

Baskets: Carrying a Culture.

The Distinctive Regional Styles
of
Basketmaking Nations in the Pacific Northwest

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January 4, 2002

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Abstract

The basketry of the First Peoples of the Pacific Northwest is more distinctive within each Nation's region than on the whole. There are three major types of basketry in the Pacific Northwest, coiled root baskets, twined baskets and plaited baskets. In this paper I have outlined the various idiosyncrasies that are characteristic of the major basketry types of eight groups. This includes the coiled basketry of the Nlaka'pamux, Stl'atl'imx, Tsilhqot'in, Klickitat and Halkomelem and the twined and plaited basketry of the Tlingit, Haida, Tsimshian and the Nuu-chah-nulth and Makah. With this information, one can begin to learn how to distinguish the baskets from each of these regions. In learning about these forms and features, and how they have changed, one can begin the process of deciphering the ideas and histories that are embedded within the final products.

The designs of coiled baskets from this area are quite distinctive from the designs of other regions that produce this type of basketry. It is a special art form and I discuss the origins and protocols surrounding these designs.

Finally, I examine a number of specimens from the White Rock Museum Maccaud basketry collection and attempt to name the patterns and use them to place the provenance of the baskets.

Table of Contents

<i>Abstract</i>	<i>i</i>
<i>Table of Contents</i>	<i>ii</i>
List of Figures	iii
Introduction	1
<i>Naka'pamux</i>	4
<i>Set'at'imx</i>	14
<i>Tsilhqet'in</i>	16
<i>Ksickitat</i>	18
<i>Halkomelem</i>	21
<i>Additional Notes on Coiled Burden Baskets</i>	23
<i>Shingit</i>	24
<i>Haida</i>	31
<i>Tsimshian</i>	34
<i>Nuu'chah'nulth and Makah</i>	36
<i>Art of Design In Coiled Basketry</i>	40
<i>Analysis of a Collection: White Rock Museum</i>	49
<i>Conclusion</i>	53
<i>References</i>	57

List of Figures

<i>Figures</i>		<i>Page</i>
1	<i>Coiling</i>	6
2	<i>Side view of coils</i>	6
3	<i>Examples of coils</i>	6
4	<i>Irregular bifurcation</i>	7
5	<i>Imbrication</i>	10
6	<i>Close up of imbrication</i>	10
7	<i>Beading</i>	11
8	<i>Close up of beading</i>	11
9	<i>A typical Stl'at'simx basket</i>	15
10	<i>Tsilhqet'in Basket</i>	16
11	<i>Bifurcation</i>	17
12	<i>A typical Ksickitat basket</i>	19
13	<i>Close together weave</i>	26
14	<i>Between weave</i>	26
15	<i>Rough like the skin on a frog's back</i>	27
16	<i>Eye-hole weave</i>	27
17	<i>Three strand twining</i>	27
18	<i>Typical Tlingit baskets</i>	28
19	<i>False embroidery</i>	30
20	<i>A Haida Basket</i>	32
21	<i>Plain checkerwork</i>	34
22	<i>Alternating S & Z twist twining</i>	36
23	<i>S twist twining</i>	34
24	<i>Southern Wakashan baskets</i>	37
<i>Figures 25 - 32 Baskets from the White Rock Museum Collection</i>		
25	<i>#978.49.455</i>	49
26	<i>#978.49.525</i>	49
27	<i>#978.49.514</i>	50
28	<i>#978.49.515</i>	50
29	<i>#978.49.516</i>	51
30	<i>#978.49.529</i>	51
31	<i>#978.49.543</i>	52
32	<i>#978.49.571</i>	52
33	<i>Map of the First Nations of British Columbia</i>	56

Baskets: Carrying a Culture

"Baskets...are a manifestation of a people's history, origins and relationship to other entities in their universe" (Turner 1996:17). The process involved in making a basket is steeped in the traditions and beliefs of a cultural group and is representative of those beliefs. The result is that, though similar materials were available to all peoples, and many of the basic techniques were shared, the art of each separate people is marked by a choice of form, technique and design, creating a style that is distinctively their own. "The basketry style of a people encodes their identity" (Laforet 1990: 286) and a set of ideas that are interwoven in this ancient art form. Often, the ideas themselves are lost in time, but their physical form remains in the product, a well made basket (Laforet 1990).

A basket maker strives to fulfill the requirements of her peoples' regional style while expressing her own personal artistic aesthetic (Laforet 1990). The resulting product then becomes a part of the larger group of work from the region and a representation of that region's style. In this way, personal choices, assumptions and preferences reflect an entire region and local culture. One might think that it is unfitting for a personal ethic to be considered representative of an entire people. These personal choices, however, would be based on the beliefs that have been instilled in the children of a people from the time they are born, in the form of teachings, stories and observations of the actions of their parents, elders and teachers. Skills were passed from mother to daughter to granddaughter, over a period of time, as the younger would observe the actions and the physical expression of the knowledge that the older woman held (Cruikshank 1979; Laforet 1990). Athapaskan and many other elders speak of learning from their grandmothers, continually listening to the stories and legends of their history (Cruikshank 1979). Personal beliefs would thus be

shaped by history and family influences and so the manifestation of these beliefs in personal art is properly reflective of the history of the whole region.

The choices made in combining techniques, materials and design are also reflective of the function of the finished product. Different "fabrics" with differing qualities are necessary to create baskets that can fulfill the requirements of specific functions that a basket may serve. Therefore, in each region, more than one type of basketry is produced (Laforet 1990).

The following is a compilation from literature sources of the distinctive features of the styles and attributes of the basketry of a few of the different regions of the Pacific Northwest Coast of British Columbia. I have also discussed cultural beliefs on the origins of basketry in the regions where the legends and tales of such beginnings are still found. Most of the information is based on documented collections from museums and ethnographers. The characterization of each basketry type is necessarily general, as there is variation within each group, and often based on comparisons to other groups' work. These guidelines, while helpful, are not definitive.

Discrepancy arises, in part, due to lack of documentation by collectors. Many of the collectors have not recorded the basket makers' names. This is an important detail that was overlooked at the time when most collections were being made due at least in part to an inherent gender bias of those doing the collecting, as they were mainly male, and baskets are traditionally within the women's sphere (Fortney 2001). As well, it has been noted that baskets are often collected outside their region of origin (Laforet 1990). This has the potential to skew the regional inventories and features somewhat. Many of the current museum collections in British Columbia are composed of smaller, privately owned collections of baskets that were donated (Fortney 2001). These are often the collections of fairly well to do women who lived in British Columbia around the

turn of the twentieth century, who collected First Nations Basketry because it was fashionable at the time. It represents object that were at once utilitarian and exotic. These collections are particularly lacking in information regarding their provenance as the women either knew for themselves where they came from and did not try to write down such information or were not so interested.

One must also be aware that the styles of a region are subject to change over time. Introduction of a new material, or a change in economic and social structure would have implications on the manufacturing of art and technologies (Turner 1996). Trading and marriage between nations was a huge factor in the development of the craft, partially responsible for the flow of change due to internal factors that can be represented as a gently sloping curved line on a graph (Weber 1990). External factors that effect change result in an abrupt break in the creative slope. The changes in artistic culture are related to the "speed and magnitude of the shift" (Weber 1990: 300). One of the most important impetuses for such a break would have been the arrival of white tourists and settlers to British Columbia during the 1800's. Not only did they bring with them manufactured items that quickly replaced major functional basketry forms but they created a demand for new and different forms. Each region responded differently to these influences. The changes and development of the craft is discussed within the constraints of the style of each region.

As the majority of my research is concerned with the coiled basketry of the Salish weavers, I will focus mainly on this type and the tribes of the Interior Plateau which are well known for their work in this field, including the Nlaka'pamux, Stl'atl'imx, Tsilhqot'in and Klickitat. The Halkomelem of the coast are also important coiled basketmakers and likely the group from which many of the Maccaud collection baskets are from. I have included some information on the twined baskets of the people of the Northwest Coast; the Tlingit, Tsimshian, Haida and Wakashan, as their baskets also comprise a large portion of the White

Rock Museum collection, and the plaited basketry of the Tsimshian, as this was an important technique for a few groups, though has minimal representation in the Museum collection. At the end, I discuss the art of design on coiled baskets; how the designs themselves came about and what they can tell us about the baskets' origins.

Nlaka'pamux (Thompson)

The Nlaka'pamux people made their home along and surrounding the lower Thompson River, the upper Fraser River, south of Lillooet, and north of Hope; and along the Nicola River. In all, their territory is approximately 160 kilometers in length and 145 km in width (Teit 1900). Together with the Stl'atl'imx, Secwepemc and Okanagan, they are the Interior Salish.

James Teit, in his manuscript describing the Thompson Indians for the Jesup North Pacific Expedition (1900) indicates two kinds of baskets made by the Nlaka'pamux; folded birch bark containers, generally made by the people north of Lytton and coiled cedar root baskets, made by the southern Nlaka'pamux. It is thought that this Plateau region, including Stl'atl'imx (Lillooet) territory is the place where coiled cedar root basketry originated (Fortney 2001). Other sources indicate that twining and plaiting were also part of the basketry repertoire of the Nlaka'pamux (Peabody Turnbaugh and Turnbaugh 1986), but coiled work was by far the most prevalent type. As well, it comprises the majority of the White Rock collection so I will focus here.

H. Haeberlin and J. Teit undertook extensive research on coiled basketry in British Columbia in the early 1900's. Teit's interviews with basket makers of the Nlaka'pamux region at that time make this an extremely valuable piece of work. They both passed on before they could publish their research, but it was taken over by H. Roberts who, under the direction of Franz Boas, compiled their notes

and completed a paper for the Bureau of American Ethnology. Most of the information in this report on Nlaka'pamux coiled basketry is based on this 1928 document and can be considered as such unless noted otherwise.

Some of the Nlaka'pamux people believe their friend, Coyote taught them the art of coiled basketry. In another legend, as told by Annie York, (Hanna and Henry 1996) a man who went to visit the moon received the instructions on how to make baskets from an elder couple with who had taken him in while he was there. He lived on the moon, providing for the couple until they had completed a task which allowed them to send him back to his home on earth. They packed him up in a fancy new air basket, providing,

a sack of roots, berries, and meat to take back to his home. She also gave him a large pile of skins. In a sack, she gave him instructions for making baskets, tanning hides, and steaming roots. 'Give those to the women,' she told him. Then she gave him some instructions for teaching the men how to make arrowheads, how to dry salmon, and how to make snowshoes. 'We want you to teach the people everything that we have taught you.' (Hanna and Henry 1996:39-40)

In this manner the Nlaka'pamux people learned all these things from the man who had been to the moon.

The coiled baskets of the Pacific Northwest are created by wrapping either bundles of fine cedar splints or whole, flat cedar slats, with the smooth split root of the cedar tree through a process of whip stitching, or overcast sewing which lashes the coils together. As the coils are laid around in the shape desired, they are wrapped or with the cedar root. An awl is used to split apart the lower splint, which was wrapped on the previous turn. The cedar root is pressed through this hole and up again to continue wrapping the new coil.

