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Kawaiisu Basketry¹

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THERE are a number of fine basket makers in Kern County, California," wrote George Wharton James (1903:247), "No attempt, as far as I know, has yet been made to study these people to get at definite knowledge as to their tribal relationships. The baskets they make are of the Yokut type, and I doubt whether there is any real difference in their manufacture, materials or designs." The hobby of basket collecting had reached its heyday during the decades around the turn of the century. The hobbyists were scattered over the country, and there were dealers who issued catalogues advertising their wares. A Basket Fraternity was organized by George Wharton James who, for a one dollar annual fee, sent out quarterly bulletins.²

While some Indian tribes were widely known for their distinctive basketry, the dealers and collectors were not always concerned about identifying the sources of their treasures. Thus James, quoted above, is aware of the presence of "fine basket makers in Kern County," but knows nothing of their tribal affiliation. He never refers to the Kawaiisu by any name³ although he knows of the existence of Indians on and around "Paiuti" (Piute) Mountain at the heart of the Kawaiisu area. As will be seen below, he describes "one of the most interesting baskets I have ever seen," owned by an aged woman "on Paiuti Mountain, Kern Co."

Today it is quite clear that there are more Kawaiisu baskets than can be identified with certainty. Thus one avid collector, Gottlieb

Adam Steiner (died 1916), assembled at least 500 baskets from the West, and primarily from California, but labelled all those from Kern County simply "Kern County." They may well have originated among the Yokuts, Tübatulabal, Kitanemuk, or Kawaiisu. Possibly the most complete collection of Kawaiisu ware is to be found in the Lowie Museum of Anthropology at the University of California, Berkeley. Here the specimens are duly labelled and numbered. Edwin L. McLeod (died 1908) was responsible for acquiring this collection. McLeod was eclectic in his tastes and, unlike Steiner, did not limit his acquisitions to items having esthetic appeal. James (1903:247) observed:

Undoubtedly the best collection of Kern County baskets now in existence is that of Mr. E. L. McLeod of Bakersfield, Cal. . . . Living in close contact with the Kern County Indians, he has had unusual opportunities for selection and choice, and the result is a collection that is at once the delight, envy and despair of all who see it. To merely catalogue his baskets would be to fill up many pages of this work.

McLeod left his baskets to his sister, Mrs. George H. (Jessie) Taylor, but later they were purchased and donated by Mrs. Phoebe Apperson Hearst to the University of California. Additional specimens were brought to the university by anthropologists who visited the Kawaiisu for short periods to obtain ethnographical data: E. W. Gifford (acquisitions in 1915), T.D. McCown (in 1929), Harold

Driver (in 1935), and S. C. Cappannari (in 1947). Some Kawaiisu ware is to be found in other museums and private collections. Ardis M. Walker, poet and conservationist, writes appreciatively of Refugia Williams, Kawaiisu basket weaver, in his book, *The Rough and the Righteous of the Kern River Diggins* (1971:8). He reminisces: "If I cared to, she suggested I might purchase some of her baskets. That is how I came to own some of the most beautiful Indian baskets in my collection." A local Kern County merchant, now retired, accepted baskets from the Indians in exchange for needed commodities. Andy Greene, one of the few Indians remaining in the traditional territory, has some baskets with which he demonstrates basket-making in schools.

As already implied, Kawaiisu containers generally bear a close resemblance to those of neighboring peoples. Usage governs weave and style, and the traditional correlation is adhered to almost without exception. Thus "work" vessels including carrying and burden baskets of all sizes, winnowers, seedbeaters, and water-bottles are invariably twined. Trays, hats (for women only), baskets with designed necks, and decorative, non-utilitarian ware of a variety of shapes are always coiled. However, the coiled tray may be deemed a "work" item since it is employed in sifting meal. Hoppers, used in connection with mortars during the pounding process, are coiled but apparently the usual custom is to cut the bottom out of an old basket rather than weave a new one. There are, moreover, a few oddities, but these will be considered later.

The common material for both coiled and twined weave is willow (*Salix* spp.). Of the four species identified, the Arroyo Willow (*S. lasiolepis* Benth.) is the most highly regarded, but Red Willow (*S. laevigata* Bebb) and Sandbar Willow (*S. hindsiana* Benth.) are acceptable. Goodding's Black Willow (*S. gooddingii* Ball) is rejected for basketry because its stems "break easily." In twined weaving, unsplit

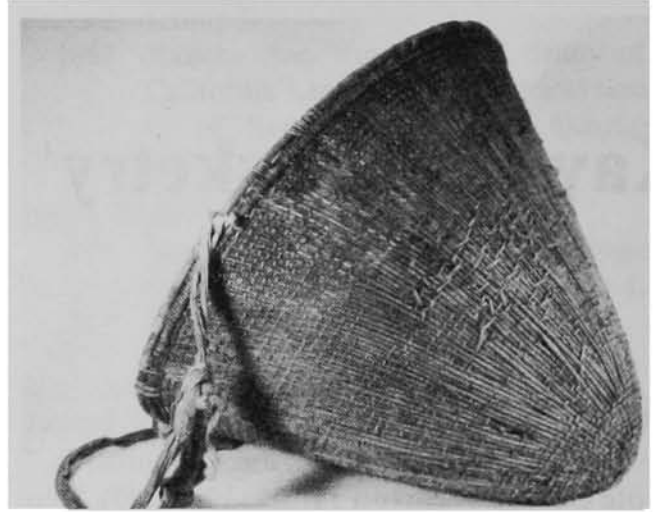


Fig. 1. Twined burden basket, Cat. No. 1-28015. All catalogue numbers are those of the Lowie Museum of Anthropology, University of California, Berkeley.

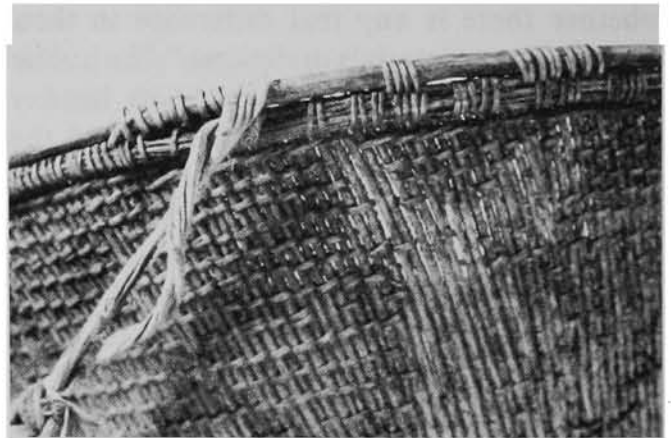


Fig. 2. Detail of rim of twined burden basket shown in Fig. 1.

willow strands constitute the warps; the wefts require split strands. For the rims of most twined baskets, unsplit withes of willow, oak or rosebush are equally suitable. Heavy duty containers (Fig. 1) usually have a double rim (Fig. 2), but whether single or double the rim is attached to the top row of twining with a coiling stitch. For coiled ware, the foundation is invariably of Deergrass (*Muhlenbergia rigens* [Benth.] Hitchc.) (Fig. 3) and is therefore always of the type called "multiple rod." The weft material is preponderantly split willow strands with the intrusion of the split strands of other materials to achieve color



Fig. 3. Incomplete coiled basket which should have been finished with a neck. Inside the top edge of the basket may be seen a few stems of Deergrass. Additional stems of the grass would have been added to continue the "multiple rod bundle" until the vessel had been completed. Cat. No. 1-28025.

