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Berlin's Ethnological Museum: The California Indian Collection

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The Ethnologisches Museum: Staatliche Museen zu Berlin (formerly the Museum für Völkerkunde, and referred to here as the Berlin Ethnological Museum) contains over 1,000 artifacts fashioned by California Indians, collected between 1837 and 1914. The collection is rich and varied; it represents one of the earliest ethnographic collections from Native California and includes ethnological treasures of great aesthetic quality and rarity. The collection is an invaluable source of scientific information and cultural renewal. The objects are highly regarded by living descendants of the Native Californians who long ago sold, traded, and exchanged these artifacts with collectors. They are heirlooms reflecting tribal history and culture, and are worthy of remembrance and study.

In this paper we offer first-hand observations on a small sample (n=10) of the Berlin Ethnological Museum's California Indian collection, with a particular emphasis on baskets. We describe and discuss these objects in detail in order to bring to life the people and cultures that brilliantly produced such exquisite, artistic objects and ethnographic treasures. We also attempt to identify their historical context and the circumstances motivating their collection, so as to better understand how they came to be curated in Berlin.

Finally, we provide a brief overview of the history and development of the Berlin Ethnological Museum's California Indian collection, because the intriguing interconnections and influential coincidences associated with it provide insights into the history and nature of the early development of California Indian studies and particularly illuminate the evolution of the science of anthropology as an academic discipline in America.

THE NORTH AMERICAN INDIAN COLLECTION in the Ethnologisches Museum: Staatliche Museen zu Berlin (formerly the Museum für Völkerkunde, and here identified as the Berlin Ethnological Museum or BEM¹), ranks as one of the most important in Europe (Bolz and Sanner 1999:5). As one Native Californian described some of the superlative California Indian art treasures housed there (Smith-Ferri 1996:47), it contains "splendidly beautiful and technically dazzling works of art." In this article, we offer a few personal observations on a small selection of the BEM's California Indian art, particularly baskets,² supplemented by descriptions of some other rare and remarkable items. Our purpose in doing so is to contextualize these objects within the cultural matrix that produced them (cf. Coe 1986:16; Porter 1990:2).

Hopefully, this approach brings to life the peoples and cultures that brilliantly crafted such exquisite, fine-art objects. Additionally, it is important to place the objects in their historical context and describe the circumstances that motivated their collection. Our intention here is, in part, to tell the story of the people who collected these objects and the historical circumstances that motivated them, and to describe how the objects came to be curated in a museum in Germany. Finally, we believe that it is important to understand how the development of the Berlin Ethnological Museum's California Indian collection parallels and provides information on the history and character of the early development of California Indian studies, and on the evolution of the science of anthropology as a discipline in America.

From the onset, several questions seem apparent. Why is there California Indian material curated in Berlin, Germany? Why is the Berlin collection so exceptional? How and where were the materials collected? Who acquired the objects and how do they mirror the history and development of American anthropology, California Indian studies, and even the political geography of World War II and its aftermath?

CALIFORNIA INDIANS

The present geographic borders of modern-day California included no less than seven distinct Native Californian culture areas—the northwestern California coast supported an ocean-going and river-oriented economy; foragers of the Great Basin occupied the arid deserts of eastern and southern California; agriculturalists lived along the lower Colorado River on California’s southeastern border adjoining Arizona; and the great Central Valley, Coast Range, and southern Pacific Coast were home to many groups that comprised some of the most populous foragers in the world.

Native Californians were remarkable both in their number and diversity. In pre-European times, gatherers, fishers, and hunters peopled the California heartland. These gatherer-hunters differed from most other foragers elsewhere in the world. Native California as a whole had the highest population density north of Mexico (with the possible exception of such nearly urban centers as Cahokia near the Mississippi River and the great houses of the American Southwest). No less than 350,000 people lived here (and perhaps many more at certain times), speaking hundreds of dialects with more than 90 mutually unintelligible languages. The density of native populations and their cultural and linguistic diversity were likely the result of the diversity of environmental niches available in this far western landscape, as well as of an estimated 15,000 years of aboriginal immigration, population movements, and settlement (Erlandson et al. 1996).

California’s natural resources were varied and abundant. Natives in the “Golden State” were “proto-agriculturalists” that actively manipulated plant communities harboring wild seed and nut crops. Indigenous Californian communities also supported powerful hereditary elites who amassed surplus goods, financed lavish feasts, and

conducted elaborate ceremonies. The elite ritual managers sponsored craft specialists (cf. Lightfoot 2005:44), and California Indian “nations” participated in far-flung exchange networks employing shell bead money as a true currency. The factors underlying the cultural elaborations of Californian foragers were perhaps many and varied, but the development of highly efficient exchange systems, aggressive environmental manipulations, and specialized subsistence adaptations taking advantage of resource-rich microenvironments appear to have played a pivotal role (Raab and Jones 2004:7).

Anthropologists now recognize that pre-contact Native Californians attained a remarkable level of sociopolitical sophistication. Some societies achieved the organizational level of chiefdoms. They inhabited permanent year-round villages, some with a thousand or more occupants. These complex societies accumulated wealth and displayed dramatically beautiful art objects such as elaborate shell necklaces, feathered and beaded belts, beaded and feathered baskets, and even technologically sophisticated and extraordinarily complex feather blankets. Some of the latter exhibited skills, a technological sophistication, and aesthetic qualities rivaling those produced by almost any other indigenous culture in the world (McLendon 1991).

Native Californians are perhaps best known for their baskets. Nowhere in Native North America was basketry more complex and sophisticated (Bolz and Sanner 1999; Kroeber 1925). However, California basketry is sometimes overlooked as a fine art form. California’s native cultures are typically under-appreciated since they do not conform to the stereotypic image of “Indians” in the minds of the general public (Boden and Gockel 1995:50; Collings 1975a:16, 1975b:10).

The fragmentary and incomplete ethnographic record of Native California can be surprisingly enhanced through a careful and rigorous study of museum pieces that provide a glimpse of aboriginal society before profound historical changes were brought about by contact with missionaries, fur trappers, settlers, and gold miners. Those changes involved a drastic reduction in native population sizes and land tenure due to the introduction of exotic diseases, reduced birth rates, enslavement, and attacks that ultimately resulted in decimation or acculturation as Indians adapted to Spanish (Californio), Russian, Mexican, and American

lifeways and technologies (cf. Edward Castillo 1978; Elias Castillo 2006; Milliken 1995; Sandos 2004).

THE BERLIN ETHNOLOGICAL MUSEUM'S CALIFORNIA INDIAN COLLECTION

The California Indian collection of the BEM contains more than a thousand objects from a wide variety of native cultures throughout the state (Blackburn and Hudson 1990). Most of the objects were accessioned into the museum collection between 1837 and the outbreak of World War I in 1914. Notably, collectors obtained some of the finest specimens before the disruption and tragedy brought on by the Gold Rush (ca. 1849-1853) in California.

The beauty and sophistication of California Indian artifacts attracted explorers, traders, trappers, merchants, missionaries, and itinerant travelers. Frequently these individuals were familiar with the collecting practices of museums and were, in certain instances, trained collectors (Blackburn and Hudson 1990:15–19).