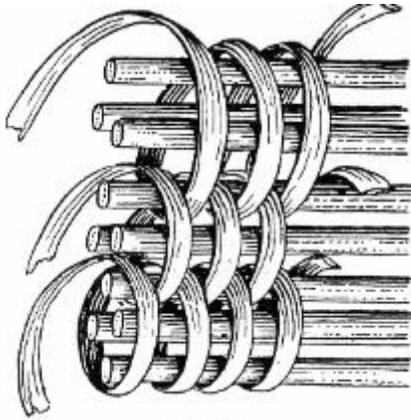


Figure 1. Coiling (Courtesy of Mason 1902:253)



Figure 2. Side view of coils. (Courtesy of Peabody Turnbaugh and Turnbaugh 1986:71)



Figure 3. Example of coils from White Rock Collection 978.49.457

Not every woman in a village is a basket maker, but here, as well as in other tribes, there are families which are known for their skills, as it seems to be in the blood. As well, a daughter is apprenticed to an older relative to learn the craft only if she desires it and has the aptitude for it (Thompson and Marr 1983). Basket makers producing high quality work are valued and honored. Experienced basketmakers are quite judgmental about appropriate proportioning and design placement. Women of the Lower Thompson division are considered the best basket makers and therefore, much more of their time is spent at the process.

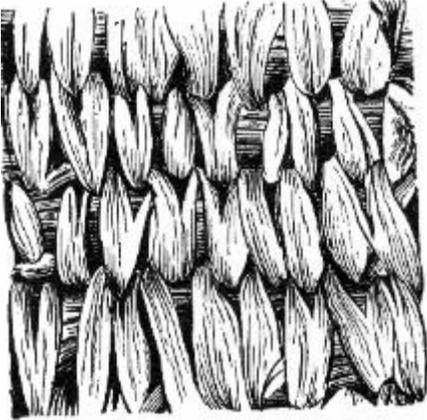


Figure 4. Irregular bifurcation.
(Peabody turnbaugh and Turnbaugh 1986:72)

The Nlaka'pamux are known for their fine, uniform bundles, that are generally smaller than those of other groups, often ranging from five to seven millimeters in diameter (Peabody Turnbaugh and Turnbaugh 1986). Stitching is irregularly bifurcated, which means that occasionally, the stitches evenly split the stitches of the previous coil (Peabody Turnbaugh and Turnbaugh 1986).

Their baskets have fairly vertical walls, broader bases and are less angular than those of their Stl'atl'imx neighbors.

The materials used by the Nlaka'pamux at the turn of the century include: cedar; juniper; wheat, rye or alkali grass; bird cherry, or bitter cherry bark for coiled baskets and birch; cattail, tule; balsam fir bark, red alder; inner bark of oregon grape; wolf moss; western flowering dogwood bark; and indian hemp in other types of basketry. A purple grass, called tluxka, was also employed, but mainly by the Upper Thompson as its growth is confined to small areas and it is difficult to acquire enough in one shade. There is also a problem with it fading unevenly over time. The finished product would, in a few years, display characteristics that are considered indicative of poor workmanship (Haeberlin et al 1928, Fortney 2001). In later years, post-contact, aniline dyes were adopted, as was the practice of using strips of fabric, generally black, as a design element for beading or imbrication.

The making of a coiled basket is long process and the finished product is necessarily of high quality as these baskets were used for carrying and storing water, as well as for cooking. Baskets that needed to be waterproof often did

not need any additional treatment as the small coils and fine stitches were enough to create a watertight product. The materials would swell up when wet and become tighter. If however, additional waterproofing was required; soapberries might be mashed and boiled in the baskets. Another option was to use the heated buds of balsam poplar or cactus to make a pitch to smear into cracks.

Four groups of coiled basket shapes are found, including burden baskets for transportation of food and materials, round baskets for cooking, nut-shaped baskets and storage trunks with lids. It is thought that the round baskets are the oldest type, being the ancestor of the modern burden basket . This is seen through a gradual transition to the current burden basket form. Examples of early burden baskets have rounded corners and are more cylindrical with patterns that are more suitable for conical or cylindrical shapes i.e.) horizontal lines, zig zags, small figures and spirals. Cylindrical baskets once predominated in the region but, even as late as 1928, very few conical baskets were found. Round baskets were not considered to be very good for carrying on the back, as they would roll back and forth. A trapezoidal style was perfect for this activity, as the small base would fit securely into the small of the back, and flare wide across the shoulder blades. The basket would sit almost perfectly vertical while the bearer was bent over, picking berries or roots and the base is just large enough for the basket to remain upright while standing on the ground. It is thought that this move towards a trapezoidal shape in burden baskets was influenced by the St'atl'imx people, also accomplished basket makers. Many of the elder women Teit interviewed figured they had created the most perfect of shapes. The burden baskets tend to be about $\frac{3}{4}$ wide as they are long, and the area of the mouth is at least four times that of the base. The height of a basket is equal to or less than the width of the mouth according to Teit's (1928) measures.

What is amazing about these coiled baskets is that they all show such a similarity in proportion, but the basket makers almost never measure. The entire process is usually judged by eye. An experienced basket maker knows how big a basket will be by the size of the base she starts with. When measurements are taken, they are done in hand widths and lengths, rather than a standard length. Pattern placement is also done by eye. A habit of size and shape is thus acquired by women.

It is characteristic of the Nlaka'pamux weavers to prematurely turn the corners of their baskets. This becomes more and more accentuated as the basket is built up. The result is that the baskets often slant to the left, as if twisted slightly. This skews the trapezoidal field for pattern placement.

The most common method of design in coiled basketry is imbrication, a process of folding a strip of colored bark, or grass over itself, underneath a stitch, which holds it down. The design element is then folded over top of the stitch that was just taken and back over itself again so as to be under the next stitch as well. This process is repeated for as long as the basket maker wants design (Mason 1902).

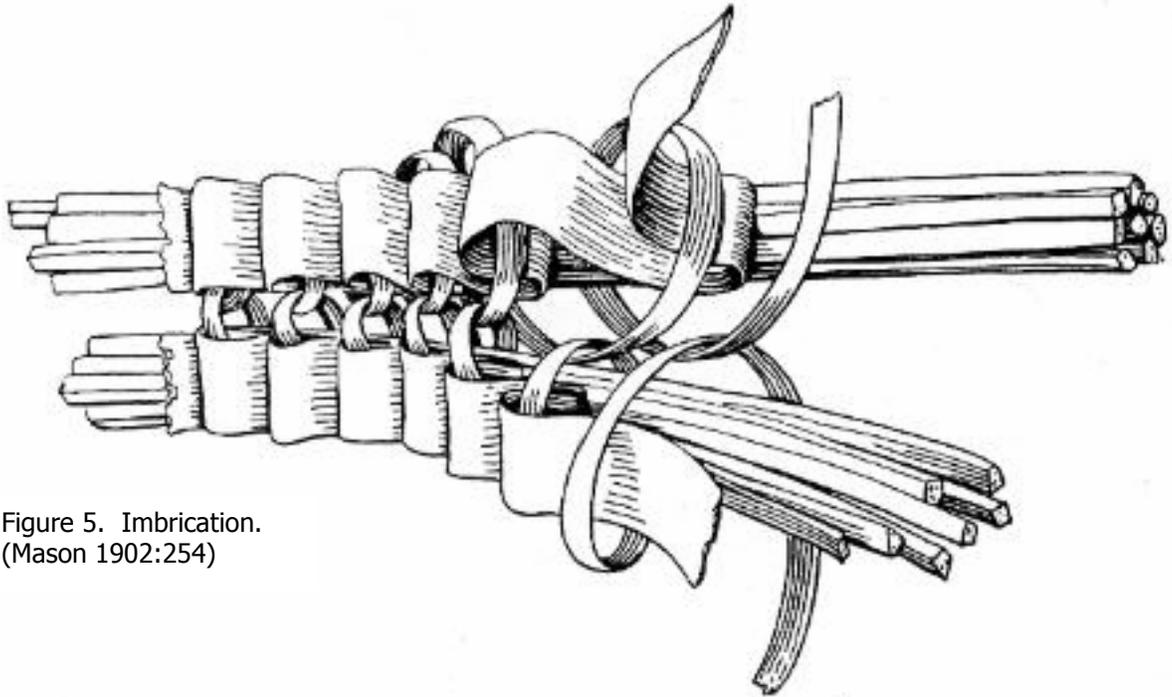


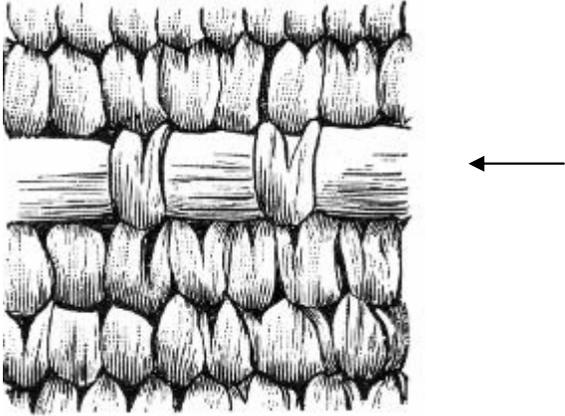
Figure 5. Imbrication.
(Mason 1902:254)

Some Nlaka'pamux women pay such attention to detail that they reduce the size of the bundle where there is to be imbrication in order to prevent a raised, or embossed texture.



Figure 6. Close up of imbrication from White Rock Museum Collection basket 978.49.524.

Beading is a simple design technique in which a strand of grass stem or cherry bark is laid along the coil and stitches are made either overtop, to hold it in place, or underneath, allowing the element to be exposed.



This technique is more commonly seen in Stl'atl'imx work than Nlaka'pamux, but is also present in this Nlaka'pamux baskets.

Figure 7. Beading. (Mason 1902:435)



Figure 8. Close up of beading. Notice that the colored element, black and natural red colored cherry bark, merely runs along the coil and is above or below alternating stitches.

In the oldest baskets there are three major design field divisions:

1. The basket is divided into 2 sections; the upper $\frac{2}{3}$ is fully imbricated with a light background of grass stems and a dark design of cherry bark. The lower portion has a pattern on bare coils (this arrangement is now common among the Stl'atl'imx).
2. A second arrangement of 2 fields of design sees the upper $\frac{3}{4}$ fully imbricated and the bottom $\frac{1}{4}$ left completely bare.
3. The basket is divided into three fields of the same width with three different patterns; the top $\frac{1}{3}$ and bottom $\frac{1}{3}$ are fully imbricated.

Baskets made after 1926 tended to be of a single design field, with a single large imbricated design on bare coils, two series of designs, or the whole basket being imbricated. Baskets with an unimbricated background, covered in groups of

repeating small design elements are most typical of the Thompson. Often large portions of the coils are left bare.

The traditional design colors are red, from the bark of the bitter cherry tree, white, from the inner stalks of grass that has been bleached in the sun, and black. The black elements are also prepared from the bitter cherry bark, by burying the bark in black mud for approximately six months. After the introduction of aniline dyes, the only limit to color choice was imagination. Compared to some other groups, such as the Nuu'chah'nulth, however, the colors remained fairly close to natural for the Salish weavers.

