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Author

Tuohy, Donald R

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REPORTS

A Maidu Coiled Basket from the North Fork of the Willamette River, Oregon

DONALD R. TUOHY, Nevada State Museum,
Capitol Complex, Carson City, NV 89710.

IN 1982, a small coiled basketry bowl with simple, triangular design elements pendant from the rim was donated to the Nevada State Museum. The circumstances under which the basket was found were not fully explained, but the donor did say the basket was recovered by him from a cave in the Oakridge District of the Willamette National Forest on the North Fork of the Willamette River in Lane County, Oregon. Sandy silt still adheres to the interior of the basket, and provides evidence of partial burial by cave debris. As the present residence of the donor is unknown, further details on the nature and exact location of the cave, and other particulars of the find, are not available at this time.

A recent overview summary of the aboriginal peoples present in and around the Willamette National Forest during the ethnographic period (Minor and Pecor 1977:80-84) indicates that the Molalla, a small native group about whom little is known, probably occupied the region in which the cave is located. Since archaeologically recovered basketry from western Oregon, particularly the Willamette Valley and the entire Cascade region, is scarce (Baxter et al. 1983:57), publication of this brief note on a complete coiled basket seemed warranted.

THE BASKET

The small, bowl-shaped basket (Fig. 1) has a maximum exterior diameter of 9.6 cm.,

interior diameter at the rim of 8.2 cm., maximum height of 5.2 cm., and a wall thickness of 6.4 mm. The basket has a three-rod foundation spaced at an interval of 3.5 rods per centimeter, and with an average of 5 stitches per centimeter. The stitches are interlocked, commonly split on the inner walls, and occasionally split on the exterior walls.

The basket was constructed utilizing two materials, redbud (*Cercis occidentalis*), both peeled and unpeeled, and bracken fern (*Pteridium aquilinum*). According to Bates and Bernstein (1982:195), the latter was used by all Maidu groups but is more common among the Mountain Maidu and the southernmost Nisenan. The isosceles-shaped triangular design elements pendant from the rim were executed in bracken fern, while the rim itself, the starting center, and the fourth and fifth coils from the center were executed in unpeeled redbud. All other stitches in the wall and base and the four stitches in the center of each triangle were executed in peeled redbud. The work direction was counterclockwise, or from right to left.

The subject basket was identified and attributed to the Maidu of northeastern California. This attribution to tribal origin and use of identified plant materials, originally made by the author, was verified by Lawrence E. Dawson of the Robert H. Lowie Museum of Anthropology, University of California, Berkeley, who examined the basket in June, 1986. Questions of when and why the basket was transported 250 air miles north of its place of origin naturally arise. Since the basket appears to be a "trinket" basket of a size always popular for sale to Anglos, even the ethnic affiliation of the transporters cannot reasonably be suggested. The

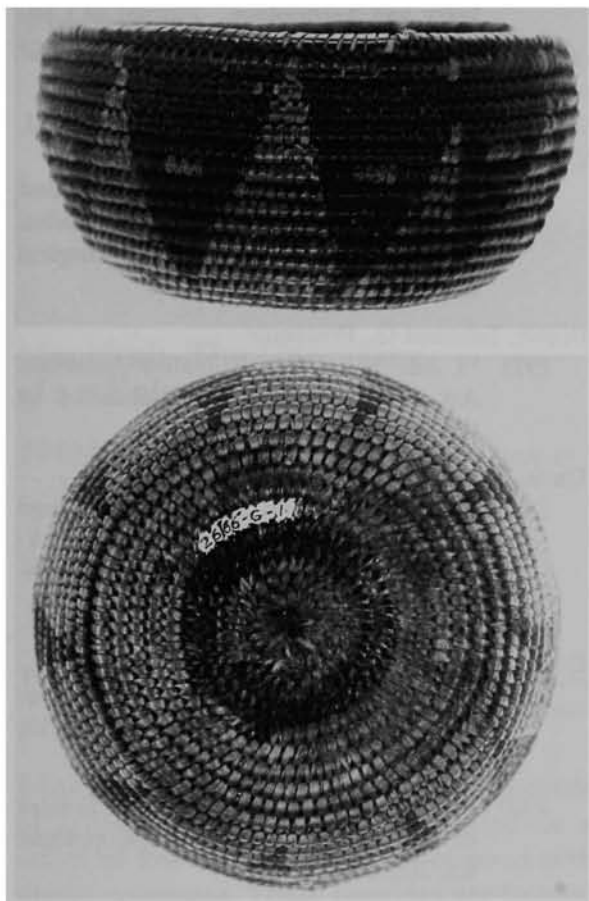


Fig. 1. Two views of the small Maidu "trinket" basket, Nevada State Museum collections, specimen No. 2666-G-1.

fact that the basket was recovered from a cave suggests it was deposited by Indians rather than Anglos, but this is speculation. Further exploration of the cave, if it can be found, may help resolve these and other questions.

ETHNIC DISTRIBUTIONS OF OREGON INDIAN BASKETRY

The reasons that a Maidu coiled basket may have been traded or carried into Molalla territory are suggested in Douglas' (1947) review of Oregon Indian basketry types and distributions. Douglas (1947:79-88) indicated that the only ethnographic example of coiled

basketry found west of the Cascade Range in Oregon was among the Kalapuya in Willamette Valley, the rest of the western tribes having made twined baskets exclusively. The Kalapuya made baskets primarily of either hazel or split conifer root. The single surviving Kalapuya coiled basket is a small undecorated storage basket made of willow with a three-rod to two-rod foundation and with stitches split on the work and nonwork surface. The use of coiled ware by the Kalapuya is attributed to "the influence of the Sahaptan peoples who passed through the Willamette Valley on their way to the Dalles on the Columbia [River]" (Douglas 1947:81).

