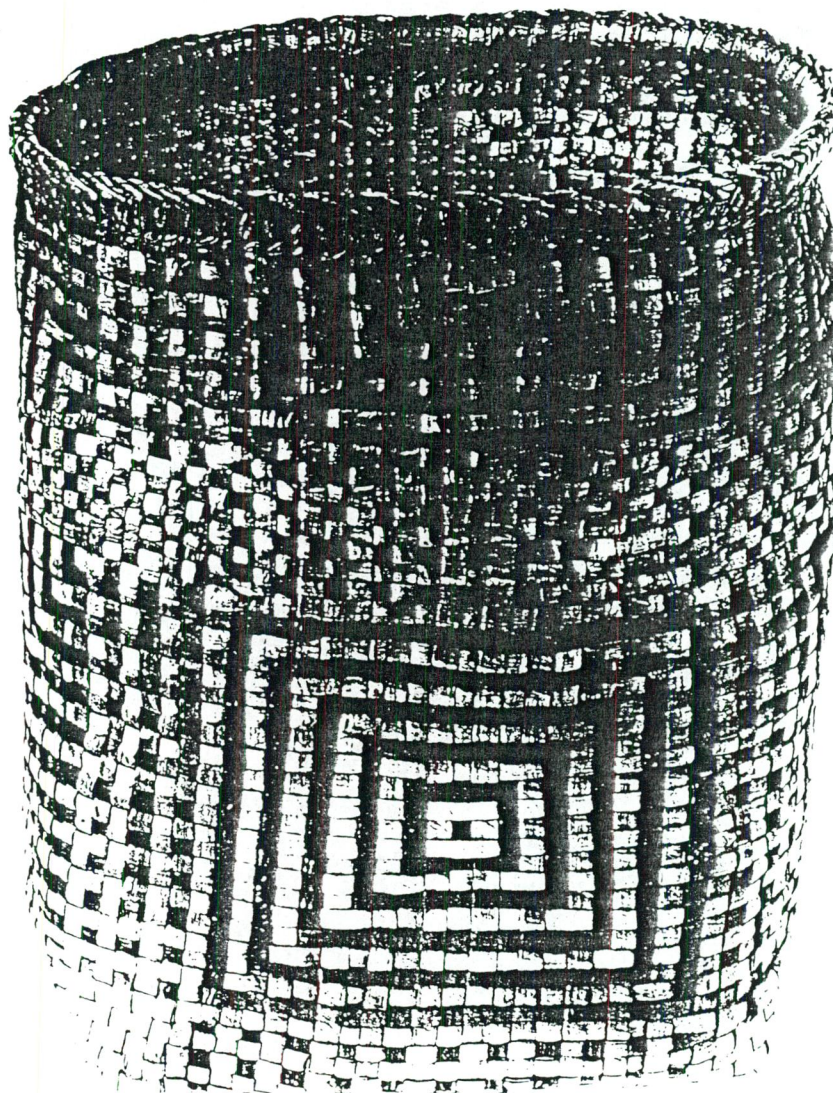
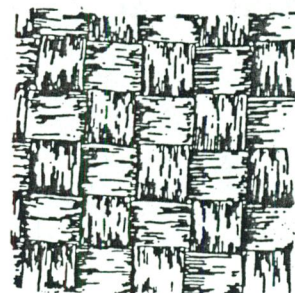


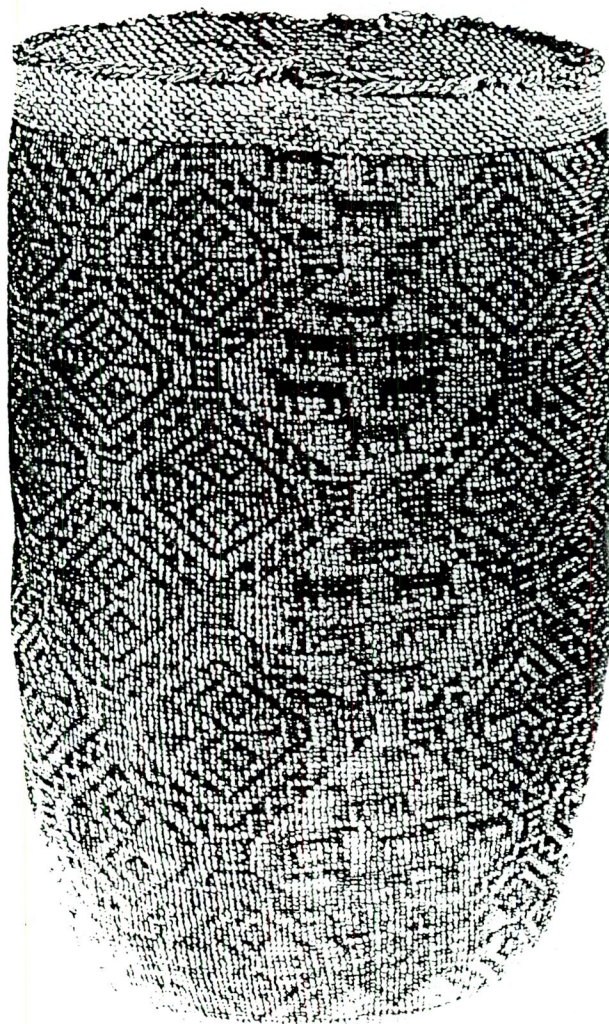
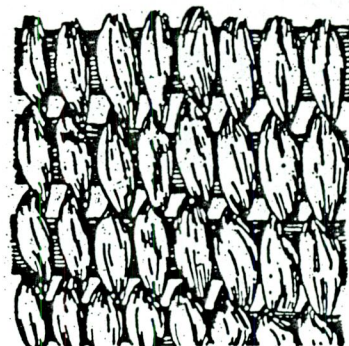
Illustration 17 - Plaited basket from Pacific Northwest region. Fashioned from naturally dyed cedar bark.







**Illustration 17A - Detail of plaited technique**



**Illustration 18 - Washo sally bag from South-eastern region. Method of manufacturing:  
Twined**



drawn from the mineral world. In the decoration of basketry beautiful stones and shells are employed, either whole or cut into beads and pendants (Illustration 3).

Besides these shells, teeth, feathers and other animals substances are used for added ornament. Yet nearly all parts of plants have been used by one tribe or another in basketmaking. In each area of America the vegetal kingdom has been explored above and below ground in the search of textile materials though it has become more difficult to find these materials in the last one hundred years as civilisation has emptied the ground. At times also in the making of a single basket many miles were travelled in search of the right plant would occur. With the European settlement and the imprisonment of native peoples on reserves this practice was disrupted and sometimes forgotten.

Native American Basketry dating from the Transitional Period to the present often incorporates non-natural elements such as glass beads and ribbons which were available from the white traders. Groups like the Pomo, Washo and others have used all over seed bead decoration on coiled baskets. Other non-natural materials are the aniline dyes. First developed in the 1860's, to replace more fugitive vegetable dyes aniline colours were also incorporated into the natives array of materials.

### **FORM**

A basketry form is restricted somewhat by the physical limitations of the materials used, the weaver's skill and the baskets use. Most traditional native American Basketry has served in contexts such as storage, ceremonies, food

The first part of the report is a general  
description of the project and its objectives.  
It is followed by a detailed description of the  
methodology used in the study.

The results of the study are presented in the  
third part of the report. This part includes  
a detailed description of the data collected  
and the analysis of the results. The final  
part of the report is a conclusion and  
recommendations for future research.

The study was conducted in a laboratory setting  
using a series of experiments. The results of  
the experiments are presented in the following  
table. The table shows the mean values of the  
variables measured in each experiment.

