

Indigenizing Southern California Indian Basket Studies:
Unpacking Issues of “Mission” and “Tradition”

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DEDICATION

For my family. Thank you for giving me an appreciation for the art of our ancestors.

Chapter I: Reasons for Studying Southern California Baskets

The indigenous people of Southern California have an ongoing tradition of basket weaving that can be traced back to the days well before European explorers arrived in California.¹ Since the early twentieth century anthropologists like Alfred L. Kroeber have viewed baskets from Southern California as some of the finest examples of basketry in the world. In 1922 Kroeber wrote, “These peoples have always been reckoned among the most backward of American Indians in the general level of their attainments; but there is also a unanimity of agreement that their baskets excel those of most other tribes, in fact are probably preeminent on the continent, if not the world.”² What Kroeber and others failed to notice was that basket weaving was (and still is) a living art form that weavers practiced in the early twentieth century. Few scholars have written about the living tradition of basket weaving of Southern California’s native people. In addition, no indigenous art historians have closely investigated the connection that modern day basket weavers have to their ancestors. This thesis provides a much needed examination of early and contemporary basket weaving practices from a California Indian perspective and through an art historical lens.

I wrote this thesis with the intention of giving back to the California Indian community, particularly the Tongva community. I trace my Tongva heritage through my maternal grandmother, who has taught me to be proud of my culture. Growing up in California, I was exposed to California Indian art and culture, and graduate school has afforded me the opportunity to research and write about the art of my ancestors and relatives. Although this thesis is meant to represent the basket weaving customs of the so-called “Mission” tribes collectively, I tend to focus on the Chumash and Tongva. My Tongva heritage and past research

¹ I use the words “Southern California” throughout to refer to the tribes whose baskets are commonly labeled as “Mission.”

² A.L. Kroeber. *Basketry Designs of the Mission Indians of California* (New York, NY: American Museum of Natural History, 1922), 3.

experience on Chumash culture have informed my knowledge of Southern California's indigenous cultures. I also focus particularly on Chumash baskets because I believe they best represent the missions' direct influence on indigenous basket weaving. Throughout this thesis I place quotation marks around the word *Mission* to distinguish it from *mission*, which I use to refer to the twenty-one Franciscan mission settlements in California. Kroeber used the word "Mission" in an anthropological context to describe a specific style of basket weaving attributed to certain indigenous communities based in the coastal region and parts of inland Southern California. The term "Mission" is problematic when used to categorize baskets because it perpetuates the issue I address in this thesis. Thus, I deliberately chose not to create a new term to describe the basket styles of Southern California's first people. Instead, I argue it is best that museums and collectors identify a basket by the name of the weaver who made it and his or her tribe.

Until recently, the majority of written sources on "Mission" Indian culture dismissed indigenous perspectives.³ No publication written by an art historian exists that specifically examines "Mission" Indian basket weaving.⁴ In recent years, anthropologist Ralph Shanks and Ipai basket weaver Justin F. Farmer have published basketry books in which they discuss "Mission" Indian basketry. Farmer's publications, such as *Southern California Luiseño Indian Baskets* and *Basketry Plants Used By Western American Indians*, look at the weaving technologies and materials used by individual tribes. Farmer's books are the first publications on Southern California Indian basketry told solely from an indigenous perspective. These texts were utilized in explaining the weaving styles of Southern California presented in chapter three

³ Justin F. Farmer, a Diegueño/Ipai basket weaver and scholar, published his first book, *Indian Basketry Material Preparation*, in 1991.

⁴ Justin Farmer self-published an instructional handbook on basket weaving in 2006 entitled, *Creation of a Southern California "Mission" Basket*, which has been distributed at workshops.

of this thesis. Unlike Farmer and Shanks, who focus on basket weaving technology and attribution, I discuss baskets in terms of their relationships to their makers and communities.

Since early native people did not write about their customs, I have had to rely mostly upon non-native texts to explain the history of Southern California's aboriginal peoples.⁵ I drew from interviews with living basket weavers and books written by indigenous authors to provide an alternative perspective on basket weaving. The goal of this thesis is not only to give voice to living basket weavers, but also to highlight the circumstances that led to the survival of basket weaving in Southern California. In 1922 Kroeber wrote, "There can be little doubt that ultimately this art will die out."⁶ History and contemporary basket weavers have proven his prediction wrong. Kroeber credited colonization with destroying the basket weaving traditions of Southern California's first populations. In 1769 the arrival of Franciscan missionaries in the area now known as San Diego initiated a series of events that led to the decline of numerous aboriginal populations. Hispanic colonists introduced European technology that replaced many indigenous customs, except basket weaving. Although the Chumash people of San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara Counties stopped weaving altogether by the early twentieth century, other so-called "Mission" tribes continued weaving in small numbers. Kroeber believed that the basket weaving customs of the people who lived at or near the missions would die out. This thesis sets out to prove Kroeber's prediction was incorrect, and it intends to bring the history of basket weaving in the coastal region between San Luis Obispo and San Diego up to date. It also calls attention to the role basket weaving plays in supporting cultural knowledge within the indigenous communities of Southern California. Regardless of ongoing challenges, California's native weavers continue to revitalize their aboriginal customs and re-invent their traditions.

⁵ I use the word "early" to refer to the years before native people adopted modern lifestyles and when they utilized baskets in greater frequency.

⁶ Kroeber, *Basketry Designs of the Mission Indians of California*, 10.

Methodology

In my thesis on California “Mission” Indian basket weaving, I employ a variety of methodologies drawn from the fields of art history and indigenous culture studies. In chapter two, I critically analyze the history of colonization and its impacts on the aboriginal communities of coastal Southern California from a native and scholarly perspective. In chapter three, in which I discuss basketry styles, I conduct a formal analysis of specific baskets and explain the iconographic significance of certain basket patterns. While I devote this chapter to a formal study of objects, the majority of the thesis focuses on colonization’s influence on basket weaving. I also seek to highlight the changes Southern California’s native cultures have undergone and how those transformations are manifested in basketry. The goal of this thesis is to challenge biased and misinformed accounts of “Mission” Indian identity and basket weaving. Chapter four discusses indigenous perspectives on *traditional* basket weaving practices and contemporary California Indian identity. In order to do so, I drew from interviews with basket weavers so as to underscore the perspectives of the living descendants of native people who lived at or near the ten southern missions, and their predecessors.

In the summer of 2011, I had the opportunity to travel to California to speak with five basket weavers.⁷ I prepared interview questions prior to meeting with the weavers, but the discussions were informal and I referred to the questions only to initiate conversation. I took some notes during each interview, but the majority of the conversations were recorded on a digital voice recorder with the permission of each weaver. These informal interviews gave me

⁷ Before I traveled to California, I contacted several basket weavers from Southern California tribes to set up interviews. My interviews with Tima Lotah Link (Chumash) and Kimberly Johnson (Tongva) were pre-scheduled. However, I attended the California Indian Basketweavers’ Association Gathering with the intention of asking a weaver for an impromptu interview. There, I approached Tashina Ornelas (Luiseño), an Apis weaver from the Temecula Village, who was willing to do an informal interview and give a weaving demonstration. During the Los Angeles leg of the trip I contacted Barbara Drake, a Tongva native plant expert, and set up an informal interview and tour of the Cooper Regional History Museum, where she volunteers as an educator. While conducting research in Southern California, I had the opportunity to ask my aunt, Patricia Roess (Tongva and Pima) about her basket weaving work as well.

valuable insight into the weaver's perspective that is often missing from published literature on basket weaving. Listening to weavers talk about their experiences in learning how to weave made me aware of issues I had not considered. Several of the weavers commented on the importance of using native plants in their baskets, which reinforces their connection to their ancestral lands. My interview with Barbara Drake, a Tongva elder and native plant expert, shed light on the fact that even in the twentieth century, California Indians still knew how to hunt rabbits and prepare native foods as their ancestors once had. Drake continues to make rabbit skin blankets using the same techniques her tribe has used for generations. These interviews reaffirmed the fact that early scholarship on basketry is incorrect and limited, and that most scholars overlooked the fact that indigenous people were carrying out their customs in the twentieth century.

In addition to interviewing basket weavers, I had the opportunity to speak with two anthropologists who work with basket collections in California. Ileana Maestas, curator of the California State Indian Museum, and Ralph Shanks, anthropologist and California basket expert, both provided valuable insight into the role museums play in preserving and disseminating basketry knowledge. Through my conversations with them I learned about the changing attitudes museums have towards indigenous communities. Since the passage of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) in 1990, museums in California have made their collections more accessible to local tribes, who in turn have shared their knowledge of basketry with the museums.⁸ This knowledge is being incorporated into contemporary museum exhibits that acknowledge living basket weavers and their work.

⁸ "The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) was enacted on November 16, 1990, to address the rights of lineal descendants, Indian tribes, and Native Hawaiian organizations to Native American cultural items, including human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects, and objects of cultural patrimony." National NAGPRA, "Archive," accessed January 16, 2012, <http://www.nps.gov/nagpra/>.

Like California museums, the Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture in Seattle, Washington has a collection of baskets that students can access. In the spring of 2011, I had the opportunity to study the Burke Museum's California basket collection through an internship in the Ethnology Department. After looking at the collection records and viewing baskets in person, I learned that object records can be misleading. Some of the baskets for which the culture of origin was listed as "Mission" may be from California tribes typically not associated with "Mission" basketry. This internship brought up several questions regarding the meaning and use of the term "Mission" when applied to baskets from California.

During my trip to California in the summer of 2011, I visited several museums to study how they label and display "Mission" baskets. I also analyzed the online collections of the Southwest Museum of the American Indian, the Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology and the Oakland Museum of California to see how these institutions label baskets from Southern California tribes. Like the Burke Museum, most museums still use "Mission" in their catalog records as well as in some exhibit labels. The California museums generally apply this word only to baskets made by weavers in the region designated as "Mission" Indian territory. These collections show that well into the twentieth century museums still used "Mission," which refers to the years the missions operated from 1769-1834, to identify baskets made by the descendants of people who lived at or near the missions. By analyzing museum approaches to labeling California baskets, I hope to shed light on the problems inherent in the term "Mission" when used to describe baskets made in Southern California.

Review of Literature

Antiquated and anthropological approaches to studying Native American cultures often treat basket weaving as an extinct art form. This thesis responds to some of the issues raised by

some of the first anthropologists like Kroeber, who wrote about basketry from a biased and misinformed perspective. Then it looks at the work of Shanks and Farmer to highlight modern day approaches to describing Southern California baskets. A section on political definitions follows, in which I discuss the work of anthropologist Florence C. Shippek. This section highlights the changing definitions of “*Mission*” *Indians* and what this label means in a political context.

In 1922 Kroeber wrote the first anthropological account of “Mission” Indian baskets.⁹ In *Basketry Designs of the Mission Indians*, Kroeber explained that the “Mission” Indians were individuals from the tribes that inhabited the territory surrounding the southernmost missions. “There were five missions – San Diego, San Luis Rey, San Juan Capistrano, San Gabriel, and San Fernando – in the territory of what are now popularly known as the Mission Indians. Or if the Chumash are included, the number becomes ten.”¹⁰ Kroeber reluctantly included Chumash baskets in this group because he believed that they were not identical to those he designated as “Mission” baskets. Kroeber’s use of the word “Mission” is somewhat misleading, considering that the Franciscans established twenty-one missions in California (Figure 1). Kroeber’s article only looked at the southern tribes: Chumash, “Gabrielino and Fernandeno; Mountain, Pass, and Desert Cahuilla; Juaneño; Luiseño; Cupeño; Northern and Southern Diegueño; and some of the Serrano.”¹¹ Kroeber used the Spanish names given to the indigenous communities surrounding the ten southern mission establishments. The Hispanic mission leaders gave the name “Diegueño” to the indigenous people near Mission San Diego de Alcalá, “Luiseño” for those near Mission San Luis Rey de Francia, “Juaneño” for Mission San Juan Capistrano, “Gabrielino”

⁹ Kroeber published two versions of the article in 1922, one entitled *Basketry Designs of the Mission Indians of California* and the other one is *Basket Designs of the Mission Indians of California*. Although their titles are almost identical, the latter provided more information.

¹⁰ Kroeber, *Basketry Designs of the Mission Indians of California*, 153.

¹¹ These are the names Kroeber lists in a footnote on page 4 of *Basketry Designs of the Mission Indians of California*.

or “Gabrieleño” after Mission San Gabriel Archangel, and “Fernandeño” after Mission San Fernando Rey de España. Today, many tribes are using their indigenous names, such as Tongva instead of Gabrielino, Ajachmem in place of Juaneño, and Kumeyaay for Northern and Southern Diegueño.

When they renamed the missions’ indigenous inhabitants, the mission leaders dismissed tribal boundaries, and they overlooked the fact that individuals from multiple tribes lived at each settlement. Native American anthropologist Deana Dartt-Newton (Chumash) has noted that people from several communities were brought to live at a single mission establishment. “From San Luis Obispo to San Buenaventura the labor force of Mission converts was primarily Chumash (later referred to as Obispeños, Purisimeños, Ynezeños, Barbareños, Ventureños after their respective Missions), with a sprinkling of inland Yokuts and Tongva peoples from the south.”¹² As Dartt-Newton points out, mission leaders recruited people from numerous regions to work at the mission outposts. Like the Tongva, Ajachmem and Kumeyaay, the Chumash bands today are reviving their traditional names that pre-dated their mission names. Throughout this thesis, I refer to the Chumash bands collectively as the “Chumash” since this is the name commonly used by the bands today. Chumash baskets are rare and the weavers’ names and home villages often remain unknown, so it is difficult to give a specific Chumash band name to a basket.