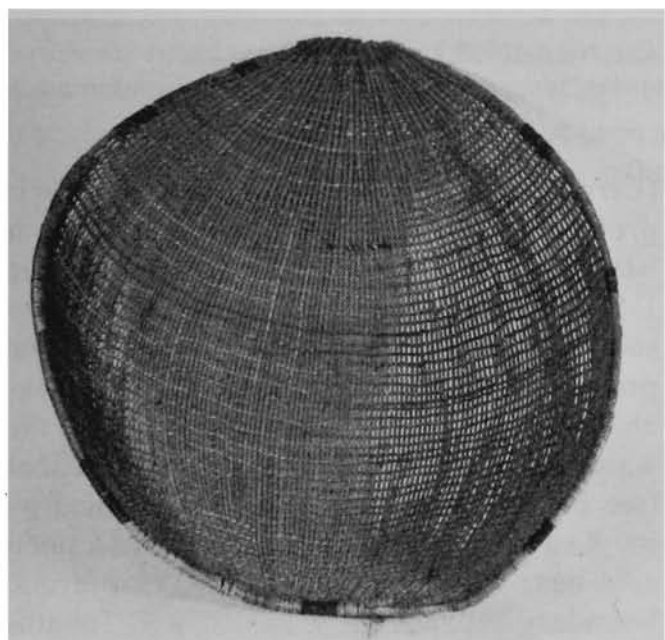


Fig. 4. Twined winnowing tray, Cat. No. 1-19703.

patterns (see below). According to Lawrence Dawson (personal communication), the "direction of Kawaiisu coiling is invariably rightward with respect to the weaver . . ." The foundation starts with a stem or two, but quickly builds up to a small bundle which remains uniform until the coiling tapers off at the top of the basket.

Apparently decoration of twined ware is most often limited to occasional variation in stitching. Wefts may pass over more than one warp, and a diagonal effect may result. Waterbottles often have a change of weave around the shoulder of the container. Obviously the weave may be tight or loose depending upon the purpose of the container. A waterbottle must be tightly woven and, in addition, rendered waterproof by the application of pinyon pitch. Other ware such as winnowers (Fig. 4) and seedbeaters (Fig. 5) have larger interstices. One specimen in the Lowie Museum collections, a burden basket (Cat. No. 1-19701), has two simple linear bands on the upper portion executed as weft strands of the reddish-brown rootstock of the Joshua Tree (*Yucca brevifolia* Engelm.).

In contrast, coiled vessels allow for a variety of colored patterns, none of which involves the use of paints or dyes.⁴ The color and design are derived from natural materials obtained locally. A red-brown material comes from the core of the rootstock of the Joshua Tree. The rootstock core of Our Lord's Candle (*Yucca whipplei* Torr.) yields a bright orange. The stems of the Squawbush (*Rhus trilobata* Nutt.) apparently supply strands of

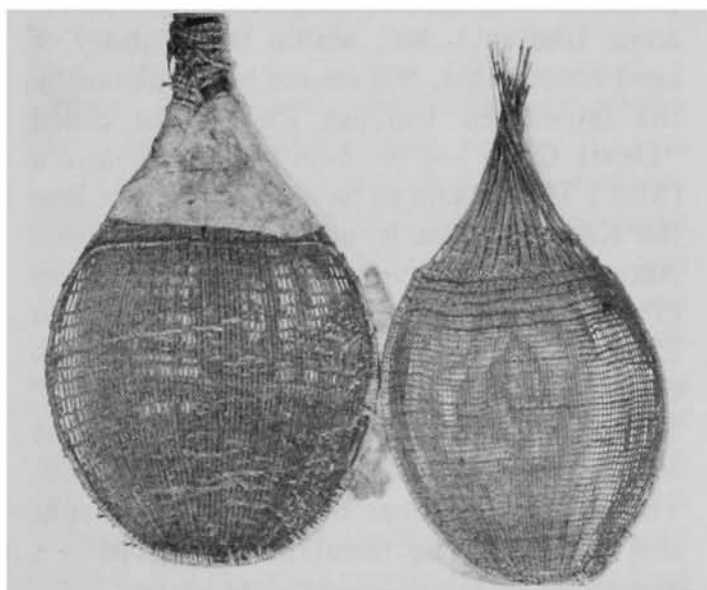


Fig. 5. Twined seedbeaters, Cat. Nos. 1-19708, 1-39369.