The data were analyzed using a series of  
statistical tests. The results of the tests  
are presented in the following table. The  
table shows the p-values for each test.



gathering and food preparation. Consequently, forms are most commonly containers of various types, including storage baskets, bowls, trays, plaques, burden baskets, cradles, caps and hats.

During the 'Transitional and Contemporary Periods' many of the other non-native uses of baskets created a new market for their wares. This demand resulted in an increasing number of new native forms or variations on more traditional shapes. Some of the new less conventional uses for native baskets include laundry baskets, waste baskets, clothes hampers and covered bottles (Illustration 4). Native Basketry declined during the Transitional and Hiatus Periods after the introduction and adoption of European trade goods which usurped the place of the native basket. This decline was also due to the time consuming and labour intensive basketmaking process which could take between seven days and several years.

Today much of the Contemporary basketry consists of both traditional and new forms that are fashioned quickly, are beneficial to produce and have also been designed to appeal to the white market.



The first part of the report deals with the general situation of the country and the progress of the work during the year. It is followed by a detailed account of the various projects and the results achieved.

The second part of the report deals with the financial aspects of the work. It gives a detailed account of the income and expenditure for the year and shows how the funds have been used.

The third part of the report deals with the personnel of the organization. It gives a list of the staff and describes their duties and the work they have done during the year.

The fourth part of the report deals with the future plans of the organization. It describes the work that is planned for the next year and the steps that are being taken to carry it out.

The fifth part of the report deals with the conclusions of the year's work. It summarizes the main achievements and the lessons learned and gives some suggestions for the future.

The sixth part of the report deals with the appendices. It contains a list of the names of the staff and a list of the names of the donors and subscribers.

The seventh part of the report deals with the index. It gives a list of the names of the subjects and the pages on which they are mentioned.

## COLOUR

Having attained perfection in the weaving of baskets the natives turned to surface embellishment for more adequate expression. Colour was the only mode of ornamentation which would not interfere with the smoothness and flatness of the surfaces. Although it is uncertain how far back the discovery was made that by simply breaking off the plain area and adding a coloured piece a picture could be introduced to the basket.

Ornamentation by means of colour is applied in basketry through employing materials of different colours by nature; by the use of dyed materials, by embroidery on the texture during the manufacture and also by adding feathers, shells, beads and other ornamental objects.

The artificial colouring of basketry material was gained through mineral and vegetable dyes. For the former splints were buried in different soils where they acquired permanent shades while vegetable dyes had the power of fixing themselves directly within the texture of the basket material.

***“Colours in textiles are produced first by the happy mixture of natural materials of different tints .... Our primitive folk also know how to make dyes from mineral and vegetable substances and how to fix colours by means of mordants” (James W.J.,p.88,1972).***

1. The first part of the report deals with the general situation of the country.

2. The second part of the report deals with the economic situation of the country.

3. The third part of the report deals with the social situation of the country.

4. The fourth part of the report deals with the political situation of the country.

5. The fifth part of the report deals with the cultural situation of the country.

6. The sixth part of the report deals with the environmental situation of the country.

7. The seventh part of the report deals with the international situation of the country.

8. The eighth part of the report deals with the future prospects of the country.

9. The ninth part of the report deals with the conclusion of the report.

Among the Hopi and other pueblo Indians of Arizona and New Mexico urine was preserved as a mordant to fix the dyes while pigeon dung was used to the same effect by the Southern California Indians.

During the Transitional Period cheap intrusive dyes and paints of the European settlers supplanted the attractive native substances and were either stamped, stencilled or applied freehand to save time as 'time was money', in the European sense. These dyes faded rapidly to dull grey, while permanent native dyes faded slightly over time gaining a soft hue.

From the earliest days colour had a definite significance. In ancient art each colour had a mystic sense or symbolism and the proper use was an essential consideration.

***"Black is generally the colour of death and mourning among the natives while red is a sacred colour which symbolizes blood, life strength and success of man. (This explains its common use on body, face and shield when going on the war path). Yellow, the colour of gold and fire, symbolises reason. Green, the colour of vegetable life represents utility and labour. Blue, the colour of the sky symbolises spiritual life, duty and religion"(James G.W. p.93,1972).***

Among the Zunis of the Southwest colour had its distinct significance on baskets. The North is designated as yellow because the light at morning is yellow. The West is blue because the Pacific lies west of Zuniland. The South is designated as red it being the region of summer and of fire while east is white due to dawn light.

***"The symbolic colour scheme of the Cherokees is East - red - success; triumph. North - blue - defeat; trouble West - black - trouble, death. South - white - peace; happiness (James G.W.p.91,1972).***

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Among the Cheyennes of the Cascades and Plateau the rivers they believe exist in the spirit world are symbolised by colours red, yellow, green and blue and were supposed to sharpen the spiritual vision.

### **Basket Uses**

Being the chief carrying utensil of the native Americans the basket necessarily has assumed many and varied forms to correspond with the uses for which it is desired, as there is practically no limit to the uses to which basketry has been put and can be put.

Basketry forms one of the principal means for transporting and has been adapted to such needs as holding water, food and materials gathered in connection with industry. Basketry also enters the house, the furniture, the clothing and the religion of the native tribes as before the coming of the Europeans, basketry supplied nearly every domestic necessity of the natives from infants cradle to the funerary jars buried with the dead.

Among the Thompson Indians of the Pacific Northwest large oblong baskets with lids for storing food and clothing were used while smaller ones of the same kind serve for holding sewing materials and trinkets. (See illustration 19). Their lids slide up and down on a string which also serves as a handle,





**Illustration 19 - Thompson Indian basket from the Pacific Northwest which serves as a sewing or trinket basket.**



**Illustration 20 - Cooking basket by Mary Benson Washo early 20th C.**





The tribes of California generally used a round open basket which served as a kettle, the food being boiled by throwing hot stones into it, Such food was usually served in the basket in which it was cooked and is either eaten from the basket or poured into small black cups, (See illustration 20).

It was natural as soon as basketry became an art that cradles for the carrying of their babies were made by the early basketmakers. These were made of willow, the child being strapped to the main portion of the carrying cradle with a piece of calico or blanket thrown over the semi- circular headrest, (See illustration 21).

The Modok women made a very pretty baby basket of fine willow work, cylinder shaped with one half cut away except for a few inches at the ends. It is intended to be set up against a tree or carried on the back with the baby therefore lashed perpendicularly in it with the head covered by a parasol. The painstaking work which the Modok woman expends on her baby basket is an index of her maternal love.

The use of baskets for carrying heavy loads was a natural outcome of their development. Carrying in baskets was done by the natives on the head and on the back with a head band or breast strap, (See Illustration 22). The most common type of baskets made by the Apache Indians of the Southwest are the burden basket or pack basket,(See illustration 12) which is used for carrying heavy loads long distances.

The baskets are made from cottonwood, willow, sumac and mulberry although other materials are used. Each basket is crafted based upon strong tribal legends and are sold today for many hundreds of dollars, to basket collectors, scholars and



1. The first part of the report deals with the general situation of the country and the progress of the work during the year.

2. The second part of the report deals with the results of the work during the year and the progress of the work during the year.

3. The third part of the report deals with the results of the work during the year and the progress of the work during the year.