Symmetry of design is very important to the Nlaka'pamux and they like to use the same pattern on all sides of a basket. They use horizontal, vertical and diagonal styles of pattern distribution and the result is more interesting and varied selection than similarly manufactured examples from surrounding tribes. The majority of designs are geometric forms, bearing little similarity to the real objects or animals which originally inspired the design (Farrand 1900). Teit found that circumference spacing was unusually difficult for Nlaka'pamux women, due most likely to the premature coiling mentioned previously. To counter balance this design problem, fillers are often used on the corner of baskets to create a balanced design field. These are often patterns unrelated to the major design of the basket. Basketmakers themselves are often very judgmental about appropriate design balance, as well as appropriate proportions.

A common character of Nlaka'pamux baskets is a single line of beading to separate the base from where the walls begin to flare up. Teit notes four reasons explained to him for this.

1. It is a mark to define the division between sides and base
2. It is a margin for the design field, giving it a border.

3. It is used by the basket maker as an aid to arrange the design configuration, a mark from which to measure, or to quickly note position.
4. Beading is means of protecting the coils of the basket at the point of greatest wear. This was by far the most common reason given for this particular trait.

Early baskets were made to be used. They are beautiful pieces of art, but they were created to serve a functional purpose within a family home, or in a working context. The coming of Europeans had less effect on the coiled basketry of the Plateau than other regions (Miller 1990), but changes were made.

Cooking baskets and pails were rapidly replaced with the new, easily obtained manufactured replacements, thus decreasing the number of traditional forms. People began to make copies of European items, such as tables and teacups, as seen in the Royal British Columbia Museum collection. Forms became a bit more ornate, fancier, with an increase in loopwork rims. Feet, which were added to baskets only after 1800, and handles became more prevalent. The Nlaka'pamux learned from the Stl'atl'imx the technique of using wooden slats, instead of bundles of splint as the foundation for their coils. This was a faster mode of basket making, but the resulting product was considered of inferior quality. The basket produced is not as strong, nor is it waterproof. It is likely that this was a practice adopted in the creation of baskets for the tourist market, in an attempt to obtain the highest ratio of profit to time and material as was attempted by the women of many nations at that time (Weber 1990). Work was often done with larger, rougher coils, with not as much attention paid to the small details.

More striking designs were employed to attract attention and a ready sale. Designs were adapted from the products that the colonists brought with them, such as the Hudson's Bay blankets, and letters were occasionally incorporated (Haeberlin et al. 1928). This was also a time when many women, who were not previously basket makers, or from basket making families took up their awls and

embarked on a creative journey in order to join the new culture of economy that came about due to colonization (Fortney 2001).

Stl'atl'imx (Lillooet)

The Stl'atl'imx, or Lillooet people, live to the north and northwest of the Nlaka'pamux along the Lillooet river and tributaries, and a portion of the upper Fraser River. Their territory is similar in size to the Nlaka'pamux.

The basket types of the Stl'atl'imx people are very similar to those of the Nlaka'pamux. While birch bark containers were made and used, especially by the Upper or Fraser River Lillooet, coiled baskets predominated. Coiled basketry is considered an ancient art to the Stl'atl'imx but created predominantly by the lower division of the tribe (Teit 1906). Upper Lillooet people prefer to trade for baskets from them.

In this region, many more baskets with slat foundations were created, though even here, they were considered inferior to the bundled foundations (Teit 1906). The coil bundles of the Stl'atl'imx people are characterized as being broad and fat, with coarser stitches than the Nlaka'pamux. The stitches are very irregularly bifurcated and from observation it can be noted that their work is not quite as evenly matched as that of the Nlaka'pamux (Haeberlin et al. 1928).

The baskets from this region are more rectangular than those from other regions, and have high walls. Corners are sharper, and this may be a result of using slats for the foundation (Haeberlin et al. 1928). A square shape predominates (Peabody Turnbaugh and Turnbaugh 1986). Haeberlin et al.

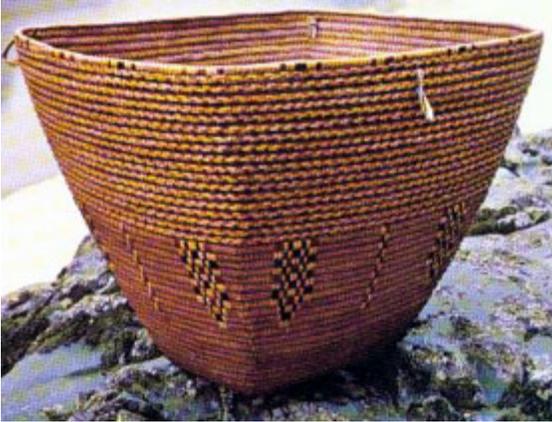


Figure 9. Typical Stl'atl'imx basket with top portion beaded. (Lobb 1978:79)

(1928) believe that the shape may have been copied from the cedar bentwood boxes of the coastal people. Width is a little more than $\frac{3}{4}$ of the length and the height is less than the mouth by about 10%. The result of these dimensions is a basket with a very small base and a flaring mouth (Haeberlin et al 1928).

Designs of the Stl'atl'imx are considered to be very well arranged, perhaps better than those of the Nlaka'pamux, which could be due in part to an improved manipulation of the coils. The Stl'atl'imx women seem to be less likely to have trouble with premature coiling but have not fully solved the problem of left leaning baskets (Haeberlin et al. 1928). Again, designs are, in the majority, geometrical figures (Farrand 1900).

The design field is generally split into two, with the upper half entirely imbricated with grass stems as a background for the pattern that is imbricated in darker colors. The lower half often has two or three short vertically arranged stripe patterns that do not reach the bottom of the basket, called droppers. Stacked arrowheads and zigzags are common in this part of the design. Droppers are not seen at all in the Nlaka'pamux work. It is not uncommon, however to find full base-to-rim designs (Haeberlin et al 1928). Patterns tend to be rectilinear or triangular (Peabody Turnbaugh and Turnbaugh 1986), fitting with the trapezoidal form. The use of a filler is seen as less than desirable and when they are employed, they are almost always somehow related to the main design.

Beading, rather than imbrication, is often used on one, two or three sides, to correspond to the wearer's back. Sometimes more than one row of beading is set into just one row of coiling, allowing a greater freedom of expression when the number of coils is limited, as it is by using the larger slats. These horizontal beaded lines gave way to more complex horizontal bands (Haeberlin et al 1928). It is also common to see one side completely unadorned (Haeberlin et al 1928).

As well as having many design elements in common with the Nlaka'pamux, the Stl'atl'imx coiled baskets are similar to the Tsilhqot'in baskets in many ways, as the Stl'atl'imx are thought to have been responsible for teaching the Tsilhqot'in the techniques. Similarities to Tlingit designs are also noted in the literature (Haeberlin et al 1928).

The changes in Stl'atl'imx basketry due to European influence are similar to those of the Nlaka'pamux.

Tsilhqot'in, (Chilcotin)

The Tsilhqot'in people live to the north of the Stl'atl'imx and are part of the Athapascan language group. Their territory extends north approximately 120 km from the boundary of the Stl'atl'imx territory and is approximately 100 km in width.

Coiled basketry is the predominant form in this region as well. Cedar bark is used, but spruce roots are preferred in this region. Haeberlin et al. (1928) suggest that only the burden basket form is created within this region. It is an oval shape, with only a slight flare, smaller than those produced by



Figure 10. Example of a Tsilhqot'in basket. From the White Rock Museum collection, 978.49.544.

the Nlaka'pamux and longer than they are wide. They are also deeper in proportion to the width, often curving slightly inwards towards the rim (Jones 1982). The rims of these oval baskets are higher at the ends than at the sides. They are the most common basket type from the region (Laforet 1992). They do not have as much flare to the walls as the baskets of the previous two groups and are not as square, with very rounded coils (Haeberlin et al. 1928). Peabody Turnbaugh and Turnbaugh (1986) also recognize rounded trunk style baskets with knobbed inset lids being created by these people.

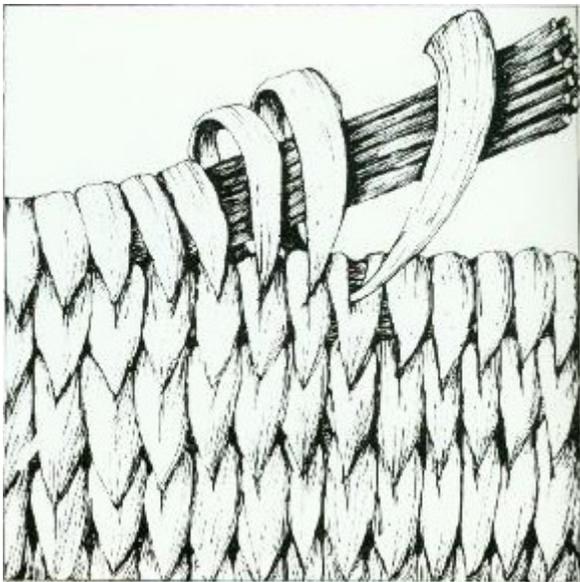


Figure 11. Even bifurcation. (Baird 1976:18)

The stitches of the Tsilhqot'in baskets are very even and perfectly, vertically bifurcated, with each stitch splitting up the corresponding stitch of the previous coil giving a very fine appearance (Haeberlin et al. 1928). Stitch style is smaller but less smooth than the work of the Nlaka'pamux (Peabody Turnbaugh and Turnbaugh 1986).

Such careful practice achieves a design which is very vertical. This effect is further enhanced by the absence of premature coiling, which culminates in a complete form that is quite symmetrical (Haeberlin et al. 1928). The foundation is typically composed of a bundle of splints but they are often uneven and result in bumpy walls. A distinctive characteristic of Tsilhqot'in baskets is the attachment of a horizontal rod approximately 1 ½ to 2 inches below the rim to support the tumpline (Peabody Turnbaugh and Turnbaugh 1986; Haeberlin et al. 1928).

Tsilhqot'in basketmakers use the roots from both the cedar and the spruce tree for their baskets, though the spruce root appears to be the more popular choice. The design field of Tsilhqot'in baskets is split into three or four divisions. If there are three divisions, the basket is divided into thirds. The top and bottom are fully imbricated, and the middle has only vertical designs (Haeberlin et al 1928). In a four-field pattern, the upper field is small and situated between the rim and the carrying rod, consisting of zigzags and meanders (Laforet 1992; Peabody Turnbaugh and Turnbaugh 1986). The other three fields are evenly divided, with the same characteristics of a three-field design. They also create many all-over patterns, often of representational designs of animals, birds and humans (Jones 1982) that are quite distinctive. Teit (1906) noticed that the Tsilhqot'in often imbricate one strip along the bottom and one along the rim with grass stem from which the pattern is set off. The background is always light, and many designs are executed in outline only (Haeberlin et al 1928), usually in red cherry bark and white grass stems, with here-and-there triangles worked in solid black dyed cherry bark for contrast (Peabody Turnbaugh and Turnbaugh 1986).