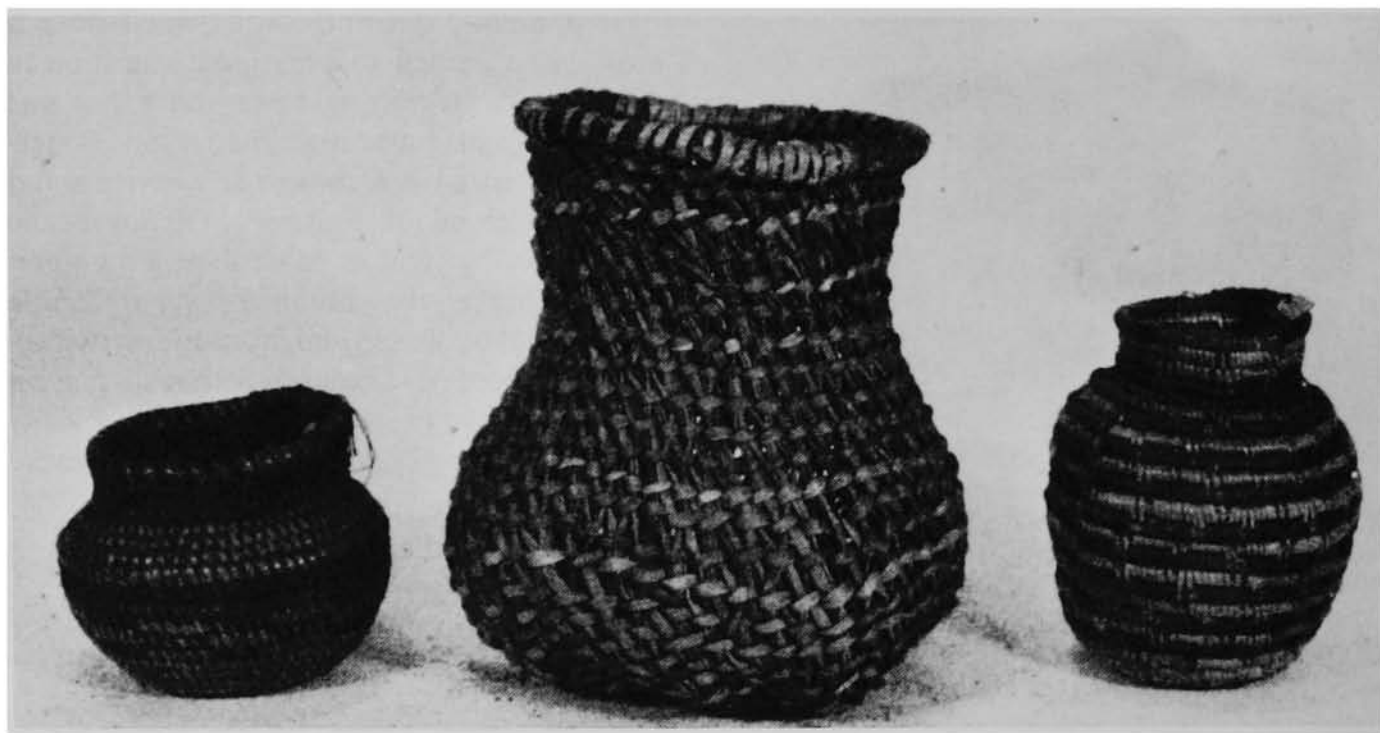


Fig. 6. Kawaiisu baskets. Left to right: small coiled basket, Cat. No. 1-20937; small open twined basket of sedge or marsh grass, Cat. No. 1-28029; small coiled basket showing "interrupted" stitching of warps characteristic of some Kawaiisu specimens, Cat. No. 1-20941.

pale brown, but it is not certain that any specimens containing this element were seen. The availability of the plant is said to be limited and the stems are judged "too short" for wide usage. Black was formerly provided by the stipe or rootstock of the Bracken Fern (*Pteridium aquilinum* [L.] Kuhn var. *pubescens* Underw.), but, within the memory of aged consultants, this source was replaced by the introduced Unicorn Plant—also called "Devil Claw"—(*Proboscidea louisianica* [Mill.] Thell.), said to have been brought into the Kawaiisu area from Needles, California. Actually it is native to the southern states (Twisselmann 1967:345) and so, according to Ernest Twisselmann (personal communication) "it couldn't have been truly primitive." The long pointed horns projecting from the seed capsules serve as black pattern material. The points are broken off and the horns split and trimmed. The resultant strands have a maximum length of about eight inches.

The employment of the stems of Redbud

(*Cercis occidentalis* Torr.) to give a red color is problematical since the only evidence is a basket from the McLeod collection in the Lowie Museum described by McCown. Dawson (personal communication) questions the provenience of this item and thinks "it reasonable to suppose" that it was made not by the Kawaiisu but by the neighboring Tübatulabal (see below). Redbud was never identified by my Kawaiisu consultants and grows in a small area near what must have been the informal boundary between the Kawaiisu and Tübatulabal but usually considered within Tübatulabal territory (Twisselmann 1967:263).

Sedges (*Carex* spp.) and rushes (*Juncus* spp.) seem not to have been used by the Kawaiisu in "serious" basket-making. They may, however, have provided material for "play" or "practice" vessels. One consultant was said to have a basket made of *parasiivi* (*Juncus balticus* Willd.), but it was not seen. A transvestite, reputed to have been an excellent weaver, began his basket making, according to

consultants, with the use of *parasiivi* at the age of five. It was also suggested that “temporary” containers may have been made of such material. A single specimen in the Lowie Museum (Fig. 6, center) is described by McCown as being woven of sedge. This item will be mentioned again below.

The quills of two birds are infrequently integrated into the patterns of coiled baskets—those of the Yellowhammer (bright orange) and those of the bird known as *poosi*—‘pelican?’ (white). The shortness of the quills probably discourages any extended patterning. Of the baskets pictured here, the only one containing quill stitches (Fig. 7) seems to include them at random and without any relation to the established design. Some coiled baskets are, in addition to color patterns, ornamented with one or two rows of the top crests of quails (Figs. 8, 9). The small vessel used in the ceremonialized Jimsonweed-drinking—now long abandoned—must have been a container of this description. One basket in the Lowie Museum collection (Fig. 9, left) may well have been designed for this purpose. Aside from this usage, quail crests may have been added to baskets simply because of an esthetic

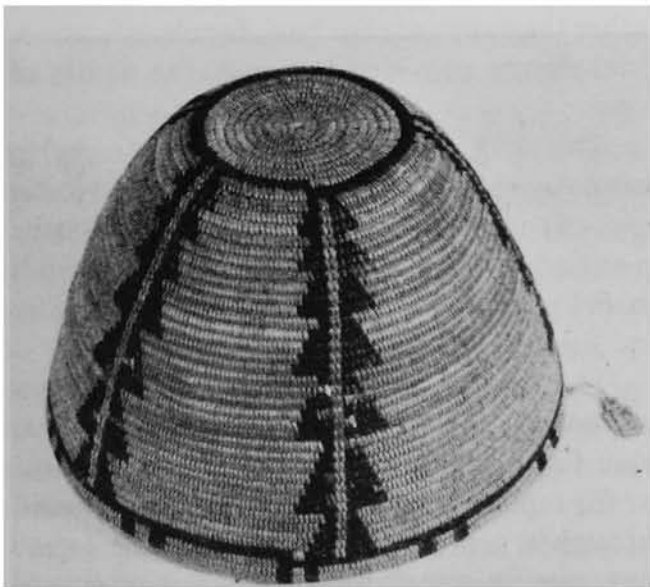


Fig. 7. Coiled basket with Yellowhammer feather quill stitches, Cat. No. 1-28030.



Fig. 8. Coiled basket with quail crests and red yarn, Cat. No. 1-2995.



Fig. 9. Coiled baskets with quail crests and red yarn, Cat. Nos. 1-20942, 1-20935.

appeal. There is no evidence that the adornment had a monetary value.

The Kawaiisu word-root, *nehe-*, refers generally to coiled basketry. Thus *nehekadi* is the term for any type of coiled basket, and *nehenibi* is the pointed tool used in the process of manufacture. All of the coiled ware considered thus far properly fall within the meaning of these words. There is, however, another category of coiled basketry. The basic materials are the same: the multiple Deergrass foundation and the wefts primarily of split willow. But there is a specific term for this kind of coiled basket—*wičikadi*—which consultants

translated "wrap-around." McCown describes the stitching as "interrupted" but the native word characterizes the process more aptly. The weaving involves several—usually two to four—"normal" coiling stitches which are anchored to the previous row, but they are followed by a number—usually four to twelve—turns about the foundation without anchoring. This alternating procedure continues throughout the basket although the number of stitches—of both kinds—may vary from time to time (Figs. 6 *right*, 8). One might suppose that this interrupted stitching would render a basket less rigid, but apparently it does not. Although the question was never raised, no consultant volunteered to suggest why the *wičikadi* weaving was occasionally used rather than the more common *nehekadi* type. Possibly the only reason was to achieve variety in the manufacture of decorative ware.