Kroeber only listed the tribes from San Luis Obispo in the north to San Diego in the south as the “Mission” Indians. The missions actually impacted more than twice the number of groups Kroeber discusses. Kroeber failed to point out that the baskets made by tribes at the eleven northern missions also display similar qualities as those produced in the south. Kroeber

¹² Deana Dartt-Newton, “Negotiating the Master Narrative: Museums and the Indian/Californio Community of California’s Central Coast” (PhD diss., University of Oregon, 2009), 39.

not only overlooked the distinctive traits of individual tribes' basket designs, but he also dismissed the unique histories and customs of the "Mission" tribes. He used patronizing language throughout his publication, especially when he described California's first people as "primitive."¹³ Kroeber looked at Native American culture from a misguided perspective, and thereby failed to recognize the significance of Southern California basketry within its cultural and historical context. Kroeber believed that basket weaving ranked low on the European hierarchy of artistic production. "The result is that basket making remains a sort of starved stepchild of civilization, whereas it is the favorite son of many savage cultures."¹⁴ Kroeber drew a distinction between America's "savage cultures" and Europe's "civilization." At the time Kroeber wrote about California Indians, Social Darwinism had penetrated the field of anthropology, which preached the idea that cultures "evolved" from "primitive" to "civilized", and that Native Americans were socially inferior to Europeans and thereby doomed to extinction. Kroeber seems to have clung to some evolutionist ideas, despite the fact that his advisor, Franz Boas opposed evolutionism. "Boas's art history was part of his broader scientific agenda that included not simply discrediting evolutionism but offering alternate explanations if possible."¹⁵ In 1922 most indigenous populations had assimilated into Southern California's Euro-American dominated society. It would have made more sense for Kroeber, as Boas' student, to discuss California native cultures from an alternative perspective that disregarded evolutionist beliefs.

Unfortunately, Kroeber's publication only included images of baskets made before the twentieth century.¹⁶ He must have been under the impression that "real" Native Americans were vanishing from existence, because his text perpetuated the idea that authentic American Indians,

¹³ Kroeber, *Basketry Designs of the Mission Indians of California*, 3.

¹⁴ Kroeber, *Basketry Designs of the Mission Indians of California*, 3.

¹⁵ Aldona Jonaitis, *A Wealth of Thought: Franz Boas on Native American Art* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995), 4.

¹⁶ He examined baskets in the American Museum of Natural History, the British Museum, the Museum of the American Indian (now the National Museum of the American Indian) and the Hearst Museum collections.

especially basket weavers, only existed in the past. Kroeber did not provide any dates (since it is likely the dates were never recorded) for the baskets he described. Since Kroeber never specified the baskets' dates, the reader is left wondering what time frame Kroeber had in mind when he wrote about "Mission" baskets. The word "Mission" implies the years in which the twenty-one California missions operated from 1769 until 1834, but Kroeber seemed to use the term to describe all baskets made by native people affiliated with the southern missions. He wrote, "they derived their name from having been brought more or less thoroughly under the influence of the Franciscan missionaries during the last third of the eighteenth and the first third of the nineteenth century."¹⁷ Even so, he did not clarify whether or not he meant that the "Mission" baskets were those made only during the mission years.

In the second half of his publication Kroeber indicated that "Mission Indians" stood for 1) pre-contact native people who were affiliated with the missions through their descendants, 2) individuals who actually lived at the missions, and 3) their descendants. He wrote, "Mission Indians were generally content to compose their patterns without much color complexity of design, but to add to their liveliness by variety of color."¹⁸ Kroeber must have been referring to early basket patterns that he believed preceded the European-inspired designs found on later baskets.¹⁹ He then described the anthropomorphic and zoomorphic patterns found on "modern pieces." Even though he did not explicitly state what years he meant by "Mission," Kroeber's brief analysis of basketry indicated that he saw all coastal Southern California native peoples as "Mission" Indians. This thesis sets out to separate early baskets and their makers from those that came after 1769, when Franciscan missionaries established mission settlements. In other words,

¹⁷ Kroeber, *Basketry Designs of the Mission Indians of California*, 4-5.

¹⁸ Kroeber, *Basketry Designs of the Mission Indians of California*, 8.

¹⁹ In chapter three of this thesis I argue that these early patterns outlasted the missions.

baskets made before 1769 cannot be called “Mission” baskets because they pre-date the missions. Moreover, baskets made after 1834 are not “Mission” baskets.

Kroeber judged baskets by anthropological standards, and assumed that native California people always made baskets for artistic purposes. He wrote, “In many cases it is the very lack of development of other arts that has led to the special development of basket making.”²⁰ Today art historians recognize that Native American people have worked in a variety of materials and have made objects that have no parallels in the European (and non-Native American) canon of art. The early indigenous people of coastal Southern California honored community members at naming ceremonies and other events through songs. At these celebrations, community members wore their best garments adorned with abalone and olivella shell beads. Some communities like the Chumash even had special dances in which dancers wore costumes to mimic certain animals. Costumes and regalia (including beaded necklaces) could be seen as art forms, but because they are garments (and few early examples exist), the first anthropologists did not see them as art. Kroeber also dismissed ceremonial regalia and objects like rattles from his art category because they were not numerous in the 1920s. Likewise, tomols and ti’ats (Chumash and Tongva canoes, respectively), rock art and steatite (soapstone) bowls could easily be studied as art (Figure 2). Most of the early steatite bowls that exist today are fragmented and have been worn down from use. By insisting that basketry was the only developed art form the “Mission” Indians created, Kroeber dismissed steatite bowls, regalia and other “undeveloped” materials from ethnographic and artistic study.

In the 1920s baskets were more numerous, and as a result, could be studied more easily than other native-made materials. Before weavers made baskets at the missions, native men and women made baskets to meet their everyday needs such as cooking, gathering and storing food.

²⁰ Kroeber, *Basketry Designs of the Mission Indians of California*, 3.

It is unlikely that weavers actively sought to develop basket weaving solely as an art practice before European settlers arrived in Southern California. Weavers exchanged baskets with individuals from other tribes and experimented with different styles and materials prior to 1769. Anthropological records even indicate that early California weavers made gift baskets. Yet, it seems that weavers made baskets primarily for utilitarian purposes. Artistic elements like multi-colored designs probably would have been of secondary importance to functionality. However, Kroeber studied basketry as an art form while art historians of his era did not see Native American baskets as art. He even argued that California Indian society was backward because unlike Europe, where men dominated the art world for centuries, native women typically made cultural materials.²¹ This was not true because scholars and weavers today know that men helped women make baskets and other objects, and they continue to do so. In the 1920s, historians of European art might have argued that Native American basketry was not art because the first baskets primarily served utilitarian purposes. I would argue that Southern California basketry should be studied as an art form because of the skill required in creating coiled baskets, and due to the fact that since the eighteenth century weavers have made baskets for sale to collectors. Native American communities have always valued weavers for their skills and contributions to society.

Today the Native American art history field places strong emphasis on recognizing women's art. Janet Berlo and Ruth Phillips, art historians and specialists in Native American art, write,

In more recent efforts to correct misunderstandings about the way that gender operates in Native American art, art historians today draw upon three decades of work by feminist

²¹ "We have then this curious situation: the general industrial backwardness of the California Indians is exemplified by their leaving the most important of their industries to their women; but the women have so far advanced this industry, that the men have no hand in the peak of attainment of the native culture on its material side." Kroeber, *Basketry Designs of the Mission Indians of California*, 4.

scholars who have produced critiques of Western art-historical practice demonstrating, among other things, that the European hierarchical classification of applied and fine arts developed relatively recently and has operated to reinforce unequal relations of power between men and women.²²

Berlo and Phillips' statement underscores the valuable role art historians play in recognizing and inserting indigenous perspectives into the field of Native American art history. They also point out that in the native worldview male and female roles complement one another. While early aboriginal men typically hunted and fished for food and provided shelter, women made baskets to store food and wove blankets to use inside their homes. Unlike art historians who treat Native American women's work as art today, some of the first anthropologists saw women's work as a craft. Early anthropological texts objectify basketry and rarely mention the women who made these works of art. In his publications Kroeber conducted a close examination of basket patterns, but failed to draw connections between the artworks and the weavers who made them.

Kroeber's publication is misleading, but it provides a crucial starting point for a discussion on the differences between the southern and northern communities along the mission trail. The Franciscans established eleven missions north of Chumash territory (San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara Counties), but they had the strongest influence in the south (Figure 1). The coastal tribes north of the Chumash made coiled baskets, but they did not incorporate European and religious motifs, as did some of the southern tribes.²³ Basket production also continued at a steadier rate among the northern tribes after 1834.

Some of the first anthropologists gave the name "Mission" to the style of basketry made in Southern California, but modern day scholars have attempted to re-categorize baskets based on geographic location and tribe names. In 2010 Ralph Shanks wrote a book entitled, *California*

²² Janet C. Berlo and Ruth B. Phillips, *Native North American Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 33.

²³ The two main types of baskets made in California are twined baskets and coiled baskets. The tribes impacted by the mission system primarily made coiled baskets. When speaking of the tribes north of Chumash territory, I am only referring to those along the mission trail, El Camino Real (The Royal Road), which ended at Mission San Francisco Solano in Sonoma, CA. These include the Salinan, Esselen, Yokuts, Costanoan, Coast Miwok and Pomo tribes.

Indian Baskets: San Diego to Santa Barbara and Beyond to the San Joaquin Valley, Mountains and Deserts. As the title denotes, Shanks' book provides an examination of basket styles based on geographic regions. Whereas Kroeber lumped the basketry of all the coastal tribes into one category, Shanks looks at basket styles more or less individually by tribe. He prefers to use the words "Southwestern California" instead of "Mission" when discussing baskets because "it is more inclusive and it avoids any confusion that the missions may have played a role in the development of baskets."²⁴ The second point Shanks makes calls attention to the fact that so-called "Native American" people made baskets long before European colonists arrived on the shores of the land now called "California." Rather than referring to them as "Mission" Indians, Shanks uses "Southwestern California," to represent the Cahuilla, Cupeño, Juaneño, Kumeyaay, Luiseño and Serrano.²⁵ The Chumash do not appear on this list because unlike the "Southwestern California" tribes who "made a relatively small number of basket types", the Chumash made "specialized types of baskets."²⁶ Shanks believes the Chumash baskets were specialized because they displayed intricate patterns not seen on other tribes' baskets. Shanks sees Tongva basketry as a transition between the Chumash design system and that of the Southwestern tribes. Shanks' book functions as a valuable guide to understanding the stylistic and structural differences of baskets.

While Shanks discusses basketry styles individually by tribe and region, Justin Farmer (Ipai) focuses on the basket styles of the Luiseño people in *Southern California Luiseño Indian Baskets*.²⁷ Farmer provides a brief overview of the history of the "Mission" Indians. Farmer's explanation sheds light on native (particularly Ipai) responses to the missions, Hispanicized tribe

²⁴ Ralph Shanks, *California Indian Baskets: San Diego to Santa Barbara and Beyond to the San Joaquin Valley, Mountains and Deserts* (Novato, CA: Miwok Archaeological Preserve of Marin in association with Costaño Books, 2010), 63.

²⁵ Shanks, *California Indian Baskets*, 63.

²⁶ Shanks, *California Indian Baskets*, 64.

²⁷ Justin Farmer identifies as Ipai, but most Ipai and Tipai people call themselves Kumeyaay.

names and the label “Mission” Indians. Numerous indigenous people today have tried to “live down the Catholic mission-association names.”²⁸ Rather than practicing Catholicism and religions introduced by foreign missionaries, some basket weavers and other California Indians practice indigenous rituals and customs today. Since the 1990s, numerous native people have identified by their tribe names rather than as “Mission” Indians because they do not associate with the missions, or with the Catholic Church. Farmer points out that before this revival of indigenous names occurred, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) “simply lumped all Southern California Indians into one tribe, calling them ‘Mission Indians.’ Sub-groups such as Diegueños, Luiseños, etc. were considered to be *Bands* (sometimes referred to as *tribelets*) of the major ‘Mission’ tribe.”²⁹ Farmer’s statement summarizes the political significance of the words “*Mission*” *Indians*, which continues to change as native and non-native scholars attempt to define and redefine Southern California aboriginal cultures. A closer look at historical documents helps to explain why the BIA called and continues to call certain tribes “Mission” Indians.

Political/Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Definition of “*Mission*” *Indian*

When applied to American Indian people, the label “*Mission*” *Indian* has political implications that differ from Kroeber’s definition. In several twentieth-century treaties and lawsuits over land rights, “Mission” often appears as an actual tribe name. The federal and state governments have liberally applied “Mission” to several different tribes throughout Southern California. Some of those tribes today use the word “Mission” in their titles, such as the Morongo Band of Mission Indians and the Pala Band of Mission Indians. The proliferation of

²⁸ Justin F. Farmer, *Southern California Luiseño Indian Baskets: A Study of Seventy-Six Luiseño Baskets in the Riverside Municipal Museum Collection* (Fullerton, CA: Justin Farmer Foundation, 2004), 4.

²⁹ Farmer, *Southern California Luiseño Indian Baskets*, 3.

the word “Mission” in political and anthropological contexts has complicated modern day understandings of its significance and meaning in California. The recent work of Farmer and the earlier publications of anthropologist Florence C. Shipek highlight the political significance of the epithet “*Mission*” *Indians*.

While scholars frequently refer to the people who lived at or near the ten southern Franciscan missions as “Mission” Indians, the federal and state government have identified other tribes located inland from these settlements as “Mission” tribes. Even though the Franciscans never established missions within the traditional territory of the Serrano, Cahuilla and Cupeño people, these three groups often appear on lists of “Mission” Indians.³⁰ In the late 1700s, “The fathers had planned a chain of interior missions paralleling those near the coast, and San Bernardino, along with San Antonio de Pala and Santa Ysabel, was to have been part of this chain. The program never went beyond these three *asistencias*, for the secularization decree in the 1830s ended all mission activity in California.”³¹ Since these *asistencias* (extensions; literally “assistances”), or sub-missions were associated with the Franciscan mission system, some members of their surrounding communities identify themselves as “Mission” Indians. The Diegueño (Ipai and Tipai) and Gabrielino (Tongva) people were originally named after Mission San Diego and Mission San Gabriel, but the tribe known as the Santa Ysabel Band of Diegueño Mission Indians is named after *Asistencia Santa Ysabel*. The Cupeño people who live inland from Mission San Diego are an exception because they were not named after a mission. The Pala Band of Mission Indians, which represents both the Luiseño and Cupeño people, is named

³⁰ “Even though most Indians native to Southern California have little or no connection to any of the old Spanish Catholic missions, they are still referred to as ‘Mission Indians’. A case in point are the Serrano, Cahuilla, and Cupeño people. There never were Catholic missions in the territory claimed by the latter three groups, albeit there were small *Asistencias* (satellite sanctuaries). However, because these people are located in Southern California the BIA simply includes them within the ‘Mission’ tribe.” Farmer, *Southern California Luiseño Indian Baskets*, 4.