**Illustration 21 - Modok carrying cradle with child lashed perpendicularly within it.**

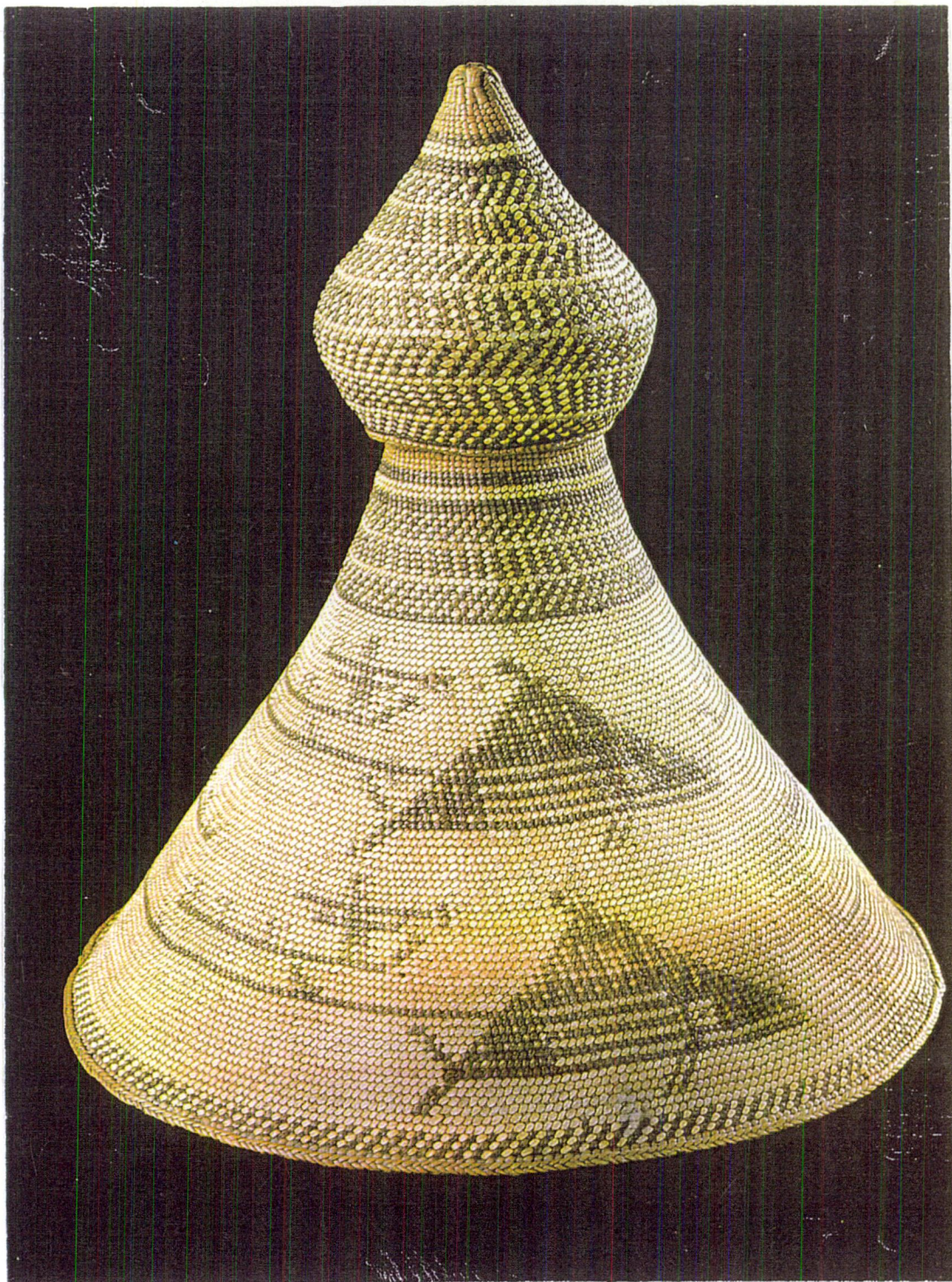




Illustration 22 - Method in which natives carried heavy loads in baskets on their backs







Illustrations 23 - Tlingit onion dome topped hat with naturalistic depiction of hunters harpooning whales.





museums.

Basketry is used extensively among tribes in dress and adornment of the person. The head claims the basketweavers art as hats are made not only for comfort but to save the eyes of the hunter from the glare and to act as an umbrella. The Tlingit from the Pacific Northwest fashioned onion dome-topped hats that usually depicted realistic scenes (Illustration 23). These hats also served for holding water.

In many native ceremonies baskets play an important part, As one of the chief and most valuable of the earthly possessions of the women the basket used to figure prominently in the Feasts of the Dead which were common among the Indians of Southern California. Images representing the dead were made and these were placed around a large oval shallow pit where a fire was kept burning. In their grief wailers jumped to and fro over the pit yelling and afterwards throwing in the images and the baskets. In this way most valuable and priceless specimens of the weavers art have been destroyed. Today owing to an appeal having been made to the mourners the practice is now nearly discontinued.

The Hopi believe that departed spirits linger around their graves, so those in mourning placed offerings of bread and other foods in baskets and bowls so that the dead loved ones would not hunger while they hovered around.





## Symbolism

Few attempts have yet been made to penetrate the reserve of the natives as to the meaning of their basketry designs yet imagery, symbolism and the picturing of what he sees are habits of his daily life and are incorporated into basketry design through the use of patterns, and motifs that look geometric or representational due to technological constraints during manufacturing.

The only reliable method of determining the meaning of either a contemporary or traditional basketry design is to obtain an explanation from its maker which of course is not always possible as the basket may be old and the maker may be dead. Therefore, one must rely on older members of the tribe to give an interpretation of its design which may not be accurate as “ *the pattern is run at the fancy of the maker. Sometimes the basketmaker will possess her own peculiar design and patterns ...*” (Mason,p.189,1904).

Due to the native woman's reserve and often fear of the whites in days gone by an explanation for basketry design simply wasn't given. Nevertheless,

*“ many of their patterns involve the Greek fret, pure and simple, as well as countless variations worked upon this self-same theme. Then again the ... basketmaker will attempt to mimic nature with cherry trees, ferns, starfish, fir-tress; and a thousand and one objects common to their everyday life”,*  
(Mason,p.189,1904).

1911-1912

The first part of the year was spent in the field, collecting specimens and making observations on the habits of the various species of birds and mammals. The second part of the year was spent in the laboratory, preparing the specimens and writing up the results of the field work.

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The first part of the year was spent in the field, collecting specimens and making observations on the habits of the various species of birds and mammals. The second part of the year was spent in the laboratory, preparing the specimens and writing up the results of the field work.

### **Case Study 1: Hopi Baskets**

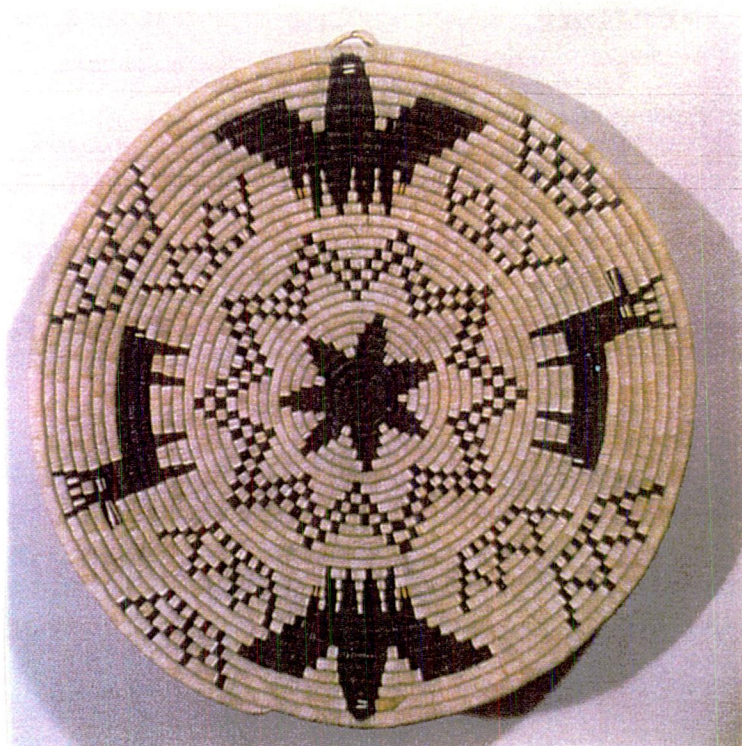
As already mentioned some of the most colourful basketry in the United States has been made by the Hopi tribe from the Southwest ,(See illustration 10). During the Classic and Transitional Periods baskets were made primarily for utility and ceremonial purposes such as wedding gifts and tribal dances. Today many of these baskets are produced expressly for sale to tourists due to the existence of better storage facilities and modern technology, although basket making continues to be important among the Hopis in their ceremonies.

