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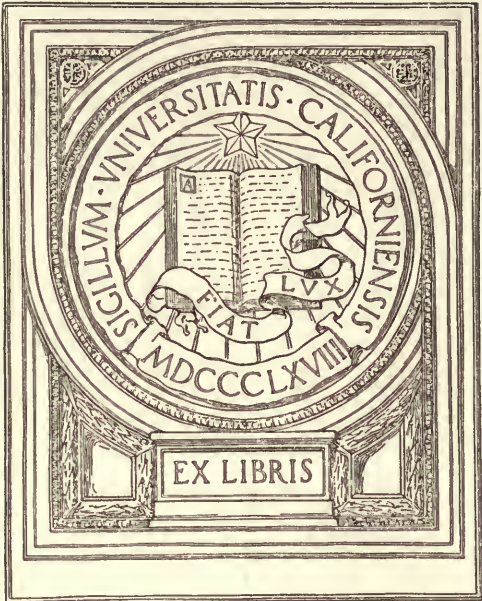
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# Poetry and Symbolism of Indian Basketry

(Reprint from "The Theosophical Path" Point Loma, Cal.)



BY

George Wharton James

Author of

*The Wonders of the Colorado Desert  
In and Around the Grand Canyon  
The Indians of the Painted Desert Region  
Indian Basketry  
Through Ramona's Country, etc.*



Illustrated with Photographs by the Author, and  
with Pictures of Baskets in his Historic Collection



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ILLUSTRATED WITH PHOTOGRAPHS BY THE AUTHOR  
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1. GEORGE WHARTON JAMES IN HIS LIBRARY SURROUNDED BY SCORES OF INDIAN BASKETS, THE STUDY OF THE SYMBOLISM OF WHICH HAS BEEN ONE OF HIS MOST INTERESTING SPECIALTIES



2. PINA BASKETS OF CHARACTERISTIC DESIGNS

# POETRY AND SYMBOLISM OF INDIAN BASKETRY



THE art of basket-weaving is one of the most primitive of all arts. The weaving of baskets undoubtedly ante-dated that of textiles. Holmes, Cushing, Fewkes, and other experts of the U. S. Bureau of Ethnology, have clearly shown that the basket is the mother of the pot. In other words, that the first pieces of pottery were undoubtedly the accidental discovery of aboriginal women who had lined their baskets with clay to prevent burning while parching corn and other seeds.

There is little doubt but that basket-weaving was simultaneously discovered and developed in many different lands, but in no country has it reached so high a state of development as on the Western Coast of North America. The finest baskets of the world have been made by the Pomas, the Gualalalas, the Tulares, the Monos, the Shoshones, the Indians of the Kern River, and the Aleuts of Alaska.

Much of aboriginal life is revealed in a study of the uses of Indian Baskets, for to these primitive people, unacquainted with vessels made of wood, glass, iron, brass, or of any of the metals, the basket was called upon to serve practically every purpose. It was used at weddings, dances, "medicine," and other ceremonies. The baby's cradle, the mother's treasure-basket, the family mush-bowl, the jars for storing and carrying water, the basket seed-winnowers, the basket drums, the fans for striking seed into the carrying-baskets, the gambling-plaques, are but a few of the thousand and one uses to which the basket is placed.

Equally interesting would it be to watch the Indian woman as she travels on foot or horseback far afield for the gathering of her material. She knows the name, the habitat, and the life-history of every piece of material within a radius of one to two hundred miles that can be used for basketry purposes. She can give you a vast amount of Indian lore in regard to the properties of all the plants as well as those

used for basketry. She will show you where the sumach, willow, red-bud, martynia, tule-root, maiden-hair fern, broom-corn, yucca, palm, and a score of other materials grow, and she knows the proper time to gather and prepare them.

Watch her as she takes this varied material and with her simple and primitive instruments, prepares it for use in her art. She scrapes, peels, and trims so that it will be of correct width, fineness, and length. And she soaks it in cold water, boils it, or buries it in mud, according to her knowledge of the treatment it requires.

By the basket student or expert almost every type of North American basket is immediately recognized either by its material, weave, or peculiarity of design, although it must be confessed that since basket-making has become commercialized the Indians are beginning, at the white man's suggestion, to imitate both the forms and designs of tribes other than their own. But even with this element of confusion introduced, the careful student need seldom make any mistake in determining to what tribe any basket presented to him belongs.

✓ The Indian Basket is almost entirely the work of the Indian woman. This is an art in which the Indian man has practically never interfered. Hence to understand it aright is to enter largely into the *sanctum sanctorum* of the Indian woman's life, for it is her one chief art expression, the one in which is enshrined her love of beauty, her joy in the observation of Nature, her symbolism, mythology, history, tradition, prayers, emotions, and aspirations. To know the basket aright is to know more of the Indian woman's life than can be revealed in almost any other way. Yet, in this, as in all other unfamiliar fields, one can walk more surely and firmly with a guide. Neither should it be forgotten that it is even essential to the right and full understanding of unfamiliar things that we look at them through the eye of another. Hence in taking such a basket as the one to the right shown in Figure 6 let me ask the reader to consider this basket for a short time as seen through my eyes rather than his own.

1. FORM. I would ask: Whence gained the weaver her idea of the form of this basket? It is well known that when a white woman wishes to make a basket she picks up some book containing a number of pictures and chooses from these the one that she desires to imitate. ✓ But the Indian woman has no books; she knows nothing of art-training in form; and yet she produces baskets that from this standpoint are as perfect as it is possible for them to be made. I venture the assertion that you may take/any basket made by any Indian





3. AN INTERESTING GROUP OF BASKETS

uncontaminated by the influence of the white race and there will not be one single basket that is not practically perfect in form.

Why is this? The answer is clear. The Indian is a close student and observer of Nature and when she forms a basket she models it after that which "Those Above" have revealed to her in their works upon the earth — hence its perfection of form. You cannot criticise the square; the circle cannot be improved by man; the spiral needs no adjustment to make it complete. These are perfect expressions of God's perfect thought, hence cannot be amended or criticised. So it is with the Indian woman's basket — she utilizes an infinitude of forms that are all complete, all perfect, all beyond criticism. Therefore, from the standpoint of form, the weaver of this basket can be regarded as a consummate artist.

2. MATERIAL. Whence does the Indian weaver gain her material? Were she a white woman she would go or send to a store and purchase a certain amount of willow splints or of raffia, of this, that, or the other color, and then, without in the least knowing or caring anything of the life-history of that which she is about to weave into her basket, she proceeds with the mechanical process. But, as I have already shown, the Indian weaver must possess a personal and intimate knowledge not only of the habitat but the life-history of every plant that she uses in her art. She must know when is the correct time to gather the willow so that it will neither crack nor split; she must know when the redbud is at its best in color and when the black of the *martynia* is permanent. If she gathers the stem of the maiden-hair fern (*adiantum*) too soon, it has not yet developed its full richness of glossy black; if she gathers it too late, it becomes rusty in color and brittle in working. She is not only the pioneer in discovering what plant-material is best adapted in her locality for basketry purposes, but so thoroughly has she studied the field that her dictum is confessed by our highest botanical experts to be the last word upon the subject of materials suitable for the making of basketry in that locality.

After she has gathered her material, observation and experience have taught her how to prepare it, and it is very seldom indeed that one finds the material an Indian weaver has incorporated into her basket to show signs of poor selection or ill judgment. Hence, though our science of botany and plant nomenclature is totally unknown to her, the Indian basket-weaver is *in fact* an expert botanist, and as such, deserving of our esteem and appreciation.



4. TOP: FINE APACHE BOWL-BASKETS; MADE IN ARIZONA  
BOTTOM: A WELL-ASSORTED COLLECTION OF INDIAN BASKETS

3. WEAVE. Whence gained the Indian woman her knowledge of the variety of weaves she incorporates into her basketry? She had no book, no teacher, to tell her what kind of stitch to use, yet the Pomas alone have developed and perfected some thirteen different styles of weave, each of them perfect and complete and eminently adapted for the purposes for which they are used.