³¹ Mildred Brooke Hoover and Douglas E. Kyle, *Historic Spots in California* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 325.

after Asistencia San Antonio de Pala.³² Tribe names reflect the influences the missions and asistencias had on these communities, but their members do not necessarily see themselves as “Mission” Indians.

Throughout the thesis, I refer to the so-called “Mission” tribes collectively as the Southern California tribes. “Southern California” has political and geographical connotations that are open to interpretation. In 1533 the first Spanish explorers arrived in the country known today as Mexico. At the time they thought the peninsula off the coast of northwestern Mexico was an island. They named it “California” after the mythical land described in a Spanish story, *The Labors of the Brave Knight Esplandian* written in 1510 by Garcí Rodríguez de Montalvo.³³ Then, in 1769 when Franciscan priests discovered the land north of the peninsula, they named it “Nueva California” and began referring to the peninsula as “Antigua California.” “By 1800, both names were discarded; the two areas were divided administratively and renamed Baja and Alta California.”³⁴ After the United States acquired Alta California the new government named the state “California,” which is why I refer to it as such when discussing all periods of its history.

When California became a state, the United States government drew political boundaries that cut across traditional indigenous territories, thereby creating a new set of problems for native communities. When people speak of Southern California today they generally mean the region approximately between Ventura and San Diego. People who live in different parts of California may have different notions of Southern California’s boundaries. I use “Southern California” to refer to the coastal and mountain regions between Santa Barbara and San Diego counties. It should be noted that other tribes, which I do not discuss, inhabit Southern California. These

³² The National Conference of State Legislatures has the most up-to-date list of these “Mission” tribes: National Conference of State Legislatures, “Federal and State Recognized Tribes,” accessed January 22, 2012, <http://www.ncsl.org/?tabid=13278#ca>.

³³ Rose Marie Beebe and Robert M. Senkewicz, *Lands of Promise and Despair: Chronicles of Early California, 1535-1846* (Berkeley: Heyday Books, 2001), 9.

³⁴ Harry W. Crosby, *Antigua California: Mission and Colony on the Peninsular Frontier, 1697-1768* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994), xv.

inland tribes usually are not included on lists of “Mission” Indians and their basket styles are different from those of the tribes impacted directly by the original Franciscan missions.

According to the California Native American Heritage Commission, the tribes of Southern California include: Chumash, Alliklik, Kitanemuk, Serrano, Gabrielino, Luiseno, Cahuilla, and Kumeyaay.³⁵ These names are somewhat outdated, and the list is incomplete. Besides the Alliklik and Kitanemuk, the Chemehuevi and Tataviam do not appear in scholarship on “Mission” baskets. Although they are inland tribes, the work of the Serrano and Cupeño is sometimes included in the “Mission” basket category.

Kroeber identified only the southern tribes as “*Mission*” Indians, but Shipek, who was also an anthropologist, referred to the native people within the region of all twenty-one missions as “*Mission*” Indians. Shipek’s essay from 1978 offered a close look at the political history of Southern California’s indigenous populations. In her paper, she wrote:

By this time, the term Mission Indian had come to include all those Indians whose ancestors were in the Spanish missions from San Francisco south to San Diego at the Mexican border and also those portions of these groups whose ancestors had remained free of the missions in the mountains and deserts to the east of the coastal strip, except for those Indians along the Colorado River.³⁶

While Kroeber used “Mission” as an anthropological term to describe a basketry style, Shipek used its political definition. Shipek also made a distinction between the people who inhabited California before colonization and those who lived at the missions. Kroeber did not identify a start date by which anthropologists and historians began calling certain native Californians “Mission” Indians. Shipek pointed out that “*Mission*” Indian represented all of the descendants of the aboriginal people who lived at the missions as well as those who lived nearby. According

³⁵ California Native American Heritage Commission, “Short Overview of California Indian History,” accessed January 12, 2012, <http://www.nahc.ca.gov/califindian.html>.

³⁶ Florence C. Shipek, “History of Southern California Mission Indians,” in *Handbook of North American Indians*, vol. 8, California, ed. Robert F. Heizer (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1978), 610.

to Shipek, in the nineteenth century the U.S. government referred to all the tribes along the mission trail as “Mission” Indians. Yet, by the twentieth century, the federal government called only certain Southern California tribes “Mission” Indians. In an article from 1989, Shipek discussed several land claims in which numerous Southern California tribes joined together as the “Mission” Indians. In 1948 the Mission Indian Federation brought two land claims (Docket 31 and Docket 80) against the United States government seeking compensation for lands that had been promised to their ancestors.³⁷ The University of California, Irvine states that the “Mission Indian Federation (MIF) was Southern California’s most popular and long-lived grass-roots political organization. Between 1919 and 1965, its membership wrestled with some of the most difficult political and legal questions of the 20th century.”³⁸ Shipek’s 1989 article supports this statement because it pointed out that the Mission Indian Federation was unable to accomplish its goals since it was not an actual tribal entity.³⁹ The University of California does not list which tribes comprised the Mission Indian Federation, but Shipek noted that the “Diegueño, Luiseño, Juañeno, and Gabrieleño” tribes filed the Docket 80 petition.⁴⁰ The Mission Indian Federation was not an actual tribe, so the federal government dismissed its requests.

Shipek’s articles from 1978 and 1989 underlined problems historians face in determining which tribes consider themselves “Mission” Indians. Shipek also stated that native people whose ancestors never lived at the missions did not like being called “Mission” Indians.⁴¹ As noted,

³⁷ This is an oversimplified explanation of the goals of the two cases. For the sake of this thesis, I am only concerned with explaining the history and various uses of the label “Mission” Indians. For an in-depth explanation of the lands claims cases see Shipek, “Mission Indians and Indians of California Land Claims.”

³⁸ University of California, Irvine, “Mission Indian Federation”, accessed January 12, 2012, <http://www.hnet.uci.edu/IDP/nativeam/mifgendescription.html>.

³⁹ “Obviously, ‘Mission Indians’ were a recognizable group in the historical sense, as those Indians whose territory had been under the jurisdiction of Spanish Missions in Southern California. However, they were not ‘an identifiable band or tribe’ in the sense of Sections 2 and 10 of the Claims Commission Act.”

Florence C. Shipek, “Mission Indians and Indians of California Land Claims,” *American Indian Quarterly* 13 (Autumn 1989), 412.

⁴⁰ Shipek, “Mission Indians and Indians of California Land Claims,” 412.

⁴¹ “Many of the mountain and desert Indians hate the term and insist upon the use of their band names or the tribal designation of Cahuilla or Kumeyaay.” Shipek, “History of Southern California Mission Indians,” 610.

numerous indigenous people of Southern California today choose not to identify as “Mission” Indians because of the negative impacts the missions had on aboriginal communities. As a result, some Southern California weavers do not consider themselves “Mission” basket weavers. They do not associate with the missions and their work is contemporary, so it would neither make sense for the weavers to call themselves “Mission” weavers nor to say their baskets are made in the “Mission” style. The word “Mission” has political connotations, but this thesis is mainly concerned with its anthropological definitions and the ways in which basket scholars and weavers use it today. This thesis exposes the colonial origins of the word “Mission” to show how its usage in connection with basketry today sustains misguided definitions of indigenous identity and culture.

Museums and Collections Visited

In the process of researching Southern California basket weaving, I visited eleven museums throughout California to answer these questions: 1) how do museums display baskets, 2) do exhibits acknowledge living basket weavers, 3) do museums still use the word “Mission” in their exhibit labels, and 4) what types of baskets (those made with natural vs. synthetic materials) do museums display and consider traditional? In the spring of 2011 I researched the collections at the Burke Museum during a graduate internship. Then, in the summer of 2011 I received travel grants from the University of Washington’s School of Art and the Bill Holm Center at the Burke Museum to visit museums in California. While in Northern California, I visited the Phoebe A. Hearst Museum, Mission San Francisco de Asís (Mission Dolores), Mission San Rafael, Mission San Francisco Solano, the Marin Indian Museum, the California State Indian Museum, the California Museum, and the Oakland Museum of California. During these visits I had the opportunity to interview a curator at the California State Indian Museum to

learn more about the California State Parks' extensive collection of California baskets. By visiting the other museums I was able to compare the ways in which museums display baskets and acknowledge Native American cultures today. In Southern California I went to the Autry National Center to view their exhibit "The Art of Native American Basketry: A Living Tradition," as well as the Arcadia Museum, which displays replicas of early Tongva material culture and photographs of the living community. I conducted informal interviews with a basket weaver at the Rancho Santa Ana Botanical Gardens, which has native plants and a Tongva village display, and with a native plant expert at the Cooper Regional History Museum that features a gallery dedicated to the material culture of the Tongva people.

Through this field research I found that only seven out the eleven museums I visited are making an effort to acknowledge living native people, and in some cases living basket weavers. As noted, the Arcadia Museum, the Cooper Regional History Museum and the Autry National Center currently devote exhibit space to indigenous voices. The California State Indian Museum recognizes that native people were still alive in the 1980s, when the exhibits were last updated. The California Museum in Sacramento has a new exhibit, "California Indians: Making a Difference," which acknowledges most of the living native people of California. This exhibit features early and contemporary baskets from various regions, including Southern California, which represent ongoing cultural practices. The Oakland Museum of California's (OMCA) history galleries begin with displays that represent the ancient and living indigenous communities of California. The gallery features a glass wall case with baskets from various regions of California; most, however, are from the north. A few modern day objects appear in the gallery as well, including a tule boat made by living Ohlone weaver Linda Yamane. The OMCA placed Native American culture at the beginning of the "History" exhibit, which is laid

out chronologically. After walking through the Native American gallery, visitors enter a corridor that includes objects from and facts about the Spanish conquest. As a result, visitors leave the exhibit with the impression that aboriginal people only lived and made baskets before colonization. Even though contemporary material culture appears within the OMCA gallery space, the layout of the exhibit is confusing and does not adequately represent the living community. While these seven museums include living native perspectives, the Missions San Francisco Solano, San Francisco de Asís and San Rafael, and the Hearst Museum do not acknowledge living native people. These museums are doing a disservice to living weavers by perpetuating the misconception that basket weaving died out.

With the exception of Mission San Francisco Solano in Sonoma, CA, which does not display any baskets, and the Burke Museum, which primarily represents art of the Pacific Northwest Coast and Arctic native communities, all the museums I visited display California Indian baskets. However, only seven exhibit Southern California baskets: the Hearst Museum, the California State Indian Museum, the California Museum, and OMCA, the Autry, the Arcadia Museum and the Cooper Museum. Meanwhile, I discovered that the Northern California museums focus on the northern tribes who made baskets in greater numbers than the southern tribes. The Marin Indian Museum in Novato and the Mission San Francisco de Asís in San Francisco only display Northern California Indian baskets, particularly those of the local Ohlone and Miwok communities. The Mission San Rafael in San Rafael does not display California Indian baskets, but rather a Tlingit basket from Alaska brought to California during the Russian Fur trade years at Fort Ross which is located in Sonoma, CA. The Mission San Francisco Solano does not have any baskets in its small museum.

Only five of the seven museums that display Southern California baskets do not to use the word “Mission” in their exhibits to refer to Southern California native people; instead, they use tribe names. Museums like the OMCA, the California Museum and the Cooper Regional History Museum do not label their baskets as “Mission” baskets. The OMCA and the California Museum represent tribes from all over California and list tribe names instead of “Mission” for a basket’s culture of origin. The word “Mission,” however, still appears on the OMCA online catalogue. I found the same situation at the Autry, whose outdated online catalogue does not reflect its updated exhibition labels. The Cooper Regional History Museum and the Arcadia Museum are located in Tongva territory, so they only display Tongva objects and do not use the word “Mission.” The Hearst Museum and the California State Indian Museum still use mission-inspired tribe names and the word “Mission” in their exhibit labels. The latter museum has Luiseño, Chumash, Yokuts and “Mission Type” baskets, as well as photographs of Diegueño, Cupeño and Soboba Reservation basket weavers. At the time I started my internship, the Burke Museum used the word *Mission* on its basket catalog records. This term remains in the historical paper catalog records, but the computer database has been updated so that “*Mission*” – *Southern California* appears instead.

At the Burke Museum I found that the museum has only a handful of baskets in its collection from Southern California. However, the Ethnology Department has roughly 365 baskets and basketry materials from various California tribes in its collection, and eleven are labeled as “Mission” Indian baskets.⁴² Even though the Burke Museum has identified the culture of origin for eleven of its baskets as “Mission”, not all of these labels are accurate. The culture for two of the baskets is recorded as “Miwok? Mission?” (Cat. ID 2.2E245 and 2.2E247). After examining the accession records for these two baskets, I discovered that there was no mention of

⁴² The museum has records for twelve “Mission” baskets, but because one of the baskets is missing I only studied eleven baskets.

the words Mission or Miwok for 2.2E245. The accession records originally noted that the locality for basket 2.2E247 was the Southwest, but then someone later crossed out Southwest and wrote “Miwok or Mission.” In both cases it appears that the collections staff later attributed the baskets as Miwok? Mission?. It is probable that they assumed the baskets were examples of the Miwok or “Mission” styles, since weavers in both regions made coiled baskets. I would argue it is more likely that these baskets were made in Southern California, not in Miwok territory.