Plaiting and coiling are the most commonly used techniques in the making of baskets and designs range from geometric to animal related. The eagle and crow tend to be the most popular subjects on baskets with triangles and concentric circles supplying the remainder of the baskets in bright colours and intricate designs, (See illustration 24).

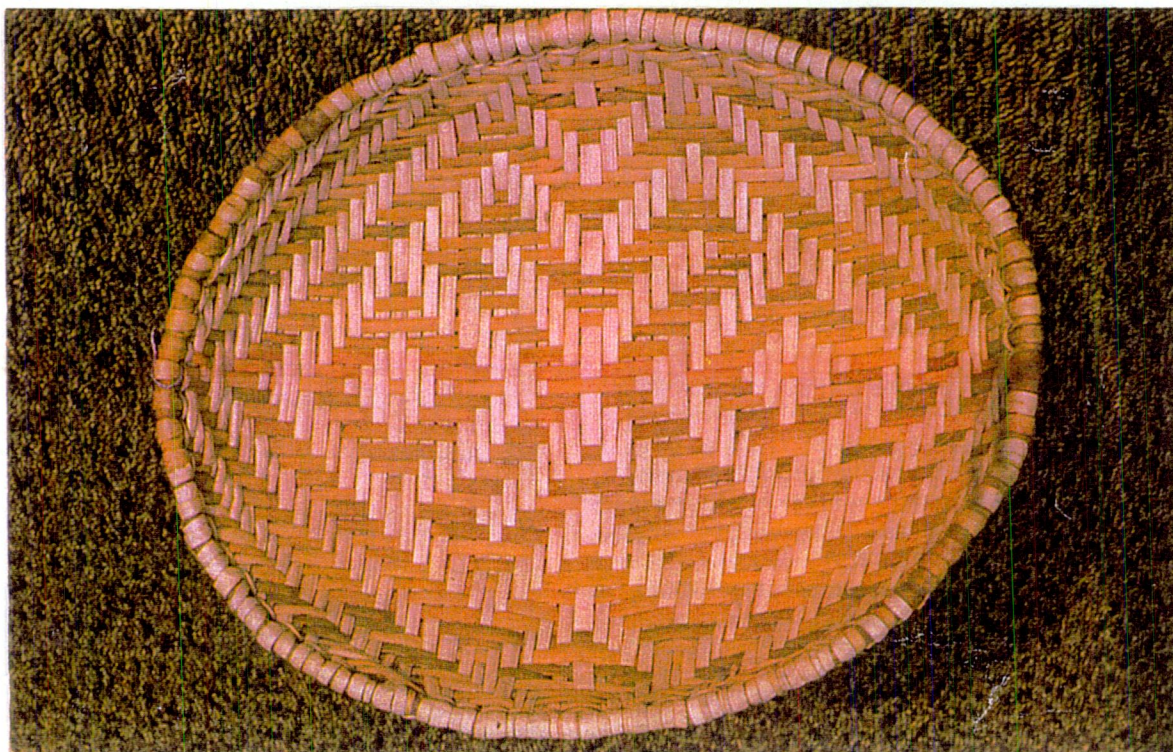
Hopi baskets are made with various uses in mind, Jars, serving bowls, storage containers, burden baskets and trays are just some of the many types of baskets that have been made throughout the years. Burden baskets are the only Hopi baskets believed to have been made by men, making Hopi basketry a distinctly female art form. The twill plaited ring basket,(see illustration 25), is the oldest continuously- made type of plaited textile made in North America and has been made by the Hopi people for more than 1,500 years. The modern day Hopi ring baskets have the greatest range of twill plaited design motifs and generally use dyed orange, black and natural shades to emphasis the design. With this exception most Hopi baskets had important ceremonial roles. Possibly the finest







**Illustration 24 - Hopi plaque with common Hopi image of the eagle (around 1990) Coiled method.**



**Illustration 25 - Hopi ring basket 1975 (Plaited)**







**Illustration 26 - Hopi plaque early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Spider design)**





example of native American wicker basketry is made by the Hopi in the form of flat plaques or sacred meal trays, (See illustration 26). They exhibit a wide range of multi-coloured stylised and abstract design motifs. geometric spider web patterns of concentric circles are common.

***“In native legend spider woman taught the Hopi women how to weave, while also weaving the clouds that bring rain. By using the spider’s web as the design on their sacred meal trays, and by saying appropriate prayers at her shrine, the Hopi hope to please the spider woman in order to encourage her to spin rain clouds” (Turnbaugh, p 233, 1986).***

During the Hopi marriage ceremony a wedding plaque is filled with white corn meal and is carried in the wedding procession as a symbol of the plentiful food with which the new couple will begin their married life;

***“The basket is kept until the couple’s death; then in a symbolic sense, the plaque safely bears the departed soul from the edge of the afterworld to the afterworld where the soul then rests in peace” (JamesG.W.,p42, 1972).***



## **Case Study 2 - Washo Fancy Basketry: with special reference to Louisa Keyser**

Washo fancy basketry is a twentieth century phenomenon that owes little to traditional techniques, forms and designs as they existed in the nineteenth century. Promoted by collectors and dealers it evolved to meet the demands of the marketplace and was dependent on a number of innovative and commercially successful artists.

Louisa Keyser, (See illustration 5), was the most innovative and influential of the Washo weavers. This in part was due to Abe Cohn's unique, yet somewhat exploitative patronage relationship with Keyser. For three decades, from 1895 to her death in 1925, Cohn provided Louisa and her husband with food, clothing and medical care in return for all the products of her labour, and she was also expected to weave in public to attract the attention of customers. In exchanging independence for economic security and protection Louisa participated in a relationship similar to those entered by most Washo after European settlers deprived them of their territory and traditional subsistence.

Through the marketing of Washo basketry Cohn provided the economic background for the transformation of traditional Washo basketweaving, Illustration 27 shows the Cohn Emporium and branch store around 1900 with Louisa Keyser's baskets exhibited in the centre, surrounded by baskets of other Washo weavers and other tribes.









Illustration 27 - The Cohn Emporium around 1900.





Due to the harsh nature of the Great Basin environment which made basic subsistence a constant struggle, and the degradation of the native culture due to non-Indian settlers in Washo lands, Washo basketmaking (Illustration 28) in the late nineteenth century was simple both in technique and design and therefore could not compete in the curio market with the sophisticated baskets from California. For the Washo a new approach was necessary.

Cohn's patronage of Louisa Keyser spurred the creation of new curio style. Living with the Cohns and secure from economic hardship, Louisa devoted an increased amount of time to perfecting her art. isolated from prolonged contact with other Washo Louisa had the freedom and encouragement to break with Washo weaving tradition. Keyser transformed Washo weaving by imitating the shape, motifs and design arrangements of the commercially popular Pomo gift baskets Illustration 29 that she had seen in Cohn's Emporium on Lake Tahoe. To these traits Keyser added fine stitching and a colour scheme based on the contrasting colours of black and red.

Illustration 30 is considered one of the finest examples of Washo coiling with stitches numbering 30 to the inch. The use of elongated triangles in this representational design is typical of Washo work. The design is called ' birds migrating or flying away '. Louisa Keyser's new style was a material sculpture without utilitarian function.