Ferdinand Deppe and the Oldest Elements of the Collection

Some of the earliest (ca. 1837) and most intriguing art pieces in the Berlin collection (Bankmann 1998; McLendon 2001; Robinson 1846) are those acquired by the King of Prussia from a German traveler to America named Ferdinand Deppe (1794–1860). Deppe was a former gardener for the royal court of Prussia. The artifacts he collected became a part of the very first museum or *kunstkammer* (art chamber) collection created by Prussian rulers.

Deppe developed his skills and ultimately was recognized as a naturalist, explorer, and painter. He created a well-regarded, yet “primitive,” painting of San Gabriel Mission (currently in the Laguna Art Museum, Laguna, California) that is considered to be the first (ca. 1832) oil painting ever created in California. Deppe showed Tongva (Gabrielino) people in native dress and illustrated their traditional homes. The Tongva constructed the San Gabriel Mission under the direction of the local missionaries and Franciscan Father Junípero Serra (1771–1806).

Two wealthy aristocrats, Count von Sack and William Bullock, paid Deppe from 1824 through 1836 to acquire natural objects for the Berlin Zoological Museum, where

his younger brother, Wilhelm, was an accountant. In the course of his wide-ranging efforts, Deppe purchased native art from the west coast of North America, and acquired artistic treasures from both central and southern California (Stresemann 1954:89–91).

Deppe became the supercargo or trading master on different merchant vessels (1820–1840) belonging to German entrepreneur Henry Virmond (McLendon 2001:151). Virmond based his operations in Mexico and did a brisk California business even before his first personal visit to the area in 1828 (Bancroft 1886:5:764). The position of supercargo was pivotal to the viability of the shipping business. The latter could be enormously lucrative but was at the same time wildly speculative. Exemplary supercargoes were the keystone to a profitable business venture.

Deppe was acknowledged to be a disciplined and exceptional supercargo. Furthermore, he was well-regarded as an ethical, outgoing, and meticulous professional. His customers ranged from missionaries, administrators, and the military to indigenous peoples. Deppe seems to have been able to maintain this difficult balance and adeptly manage his relationships in order to obtain extraordinary collections. Two of his closest business contacts were owners of major maritime shipping ventures along coastal California, trading in hides and tallow.

In 1832, Deppe visited Mission San José where he observed a religious ceremony conducted by at least two distinct California Indian “tribes” with differing costumes and regalia. Rounding out the festivities, after a Catholic Mass and native celebration, was a fight between a California grizzly bear (*Ursus arctos californicus*) and a Spanish bull (*Bos taurus*).

McLendon (2001:153) has suggested that this may have been when Deppe acquired the Native Californian ceremonial regalia that is part of the Berlin collection, and that includes incised bird bone and shell ear pendants, feathered belts, and dance headbands. Deppe returned to San José in 1833, at which time he appears to have acquired the Nisenan or Konkow feather blanket curated in the BEM (Figs. 1 and 2) and described below.

There was originally some confusion about who acquired the feather blanket, but recent discovery of a list of items sold to the museum and written by Deppe's brother, Wilhelm, resolves the issue, and indicates that the specimens came to the museum sometime during



Figure 1. Deppe Feather Blanket (IVB182). L=5 ft., W=3 ft. (approximate dimensions). Materials include Snow goose (*Chen caerulescens*), Canada goose (*Branta Canadensis*) and mallard duck (*Anas platyrhynchos*) feathers (traces of blue and purple). Cordage made of Milkweed (*Asclepias cordifolia*) or immature dogbane (*Apocynum cannabinum*). Zigzag dogbane coils are wrapped with split feather quills and reinforced with milkweed cordage. (Photo by Wiebke Vosgerau.)

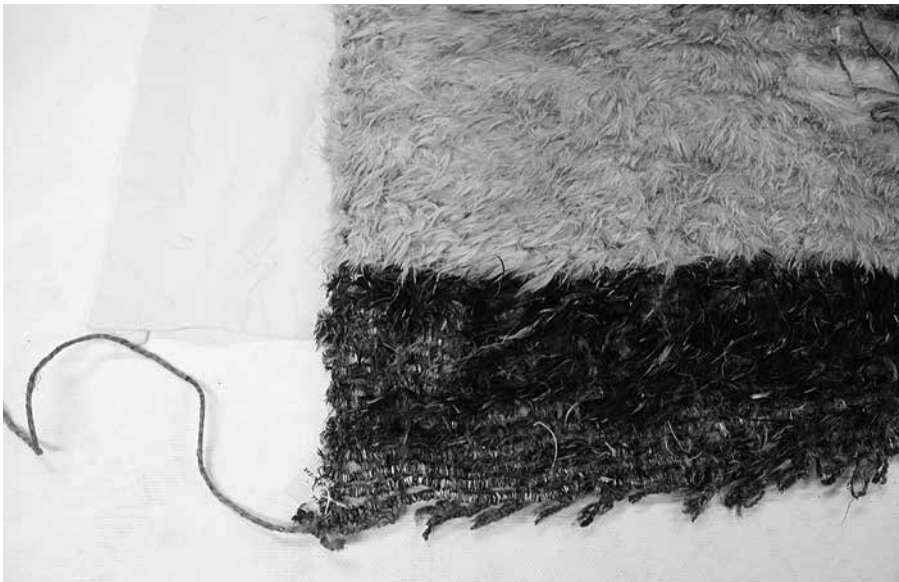


Figure 2. Detail of Deppe Feather Blanket shown in Figure 1. (Photo by Wiebke Vosgerau.)

the 1830s (Bankmann 1998; Krickeberg 1914:716). Krickeberg (1914:701) originally listed only 22 California objects that Deppe had acquired, but the recently discovered inventory increases the number of objects of documented Californian provenance to 30 (Bankmann 1998). Deppe's California assemblage includes such ceremonial regalia as the feather blanket, feathered baskets, two large feather belts, six flicker (*Colaptes auratus*) quill headbands, shell ear ornaments, and a hair net (fashioned from dogbane or milkweed). It is diffi-

cult to identify the precise ethnic origin of all of Deppe's materials; however, his collecting included items definitely attributable to the Chumash, Costanoan (Ohlone), Pomo, Nisenan, and Konkow tribes.

The Deppe Nisenan/Konkow Feather Blanket. The Deppe feather blanket (Figs. 1 and 2) is one of only fourteen known³ surviving examples recognized worldwide (Hudson and Bates 2015:104–106). The “remarkably thick, soft, incredibly light, beautiful (and) downy” blankets were objects of wealth and status crafted by a very few, select Native Californian cultures (McLendon 2001:132). These blankets, that doubled as robes, were worn in winter, mainly by women, and were only associated with those groups living along the Pacific flyway in the San Francisco Bay area and the Sacramento and San Joaquin deltas (Barrett and Gifford 1933:221; Dixon 1905:148; Driver 1936:188; Kroeber 1929:276, 1932:82; Merriam 1967:367). Twice per year, these areas teemed with migrating waterfowl in such extraordinary numbers that they blackened the sky. They were caught with nets, and the feathers of hundreds of birds were required for the creation of these feather blankets (McLendon 2001:151–154).