In any case, although there are a few *wičikadi* baskets in the Lowie Museum collection, I saw only one in the field. It was owned by—and probably made by—Refugia Williams, one of the last of the Kawaiisu weavers. It is not likely to have been made after 1930, and it is quite unlikely that any such basket was woven after this date. The most interesting aspect of the ware is its rarity. While coiled and twined weaving is common to the area, *wičikadi* basketry is apparently limited to the Kawaiisu. The Kawaiisu people with whom I worked seemed unconscious of this fact. In searching for possible parallels I enlisted the aid of Lawrence Dawson of the Lowie Museum. A basket illustrated by Mason (1904:Plate 24) and attributed to the "Watchumna (Mariposan) Indians of middle California" is, according to Dawson, "most likely . . . just another Kawaiisu example." In other communications Dawson states that the wrapping of the Kawaiisu *wičikadi* type

is to be seen in baskets of the Samoans, Pima and Papago, and from Toluca in Mexico, but these examples are not identi-

cal to the Kawaiisu pieces either in coiling stitch or decorative effects produced by the wrapping. The Pima-Papago ones are few and apparently all novelties produced for sale. They may even be copied from Toluca baskets which are widely disseminated in markets as Mexican curios. I do not know a good explanation for the isolated and infrequent occurrence of this weave among the Kawaiisu. Either they invented it themselves, or at some point a weaver got hold of a Toluca basket . . .

Dawson has found two examples of the wrap-around weave among the Washo, but he notes that "instead of a grass bundle, the Washo use a single rod of willow [and] the shapes [of the baskets] are also different."

The type of design patterning characteristic of *nehekadi* weaving among the Kawaiisu does not lend itself to *wičikadi* ware. From the few examples available, the decorative motifs of the latter seem restricted to complete rows of wefts of colored material which stand in contrast to the usual willow strands. Quail crests, enmeshed in red yarn, are sometimes added (Fig. 8).

COILED BASKETRY TYPES

Shape and usage of *nehekadi* baskets, rather than size, are the basis for classification. Consultants provided me with the names of types:

The *k^wičiči* is an open basket serving primarily as an eating dish. Today the word is applied to any "plate." If *mučiči* is not an error in an early (1936) recording of *k^wičiči*, then it is an eating bowl about six inches in diameter and four inches deep.

The *saguci* is a flat, disc-like tray used as a winnower or sifter to separate coarse meal from fine—the former is returned to the mortar for repounding. The separation is achieved through a gentle rocking motion. The *saguci* may vary in size from a foot in diameter to more than two feet. It always embraces a circular design (Figs. 10, 11). The center four-

pointed star drawn by Sadie Williams (Fig. 12a) was not seen, but she must have known of it. The star-like figure is encircled by the "going-around" motif (see below).

The *muruwasi* is a large-patterned basket. One sketch by Sadie Williams (Fig. 12b) has upper and lower broad bands, both of the "rattlesnake" design. She adds the following note to her drawing: "Not utilitarian. Used for burials, placed over face of deceased. Sometimes broken and buried with deceased. Rattlesnake design. This basket sometimes made with other designs." One consultant said that the *muruwasi* could be used for stone-boiling, but this procedure had long since been abandoned.

The *šivoron(i)ži* is much like the *muruwasi* but with a constricted neck. Sadie Williams' sketch (Fig. 12c) has two bands of the "zigzag" motif around the body of the basket with the "dragonfly" motif around the neck. Her comment is: "Not utilitarian. Same as *muruwuze*." (her spelling). No doubt nonutilitarian containers could be kept at home as receptacles.

The *iki(ci)* or *ikibizi* is the basket hat worn only by women. It may be assumed that each woman designed her own hat. I recall that Emma Williams (see cover), my chief consultant, had some bird quill element in the pattern on her *ikici*. One of the baskets (Fig. 7) photographed at the Lowie Museum may have been an *ikici*. It has a few stitches of bird quill scattered seemingly at random in the dominant black pattern. The basket hat serves the important function of protecting the upper forehead when a tumpline is used to carry burdens on the back. The hat can be used as a personal food dish. A female consultant told of what seemed to her an amusing incident: a woman went to sleep wearing her hat which rolled off her head as she slept.

The purpose of the basket hopper, *ikibiga(zi)ka*, is to prevent the loss of meal in the pounding process. There was some difference of opinion as to whether the hopper is

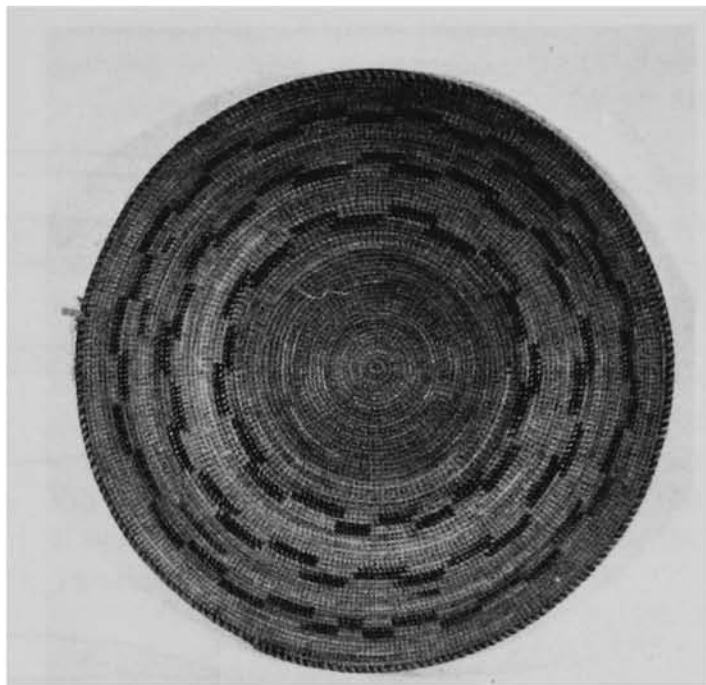


Fig. 10. Flat, coiled, disc-like tray, Cat. No. 1-19705.

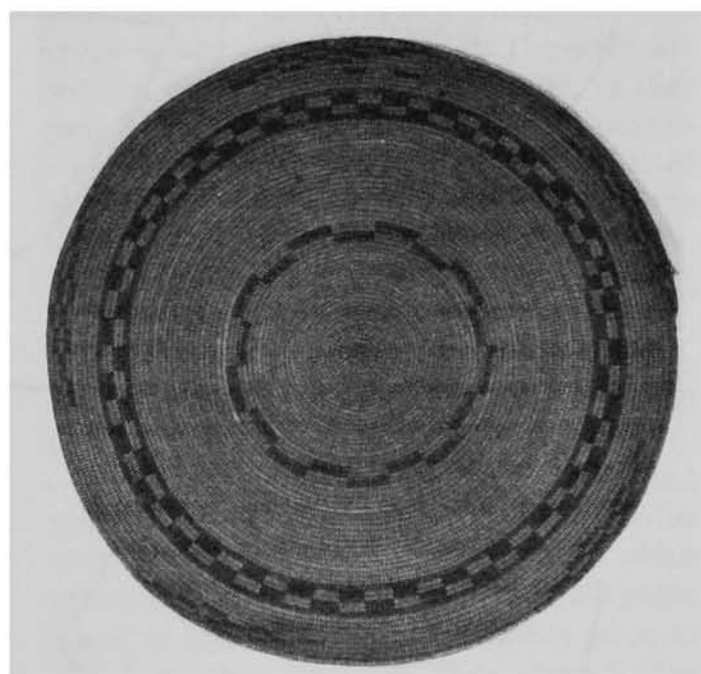


Fig. 11. Flat, coiled, disc-like tray, Cat. No. 1-19689.