Other weavers adopted Keyser's innovative shape, colour scheme, and designs while also looking to foreign ideas and their own creativity to evolve highly individualised styles. Keyser, although having originated the Washo fancy



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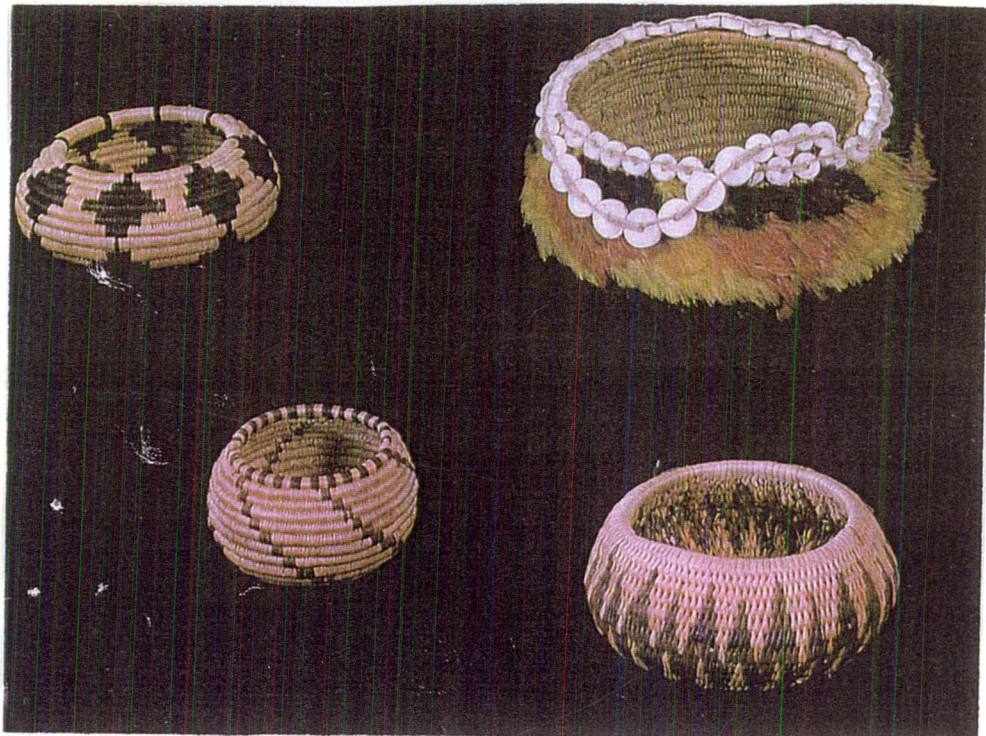
2. The second part of the paper discusses the role of the government in the development of the United States. It is argued that the government has played a crucial role in the development of the country, and that its actions have been guided by a set of principles that have been developed over time.

3. The third part of the paper discusses the role of the individual in the development of the United States. It is argued that the individual has played a crucial role in the development of the country, and that his actions have been guided by a set of principles that have been developed over time.

4. The fourth part of the paper discusses the role of the future in the development of the United States. It is argued that the future is a time of great opportunity, and that it is essential for us to prepare ourselves for the challenges that will come.



**Illustration 28 - Washo traditional storage baskets 19<sup>th</sup> century with simple geometric design.**



**Illustration 29 - Pomo gift baskets which were commercially successful during the Transitional Period.**





basketry style, pursued a separate course of development in her basketry art. Her high aesthetic standards led her to retain a reserved approach of elegant simplicity with which she created profound visual effects while her contemporaries adopted bold and flamboyant designs to compete for the attention of tourists. This basket (See Illustration 31) by Louisa Keyser perfectly fuses classic form with surface decoration combining unique woven columns which expand and contract with the swelling of the vessel's form. This basket is considered a masterwork in the expression of Native American Basketry.

Notwithstanding, Louisa Keyser's enormous artistic talent it is clear that without the patronage of Abe Cohn (Illustration 32) who provided support and encouragement for her to transform Washo basketry and pursue her aesthetic goals Washo basket - weaving would have taken quite a different course. Yet, Cohn has been rightly criticised for exploiting Louisa Keyser. I would argue that the only facts that now remain are Louisa Keyser's baskets which are an undeniable testimony to her creative genius and sensitivity.

Today Washo basket weaving has declined as most of the remaining weavers are now quite elderly and this craft is in danger of extinction. Realising this some collectors are attempting to acquire all the baskets made by contemporary weavers yet the Washo tribe still hope to interest young people in taking up basket weaving as a profession.





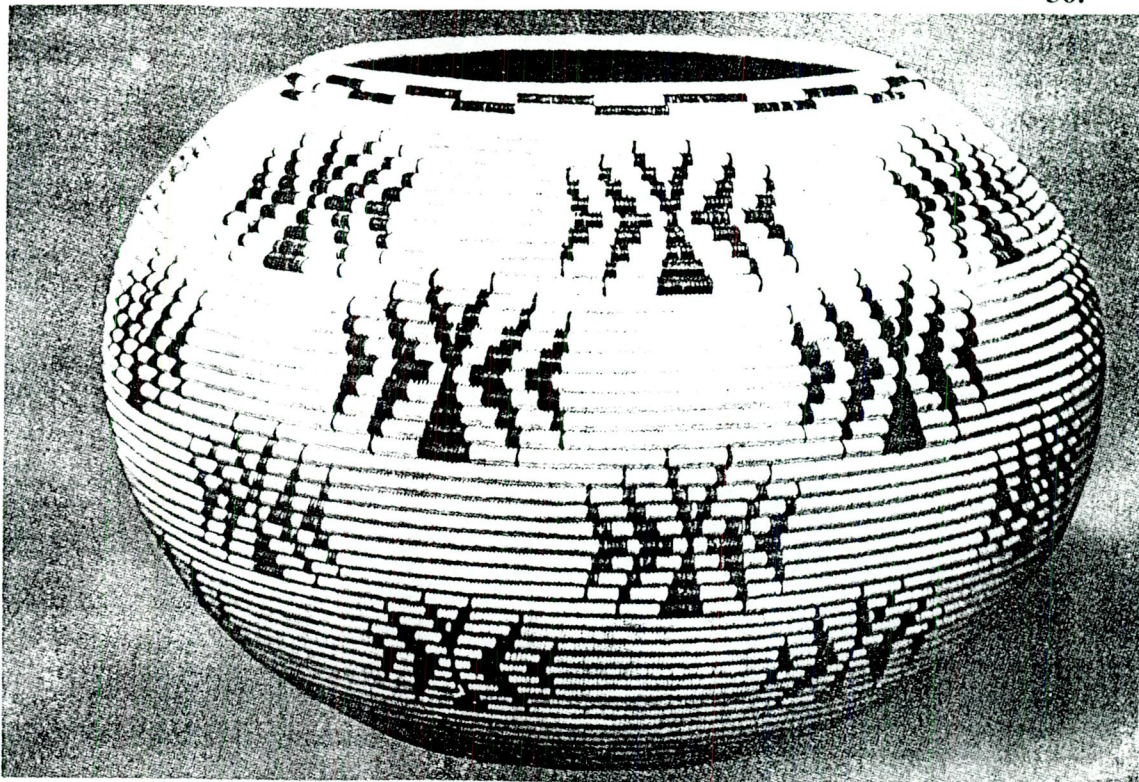


Illustration 30 - Basket by Datsolatee (Louisa Keyers) Representing design called "*birds migrating or flying away*".



Illustration 31 - Basket by Louisa Keyser which combines sculptural form with surface decoration.