Then think, too, of the marvelous digital dexterity manifested in the manipulation of these various weaves. The fingers must be trained to a high degree to accomplish such perfect work. Here is no machine-made or instrument-measured stitch. Everything is determined by the eye, the hand, and the finger. The Pomas, and now the Pimas, are making baskets with so small and fine a stitch that it seems incredible that they could be made by human hands. Some of the finer work of the Aleuts is as perfectly and closely woven as machine-made grosgrain silk. Hence from the standpoint of hand-weaving the Indian basket-maker must be regarded as an artist and an adept.

4. MATHEMATICAL ACCURACY. In many of these baskets the mathematical skill displayed is remarkable. It must be understood that before the weaver makes the first stitch in the bottom of her basket, she has carefully figured out how many coils of weaving, and, practically, how many stitches it will require to make the bottom of the basket before she begins to flare it for the bowl. She had to know absolutely and accurately where to place the first stitch of each figure of the design so that each occupies its own proper place. Then, another wonderful piece of mathematical calculation is revealed in the fact that as the bowl continues to flare, the size of each figure of the design must be correspondingly increased. This must be done so evenly and perfectly that by the time the top of the basket is reached each figure of the design must hold exactly the same relative position that it did at the beginning.

It will be noticed that while in the diamonds of the basket on the left of Figure 6, the first and second rows from the bottom are reasonably accurate, those at the top of the third row were not so carefully calculated that at the joining-place they were of the same size and equal distance apart. Here, then, is displayed the difference between an expert and careful worker and one who is less careful. Not all weavers are artists, though many are, but in the work of those who are adepts the mathematical skill displayed cannot be surpassed by any mathematician with his calipers and other instruments of measurement. Even where the most complicated designs are introduced the

weaver seems to have figured it all out in her busy little brain, and the workmanship beautifully agrees with the perfection of her design. Hence as a mathematician the well-made basket reveals the weaver as an artist.

5. **COLOR.** Whence gained the aboriginal savage her perfect knowledge of color? Her gamut is limited to the whites, blacks, browns, and reds. Yet with these she produces baskets that are harmonious masterpieces in color. On one occasion I showed two baskets to one of the greatest modern colorists of the world of artists and tears sprang into his eyes as he gazed upon them and remarked: "Such coloring as this is at once my admiration and my despair. What could I do with three colors alone as this weaver has done? Such work as this is beyond me." Here, then, is the dictum of a great artist, that the Indian weaver is a master and adept in the production of color harmonies and as such, therefore, she demands our appreciative homage.

6. **DESIGN.** Where did this aboriginal savage secure her strikingly artistic and appropriate designs? You may pick up a thousand or ten thousand baskets — those that are made by conscientious workers — and the variety of designs is simply amazing and astounding; yet there is not one that can be called inartistic or inappropriate. They all seem to fit the needs of the basket both as to shape and use. Whence came this diversity of design, and, indeed, the ability to produce any design? When I look at the monstrosities offered to the modern public in the way of designs on wall-paper, carpets, calicos, and other printed goods, I can only conceive of many of them as being made under the influence of delirium tremens. The one idea seems to be to produce something "different." Designs that originally meant something have been conventionalized, de-conventionalized, re-conventionalized, added to, diminished from, turned inside out, twisted first this way and then that, until the original parents would be horror-stricken at the charge of paternity. But in Indian weaving there is nothing of this kind. It is all simple and individualistic, but effective.

Please note that word "individualistic." Every weaver, as a rule, makes her own design. It may have elements similar to those of other weavers but they are combined according to the present weaver's own state of mind or the idea she wishes to embody in her symbols.

This commercial age has either corrupted or totally destroyed the taste of the majority of its people so that they are incapable of judging upon that which is artistic. Should they wish to decorate a sofa pillow,

they hie themselves to a department store and buy "pattern 91" or "design 23 B"; purchase the material they require, and then go home, pin the design to the material and iron it on, afterwards working out the mechanical design with whatever material the pattern calls for. And this is called Art Work! Let it not be forgotten that William Morris's definition can never be dodged: "Art is the expression of man's joy in his work." How can there be any art in the product of a machine? The true art-work is personal, individualistic, and the Indian weaver centuries ago learned this lesson. She gains her designs from the suggestions of the Milky Way, the stars, and other objects that remind her of happy passages in her own life. She watched the flying of the ducks and birds and the floating of the water-fowl upon the lakes. She copied the graceful movements of the gliding snake and the dancing glint of the sunbeams upon the waters. The lightning, the rain-clouds, the falling rain, the rainbow, and a thousand and one things in nature suggested designs for her baskets. She wove her symbolism and her religion into these baskets and therefore, as a rule, they are unique, striking, perfect, and fill the soul of the appreciative with the keenest joy.

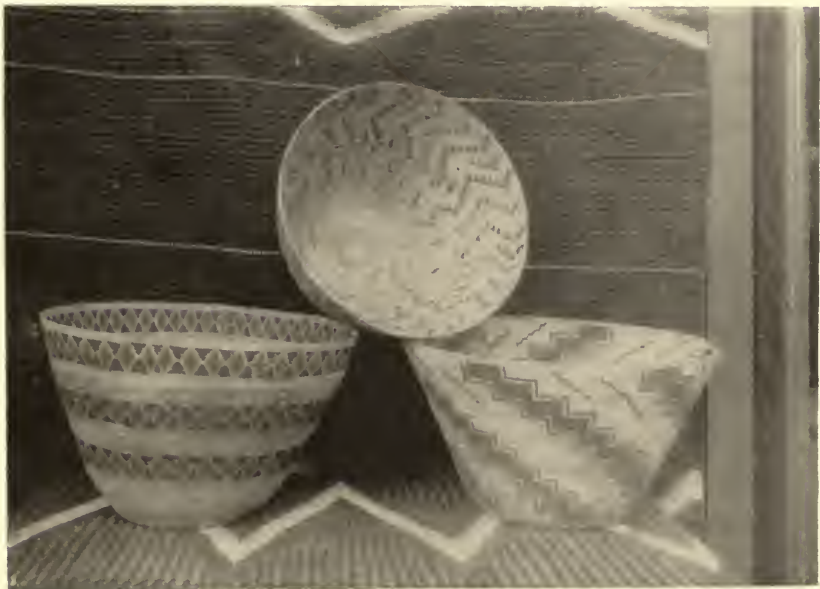
If, therefore, these points I have mentioned are well taken, it must be confessed that the Indian weaver is an artist. If in form her basket is beyond criticism; if in material it has utilized the best; if in weave it is symmetrical; if in measurement it is perfect; if in color it is harmonious, and if in design it is individualistic and artistic, who shall deny that as a complete whole it must be a masterpiece?

Artistic masterpieces, no matter of what character, demand the instinctive reverence and homage of the well-informed of mankind. If I gaze upon a picture by Velásquez, Rembrandt, Titian, Tintoretto, or Reynolds, I do not ask if the artist dressed in the height of fashion, spoke in grammatical sentences, or was familiar with the usages of good society at the table. My heart is filled with gratitude to him for his artistic gift to the world, and I take off my hat to him in reverent homage. So with the sculptor, the musician, the architect, the dramatist, the poet! I ask no other questions about them but that they have produced these masterpieces that will live so long as men love and reverence beauty.

Shall I be any the less honest and worshipful, therefore, if the creator of my artistic masterpiece of basketry be an ignorant, dirty, brutal savage? What matters it what the conception man may have of this Indian weaver? All I ask is: "Did she produce this glorious piece of work?" And if the answer be in the affirmative, just as I



5. INDIAN BASKETS IN MR. JAMES' HISTORIC COLLECTION



6. FINE YOKUT BASKETS IN THE GAVIN COLLECTION, THE ONE ON THE LEFT IS THE DIAMOND-BACKED RATTLESNAKE DESIGN

raise my hat in reverent homage to the painter, the sculptor, the architect, the musician, and the poet, so I raise it to the Indian weaver in thankfulness for her gift of beauty to the world.