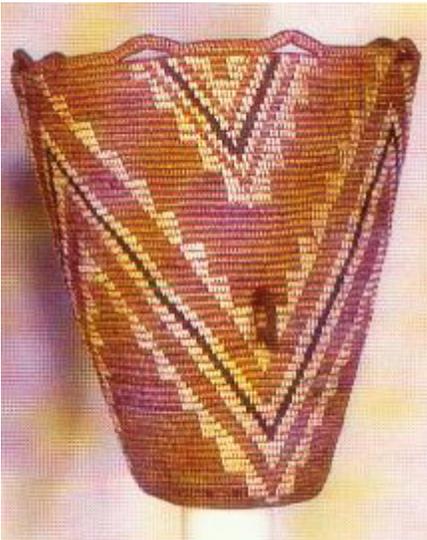
The art of coiled basketry is a newer form for the Tsilhqot'in, having learned from the Stl'atl'imx, and therefore, we do not see as much development of shape and style. Changes due to tourism are similar to those seen in the Interior Salish tribes, most notably with the addition of loopwork rims (Laforet 1992).

Klickitat

The Klickitat people are part of the larger group of people speaking the Sahaptin language. They make their homes along the north side of the Columbia River valley, near the slopes of the Cascade Mountains in Washington State (Schlick 1994).

In 1930 the Klickitat, along with the Nlaka'pamux, St'at'imx and Tsilhqot'in were the major producers of coiled baskets (Schlick 1994). Also made in this region, though not to the same extent by the Klickitat, were twined, fez-shaped basket hats, used in ceremony and story-telling, twined bags with circular bases for root-digging, folded cedar bark baskets and flat twined bags, commonly known as wallets, used for storing foods (Schlick 1994).

The basketry forms of the Klickitat people have undergone gradual transitions in a similar manner as those of the Nlaka'pamux. The most common use of coiled baskets in this region pre-contact (before the mid 19th century) was as cooking pots. Baskets created for this purpose had wide mouths and were shallower in proportion to width (Schlick 1994). Since the introduction of metal cooking pots, this form is found much less frequently. The elders today remember their elders creating big beautiful baskets that, when the maker was sitting on the floor, would come up to their chins (Schlick 1994). Some also remember baskets that were flat on one side, to be carried on a horse (Schlick 1994).



The major form of basket produced by the Klickitat in more modern times is a slightly flaring oval pack basket (Peabody Turnbaugh and Turnbaugh 1986), a truncated cone (Lobb 1978). This tall cylindrical shape is distinctly narrower than its predecessors are. A one-gallon container for berries would be eight inches high (Schlick 1994). Nut-shaped baskets and rounded storage trunks are also found, but not as commonly.

Figure 12. A typical Klickitat basket. Notice the braided, looped rim. (Jones 1982:28)

The work of the Klickitat women was considered, at the turn of the century, to be coarser and poorer than that of the surrounding tribes (Haeberlin et al 1928). They do not practice bifurcation of stitches (Schlick 1994), a process which makes the final product look very neat and tidy. Watch spring coil is the most common start (Schlick 1994) and false braid the most common rim finish, not often used by other people (Peabody Turnbaugh and Turnbaugh 1986, Schlick 1994). It was common for baskets to be finished with a loopwork rim, called ears, which would allow for a string to be laced overtop to hold down ferns or foliage that covered the berries inside. Traditionally, these ears are small and heavily reinforced, so as to be functional. Holes were still punched underneath the loops through which threads were strung to attach the baskets to the body. On large baskets, loops made from hide may be attached to support a tumpline or carrying strap (Schlick 1994).

Baskets were usually fully imbricated in black and white, though brown and yellow were occasionally used (Peabody Turnbaugh and Turnbaugh 1986). Yellow was created from a dye made from the roots of the Oregon grape (*Mahonia aquifolium*). This was unusual in coiled basketry and no other tribe used yellow until the introduction of aniline dyes (Schlick 1994, Haeberlin et al. 1928). The Klickitat did not use cherry bark like the Interior Salish did, but instead chose the skin of the cedar root with the smooth side out or the bark of the red osier dogwood (*Cornus sericea*) (Schlick 1994).

Designs were of a single field and consisted of geometrical patterns such as zigzags, based on a three-peaked V or mountain motif (Schlick 1994). Other horizontal and vertical layouts are seen, but not as often (Peabody Turnbaugh and Turnbaugh 1986). Many stylized, representational designs, based on fish, birds, dogs, body parts, plants and people were developed in later years and were incorporated in to the greater design field (Lobb 1978; Schlick 1994).

Among the Klickitat, as with other people, the art of coiled basketry is not nearly as common as it once was. Many people have lost the skill, through a lack of teachers, being busy with other economic tasks or a reluctance to learn such a difficult craft (Schlick 1994). During the mid 20th century the monetary return for the amount of work that had to go into making a basket did not make it a very viable economic activity (Schlick 1994). Since that time, a few women have picked up the craft again, as a way to reconnect with and carry on past traditions.

Halkomelem

The Halkomelem, the Coast Salish, are the only people on the Northwest Coast to make coiled cedar root baskets. It is likely that many of the baskets in the Maccaud Collection at the White Rock Museum are from the Halkomelem people as these would most likely be the easiest for Irene Maccaud to have acquired. In Irene's day, many women were going door to door to trade their beautiful baskets for clothes, food and other survival necessities that they had come to depend on the Europeans for (Fortney 2001). In my research, I have found this region's basketry to be less well defined than that of the previously mentioned people. That being said, coiled basketry was of major importance for this group as well.

Given that the Halkomelem often refer to coiled basket work as "Lillooet or "Thompson", it is probable that they learned from the people of the Plateau (Fortney 2001). This is supported by the work of Haeberlin et al. who document Nlaka'pamux and St'atl'imx women discussing the passing on of the technique to the coastal people (1928). There is a lot of crossover between the techniques of the Plateau people and the Halkomelem. While I have been able to outline the common traits of St'atl'imx and Nlaka'pamux, Tsilhqot'in and Klickitat, I have not

found the stylistic traits of the Halkomelem easy to define and I believe this is partially the reason.

The Halkomelem used the bundle technique, as well as the slat technique, both independently and in conjunction (Fortney 2001). It is common to see baskets with slat bottoms and bundle foundation for the walls. It was common for girls who were just learning and older women whose skills were not what they once were to aid other family members or friends by making these bases (Fortney 2001). This decision in regards to style, slat or bundle foundation, determined the name of a basket, before the function, shape or size (Fortney 2001). Halkomelem work was often very angular and rectangular forms predominated (Hedges 1997). There is a definite distinction here between the berry baskets, with their sloping walls and other burden baskets that have more vertical walls.

It was not as important for the Coast Salish to make the superfine, bundle foundation, waterproof baskets for cooking or carrying liquids, as the Nlaka'pamux or Stl'atl'imx did, for they use cedar bentwood boxes for those purposes (Haeberlin et al. 1928). The water basket was a part of the repertoire though, and the Sto:lo, up river Halkomelem, used to dip the basket roots in beeswax to promote waterproofness in the finished product.

Imbrication and beading were both used by the Halkomelem as decorative techniques. Handles, lids and loopwork rims were also common, perhaps more common than among the other coiled basket makers. Sto:lo basketmakers will trim a basket with red if it is for a girl, or use more black if the basket is for a boy (Fortney 2001). Animal motifs, such as ravens and eagles, are more common designs from this region than from others.

The Halkomelem, as with the other tribes, take great pride in their work, and are critical of each others work. Baskets that are uneven, with irregular coils are

attributed to beginners and many of the problems an inexperienced person would attribute to old age are actually due to improper preparation of materials (Fortney 2001).

We are very fortunate that there are modern Halkomelem women continuing the tradition of coiled basketry and some their work can currently be viewed at the Satet te siwes (Continuing Traditions) exhibit at the Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia.

Additional notes on Coiled Burden Baskets

Burden baskets of a trapezoidal shape are probably the oldest traditional form of coiled basketry that is found in collections today. Haeberlin et al. (1928) have done a detailed spatial analysis of baskets from the Interior Plateau, creating formulas that compartmentalize the relative sizes and shapes of burden baskets into particular groups. To them, the shape of a basket is indicative of the cultural tradition from which it was obtained, the mouths of Stl'atl'imx baskets considered to be larger and the walls more angled than those of the Nlaka'pamux. It is possible, however, that they are mistaken in their understanding.

Contemporary studies in basketry have shown that perhaps the angle of the basket is more indicative of the use than of the origin (Fortney 2001, Schlick 1994). Not all the burden baskets would be used for the same tasks. Sharply angled baskets are preferable for packing and transporting berries. In a recent interview, Sto:lo weaver Wendy Ritchie explains how important the shape of a basket is to its function.

So they're tiered out like that, so that the ones on the bottom don't have all the pressure of the top berries squishing them...So when they pick berries, the layers of berries, and they put in a layer and they put in some leaves, and they put in a layer and they put in some leaves,

so the juice doesn't drain down...So the weight is alleviated by the angle of the basket. So your bottom berries don't get mushed.
(Fortney 2001:17)

It is logical to create baskets with sloping sides to protect berries from crushing (Schlick 1994), but not all loads require such protection. Basket makers retain the knowledge of the appropriate form a basket should take for a specific purpose. The differences may be slight and not immediately apparent to one who is not intimately familiar with baskets and their uses (Fortney 2001).

Haeberlin et al. made a slight reference to this possibility when, after describing all the basket groups by size, and naming them, they further divided the baskets into two groups. There are those that have straight walls with a continuous, consistent flare, and those in which the angle of the flare changes half way up to become vertical. They skimmed over this distinction very briefly, perhaps not giving it the attention it deserved in their interviews with early basketmakers.

The other discrepancy that comes from Haeberlin and Teit's (1928) attempt to name categorical divisions based on size is that contemporary basket makers seem to indicate the importance of construction technique above use in naming. Much of the literature would agree with Haeberlin et al., believing that the name reflects the function. To current basket makers, however, "naming a basket type is the same as naming its construction methods" (Fortney 2001:22).

Tlingit

The territorial boundary of the Tlingit people falls pretty much on line with the political boundary between the United States and Canada, in northern British Columbia. They inhabit the portion of the Northwest Coast that is known as the Alaskan panhandle, extending north into the southern coast of Alaska proper. They are part of the northern Athapascan linguistic group (Peabody Turnbaugh

and Turnbaugh 1986). Here, plain twined basketmaking is one of the oldest and most respected art forms (Paul 1944).

The northernmost division of the Tlingit, the Yakutat, believe that their people were the first basketmakers. A beautiful woman married the sun and he took her to his home.

Long years they lived together in the Sky-land and many children came to them. But these children were of the Earth-world like their mother and not of the Spirit-world of their father, Ga-gahn. One day, as the mother sat watching her children frolicking in the fields of the Sunm-land, her mind filled with anxiety over their future. She plucked some roots and began idly to plait them together in the shape of a basket. Her husband, the Sun, had divined her fears and perplexities. So he took the basket which she had unknowingly made and increased its size until it was large enough to hold the mother and her eight children. In it they were lowered to their homeland, the Earth. Their great basket settled near Yakutat on the Alesk River and that is the reason that the first baskets in south-eastern Alaska were made by the Yakutat women. (As recorded by Paul 1944:9)

Where the basket landed became the homeland of the Yakutat people and their culture “materialized through the making of a basket” (Walker 1999).