The plumage of the speculum feathers of the mallard duck (*Anas platyrhynchos*) is represented in the Deppe Blanket in the iridescent black-brown, blue-green, and purple bands. The adjacent white bands are made from the contour feathers of Snow goose (*Chen caerulescens*), and the light beige, central block is made from the breast feathers of the Canada goose (*Branta canadensis*). It took six women four months on a standing loom to fashion these rare and valuable blankets (Phelps 1983:207).

The existence of such blankets testifies to the wealth, status, and sociopolitical complexity of these stratified societies, which were able to support craft specialists that could fashion such remarkable artistic treasures. The Deppe feather blanket has been identified as coming from either the Valley Nisenan or Konkow groups in the valley and foothills in the vicinity of Sacramento, where these treasures were known as *chi'i* or *chi'* (McLendon 2001:151–154; Phelps 1983:207).

Chumash Baskets. Chumash basketry is exceedingly rare and is renowned for its aesthetic qualities. The Spanish and English merchants, and other early visitors to southern California, were drawn to these beautiful art objects (Bolton 1931; Dawson and Deetz 1965:200; Heizer

and Whipple 1951:209–215; Hudson and Bates 2015:100; Hudson and Blackburn 1982, 1983). Dawson and Deetz (1965:200) noted that Spanish explorers and voyagers were so taken by Chumash basketry that they competed for their purchase and even sent especially fine examples to Mexico, Peru, and Spain as curios and souvenirs.

Chumash basketry flourished under the mission system and the natives adapted their basketry shapes and decorative elements for foreign collectors. Secularization of the missions (1834–1836) dispersed the native population among various Californio ranches. Scholars have affirmed that most Chumash basketry production ceased at about this same time (Dawson and Deetz 1965:208).

Deppe collected a number of Chumash baskets. These are exquisitely made and technologically sophisticated objects. Their forms are distinctive, and some appear to have been fashioned particularly for sale or trade to a European clientele.

The pedestal basket (Figs. 3 and 4) appears to mirror a form known only in post-contact contexts. The pedestal base has an entire rim finished in a herringbone weave. This is a northern Chumash characteristic that appears to have been added onto a southern Chumash basket form and as such is an extremely rare detail. The only other known examples of this embellishment are Northern Chumash vessels collected in the eighteenth century and housed in the British Museum, the Museo de America in Madrid, and at the Royal Museum of Scotland (see Shanks 2010:25–28).

After initial contacts with Europeans, the Chumash started crafting various sized baskets with a pedestal base (Dawson and Deetz 1965, Plate 13, Fig. 2b). These baskets found their way to the Carmel Mission and were used as collection trays for votive offerings during church services in the sanctuary. It is probable that such baskets served similar functions at other missions. The pedestal appears to have been a trait added by the Chumash after contact; however, the basket form without the pedestal was most likely a form used in traditional native rituals for offerings.

The lidded basket (Fig. 5) may be a traditional, pre-contact form (including the lid), but this is uncertain. The oval, lidded basket (Fig. 6) was apparently fashioned in this form specifically for European customers' sewing supplies (Dawson and Deetz 1965).

Dawson and Deetz (1965) have suggested that what makes Chumash basketry distinctive is not just form or



Figure 3. Southern Chumash Coiled Pedestal Tray (IVC71). H=4.75 in. (12 cm.), D=15.75 in. (40 cm.). The basket has 18 stitches per square inch (psi); 7 coils per inch (cpi). Warp is 3 *Juncus* (*Juncus* sp.) rods. Weft is Sumac (*Malosma laurina*), natural and dyed *Juncus* (*Juncus* spp.). Split *Juncus* start. Coils to the right. Non-interlocking stitches. Clipped stitches on the working surface. Rim ticking, braided finish on base. (Photo by Wiebke Vosgerau.)

technology, but rather a unique design pattern involving both composition and spatial divisions. The latter are indicative of a complex and systematic body of design concepts and explicit rules, observable patterns not shared with neighboring tribes.

Such an elaborate standardization of aesthetic and craft patterns is similar to the basket attributes observed by O’Neale (1932) for Yurok and Karok basketry from California’s northwest coast. This “grammar of basketry

style” we interpret as a distinct manifestation of the kinds of extreme craft specialization found only among the most socio-politically complex Native Californian groups.

The distinctive Chumash basketry features include a principal band or horizontal band spaced below the rim, generally no more than an inch in width, and rim ticking of five or six blocks of alternating black and light checks; these are typically one or two coils high. These signature basketry design features are the “most important and

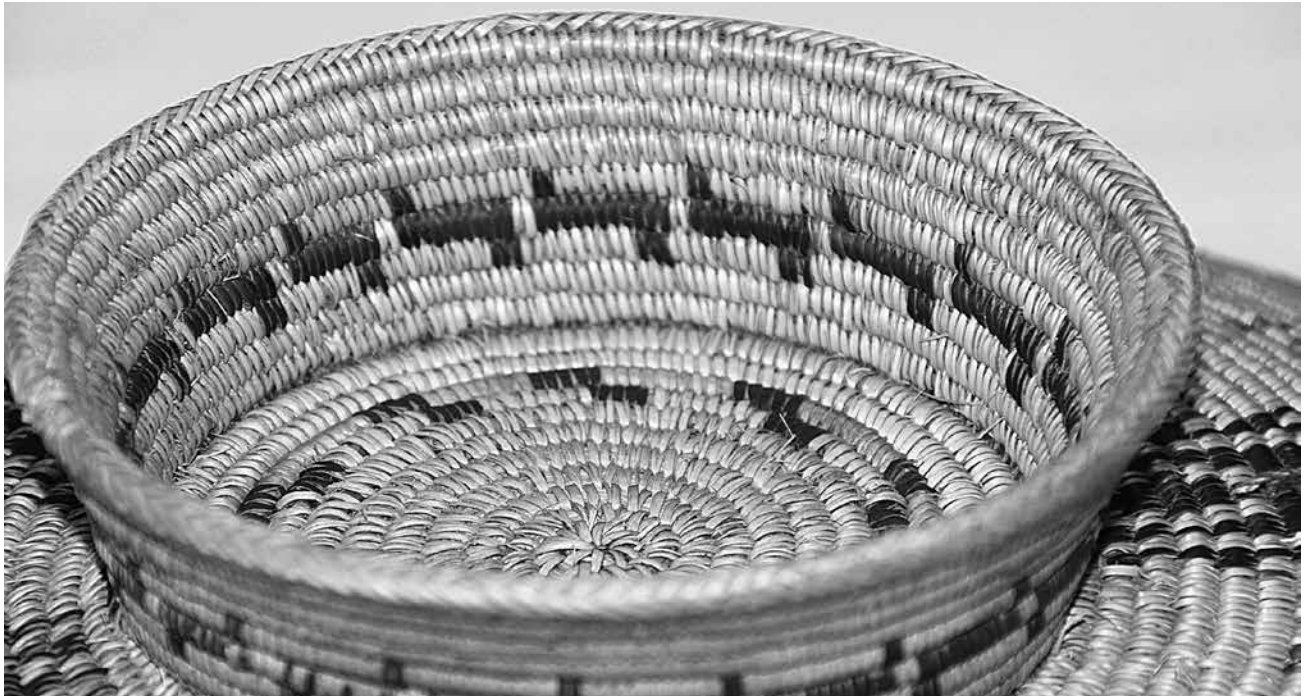


Figure 4. Base of Chumash Coiled Pedestal Tray shown in Figure 3. (Photo by Wiebke Vosgerau.)

steadfast elements” of Chumash basketry and appear in both the simplest and the most elaborate baskets (Dawson and Deetz 1965). There are also “filler” designs in the body zone and above the principal band in the more elaborate and finer baskets.

