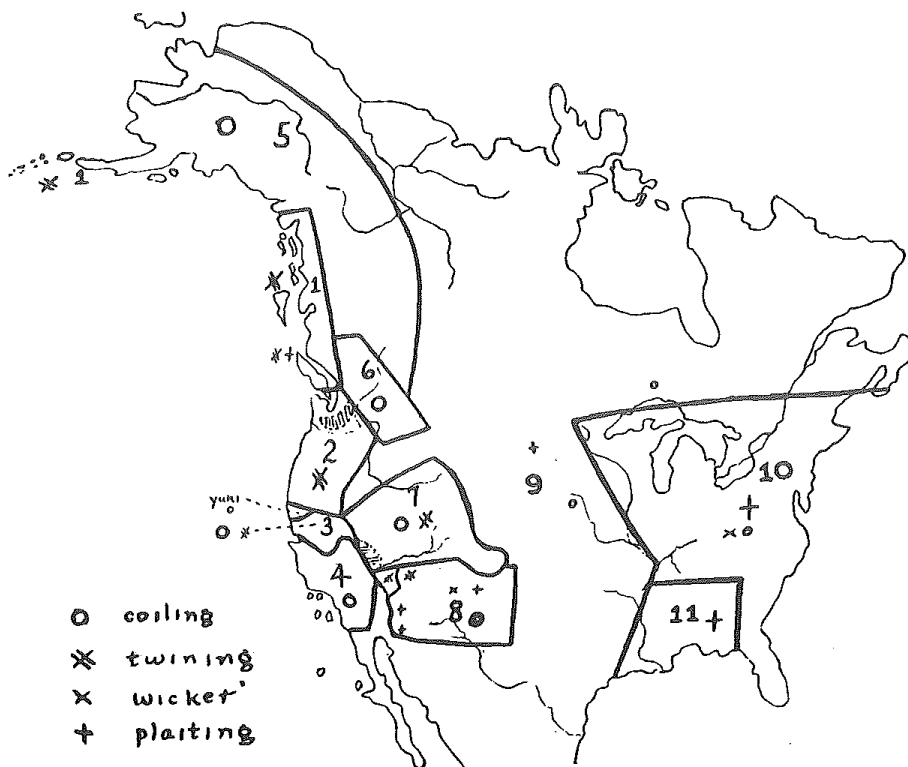


# DENVER ART MUSEUM

1300 LOGAN STREET, DENVER, COLORADO

## DEPARTMENT OF INDIAN ART

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Basketry areas of North America. The peoples of area 2, indicated by vertical shading, also now make imbricated coiled ware such as is found in area 6. The people of area 7 indicated by horizontal shading, make coiled ware which might be classed with area 3.

*Courtesy of Gene Weltfish and the American Anthropologist*

## INDIAN BASKETRY

Varieties and Distribution



LEAFLET 58

MAY, 1933

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**1. BASKETS** are the objects made, without the aid of even crude machinery, by intertwining or weaving together long slender sections of vegetable material. Mats differ from baskets in that they are flat and not shaped into vessels. Cloth differs from basketry by being made of spun or twisted fibres on some sort of a mechanical device.

**2. TECHNIC.** Like cloth, basketry is made up of two elements: warp, which is the foundation; and weft or woof, which is the filler connecting the warps. These two elements are combined in four fundamental ways: coiling has a continuous horizontal warp moving upward in spirals which are wrapped and sewed to each other by the weft; twining has vertical warps with horizontal wefts twisted around them; wicker work has warps which are enclosed by wefts passed alternately above and below them without twisting; plaiting or checker work has a warp and a weft which are indistinguishable, being of the same size and shape and equally active. All of these basic technics have many variations. See references 1, 2 and leaflet 67.

**3. DECORATION** is applied in six ways: false embroidery, by which a third element is wrapped around the weft elements on the outside of the basket; imbrication, by which a third element is folded back and forth over the stitching element of coiled basketry, overlapping like shingles; wrapped twining, by which one flexible weft is wrapped around the crossing of the warp and the second weft, which is stiff; overlay twining, by which a third element is laid against one weft and is twisted with it, showing both inside and out or outside alone according to the manner of twisting; having the color of the weft differ for background and for pattern; painting. Leaflet 68.