While technique and design is fairly consistent throughout the territory, there is a distinctive split in the material used in the manufacture of twined baskets from this greater region. The people of the region north of Fredrick Sound use the roots of the Sitka spruce tree. The southern people use roots of the great red cedar. This line of division corresponds to the northernmost limit of the red cedar growing region, which would explain this split (Paul 1944). The finest strips of the exterior of the root are used for the weft, while the internal pieces for the warps (Weber 1990). Material used for decoration included manna grass, bluejoint grass, hair grass, nodding woodreed, Alaska brome grass, wild rye, and maidenhair fern (Ross 1994).

The Tlingit women work their baskets in a counterclockwise fashion. They begin at the base and work the basket in an upright position, left to right (Laforet 1992, Weber 1990). The weave slants to the left (Ross 1994).

There are five types of weaving employed by the Tlingit, as described by Francis Paul (1944). These include:

1. Woosh-tuhk-ah-gee: (close-together-work): This is the standard weave with which the majority of baskets are made. Two weft elements are twisted around one warp strand, completely enclosing the warp strand. The rows are pushed together to create a tightly woven, waterproof basket. A variation on this is called the strawberry weave, in which the two wefts are of different colors, creating a checkerboard arrangement. In a second variation, the rows are not pushed so close together, but left evenly separated, resulting in an open mesh that could be used for such tasks as straining oil.

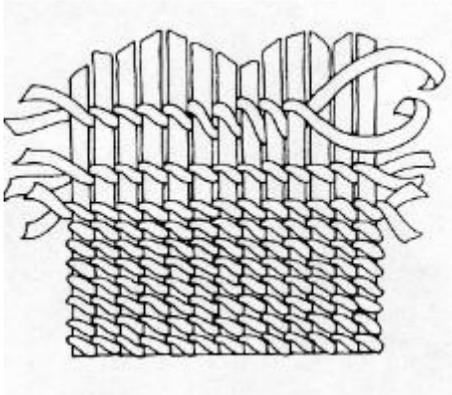


Figure 13. Close together work, also called plain twining. This is an example of Z twist. (Laforet 1984:220)

2. Khah-gees-ut: (between, or middle thing): A single weft strand is passed over and under each alternate warp element between the rows of plain twining. This weave is often found on basket bottoms. It is not as beautiful or strong a technique, but is employed because it allows the weaver to make use of the second grade roots, that are not good enough for plain twining. It is a technique frequently used by the Chilkat people.

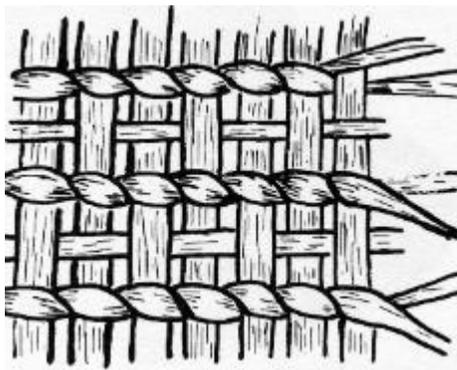


Figure 14. Between weave. (Paul 1944:23).

3. Hikdjee-hah-zee: (rough-like-the-skin-on-a-frog's-back):



Figure 15. Close up of rough like the skin on a frog's back stitch. From White Rock Museum Collection 978.49.541.

In this third technique, the weft elements are twined around two warp elements each time, alternating the pairs of warps in successive rows. This technique is used discreetly to produce a textural geometric design in the basket surface.

4. Wahk-kus-kaht: (eye-holes): This open weave technique begins with bending the warp splints so they run on the diagonal. Every second one is bent in the

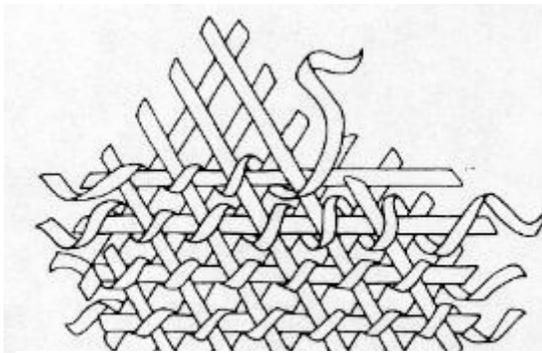


Figure 16. Eye-holes, also called crossed warp technique. (Laforet 1984:224)

alternate direction, resulting in them crossing each other in regular series. After each point of contact, the weft elements are twined around, just as in the standard weave.

5. Uh-too-koo: (twisted, or on the top): This weave is called by others "three strand twining", for that's exactly what it is.

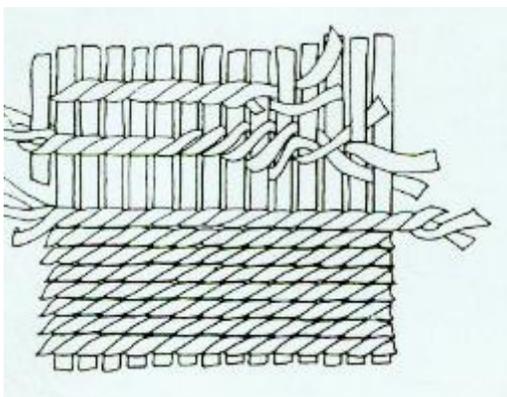


Figure 17. Three strand twining. (Laforet 1984:221)

Each of the three weft strands passes over two warp strands on the outside and under one on the inside. The resulting basket looks like standard weaving on the inside, but has a long, winding look to the outside. As the strongest of weaves, it is traditionally used by the Tlingit on the bases of large baskets.

There are a great many forms of twined baskets made, due to the easy manipulation of the materials and methods. The basic traditional form is a simple cylinder with straight sides or a little flare (Paul 1944, Jones 1982).



Figure 18. Typical cylindrical Tlingit baskets. (Lobb 1978:55)

For berry picking, three sizes of baskets are necessary; a small, quart sized basket into which the picker placed the berries; a medium sized basket carried on the back into which the smaller vessel was emptied; and a large basket, holding approximately two bushels that sat on the ground nearby. Many pickers would empty their medium sized baskets into this communal receptacle which had strong handles, well woven into the sides about two-thirds of the way up. These largest of berry baskets were never common, as each household only needed one or two (Weber 1990). Other cylindrical types include a water bucket, which was often undecorated; a short basket, known as the "lower part of the basket," for cooking; and the ceremonial salt water drinking cup, the use of which is confined to men (Paul 1944). Weaving hats was a very important part of the basket makers' tasks. Common hats were worn daily for protection of the elements, and ceremonial hats of exceptionally fine work were brought out for special occasions (Ross 1994). Spoon bags were another unique traditional form. They were made, as the name suggests, to store the spoons of the household by alternating bands of open and closed weave (Paul 1944). One of the favorite basket types is one of the smaller forms with a lid, which had a chamber in the knob that was filled with small pebbles which were sometimes from the gizzard of a grouse or goose and would make a rattling sound when shaken. This was called a rattle lid, and the Tlingit name translates as a "something inside basket" (Paul 1944). In later years, once it was available,

bead shot would be used to create the sound, which may have functioned as an alarm for the owner (Ross 1994).

Contact with Europeans had many of the same effects on twined basketry as it did on coiled basketry. One of the first forms to fall into disuse as modern utensils became available was the cooking pot (Weber 1990). So too did the bucket shaped basket, which was replaced by metal buckets from the colonists. One of the first new forms to be developed was a shot pouch made from twining, as well as snuff and down containers. These are excellent markers of the early contact period as they were only popular for a short time. Shot pouches were rapidly made obsolete by the development of new types of guns (Weber 1990).

By 1880 cruise ships were arriving in Alaskan ports, bringing tourists from across the continent into contact with the Tlingit people. The purpose of collecting baskets made by the aboriginals was one of the draws of such an excursion, as indicated by the brochure published by the Alaska Steamship Company in 1904, advertising Alaska Indian Basketry (Macdowell 1964). Such pressure induced the production of new forms. Shapes became more conical, perhaps because the flaring walls gave the appearance of a large form, thus, increasing the dollar value of the basket. This corresponded with a decrease in straight cylindrical forms (Ross 1994). Other non-functional forms were created, such as tea kettles and basketry covered bottles (Weber 1990). Overall size was reduced which meant that an even finer gauge of weaving was perfected (Ross 1994). The fanciest forms, according to work done by J. M. Jones, were found between the years of 1900 and 1920, when the Victorian era was at its peak along the Northwest Coast (Ross 1994). A balance was sought between size, decoration and time spent, to maximize dollar value with a minimum of labour (Weber 1990).

Market pressure induced an increase in the use of openwork twining, which reduced the amount of time necessary to create a basket, as well as the amount of material necessary, reducing the root gathering and preparation time as well (Ross 1994; Weber 1990). More checkerwork weaving was used, which was an easier, faster method, though not as strong, (Ross 1994) and less three-strand twining was employed (Weber 1990). The finishing techniques, which once were numerous, and often important arenas for increasing strength, were reduced in number to four by 1939 (Ross 1994). At this point the most common was simply cutting off the warp ends (Weber 1990). Basket bottoms were no longer reinforced for strength (Weber 1990). This was a common trend, the reduction of strength and integrity in baskets that are made as collector's items, to look pretty on shelves in white women's homes, as opposed to those that were intended for use (Weber 1990).

False embroidery is the technique employed by the Tlingit for decoration. The colored grass is wrapped around the front of the weft strand as it passes over

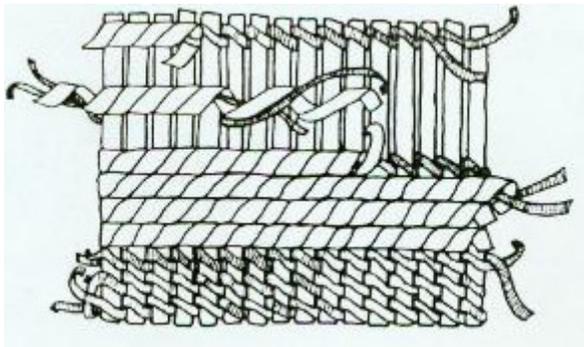


Figure 19. False embroidery. (Laforet 1984:227)

the warp.

This design element is continually on the front of the basket and is never seen on the inside. The slant of this element ends up running in the opposite direction of the twining, creating a doubly effective decoration (Paul 1944). Early designs of the Tlingit basketry were worked in soft natural hues, as were found naturally and by dyeing grasses with other plants (Jones 1982). This changed with the introduction of aniline dyes. Green-dyed decorations are common only

on the baskets from the period from 1880-1900, while red is used continuously from the time it became available (Weber 1990).

The basket design is always properly adapted to the form and size of the basket. With the common cylindrical forms, by far the most frequent trend is the application of design in three horizontal bands, encircling the basket. The top and bottom bands mirror each other with large bold patterns while the central band is smaller, unrelated pattern, such as the tying design (Paul 1944). These bands are believed to have become narrower and reduced to two bands for the baskets produced for the tourist market (Corey 1983 in Weber 1990). Due to the direction of twining, a Tlingit basket can be picked out by noticing that the jog in the pattern is higher on the left-hand side (Laforet 1992).