While studying the accession files for all the so-called “Mission” baskets, I did not find any documentation, with one exception, from the baskets’ original owners. A Hudson Bay Fur Company tag was saved in the accession file for basket 2-2975 that states, “Made by Poma Indians Calif.” Poma is probably a misspelling of the word Pomo, which is a tribe located north of San Francisco and is typically not called a “Mission” tribe. Even so, it appears that someone later changed the attribution to *Mission*. It is most likely that the collections staff attributed the majority of these baskets with the culture of origin “Mission” after the museum acquired them.⁴³

When the donor(s) met with collections staff upon transferring these baskets to the Burke museum they may have stated that the baskets had “Mission” origins. Since very little (or no) original documentation exists for the Burke Museum’s baskets, I was unable to determine for certain why the museum labeled this group of eleven baskets as *Mission* baskets. It appears that in most cases the collections staff labeled them as such because they could not determine the specific tribal origins of each basket, or in some instances they could not tell the difference between coiled baskets made in coastal Southern California and those made in Northern California. The accession file for one basket in the Burke Museum collection, which is not one of the eleven I studied, was originally catalogued as a Mission basket. A note stated that basket

⁴³ Since I am not an expert in identifying baskets, I was unable to determine for certain if the baskets just mentioned were actually made by Pomo and Miwok weavers or weavers from Southern California.

expert Craig Bates later re-identified it as a Maidu basket. This note proves that some of the “Mission” attributions were incorrect and that some of the eleven I examined may still be catalogued incorrectly.

As Shipek’s article showed, some people think that all the tribes impacted by the Franciscan missions are “Mission” Indians. Thus, the process of labeling baskets becomes quite complicated. Basket experts like Shanks and Farmer who have a keen eye for discerning individual tribes’ weaving styles have helped museums properly identify baskets. However, the process of learning stylistic differences requires years of careful study. The number of experts who can identify baskets is small, and the time needed to examine basket collections is long and tedious. Museum collections are understaffed and have limited resources to compensate outside experts in helping them catalogue new and existing collections.

The Burke Museum collection offers valuable insight into the issues scholars face when studying Native American material culture. Tribe names as well as dates are often incorrectly recorded on provenance records. The museum acquired these baskets between 1932 and 1985. Only a few files note when the donor collected specific baskets, such as one that was collected before 1914. The date for when a basket was collected provides some idea as to when it was made, but collection dates are unreliable, since baskets may have several owners before they arrive at museums. When those dates are unknown, patterning offers clues as to when a specific basket was made. The realistic designs on a handful of the Burke Museum’s baskets are typical of baskets made for sale to tourists and collectors in the early twentieth century. A floral design appears on a basket tray (Figure 3) and two eagles flank the sides of a tray upon which appear two tree-like motifs (Figure 4). Chapter three discusses the significance of representational

basket designs and what they reveal about basket weaving in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century.

Unlike the Burke Museum, which has a small collection of Southern California baskets, the Southwest Museum of the American Indian has over seven hundred “Mission” baskets in its collection.⁴⁴ For each basket, the Southwest Museum lists “Mission” under “Maker” or “Tribe” when the name of the basket weaver or tribe is unknown. Without documentation to prove the tribal origins of a basket, collections staff do their best to identify the most likely source and list the tribe name with a question mark (i.e. Cahuilla?). The majority of the “Mission” baskets in the Southwest Museum collection have a tribe name listed, thereby indicating that 1) the baskets were well documented when the museum acquired them, 2) the collections staff know how to identify a “Mission” basket, or 3) the museum hired a basket expert to help the collections staff attribute their baskets. All three of these reasons may explain why the baskets are so well documented. Some of the notes that accompany baskets in the collection include comments made by Justin Farmer who has given workshops at the Autry National Center on basketry attribution. Through his collaboration with the Southwest Museum/Autry National Center, Farmer has helped the museum improve its object records.

The Southwest Museum online collection provides more information about its baskets than other museums do, but it continues to use mission-inspired names. The tribes listed (Cahuilla, Chumash, Cupeño, Diegueño, Fernandeño, Gabrielino, Luiseño and Soboba Reservation) for the baskets that appear on a search for “mission baskets” correspond to the lists

⁴⁴ A search for “mission baskets” on the Autry National Center’s online collection database yielded these results. The Autry Museum of Western Heritage merged with the Southwest Museum of the American Indian and the Women of the West Museum in 2003 to form the Autry National Center. The Autry, “About Us,” accessed January 16, 2012, <http://theautry.org/about-us/what-is-the-autry>.

of tribes early anthropologists typically designated as “Mission” tribes.⁴⁵ These names are somewhat outdated, as they represent the missions rather than the indigenous names some California Indians prefer to use today. Like the Burke Museum, the Southwest Museum’s use of mission-inspired names and the word “Mission” is old-fashioned, but the dates it provides for the baskets are more realistic. Whereas the Burke Museum recorded the dates when the Burke acquired the baskets, the Southwest Museum gives an approximate timeframe for when the baskets were likely made (i.e. late 1800s to early 1900s).⁴⁶ The dates indicate that the baskets span a range of years from when more weavers were making baskets in the late nineteenth century until the 1950s when basket weaving was less common.

The Southwest Museum collection not only lists the tribe, date and maker of each basket, but also documents the materials and designs of the “mission baskets.” This information is vital to determining approximately when and where baskets were made. It also helps scholars decide when certain basket designs came into popularity as discussed in chapter three. Aside from using some antiquated methods, the Southwest Museum’s online collection offers valuable information on Southern California baskets. The online collection uses the word “Mission”, but it does not appear on labels that accompany the baskets in its current exhibit, “The Art of Native American Basketry: A Living Tradition.”⁴⁷ The curators clearly made an effort to label baskets with appropriate tribe names. For example, the label accompanying a Tongva basket reads

⁴⁵ Autry National Center, “Search Results,” Accessed January 16, 2012, <http://collections.theautry.org/mwebcgi/mweb.exe?request=keyword;keyword=mission%20baskets;dtype=d;keyword=mission%20baskets;dtype=d>.

⁴⁶ The dates are not completely trustworthy, as many baskets may have been acquired or collected around 1900, but were likely made much earlier.

⁴⁷ Two touch screen kiosks in the entrance to the “The Art of Native American Basketry: A Living Tradition” exhibit feature baskets in the Southwest Museum collection from a variety of Native American tribes. Visitors have the option to scroll through screens, each featuring a different basket with a photograph and description. The information provided for each basket is the same as that recorded on the online collections database: culture, date, locations, dimensions, credit, design motif, technique, materials, use and region.

“Tongva (Gabrielino).” The curators wrote “tribe name attributed” (i.e. “Luiseño attributed”) on labels next to baskets for which the tribe is not definitively known.

Scholars Interviewed

While conducting research in California, I interviewed basket weavers and basket scholars. Ileana Maestas, curator at the California State Indian Museum and Ralph Shanks, anthropologist, were kind enough to speak with me about the current state of basket weaving and museum collections practices. Prior to interviewing Maestas, I prepared a list of questions about the California State Indian Museum’s basket collection and its relationship with the California Indian community. I also learned from the museum’s website that it is a State Historic Park overseen by the California State Parks Service. The State of California owns the museum’s basket collection, which is stored at a separate location from the State Indian Museum. The State Parks Service owns close to four thousand baskets, and only a tiny fraction of the baskets in the collection are on view at the State Indian Museum, which is a small building with one large room that serves as the exhibit space. In the galleries, baskets from Northern California tribes outnumber those from Southern California, which makes sense given that the museum is located in Sacramento. The northern tribes also have a basket weaving tradition that remained relatively intact after colonization. Although the majority of the museum’s displays are dedicated to the local Maidu and Miwok people, the museum has strong connections with the greater California Indian community. The museum currently has plans to move to a new location in West Sacramento at a site set aside for the California Indian Heritage Center (CIHC), which has an advisory board with members from various California tribes. The CIHC will serve the entire California Indian community from Northern and Southern California. According to Maestas, when the CIHC Advisory Board was formed “the collections group specifically said we really

want to focus on just sticking with California Indian cultures.”⁴⁸ As a result, the museum has helped to keep baskets in the state where visitors can learn about California’s diverse indigenous cultures. The collection is also available to basket weavers and apprentices seeking to learn their ancestors’ weaving styles.

The State Indian Museum/California Indian Heritage Center often receives requests from tribes, weavers and scholars to view the basket collection. When tribes ask to see the collections, they typically want to view the conditions in which their baskets are stored. Maestas explained that she has advised tribes setting up their own collections facilities, particularly on the process of cataloguing baskets. The State Indian Museum/California Indian Heritage Center also receives input from tribes regarding collections care, taking traditional practices into account. For example, certain tribes request that male and female items be stored separately. Over the years the museum has received basket donations from collectors, but the majority are older baskets made at the turn of the century.⁴⁹ Due to the current state of California’s struggling economy, the museum cannot afford to buy baskets from living basket weavers. In order to remedy this situation, the museum has borrowed baskets from contemporary weavers for past exhibits. Basket weavers like Justin Farmer have also assisted the museum in identifying baskets in its collection. Since collections like that of the State Indian Museum are overseen by collections managers with numerous responsibilities and diverse backgrounds, they often seek the assistance of experts like Farmer who can easily identify a basket’s tribal origins. Even with the help of basket experts, it is sometimes impossible to identify certain baskets, particularly those from the so-called “Mission” tribes. When I attended the California Indian Basketweavers Association (CIBA) gathering in June of 2011, I learned that even before the mission years,

⁴⁸ Ileana Maestas, Personal interview, June 22, 2011.

⁴⁹ Ileana Maestas, Personal communication, February 23, 2012.

weavers traded baskets with weavers from other tribes. Early native people may have discovered outside baskets, or received them as gifts. Weavers from a number of different tribes could have made many of the “Mission” baskets, which is why museums continue to label certain baskets made during and after the mission years as “Mission” baskets. Basket experts try to make an educated guess as to which tribe a basket may represent.

For my interview with Ralph Shanks, I prepared a list of questions that had not been answered in his books. He has worked with the Phoebe A. Hearst Museum at the University of California, Berkeley, and he teaches a basketry analysis class at the University of California, Davis.⁵⁰ Shanks has not only shared his expertise with museum collections, but also with students. He has developed a system for identifying baskets that students can follow when working with basket collections. With the assistance of students from the University of California, Shanks has helped museums improve their object records and give tribe names to baskets that were previously unidentified.⁵¹

I relied upon the work of published authors for this thesis, but it is important to note that not all basket experts share their knowledge in published form. While listening to presenters speak on the panel, “California Stories Through Indian Eyes” at the CIBA gathering, I learned that tribes have members who can recognize baskets that are unique to their own communities and of others. Thankfully, there are people who take the time to learn about their tribes’ basket styles and whose ancestors passed on their basketry knowledge. As a result, native people can carry out their ancestors’ customs and educate others about these artistic practices.

This thesis aims to dispel myths perpetuated by museum collections and early anthropologists that certain baskets are products of the California mission system. It examines

⁵⁰ Ralph Shanks, Personal communication, February 21, 2012.

⁵¹ Ralph Shanks, Personal interview, July 8, 2011.

information found in museums and anthropological texts, but it is also seeks to highlight the cultures responsible for the baskets found in collections today. This thesis sets out to underscore the living existence of the descendants of Southern California's first people by looking at basket weaving as a living and indigenous art form.

Chapter II: History of Southern California's First People and Basket Weaving

This chapter provides an overview of the history of California's first people, beginning with the years before European explorers arrived and ending with the late twentieth century. Stories told in classrooms and museums generally portray Native Americans in the past, but in reality the descendants of California's first people survived colonization and continue to practice their indigenous customs today. In his publication on Southern California basketry, Kroeber failed to mention living basket weavers. Kroeber's publications date to the 1920s, and since then few scholars have discussed the state of Southern California basket weaving in the twentieth century. Instead of writing about weavers and the circumstances that led to a decline in basket weaving, authors focused on the objects made in the nineteenth century and earlier. This chapter will underline the historical circumstances that impacted basket weaving trends in Southern California from the time before the missions through the 1980s.

In order to explain the current state of basket weaving today, it is necessary to provide some historical background on basket weaving in Southern California.⁵² History books about California often begin with the first years of European colonization, thereby leaving out a significant chapter of the region's past. Prior to 1769, when the Spaniards introduced a writing system to Southern California's first people, these Native Americans did not record their stories in written documents. Our knowledge of these early aboriginal societies is limited to archaeological remnants, oral histories and explorers' accounts of their first encounters with native people.

Before the arrival of the first European explorers in 1542, the inhabitants of California's central and southern coast regions lived in political territories marked only by physical

⁵² This chapter does not provide an in-depth discussion of California history, but rather it focuses on the history of Southern California from San Luis Obispo in the north to San Diego in the south. For a close study of Indian-Spanish relations in early California, refer to Beebe and Senkewicz, *Lands of Promise and Despair: Chronicles of Early California 1535-1846*.

boundaries like valleys and mountains. Archaeological evidence shows that these coastal peoples made baskets before Europeans arrived.⁵³ In 1930 Gene Weltfish pointed out that archaeologists had found the remnants of a twined basket on Santa Catalina Island, CA.⁵⁴ Weltfish did not provide a date for the basket; he only called it a “prehistoric” twined water bottle. These remains, which Weltfish noted were in the collection of the Museum of the American Indian (now the National Museum of the American Indian), indicate that early aboriginal people, such as the Tongva who inhabited Santa Catalina Island (“Pimu’nga” in the Tongva language) made baskets well before colonization. Weltfish does not include an image of the twined water bottle, but it would have looked similar to another twined water bottle basket made on San Nicolas Island (Figure 5). Anthropologist Albert B. Elsasser stated, “many twined water bottles sealed with asphaltum have been recovered from late prehistoric dry caves in Chumash territory.”⁵⁵ The Chumash, like the Tongva, made twined baskets to store water while travelling by canoe between the Channel Islands and the mainland.⁵⁶ Water bottles are one of the few examples of twined basketry the Chumash people made. The tribes of Northern California, particularly those of the Trinity River region, only made twined baskets, but early Southern California people typically wove coiled baskets.

