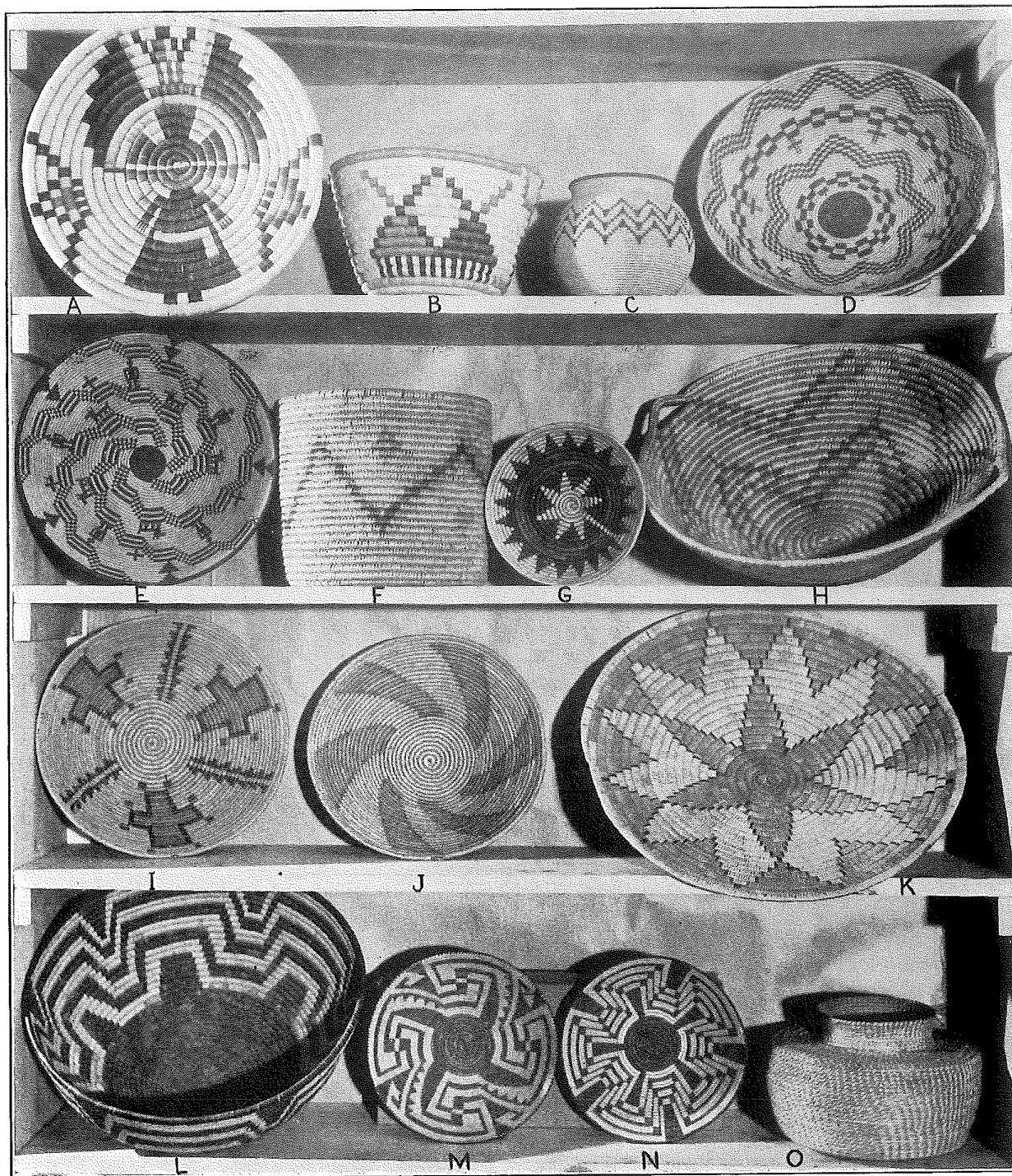


DENVER ART MUSEUM

1300 LOGAN STREET, DENVER, COLORADO

DEPARTMENT OF INDIAN ART

FREDERIC H. DOUGLAS, CURATOR



Types of Southwestern Coiled Basketry

LEAFLET 88

DECEMBER, 1939

1. INTRODUCTORY. The Southwest, that is, Arizona and New Mexico, with adjoining parts of adjacent states, is one of the great basket-making areas of the United States. The basket-making situation is not quite as complex as in California; but is sufficiently so to cause confusion among collectors and students. This leaflet attempts to outline the types of coiled basketry made in the area. Leaflets 99-100 deal with twined, plaited and wicker basketry in the area.