The designs themselves are geometric interpretations of natural objects (Peabody Turnbaugh and Turnbaugh 1986). It is believed that they may have developed from the split porcupine quill embroidery of the interior Athapascans (Paul 1994). Crest designs and patterns adapted from Chilkat blankets were not seen in Tlingit basketry until after 1880 (Weber 1990).

Haida

The Haida Nation makes its home on Haida Gwaii (the Queen Charlotte Islands), off the central coast of British Columbia. Baskets produced in this region are very similar to those of the twined spruce root baskets of the Tlingit (Peabody Turnbaugh and Turnbaugh 1986). More cedar bark plaiting, which is characteristic of the Tsimshian, is seen in the Haida repertoire, as are bark twined baskets and hats of red-cedar or yellow-cedar bark (Ross 1994). The Haida people believe that it was Raven who taught them the skill of basket weaving (Knudtson 1991).

The twined baskets of Haida Gwaii are less decorative than those of the Tlingit, and thus did not receive the early popularity that the Tlingit work did. The Haida did not use false embroidery until it was taught to them by the Tlingit, probably sometime around the turn of the century (Laforet 1990; Weber 1990). Their forms and techniques are very similar. In the eyes of a modern Haida basket maker, Deloras Churchill, Tlingit baskets were of finer work, but the Haida baskets were sturdy and made to be useful (Knudtson 1991).

A traditional Haida basket is circled by alternating weft bands of black and tan of similar size (Jones 1982, Lobb 1978). The black color is a result of spruce roots having been dyed by burial in mud or immersing in rusty water used as the weft, which creates a pattern on the inside as well as the out (Lobb 1979). Structural manipulation, such as twill twining, is often employed to create textural designs at the top (Lobb 1978, Peabody Turnbaugh and Turnbaugh 1986).



Figure 20. A typical Haida spruce-root basket. (Lobb 1978:65)

When making twined baskets and hats, Haida women work left to right in the same manner as the Tlingit. They work with the basket set on a stand, however, supporting the base above what will be the rim. The basket sits upside down and is worked from the bottom down to the top (Laforet 1992). This results in the work being completed in a clockwise manner (Weber 1990). This can be seen in the jog that forms at the point of transition from plain weft to colored weft. The right side of the jog will be higher than the left, opposite that of the Tlingit baskets (Laforet 1984). Another distinguishing feature that results from this method is that the stitches slant to the left. It is known as Z twine (Laforet 1990; Ross 1994). (See Figure 10.)

Due to their seeming plainness in the eyes of the tourists, Haida basketry changed less because of their influence, though Christian symbols, European textile patterns and new forms were adopted to some small extent (Knudtson 1991).

The twined and plaited hats are the most distinctive form of basketry produced by the Haida people and are considered by some to be the single most elegant manifestation of Haida fiber art (Knudtson 1991). They are so well known, in fact, that many people believe that all the hats of the Northwest Coast to belong to the Haida group (Ross 1994). When closely surveyed, one can spot the differences that make the Haida craft unique.

According to an exhaustive comparison of basketry techniques by Andrea Laforet (1984), the distinguishing characteristics of Haida hats are

1. The crown is begun with warps radiating from a central point,
2. The use of Z twining as a basic technique,
3. Distinct separation of the different fields; top, crown and brim,
4. Three ply Z twine used on the top and the brim,
5. The use of a twill design on the brim to create a textural pattern, often resulting in embossed diamonds, diagonal or zigzag patterns,
6. There are only a few types of braiding ever used to finish the brim,
7. Attached to the inside is a two ply Z twill twine headband.

Hats produced by the Haida women are often considered prized possessions, even among neighboring nations. Haida hats are often painted with crest symbols in the customary colors of red and black. This is exceptional in basketry, more so because the painting is usually done by a man (Knudtson 1991). This is one of the few artistic realms where the art of men and women overlap.

Tsimshian

The Tsimshian people live off the central coast of British Columbia, including the lower Nass and Skeena River valleys. Basketry from this region includes the cedar bark plaiting that is representative of the region and limited forms of spruce root twining similar to that of the Haida and Tlingit people (Laforet 1984). There is a minimal amount of twined bark work seen as well.

Plaited containers are created from either cedar or maple bark and executed in plain checkerwork plaiting or diagonal checkerwork (Laforet 1984).

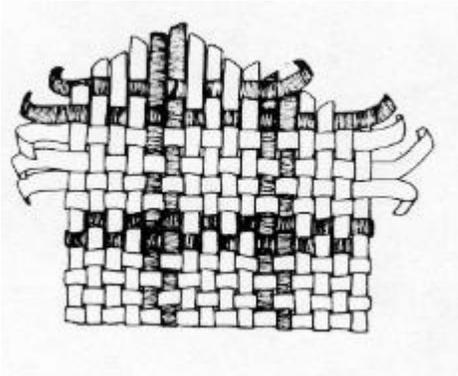


Figure 21. Plain checkerwork bark plaiting, with dark decorative elements included. This is the major form of ornamentation on plaited baskets. (Laforet 1984:226)

Most maple bark containers were from the people living inland, up river. The containers are soft and flexible. They have square, cornered bases and round rims (Laforet 1984). Upriver women marked the perimeter of the base with a single row of two ply twining before the transition to the walls and split the base elements longitudinally to reduce the gauge of the walls (Laforet 1984).

The most common form is tall and cylindrical with a somewhat flaring rim (Laforet 1984). These would be used for transporting berries, and possibly other goods. Here as elsewhere, function determines size, and other baskets of similar shape, but varying sizes were created for different tasks. The largest baskets are found upriver, one representative having a capacity of 96 litres (Laforet 1984). The second size range is smaller, holding between 2 and 43 litres. A third range of sizes is found and is generally used carried around the neck as a

receptacle for berry picking. The smallest of these has a capacity of about one litre. Some of these have double bases with small stones loose in between for a rattle effect, likely for entertaining children (Laforet 1984).

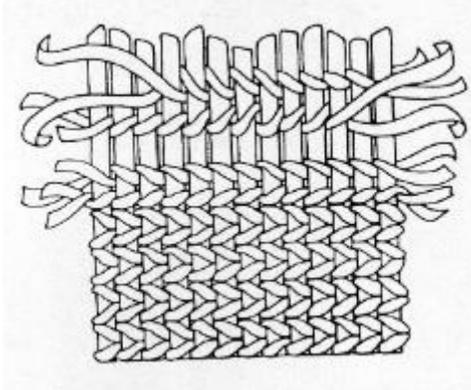
The only decorative element on these baskets is created with dyed black or occasionally red cedar or maple bark, used in place of a regular element, or placed over top of the weaving element. Patterns are geometrical and are often simple horizontal bands (Laforet 1984). The maple bark baskets from the upriver Tsimshian have a specific design configuration, with the decoration covering the entire wall, with the exception of about two inches immediately above the base. This undecorated band may be divided horizontally by a single narrow black band (Laforet 1984). There is only one fully plaited basket in the Maccaud collection, and it fulfills the distinctive characteristics of Tsimshian work.

Twining is used by the Tsimshian mostly as a minor perimeter technique in conjunction with plaiting (Laforet 1984). There are, however, three types of twined cedar bark or spruce root basketry from the Tsimshian noted by A. Laforet's survey of collections of Tsimshian basketry in 1984.

1. Cylinders with circular bases, flared walls and round mouths, made using 2-ply Z twist twining and plain twining. These are very similar to Tlingit basketry.
2. There are two shapes in the second category, one made with a square base and round mouth, the other commences with a rectangular base and results in an oval mouth. The base is made by plaiting and two ply S twining is used for the walls; the stitches slant to the right. Baskets of this type may have convex fitted lids.
3. This third category includes baskets that are thought to have been made by experimenting with techniques used on the south coast. They are made with a type of wrapped twining and have unusual shapes.

The spruce root twined basketry is very similar to that of the Haida Nation, with the exception of three critical characteristics (Laforet 1984);

1. The base is begun with a rectangle of spruce roots, twined in parallel row of alternating S and Z twining.



After completion of this rectangle, the warps and the wefts become the warps of the rest of the base, as the weft is added and twined around the rectangular start.

Figure 22. Alternating S and Z twining. (Laforet 1984:220)

2. The walls are created with alternating S and Z twist twining. These can be carried along at the same time, one pitched to the right, the other to the left (Weber 1990).
3. The jog is on the reverse side, higher on the left, after the addition of design elements due to the basket being woven in an upright position, with the base to the ground.

Nuu-chah-nulth and Makah

The Nuu-chah-nulth and Makah comprise the Southern Wakashan Linguistic group. Their traditional territory is the West Coast of Vancouver Island and the northernmost tip of the Olympic Peninsula.

Materials used in the basketry from this coastal region include the western red cedar bark (*Thuja plicata*), swamp grass (*Carex abnupta*), bear grass (*Xerophyllum tenax*), three corner grass (*Schoenaplectus olneyi*), rushes (*Typha latifolia*) and spruce root (*Picea sitchensis*) (Ross 1994). Women were quick to pick up on the ease of using raffia as a basketry material once it was introduced

in the late 19th century and incorporated it into their repertoire (Laforet 1992). Raffia is the tough, stringy fibre of a species of Madagascan palm. The techniques used most often include both twining and plaiting and it is common to see twined baskets begin with a plaited square start. The twining slants to the right, as is characteristic of the S twist (Laforet 1992).

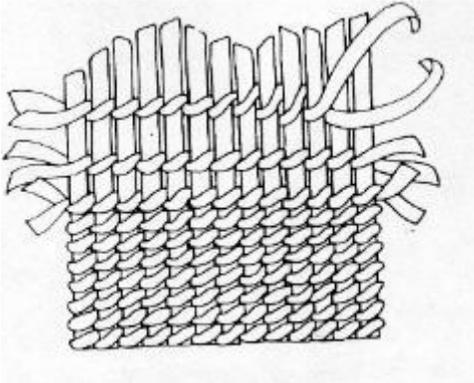


Figure 23. S twist twining. (Laforet 1984:220)

The open twined burden baskets made from spruce roots and cedar branches are probably the oldest form of basketry. This shape is similar to that of a wedge, with rounded corners (Ross 1994) and a bottom that would allow the basket to sit upright only in the bottom of a canoe. This shape is often referred to as a clam basket but was surely used for other products such as holding edible roots and firewood. They were made to be tough and coarse or light and delicate (Laforet 1992).

Both plaited and twined baskets were made around moulds, which would ensure that the desired shape was obtained and that the weave would be tight. These moulds were often made by the husband of a weaver and passed down to the next generation of weavers, thus establishing a line of similarity between the baskets of a family (Ross 1994).

The best known baskets from the south coast are the small trinket baskets. These were created in the early, or pre-contact era and rapidly became a hot seller on the tourist market. The Nuu'chah'nulth, having generally abandoned

the art of basketry in the early historical period, were re-taught the skill by the Makah in the 1920's (Baird 1976).