In addition to the water bottle baskets, archaeologists found a Chumash burden basket and a storage basket in a Chumash cave.⁵⁷ Kroeber noted in the caption to a photograph of the burden basket and storage basket that both are examples of coiled baskets (Figure 6). Thomas Bowen also pointed out that archaeologists discovered two baskets during an archeological

⁵³ Gene Weltfish, “Prehistoric North American Basketry Techniques and Modern Distributions,” *American Anthropologist* 32 (1930), 489.

⁵⁴ Weltfish, “Prehistoric North American Basketry Techniques and Modern Distributions,” 489.

⁵⁵ Albert B. Elsasser, “Basketry,” *Handbook of North American Indians*, Vol. 8, ed. Robert F. Heizer (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1978), 638.

⁵⁶ The Chumash inhabited the northern Channel Islands and the Tongva inhabited the southern Channel Islands. I use the past tense because although the descendants of these early people still live on the mainland, they no longer dominate the Channel Islands.

⁵⁷ Alfred L. Kroeber, *Handbook of the Indians of California* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1925), 561.

survey conducted in the 1930s of the Twenty Nine Palms area within Cahuilla territory.⁵⁸ It is without doubt that basket making in California pre-dated the arrival of Europeans. Elsasser argued that archaeological remains of awls also offer evidence that early native people made coiled baskets before foreign settlement.⁵⁹ Impressions of coiled baskets from Southern California date to A.D. 1530.⁶⁰ Yet, some anthropologists believe that coiled basketry was produced as early as 1000 B.C.⁶¹

Baskets and other woven structures such as tule huts and boats were essential components of life in early California. People throughout California made baskets in different styles and for a variety of purposes, yet the inhabitants of the coastal region from San Luis Obispo to San Diego made similar baskets. Few, if any, baskets from the years before Spanish settlement remain intact. Raúl A. López and Christopher L. Moser stated that baskets were often buried or burned with the deceased members of a community.

When most Southern California Indians left this world, kinsmen and friends cremated him (only the Chumash and Tubatulabal buried their dead) and burned or ritually ‘killed’ his prized possessions, including the ceremonial baskets received on Initiation Day. Months later they wove new ceremonial baskets and images to hang from his funeral pole as a show of respect. These, with his remaining clothing and possessions they burned, pole and all, in one great farewell funeral pyre.⁶²

Throughout California, early native people burned baskets at funerals. This tradition ceased as indigenous people assimilated into modern society after colonists arrived. Some tribes continued

⁵⁸ Thomas Bowen, “Seri Basketry: A Comparative View,” *Kiva* 38 (1973), 148.

⁵⁹ “In southern California, bone awls offer the main approach to the question of precedence of twining over coiling in prehistoric times. Unfortunately the evidence here is by no means clear, since it must necessarily rest upon the positive identification of ‘awls’ as true basketry awls rather than as remnants, for example of fish gorges or other implements indicates the paucity of any bone implements in early archaeological deposits... It seems likely that coiling occurred at a later time at least in coastal southern California than in central California. Numerous dry cave finds in the Santa Barbara region, all seemingly late (estimated A.D. 1500-1800) are of twined basketry, although coiling was not lacking concurrently.” Elsasser, “Basketry,” 634.

⁶⁰ Elsasser, “Basketry,” 634.

⁶¹ “At a date estimated around 1000 B.C. coiled basketry was introduced, possibly in connection with a major population displacement originating ultimately in the Great Basin to the east. Baumhoff and Heizer later suggested, however, that certain fine coiled basketry found in dry caves in the Great Basin was derived from ‘outlands,’ perhaps even central California, at about the same time level (about 1000 B.C.).” Elsasser, “Basketry,” 634.

⁶² Raúl A. López and Christopher L. Moser, *Rods, Bundles & Stitches: A Century of Southern California Indian Basketry* (Riverside, CA: Riverside Museum Press, 1981), 9.

burning baskets into the early twentieth century. They stopped doing so when community members voiced concern over the loss of their precious baskets. These late attempts to save baskets could not resurrect baskets burned centuries before. In Gabrielino society, “baskets and other more perishable possessions went into the flames.”⁶³ Few Gabrielino/Tongva baskets exist today because early people burned baskets when someone died. Early people did not record the dates when they made their baskets, and they often burned them at funerals, so it is difficult to determine which examples represent basket weaving practices from before 1769.

Baskets from other Southern California tribes ended up in international museums. The earliest baskets collected may have been old when the Spanish took them. Chumash baskets collected by Spanish explorers during the Malaspina Expedition in 1791 can be accessed at the Naprstek Museum (Museum of Asian, African and American art) in Prague, Czechoslovakia and the Museo de América (American Museum) in Madrid, Spain.⁶⁴ These baskets offer a glimpse of what baskets looked like before and around the time colonists first arrived in California. Other Tongva baskets collected by early explorers ended up in foreign museums, such as the Museum für Völkerkunde (Museum of Ethnography) in Berlin, Germany.⁶⁵ German scholar and artist, Ferdinand Deppe, probably acquired these baskets during his travels in California between 1829 and 1837.⁶⁶

Pre-1769

In 1542, the first European explorers landed on the coast of present-day Southern California. The expedition led by Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo made its first stop in Alta California

⁶³ Bernice Eastman Johnston, *California's Gabrielino Indians* (Los Angeles, CA: Southwest Museum, 1962), 52.

⁶⁴ Blackburn and Hudson, *Time's Flotsam*, 88 and 153.

⁶⁵ Thomas C. Blackburn and Travis Hudson, *Time's Flotsam: Overseas Collections of California Indian Material Culture* (Menlo Park, CA: Ballena Press, 1990), 96.

⁶⁶ Blackburn and Hudson, *Time's Flotsam*, 30.

Glen Dawson, *Ferdinand Deppe's Travels in California in 1837* (Los Angeles, CA: Early California Travels Series XV, 1953), xi.

in the harbor of modern-day San Diego.⁶⁷ From San Diego they sailed to the Channel Islands, then they stopped in San Pedro Bay and headed north through the Santa Barbara Channel towards San Francisco Bay. They spent time among the communities that inhabited California's coastal regions, and in 1543 the Spanish explorers returned to Navidad, in present-day Haiti.⁶⁸ Disappointed that they did not discover gold in California, this group of explorers left California with the hope of finding riches in other lands.

When this first group of Spanish explorers arrived in California, its inhabitants thrived in highly developed societies and they inhabited geographically diverse territories. The tribes of the southern coastal region shared similar customs and beliefs, but they spoke unique languages and respected tribal boundaries.⁶⁹ These societies depended on the land and the ocean for sustenance. Women and men wove a variety of baskets that served specific functions, such as holding food on gathering expeditions. When fur trader George Nidever landed on the shores of San Nicolas Island in 1852 he discovered the fabled Lone Woman of San Nicolas Island and her baskets. History books refer to this Tongva woman as the "Lone Woman" because she lived alone on San Nicolas Island for about twenty years after a group of explorers relocated the rest of the island's inhabitants to California's mainland. Nidever took her to Santa Barbara, where she was christened with the name of Juana Maria at the Mission Santa Barbara.⁷⁰ European explorers did not establish a settlement on the island, so Juana Maria's lifestyle remained relatively unchanged until Nidever's crew found her in 1852. One of Nidever's crewmembers,

⁶⁷ Beebe and Senkewicz, *Lands of Promise and Despair*, 32.

⁶⁸ Beebe and Senkewicz, *Lands of Promise and Despair*, 32.

⁶⁹ Throughout my thesis, I use "Southern California" to refer to the following tribes: Chumash, Tongva, Ajachmem, Luiseño, Kumeyaay, Cahuilla, Serrano and Cupeño. However, other scholars who have written on the subject of California Indian basket weaving list different tribal names. For instance, the people commonly known as the Kumeyaay, or Diegueño are using the names Ipai and Tipai with more frequency today. Anthropologist Ralph Shanks only lists the Cahuilla, Cupeño, Juaneño, Kumeyaay, Luiseño and Serrano in his discussion of the "Mission tribes". See Shanks, *California Indian Baskets*, 63.

⁷⁰ William McCawley, *The First Angelinos: The Gabrielino Indians of Los Angeles* (Banning, CA: Malki Museum Press, 1996), 212.

Carl Dittman, saw “a basket and some feathers” on the beach when they landed.⁷¹ European explorers had visited San Nicolas Island and the other Channel Islands before Nidever’s trip in 1852. Even so, Juana Maria continued making baskets that were not influenced by contact with Europeans. Accounts such as that of Nidever and Brown do not explain what happened to the basket found on the beach. It is possible that the basket ended up in the Vatican Museum collection along with a feathered dress that was lost.⁷² Juana Maria also made a twined water bottle basket that “was preserved in the California Academy of Sciences”, but it was later destroyed in the San Francisco earthquake of 1906 (Figure 5).⁷³ If this earthquake had not destroyed Juana Maria’s water bottle basket, scholars would be able to study it in greater detail today.⁷⁴ Even so, the photograph shows the twined technique and shape.

Firsthand accounts from early European contact with coastal Southern California Indians note that these first people also lived in thatched houses. In 1846 Alfred Robinson translated Friar Geronimo Boscana’s description of Ajachmem culture and religion, which he witnessed at Mission San Juan Capistrano, in a book entitled *Chinigchinich*. In the English version translated from Spanish, Boscana writes that the Ajachmem people, who he refers to as “these Indians”, lived in “caves, or huts made of straw.”⁷⁵ The Ajachmem, like other coastal peoples, made thatched huts out of tule stalks, not straw. Tule, or bulrush, is a native rush that grows in or near freshwater sources throughout California. Boscana may have seen these huts in villages outside of the Mission San Juan Capistrano settlement during the mission years or before the mission

⁷¹ Charles Frederick Holder and Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo, *The Channel Islands of California; A Book for the Angler, Sportsman, and Tourist* (Chicago: A.C. McClurg & Co., 1910), 315.

⁷² Travis Hudson, “Recently Discovered Accounts Concerning The ‘Lone Woman’ of San Nicolas Island,” *Journal of California and Great Basin Anthropology* 3 (Winter 1981), 195.

⁷³ Hudson, “Recently Discovered Accounts Concerning The ‘Lone Woman’ of San Nicolas Island,” 195.

⁷⁴ Shanks notes in the caption to the photograph of the water bottle basket that anthropologist C. Hart Merriam photographed the basket before it was destroyed in the 1906 fire. “Eventually her basket was taken to a San Francisco museum, but the basket burned in the 1906 earthquake and fire.” Shanks, *California Indian Baskets*, 49.

⁷⁵ Friar Geronimo Boscana, *Chinigchinich: A Historical Account of the Origin, Customs, and Traditions of the Indians at the Missionary Establishment of St. Juan Capistrano, Alta-California* (Bibliobazaar, 2008), 13.

was built when he first arrived in California. The former is unlikely since most mission leaders burned down thatched huts thereby forcing native people to seek asylum at the missions. In Tongva territory, “The willow frameworks that formed the skeletons of their tule-thatched huts, which the Spanish were to call ‘jacales,’ long ago were burned or withered to dust.”⁷⁶ As the Franciscans established more missions in California, they sought to replace indigenous lifestyles. Before colonization, coastal peoples wove tule dolls, boats and thatched houses using similar technology as that used in producing baskets.⁷⁷ At the missions native people no longer needed to make dolls and they were not allowed to make thatched houses and boats, but they continued to make baskets.

1769-1833

During the late eighteenth century, Spanish and Mexican Catholic priests established twenty-one mission settlements along the coast of present-day California (Figure 1). With the help of soldiers recruited from Mexico, the Franciscans quickly employed the local aboriginal people as laborers at the mission settlements. At the missions, the priests forcibly converted the indigenous people to Catholicism and pressured them to abandon their “uncivilized” ways. In the days before contact with foreigners, native peoples used baskets primarily for collecting and storing food. Weavers from different communities had unique styles, but they all made baskets using the same basic coiling technology. Early weavers typically incorporated geometric motifs in their coiled baskets. Most of the aboriginal people who lived at the missions no longer collected traditional foods as they once had, but some weavers continued making baskets for new purposes. Weavers who made baskets within the territory of the ten southern missions used their

⁷⁶ Johnston, *California's Gabrielino Indian*, 3.

⁷⁷ Tule, or Bulrush, is a type of rush that grows near water. It was, and still is used by tribes along the Pacific coast of North America for basketry purposes.

ancestors' techniques during the mission years (1769-1833), and some incorporated designs influenced by the Catholic Church and the Spanish Crown.

The mission leaders recognized the skill and craftsmanship of the weavers' baskets, and even commissioned some weavers to make baskets as gifts for Spanish dignitaries, such as the Chumash "presentation" baskets.⁷⁸ The baskets that display the strongest Spanish influence were those made by Ventureño Chumash weavers at Mission San Buenaventura in Ventura, CA. Five Franciscan missions were established in Chumash territory, where the Spaniards had the greatest influence on indigenous basket weaving. In an essay written in 2009, Janice Timbrook points out that Chumash women "made oval and rectangular sewing baskets with lids (Figure 7), added pedestal bases to traditional bowls, and even fashioned at least one basket in the shape of a padre's hat (Figure 8). New design patterns included pictorial elements and inscriptions. When metal tools were introduced, Chumash weavers found that adding rusty iron to water made black dye much darker."⁷⁹ The basket called a "Padre's hat" was woven into the shape of "a wide-brimmed friar's hat."⁸⁰ Timbrook notes that the main body of the hat is similar to that of the basket caps Chumash women wore to protect their foreheads from burden basket straps. Historical records indicate that Spanish explorers saw these kinds of baskets during their travels through the Chumash territory, but the padre's hat is the only known basket of its kind in existence today.

Chumash basket shapes and patterns changed in direct response to European interests, and the baskets made at the missions that feature Spanish heraldic designs "are some of the finest baskets ever made anywhere in the world. The skill involved in creating the intricate patterns is

⁷⁸ They are called "presentation" baskets because they were often presented to Spanish dignitaries or dedicated to the Spanish Crown.