manufactured solely for this purpose or may be an old coiled basket of suitable size with the bottom cut out. If woven as a hopper, it would not be patterned. Though I never saw one, it must fit snugly around a mortar hole and low enough so as not to impede pounding. One consultant said that it is held in place by

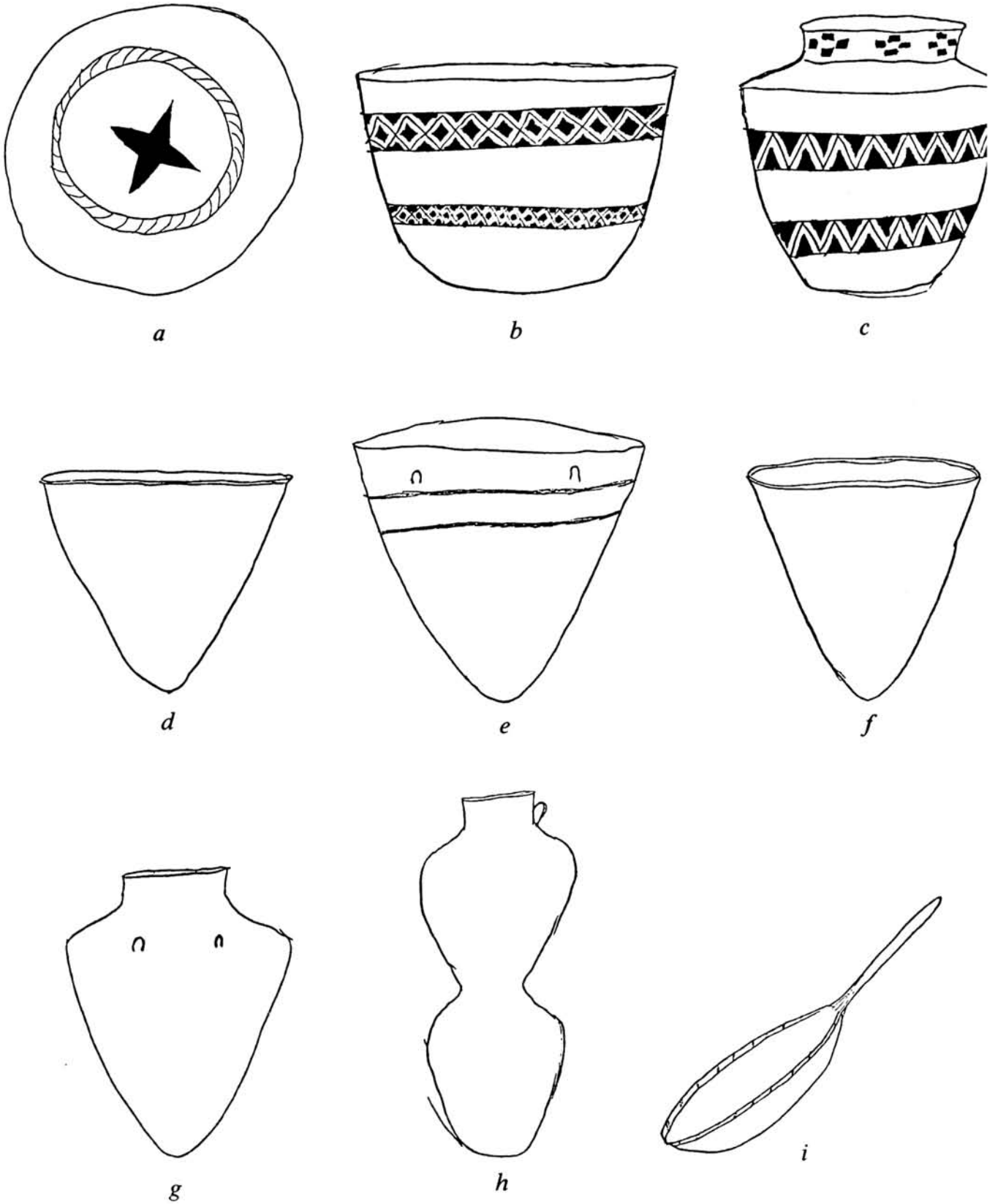


Fig. 12. Nine baskets drawn by Sadie Williams. Letters refer to specimens discussed in the text.

applying pitch along its bottom edge. She said further that it is used only in connection with a portable stone mortar. In this case it would be employed primarily in inclement weather when pounding in a bedrock mortar hole was impractical. Voegelin, in her *Tübatulabal Ethnography* (1938:31), reports that a Tübatulabal consultant "had seen Bob Rabbit, widowed Kawaiisu rain doctor, using hopper on mortar hole in log at pinyon camp where there was no stone."

Cappannari recorded *taarabigadi* (*taara* 'quail'), apparently the small coiled container used in connection with the drinking of the liquid prepared by soaking Jimsonweed (*Datura wrightii* Regel) root. The vessel is described as having a woven pattern as well as a row of quail crests around its rim. The small basket (Fig. 9, left) in the Lowie Museum collection seems to fit this description.

CONVENTIONAL COILED BASKETRY PATTERNS

The conventional decorative designs on coiled baskets are known by name. Here are eleven of such names, but it cannot be assumed that the list is exhaustive:

ayataniitikadi (*ayataniizi* 'butterfly'): Fig. 3 (the small figure)

cini'ogikadi (*cini'oo-* 'zigzag'): Figs. 12c, 13 (tray and ornamental basket)

kamiyu'uvi 'jackrabbit-leg':—perhaps Fig. 14, front left

kazibinoorikadi (*kazibinoози* 'dragonfly'): Fig. 12c (on neck)

kogotikadi (*kogo* 'gopher snake'):—perhaps Figs. 10, 11

navidawiyuwitiikadi (*navidawi* 'facing, opposite'): Fig. 13 (outer circle of tray)

niwirikadi (*niwi* 'person'): Figs. 9, right and 15

pu'id/riikadi (*pu'i-* 'eye'): Fig. 15 (basket between seedbeaters)

togowarikadi (*togowa* 'rattlesnake'): Figs. 12b, 13, lower

wigidawi miyag^weedi 'going sideways (or

across)': Fig. 14 (front baskets)
wo'iitiikadi (also recorded *wo'oyiitiikadi*)
'upside down,' 'face downward': Figs. 13, 14 (both on left)

Other designs such as the chevron and dots were not named—or possibly no inquiry was made about them. The selection of a pattern for a basket may rest with the weaver, though some patterns probably fit more adequately than others into the space available. Identical designs are variously interpreted by different peoples. Thus the Kawaiisu "eye" represents the "king snake" to the Tübatulabal. The Kawaiisu "person" figure is conceived by the Tübatulabal to be a "small boy."

TWINED BASKETRY

The word for twined basketry, *cagakadi*, is derived from the root *caga-* 'to lead into' and must describe the process whereby the wefts twine in and out of the warps. The wefts are worked in pairs and cross each other as they pass over and under the warps. A variation in weave is achieved by shifting the number of warps passed. Though most often two, the number may be extended to as many as six. The weave may be close or loose depending upon the use for which the basket is intended. If a twined container calls for waterproofing, the stitching must necessarily be close and tight.