Figure 24. Southern Wakashan trinket baskets. (Ross 1994:127, RBCM #11055)

These twined baskets had warps generally made from cedar bark, while the weft is from spruce roots, cedar bark or from the long tough leaves of the basket sedge or bear grass. Their size was reduced, even from the day of their late introduction due to the pressure

from tourists who wanted small souvenirs to take away with them (Ross 1994). Some of the pieces were so small that they demanded the workmanship to be incredibly fine, resembling fine linen cloth (Hedges 1997). The relative proportion of small baskets also increased due to the lack of necessity of larger baskets, as now cooking pots and buckets could be purchased (Ross 1994). There is a marked decrease in the number of different techniques used to start baskets at this time (Ross 1994). Tourist pressure also induced the formation of new, non-functional wares that conformed to the ornate tastes of the Victorian era. The people were encouraged, by the Indian Commissioner to create forms that were considered functional to the colonialist world, such as wastepaper baskets and letter holders (Forbes-Lindsey, 1908 in Ross 1994). Basket makers began to cover everything that came their way with twined grasses, from bottles to abaloned and seashells.

Twined hats were very common throughout the coast and the samples from this region are twined with spruce root, sedge or cedar bark wefts over cedar warps, often in two layers; a double hat, so to speak, in the shape of an upside down bowl (Ross 1994). During the second half of the 19th century, these hats were made for men of high status with a large, painted black rim. These were made

exclusively using spruce roots with diagonal twill twining creating a textural design on the brim and three strand twining on the top (Ross 1994). Another type of twined hat is known as the whaling hat and is also thought to have been reserved for high status men, on special occasions. The shape is that of a truncated cone, commonly with a round or pointed knob on top. The designs on these hats were of whaling scenes or geometric thunderbirds, worked in brown or black overlay (Ross 1994). These are commonly known as Maquinna hats, after a line of famous chiefs.

Early designs from this group are often geometric, but do include representational forms of canoes, sea serpents, birds and thunderbirds. Horizontal designs are by far the most prevalent on early baskets (Ross 1994). As with other groups, the trend is for dark designs on light backgrounds (Peabody Turnbaugh and Turnbaugh 1986). Early basket decorations were created by changing the regular weft element to a differently colored weft strand.

The tourist market placed pressure here too, with the development of new motifs and medallion designs, as there was a move towards decoration for its own sake rather than complementing the shape of the basket (Ross 1994). It is probably at this time that the women began to make pattern baskets that they would keep on hand to help them remember how to recreate specific patterns (Gogol 1981). After 1930, we begin to see baskets that had designs created with the difficult technique of false embroidery that had not been used previously (Ross 1994). The Nuu-chah-nulth and Makah people were quick to pick up on the use of aniline dyes when they became available and one can see great experiments with color in their later work.

The Art of Design in Coiled Basketry

Once a woman has decided to embark on the creative journey of making a basket she will generally already have an idea of the shape she wishes to create, as it will be dictated by the use to which the basket will be put. Neither does the technique and material she will use require much planning, as they are determined by the cultural traditions and knowledge she has gained from her teachers, who carried on the traditions of their teachers before them. It is in the process of decoration that a woman has the most creative freedom to express her individuality. Basketry designs are a very important medium for artistic expression (Brandford 1984) but often still reveal familial relations and cultural continuity.

To incorporate design for beauty on the form of a basket that is produced to be functional tests the skill of a basket maker, as she is bound by the constraints of her medium. In the case of coiled basketry the woven ornamentation must correspond to the corrugated units, or tiles, that are created in columns and rows during the weaving of a basket (Braid 1976). Any representational form must be adapted within the constraints of these physical boundaries (Farrand 1990). Because of this it is not surprising that the majority of designs are geometrical patterns. These patterns stem from the vision of what the women see around themselves, what they know. They are based on objects and patterns seen in nature.

A Klickitat legend on the origin of basket weaving tells the tale of a young girl who doesn't have the abilities of the other children and so is avoided by all the people. A large cedar tree takes pity on the young girl and teaches her the skills to make baskets from his roots. After her first, unsuccessful, attempt, the cedar gives her a pep talk and sends her out to

"seek out the things of nature and bring them back pictured in your mind"....

She walked for many days looking at everything. She became confused because she did not know what she was seeking. She was walking down the trail one day when a rattlesnake spoke to her, "See the designs on my back: Use them to design the edging on you baskets." She was grateful to the rattlesnake, but she was thinking, "I can't just put edgings on my baskets."

She continued walking down the trail until she saw Patu (Mountain). He spoke to her, "Look at me very closely; this is the way I am, like a design. The outlines of my peaks are like designs." She looked at his peaks and thought, "Truly, the peaks look like designs. It would be beautiful in a basket design." She was grateful to Patu and journeyed on.

Further down the trail Grouse ran across her path. She stopped and he spoke to her, "See my tracks? You may copy my footprints for your designs." The girl looked at Grouse's footprints and thought, "Yes indeed, those tracks look just like designs." She was grateful to Grouse and went on.

Several days later it was getting dark when she decided it was time to return home. She came to a brook and decided to have a drink. She knelt down on her knees by this brook, and he spoke to her, "Look at me. See the reflections and the designs with waves of water. You can make designs like this on you baskets." She looked down into the water reflected like pictures. She thought what beautiful designs these would make on her baskets, especially the reflection of the evening star.

The next day she took a blanket and spread it out under the cedar tree. She told cedar all about the designs she found in the forest. "Now that I have seen nature and the beautiful things in it, I feel much wiser and more capable of doing what you have been trying to teach me. I believe I can do it now." (Reprinted from American Indian Basketry Magazine 1979:32-33)

Mountain peaks are still one of the most common patterns in Klickitat basketry. They are traditionally represented as a three-peaked V, and often form the basis of the design, with other motifs incorporated into the framework that results (Schlick 1994).

Though I have not found similar tales of patterns found in nature for other nations, James Teit's work with the Nlaka'pamux and Stl'atl'imx people (1900, 1906, 1928) documents the designs that were found on baskets at the turn of the 20th century. English interpretation of the names of popular patterns include: stripped snake; snake track; dentalia; flies; flying goose; mountain tops, cloud over mountain; grasshopper; butterfly wing; lightning; hammer; open mouth; fish backbone; rainbow; arrowhead; net; and star (Haeberlin et al. 1928). This is not a complete list, but it demonstrates that these tribes also based their patterns on what they saw around them. The majority are parts of nature but human creations are not excluded. It seems that the majority of designs from the Interior Salish, especially the Nlaka'pamux, are arranged in vertical or horizontal bands. Stl'atl'imx are more likely to use a single large motifs while Nlaka'pamux will create all-over patterns using multiple small motifs (Haeberlin et al 1928). What is necessary to note is that animal motifs, as whole creatures, are not predominant (Farrand 1990). More often either a specific part of an animal is represented, or the tracks or patterns created by the animal. Among the Tsilhqot'in and Klickitat representational forms of animals are more popular (Haeberlin et al 1928).

In many cases the patterns are greatly modified from their real forms in order to fit within the geometrical constraints of tile pattern created by the technique. The result can be so far removed from what is realistic that the name seems to bear little resemblance to the pattern. Also, many designs are varied over and over in subsequent work, each time becoming just a little bit different from the previous piece and often becoming more complex. Usually the simplest form of a design is considered the true design (Haeberlin et al 1928). Sometimes "what were originally representations of very dissimilar objects have converged in their evolution until the same figure does duty for both" (Farrand 1900: 392). There are some patterns which seem to have no known name. These are generally from very old specimens and the representative meaning is considered to be lost

in antiquity (Farrand 1990). There is, therefore, a good deal of uncertainty and ambiguity when it comes to a discussion of the meaning of the decoration on particular baskets.

Many designs are based on what the weaver has been taught to create, or variations on known patterns, but weavers also speak of “dream designs” that were inspired by the supernatural spirits (Haeberlin et al. 1928, Thompson and Marr 1983, Schlick 1994, Fortney 2001). These designs are often new variations or combinations of old motifs rather than spectacularly unique new forms (Haeberlin et al. 1928, Schlick 1994). They are described as being clearly and accurately presented to the dreamer in her sleep (Haeberlin et al. 1928). According to Haeberlin and Teit (1928), dream designs are identified with the weaver throughout her life and might be taught to daughters and granddaughters. However this would weaken the supernatural relationship between the dreamer and her design. Friends would not use the design out of courtesy and respect. In their view it was inevitable, however, that someone would eventually see and appreciate the design. Creating another basket with someone else’s dream design thus opened the doors for all to use it. It is possible that they were mistaken in this assumption, that a basketweaver would not use someone else’s design but that the unity of thought that was present across the culture limited potential patterns, resulting in multiple points of origin for artistic ideas. Indeed, basketmakers have found designs they thought they had created on baskets from distant parts of the country (Haeberlin et al. 1928).

A basketmaker may develop a repertoire of designs and combinations that are identified with her throughout her life (Thompson and Marr 1983). It has been noted that a basketmaker is unlikely to make the same basket twice (Mason 1902), but will vary the color or arrangement of the motifs in a manner that corresponds to her personal taste (Schlick 1928). Color is thought to have no connection to the design itself, black and red being colors that were readily

available, while the white/yellow of grass stems provided excellent background. They were used in any combination only to create contrast, except for a few small motifs. Hail and snow were always in white and red currant berries would be made from red (Haeberlin et al. 1928). This freedom of expression and the lack of restriction in design selection allows an individual the opportunity to play a personal role in the basketry style of her tribe (Haeberlin et al 1928). However, the "range of individual invention is strictly limited by the traditional style" (Haeberlin et al 1928: 386).

The ability to create balance and symmetry on each basket a woman makes is an incredible skill considering the difficulties that may arise during the process. From what the literature records, a high percentage of women do not draw out their designs before beginning a basket. The majority "work from a mental template which is regulated by a cultural sense of aesthetics, further defined by family traditions, and then influenced by personal preference." (Fortney 2001:31). Working like this demands that a weaver have a good eye for proportion and the ability to improvise, should things not work out as planned (Fortney 2001). Materials often greatly influenced the form of the final product (Haeberlin et al. 1928). In most traditional societies high values are placed on a weaver who consistently creates interesting and balanced designs on her baskets.

While selection of the design is entirely up to the inclinations of the weaver, she is guided in her choices by her family traditions and the designs produced by the women around her. According to Sharon Fortney, in her paper on Sto:lo basketry (2001), the knowledge of basketry and the designs placed on the baskets are regulated by kinship. Haeberlin and Teit (1928), while they recognized that patterns might belong to a basket maker during her lifetime, assumed that after the origin of the design was forgotten, it would be used by the majority. This is in opposition to Fortney's interviews with modern weavers

who indicate that, while everyone uses everyone else's designs, they would not use a design that belongs to another woman without first asking permission (Fortney 2001). This sounds contradictory at first, but a closer inspection of the basketmakers Fortney spoke with reveals that they are all interrelated. Given the longevity of the culture and the practice of basketry, as it runs in family lines, it is not unlikely that the majority of basketweavers are related in some way.