ROYAL MUSEUM OF ETHNOLOGY (1873)

A new and greatly expanded building, a public building rather than a former *kunstkammer* (art chamber) housing the collections created for Prussian rulers, was established in Berlin in 1873 and was now known as the Royal Museum of Ethnology (RME). During the early years of the RME, Adolf Bastian, physician and ethnologist, was its director. It is important to understand the “collecting philosophy” at this early stage of the Museum’s development, as it guided the acquisition of California material.

The Adolf Bastian Era

Like his contemporaries, Bastian believed that he was preserving the relics of time, and that this inventory could facilitate the reconstruction of world prehistory (Bolz and Sanner 1999:31–33). Because of that perspective, he was exceptionally focused on acquiring artifacts that bore

no evidence of Euromerican influence. These relatively pristine objects would presumably be untouched by the vagaries of outside influences.

Bastian believed he was in a race to safeguard the ancient remnants of native cultures. Such a conceptualization guided the activities of many of the early ethnologists who worked in California. These included the photographic and ethnographic work of Edward S. Curtis, the linguistic documentation of legendary anthropologist John Peabody Harrington, and the passionate efforts of the dean of California ethnology, Alfred Kroeber (see below).

Bastian stated in a note written in 1876 that

A time such as ours, that with a rough hand destroys countless primitive tribes and furrows the surface of the earth in all directions, is responsible to coming generations to preserve as much as possible of that which still remains from the development of the human spirit. What is destroyed now will be irredeemably lost to the future [Bastian 1876, cited in Westphal-Hellbusch 1973:3–4].

Early Twentieth Century: Von Den Steinen, Seler, and the Fred Harvey Company

The California collection attained its current size between 1903 and 1914 during the terms of curators Karl von



Figure 5. Southern Chumash Coiled Globular Lidded Treasure Basket (IVC74a and b). H: 9-7/8 in. (25 cm.) D: 14-9/16 in. (37 cm.); 12 spi; 5 cpi. Warp: 3 Juncus rods. Split Juncus start. Weft: Sumac, natural and dyed Juncus (base woven with Juncus). Coils to the right. Non-interlocking stitches. Clipped stitches on the working surface. Rim ticking. (Photo by Alexander Schwed.)

den Steinen and Eduard Seler. Both gentlemen visited museums and attended conferences in North America, and it was during the later years that George Dorsey emerged as a central figure in supplying specimens for the ethnohistory collection. Dorsey was a curator of the Field Columbian Museum (currently the Field Museum of Natural History) in Chicago and also worked for the Fred Harvey Company's Indian Department, located in Albuquerque, New Mexico (Bolz and Sanner 1999:138–139; Nash and Feinman 2003).

The Fred Harvey Company was central to opening up the American Southwest to public tourism by providing hotels, restaurants, and curio shops along the Southern Pacific Railroad line between southern Arizona and the California missions (Howard and Pardue 1996; Weigle and Babcock 1996). The Harvey firm is recognized as being one of the principal dealers specializing in the buying and selling of Indian collections, beginning in 1902. Their business openly focused on commercial concerns rather than scientific



Figure 6. Southern Chumash Oval Lidded Sewing Basket (IVC 76a and b). H: 6-7/8 in. (17.5 cm.) D: 13.75 in. (35 cm. × 46 cm.), 18-1/8 in.; 16 spi; 5 cpi. Warp: 3 *Juncus* rods. Split *Juncus* start. Weft: Sumac, natural and dyed *Juncus*. Coils to the right. Split stitches on the inside. Clipped stitches on the working surface. (Photo by Alexander Schwed.)

pursuits. Object provenance and ethnic identification was significantly less important (Dutton 1983:93–98).

George Dorsey formalized the Harvey Company sales policy, produced catalogues, and appraised acquisitions. The Berlin Museum was the first major institution to acquire some of the Harvey Company's largest collections. The Harvey Company, acting as an intermediary, was able to parlay the growing frenzy and competition for rare, quality baskets—pivoting between museums and collectors and thereby extracting enormous profits from their sales (Pardue 1996:106).

Panamint Shoshone Basket Bowl. A coiled, three-rod, willow (*Salix* spp.), devil's claw (*Proboscidea lousianica*), and bulrush (*Scirpus californicus*) basket, a bowl with striking figural representations of men and women encircling the vessel, was acquired by the Royal Ethnological Museum from George Dorsey and the Fred Harvey Company in 1905 (Fig. 7). Dorsey stated that the basket bowl was collected from the “Mono (at

Owen Lake” (i.e., Owens Lake)—a designation given on the inventory card, which refers to the catalogue of all objects at the museum.

Travis Hudson (Blackburn and Hudson 1990:97) examined the bowl and attributed it to the Tübatulabal of the far southern Sierra Nevada/Kern plateau. The Tübatulabal lived and still currently inhabit areas along the south fork of the Kern River—principally in the towns of Bodfish and Lake Isabella (Garfinkel and Williams 2011; Smith 1978; Voegelin 1938). Their name, Tübatulabal, translates as pinyon pine-nut eaters.

A close examination of the vessel, its form, design, technology, and materials, was undertaken by a number of specialists, at our invitation, to determine the ethnic origin of the basket. With the aid of Native California and Great Basin basketry dealer and scholar Natalie Linn, we have concluded that the more probable ethnic affiliation of the vessel is Panamint Shoshone. The latter group has been referred to by a number of names, including

