

AMERICAN INDIAN BASKETS

THE University Museum's outstanding collection of baskets has been enriched by some sixty American Indian baskets, notable for their beauty of form and design and their perfect condition, evidence of the discrimination and care of their collector, Miss Mary T. McInnes, in whose memory they were presented to the Museum by her sister, Miss Martha H. McInnes.

Ten tribes are here represented. There are fine trinket- or work-baskets of the Tlingit of southern Alaska, woven of spruce-root with decorative overlay of dyed grass; Makah baskets from Neah Bay, showing the characteristic wrapped twined weave that gives the tile-like stitch and slants the warp in the direction of the weave. Here also are imbricated Salish, coiled Pima, Papago, Navaho, Apache and Hopi of the Southwest, and Chippewa wicker and sweet grass baskets from the region of the Great Lakes.

The Navaho specimen is the ceremonial plaque or shallow bowl, with its broad band of orange-red bordered by black triangles. This band is always broken at one point—the "life gate"—which, in ceremonial use, must be oriented. This tray plays an essential role in Navaho wedding ceremonies and in the nine day solemnities, such as the Mountain Chant, when, converted into a drum, it emits a ghostly sound (Plate VII).

Perhaps the most beautiful baskets both in form and design, in this collection, were made by the White Mountain Apache (Plate VII). The graceful vase and the long boat shapes break the monotony of shallow bowl or tray forms. Men and animals appear amid geometrical designs which include the swastika, a symbol independently native to America. In aboriginal art it is associated with the woodpecker and other life forms, and is probably linked with the concept of the four world quarters.

Very dainty are some of the Pima baskets—small, finely woven plaques with exquisite designs, and minute bowls of no earthly use, save the pleasure of their weaving, and, perhaps, a child's joy in the owning.

In addition to the American tribal baskets, Miss McInnes' collection contains a number of tiny Mexican baskets, woven of straw or of translucent horse-hair. A dozen baskets from Africa and the Far East are included in this generous gift.

H. N. W.



PLATE VII. *Above.* White Mountain Apache bowl and jar. Navaho sacred bowl. Tlingit and Makah trinket baskets.

Below. White Mountain Apache boat-shaped bowl.



A DAT-SO-LA-LEE BASKET

A VALUABLE Washo basket has been presented to the Museum by Mr. G. G. Green and Dr. J. Alden Mason. It is the creation of the famous Datsolalee, whose skillful fingers wove the most artistic products of her tribe, perfect in form, fine and even in stitch, balanced in design. Into the concept of each of her baskets—and they are all named—went a poetic thought: "Light ascending," "Little dead snow-birds," "When the birds leave their nest" (Plate VIII).

A basket such as this one, which has a count of thirty stitches to the inch, would have required a full day to weave one round. It is estimated that some forty thousand stitches went into its building. Patiently laboring through months to the completion of a single fine basket, proud of her deftness and the beauty of the thing she created, Datsolalee's art products passed through the hands of trading companies and commanded from connoisseurs prices well up in the three figures. The University Museum is happy in the addition of this handsome piece to its Washo series.

H. N. W.

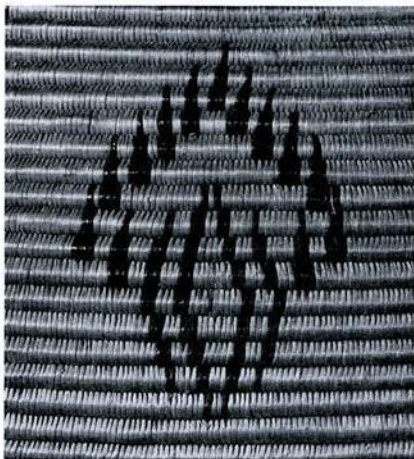


Figure 2.

Detail of Washo basket, about actual size.



PLATE VIII. Dat-so-la-lee's basket.