Yet, hitherto, it will be noted that I have discussed the basket merely from the standpoint of its physical appearance. As yet the main subject has remained entirely untouched. Is there any poetry, is there any symbolism in the designs? If so, a study of this phase of the basket-weaver's art necessarily must materially enhance the joys of the student.

It is nearly thirty years ago since my attention was first directed to this phase of the subject. I was then a missionary in Nevada, and though my work had practically nothing to do with the Indians I was much attracted to the Paiutes who at that time were fairly numerous in the State. Several of them I invited to my home. Some of them were educated in the "white man's way," and all were more or less interesting. One of those I used to invite to my home and table was the remarkable daughter of the last great chief of the Paiutes, Winnemucca. She rejoiced in a high-sounding and mellifluous name of many syllables, but most people called her "Sally" for short. On one occasion she was dining at my table and we were talking about her people when, suddenly, she burst out with the remark: "You white people think we Indians are very ignorant; that we have no poetry, no mythology, no religion, no tradition, no legendary lore, no history, but you were never more mistaken. We have all these things, but unfortunately my people have not learned to write and print books as yours have. Yet we keep all these things in our hearts and if you only knew it even that basket that you bought from me yesterday contains much of what the Paiutes believe."

In a moment I sprang from the table and fetched the basket from the kitchen. Handing it to Sally I begged without delay to tell me all she could about it. Taking the basket and pointing to the design (see basket on the right in Figure 5), she said in effect:

"We Paiutes believe in an underworld as well as an upper world. In the upper world there are mountains and valleys (represented in the design) and there are corresponding mountains and valley in the underworld (pointing to the design). The red earth separates the upper from the underworld and the place of communication between the two is the opening represented in the design. (The Pueblo Indians of Arizona and New Mexico term this opening from the under to the upper world "Shipapu or Shipapulima.") We believe that the souls of all children that are to be born live in this underworld and that when



the mother gives birth to the body of her child, its soul is sent from the underworld through this opening to become henceforth the living power of the body. We also believe that when the person dies, his or her soul returns to this region of spirits in the underworld."

Sally commented quite a good deal upon this spirit-world of her people and was much interested in explaining to me its philosophy and inherent truthfulness. Naturally many white people will immediately stamp this idea as superstition and consequently a foolish belief. But, let me ask in all sincerity, How much does the white race know about the spirit-world, and from whence come the souls of the children that are born into the world? When does a baby become a living soul? When does the soul of the child unite with its body, if it does so unite? Thousands of pages have been written by great legal minds in all ages in an endeavor to settle this question and it is not settled yet. Is it when the unborn child is two months old, three months, or six? When does the crime of abortion become infanticide and murder? The fact of the matter is that with all our advancement our science, and our culture, we know no more than does the aboriginal Paiute basket-weaver. Our highest knowledge upon the subject is found in the simple little nursery rhyme sung by George MacDonald:

Where did you come from, baby dear?  
*Out of the everywhere into the here.*

Where did you get your eyes so blue?  
*Out of the sky as I came through.*

What makes the light in them sparkle and spin?  
*Some of the starry spikes left in.*

( Where did you get that little tear?  
*I found it waiting when I got here.*

What makes your forehead so smooth and high?  
*A soft hand stroked it as I went by.*

What makes your cheek like a warm white rose?  
*Something better than any one knows.*

Whence that three-cornered smile of bliss?  
*Three angels gave me at once a kiss.*

Where did you get that pearly ear?  
*God spoke, and it came out to hear.*

Where did you get those arms and hands?  
*Love made itself into hooks and bands.*

Feet, whence did you come, you darling things?  
*From the same box as the cherubs' wings.*

How did they all just come to be you?  
*God thought about me, and so I grew.*

But how did you come to us, you dear?  
*God thought of you and so I am here.*

In the course of years I was to learn several interesting things in regard to the opening in the basket showing the relationship between the upper and under-worlds. By a peculiar process of reasoning the Indian has come to believe that the symbol affects the thing symbolized and that as the basket is the work of her creation, if she interferes with the Shipapu opening and she should have a child born to her, this interference will prevent the soul of her child from uniting with its body. This would be an awful catastrophe, a clear circumventing of the will of the gods which would produce nothing but evil and distress to both her child and herself. As soon as I got this idea into my head I determined at the first possible opportunity to test it with one of my basket-weaving friends. Accordingly I took with me to the Reservation three hundred bright, new silver dollars which I secured expressly for that purpose. In those days the baskets were current in the Reservation and equivalent to \$4.00. Going to the weaver, I asked her if she would make one of those baskets for me, but without the opening. At the same time I offered her \$8.00 if she would do this. She looked at the silver dollars regretfully, but instantly exclaimed: "I am sorry but I cannot make the basket." I then put down \$16.00 and repeated the request. The same answer was given with the query why could she not make the basket in the regulation style. I replied that I did not want the opening and must have the basket without it and if she would oblige me I would double the amount in payment. Suiting the action to the word I spread out another \$16.00, making \$32.00 in all. The answer was still a regretful refusal. I continued to make the request until the whole of my three hundred silver dollars was spread out in tempting array upon the table, but even with that dazzling temptation before her the good woman, aboriginal savage though she was and though this mass of silver was more than her wildest dreams had ever suggested might belong to her, she still shook her head regretfully and positively refused my request. I am afraid there are many white women to whom such a temptation to set aside their religion would have been accepted as quickly as offered, but here was a so-called degraded savage proving her inherent nobility of character and

adherence to her religious belief because she was convinced that to yield to the temptation would be a circumvention of the will of the gods and would bring irreparable injury to herself and her possible offspring.

At another time in talking with a Navaho weaver about this very basket, she called my attention to the fact that it possessed a border stitch which I have since called the "Herring Bone" border, totally unlike the finishing stitch of any other tribe. In explanation of this border stitch she said it was a proof that the gods heard the prayers of faithful and true-hearted Navahos. In the long ages ago when the world was young and "the sun cast little shadows," one of the ancestral mothers of the tribe was seated under a juniper-tree praying. The burden of her prayer was to the effect that in the Navaho country it was difficult to secure good basketry material. The baskets were hard to make. Consequently when the top row of stitches was worn through and the basket began to fall to pieces it was a great hardship on the poor weaver whose time was already more than occupied in providing for the needs of her family. Therefore, would not the gods above in compassion teach her how to make a border stitch which should prevent the rapid wearing away of the top of the basket and thus materially prolong its usefulness. As she prayed there fell into her basket a twig of juniper. This she immediately took as the answer to her petition. Noticing that the twigs followed along the stem in the oblique herring-bone style, she picked up a splint and immediately began to work it upon the upper row of her basket in like fashion. The result was the discovery of this border stitch which henceforth became the valued possession of the Navahos. Later, when they taught the Paiutes how to make this basket this tribe became familiar with the "Herring Bone" border stitch, and still later as the Navahos came into close contact with the Havasupais in friendly relationship, the latter people also learned how to make this border stitch. But with these exceptions this stitch is elsewhere unknown.

One day while looking at this border stitch an old Navaho Shaman or medicine man, called my attention to the fact that the finishing-off point on this border stitch, which he called the *athatlo*, came directly opposite the Shipapu opening. He explained to me that this was a matter of tremendous importance to the Navaho. These baskets are prescribed for use in certain religious ceremonies that require from nine to fifteen days in their performance. Such ritualists are these people and so strictly conservative that they believe that the slightest deviation from the required ritual, at any point, is liable to be fraught

with great disaster. In certain parts of the ceremony which occur in the darkest hours of midnight the basket must be raised by the Shaman and the Shipapu opening turned towards the East. How shall this be done in the dark? The making of an artificial light is forbidden, yet the Shaman must be absolutely sure, and he himself believes that he must know that the Shipapu opening is properly oriented. Gently running his fingers around the border stitch until they come to the *athatlo*, he lifts the basket with confidence and turns the opening towards the East, for the *athatlo* assures him of the correct location of the opening.