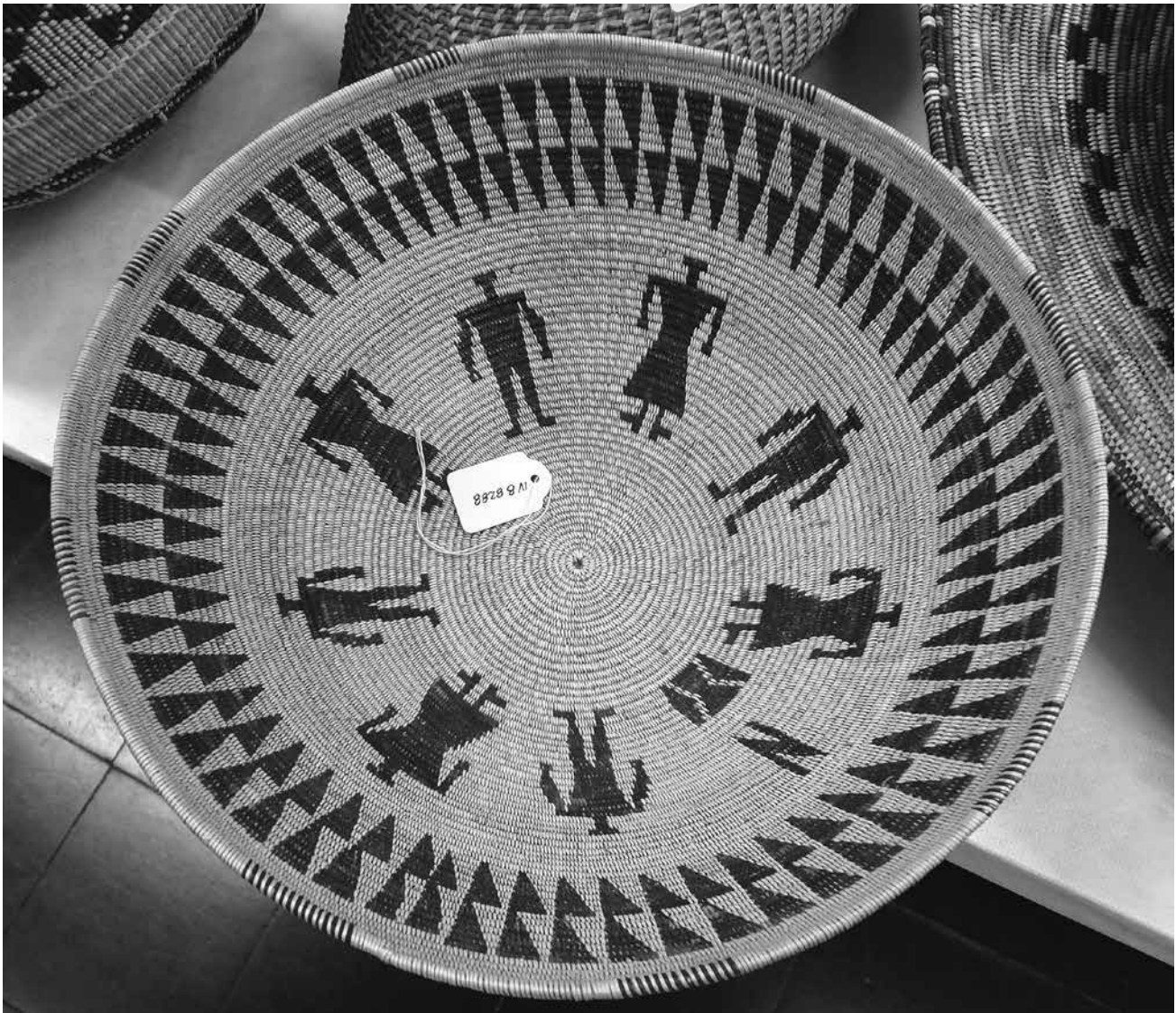


Figure 7. Panamint Coiled Basket Bowl (IVB8288). D: 10-5/8 in. (27 cm.) H: approx. 5 in. (12.7 cm.) Warp made of deer grass (*Muhlenbergia rigens*). Foundation weft made of willow, devil's claw (*Proboscidea lousianica*), and bulrush (*Scirpus californicus*) rim ticking. There is considerable controversy among basket scholars as to whether or not the human design elements are a post- or pre-contact trait. (Photo by Alexander Schwed.)

Timbesha Shoshone, and also by even older terms such as Little Lake, Coso, or Koso (Kroeber 1925; Steward 1938). The term Coso means “steam or fire” in the native Numic languages and refers to the active, steaming, geothermal site of Coso Hot Springs, its associated fumaroles, and the volcanic origins of the Coso Range itself in the heart of Panamint Shoshone (Timbesha) aboriginal territory (Garfinkel 2007; Garfinkel and Williams 2011:35).

The use of devil's claw and bulrush in the basket argues against a Tübatulabal origin for the vessel, and the use of willow appears to weaken the argument for a

Yokuts attribution. The basket is woven with a three-rod foundation.

The design elements on the Panamint Shoshone bowl remind us of the central religious ceremony of native peoples of the desert west—the Great Basin round or circle dance (Hultkrantz 1976:147–148; Park 1941:186; Steward 1938:45; Vander 1997:55–71). This dance was a spring or fall tradition that coincided with the seasonal abundance of favored foods (e.g., the pine nut harvest, communal antelope hunt, and the rabbit drive or fish run). The dance was part of a communal

celebration. Both men and women danced, forming a circle and taking small steps to the left in a shuffling movement. The dance was performed over a period of three to five nights and was accompanied by singing and the smoking of native tobacco. This was not just a social gathering; it was also an important religious celebration and a venue for the courting of prospective spouses.

Round dance leaders were not necessarily ritualists or doctors. The dance leaders talked while people danced, and weather control was an important objective of the dance. The dance was also a means of ensuring good health for everyone, and the participants would dance and sing all night long.

The California Indian Basketry Craze

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, a whirlwind of basket collecting swept the United States (Smith-Ferri 1996, 1998; Washburn 1984). Many modern collectors and scholars of Native American arts believe that the finest expression of native basketry arts was achieved in California; however, devoted art collectors disagree on which tribes displayed the greatest skill and produced baskets with the greatest aesthetic appeal—some say the Kawaiisu, others the Yokuts, Pomo, or Washo (Collings 1975a, 1975b, 1976, 1979, 1982).

Given the basketry frenzy that existed at the time, conditions were not beneficial for museum curators (Pardue 1996:106). The availability of the finer and more desirable baskets diminished quickly and prices escalated dramatically. Dealers priced California basketry many times higher than equivalent items from Africa, South America, and Oceania. In 1903, curator Karl von den Steinen mourned the fact that he did not have sufficient funds to purchase an exemplary California collection, as the museum had already acquired expensive South American gold artifacts (Bolz and Sanner 1999:139).

Bastian, Boas, Kroeber, Barrett, and California Indian Studies: A Remarkable Pedigree

Not all of the good material eluded the Museum—in fact, one of the larger and most impressive collections the BEM purchased was an assemblage of Pomo and Hupa materials from Samuel Barrett. This acquisition had pivotal implications for Barrett and important ramifications for the new discipline of American anthropology (Smith-Ferrie 1996).

The early twentieth century saw the inauguration of the Department of Anthropology at the University of California, Berkeley. The department began in 1901 with the financial help of Phoebe Apperson Hearst (1842–1919), the widow of wealthy mining magnate and U.S. Senator George Hearst (1820–1891), and the mother of the famous newspaper mogul William Randolph Hearst (1863–1952).

The University's Anthropology Department was the only one located west of Chicago. Alfred Kroeber, the dean of California Indian studies, was its first professor. Kroeber had a brand new Ph.D. from Columbia University and was a student of Franz Boas. Boas (1858–1942) was a German-American anthropologist and a pioneer of the modern discipline; he is generally recognized as the “Father of American Anthropology.” Boas developed the theoretical school of historical particularism, which embraced the theory that each society was best understood as a collective representation of its unique historical past. Incidentally, it's worth noting that Adolf Bastian (see above) retained Boas to work at the Royal Ethnological Museum, and strongly influenced him as an employer, teacher, and mentor.

Kroeber is widely considered the “Father of California Anthropology,” and of course was the legendary documentarian of California Indian culture and the author of the classic *Handbook of the Indians of California* (Kroeber 1925). He was one of the most prolific scholars in the history of California anthropology. Fortunately, during the course of one of his many statewide ethnographic surveys, he met and recruited Samuel Barrett.