**Illustration 31 - Abe Cohn 1920 standing outside his Emporium holding two of Lousia Keyser's baskets. He was her patron for 30 years.**





## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **The Impact of colonisation on the making, use and display of Native American Basketry**

## CHAPTER IV

The following is a list of the names of the persons who have been named in the preceding chapters.

This Chapter addresses the influence Europe and its settlers in North America had on the Native American culture from an artistic viewpoint. The processes of change incurred by the interaction and the visible domination of one group over the other is looked upon while the views of both groups on art and artists are dealt with. The history from first contact to present day between both cultures is detailed chronologically while an account of native arts placement in an alien society is presented.

The history of Native American basketry is a combination of many different cultural traditions that have influenced each other. From the sixteenth century basketry has increasingly been influenced by the art and technologies of Europe, via European settlers in America. Over the last century these distinct Indian styles have become more similar; due to outside pressures and because of mass communication allowing increasing contact among Indian tribes at greater and greater distances from each other.

Today the old or 'traditional' baskets are quite different from 'contemporary' works. The old styles are products of exotic societies now extinct or changed beyond recognition while the new art is made by artists who belong to an ethnic minority but who now share cultural similarities with members of the larger societies.

As Grace Glueck of the New York Times recently argued:

***“ Though still an identifiable ethnic minority, Native Americans .... are by and large, as diverse in their cultural outlook as Americans in general and no longer feel dutiful about making art that reflects their Indian heritage” (Coe,p.15,1986).***





Yet to be a modern 'Indian' many people believe traditions needn't be cast aside, rather the past is often incorporated into the present with great breadth of vision and with greater freedom than was granted before.

Anthropologists today believe that Indian society has not practised the western concept of 'art for arts sake', which in Europe is a separate entity from the rest of daily life. Here artists are seen as visionary lovers distanced from others in their search for hidden truths and meanings. Native societies tend to think of artists differently as the ability to make things by hand is considered a gift given by the Creator to be used for the welfare of the community.

According to native beliefs every person has received such a gift and a major goal in the life of an Indian was discovering their gifts, developing them and using them as functionality was the overriding criterion for any product made, with aesthetic qualities, although present not seen in isolation from the whole.

For many native peoples the separation of life into different components didn't exist. Words such as art, culture and religion are missing from most native languages because they are unnecessary: the values they represent are ever present in the daily lives of traditional native people. This poses a problem for Western society as Carol Fallon noted and urged us not to ***"impose an out-dated Western concept on a non-Western culture that has never made the division and therefore need not trouble to free itself from it"*** (Porter ,p 3,1990).

Some scholars believe that Indian art and material culture should be viewed through Indian eyes to be appreciated correctly, a feat no Westerner can hope to

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2. The second part of the document focuses on the implementation of the proposed changes. It details the steps involved in the transition process, from the initial planning phase to the final execution. This section highlights the challenges faced during the implementation and the strategies used to overcome them, ensuring a smooth transition for all stakeholders.

3. The third part of the document provides a comprehensive overview of the results achieved. It presents a detailed analysis of the data collected, showing the impact of the changes on the organization's performance. This section also includes a comparison of the results against the initial goals, demonstrating the effectiveness of the proposed changes.

4. The fourth part of the document discusses the future outlook and the ongoing efforts to improve the organization's performance. It outlines the key areas for future focus and the strategies to be implemented to achieve these goals. This section also includes a summary of the lessons learned from the implementation process, providing valuable insights for future projects.

achieve yet, the more knowledge one acquires concerning the world from which the work comes, the richer one's appreciation will be. Attempting to see objects through Indian eyes requires an imaginative and positive mind, opened to the philosophies behind the objects created. An understanding of the spirit world of the Indians is needed in order to see how an object reflects that world.

For many native people there is a spirit in nature that connects Indians to the land, the animals, the plants and all their relatives. One of the most important motives of their arts is to show their understanding of that spirit and of their relationship to the world. The natives who have spiritual knowledge understand their 'art' in ways anthropologists and art connoisseurs do not as they were primarily concerned with historical and aesthetic studies of the artefacts. All too often in the study of Native American basketry separation of the object from its social context occurred.

The earliest Native American arts and crafts were housed in scientific museums devoted specifically to ethnographic studies which is the observation and analysis of human groups through the recording of their respective modes of life. These collections were therefore regarded as specimens for investigation without any consideration of their aesthetic qualities although some museums devoted to art possessed "aboriginal collections" and, in some instances kept them on continuous display. As Robert Wood Bliss a noted collector commented:

***" the sculpture, the goldsmiths work, textiles and ceramics of the inhabitants of the Western Hemisphere before the voyages of Columbus were often of great artistic value, and .... They belong in Museums of Art as well as in the crowded cases of archaeological artefacts of folk art in museums of natural history" (Porter, p2,1990).***



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Sadly at the turn of the last century this view was not shared by many as objects seized as pagan idols and superstitious nonsense were put on proud display in prominent institutions and through this, the material goods changed their meaning (Illustration 33). The natives themselves believed that their objects needed to be useful.

Behind glass in museum cases Native Americans were frozen in the past, Illustration 33, these peoples who had evolved, adapted and made creative accommodations to the passage of time were disparaged as not being 'real Indians'. They were presented as unchanging and incapable of meeting the advance of civilisation and progress. The public went to museums to see the stereotype and the exotic images and stories as the American public felt *"most comfortable with the mythical Indians of Stereotypeland ...."* ( Hill, p16,1986). Museums failed to capture the spirit of the Indian craft which became objects behind glass and emotional symbols of culture control and loss.

Prior to this during the earliest days of contact throughout North America explorers and settlers recorded their admiration for and desire to obtain pieces of basketry. In 1520 when Albrecht Durer saw treasures brought back from North America his admiration was spontaneous;

*"and all the days of my life I have not seen anything that so gladdened my heart as these things did. For I saw among them wonderful, artificial things and marvelled at the subtle ingenuity of people in strange lands"* (Feest,p9,1992).



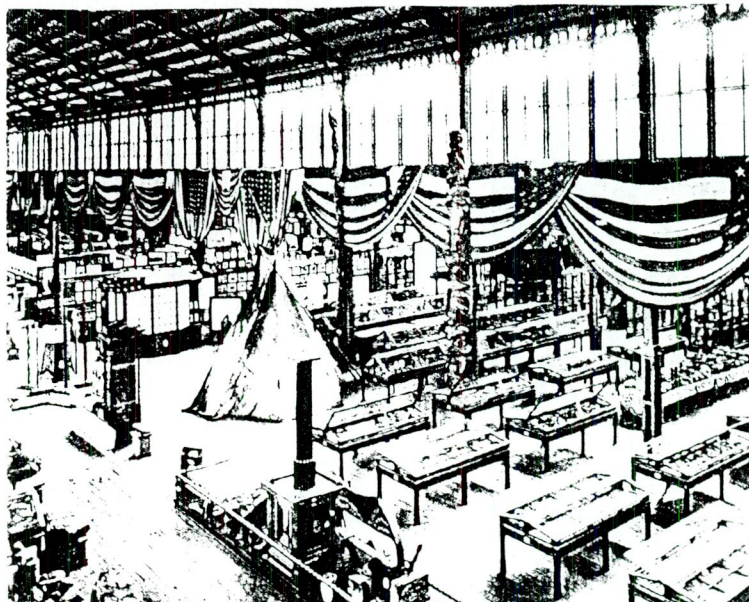


Illustration 33 - US National Museum Washington D. C. Native objects displayed out of context.