⁷⁹ Janice Timbrook, "Native American Arts in the Missions: Chumash Basketry," *The Arts of the Missions of Northern New Spain: 1600-1821* (Mexico City: Antiguo Colegio de San Ildefonso, 2009), 327.

For an example of a pedestaled basket, see Appendix A: Figure 30, which is a Cahuilla basket.

⁸⁰ Timbrook, "Native American Arts in the Missions," 328.

truly unparalleled.”⁸¹ In order to create the patterns, weavers intertwined dyed juncus and the stalks of other plants into their baskets, which stood out against a plain background of un-dyed juncus or deer grass. Before the missions, weavers used materials in different shades of earth tones, like those seen on baskets today, to create unique basket patterns. Like their ancestors, weavers at Mission San Buenaventura had to carefully plan out the size and proportions of the coiled presentation baskets to make the intricate patterns fit within the concave surfaces.

Of all the Southern California tribes, it seems that only Chumash weavers made baskets with Spanish heraldic designs. Weavers’ names appear on three of the baskets, which is an element of the Chumash presentation baskets that is not typical of other tribes’ baskets. Along the inner rim of a Chumash basket (Figure 9) the weaver wove her name “Maria Marta Neofita de la Mision De El Serafico Doctor San Buenaventura Me Hizo An” (Maria Marta, neophyte of the mission of the Seraphic Doctor San Buenaventura, made me yr).⁸² It seems that the weaver intended to include the year she made the basket, but she ran out of space and could not complete the Spanish word for year, “año.” This is a rare example of Southern California basketry in which a weaver, Maria Marta, signed her work. It is also interesting that she identified herself as a “neofita” or neophyte, which meant that she was a native woman who had converted to Catholicism. Neophytes like Maria Marta received Spanish names upon converting to Catholicism at the missions. Rather than using her native name, Laputimeu, Maria Marta signed the basket with her Christian name, which signified her acceptance of Spanish culture and her submission to the Catholic Church. The act of making a basket for a Mexican dignitary, General José de la Cruz, also reinforced Maria Marta’s position as a subject of the newly independent

⁸¹ Timbrook, “Native American Arts in the Missions,” 328.

⁸² Brian Bibby, *The Fine Art of California Indian Basketry* (Sacramento: Crocker Art Museum, 1996), 9-10.

Mexican government.⁸³ In Mexican California, the words “neofita” or “neofito” were commonly used to describe converted Indians, or “Indios.” Unlike the politically correct word, “indígena”, “indio” had (and still has) a derogatory connotation in Spanish and Mexican California. When the Spaniards colonized California and Mexico, they introduced a caste system that placed indigenous people below the lowest caste.⁸⁴ This system remained in place after Mexico gained independence from Spain. In order to survive in a class-governed society, many native people assimilated into the dominant society by learning to speak Spanish and by adopting Hispanic lifestyles. Basket weavers rebelled (in a sense) against mission leaders, who sought to destroy indigenous culture, by continuing to weave baskets.

If weavers stopped making baskets after the Franciscans arrived, then the practice probably would have died out. Baskets that exist today serve as reminders of the weavers who sought to preserve their customs and cultural knowledge. They also embody the memories of ancestors who survived colonization and assimilation. By studying baskets, aboriginal people are reunited with their ancestors whose presence is felt in each basket. When displayed in the proper context, baskets have the agency to educate audiences about the history of the people they represent.

Basket weaving can be interpreted as a form of colonial resistance, but Chumash weavers used symbols in their baskets that represented Spain’s domination over the indigenous people. Three Chumash baskets featured the Pillars of Hercules from the Pillar Dollar, which symbolized “Spain’s dominion over both Old and New Worlds.”⁸⁵ The Pillars of Hercules also flanked the shield of King Charles III that appeared on a coin made in New Spain (modern-day Mexico).

⁸³ Phoebe A. Hearst Museum, “A Century of Collecting”, accessed October 20, 2011. http://hearstmuseum.berkeley.edu/exhibitions/cent/gallery1_3_9.html.

⁸⁴ Spanish colonists treated indigenous people as less than lower class. Native people were enslaved to build and work at the missions.

⁸⁵ Timbrook, “Native American Arts in the Missions,” 329.

This coin design appeared on five of the six presentation baskets.⁸⁶ Scholars like Lillian Smith believe that more baskets made in a similar style are yet to be discovered. In her 1982 article, Smith described three of the Chumash baskets with Spanish coin designs. These three baskets are now held in the collections of the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI), the Phoebe A. Hearst Museum (Figure 9), and the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History.

Through her research on the Hearst Museum basket, Smith found clues that suggest more baskets were probably made in a similar style. The records for these baskets have been lost, but the baskets may still exist in Mexico and other places where mission leaders sent baskets.⁸⁷ Existing records document the fact that mission priests sold Indian baskets to pay for church decorations. “Hides, blankets, otter pelts, lard, tallow and baskets were among the products marketed by Fr. José Señan of Mission San Buenaventura, the profits used to purchase articles to adorn the mission church and sacristy.”⁸⁸ In addition to selling baskets, Church leaders also sent the elaborate Chumash baskets to Mexico City as gifts for the College of San Fernando.⁸⁹ Craig Bates stated in an interview for the Crocker Museum’s 1996 California Basket exhibit that many Chumash baskets ended up with affluent Spanish families. “Many of the old Spanish families – people of means in Mexico and Peru who were connected with the presidios and other things in California – ended up with Chumash baskets. So quite early on, the Chumash were making... baskets that would appeal to foreigners.”⁹⁰ The fact that Chumash baskets were sent as gifts to Mexico indicates that some mission leaders commissioned weavers to make baskets that specifically featured the Spanish coin design.

⁸⁶ Timbrook, “Native American Arts in the Missions,” 329.

⁸⁷ This is an important topic for future research.

⁸⁸ Lillian Smith, *Three Inscribed Chumash Baskets with Designs from Spanish Colonial Coins* (Scottsdale, AZ: American Indian Art, 1982), 63.

⁸⁹ Smith, *Three Inscribed Chumash Baskets with Designs from Spanish Colonial Coins*, 64.

⁹⁰ Craig Bates in Bibby, *The Fine Art of California Indian Basketry*, 10.

Spain dominated California for nearly seven decades and left a lasting impact on the culture of the “Mission” Indians, but native weavers managed to keep their traditions alive. While they lived at the missions, native weavers preserved their art form and survived by adapting to European influences. Native artist, Frank LaPena comments on how Maria Marta made her basket in a traditional shape, but she used a new pattern. This basket, like the other presentation baskets, symbolizes the new religious and cultural identity adopted by the aboriginal peoples who lived at the missions. Unlike other California tribes that maintained their indigenous customs and belief systems, the tribes impacted by the missions underwent drastic cultural changes. The indigenous people who lived at the missions not only adopted European lifestyles, but they also quickly replaced their languages with Spanish, they converted to Christianity and some even made art in the same tradition as the Europeans. The Chumash presentation baskets are just a few examples of the type of art created at the missions that display the fusion of indigenous and European concepts. Chumash artisans at Mission Santa Barbara decorated an altarpiece with abalone shell inlays, and Tongva artists at Mission San Gabriel created paintings in the European style that depict Christ’s Passion (the Stations of the Cross).

When they no longer lived at the missions, weavers created baskets for new audiences, and after the secularization of the missions in 1834, native women took jobs working for foreign settlers.⁹¹ Some continued weaving baskets in response to a growing interest among Euro-Americans in Native American-made objects. Timbrook states that in the early twentieth century Chumash women continued to use the same natural materials they used in earlier baskets, but

⁹¹ “The Indians were to learn the Spanish religion, language, and way of life, and then after a period of ten years or so, the church was to be turned into a regular parish (a process known as ‘secularization’). The lands were to be divided among the Indians, who would then take their places in society as Spanish and Catholic farmers and ranchers.” According to Beebe and Senkewicz, the mission founders originally promised to return land to the indigenous people, but the Mexican government, which gained control over the territory before the missions became secularized, did not fulfill that promise. Beebe and Senkewicz, *Lands of Promise and Despair*, 71.

these were not of the same quality as baskets made prior.⁹² Chumash basket weaving ceased in the early twentieth century with the passing of the last “old-time” weavers (Figure 10 A&B). “The last three old-time weavers – Ventureño Chumash women Petra Pico, Donaciana Salazar, and Candelaria Valenzuela – had passed away by 1915.”⁹³ Although the Chumash stopped making the older traditional baskets with the passing of these three weavers, they are working to revitalize these older weaving styles today.⁹⁴ Tima Lotah Link is one such weaver who within the past fifteen years has turned to weavers from neighboring tribes and baskets in museums to learn her ancestors’ customs. Unlike many Chumash weavers who lived and worked in the missions during Spain’s occupation of California, Tima does not live at a mission nor does she use Spanish-inspired designs. Therefore, her baskets cannot be called “Mission” baskets.

Not all of the so-called “Mission” Indians actually lived at the Franciscan missions. In the San Gabriel Valley, “not all of the Gabrielino converted to Christianity and joined the missions. In fact, many did not.”⁹⁵ Like the Gabrielinos, people in other coastal communities did not join the missions. Historical records show that some native people avoided the missions by hiding in the mountains surrounding the missions. In some instances, mission leaders found it difficult to force entire communities to work and live at the mission settlements. As Beebe and Senkewicz remark, “In some cases large numbers of Indians lived at the mission site, but in other instances it proved impossible or unfeasible to gather large numbers into a stable community near the church complex.”⁹⁶ In spite of mission leaders’ efforts to convert the indigenous populations, native people found ways to resist Hispanic lifestyles and maintain their customs.

⁹² “Even though these later baskets were less finely woven and less elaborately decorated than the fine old baskets, they were still completely hand made using meticulously-prepared wild plant materials.” Timbrook, “Native American Arts in the Missions,” 327.

⁹³ Timbrook, “Native American Arts in the Missions,” 327.

⁹⁴ Tima Lotah Link, Personal communication, February 21, 2012.

⁹⁵ McCawley, *The First Angelinos*, 96.

⁹⁶ Beebe and Senkewicz, *Lands of Promise and Despair*, 71.

Numerous aboriginal people who lived at the missions continued to practice their religious and cultural customs in secret. The Franciscans and soldiers brought indigenous people from various regions to the missions where they intermarried with individuals from different tribes, and weavers learned new weaving techniques and styles used outside of their tribes. When they arrived at the missions, native people brought with them their knowledge of plants that grew in their villages. Weavers who worked with certain materials before they lived at the missions incorporated new plants from regions outside their own, thereby enhancing their basket designs. This inter-tribal exchange continued after indigenous people no longer lived at the missions.

1834-1849

In 1821 Mexico won its independence from Spain, thereby gaining control over the California colony.⁹⁷ Thirteen years later, Mexican leaders initiated the Secularization Act of 1834, which had both positive and negative impacts on the native populations. It freed mission inhabitants from the control of mission leaders, but secularization turned the aboriginal population into a workforce for Mexican-owned ranches.⁹⁸ Secularization was originally intended to turn the missions into local parishes, but the Mexican government had little interest in maintaining these sites. Many mission settlements, including their churches, fell into disrepair and could no longer serve the needs of the indigenous people. Without resources and shelter provided by the missions, native people struggled to survive in the Mexican society that dominated Southern California. The Mexican government failed to fulfill the Spanish government's promise to return mission land to the aboriginal people. The 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, in which Mexico ceded California to the United States, did not guarantee

⁹⁷ Ramón A. Gutiérrez and Richard J. Orsi, *Contested Eden: California Before the Gold Rush* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998), 160.

⁹⁸ Steven W. Hackel, *Children of Coyote, Missionaries of Saint Francis: Indian-Spanish Relations in Colonial California 1769-1850* (North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 386.

any land in title for the descendants of the native people who lived at the missions.⁹⁹ The Treaty “ensured safety of pre-existing property rights of Mexican citizens in the transferred territories. The latter of which the United States in a significant number of cases failed to honor.”¹⁰⁰ The majority of indigenous people did not receive land in title from the Mexican government, but a few did, including Victoria Reid. Mrs. Reid (formerly Bartolomea) was the daughter of the chief of the Tongva village of Comicranga, and she later became the wife of Scottish settler Hugo Reid in 1837.¹⁰¹ After Mission San Gabriel was secularized, Victoria Reid (then Bartolomea) received a land grant of 128 acres in 1830, and upon her marriage to Hugo Reid, the land title was transferred to his name.¹⁰² Mrs. Reid probably received this land because she was the daughter of a Tongva tomyaar (similar to a chief).¹⁰³ Without legal title to their ancestral land, few people could gather and hunt for resources as they had before the arrival of foreigners. Unable to collect and store their traditional foods on the scale they once had, native women no longer needed to weave utilitarian baskets. Mass-produced containers introduced by foreign settlers also replaced baskets, which were time-consuming to make. In spite of these changes, weavers made baskets for other purposes – as souvenir art.

1850-1930s

By the time the United States acquired the California colony in 1848 (it became a state in 1850), most indigenous people of Southern California had assimilated into Mexican society, and

⁹⁹ Gutierrez and Orsi, *Contested Eden*, 346.

Barry M. Pritzker, *A Native American Encyclopedia: History, Culture, and Peoples* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 114.

¹⁰⁰ Dartt-Newton, “Negotiating the Master Narrative,” 91.

¹⁰¹ McCawley, *The First Angelinos*, 8.

Robert F. Heizer, *The Indians of Los Angeles County: Hugo Reid’s Letters of 1852* (Los Angeles, CA: Southwest Museum, 1968), 1.

¹⁰² McCawley, *First Angelinos*, 43.