**4. VARIETIES OF BASKETRY.** The purpose of this leaflet is to indicate the distribution of basketry in America north of Mexico, and to give some idea about the appearance and technics of the various kinds. Space will permit the mention of the more important kinds only.

Geography is taken as the basis of the classification, the country being divided into 11 areas. It must be understood that the boundaries of these areas are not absolute, as the areas often shade gradually into each other. There are also many exceptions to the general statements made in the leaflet.

**5. AREA 1—Northwest Coast.** In the northernmost part of this area the Aleut make very finely twined cylindrical baskets and flat wallets. The background is straw colored and the decorations are made of colored thread. This is the most delicate basketry in America. In the central part the Tlinkit and Haida make fine twined cylindrical baskets and conical hats of spruce root. The background is brown and the many colored geometrical decorations are applied by false embroidery. The hats have painted designs. In the south the Tsimshian, Kwakiutl, Nootka and Bella Coola make plaited baskets of brown cedar bark.

**6. AREA 2—Oregon, Washington and Northern California.** In this area twining predominates. In the northwest the Makah make small round and rectangular baskets, often with lids, in wrapped twining. The background is light, with small brightly colored designs, often naturalistic. In the northeast flat flexible wallets are made, decorated in color by wrapped twining or false embroidery. The designs are geometric. The Nez Percé are the best known makers. In the center, flexible, cylindrical baskets prevail. They are usually light in color with geometric designs in a few dark colors. Skokomish, Clallam and Quinault are the best known. A group, of which the Klickitat is the best known tribe, make coiled baskets with imbricated decoration. The color is light or dark on brown, or dark on light. Large zigzags are the most common pattern. To the southwest are the Hupa, Karok, and Yurok of California, makers of excellent twined work

with overlay decoration. Brimless caps with red or black geometric designs on light are their most famous product. Less fancy work has a ground of brown conifer root with light designs. The designs in this section are on the outside. In the southeastern corner are the Pit River tribes, and also the Northern Wintun and Northern Maidu. Their twined work has an allover light overlay with black geometric designs which show both outside and in. In southern Oregon the Klamath and Modoc make very flexible twined baskets of brown tule rush.

**7. AREA 3—Central California.** Coiling on a 3 rod warp is the rule in this area, though the Pomo, probably the best and most versatile of all basket makers, use twining and 1-rod coiling. Pomo coiling is light, with black or red geometric designs. Long shallow oval shapes are characteristic of this tribe. Another specialty is the coiled basketry trimmed with brightly colored feathers. The twined work is light brown with red, black and light designs, often in narrow bands. Maidu coiling is light with red designs, very often bold combinations of triangles. Miwok coiling is light with black and sometimes red geometric designs. Just over the border in Nevada are the Washo, makers of delicate light baskets with fine black designs. The rare Yuki baskets are red on light.

**8. AREA 4—Southern California.** Coiling on a grass bundle warp is found throughout this area. In the north are the Yokuts, who make the baskets commonly called Tulare. The "bottleneck" is the best known product of these people. It has a broad body with nearly flat shoulders pinching in on a small neck. Feathers or red wool tufts are usually set around the top of the body. The background is brown with horizontal bands of red and black geometric or conventionalized life form designs. Diagonal designs are also used. Rather similar are the baskets of the Kern River, Panamint and Mono, south and east of the Yokuts. Space does not permit an attempt to give the points of difference between these closely related types. In the southwest corner are the various groups of "Mission" Indians, makers of a basketry which can be distinguished by its mottled brown surface decked with black designs.

**9. AREA 5—Central Alaska and Inner British Columbia.** In this immense area live a few simple tribes who make rather crude coiled basketry. Besides the Athabascan tribes of the interior, coiled work is made by the coastal Eskimo.