Barrett was the son of a Ukiah business owner, the elder Samuel Barrett, who ran a family-owned general store where local Pomo Indians purchased their supplies. The younger Barrett was also a contemporary of Ukiah ethnologist Dr. John W. Hudson (1857–1936). Dr. Hudson's wife was the nationally-renowned painter of the Pomo Indians, Grace Carpenter Hudson (1865–1937). The elder Barrett welcomed native people into his general store and accepted baskets in trade or purchased them outright, reselling them to non-native clients (McLendon 1993:52).

The younger Barrett became fascinated by Pomo basketry, and on his days off from the store visited nearby Pomo settlements, where he traded groceries for

baskets. At first, he bought directly from the weavers, using money he had saved from his wages, then as his collection expanded borrowed money from his father (Peri and Wharton 1965:3).

Around 1899, Barrett's collecting activities began to mature. He partnered with Ukiah botanist, horticulturalist, and basket wholesaler Carl Purdy (1861–1945), and was able to pay his father back. At the same time, Barrett became more and more interested not only in baskets but also in the full expression of native culture and lifeways, and began studying a number of Indian groups in the North Coast ranges from San Francisco to the Eel River (Smith-Ferri 1996:5). Barrett probed their mysteries to discover which plants were used in native California Indian baskets, precisely who crafted them, and what their designs meant. His ethnographic focus led him to part ways with Carl Purdy and instead brought him into contact with Alfred Kroeber.

In 1901, Barrett became one of the first students in the University of California, Berkeley's new anthropology department; in fact, he often was the only student in Kroeber's classes! Under Kroeber's tutelage, he completed ethnographic research and collected artifacts from California native peoples in Mendocino, Lake, and Sonoma counties (Barrett 1959:24). He also worked in the University of California Anthropology Museum (later named the Robert H. Lowie Museum of Anthropology, but now called the Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology).

Barrett came to the university with little money, and he could scarcely afford the tuition and living expenses at the upscale campus, even after receiving several scholarships (Smith-Ferri 1996:10). Professor Kroeber brokered a solution. In 1903–04, Barrett sold his Pomo basketry collection; half went to the University of California, while the Museum für Volkerkunde (BEM) paid \$1,200 for the portion that Barrett considered the better half. We can affirm from personal observation that the 218 Pomo and Hupa artifacts in the BEM appear to be in impeccable condition and are a cherished part of the North American Indian collection.

Barrett's doctoral dissertation, which led to his receiving the first anthropology Ph.D. granted by the university, focused on his in-depth study of Pomo baskets, and eventually resulted in a formal monograph entitled *Pomo Indian Basketry* (Barrett 1908).

Barrett's classic work included photographs and detailed descriptions of a number of the Pomo baskets now curated at the Berlin Ethnological Museum, including those depicted in his Plate 16, Figures 1–5; Plate 17, Figure 2; Plate 18, Figures 1* and 3*; Plate 19, Figures 4, 5, and 6; Plate 21, Figures 1*, 2, 3, 4, 5*, and 6*; Plate 22, Figures 3*, 4, 5, and 6; and Plate 23, Figures 1, 2, 3, and 5. In addition, the following baskets depicted in his pen and ink drawings are present in the California collection at the Berlin Ethnological Museum: Plate 28, Figures 1, and 2; Plate 29, Figures 1–4, 5*, and 6. (All figures with asterisks are not noted in Blackburn 1990.) The plates in Barrett's (1908) book are in black and white and have no associated scale; as a result, readers have difficulty appreciating the size, beauty, and technical excellence displayed in Pomo basketry.

The Pomo and their Baskets. The Pomo lived north of San Francisco in Sonoma, Mendocino, and Lake counties (Barrett 1908; Kroeber 1925; McLendon 1998; McLendon and Oswalt 1978). They spoke seven distinctive languages, and although typically referenced as one "tribe," they lived in 72 semi-independent "nations" (Smith-Ferri 1996). They were a wealthy native people, living in permanent and sizable villages, and they crafted some of the most aesthetically pleasing and technologically sophisticated baskets in the world (Smith-Ferri 1996).

Smith-Ferri (1996:18), a native Pomo herself, emphasizes the fact that Pomo baskets embodied conscious utilitarian, artistic, and religious elements. By means of a sophisticated knowledge of plant materials and characteristics and a conscious management of the botanical environment (including burning, weeding, soil aeration, pruning, debris clearing, and selective harvesting), the Pomo obtained both the necessary materials for their baskets and important plant foods for subsistence. The baskets illustrated here were fashioned by celebrated weavers who were virtuosos in their craft (Hudson 1893; Smith-Ferri 1996:21). According to BEM inventory cards, the Pomo baskets discussed in this paper were acquired from the Yokayo, Upper Lake, and Pinoleville villagers.

Two of these communities (Yokayo and Upper Lake) were reportedly thriving indigenous towns where members of the Central, Eastern, and Northern Pomo had banded together and purchased lands. The latter two established towns developed in accordance with



Figure 8. Pomo Conical Burden Basket (IVB 7271). H: 24-5/8 in. (62.5 cm.) D: 18.5 in. (46.9 cm). Warp of willow (*Salix* spp.) rods. Weft of sedge (*Carex* spp.) root and redbud (*Cercis occidentalis*). Diagonally twined two-strand close weave. Rim: willow rods self-coiled into wefts. (Photo by Alexander Schwed.)



Figure 9. Pomo Feathered Gift Basket (IVB 7209). H: 1 in. (2.5 cm) D: 2-3/4 in. (7 cm.). Basket has 3-rod foundation that coils to the left. Warp is willow rod. Weft is sedge. Green feathers are Mallard duck (*Anas platyrhynchos*), red are Red-Winged Blackbird (*Agelalus phoeniceus*), yellow are Western Meadowlark (*Sturnella neglecta*), blue are Bluebird (*Sialia* spp.). Valley Quail (*Callipepla californica*) topknot feathers decorate the rim. Cotton suspension cord with six clam disc beads. Dangles (old style) are isosceles triangle-shaped abalone (*Haliotis* spp.) pendants hung with clear and red-clear, smooth glass trade beads on cotton cordage. (Photo by Alexander Schwed.)

traditional, pre-contact cultural templates (McLendon and Lowy 1978:231).

The four Pomo baskets illustrated here (Figs. 8, 9, 10, and 11) include a large, diagonally-twined and decorated conical burden basket (Fig. 8); a small, coiled and feathered treasure or gift basket (Fig. 9); a diagonally-twined, decorated storage bowl (Fig. 10); and a twined, decorated, and beaded “dowry” basket (Fig. 11), which has a fascinating pedigree.

The dowry baskets were called “*chi-mo*,” literally “son-in-law” (Jacknis 1991:196), and were presented by the recipient’s mother-in-law or the bride’s nearest relative. Upon receipt of the gift, the new owner and the presenter were not to view or communicate with each other again. Twined dowry baskets like these were some of the largest Pomo woven baskets made (Jacknis 1991). They were frequently plain-twined—a technique that strengthened the walls of the vessel while also producing a unique decorative embellishment. Horizontal design bands with geometric shapes in complex arrays are frequently present on these objects. Most *chi-mo* exhibit an intentional change in design pattern called the *dau*—described as a door by which spirits can enter to

consider the vessel and escape through when the object is destroyed (Kroeber 1909; Winther 1985, 1996).