¹⁰³ Land Grant 135, Huerta de Cuati was “granted in 1830 or 1838 to Victoria Reid, who was claimant for 128 acres, patented June 30, 1859.” Robert G. Cowan, *Ranchos of California: A List of Spanish Concessions 1775-1822 and Mexican Grants 1822-1846* (Fresno, CA: Academy Library Guild, 1956), 31.

no longer identified as Indians for fear of racial discrimination.¹⁰⁴ In 1886, the United States government passed the Dawes Act, which placed Native American children in boarding schools where they were forced to abandon their indigenous customs.¹⁰⁵ Some children from Southern California communities were sent to the Sherman Institute in Riverside, CA along with native children from the Pacific Northwest, the Southwest and the Plains regions. Boarding school students were punished for speaking any language other than English, and they were forced to dress and act like Euro-American children. These children spent months away from their families and when they returned home they often could no longer communicate with their elders. Government assimilationist programs such as the Dawes Act contributed to the decline of indigenous lifestyles and traditions in the late nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century. Since native parents rarely taught their children aboriginal customs, practices like basket weaving regressed.

In the late nineteenth century some Chumash weavers like “Candelaria Valenzuela supplemented their income from the sale of baskets” (Figure 10B).¹⁰⁶ The Chumash stopped making baskets after Valenzuela, the last Chumash master weaver, died around 1917.¹⁰⁷ While Chumash basket weaving ceased for several decades after Valenzuela’s passing, other Southern California communities continued making baskets in the twentieth century. A handful of weavers made baskets for sale to collectors and tourists into the early twentieth century, but only a small number of baskets remained in the possession of Native American people. “There was, therefore, a general hiatus in basket creation during the middle to late 1800’s. However, beginning circa 1880-1890, non-Indians began collecting local baskets as ethnic art pieces or as

¹⁰⁴ Some California Indians could pass as Mexicans, who were often part indigenous as well.

¹⁰⁵ Pritzker, *A Native American Encyclopedia*, 115.

¹⁰⁶ Smith, *Three Inscribed Chumash Baskets with Designs from Spanish Colonial Coins*, 64.

¹⁰⁷ Christopher L. Moser and Justin F. Farmer, *Native American Basketry of Southern California* (Riverside: Riverside Museum Press, 1993), 45.

remnants of a culturally endangered art form.”¹⁰⁸ This collecting trend contributed to the removal of baskets from indigenous communities, but it also helped to preserve baskets, which often ended up in museum collections in the twentieth century. In response to this growing interest in California Indian baskets, weavers began to make baskets for sale to collectors and tourists from around 1890 through the 1920s. Farmer refers to this period as the “Basket Renaissance...when making Indian baskets for sale became a major cottage industry.”¹⁰⁹ During this time, weavers made baskets that appealed to collectors’ interests. In her dissertation on Pomo basketry, Sherrie Smith-Ferri noted that the Arts and Crafts Movement played a critical role in promoting basketry and other native arts.¹¹⁰ “The 1884 publication of Helen Hunt Jackson’s *Ramona*, an immensely popular novel about Southern California Indians, resulted in a general public recognition of, and desire for, California Indian baskets, especially Mission baskets.”¹¹¹ Smith-Ferri used the word “Mission”, but more importantly, she highlighted the burgeoning interest collectors had in Southern California basketry at the end of the nineteenth century. Collectors gained interest in baskets because these objects represented to Americans “their perceived embodiment of desirable cultural values such as naturalness, primitiveness, and simplicity.”¹¹²

Farmer argues that the baskets seen in museum collections today do not accurately represent the basket traditions of Southern California Indians, but rather, they reflect the interests and misunderstandings of early twentieth century collectors. Some of these collectors did not appreciate weavers as artists. Farmer points out that early ethnographers “did not pay much

¹⁰⁸ Farmer, *Southern California Luiseño Indian Baskets*, 11.

¹⁰⁹ Farmer, *Southern California Luiseño Indian Baskets*, 21.

¹¹⁰ Sherrie Smith-Ferri, “Weaving a Tradition: Pomo Indian Baskets From 1850 Through 1996” (PhD diss., University of Washington, 1998), 67.

¹¹¹ Smith-Ferri, “Weaving a Tradition,” 69.

¹¹² Smith-Ferri, “Weaving a Tradition,” 69.

attention to Indian lady's names" when documenting basketry provenance."¹¹³ Farmer laments the fact that most ethnographers rarely recorded a basket weaver's name, and they merely referred to a weaver by her husband's first name. Anthropologist Lila O'Neale was an exception. "Though a student of Alfred Kroeber's, she had intellectual interests more in line with her contemporaries at Columbia in New York than with her mentor at Berkeley (who had been Boas's first doctoral student)."¹¹⁴ While Kroeber embraced evolutionist ideas and failed to recognize weavers as individual artists, O'Neale recognized the artistic achievements of individual weavers.

In her work from 1932 on Yurok and Karok basketry, O'Neale wrote about basket weavers, particularly female weavers, focusing on the relationships between mothers and their daughters. O'Neale not only praised women's contributions to their communities, but she also recognized female basket weavers as individuals. She referred to each of her informants by number, most likely to protect their privacy, but O'Neale gave specific examples of each weaver's work: "No. 34 made very small butterflies which were, according to her, an original motive."¹¹⁵ Rather than attributing Yurok/Karok basket patterns to the tribes, O'Neale credited the individual weavers with whom she spoke for creating original patterns. Had O'Neale worked in Southern California as well, she would have offered an insightful (and female) perspective on basket patterns that is missing in the first half of the twentieth century.

O'Neale recognized individual weavers as artists, but many of the first anthropologists (mainly men) tended not to see weavers as artists. Early anthropologists often treated native people, like their baskets, as objects meant for display. In 1935, two Kumeyaay (Diegueño)

¹¹³ Farmer, *Southern California Luiseño Indian Baskets*, 82.

¹¹⁴ Janet Catherine Berlo, *The Early Years of Native American Art History* (Seattle and Vancouver: University of Washington Press and University of British Columbia Press, 1995), 10.

¹¹⁵ Lila O'Neale, *Yurok-Karok Basket Weavers* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1932), 160.

ladies were photographed at the California Pacific International Exposition in San Diego's Balboa Park. In the photograph, Andrea Quevas and Maria Ignacio Nejo Wachena sit side by side with their baskets (Figure 11).¹¹⁶ They were two of many Native American artists who were "on display" giving demonstrations of their traditional arts at the International Expositions that took place in the 1930s. Haida carver John Wallace also gave carving demonstrations at the San Francisco Golden Gate International Exposition in 1939.¹¹⁷ The Indian exhibit at the San Francisco Exposition not only objectified Haida totem poles, but also their maker – John Wallace, whose poles were later purchased by the University of Pennsylvania Museum after the expo.¹¹⁸ Similarly, the photograph of Quevas and Wachena calls attention to early twentieth century attitudes towards American Indian culture. It demonstrates that native women still made baskets in the 1930s, but it also shows how World's Fairs objectified native art and indigenous people. This continued a long history of such displays that included Native American artists like Geronimo (Mescalero-Chiricahua Apache) who attended the St. Louis World's Fair in 1904.¹¹⁹ The photograph of Quevas and Wachena captures a moment in American history when aboriginal peoples encountered harsh racism and discrimination. It also proves that Native Americans still existed in the early twentieth century, and the caption identifies the women by their names and it describes their basket styles. The full caption points out that Wachena was known for the star pattern she wove into her baskets.¹²⁰ While most weavers do not sign their baskets as a painter would sign his or her name on a canvas, some weavers have been known to use a signature weaving style that is uniquely their own. In spite of conforming to the demands of the consumer market, basket weavers found ways to continue imbuing baskets with an

¹¹⁶ L. Frank and Kim Hogeland, *First Families: A Photographic History of California Indians* (Berkeley, CA: Heyday Books, 2007), 104.

¹¹⁷ Robin K. Wright, *Northern Haida Master Carvers* (Seattle & London: University of Washington Press, 2001), 317.

¹¹⁸ Wright, *Northern Haida Master Carvers*, 317.

¹¹⁹ S. M. Barrett, *Geronimo's Story of His Life* (New York: Duffield & Co., 1915), 197.

¹²⁰ Frank and Hogeland, *First Families*, 104.

individual style and to preserve weaving practices. It seems ironic that European colonization of the Americas contributed to the demise of basket weaving, yet Euro-Americans helped to preserve the art form by buying baskets. The tourist market encouraged basket weaving, but few native people saw basket weaving as a feasible way to make a living in the twentieth century. When Kroeber wrote about Southern California basketry in 1922, young women were losing interest in weaving. Changes in society distracted native women and men from learning their traditional customs. It was not until the 1970s that many communities began revitalizing their traditions.

1940s-1980s

During the gap in basket production from the 1920s until the 1970s, few weavers passed on their basket weaving knowledge to younger generations. Young indigenous people turned away from aboriginal customs that were considered unpopular and unimportant in mainstream society. Hardly any publications document basket production from around the 1920s to the 1970s, but weavers did make baskets during this period. Basket scholar Brian Bibby calls attention to the fact that a number of individuals carried out weaving practices during those decades. Bibby provides several explanations for the survival of basket weaving traditions. He points out that even though the lifestyles of California Indians changed in response to modern influences, weavers continued making baskets for “the collectors’ market.”¹²¹ By selling their baskets, native women contributed to their household economies. Yet, “by the 1940s the market for basketry began to ebb, and the Second World War brought further disruptions.”¹²² The Second World War, as well as the boarding school system that lasted until 1948, impacted the

¹²¹ Bibby, *The Fine Art of California Indian Basketry*, 3.

¹²² Bibby, *The Fine Art of California Indian Basketry*, 3.

lifestyles of native men and women.¹²³ Young indigenous women did not pass on the traditions of the weavers who died in the early twentieth century. “For many young women, it wasn’t very chic to be an ‘Indian’ basket weaver in the 1940s or 1950s.”¹²⁴ California’s native youth also lost interest in speaking their indigenous languages and learning traditional dances. Prejudice within American society (like the Mexican society before it) prevented native parents from teaching their children tribal customs, and mainstream culture distracted aboriginal youth from learning indigenous ways.

Unlike those of Southern California’s indigenous populations, basket weavers in Northern California tribes remained more active. The creation of reservations and Rancherias along the Pacific coast of Northern California (north of Sonoma County) helped native communities preserve their customs and access natural resources for weaving materials. For instance, several Rancherias have been established in Pomo territory, which extends from the Pacific Coast of Sonoma and Mendocino counties inland past Clear Lake. In 1972, Elsie Allen, a Pomo basketweaver wrote a book about her experiences learning and teaching others how to weave. When she wrote her book, Allen was optimistic about the renewal of basket weaving as a traditional practice. At the same time, she noted that young girls were not as interested as she hoped they would be in basket weaving. “I didn’t attract many Indian girls as they did not like to dig in the mud. I am happy if some local Indian girls would become interested in learning this art.”¹²⁵ Collecting materials in the springtime was an enjoyable ritual in which groups of women and young girls would gather together.¹²⁶ When they collected materials women learned the proper skills for nurturing native plants. Gathering helped rejuvenate and contributed to

¹²³ “By 1948 the regular elementary and high school programs were discontinued” at the Sherman Institute.

Sherman Indian Museum, “History,” accessed January 18, 2012, http://www.shermanindianmuseum.org/sherman_hist.htm.

¹²⁴ Bibby, *The Fine Art of California Indian Basketry*, 4.

¹²⁵ Elsie Allen, *Pomo Basketmaking: a supreme art for the weaver* (Happy Camp, CA: Naturegraph Publishers, 1972), 15.

¹²⁶ Allen, *Pomo Basketmaking*, 17.

abundant plant growth. Even though she grew up in the Bay Area, north of Southern California, Allen's story gives the reader a general sense of the state of basket weaving in coastal California in the 1970s.

Farmer also writes that basket weaving declined in the “early – middle 20th century, and, ... basket making almost died out in central and southern California and in the Southwest. Fortunately, the art form was rescued in the late 20th century and is now a thriving cottage industry. However, the grandmother-granddaughter relationship almost died out in the middle 20th century.”¹²⁷ What Farmer does not say is that basket weavers and their allies helped to save and revive basket weaving. Before its decline, the art of basket weaving was typically passed on from generation to generation. In my interviews, I found that the descendants of weavers who lived at the missions learned their weaving skills from distant relatives who still had knowledge of the craft. Or, in some cases they learned from weavers outside their tribal communities. It is well noted that the Chumash weaving tradition died with Candelaria Valenzuela.¹²⁸ Tima Lotah Link (Chumash) has initiated traditional basket weaving in the Chumash community, and in order to do so she relied upon the guidance of weavers from nearby tribes. Today she is passing on that tradition to other interested Chumash people, but the number of weavers is smaller than that of Valenzuela's generation. Nevertheless, mainstream lifestyles prevent modern day California Indian people from dedicating time to cultivating basket materials and weaving, and it is not a part of everyday life for most native people as it once was for their ancestors.

In spite of the changes basketry has undergone, many contemporary weavers adhere to the basic principles of basket weaving that their ancestors followed. Chapter three looks at the types of baskets and patterns Southern California weavers continue to make and use. While this

¹²⁷ Justin Farmer, *Basketry Plants Used by Western American Indians* (Fullerton, CA: The Justin Farmer Foundation, 2010), 26.

¹²⁸ Farmer, *Southern California Luiseño Indian Baskets*, 2004.

second chapter focuses on the shifts basket weaving has undergone as a whole, chapter three concentrates specifically on the history of basket patterns in Southern California.

Chapter III: Southern California Baskets and Patterns

Since the early twentieth century, art historians and anthropologists have credited California's native communities with creating some of the finest examples of basketry in North America. The intricate patterns found on coiled baskets from Southern California captured the attention of European settlers as early as the eighteenth century when Spanish mission leaders began collecting and selling baskets made by indigenous weavers. Basket weaving declined in the twentieth century, but weavers continued making baskets for collectors and their communities. Most baskets ended up in museums and private collections where basket scholars and weavers have been able to learn about these complex works of art. Several of the baskets made after 1769 still retain the patterns early indigenous weavers used before European designs influenced Southern California basketry. The word "Mission" implies that Southern California basket patterns changed as a result of the missions' influences. I would argue that only the Chumash baskets with Spanish-inspired designs made at Mission San Buenaventura could be called "Mission" baskets. Kroeber's texts on "Mission" basket designs actually proved that weavers preserved many of the conventional patterns found on early baskets during and after the mission years. This chapter seeks to underscore the survival of Southern California's indigenous design system.