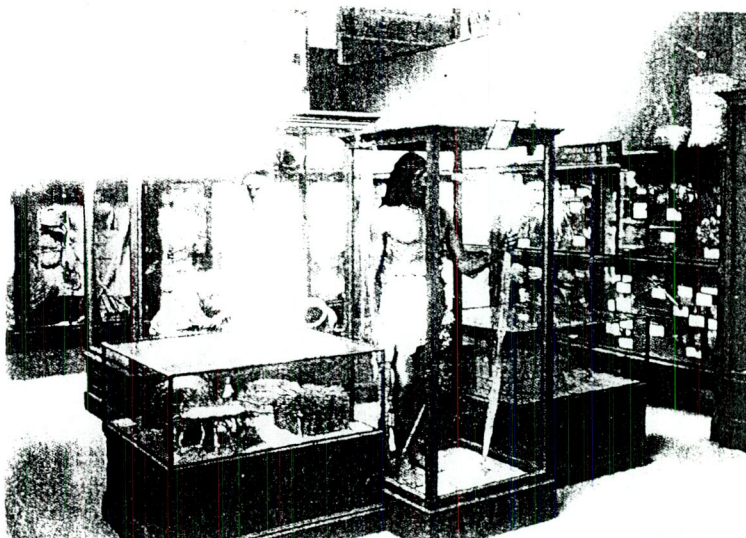


Illustration 33A - US Government Building, Centennial Exhibition Philadelphia 1876  
(Behind glass in museum cases, Native Americans were frozen in the past.)





What fascinated this German artist were the new media, workmanship, rarity and exoticism in the Native American basketry. This also appealed to Captain Cook as on his third voyage (1776-1778) he collected a sizeable number of items from the natives to display back home.

Native American basketry became extremely important at the outset to many pioneer families living on the remote frontier, yet it was this settlement by Europeans which disrupted the natives subsistence strategies and made them more dependent upon European commodities and trade goods. In time, the natives became consumers within the European economy and were forced to buy many of their basic goods. To satisfy the need for cash many individual natives began to sell baskets, which became a means for survival in their rapidly changing world.

This process and change were not ideal for the Native Americans as their culture which had survived successfully through generations of tradition and skills, which had been perfected throughout the ages, and knowledge of their land was being obliterated by the ascendancy of Western society in America.

Many natives throughout North America surrendered to this growing demand for speed of production by cheapening the quality of their wares. New materials were introduced to circumvent the time and labour necessary to gather and prepare traditional resources. Commercial yarns, dyes and glass beads increased the natives' palette and were used to produce objects with traditional character (Illustration 3).



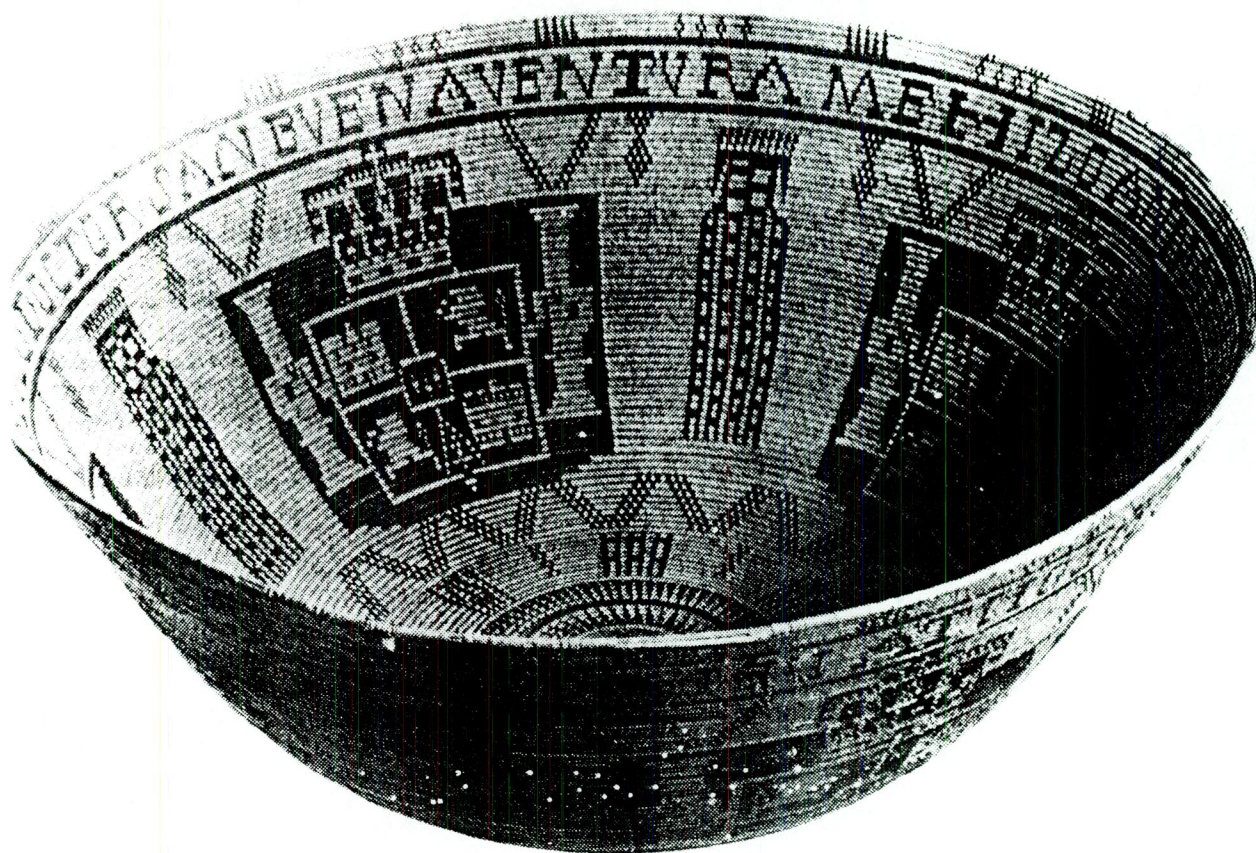


Illustration 34 - Coiled basket with Spanish inscription and Royal coat of arms 1822. The willingness of Chumash basketmakers to copy any given basket is exemplified in this piece which is almost entirely devoted to a European subject matter.





Eventually lacking the ability to produce both inexpensively and in volume natives frequently turned to novelty items where success was achieved in the making of new types and styles of basketry. Fancy shapes and designs based on European models gradually appeared. With white preference for realistic designs native craftspeople used largely pictorial pieces on their baskets for tourist sale (Illustration 34). In general only those foreign features that were compatible with traditional design found easy acceptance; like floral patterns, butterflies and birds.

Regrettably indiscriminate buyers forced native artists to provide altered traditional baskets to suit non native taste which are still made by tribes all accross the country today. Unfortunately, most Americans were introduced to the art of Native Americans only through these cheap tourist curios.

In the long run the white presence proved to have less beneficial results. As the whites assumed political domination over the tribal people and imposed their administration on their affairs, the old way of life could no longer be maintained.



In the early 1990's there was a craft movement which focused significant attention on Native American basketmaking popularised by magazine articles, books and hobby clubs. Their baskets were recognised, praised and frequently copied by artisans. Many attempts to replicate native crafts resulted in the creation of trash and, in some areas, the subsequent misrepresentation of traditional Native Arts and Crafts.

After 1910 interest in Native American basketry began to reduce and by the late 1920's few natives made traditional baskets. The most significant factor in the decline of basketmaking was the break-down of traditional values and customs. In most regions the old arts had no place, except for the Southwest where positive action had been taken by perceptive groups to encourage and preserve traditional work. Some tribes, swamped by white settlement, were pushed off the better lands and confined to reservations where churches were chosen to undertake the re-education of the native children. The idea was to replace the native world view with Christian morality and in so doing attempt to halt centuries of traditional belief and artistic expression.