Charles Presby Wilcomb

Professor Kroeber, who arranged the purchase of Barrett’s collection by the Berlin Ethnological Museum, probably also arranged the purchase of an even larger collection compiled by Charles Wilcomb. Charles Presby Wilcomb (1865–1915), an early ethnologist and cultural historian, is considered an American pioneer in these fields. He obtained his background through “on the job training” and direct experiences with Native Californians. He personally funded his travels to Europe and across America to review museums and educational facilities (Bernstein 1979:74; Frye 1979).

Wilcomb is principally associated with the development of ethnological and historical collections and the creation of public museums (Frye 1979). It was his focused efforts that drove public sentiment and sparked an appreciation and greater understanding of California Indian culture, a transition that changed the public’s view of Native Californians as “primitive diggers” to one of being resilient and gifted artisans capable of



Figure 10. Pomo Diagonally-Twined Storage Bowl (IVB 7269). H: 8-11/16 in. (22 cm.), D: 17-5/16 in. (44 cm.) Warp made of willow shoots. Weft made of sedge and redbud. Cut rim rods extend 1/8 to 1/4 in. (2–5 mm.) beyond last coil. Barrett believed this was the finest basket in his entire collection. (Photo by Alexander Schwed.)

creating remarkable objects of art and utility. During his unfortunately abbreviated life, Wilcomb was responsible for the creation of two important California institutions, the Oakland Public Museum (later the Oakland Museum) and the Golden Gate Park Museum (the predecessor of San Francisco's M. H. de Young Museum).

At one point, Wilcomb had amassed some 500 Native American objects (Bolz and Sanner 1999:143) that he originally intended to sell to a private museum in the eastern United States. However, that relationship unraveled (Krickeberg 1914:679), and in 1914 Wilcomb arranged for their acquisition by the Berlin Ethnological Museum.

*Konkow Maidu Ceremonial Hairpin (Trembler)*⁴ We include a Konkow Maidu ceremonial hairpin (trembler) acquired by Wilcomb (Fig. 12) in our overview of notable California objects at the BEM. The Maidu lived on the eastern edge of the Sacramento Valley and in the foothills of the nearby Sierra Nevada. Three primary Maidu ethnic/

linguistic divisions are presently recognized—the Konkow or Northwestern Maidu, the Mountain or Northeastern Maidu, and the Nisenan in the south.

Hairpins such as the one shown here were worn on ceremonial occasions throughout north-central California and were believed to be endowed with supernatural power that formed an integral part of religious expressions (Ewing 1982). Konkow Maidu ceremonial cycles incorporated curing, singing, and dancing. During these rites, costumed members of the society were transformed into divine supernaturals, spirits, and ghosts. Dance and song comprised a means of re-experiencing sacred time, empowering first fruits ceremonies, and served to restore native people to an original, unsullied state existing at the time of creation (Kroeber 1932; Loeb 1932, 1933).

The hairpin trembler was only one part of a dance costume that also included matching pairs of feathered plumes inserted into a hair net on the back of the head.



Figure 11. Pomo Plain-Twined Dowry Basket (IVB 7270). H: 17 in. (43.2 cm.) D: 28-1/8 in. (71.5 cm.) Warp is made of willow shoots. Weft is made of sedge and redbud. White clam (*Saxidomus* spp. and *Tresus* spp.) shell beads are sewn on with cotton cordage onto wefts. Cotton cordage at basket start. (Photo by Alexander Schwed.)

There were three such sets of owl-feather pins, and alongside these were one or two pairs of the feathered hairpin-tremblers. Feathered tremblers were always worn in matched pairs on either side of the head. The triple-pronged tremblers were intended to shake and move as the dancer swayed in rhythm to the music. A red-scalped woodpecker pin (not shown) indicated the position of the dancer, and was functionally similar to a wand carried when singing but not when dancing (Jacknis 1991:226–229). The BEM feathered trembler is in remarkably fine condition.

THE SECOND WORLD WAR AND ITS AFTERMATH

When war broke out in 1939, the BEM boxed and crated many of the specimens in the collection and transferred them for safekeeping to anti-aircraft towers, bunkers, deeply entrenched mine tunnels, and salt mines. The

moves were all made in a last-ditch effort to preserve these precious art pieces from destruction. By 1942, as the world war progressed and the crisis worsened, all the “show” pieces were relocated. Fire, water leaks, theft, and confiscation drastically affected the North American and Californian specimens. After Germany’s defeat in 1945, the allies seized and divided the hidden German art treasures and many of these cherished assets disappeared. In fact, the Russian Red Army’s “Trophy Brigade” shipped much of the California collection to the Soviet Union. The hiding place of this German war booty remained a closely guarded secret for nearly 50 years (Bolz and Sanner 1999:45–49).

German Reunification

The reunification of Germany in 1990 brought a remarkable surprise to the Berlin Ethnological Museum. The stored collection of museum materials was rediscovered in Leipzig, in what was formerly East Germany. There was



Figure 12. Maidu Hairpin or “Trembler” (IVB12202a and b). H: 12-1/4 in. (31 cm.). We believe this specimen was likely fashioned by George Barber (see Jacknis 1991:226). Collected at the Chico Rancheria, Butte County, California. Materials include Striped Red-shafted Flicker (*Colaptes auratus*) tail feathers (the feathers with white spots come from the leading edge of the tail), Acorn Woodpecker (*Melanerpes formicivorus*) scalp feathers, hide, cotton cordage, oak pin, iron wire, red wool yarn and cloth, smooth, white glass trade beads, and Valley Quail topknots. George Barber was an important Chico Maidu man who fashioned dance regalia from such materials as eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus* and *Aquila chrysaetos*), hawk (*Buteo* spp.) and falcon (*Falco* spp.) feathers, clamshells, glass beads and acorn woodpecker scalps. He was one of the few who made such objects specifically for museums and major collectors. (Photo by Alexander Schwed.)

little if any data as to how these materials ended up there, nor for that matter was much information available on the history of the collection's "life in exile." A Leningrad inventory of the American materials listed 9,000 objects. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, conversations ensued on the transfer of the materials from Leipzig to Berlin. With the return of the Leipzig items, the Berlin Ethnological Museum's North American collection regained much of the splendor it had lost as a consequence of World War II. In 2000, museum curators Peter Bolz and Hans-Ulrich Sanner celebrated by issuing a special full-color catalog of selected specimens in an elegant testimonial (Bolz and Sanner 1999).

SYNTHESIS AND CONCLUSION

The Berlin Ethnological Museum contains over a thousand artifacts from California. The collection is rich and varied, and constitutes one of the earliest ethnographic collections in existence. Many of the materials in the collection reflect a less disturbed way of life, before the dramatic impacts of exotic contacts affected rapid and catastrophic changes in native cultures. The assemblage includes treasures of great aesthetic quality, objects having tremendous meaning and beauty. These artifacts are rare, and are an invaluable source of scientific information on Native Californian cultures at the time of contact. However, there is another side to the story. These objects are also highly regarded for their humanistic value. They are associated with artisans who made and used them nearly 200 years ago. Some objects were employed as simple utensils, but others were invested with powerful meanings and embodied esoteric religious metaphors. To students of Native California cultures, they are invaluable windows into the past. For living descendants of the Native Californians who long ago traded and exchanged these artifacts with collectors, they are a testament to their ancestors, heirlooms reflecting tribal history and culture, and objects worthy of profound respect, remembrance, and serious study.