Nettie Jackson, a modern Klickitat weaver, had already begun reconnecting with the basketmaking skills that marked her past before she learned of the patterns that traditionally belonged in her family. She inquired of her teacher, her mother-in-law, if she could make people baskets. The response came back that it was not their design. After going ahead with the project anyway, an aunt informed her years later that her great grandmother had made people baskets, so it was all right (Schlick 1994).

Rena Bolton, another contemporary weaver, spoke with Fortney about ownership of designs. "I had my mother's design that was like the Star of David. She used that a lot – the Star of David. And she used other little designs like the fly and the bee. Just like I use the pond skipper. I'll probably pass all the designs I've invented or were given to me. I'll give them to my daughters to use" (Rena Point Bolton in Fortney 2001:41). Some designs are common to many families, differing in small variations, or colors, such as butterflies and stars, but others are part of a family's heritage (Fortney 2001).

It is nearly impossible, at this point in time however, to trace the history of these designs due to the lack of documentation of the baskets that have survived. While a few collectors recorded the name of the village, or territory where they collected a basket, very rarely was the name of the weaver ever known. Even in many major museum collections, the provenance of baskets is uncertain.

Contemporary weavers will likely recognize the patterns and techniques of their ancestors on old baskets, and may be able to identify the maker and/or family from where it comes. Bruce Bernstein (1990) believes, however, that design plays a secondary role in this knowledge which is based more on splices, starts, finishes and shapes than the pictures used. Each family follows its own set of protocols in construction and some weavers leave identifying marks that would pass unnoticed to the unknowing eye (Fortney 2001). The use of specific patterns and designs might, however, fall across many territorial boundaries, as both the long-standing and contemporary marriage practices involve creating links with surrounding groups (Fortney 2001). The result of this is that designs will be found in more than one region and not be indicative of a place of origin as women would take their traditional designs with them if they moved to their husband's village. Traditional designs might be interwoven with new techniques and designs learned from her spouse's people, creating forms that do not fall within what might be criteria for identification characteristics of a region. This is exemplified by Rena Point Bolton who uses Salish designs on the basketry she makes with the skill and techniques that were taught to her by her husband's people, the Tsimshian (Fortney 2001). It is common to read of a basket being typical of one region in style and technique, with patterns from another.

Fortney (2001) also believes that the period of time immediately following colonization, the early 20th century, may have had an effect on the exchange of designs. During this time many women were making baskets that had not previously belonged to basketmaking families. The selection of designs was no longer just a family tradition or personal aesthetic but was greatly influenced by the colonist's aesthetic. Baskets that had so much time invested in them had to be saleable. As well, women were engaged in economic activities like fruit picking and cannery work, that brought together people from very diverse communities. In such an atmosphere it is likely that "ownership protocols were relaxed during this period. Clearly knowledge of ownership continues to persist,

however, since contemporary basket makers still can discern ownership of certain designs" (Fortney 2001:44). Rena Point Bolton makes the point to that with the current dearth of weavers she would say to anyone, "go ahead and use whatever designs that appeals to them. I don't think there's any one person that can just say those are mine and I don't want anyone else to use them. I don't think its that important" (Bolton in Fortney 2001:41). Obviously, in this day and age, it is more important to weavers that the art be kept alive than the traditional protocols are followed.

We must remember that "baskets are symbols of sociopolitical life. Aesthetics is the idiom that pushed baskets to be a symbol of a community or individual. Unless the aesthetics of Patwin baskets is read, all baskets 'look the same.' Like the weavers, we must pay attention to the process which created the finished product." (Bernstein 1990:224). Though the discussion here involves weavers from a completely different cultural region, the essence of the idea crosses those cultural boundaries. It is often the small details that are easily overlooked by collectors and ethnographers that would express where a basket is from and who made it. A basketmaker would have greater insight, gifted with a way of knowing through an intimacy with the materials and techniques that a non-weaver cannot attain.

That being said, some generalities can be made. Certain patterns are far more prevalent in one society than another and certainly their arrangement is indicative of a region. Common arrangements are detailed under the regional descriptions as are regional manufacturing traits. What follows is my interpretation of these traits in regards to a few of the burden baskets in the White Rock collection. My analysis is based on the previous literature review as well as comparisons with collections of baskets of known provenance. These include the Royal British Columbia Museum, and the Museum of Anthropology at UBC. Even in these cases, however, the region of origin is known (in the case of

the baskets I used for comparison), but the maker's name is often not given. It is also very difficult to compare construction techniques when one of the baskets is present only in a photo.

Analysis of a Collection: the White Rock Museum Collection



Figure 25. Basket #978.49.455 from the White rock Museum Collection.

This coiled basket is made with solid slats and is very angular in shape. Design covers 50-60%. They include imbrication and multiple lines of beading per coil. The design pattern, according to Haeberlin et al (1928) is rainbow, necklace or grasshopper (Plate 80, figure 85). According to Farrand (1900) it could be lightning (figure 330, pp. 399). It bears a resemblance to artifact #2931 from the Royal British Columbia Museum, which is from Pemberton Meadows (Mount Currie Stl'atl'imx). Based on the shape, beading on the upper field, and the slat coils, I would say this is done in the Stl'atl'imx style.



Figure 26. Basket #978.49.525 from the White Rock Museum Collection.

This basket is 100% imbricated with quite a common pattern. I have noticed it on a number of baskets from various regions in the literature. In Lobb (1978:73), it is found on a cylindrical Klickitat basket, and in a brochure from Frohman Trading Company (1902, reprinted in 1977:13) there is a photo of a basket bearing a striking resemblance to this one in both design as well as size and shape, including the foot. They list it as Nlaka'pamux, and I would agree.



Figure 27. Basket # 978.49.514 from the White Rock Museum Collection.

Almost two thirds of the top of this basket is fully imbricated, with the open mouth design (Farrand 1900:401). The straight lines coming off the sides of the mouth are the whiskers, or hairs. According to personal communication with Sharon Fortney (2001), the Nlaka'pamux never use this design and it is very distinctive of the Stl'atl'imx. Underneath are droppers that do not fall all the way to the bottom. This is an old piece, typical of the Stl'atl'imx. It is very similar to artifact #145638 in the Royal British Columbia Museum, from the Fountain Reservation, Xaxl'ep, in Upper Stl'atl'imx territory, though not as large.



Figure 28. Basket # 978.49.515 from the White Rock Museum Collection.

This is another older type basket. It has beading at the top of the rim and at the bottom of the side wall. The design is a ladder or arrowhead (Haeberlin et al 1928, plate 84, figure 278). This sort of vertical design is very typical of the Nlaka'pamux. The lopsidedness of the design also makes me think that it is Nlaka'pamux in origin.



Figure 29. Basket #978.29.516 from the White Rock Museum Collection.

Again we see vertical patterns. In this basket, they are mula, or a cluster of flies (Haeberlin et al. 1928, plate 86, figure 401). According to the Klickitat, flies were friends of the people and that is why they were used so frequently (Schlick 1994). This basket has a shape that is more rectangular and the bottom is a bit twisted, though the stitches are very even. The pattern is very skewed, with 2 verticals on each end, with 3 stripes on one side and 2 on the other. I would suggest it is Nlaka'pamux in origin.



Figure 30. Basket #978.49.529 from the White Rock Museum collection.

This basket is made with a bundle foundation, though it looks like slats because they are so flat. The imbrication is very shiny. According to Mason (1902:324, plate 76, figure 2) the design is a net. There is no design exactly like this in Haeberlin et al (1928). In between the holes of the net are flies, or big stars. The shape is very angular and may be Stl'atl'imx or could just be more modern Nlaka'pamux.



Figure 31. Basket # 978.49.543 from the White Rock Museum Collection.

Here again we see an open mouth but this time there is no hair. The fully imbricated portion covers just over half the basket and the droppers do not reach the base. The basket itself is trapezoidal with very angled corners. It is very similar to #1205 from the Royal British Columbia Museum which is from the Stl'atl'imx.



Figure 32. Basket #978.49.571 from the White Rock Museum Collection.

On this basket we see a repetition of a small motif across the entire field. This design bears some similarities to a basket in Mason (1902:324, plate 77, figure 6) where it is considered to be crossing trails or stars. It is a bundle foundation and is very rectangular. I would identify it as Nlaka'pamux.

Conclusion

Baskets are a part of a young girl's life even before she is born in some cultures, where an expectant mother will place basket materials under her head at night to promote the birth of a girl child (Thompson and Marr 1983). The skills involved in the making of a basket are important ones for a daughter to learn.

It has been said that the "limits in the exploitation of times of abundance (of food) may have been set less by the people's capacity to get food than by their capacity to *store* it" (Suttles 1987:56). Baskets were an integral part of food systems as the major container for food collection and storage in most early British Columbia societies. To have an abundance of food was to be wealthy. Therefore to have an abundance of baskets was to allow for the possibility to be rich. Annie York remembers that in Nlaka'pamux households it was common to have 16 large baskets for berries and an equal number for root storage (Turner 1996). They were also an item that was traded for many other goods that could not be procured in the region where the maker of the basket lived or merely the things that she did not have, such as a horse (Schlick 1994).

Even in the times after the arrival of Europeans, baskets were considered valuable trade items and the ability to produce them would serve a woman well. Some women made basketry a subsistence activity when the colonists first arrived and basket collecting was a great trend. It was a way to enter the new market economy. For the first part of the twentieth century, women were known to sit on street corners or go door to door with their baskets. Sometimes all that was requested in exchange were old clothes (Fortney 2001). "A basket maker would never be poor" (Schlick 1994:92). Baskets were practical.

But basketry is also an important art form. It is the major art form of First Nations women. It is the oldest of all craft arts, with the exception of tool

making (Hoolihan 1987 as quoted in Turner 1996). To view baskets as merely art, however, separates them from human and historical relations (Olorphy 1992). "Baskets are more than objects; they are carriers of culture. They were created, they represent aesthetic values, not just object of beauty" (Bernstein 1990:213). A basket is an astounding example of the melding of artistic creativity and practical utilitarianism. Baskets are beautiful, but they are made, traditionally, to be used, not just looked at. Viewing them merely as pieces of art can block our understanding of indigenous meaning and cultural context (Olorphy 1992).

It is important that as observers and learners we take a look at the way in which the people see and know their own craft. This can be very different from how we see and know an object, from our very different cultural background. If we look closely at the baskets and at the process that made them we can glean much information on the ideals and values of the culture itself. A basket can contain the meaning, memory and identity of a people.

While I have attempted to determine the distinguishing characteristics of the styles of a few regions in the Pacific Northwest, and to name many of the designs on the coiled burden baskets of the Interior Salish, I have come to learn how closely the shapes and forms or techniques are tied to aspects of the culture that I never considered. The details I have given can be used to determine the origins of a basket to some extent, but should by no means be considered a conclusive way to place them. Baskets were made by all the peoples of British Columbia and I have only covered a few groups. Practices change over time and the individual decisions of one weaver may not reflect all of the cultural characteristics that have been documented.

Basketry links the present with the past, with a people's history. Baskets have many things to share with us for they carry a culture. Read them carefully, or rather, feel them.

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