Again, the Navaho maiden would scarcely regard herself as properly married if this basket were not used in the ceremonial. Three or four times have I seen a marriage in which this basket played an important part. After many preliminaries some feminine relative of the bride fills the basket up to the top of the brown earth line with cornmeal mush. It is then handed to the Shaman who sprinkles a line of the pollen of the blue larkspur from one side of the basket to the other and another line at right angles, thus describing a simple cross on the surface of the mush. The Navahos believe that there are five world points each controlled by two sets of powers, the good and the evil, all of whom must be propitiated — the good that they may remain good, and the evil that they may become good.

Raising the basket with the *athatlo* turned towards the East, the medicine-man takes a small pinch of the mush from the division of the basket nearest the East. He breaths upon it. This is "placing his spirit upon it" and attesting his sincerity, and he sprinkles the mush to the powers of the East. In turn he does this to the powers of the North, the West, the South, and the Here. The basket is then given into the hands of the bride and groom who likewise propitiate the powers of the five world points.

The next part of the ceremony needs the explanation that the Navahos sexualize everything. The lightning is both male and female. So are the earth, the sea, the winds, the rocks, and the rivers. The cold, harsh winds come from the North, hence the North is the masculine part of the earth; the South winds are warmer and softer, hence the South is the feminine part of the earth. Therefore when the bridegroom begins his symbolical journey around the mush bowl, he works to the North, while his bride works to the South. This symbolic journey is taken as follows: The bridegroom takes a pinch of the mush and eats it, the next pinch he gives to his bride. She takes a pinch and eats it and then gives one to her groom. Thus, alternating,



8. A HOPI WEAVER AT ORAIBI



7. A CHIMEHUEVA BASKET-WEAVER

the one circling to the North and the other to the South they proceed until their fingers meet on the further side of the bowl when, having thus journeyed their own way and met they are regarded as duly married and the ceremony is complete. Yet, scarcely complete, for one more piece of pleasant ritual must be observed. Just as the white bride cuts her wedding-cake and gives a piece to each of the guests, the romantic of whom carry it home and place it under their pillows that they may dream of their own future prince or princess, so does the Navaho bride hand around the basket of mush, each one of the guests taking a pinch with exactly the same pleasant superstition in mind.

This same basket is used in a number of ceremonies by the Navahos. By the Apaches, too, it is regarded with reverence, and as the Navahos and Apaches are racial cousins, the fact that the basket is held in high esteem by the one has led the medicine-men of the other tribe to attach special significance to this basket in certain ceremonies that are supposed to be very efficacious in the healing of the sick. To describe these ceremonies would take many pages. Indeed I might fill a number of pages in recounting the laws pertaining to "Butts and Tips" all of which have the purpose of requiring the careful and "religious" handling of the splints of which these baskets are made, so that, even in their very construction, nothing evil, improper, or unworthy may enter into them, but that everything may be done decently and in order.

Hence, it will be seen that when I look upon a basket of this weave and design it is no longer to me a mere piece of aboriginal weaving to be regarded solely from its physical appearance, but it becomes an object full of association, crowded with suggestions that bring before me a host of ideas, thoughts, and emotions connected with the intimate and inner life of a little known and much misunderstood people.

Having thus gained a clue to what seemed to be a great ethnological possibility, I never lost sight of it and determined at the first possible opportunity I would follow it up and see if other Indian peoples wove into the designs of their baskets any of these ideas that had been suggested to me as the result of my study of this Paiute-Navaho-Apache basket.

It was not until about twelve or fifteen years ago that a good opportunity arose to further my investigations. I then found it possible to visit the Saboba Indian Reservation, near to San Jacinto, California. I expected to have with me a former teacher of the Indian school at this place who had made a comprehensive study of the people, was familiar with their language and naturally seemed to be in a posi-

tion to be the best informed person in the country as to their social, religious, and ceremonial life. I informed her of the object of my visit and asked if the Saboba Indians attached any special significance to the designs of their baskets. She replied that they did not; she was familiar with their habits, their work, and their most intimate thoughts, and the only ideas they had in weaving designs into their baskets was to increase their beauty, enhance their desirability, and thus, if they were to be sold, increase their commercial value.

Fortunately for me on the morning when we were to go together to test this matter, some friends of hers, calling in their own conveyance took her on ahead with the understanding that we were to meet later on. At the same time the physician of the Agency, Dr. C. C. Wainwright, expressed a desire to go with me, and, as he spoke Spanish, which most of the Indians understood, I gladly accepted his offices as interpreter.

The first woman that we found was Juana Apapos. I had bought a number of baskets from her in the past few years and had no hesitancy in asking her to bring out anything she had for sale. She was busily engaged in weaving the basket shown in the center of Figure 15. I bought two or three other baskets she brought to me, but this was the one in which I became the most interested. I had long ago learned, however, that in dealing with most Indians it was not a good plan to ask questions which, in themselves, seemed to suggest the answers desired. Too often the Indian's idea of politeness is that if you suggest an answer to your question that is the answer you desire. Hence the vast amount of *misinformation* that people distribute among their friends as knowledge actually gained from the Indians. Consequently I asked no direct questions, but sat down upon the ground and using the sand to demonstrate upon, I explained to Juana that I had recently visited the Navahos, the great blanket-weaving Indians of New Mexico, and that they wove into their blankets a number of designs some of which seemed very similar to those that the Southern California Indians weave into their baskets. I then drew upon the sand several designs used by the Navahos, one of which was much like the conventionalized step design in Juana's basket, and I explained to her its Navaho significance. Almost immediately she replied, "But that was not what I meant when I put that design into my basket. You see where we live here there is no opportunity to see the majestic summit of Mount San Jacinto. I am very fond of that mountain. Up at Cahuilla, where some of my relatives live, one can see the whole glorious range of San Jacinto, with its steps leading

higher and higher until you come to its broad flat top, over which the sun floods the country every morning in a scene of bewildering beauty. So, when my friends invited me to pay a visit to Cahuilla, I was glad to go, for I was really hungry to see the great mountain that I so much love. Every morning I used to get up early and watch the first gleams of the sunlight until the mountain slopes and the valleys as well were flooded with its light. Just before I came home I began to make this basket and I thought I would put into it the steps that so reminded me of Mount San Jacinto and all it meant to me. Here are the steps you see (pointing to the design), leading from the mountain top into the valley where the earth is, which you see I have made, and under it running springs of water, which are also represented. Thus the basket gives me much pleasure in reminding me of the joys I had on that visit."

Here Juana ceased her narrative, without any explanation of the tree-like figures which overshadow her representation of the valleys. Accordingly I asked her to tell me what they meant. This, for a time, she refused to do under the plea that I would laugh at her. When, finally, I convinced her that I would not laugh, she explained as follows: "In some parts of the valleys are wonderful pine-trees which spread out their great branches in every direction. These, in the winter were covered with heavy snow. This you could certainly tell by the way in which the branches bent over. I wanted to put these trees into my valleys, but when I started to weave them I did not think enough beforehand and so started to make them too big, so that when they were finished, the trees were bigger than the valleys. I do not like to see them." Then, with a quaint expression upon her face, she handed me the basket saying: "I think I will sell you this basket now." I did not waste any time but immediately asked the price and paid it, for it mattered much to me that Juana realized that her design was carelessly conceived and indifferently executed and therefore she was glad to get the basket out of her sight. I know many white workers who have not yet learned enough to be able to discern good from evil work, especially if it is the product of their own fingers.