Native children were taken from their families and communities and sent to boarding schools. As Carl Sweezy, an Arapaho born around 1880 recalled of his school days;

***“ We had everything to learn about the white man's road.....We had to learn to live by farming instead of by hunting and trading .... We had to learn to cut our hair short, and to wear close fitting clothing made from dull coloured cloth, and to live in houses, though we knew that our long braids of hair and embroidered robes and moccasins and tall round lodges were more beautiful” (Hill,p176,1994).***



The first part of the paper discusses the importance of the study of the history of the United States. It is argued that a knowledge of the past is essential for a full understanding of the present. The author then goes on to discuss the various factors which have shaped the development of the United States, including the influence of the British, the Spanish, and the French.

The second part of the paper discusses the role of the United States in the world. It is argued that the United States has a special responsibility to the world, and that it should use its power to promote peace and justice. The author then goes on to discuss the various ways in which the United States has fulfilled this responsibility, including the establishment of the United Nations and the Marshall Plan.

The third part of the paper discusses the future of the United States. It is argued that the United States must continue to play a leading role in the world, and that it must do so in a way that is consistent with its values and principles.

The author concludes the paper by stating that the United States has a great future ahead of it, and that it is up to the people of the United States to make the most of this future.



**Illustration 35 - A group of Apache scouts in Arizona 1871. They are wearing European style uniform supplied with gun, cartridge belt, blanket and canteen.**







Illustration 35A - An Arapaho chief 1870 dressed in full native war regalia.







**Illustration 35B - Blackfoot painted tipis in Plains region. A traditional native home in this area.**





For the natives, children are the reason elders seek information, share it and pass it on. Children are the focus of the transfer of knowledge from the elders, as without them the traditional culture simply will not survive and the spirit of the people will be forgotten.

White legislators and bureaucrats took it upon themselves to suffocate all signs of traditionalism as Ray Lyman Wilbur, Secretary of the Department of the Interior during the Hoover administration expressed the prevailing view of the 1920's:

***"The red man's civilisation must be replaced by the white man's .... The Indian must give up his role as a member of the race that holds aloof, while all other races enter into our melting pot and emerge as units of great purpose" (Coe,p65,1986).***

When the older traditional values and techniques of the Native American basketmaking were on the verge of extinction in the early decades of the twentieth century there came a renewed interest in preserving this craft among Native Americans and White Americans alike. Natives fearful that their traditional culture was on the verge of extinction with the passing of the older generation began to study and practice many of the crafts while whites, in search of missing values in their own culture, turned to Native American crafts in search of authenticity.

In 1927 the Secretary for the Department of the Interior commissioned a report under pressure from Indian support groups. In addition to the recommendation of a general policy based on the recognition of positive aspects of Indian culture, the report strongly endorsed the development of Indian arts and crafts and warned against the imposition of an industrial system as a replacement for handcrafts. The



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report listed the standards the government should take;

***“products that were characteristically Indian of good materials, of good quality, of execution, of good colour and design useably unless intended for display, unique or compatible with other requisites, tagged with the government’s guarantee of genuineness and quality and priced fairly” (Coe,p65,1986).***

Then in 1935 the Indian Arts & Crafts Board was established as an independent part of the federal government which continues today to promote the economic welfare of the Indian tribes by acting as an advisory and promotional agency to any authentic Native American art & craft.

With the greater public awareness in the 1930’s and 1940’s several museums undertook large scale loan exhibitions of the artefacts and specimens. In 1931 the Exposition of Indian Tribal Art was held in New York where it was considered to be ***“the first exhibition of American Indian Art selected entirely with consideration of aesthetic value” (Feest,p13,1992).***

Other milestones on the recognition of tribal craft as art was an exhibition organised in 1939 for the Golden Gate Exhibition in San Francisco, while the first major museum to recognise fully the aesthetic quality of Native American cultures was the Museum of Modern Art in New York which held an exhibition in 1941.

In 1976, ‘Sacred Circles’ was organised by Ralph T. Coe, an authority on Native American arts & crafts, at the request of the Arts Council of Great Britain and was presented at the Hayward Gallery in London. ‘Sacred Circles’ was intended

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to be a historical documentation of the works from archaeological times to the period just before the 1970's yet with a few contemporary objects added. But to those connected to the exhibition on the day to day basis it became an affirmation as Coe declared;

***...."we are still here. We still walk on this land. We still dance in ceremonies of thanksgiving . And we still depend on art to express what it is like to live on our side of the world" (Hill,p177,1994).***

These exhibitions, and the catalogues which accompanied them brought to the attention of the general public for the first time a wide range of Native American arts and crafts seen in the context of the Native Americans' identity and belief. Further recognition of the native work today includes the Indian Art Fund, an educational board which collects representative collections of native art with the purpose of educating the Indian crafts person to a better standard of workmanship.

Finally, and most reassuringly for the future, the legislation creating the Museum of the American Indian (1989) outlines the principles and recommendations to address past inequalities between museums and Native Americans while also establishing excellent guidelines for future co-operation. The National Museum of the American Indian's collections founded on the great wealth of native objects acquired by George Gustave Heye (1874 to 1957) explicitly states;

***"All Native American materials .....together with all culturally specific information, must be treated as the sole property of the affected Native American culturally affiliated group and with the utmost respect by scholars and interpretations of those cultures, whether in collections, research, scientific study, exhibitions or educational programs" (Hill,p19,1986).***





Today Native Americans are being re-evaluated in the light of contemporary issues. Things are not the same today in native culture as they were in the past, there has been rebirth and regeneration. The secret of survival lies in part with the younger generation capitalising on the elders teachings, and in the white man's recognition that instruments of continuity often remain unspoken in the Indian world in face of outward evidence of dissolution. Great American Native art is being made today in both the old 'traditional' way and in the modern traditional way. These arts are a vibrant testimony to a cultural resilience that has often gone unrecognised and unsung.



## CONCLUSION

This investigation into the material culture of Native North American has provided me with an opportunity to explore and discuss the multifaceted role basketry has played in the cultures of Native Americans. Through the study of historic times to present day ; the technical aspects involved in basket making and the specific cases of the Hopi and Washo tribes, particularly the work of Louisa Keyser. I have come to the conclusion that basketry is a mirror which reflects the daily lives of native peoples in their beliefs, customs, ideas and traditions.

I have pointed out that all cultures are in a constant state of change brought about both by internal and external forces and that the arrival of the Europeans to the American continent changed the face of the entire area and the lives of its native peoples irredeemably. Due to the lack of respect and understanding shown by the new settlers many disadvantages arose for the natives as

***“The white settlers and their government appropriated lands that belonged to Indians and restricted access to these lands. The first Governor ....recognised native title to land, but his successors denied Indians ever had title”  
(Taylor,p12,1995).***

This disruption by the arrival of Europeans in the early sixteenth century affected thousands of years of cultural development and within a few mere centuries the old way of Indian life was swept away forever. As the geneticist Neel has written;

***“....the intellectual arrogance created by our small scientific successes must now be replaced by a profound humility based on the new knowledge of how complex is the system of which we are a part ....In the most sophisticated way we can summon, we must return to the awe and even fear, in which primitive man held the mysterious world about him and like him, we must strive to live in harmony with the biosphere...” (Keesing,p129-130,1981).***





Change has come slowly in the willingness to understand and respect Native American culture. I firmly believe that the arts and crafts of these peoples offer modern society a profound and original expression of the spirit of man. Yet today Native Americans still struggle for economic and political independence making it a paradox that once self sustaining and healthy populations find themselves living under poor conditions in the land of plenty where they believe land is something that cannot be controlled.

Native Americans will adapt as they have in the past both in life and culture. No culture is static and Native Americans are not frozen in time and space. Instead they develop as they recognise they have much to offer others if others continue to listen. Contemporary basketmakers labour for these rewards so that a living legacy can be passed onto the next generation.



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