2. COILED BASKETRY has a continuous coil which begins at the center of the bottom and rises to the rim. The coil is the warp, or foundation, of the basket, and successive circles of it are wrapped and fastened together by sewing with a flexible weft. This coil and the presence of horizontal corrugations in the fabric are the easiest means of distinguishing this technic.

3. THE BASIC DIVISION of coiled basketry rests on the character of the warp, or foundation material within the coil. There are three main types: bundle or multiple foundation, with a bunch of fine elements; triangular foundation, with three—or in one case five—large elements arranged in a triangle with the apex upward; and vertical foundation, with one to three large elements placed one atop the other. There are numerous subdivisions of each.

4. DIRECTION OF COIL. Coils turn either clockwise, to the right; or counter-clockwise, to the left. This is noted by looking at the bottom of the basket on the inside. In the Southwest shallow baskets have a counter-clockwise or left coil. Jars have a clockwise or right coil.

HOPI

5. VERY THICK COILS containing a multiple foundation, together with the use of rather brightly colored and elaborate designs make this basketry easily recognizable (A, B). The foundation consists of stems of the grass *Hilaria Jamesii*, or shredded leaves of the narrow leafed yucca, *Yucca angustifolia*. The sewing material is the split leaf of the same yucca. White, greens and yellows are obtained by bleaching the yucca in varying degrees. Red-brown and black are the other colors commonly used. The former is from *Thelesperma* and the latter from sun-flower seed. A perfectly flat tray is the standard oldtime shape (A), though deep shapes of various kinds are also made (B). The designs are conventionalized plants, clouds, living creatures; and various geometric figures. For details see Leaflet 17.

WESTERN APACHE, YAVAPAI, WALAPAI, HAVASUPAI, CHEMEHUEVI

6. 3-ROD TRIANGULAR FOUNDATION and the use of black designs on a light cream or tan background are the features uniting the basketry of these tribes. Willow twigs are commonly used for the foundation, though those of the cottonwood and squaw-bush may be used also. Split willow twigs are used in sewing, with occasional exceptions. The black material for the designs comes from the outer covering of the seed pod of the devil's claw, *Martynia*. The Yavapai, and perhaps sometimes the Apache, use a red from the inner bark of the root of the tree yucca, *Yucca arborescens* or *brevifolia*. Shallow bowls are common to all groups. The Yavapai and Apache make deep jar shapes and the Chemehuevi more or less globular shapes. The Jicarilla and Mescalero Apache make coiled water bottles.

The designs are largely made up of rather complex geometric elements which the Apache (E) and Yavapai supplement with angular figures of people and animals. The designs of the Apache tend to be complex and to move in

diagonals. Those of the Havasupai (D), Walapai and apparently the Yavapai are slightly less complex and favor the use of concentric circles of designs. Chemehuevi designs are the simplest of all (C), each piece usually having only a band or two of very simple figures. Space does not permit the discussion of other distinguishing factors. Leaflet 64 deals in more detail with Apache basketry. The photos on the cover give a general idea of the differences in design styles.

UTE, PAIUTE, JICARILLA APACHE

7. 3-ROD TRIANGULAR FOUNDATION is also used by this group, but in design style and materials there is no resemblance to the work of the group described in section 6. The Paiute group referred to here is that living just north of the Navaho reservation, in southeast Utah. The basketry of other Paiute groups will be considered in a future leaflet on the basketry of Utah, Nevada and states to the North. The Ute are those of Colorado.

Jicarilla basketry (F, H) is unique in the Southwest for its quite common use of 5 rods instead of 3 in the foundation. Even when only 3 are used this basketry has a stiff massive quality which is distinctive. Split twigs from the sumac, *Rhus*, are used in sewing. This wood has a characteristic shiny appearance. Jicarilla work may also be distinguished by its use of large brightly colored designs. Most of these colors are aniline, but older work shows soft, rather dark colors from native dyes. Rather deep bowls (H), often with handles, fish creels, and deep straight-sided shapes are made (F). The last often have flat lids. Wavy openwork rims and loop handles (H) on the rims are quite common.