The next weaver we visited was an almost blind old woman who was just finishing the large basket in the center of Figure 16. In speaking of this design the old lady reminded us that they lived in a region where the white man had stolen practically all the available water supply, the springs, etc., and that unless there was abundant rain their crops did not grow, the grass did not spring up, so that their flocks went hungry and that meant poverty and hunger to them-





10. MY LITTLE HAVASU FRIEND GOING FOR WATER  
WITH A BASKET WATER-BOTTLE OR ESUWA



9. HAVASUPAI MOTHER PROUD OF HER CHILD  
(Copyright 1899 by George Wharton James.)

selves. But the year before there had been much rain; the sky was filled with clouds and rainbows; and the constant falling of the rain filled the springs, watered the earth, gave them an abundance of crops, and made everything happy and prosperous. "So," continued she, "as I am only a poor old woman, nearly blind, and unable to do anything else, I am making this basket in order that I may take the sacred meal and sprinkle it at the shrine where I shall pray to 'Those Above' that they send us much rain this year, and to remind them of my prayers I put the rainbows into my basket that they may know exactly what my prayers are for." Then, with a pathos that was touching in its naïve simplicity, the old lady, raising the basket to her nearly blind eyes and peering at the rainbow designs that she had made, exclaimed "I am an old woman and cannot weave very well and my sight is nearly gone, and I never attempted to make any rainbows before. They are not very good, but I think 'Those Above' will understand what I mean, and I hope they will answer my prayers and send us rain."

The work thus begun interestingly continued all day and I got a vast amount of lore from the Saboba people suggested by the designs in their baskets, that filled a large notebook.

Figure 17 is of Pedro Lucero, one of the patriarchs of the tribe, whose wife was one of the most skilful weavers of her people. She had just completed the basket the old man holds in his hands. I purchased it and with the aid of Bonifacio Cabse obtained from the old man and his wife the following legend of the advent of the Sabobas in Southern California:

"Before my people came here they lived far, far away in the land that is in the heart of the setting sun. But Siwash, our great god, told Uuyot, the warrior captain of my people, that we must come away from this land and sail away and away in a direction that he would give us. Under Uuyot's orders my people built big boats, and then, with Siwash himself leading them, and with Uuyot as captain, they launched them into the ocean and rowed away from the shore. There was no light on the ocean. Everything was covered with a dark fog and it was only by singing as they rowed that the boats were enabled to keep together.

"It was still dark and foggy when the boats landed on the shores of this land, and my ancestors groped about in the darkness, wondering why they had been brought hither. Then, suddenly, the heavens opened, and lightnings flashed and thunders roared and the rains fell, and a great earthquake shook all the earth. Indeed, all the elements of earth, ocean, and heaven seemed to be mixed up together, and with

terror in their hearts, and silence on their tongues, my people stood still, awaiting what should happen further. Though no voice had spoken they knew something was going to happen, and they were breathless in their anxiety to know what it was. Then they turned to Uuyot and asked him what the raging of the elements meant. Gently he calmed their fears and bade them be silent and wait. As they waited, a terrible clap of thunder rent the very heavens and the vivid lightning revealed the frightened people huddling together as a pack of sheep. But Uuyot stood alone, brave and fearless, and daring the anger of 'Those Above. With a loud voice he cried out: 'Wit-i-a-ko!' which signified 'Who's there; what do you want?' There was no response. The heavens were silent! The ocean was silent! All Nature was silent! Then with a voice full of tremulous sadness and loving yearning for his people Uuyot said: 'My children, my own sons and daughters, something is wanted of us by 'Those Above. What it is I do not know. Let us gather together and bring *pivat*, and with it make the big smoke and the dance, and dance until we are told what is required of us.'

"So the people brought *pivat* — a native tobacco that grows in Southern California — and Uuyot brought the big ceremonial pipe which he had made out of rock, and he soon made the big smoke and blew the smoke up into the heavens while he urged his people to dance. They danced hour after hour, until they grew tired, and Uuyot smoked all the time, but still he urged them to dance.

"Then he called out again to 'Those Above, 'Witiako!' but could obtain no response. This made him sad and disconsolate, and when the people saw Uuyot sad and disconsolate they became panic-stricken, ceased to dance, and clung around him for comfort and protection. But poor Uuyot had none to give. He himself was the saddest and most forsaken of all, and he got up and bade the people leave him alone, as he wished to walk to and fro by himself. Then he made the people smoke and dance, and when they rested they knelt in a circle and prayed. But he walked away by himself, feeling keenly the refusal of 'Those Above to speak to him. His heart was deeply wounded.

"But, as the people prayed and danced and sang, a gentle light came stealing into the sky from the far, far east. Little by little the darkness was driven away. First the light was gray, then yellow, then white, and at last the glittering brilliancy of the sun filled all the land and covered the sky with glory. The sun had arisen for the first time, and in its light and warmth my people knew they had the favor of 'Those Above, and they were contented and happy.

“ But when Siwash, the god of earth, looked around and saw everything revealed by the sun, he was discontented, for the earth was bare and level and monotonous and there was nothing to cheer the sight. So he took some of the people and of them he made high mountains, and of some smaller mountains. Of some he made rivers and creeks and lakes and waterfalls; and of others, coyotes, foxes, antelope, bear, squirrels, porcupines, and all the other animals. Then he made out of other people all the different kinds of snakes and reptiles and insects and birds and fishes. Then he wanted trees and plants and flowers, and he turned some of the people into these things. Of every man or woman that he seized he made something according to their value. When he had done he had used up so many people that he was scared. So he set to work and made a new lot of people, some to live here and some to live everywhere. And he gave to each family its own language and tongue and its own place to live, and he told them where to live and the sad distress that would come upon them if they mixed up their tongues by intermarriage. Each family was to live in its own place and while all the different families were to be friends and live as brothers, tied together by kinship, amity, and concord, there was to be no mixing of bloods.

“ Thus were settled the original inhabitants of the coast of Southern California by Siwash, the god of the earth, and under the captaincy of Uuyot.”

In the design of this basket the upper row shows the sun, moon, and stars shining through the openings in the mountains as related in the story. The bottom row represents the different villages of the people, each separate and distinct, yet each connected with the other by the bonds of kinship and affection.

Unfortunately this basket is no longer in my collection. While traveling and lecturing in the East the basket disappeared. Whether it was stolen or accidentally lost I have never been able to determine, but should it ever be seen, I give this public announcement that it was never sold by me; that it should be in the collection and that I should be happy to see it returned there.

A few years after I gained this story from Pedro and his wife an earthquake visited Saboba and though the *temblor* was not a severe one, it shook down the old adobe wall under which Pedro and his wife, with several others, were sleeping. I then wrote the following true story which it is well should find a place here.



II. A HAVASUPAI WEAVER WITH WATER-OLLA (ESUWA) BY HER SIDE, AND PLAQUE OF RADIATING WATER-DESIGN IN HER HANDS



12. A TULE-RIVER (CALIFORNIA) INDIAN WOMAN CARRYING A BASKET HOLDING A GOOD BARROW-LOAD OF PEACHES AND FIGS

“Everybody knew Pedro and his wife. They were a loving couple, though aged, wrinkled, and worn. ‘Poor’ was no name to describe the abject wretchedness of their lot, yet in each other’s love they were content, nay, even happy. But Pedro was blind. I never asked him whether he was born blind, or if it were the result of some later accident, but ever since I have known him he has been without the power of sight. His wife was a quiet, even-tempered, sweet-spirited, industrious old woman, one of the few remaining basket-makers of the Sabobas, and she would sit hard at work, day in and day out, shaping the pliant willow and tule root into the useful and pretty baskets that in these days we have learned so much to value.