The eastern neighbors of the Molalla, the Northern Paiute, made both coiled and twined baskets, with the basic construction material being willow (*Salix* spp.), but most coiled pieces were oval in outline and three-rod foundations rarely were used. Since none of these wares has been found west of the Cascades, it seems likely that trade relationships in basketry were not well developed between the Northern Paiute and Willamette Valley tribes. The Northern Paiute apparently had little in common with Chinookan and Sahaptin bands (Warm Springs Reservation 1984:17).

MAIDU BASKETRY

Material aspects of Maidu basketry were discussed by Swartz (1958:67-85). Dixon published a basic ethnology of the Northern Maidu (1905) and a study of Maidu basketry designs (1900). As Swartz (1958:74-75) noted, the Northeastern Maidu had five manufacturing traditions, one of coiling and four of twining, of which the most important was coiling. Baskets made by this technique commonly were used as cooking baskets, dippers, circular plaque sifters, and plates. Materials used in their manufacture included willow, maple, redbud, bracken fern, and

slough grass. Coiled baskets the size of the subject bowl are identified by Swartz (1958: 83) as "trinket storage" baskets. Marie Potts, a Maidu weaver, noted that small baskets commonly were made by beginning weavers (Brown 1975). Such baskets were made either with a three-rod or an extremely rare one-rod foundation with the work direction counterclockwise, and with split stitches common on the nonwork and work surfaces. The start invariably was a "center point spiral."

The Maidu also used baskets of all sizes in their annual mourning ceremony (Riddell 1978:383). Baskets and clothing were destroyed to honor the dead as part of the annual ceremony. Thus, small baskets of the size indicated were used for a variety of purposes, and were sought by Anglo collectors also.

CONCLUSION

Other than its probable cultural affiliation with the ethnographically known Maidu, the basket is of undetermined age. If the basket was traded into Oregon prior to the development of modern roads or trails, an aboriginal route may have been through the territory of the Shasta, Achomawi, or Klamath. Davis (1961:12) noted that basketry is mentioned 76 times in the ethnographic literature as exported from or imported to California. The total for basketry is second only to that of salt which is mentioned 79 times. Thus, baskets frequently were traded, and the recovery of a Maidu basket from a cave in Molalla territory, although unusual in occurrence, certainly is not unique in the distance traveled from its place of origin, or in the nature of its sequestered deposition.

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Warm Springs Reservation

1984 The People of Warm Springs. Profile: The Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon. Warm Springs.



Macahui: The Unmaking of an Enigma

JULIA BENDÍMEZ, Centro Regional de Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexicali, Baja California, México.

DON LAYLANDER, Cultural Resource Management Center, San Diego State Univ., San Diego, CA 92182.

HÉCTOR LEÓN, Museo Regional, Univ. Autónoma de Baja California, Mexicali, Baja California, México.

MACAHUI, an extensive cluster of hundreds of artificially cleared areas, is located on a series of low terraces, formerly covered with desert pavement. These clearings are located just south of the U.S.-Mexico border, about 25 km. west of Mexicali, in the Sonoran desert of northeastern Baja California (Fig. 1). The clearings vary considerably in size and shape, but most frequently are circular and about 8 m. in diameter (Figs. 2 and 3). Distinct rock borders are not usually found around the clearings.

Key questions in the archaeological interpretation of desert pavement clearings concern their ages and the reasons for their creation. However, satisfactory answers to these questions are often difficult to obtain. The "Topock Maze" of southeastern California has long been a focus of some controversy (Haenszel 1978).

In the general region considered here, similar clearings have been the subject of archaeological attention since the 1920s and



Fig. 1. Location of Macahui, Baja California, Mexico.

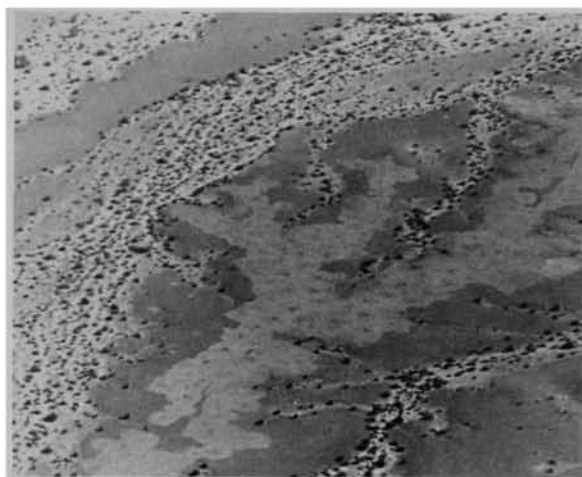


Fig. 2. Aerial view of a portion of Macahui. (Photo by Fernando Rodríguez).

1930s. Malcolm J. Rogers (1939) observed the presence of thousands of "sleeping circles" in the deserts of southern California and northern Baja California. Rogers' sleeping circles included both rock-lined features and cleared-pavement features, and they