**10. AREA 6—Southern British Columbia.** Coiled basketry decorated by imbrication is the type in this area. The Chilcotin, Shuswap, Lillooet, Fraser and Thompson Indians are the makers, each with their own tribal peculiarities. Large square or oblong shapes are the rule. The sides often curve down from a large mouth to a small base. Quite large hampers with lids are made. The baskets are brown of varying shades bearing simple geometric red, black or light designs.

**11. AREA 7—Great Basin or Interior Plateau.** In this area crude coiled work is made by the Paviotso, Paiute, Bannock, Shoshone and Ute. It is usually light in color, poorly made and with little if any decoration. In the south of the area some of the Paiute groups make, or have made, very fine coiled basketry, usually light with simple dark designs. Diagonal twined work is also made in this area. Some of it is of fairly high quality.

**12. AREA 8—Southwest.** Much excellent basketry is made in this section, most of it in various coiled technics. In the northwest are the Chemehuevi, makers of very fine coiled ware on a 3-rod warp. The basketry is light in color with black horizontal design bands. The most characteristic shape is the "bottleneck" with rounded curves instead of the angles of the Yokuts. There are also flat trays. In the west central part are the various bands of the western Apache. All these bands make very good 3-rod coiled work with black designs on a light ground. Bowls are the most common shape, though jars, sometimes of great

size, are often made. The designs are vertical or diagonal. Human and animal figures are common. Twined carrying baskets are made, also pitch covered water bottles. In southern Arizona are the Pima and Papago, makers of black and white basketry with a grass bundle warp. Nearly all baskets are bowls. The decorations are superb organizations of frets and meanders. Coarse basket granaries and lace-coil carrying baskets are made. Near the Grand Canyon are the Havasupai, also makers of 3-rod coiling in black and white. They are fond of flat trays with concentric design bands or vertical patterns. The related and nearby Walapai make coarse twined work.

In north central Arizona are the Hopi, who make 3 kinds of basketry: coiled trays and deep shapes with very heavy grass bundle warps; wicker trays and deep shapes; and plaited work bowls of pale green and yellow yucca. The first two types are very colorful, dyed wefts of many colors being used to make elaborate geometric and naturalistic designs. It is the most highly colored basketry in America. Neighbors of the Hopi are the Navaho and Paiute who both make a type of coiled basket bowl for Navaho ceremonial use, the so-called "wedding basket". This is light brown with red and black designs. The Mescalero Apache live in southern New Mexico. Their coiled basketry is made of different parts of the yucca plant, which give the basket simple pale green and yellowish geometric designs. The coil is very flat and broad. In northern New Mexico are the Jicarilla Apache, also workers in the coiled technic. Their baskets have a very heavy, thick and stiff coil, which, combined with their use of bright aniline dyes, makes their basketry unmistakable. Most of the Pueblo groups make plain plaited or wicker work baskets.

**13. AREA 9—Plains.** Basketry is nearly non-existent in this large area. The two exceptions are the few small coarsely coiled bowls made for gambling by some tribes, and the plaited carrying baskets of the Mandan, Hidatsa and Arickara.

**14. AREA 10—Northeast.** Basketry is very limited in the northeastern quarter of the country. The Maine tribes and their Canadian neighbors make plaited and wicker baskets of wood splints, and some sweet grass wickerwork. The New York Iroquois make twined and plaited splint baskets, resembling the laundry basket of the whites. They do some twining of corn husks. The same kinds of work are done by the tribes in the Great Lakes region. Some of them make little coiled sweet grass baskets for souvenirs. In all this area decoration is sometimes applied by die stamping or by painting.

**15. AREA 11—Southeast.** Throughout the Gulf region much basketry was made of split cane in various plaited technics. The colors are soft, glossy, red, yellow or orange and black. Such baskets were made by the Choctaw, Cherokee, Chickasaw, Alibamu, Kaosati, Attacapa and Chitimacha and no doubt many other now vanished tribes. The Chitimacha baskets, the best of the type, have quite complicated designs, usually light colored angular elements or flowing curves against a dark background. The designs of the other tribes are much simpler.

Besides the cane basketry these tribes and those of the south Atlantic region make utility baskets of oak splints.

**Compiled from the following sources by F. H. Douglas:**

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