The Ute and Paiute basketry referred to here is that made by these tribes for the Navaho. Only one type is made, the well known so-called Navaho "wedding basket." This basket is a shallow bowl (G), bearing the design shown on the cover, and is used in many Navaho ceremonies. It is made of sumac, *Rhus*. The specimen shown is much smaller than usual.

NAVAHO

8. A TRIANGULAR FOUNDATION is used (I, J). But it has two rods and a small bunch of softer material instead of three rods. The soft bunch is placed at the top of the triangle. The rods and sewing splints are made from sumac, *Rhus*, and the bundle is made of yucca leaf, *Yucca baccata*. This technic is of interest because it was that of the ancient Basket-makers and survives today only among the Navaho. Navaho basket-making is not dead, as is often said today, but it is dying out.

Only rather small shallow bowls are made. The most common design is that shown in H on the cover, the same design as is on Ute and Paiute pieces made for the Navaho. Other designs are simple crosses, rectangles, zigzags, etc.

MESCALERO APACHE

9. A VERTICAL FOUNDATION is used by this group (K). There are three variations: two rods and a bundle; three rods and a bundle; and a quite wide thin wood slat and a bundle. All of these produce the wide thin coil which is such a prominent characteristic of the type. This distinctive coil, together with the equally distinctive color scheme of Mescalero basketry, make it very easy to identify. This color scheme is due to the color variations which can be produced by the sewing material, the leaf of the narrow-leafed yucca,

Yucca brevifolia. Quite bright green, grey-green, yellow and creamy white can be produced by different degrees of bleaching. The root of the same plant produces a dark red-brown. These colors are arranged in varying combinations to produce large and simple geometric figures, such as that shown on the cover.

The shallow bowl (K) is the common shape. It often has a flat bottom with sides flaring up at an angle. Deep shapes are made but are rather scarce.

PIMA, PAPAGO, MARICOPA

10. A SMALL MULTIPLE FOUNDATION is used by these tribes (L, M, N, O). The work of all three is very similar in most cases, for all use the same sewing materials, colors and designs. The Pima (M, N) and Maricopa use split leaves of the cat-tail, *Typha angustifolia*, for the foundation. The Papago use the leaves of the bear grass, *Nolina erumpens*. This is not an absolute rule, but the general tendency, for both groups may use either material. In all but modern commercial Papago basketry the light sewing material is split stems of the willow, *Salix nigra*, and the black material is the outer covering of the seed pod of the devil's claw, *Martynia*. In the modern Papago work mentioned above the light sewing material is bleached yucca leaf. Sometimes the green unbleached leaf is used; and also a red from the root bark of the tree yucca, *Yucca arborescens*.

Shallow bowls of many sizes are the most common product (M, N), with deep jar shapes coming second. There is much commercial basketry in a great variety of fancy shapes. The old standard patterns are complex geometric figures of the type shown on the cover. Some conventionalized life forms have been used in recent decades.

Tribal differentiation is difficult to indicate. On the whole Papago baskets tend to be more flexible, deeper and to have more black (L). In this style the Maricopa make only one shape—not made by the others—which is distinctive, a large, flat bottomed, very deep, carrying basket.

All three groups also made a coarse coiled ware with the sewing elements very far apart, so that the foundation is clearly seen (O). Wheat straw, *Triticum vulge*, is most commonly used in the foundation, and willow or mesquite bark, *Prosopis velutina*, for the sewing materials. The work of all three tribes is about identical, except that the Maricopa put scattered smears of pink paint on the surface (O).

YUMA, MOHAVE, COCOPA

11. VERY LITTLE BASKETRY was made by these tribes. It seems to be largely extinct today and there is very little information about it. The Yuma made coiled bowls apparently like those of the Pima-Papago group, except that two rods in a vertical position were used in the foundation. They also made coarse coiled rush baskets like those mentioned in the last paragraph of section 10. The Mohave made a few bowls of openwork coiling. The Yuma and Cocopa made very large extremely coarse storage baskets having the general appearance of a bird's nest. The Pima-Papago group made these also.

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

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