“They did not have much of what we should call intellectual intercourse. There were no chats on the latest operas, or novels, or poems, or pictures. They did not discuss the newest scientific theories and argue about the descent of man, or life being a product of ferment. One would have thought there was little to bind them closely together. Poverty is said to be ‘grinding’; and where one is ‘ground’ he does not generally feel loving and gentle. Still this couple were ever loving and gentle one with another. The old woman would talk to the old blind man, and he would reply, and a look of content and peace would come over his face in spite of his sightless orbs. For they loved each other deeply, truly, faithfully, lastingly. Theirs no fair-weather love, while youth and good looks lasted; no formal tie to be severed at will for a younger man or woman, but a true union of hearts — Indian hearts though they were — and their ever-present reward was a conjugal happiness to be envied. Happiness is a relative term, and, as the Christ put it, it comes not from without. ‘The kingdom of heaven is within you.’ Poverty and squalor cannot affect it, for it is a state within. The ‘diners on herbs’ might enjoy it and the ‘feasters on stalled ox’ know nothing of its calm delights and perpetual inner banquets. These two loved, and in the gentle serenity of that never-failing devotion to each other the days passed in happiness and content, and one, seeing them as I did, could wish them nothing better than to pass out into the beyond together, thus loving and being loved.

“But the cyclone considers not the gamboling of the innocent lamb. The tornado sweeps with equally direful force over the happy as well as the wretched, just as the rain falls upon the just and the unjust. The stormy blasts of winter have no discernment of the poorly clad, and the disasters of the earthquake smite the deserving and the good as well as the undeserving and the bad. So it need not seem strange

that when the earthquake of a few years ago shook up Southern California it slew the wife of Pedro as well as several other women, none of whom, perhaps, were as happy in conjugal bliss as she.

“Sad and bitter were the wailings when the mournful news of these tragic deaths was told. Assembled together in an adobe hut, asleep under its walls after a *fiesta* of celebration of the happy Christmas-time (and let us not be too censorious that their feasting was of the grosser kind), the *temblor de tierra* came, one of the walls fell, and the lives of the sleeping women were instantaneously dashed out, Pedro’s wife being among the number.

“He himself was also a victim of the earth’s unsteadiness. Leg and collar bone (I think it was) were shattered, and when the dead body of his wife was found and brought out into the sunlight, Pedro was lying in agony and pain, broken and shattered in body. Out of kindness he was not told of his aged companion’s tragic death. The Indian agency doctor visited him and gave him all the benefit possible of his great skill and knowledge. Ever since Pedro had opened his heart to the doctor, when he and I several years before had talked with him about the origin of his people, the physician had taken the deepest interest in this old blind man and his wife, so that now he needed no urging to do all that could be done to restore him to health. The fractures were reduced and the wounds treated, and the pure natural life of the old man aided the surgeon’s endeavors so that he seemed on the way to speedy recovery. But all the time he kept asking for his wife. Where was his wife? Why didn’t he hear her voice comforting and consoling him in his pain? That it might not retard his recovery the dreadful news was still kept from him, and he was left under the impression that his wife, like himself, was injured too seriously to come to him, but that she would doubtless soon recover. Tears rolled down his wrinkled cheeks from his poor, sightless eyes as he thought of his loved partner thus injured and of his inability to minister to her.

“His distress was pitiable to observe, and it was only when the doctor urged self-control and speedy recovery for her sake that Pedro’s agitation was overcome.

“Those Above had stricken them with severe blows. Why was it? He could patiently have borne for himself, but his poor wife — she was so feeble, and so old. Could she not have been spared?

“His broken bones began to knit and his wounds to heal. Speedy

restoration to a fair degree of health was looked forward to, when it was deemed that the time had come to tell him the truth. The result was terrifying. In a few pathetic words this poor Indian exposed his whole inner heart.

“ ‘And she is gone from me? Shall I never hear the gentle love-sweetness of her voice in my ears again? From youth to old age we have walked hand in hand together, and now she has left me alone. She has gone on alone. I need her — she needs me. Care for me no more, I must go to her,’ and straightway he turned his face away from all succor, refused all food, and in a few hours was again walking hand in hand, though now in the Indian spirit land, with the aged wife, who doubtless, with himself, had renewed her youth.”

To return to the symbolism of the baskets, the design in the basket to the left in Figure 15 is one containing the same motif of aesthetic pleasure in objects of natural beauty as revealed in the basket by its side. This weaver, living on Warner's Ranch, where there are many springs and many beautiful flowers and butterflies, conventionally designated them all in this basket. In the center the small design represents springs and in the body of the design it will be seen that butterflies and flowers alternate one with another.

The basket in the upper row to the right of Figure 16 has the same motif. With nothing but the black and white of her splints the appreciative weaver expressed her joy and delight at the beauty of the trailing vines and flowers in this manner.

The large basket in the center of Figure 5 was sent to me by a Caluilla weaver while I was lecturing in New York. At that time she and her family were camped some sixteen or eighteen miles from Redlands. Desirous of knowing the symbolism of the design and knowing that she was an intelligent woman and would answer correctly I wrote a friend of that city if he would kindly go out and get the desired information. When he arrived the weaver asked him to come in the morning *before sunrise* and she would then show him what the design meant. My friend was wise enough to do as he was told and a full hour before sunrise found him at her camp. Taking him a little distance away she pointed to the ridge in the East, where, silhouetted against the beautiful clear white light of the early morning, a number of yuccas were to be seen. The white light of the morning shining through the dark spikes of the yucca afforded her so much pleasure that she wished to place them in her basket. The little groups in the design represent the flowers conventionalized. This was one





14. A HAVASUPAI WEAVER, BEGINNING THE WEAVE OF A WATER-OLLA



13. A PALOMAS APACHE WEAVER, AND LARGE BASKET IN MR. JAMES' COLLECTION

of the baskets the coloring of which gave such delight to the master artist to whom I have above referred, but unfortunately, the engraving does not reproduce the rich and perfect harmonies of its color scheme.

Several of the baskets are prayer-baskets, carrying out somewhat the same idea that the old Saboba woman had when she put the rainbows in her basket — see Figure 16, for instance, and the basket to the left in Figure 5. When I first saw and purchased this basket, I could not conceive what its peculiar design could mean until upon inquiry the weaver showed me that the central cross design was a conventionalized representation of the four paws of a bear, showing their sharp claws, and that the other sharp pointed portions of the design represented the incisor-like and dangerous teeth of the bear. Instinctively realizing what the basket meant I asked her if I might accompany her when she took the basket to the shrine of prayer. In amazement she looked at me and asked me how I knew she was going to pray. I made no reply but simply asked that I might go and satisfied her that my desire was an earnest one and that I should sincerely unite my prayer with hers. She then took my request in the most matter of fact way and before long put a supply of prayer-meal into the basket and took me to the shrine where she knelt and prayed most fervently to the Powers Above. From her prayer I gathered that her husband and sons were working in a portion of the Sierras where a number of bears had been seen. She was afraid that these wild creatures might jeopardize the lives of her loved ones. According to her reasoning the bears were subject to the two great powers — one good, the other evil. This must be so, for all bears have equal power to do damage and injury, but only a few show the disposition to attack man. These, therefore, undoubtedly are under the domination of the evil power and she sought especially to propitiate this power in order that no injury would come to those she loved.

This same motif is found in the basket to the right in Figure 18. Here is clearly outlined a diamond-back rattlesnake, although in the engraving the head of the rattler is in the shade and is indistinct. The woman who made this knelt in my presence, and after sprinkling the sacred meal as is their wont when at prayer, petitioned the powers of good and evil that her loved ones might be preserved from the poisonous fangs of the rattlesnakes that abounded in the region where they were at work.

It will also be noticed that in this basket there is a figure that looks like that of a mouse or rat. There are two of these figures in the bas-

ket. I forgot to ask the weaver the significance of these, hence I do not know definitely what her idea was in placing them here. The assumption, therefore, is purely my own and may be erroneous, but it is not improbable that her thought was to suggest to the powers that controlled the rattlesnakes that if the gods would undertake to preserve from injury those she loved she would see to it that plenty of mice and other reptilian foods were forthcoming for these creatures.