NOTES

¹There are many other collections of California Indian material culture in Europe and around the world that could be profitably studied in the same way we have done here, and that research would be most worthwhile. A preliminary effort to document

California objects outside the United States was undertaken by Thomas Blackburn and Travis Hudson (1990). Their inventory was simply a preliminary checklist, and certainly much more detailed and analytical studies could be carried out.

²California Indian material culture, particularly basketry, was significantly impacted during different stages of contact. Chronologically, these effects resulted from contacts with explorers, missionaries, and early settlers, population movements/declines, a loss of lands promised by unsigned treaties in the 1850s, the California Gold Rush, and the transcontinental railroad. It is both significant and unusual when museum collections include Native California objects that were collected prior to the 1870s or 1880s, since the majority of collecting took place between the 1890s and the 1930s. This was a time when major museums were establishing their collections and the tourist trade in basketry was at its height. As a result of research with Yurok weavers, O'Neal (1932) was able to distinguish between made-for-sale baskets and those baskets intended for native use, and her work appears to have helped contemporary basket scholars distinguish between the two categories. For this reason, the Berlin collection is especially important because of the early acquisition dates of some of its notable objects. While the Pomo baskets discussed in this article are not particularly early (1890/1905,) they are included here because of Barrett's connection to Germany and to Kroeber, and because of Kroeber's seminal influence on the development of the emerging discipline of anthropology. Our research has not focused exclusively on the earliest materials, but has attempted to provide a glimpse of the methods and motivations of a number of the major collectors who contributed to the development of the BEM California collection.

The entire BEM California collection has not been rigorously reviewed, and a detailed enumeration of all its classes of artifacts has yet to be fully achieved. The best approximation currently available to us comes from the work of Blackburn and Hudson (1990)—their list of the California assemblage at the BEM is the best overall inventory now available. A review of their catalogue shows that there is a diverse array of both ethnographic and archaeological materials present. The Blackburn and Hudson inventory has fifteen pages of BEM entries (pp. 88–102) that include about 750 individual accession numbers. The entries frequently represent individual items, but they occasionally designate a group of similar objects such as shell beads or cane tubes under a single numerical entry. The latter are not fully enumerated, and researchers therefore cannot determine the precise number of objects present.

In addition, the annotations supplied in the inventory sometimes identify the geographical provenience of the object(s) and sometimes simply give their ethnic attribution. Geographically, the BEM California Indian collection includes items that may be identified as coming from the following California counties: Alameda, Amador, Butte, Calaveras, Colusa, Fresno, Glenn, Humboldt, Inyo, Kern, Lake, Lassen, Los Angeles, Madera, Mendocino, Modoc, Monterey, Mono, Riverside, San Benito, San Bernardino, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Barbara, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, Shasta, Sonoma, Tuolumne, Tulare, and Ventura. The following ethnolinguistic

groups are represented in the collection: Achumawi, Cahuilla, Chemehuevi, Chumash, Costanoan (Ohlone), Gabrielino, Hupa, Kawaiisu, Luiseño, Maidu, Miwok, Mohave, Mono, Pomo, Shasta, Tübatulabal, Wintun, Yokuts, and Yurok.

The types of cultural materials in the BEM collection are difficult to quantify, since the exact numbers of various items sometimes are not provided in the published listing (as alluded to above). Nevertheless, the following types of objects are present in the BEM collection and are identified within the listing: arrows, arrow points (stone), awls (bone), baby rattle, baskets (bowls, burden, jars, mats, platters, sieves, and trays), beads (glass, stone, and shell), belts, blanket/robe (feather), bowls (basketry, pottery, and stone), bows, canteens (pottery), charmstones, cooking paddles, comals, cups (pottery), cradle board, dance staff, digging stick weights, doughnut stones, dishes (soapstone and shell), ear spool, ethnobotanical specimens (very numerous in the inventory), flakes (stone), fish hooks, gaming pieces, gourd rattle, hair net, hair ornament (shell), headdresses, headbands, jars (pottery), knives (stone), mano (handstone), meal brush, mortars (stone), necklace (shell and seed), net, net bag, nose tube (bone), pestles (stone), pipes (wood, bone and stone), pump drill, quivers, sandals, scrapers (shell and stone), skirt (feather, bark), balls (stone), wedge (bone), and whistle (bone).

³Feather blankets (robes) have been reviewed and discussed in detail by McLendon (2001). She remarks that at one time there were 15 such blankets in various institutions throughout the world. She describes a total of 14 blankets in meticulous detail; half are curated in America (n=7) and the other half are in Europe and Russia (n=7). The provenance for the blankets is as follows:

- Two-color black and white *Gale* feather blanket (84680), a three-color *Phelps* blanket (9824), and a two-color, beige and white *Phelps* blanket (98238), Peabody Museum, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts (PMH), n=3.
- *Hooton* blanket (39537), American Museum of Natural History, New York, New York (AMNH), n=1.
- Two color, beige and white, *Phelps* feather blanket, Denver Art Museum, Denver, Colorado (DAM), n=1.
- Three-color, *U.S. Exploring Expedition* feather blanket (FA 3349, 94-1), and a two-color, black and white *Dawson* blanket without stripes, Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History, Los Angeles, California (LACMNH), n=2.
- Three-color, *Deppe* feather blanket (IVB182), Berlin Ethnological Museum, Berlin, Germany (EMB), n=1.
- Two-color, gray and white (2520-8), and a two-color, black and white (2520-9) feather blanket, Musei Antropologii I Ethnographii, St. Petersburg, Russia (MAE), n=2.
- Three-color, *U.S. Exploring Expedition* feather blanket (Hd37), National Museum of Denmark, Copenhagen, Denmark (NMD), n=1.
- Three-color, *U.S. Exploring Expedition* feather blanket (2119) National Museum of Natural History, Washington, D.C. (NMNH), n=1.

- Two-color, black and white, *Lopez Uraga* feather blanket (161), Staatliches Museum für Volkerkunde, Dresden, Germany (SMVD), n=1.
- Three-color feather blanket (1910:188) Ulster Museum, Belfast, Northern Ireland (UMB), n=1.
- *Wrangell* blanket (E-175), Museum für Volkerkunde, Frankfurt, Germany (MVF), n=1.
- Missing blankets: *Vischer* blanket in Museum der Kulturen, Basle, Germany, and *Dawson* blanket in National Museum, Mexico, n=2.

⁴We recognize that Stewart Culin also collected from the Maidu, specifically for the Brooklyn Museum (Bates and Bibby 1983). The Culin material includes tremblers and other regalia fashioned by the Maidu that are very similar. These objects are important and should be studied, since it is generally recognized that such objects unfortunately ceased being made when the Maidu dance society traditions ended.

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