The basic material for both warps and wefts is willow—unsplit for warps, split for wefts. Split Squawbush stems (*iicivi*, *Rhus trilobata* Nutt.) are occasionally used for wefts, but it is said that the stems cannot serve as warps because they are "too short." One consultant was told by her grandmother that only those who have no relatives can use Squawbush in basket-making. The rims of twined work-ware may be of unsplit willow, oak, or rosebush stems.

Nine twined basket types were identified, though not all of them have been seen. Of one the data are not clear as to whether it is twined



Fig. 13. Upper: John Marcus in front of his house in Monolith. For demonstration he is wearing a basket hat, although men did not wear them. The baskets he holds are also shown in the lower photo. Lower: Below is a large tray with two rows of the "zigzag" motif. The outer circle may be the "facing" or "opposite" motif. The larger winnower clearly shows the open twining. The four coiled baskets on the bench illustrate, left to right, the "upside down" motif, the "rattlesnake" motif, the "zigzag" motif, and the "going across" motif.



Fig. 14. A collection of work baskets and decorative baskets most of which were probably made by Emma Williams. There are two burden baskets, two seedbeaters, two winnowers (a soap-root brush is in the larger winnowers), and a waterbottle. Of the coiled baskets, the one nearest the burden baskets has the "eye" design; the next one has the "upside down" design; and the two front baskets have, the author believes, the "going across" pattern.

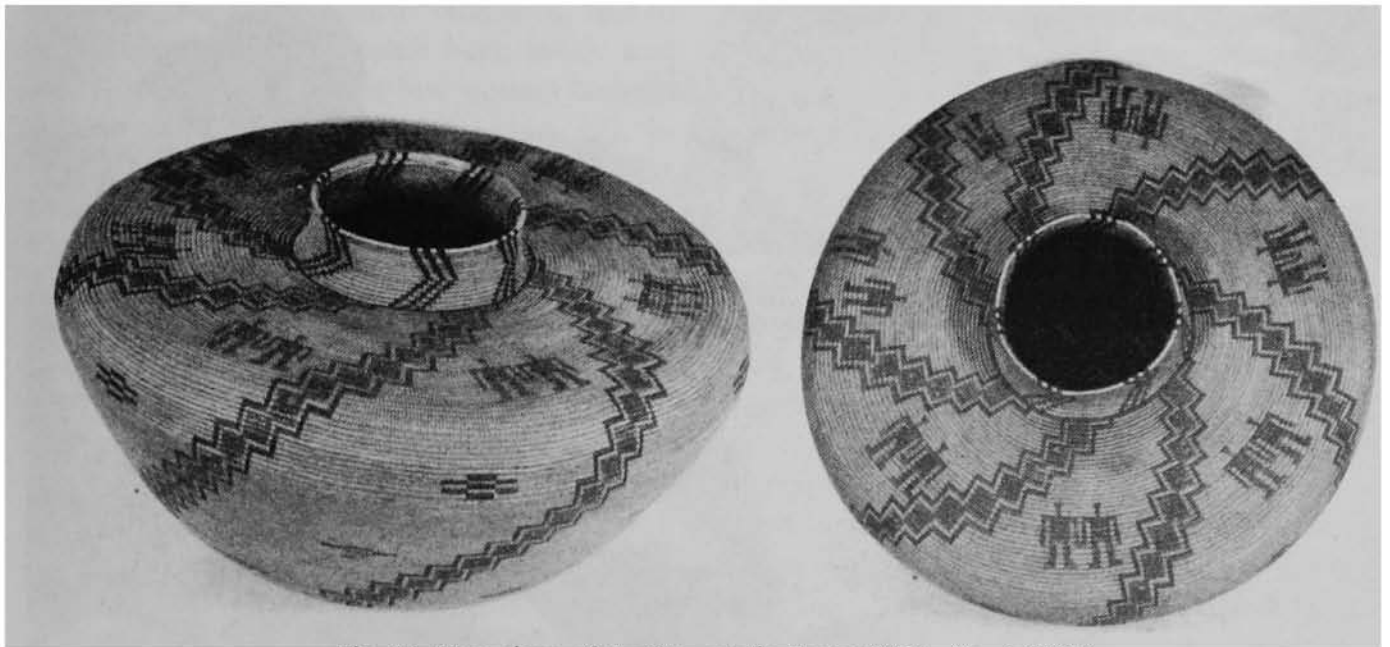


Fig. 15. Two views of the "Apostolic Basket," Cat. No. I-20934.

or coiled.

The *yaduci* 'winnower' has a rounded triangular shape and varies in size from one to about two feet at the base (Fig. 4). In use it is held with the broad base close to the body and the rounded tip pointing outward. Though there may be differences in details, the paired wefts are twisted about single warps. In the pinyon-gathering procedure (Fig. 16), the *yaduci* serves to separate the good seeds from the bad, i.e., those whose shells are empty. By tossing the pinyon seeds into the air, the sound ones usually fall back into the winnower while the empty ones are apt to drop to the ground. The *yaduci* is also employed to parch pinyon seeds with hot coals. A rapid shuffling motion

prevents the seeds and the basket from being scorched.

The *taniku* 'seedbeater' (Fig. 5) is a tennis-racket shaped basket with a slightly concaved oval bowl about nine inches long and a handle of about six inches. The handle is formed by bringing together the extended warps, which are usually bound together with cloth strips. The pods or seeds of standing grass and similar plants are beaten into a gathering container held in a position to receive them.

The *wo'nizi* 'gathering basket' (Fig. 12*d*) is roughly conical: as indicated in Sadie Williams' drawing, it measures about 18 inches in diameter across the top and is about 16 inches deep. It is lined with cloth inside and out, obviously



Fig. 16. Emma Williams and her elder daughter at a pinyon-gathering. They are removing pinyon seeds from the cones. Mrs. Williams is putting the seeds in a winnower.

to prevent the seeds from dropping through. A short cord attached to one side of the rim tilts the container so that it can receive the seeds as they are beaten loose from the plant.

The large carrying basket, *aniši* (Fig. 12e), is of the same general shape as the *woʻnizi*. Sadie Williams' drawing conveys this information: "Big carrying basket—general purpose—carry seeds, acorns, piñons, clothes. Loops are string or buckskin." A tumpline may be attached to the exterior loops. The sticky pitch residue found in one *aniši* undoubtedly comes from the transporting of pinyon cones.

The *ookorosi* is a smaller carrying container of the type used to collect pinyon cones from individual trees. Sadie Williams' note accompanying her drawing (Fig. 12f) reads: "Used for piñons, in picking green piñons, gathered them in these and dumped into larger basket, anisi." The consultant's sketch appears to make the *ookorosi* somewhat deeper and narrower than the *woʻnizi*.

The *sanaʻoochozi* 'waterbottle' is considered the most difficult of containers to make. Not only was it essential that the weave be tight, but the vessel, despite its constricted neck, had to be waterproofed with pitch both inside and out. It was admitted that few women had the skill to produce a *sanaʻoochozi* (Fig. 17). In 1937 it was said that only one woman still alive was able to do so. She was Refugia Williams, who died two years later, aged and infirm, and had probably not made a *sanaʻoochozi* in many years. The only specimens seen are old, and probably few, if any, remain usable. A comparison of the photos of waterbottles with Sadie Williams' drawing (Fig. 12g) will reveal a marked difference. This is curious since the usual waterbottles, as photographed, were well known to her. The information written at the bottom of her drawing is quite accurate: "Water jug, made of willow, pitched with red earth. Hot sunup = pitch put inside and rolled to distribute it evenly. Had a basketry ladle.