The basket to the right of the lower row of Figure 16 is the well-known Bat Basket, the story of which has been told many times. When I first saw this basket the old weaver was busily engaged in its manufacture. As I chatted with her she told me that the design which she was weaving into it was that of the flying bat.

“Why do you put the flying bat into your basket?”

The answer came with a childlike confidence and simplicity that were intensely interesting and pathetic. “For a long time when I have gone to my bed to sleep, the flying bats have come through that hole” — pointing to a small hole at the junction of the wall and roof — “*and sucked away my breath*. You see I cannot breathe very well, for they have taken away nearly all the breath I have.” (The poor old creature was suffering from asthma — a very rare complaint with Indians.) “So I am going to pray to Those Above to keep the bats away from me. I am making the basket to take the sacred meal to the shrine” (mentioning a place where the old Cahuilla Indians go to pray as in the old days before priests and missionaries were known), “and I am putting the bats in the basket so that Those Above will know what I am praying about. I will sprinkle the sacred meal and then pray earnestly that the bats be kept away so that when I lie down to sleep my breath be no longer taken away from me.”

Impulsively I placed my hand on her shoulder and exclaimed: “And when you pray will you remember that your white brother will pray with you?”

I took good care, however, before leaving, to close up the aperture through which the bats entered her hut to disturb her. It was nearly a year before I returned to Cahuilla, but one of the first visitors to my wagon was this old woman. She took my face between her hands and kissed me on each cheek, and shook my hands with cordial earnestness, while tears streamed down her cheeks. Almost her first words were: “You see I now have my breath. Those Above heard *our* prayers.”

Her gladness almost touched me to tears, and they actually did flow when I realized the significance of the plural pronoun she had used:

"*Our prayers.*" Here, indeed, was the recognition of the brotherhood of man and the fatherhood of God. Then she continued: "I told you if our prayers were answered I would keep the basket for you, and it is there on my wall waiting for you to come and fetch it."

The second basket from the left in the upper row of Figure 16 has an equally pathetic prayer connected with it. It was made by the squaw of Panamahita, a Havasupai Indian, who lives with his tribe in Havasu or Cataract Canyon, one of the tributaries of the Grand Canyon of Arizona. Their home is deep down in the Canyon some fifty miles west and south of El Tovar. Some months prior to my visit on the occasion of my getting this basket, there had been a severe cloud-burst which had completely washed away the gardens of several families of the Indians and had done a great deal of damage to their peach and fig trees. Upon these vegetables and fruits the Indians depended for a large share of their subsistence during the year and all of these having been destroyed they were naturally in sad circumstances. I had ridden into the Canyon from Bass Camp and had just passed the school-house when I met the family leaving the village to visit a shrine some fifteen to twenty miles away where I doubt whether any other white man save myself has ever been privileged to go. This basket was in the hands of the weaver and in our conversation I learned that she had made it expressly for the visit they were about to make to this shrine. Before long the symbolism of the design was made apparent. According to their belief, with which I have been familiar for many years, the Havasupais believe that "Hackataia" is the great central power behind all cyclones, tornadoes, cloud-bursts, and destructive forces of this nature. They regard the roaring, turbulent Colorado River in the depths of the Canyon as a manifestation of Hackataia; the thunder as another manifestation. The destructive cloud-burst which had devastated their gardens and partially destroyed their homes was also an exhibition of his malevolent power. Accordingly, in the center of the basket the black part of the design represents the great Hackataia from which all the smaller Hackataias come, the latter being represented by the inverted pyramids which surround the central black design. It was to this god their petitions were to be addressed. Now, as I have explained, these people live in the region of deep canyons, surrounded by high plateaus. In the next circle of the design this country of alternating plateau and canyon is shown, and it will be observed that all symbols of Hackataia are absent. This was to be the chief burden of the prayers, that if it were the will of the gods, all this country, that they regarded as their home country, should hence-



15 (TOP) AND 16 (BOTTOM). INDIAN BASKETS IN MR. JAMES' COLLECTION

forth be completely free from the ravages of tornado, cloud-burst, fierce storm, or other injurious power. Then, fearful of asking too much at the hands of the gods, the upper row of the design suggests a modification of the prayer, namely, that if Hackataia *must* come into this region, will it not be possible to confine him to the plateaus, so that when he reaches the edge of the canyon, instead of descending into it and bringing evil and misery and distress to the poor, hard-working Havasupais, he will jump across the canyon and continue his destructive work upon the plateau where there are no human beings with little children to be made to suffer.

In the basket to the left in Figure 18 will be seen four pairs of birds. The central portion of the design is a conventionalized flower or shrub near which these birds, the doves, were often seen by the weaver. She was a young maiden about to be married at the time that I found her engaged in the making of this basket. I had known her practically from her babyhood and we were exceeding good friends. She trusted me implicitly, hence when I asked the meaning of the design of the birds in her basket, she looked at me sweetly and shyly for an instant and then explained: "You know José and I are soon to be married. Every day when I am busy with my work I see the love-birds" — this is the name given by many Indians to the dove — "they are always cooing to each other and stroking each other's feathers down with their bills and showing how much they love each other, so I thought to myself I would pray to the god of the Palatinguas that not only before our marriage, but afterwards, and all the time, José and I may make love to each other and be as happy together as are the love-birds."

"But why did you put the four pairs of love-birds in your basket?" I asked.

"Oh, that was to represent all the seasons of the year, spring, summer, autumn, and winter, and thus represented, one year to represent all years," she replied.

When I asked, "Will you sell me the basket?" she replied, "No, I cannot sell it now, because if I were to sell it that might spoil my prayer."

It was some three years before I saw her again and when I did she was the happy mother of two beautiful and healthy children. The basket hung upon the wall. Immediately I saw it, the question instinctively sprang to my lips, "Are you happy, Juanita?" With a smile she responded, "Yes, I am perfectly happy and satisfied, and

now if you want the basket I shall be very happy to have you take it."

Need I say that it now occupies an honored place in my collection?

On the small basket to the right in Figure 5, which was made by a Pima, will be seen that almost universal symbol, the swastika. Dr. Thomas Wilson, while he was Curator of Anthropology, National Museum, wrote a most learned monograph, illustrated with hundreds of engravings, giving the history of this symbol as found by him among the different nations of the earth, both civilized and uncivilized. While he presented a few Indian designs and gave their explanation, he failed to present the interpretation that had been given to me some years ago by the Pimas and other tribes in Southern Arizona. "These people live in a region where water is exceedingly scarce. Indeed, the chief burden of their prayers is that the "Reservoirs of the Above" (the rain-clouds) and the "Reservoirs of the Below" (the springs) may be kept perpetually full so that they may not be deprived of this life-giving fluid. One of their dances is a prayer of thanksgiving and also of petition to 'Those Above for this purpose. 'This dance is called the "Dance of the Linked fingers." 'The dancers stand two by two, one crooking his first finger from below and the other crooking his first finger, but holding it downwards as from above, and the two thus linking their fingers represent the meeting of the waters of the "Above" and the "Below." If the reader will kindly link the first fingers of his right and left hands, he will see that they make the design of the Greek fret. 'This symbol is found in infinite variation in the designs of the basketry of the Pimas and Apaches and other tribes of Southern Arizona.

Now, while the worshipers with their fingers thus linked dance to and fro, it is natural that by and by their fingers should slip from this position into the easier cross-linked position. When the weaver seeks to imitate this design, which to her mind is exactly of the same symbolic significance as the Greek fret, the exigencies of the art of basket-weaving force her to make it in the form of the swastika as shown in the basket in Figure 5. Here, then, we have the interpretation of these two symbols. 'They both mean the same thing — 'Thanksgiving to the gods above for the feeding of the reservoir of the clouds and the feeding of the reservoir of the springs.