Applied pitch both inside and outside—painted it red earth."

Design on the waterbottle is limited to a weave-variation in a few rows usually toward the top of the container. For waterproofing, the pinyon pitch, mixed with red ochre, is applied both in and out. To spread the sticky substance, a consultant said that a few smooth pebbles are dropped in and the vessel shaken vigorously to produce an even coating. The rounded bottom of the *sanaʻoochozi* made it practical to stand it in a shallow depression. Two consultants spoke of two small cups being hung on the vessel, but these were never seen.

Probably never a very common item is the double-bulbed waterbottle (*navaʻakurazi* 'divided by a neck'). None was ever seen and none is in the Lowie Museum, but consultants remembered that the well-known transvestite had made them. Sadie Williams knew what the container looked like and drew a sketch from memory (Fig. 12b). She puts a loop near the top of the bottle. Next to the drawing she writes: "Hoyepuz [the transvestite] made this kind of water jug. Used around house, not packed any distance as is other type of water jug." This statement disproves the idea that this container, having a greater capacity than the usual waterbottle, might have been used to carry water greater distances.

Data about the basket called *saazowinibi* are vague. No specimen was seen and it is not certain that any still exists. It is described as a flat-bottomed twined basket into which wet leached acorn meal is placed for drying. While the weave must have been tight enough to retain the meal, it cannot have been waterproofed since any water in the meal had to be permitted to drain through.

Similarly, the container named *čipiʻnizi* is known only through an oral account. On one occasion it was said to be a tightly woven twined basket, but at another time the consultant seemed to indicate that it is coiled. In any case, its function is to hold ground Chia

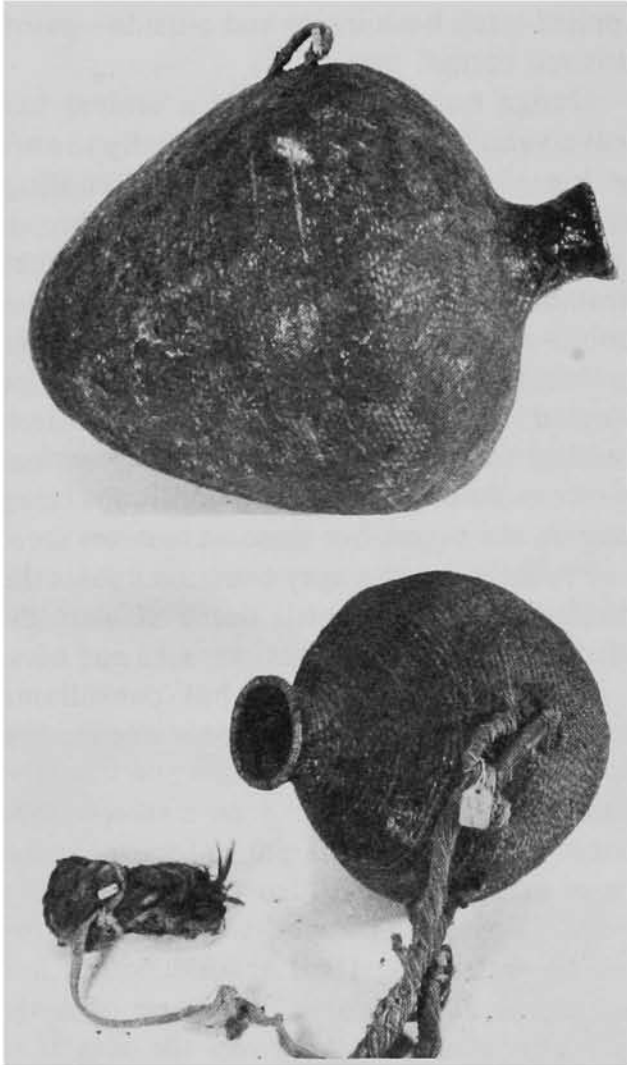


Fig. 17. Twined and pitched waterbottles. Upper: Cat. No. 1-19712; lower: Cat. No. 1-27119.

(*pasida*, *Salvia columbariae* Benth). It is pictured as cylindrical and somewhat bulging toward the bottom. It is not made to stand, but is hung up with a cord.

“ODDITIES”

Two vessels labelled “Kawaiisu” in the Lowie Museum do not fit into familiar Kawaiisu categories. One (Fig. 18) is described by McCown as “sub hemispherical open mouth with round bottom. Diagonal twining with red design material covered over with white on reverse . . . Rim is a coil of epicampes⁵ with warp ends bent into it. In addition there is a single wooden ring of redbud? elder? fastened



Fig. 18. Unusual Kawaiisu twined basket. Note wooden ring attached to rim. Cat. No. 1-20923.

on by sewing . . . Used for holding meal or mush. An odd specimen.” There are features of this container which make its identification as of Kawaiisu provenience questionable. Lawrence Dawson of the Lowie Museum points out that willow root was used to achieve a white color. No such usage is known for Kawaiisu baskets. Further, the employment of Redbud or elder in Kawaiisu basketry is nowhere reported. Both willow root and Redbud are known, however, from the neighboring Tübatulabal. It may well be, therefore, that this “odd specimen” ought not be regarded as of Kawaiisu manufacture at all.

The second container is, according to McCown, an “open-worked twined, vase-shaped basket, made of sedge or marsh grass . . . This is a crude little experiment in sedge grass. Not intended for use. A greenish color” (Fig. 6, center). Though the little basket stands alone among known Kawaiisu baskets, there is no reason to doubt its authenticity.

The “Apostolic” Basket (Fig. 15)

The most celebrated of Kawaiisu baskets is a coiled container that is at least 130 years old

and has come to be called the Apostolic Basket. Acquired by McLeod and now in the Lowie Museum, its story has been told and retold. The two accounts at hand—one in James (1903:247-248) and the other written by J. Torrey Connor⁶—do not agree in all details. James describes the basket as

one of the most interesting . . . I have ever seen. In color it is a rich cream with the designs worked out in red and black, the whole mellowed by time into that indescribable but so real charm that only expert collectors can fully appreciate. It is 16 inches across and 9 inches high. The neck is 5 inches across. When Mr. McLeod first heard of it and saw it, it was being used as a water receptacle by its owner on Paiuti Mountain, Kern Co. For four years he visited its owner and endeavored to purchase it without avail. At last, succumbing to the dazzling vision of several handfuls of silver spread temptingly before her, the owner reluctantly parted with it. Before doing so, however, Mr. McLeod learned from her that the basket was made by a Christianized woman early in the last century. The priest had so pictured to her mind the life of Christ and the Apostles that she wove them into her basket . . . It will be seen that on the top there are thirteen human figures depicted, and that ten of these are in pairs, standing side by side. Then one figure is in a division alone, while the other two figures are together, one a little below the other. With an ingenuity that is striking in its simplicity and effectiveness the weaver thus placed Judas, the betrayer, in a solitary and separate place, while the beloved disciple, John, is with Christ but not equal to him, being placed a little behind him.