While there are other baskets in the collection the symbolism of which I have not described, because I have not been able to learn it from the weavers of the baskets themselves, there is one more that must receive attention at my hands. It is the center basket with the star-design in Figure 18. 'The story of this basket is connected with

the origin of that part of the story of *Ramona* which describes the killing of Alessandro by the Jim Farrar of the novel. This part of the story is literally true, the original Indian's name being Juan Diego, and the wife actually bore the name, "Ramona Lubo." It must be remembered, however, that this parallel of absolute truthfulness between the fact and the fictitious story of *Ramona* does not apply throughout the whole novel, although every isolated fact of the story has its counterpart in actual fact.

Here is the story of the basket as I wrote it some years ago in my book entitled *Through Ramona's Country*: "Ramona Lubo is herself a fine basket-maker, but for many years she has not cared to exercise her art in this direction. One of the most highly-prized baskets in my collection was made by her, but was purchased by me in ignorance of that fact. The basket is an almost flat plaque, with a flange, giving it somewhat of the appearance of a soup-plate. In color it is a rich cream, with a large five-pointed star in the center and a host of small dots representing stars surrounding it, all worked out in stitches of deep brown of tule root.

"The manner in which I learned the meaning of the big star and the little stars from Ramona is as interesting as the story itself. It came about as follows. After hearing Ramona's story of the killing of her husband by Sam Temple, as recited in a former chapter, it seemed that it would be an excellent thing to preserve her story in the graphophone, told in her own way. Accordingly on my next visit to Cahuila, I took a large graphophone with the necessary cylinders, and soon after my arrival set up the instrument in the wagon ready for use. Timid and afraid of everything new, as usual, it was difficult work to persuade Ramona to come into the wagon. Fearful as a doe she sat down, while I wound up the machine and adjusted the cylinder, on which was one of Nordica's songs. Our explanations of the mysterious powers of the graphophone only seemed to excite her fears the more, so that I was not surprised when the clear voice of the great artist burst forth from the horn to see a look of absolute terror come over Ramona's face, and the next moment to see her flying form darting through the wagon doorway. She fled incontinently to her little cabin, and it seemed as if our hopes of a record were doomed to disappointment. Mrs. N. J. Salsberry, the beloved teacher of the Indian school, and her daughter, Mrs. Noble, women in whose integrity Ramona had the highest confidence, united with me in persuasions to get her back to the wagon, but it was some days before she would consent.

"In the meantime I had wandered about the village, buying all





17. PEDRO LUCERO

With basket in which is enshrined the history of his people,  
the Sabobas, of Southern California.



18. INDIAN BASKETS IN MR. JAMES' COLLECTION

the baskets I could find, and among others this one with the design of the large star surrounded by all the lesser ones in the firmament. In vain I sought to know something of the design from the Indian woman of whom I purchased it. She did not make the basket, and she did not know the meaning of the design. "Who was the maker?" She refused to tell, and I had at last settled down to the thought that I must be content to be the mere possessor of the basket without knowing anything of its design or weaver, and had placed it with my other purchases in the wagon.

"At length Mrs. Noble's persuasions were successful and she and Ramona came again into the wagon. While preparing the graphophone I suggested to Ramona that she look at my baskets. With the child-like interest and curiosity Indians always display in one another's work, she began to examine the baskets and question me as to their weavers, when suddenly she caught sight of this star-basket. Seizing it with eagerness she exclaimed:

"Where did you get my basket?"

"It's not your basket, Ramona," I replied. "I bought it, and it is mine!"

"No, no! It is not yours," she excitedly answered. "It is my basket, my basket!"

"How can it be yours when I bought and paid for it?" I queried.

"Yes!" said she. "I know it is yours in that way, but that is not what I mean. It is my basket, mine! It belongs to me! I made it! It is part of me — it is mine!"

"Need I say that in a moment my keenest interest and profoundest curiosity were aroused?"

"Ah," said I, "I understand, Ramona; you made the basket. It is a part of you. Why did you put the big star and the little stars in your basket?"

"I will not tell you," was her reply, with the keen directness of an Indian.

"Surely you will tell me," was my response. "You often say you will not tell me things and yet you generally do. Do not say you will not tell me, for I want you to tell, and I think you will."

"I forbore pressing the question, however, at this time, as I saw it would be useless, but securing her promise to allow me to come down to her cabin, and there obtain more photographs of her, I determined to use that opportunity for further queries on the subject of the basket.

"In the meantime she told her story in the graphophone, and I now have the cylinder. Unfortunately she was so afraid of the machine

that in spite of all my urgings her voice was low and timid, and did not make much impression. It is clearly to be heard, however, when one is perfectly still, hence is a valuable record.

“The following day when I went to her house, I took the basket along, and after I had set up my camera I handed her the basket. As I put my head under the focusing cloth, while she sat before me at the end of the little cabin, holding the basket in her hand, she voluntarily began her story, her son, Condino, acting as interpreter.

“‘There are many times when I lie down out of doors, tired and weary, but I cannot sleep. How can I sleep? I am all alone, and as I roll and toss, all at once I think I can see that wicked man riding up to the top of the hill and looking down upon our little home, and I hear him cry, “Juan Diego! Juan Diego!” Then I see my poor husband, tired and sleepy almost to death, stagger to the doorway, and that wicked man, shouting foul oaths, put his gun to his shoulder and fire, bang! bang! — two shots — right into the heart of my poor husband. And I see him fall across the doorway, and although the blood was oozing from his dead body, and I knew I had now no husband, that cruel, bad man pulls out his little gun and fires again, ping! ping! ping! ping! four more shots into his dead body.

“‘When I see this, how can I sleep? I cannot sleep, and my face becomes wet with many tears.

“‘Then I look up into the sky, and there I see the Big Star and all the little stars, and I think of what they tell me, that my husband, Juan Diego, has gone somewhere up there. I don’t understand, I am only a poor ignorant Indian, but the priest understands, and you white people understand; and he says that Juan Diego has gone there and that he is very happy, and that if I am a good woman I shall go there too, and I shall be very happy, because I shall be with him. And when I think of this, it makes me feel good here (putting her hand over her heart and body) and my head does not feel so dizzy, and I am able to turn over and go to sleep.’

“‘So that was why you made the basket, was it, Ramona, that you might see the Big Star and the little stars, even in the daytime, or when you were indoors, and it might make you feel good to see them?’

“‘Yes,’ she replied, ‘that was it.’

“‘Then,’ said I, ‘if the basket gave you so much comfort, Ramona, why did you sell it?’

“As I asked the question such a look of despair came over the face of the poor woman as I shall never forget, and raising her hands with a gesture of helpless hopelessness she exclaimed: ‘I wait a long, long

time, and I no go. I want to go many times, but I no go. I stay here and I no want to stay here. Nobody love me here, white people no love me, Indians no love me, only Condino, my little boy, love me and I heap tired! I heap tired! I want to go! I no go!

“And then flinging the basket away from her in a perfect frenzy of fury, she shrieked, ‘Basket say I go! I no go! Basket heap lie! Basket heap lie!’

“So that I see in this basket not only a beautiful piece of work, with dainty colors arranged in exquisite harmony, but I see the longings of a woman’s soul to be again with her husband in ‘the above,’ her aspirations to be at rest, and alas! the sickness of heart that comes from hope long deferred — a woman’s despair.”

From these simple and pathetic stories it will be seen that far more human interest attaches to the basket of the Indian than we have hitherto conceived. No longer can they appear to us as mere pieces of aboriginal wickerwork with no other thought connected with them than their beauty of form, color, and design, and the use for which they were intended. Henceforth one can never look at a basket without realizing that the Indian weavers and people are human with ourselves, feeling all the emotions, enjoying equal hope and aspirations, and feeling equal wretchedness and despair as ourselves.

And if this brief and imperfect presentation of the subject leads my readers to feel even a small part of my own sympathy for and interest in the Indian, its recital will be more than justified and my labor abundantly repaid.



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