J. Torrey Connor has a somewhat different version, According to him, McLeod

read of a basket said to have worked in its design the story of Christ and the 12 apostles as taught the Indian women by the Padres.

McLeod

asked Señor Ramirez (a dealer in baskets) if he had ever heard of such a basket. He said that he had and knew where it was. It belonged to an old [woman] living on Paiute Mountain, Kern County, so high up on the mountain that it was impossible to reach the cabin even on horseback . . . Mr. McLeod instructed Mr. Ramirez to visit her and see if the basket could be secured. He did so and was told that it was her most prized possession (although she was using it for a water bottle). She said she would never part with it and it should be burned upon her grave when she died.

Remirez kept visiting the woman for seven years,

when at last he found the old lady waiting for him, the basket tied up in a piece of cloth, willing to part with it for money, bright calicos, etc. . . . She repeatedly told Mr. Ramirez she had made the basket when a very young woman, working some three years upon the specimen, weaving into it the story that the Padres of the San Gabriel mission had taught her of Christ and the 12 Apostles. As will be observed, in one division there is a lone figure representing Christ. Following around the basket to the left there are two figures to each division the feet on a line with those of Christ until you come to the 12th which is lower than the others and represents Judas Iscariot who had betrayed his blessed Lord and had fallen from grace, and was therefore set aside or lower than the rest. She told him that the basket was placed upon the altar at San Gabriel where the Indians could see it to impress upon them the sacred story, as it was exemplified by this Indian woman . . . [Connor 1908?].

It should be noted that the name of the weaver of the basket is not given in either account. Nor is it clear that the young basket-maker and the aged owner are one and the same. As may be seen from the recent (1978) photos of the specimen at the Lowie Museum,

it remains in excellent condition despite its age. Puzzling is the statement in both accounts that at one time the vessel was used to hold water. There is no evidence that it is water-tight, and it is quite certain that no waterproofing was ever applied to it. The mention of Piute Mountain is testimony to its Kawaiisu origin.

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

To what extent has Kawaiisu basketry been influenced by contact with non-Indians? Compared to some California tribes, the Kawaiisu, with their habitat of mountains, forests, and desert, were not suddenly overwhelmed by the white man's onrushing immigration. A few connoisseurs came to recognize the competence of Kawaiisu basket-making, but there was apparently no pressure to produce baskets for sale. Thus the weavers were not disposed to alter their traditional patterns. The Apostolic Basket may be considered an exception, but the circumstances which prompted its manufacture were unique. The shift from the Bracken Fern to the Unicorn Plant as the source of black material in coiled weaving was probably due to the increasing availability of the latter, but the basis of this availability is not known to me. Red yarn came to be used in connection with quail crests around the tops of decorated coiled baskets, probably as a substitute for red feathers of the California woodpecker such as are found on some analogous baskets of the Yokuts. Rope and strips of canvas or heavy cloth became appurtenances for carrying baskets. Receptacles designed to receive grass seeds were often lined with White man's cloth. Sometimes burden baskets were covered with cloth on the outside. Again, what may have been the aboriginal usage in these situations was never indicated. While waterbottles normally have as stoppers sections of yucca stems, bunched yucca fibers, or bunched leaves of the hedge-nettle (*Stachys albens* Gray), the White man's corks of the appropriate size also proved acceptable.

The superiority of a few of the historically introduced "tools" in basket-making must have been readily apparent. Thus, holes of several sizes punched into the tops of tin cans provided a convenient way of standardizing the width and thickness of split strands for both coiled and twined ware. However, Emma Williams, the last of the outstanding weavers, never used such "modern equipment" as far as I could observe. Metal awls and knives quickly proved their effectiveness. The cactus thorn and the bone or wooden point could offer little competition to the steel needle which could be fitted with the same aboriginal gum handle. The new techniques of manufacture increased efficiency and comfort but did not alter the well-established traditions of the weaver.

As with other culture traits, there must have been an exchange of basketry forms, patterns, and techniques among neighboring tribes. Yet enough of distinctiveness remained to enable the keen observer often to differentiate between the "native" and the "foreign" product. There are, however, questions about the movements of basket weaves over large areas, but about these my knowledge is too limited to express an opinion.

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NOTES

1. This paper is prompted not by a desire to prove the excellence or uniqueness of Kawaiisu woven ware—though both of these claims can be supported with some justification—but, more realistically, because there is a considerable accumulation of data on the subject and because basket weaving ceased three decades ago and cannot be revived. I have no ability in the arts and crafts, but, in the course of ethnographic fieldwork in the late 1930's, I dutifully recorded what I could about baskets and basket-making. Two of the best known weavers were still alive, though one died in 1939. In more recent years, I have been the recipient of copies of the fieldnotes of the late Theodore D. McCown and the late Stephen C. Cappannari and

both included material on basketry. In 1929 or 1930 McCown undertook to prepare descriptive notes on the Kawaiisu baskets then in the anthropological museum (now called the Lowie Museum of Anthropology) at the University of California, Berkeley. Among Cappannari's papers are copies of drawings of nine baskets done by a Kawaiisu woman. Because the lines of the copies are faint, I persuaded Elmer W. Smith, designer and illustrator associated with the Harvard Museums, to make the sketches publishable without in any way changing their character. In June, 1978, I received permission to photograph the Kawaiisu baskets at the Lowie Museum. Lawrence E. Dawson, Senior Anthropologist at the Museum, not only made the arrangements for the photography, but has been in communication with me since in response to my questions. In the meantime, I have made two visits to the remarkable private basket museum about fifty miles north of Pittsburgh, thanks to Mrs. Elizabeth Rodewald and William S. Huff, grandchildren of the basket collector, Gottlieb Adam Steiner. (I plan to write an article about this museum.)

I gratefully acknowledge the help of those whose names appear above and also to Dr. David G. Mandelbaum, recently retired from the Department of Anthropology at the University of California, Berkeley, who made the initial contact for me at the Lowie Museum, and to Professor William Bascom, Director of the Lowie Museum. My gratitude goes, finally, to Dr. Richard Evans Schultes, Curator of Economic Botany and Director of the Botanical Museum at Harvard University, for his words of encouragement in this enterprise.

2. James' journal *The Basket* lasted only through vol. 2, no. 4.

3. The name Kawaiisu was unknown to people as a whole and was never used by members of the tribe. A letter sent to me as late as September, 1978, by a descendant refers to the tribe as "Paiute." The old name *niwi*, pl. *niwiwi* 'person' has long since

been discarded. "Kawaiisu" is a corruption of the name given the tribe by their neighbors to the north, the Tübatulabal.

4. Bob Rabbit told McCown that "cottonwood fiber was dyed yellow and used for some kinds of baskets." No other consultant confirmed this and no such basket was seen.

5. "Epicampes" is Deergrass, now known as *Muhlenbergia rigens*.

6. Connor's version, which I have in typed copy, is said to have been published in the January, 1908, issue of the *Overland Monthly*, but I cannot find it there.

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