This chapter will provide an overview of the basic materials and basket shapes Southern California's indigenous people use.¹²⁹ It will then analyze the ways in which Southern California basket designs have changed, focusing primarily upon Chumash and Tongva baskets.¹³⁰ It will examine the patterns typically found on coiled baskets, and it will explain the

¹²⁹ For a more detailed description of baskets see Farmer, *Southern California Luiseño Indian Baskets: A Study of Seventy-Six Luiseño Baskets in the Riverside Municipal Museum Collection* and Shanks, *California Indian Baskets: San Diego to Santa Barbara and Beyond to the San Joaquin Valley, Mountains and Deserts*.

¹³⁰ I focus primarily on Chumash and Tongva basket patterns since these tribes felt the strongest impacts of the missions and urbanization in Southern California.

cultural and historical significance of those designs. The chapter will conclude by highlighting the impacts colonization and the tourist trade had on basketry, and how basket patterns reflect the intersection of indigenous and European cultures in Southern California. By doing so, it will call attention to the role basket weavers have played in maintaining their ancestors' basket practices, particularly in preserving their conventional designs.

Southern California Baskets

When Kroeber wrote *Basketry Designs of the Mission Indians of California*, he identified a group of tribes that shared a similar basket weaving tradition. While tribes from the northernmost part of California (i.e. the Trinity River tribes) only make twined baskets, people in Southern and Central California typically make coiled baskets. Central California weavers decorate their baskets by adding feathers and beads to dyed wefts.¹³¹ Southern California weavers typically do not use feathers and beads, but they weave patterns into the body of each coiled basket. Weavers from Southern California tribes have developed a basket weaving tradition that is unique from the rest of California. Through trade and intermarriage, weavers from the various Southern California communities have always exchanged ideas and influenced one another's work. It is often difficult to discern the culture of origin for baskets made between Chumash and Tipai territory. Many of the same plants grow throughout the coastal region between modern day San Luis Obispo and San Diego. Early weavers from different areas used some plants more than others in their baskets, but they often traded materials with one another. As a result, it is sometimes impossible to determine where a basket that predates 1900 was made, because the weaver may have obtained her or his materials from outside the community. For the

¹³¹ Central California includes the coastal region between Mendocino and Monterey and inland towards the eastern side of the Sierra Nevadas.

sake of this thesis I will focus primarily upon the basic features that the Southern California tribes' baskets have in common.¹³²

Southern California weavers make some twined baskets, but they are known for their coiled baskets. A weaver begins a coiled basket with a starting knot that consists of wefts that wrap around a bundle or three-rod foundation (Figure 12). The foundation is generally a bundle or several strands of a single material such as juncus or deer grass. Sometimes weavers use sumac or sedge for the wefts. Juncus (*Juncus textilis*) is a rush native to California that prefers to grow in damp areas. Weavers typically pull mature juncus stalks from their roots to use for the foundations and wefts of coiled baskets. These green stalks can grow as tall as eight feet and when they dry they turn a tan color, which is the main color often seen on the surface of coiled baskets.¹³³ Like juncus, deer grass (*Muhlenbergia rigins*) prefers to grow in moist soil, and it is the most commonly used foundation material in Southern California.¹³⁴ Weavers harvest the seed stalk of the deer grass plant that grows to 1/16 inch in diameter and 2-4 feet in length, and it dries to a light tan color. Yucca fiber (*Yucca whipplei*) is another resource sometimes found in basket foundations, though it is most commonly used in basket knots rather than the entire foundation. Weavers pound yucca leaves to produce the fibers used in the starting knots of coiled baskets. According to Farmer, "A fairly high percentage of 'Mission' basket weavers used Yucca fiber for their 'starts'."¹³⁵ Other materials sometimes found in basket foundations are sumac and sedge. Sumac (*Rhus trilobata*) is a shrub that produces shoots that can grow as long as five feet. Weavers also use the sumac shoots as a weft material that "darkens to a rich

¹³² For more information on individual tribes' materials and basket shapes, see Farmer's *Southern California Luiseño Indian Baskets*, Shanks' *California Indian Baskets*, Kroeber's *Handbook of the Indians of California* and Elsasser's "Basketry" in the *Handbook of North American Indians*, vol. 8.

¹³³ Farmer, *Basketry Plants Used by Western American Indians*, 121-123.

¹³⁴ Farmer, *Basketry Plants Used by Western American Indians*, 102.

¹³⁵ Farmer, *Basketry Plants Used by Western American Indians*, 176.

honey-tan and forms a patina.”¹³⁶ The species of sedge (*Carex spp.*) that Southern California weavers prefer typically grows near water. When it has been dried and prepared for weaving, sedge turns a light tan color, which is coated with a powdery white film that is leftover from the plant’s chalky outer coating that has been scraped off.¹³⁷ Weavers use sedge and several of these materials for coiling wefts as well.

In order to create contrasting patterns against a natural juncus background, weavers will use dyed juncus for black shapes, yucca root for red designs, and red bud for brick-red patterns. Southern California weavers pick the root of the yucca plant or Joshua tree (*Yucca brevifolia*), a different species than that used for yucca fiber starts, for its brownish red color. For a different shade of red, weavers gather the shoots of red bud (*Ceris occidentalis*), which grows either as a shrub or tree.¹³⁸ Weavers use red bud to create designs on coiled baskets, and some also make twined baskets out of red bud. The most common materials found in twined baskets are juncus, tule and sumac. Tule or Bulrush (*Scirpus spp.*) grows in or near water where it reaches heights of about five feet. Weavers along the entire Pacific Coast of the western United States use tule stalks to create a variety of items, such as baskets, cradles, boats, duck decoys, dolls, mats and thatched houses (Figures 13-16). Tule is a pliable material, which is why native people use it in a variety of everyday objects. In twined baskets, tule typically functions as the warp material.

Southern California weavers make twined baskets to serve different purposes than coiled baskets. Coiled baskets consist of wefts wrapped around a foundation that spirals about a center knot, and twined baskets follow a web-like pattern (Figure 17). Like coiled baskets, twined baskets begin with a knot that ties together the twining warps that serve as the foundation of the basket. Yet, twining warps extend out from the knot in a web-like arrangement rather than in a

¹³⁶ Farmer, *Basketry Plants Used by Western American Indians*, 157.

¹³⁷ Farmer, *Basketry Plants Used by Western American Indians*, 147.

¹³⁸ Farmer, *Basketry Plants Used by Western American Indians*, 142.

spiral, and the movement of the warps changes depending on the type of basket. Warps are typically made out of juncus, tule, willow or sumac, which are also used for the wefts that tie the warps together. While the wefts weave around the foundation of a coiled basket, wefts weave in and twist around warps in twined baskets. Shanks notes that twined “baskets are undecorated or have very modest designs.”¹³⁹ Archaeological remnants of early twined baskets, such as the water bottle baskets found on the Channel Islands and in caves usually no longer have multi-colored patterns. These baskets may have been dyed various natural colors at one time, but organic dyes fade over time. While weavers use a variety of materials in coiled baskets, they typically make twined baskets out of one material, either tule or willow. Southern California twined baskets are generally undecorated, and when dyed, their pigments often fade; so, few scholars have studied their patterns.

Twined burden baskets (Figure 18), water bottle baskets (Figure 19), seed beaters (Figure 20), and woodpecker traps (Figure 21) are the main types of twined baskets that Southern California weavers make.¹⁴⁰ With the exception of woodpecker traps, these twined baskets are similar in shape and function to Great Basin baskets. Basket shapes indicate that the people of Southern California exchanged ideas with people from the Great Basin as well as other parts of California. Indigenous people throughout California use burden baskets to carry loads on their backs, which are held up by a strap that wraps around the carrier’s (usually a woman’s) forehead (Figure 22). Early native women wore coiled basket hats to protect their foreheads from burden basket straps (Figure 23). “The southern California coiled hat is higher than the northern form, shaped like a fairly tall frustum. Generally, southern women wore hats only when they were

¹³⁹ Shanks, *California Indian Baskets*, 149.

¹⁴⁰ Southern California weavers also make coiled burden baskets.

carrying a load with a carrying strap or tumpline.”¹⁴¹ Some women wear basket hats at ceremonies today, but there is no historical evidence that they did so in the past. Before native people adopted modern lifestyles, basket hats primarily served a utilitarian function, as did burden baskets and seed beaters. Gatherers strike seed beaters against plants to shake out their seeds that then fall into burden baskets, which they carry on their backs. Early women typically carried dry loads in burden baskets, and they used twined water bottle baskets sealed with asphaltum, a natural tar, to transport water on long journeys (Figure 19).¹⁴²

Basketry traps are useful in catching animals, such as birds and fish. These traps are “long and narrow openwork baskets” (Figure 21).¹⁴³ Twined baskets such as these are less commonly utilized today since synthetic products and machines have replaced them. Southern California’s indigenous people rarely hunt for their own food today, and few individuals eat the same foods as their ancestors. When contemporary weavers make twined baskets, they typically weave them for demonstration purposes and for museum displays to give modern day audiences a sense of the tools early indigenous people used to collect their food. Yet, some weavers still make and use their baskets. Some Southern California native mothers strap their infants into cradles to carry on their backs or to give the baby a secure place to rest. Basket cradles, though, are neither twined nor coiled baskets. Southern California people make y-shaped and u-shaped cradles that have “horizontal slats across the back,” and sunshades project out from the top to provide shade for the baby (Figure 13).¹⁴⁴ The cradle in the photograph made by Tima Lotah Link is a contemporary example of a Chumash y-shaped cradle.

¹⁴¹ Elsasser, “Basketry,” 638.

¹⁴² “Asphaltum – natural tar – can be collected from beaches. In the past, Indians employed it primarily as an adhesive for hafting projectile points or for adhering sundry items.” Kent G. Lightfoot and Otis Parrish, *California Indians and Their Environment* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009), 250.

¹⁴³ Shanks, *California Indian Baskets*, 9.

¹⁴⁴ Shanks, *California Indian Baskets*, 50.

Early Southern California weavers made both twined and coiled burden baskets. They stored their food in coiled storage baskets, which are tightly woven containers that preserve and protect food. The main types of coiled baskets indigenous people use are mortar hoppers (Figure 24), winnowing trays, sifting trays, parching trays (Figures 3 & 4), leaching baskets (Figure 25), and cooking baskets (Figure 26) to prepare food.¹⁴⁵ Weavers apply asphaltum to hoppers, which are bottomless coiled baskets, to attach them onto stone mortars. The hopper helps to contain the flour produced from seeds that a woman grinds between a stone pestle and mortar. Winnowing trays are flat baskets with a slightly raised edge that women normally use to separate seeds from other plant materials collected at the time of gathering. Sifting trays serve a similar purpose as winnowing trays, but they are used after seeds have been turned into flour in order to separate out rough pieces. Women place hot stones on parching trays and inside cooking baskets to heat acorns and other food items. Before acorn flour can be cooked, one must pour water over the flour that rests on a leaching tray. The water flushes tannic acid out of the flour through the bottom of the tray. Before acorns are processed they are stored in a willow acorn granary (Figure 27). Willow (*Salix spp.*) is a material native weavers use extensively throughout the United States, but Southern California weavers rarely use willow in their baskets, and only for acorn granaries.¹⁴⁶ Acorn granaries are coiled vessels, but unlike the tightly woven coiled baskets typically found in museums, they do not have surface patterns.¹⁴⁷

Early native people relied upon baskets to process and store food, but they also made baskets for personal use. Gambling trays, like winnowing, sifting and parching trays, are flat, circular baskets with a slightly raised edge (Figure 28). Southern California people made, and

For more information on cradle baskets, see Brian Bibby, *Precious Cargo: California Indian Cradle Baskets and Childbirth Traditions*, Berkeley, CA: Heyday Books, 2004.

¹⁴⁵ Winnowing trays, sifting trays, and parching trays have a similar shape and look nearly identical.

¹⁴⁶ Farmer, *Basketry Plants Used by Western American Indians*, 162.

¹⁴⁷ For more information on how to make an acorn granary, see Farmer's video "Making a Diegueño Acorn Granary." California Indian Arts Association Video Collection, Item 2005.025.012.

still use, gambling trays to play a game with walnut shell dice.¹⁴⁸ “Prior to c. 1930’s, Indians used trays...in their dice games, which were primarily a lady’s [activity].”¹⁴⁹ In addition to the small storage baskets that contained shell money and small possessions, early bottleneck treasure baskets held valuables (Figure 29). These baskets have a globular shape that forms a narrow and short, neck-like opening at the top. Early native people used bottleneck baskets in ceremonies, but they later “became immensely popular items made for sale.”¹⁵⁰ After coiled bottleneck baskets and trays gained popularity in the tourist trade, weavers continued to make them both for sale and personal use. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries weavers also experimented with new basket forms such as the bowl-shaped Chumash presentation baskets (Figure 9), baskets with pedestals (Figure 30) and cups (Figure 31). Some weavers created basket shapes that are unique to their communities, but this chapter will not go into detail explaining those differences.¹⁵¹ Instead, it will deconstruct Kroeber’s guide to “Mission” designs and examine the main types of patterns that are unique to Southern California as well as the new patterns that emerged as a result of assimilation.

Southern California Basket Patterns

In the two versions of the article he wrote on “Mission” basket designs for the American Museum of Natural History, Kroeber did not designate particular patterns as belonging to specific tribes. Some of the symbols he listed may have crossed over among numerous communities, especially since people from various tribes lived within a single mission settlement, and people often intermarried with others outside their tribes. “Baskets were the

¹⁴⁸ Shanks, *California Indian Baskets*, 9.

¹⁴⁹ Farmer, *Southern California Luiseño Indian Baskets*, 27.

¹⁵⁰ Shanks, *California Indian Baskets*, 10.

¹⁵¹ This thesis will not describe all the basket patterns each tribe has ever used. For an in-depth explanation of the types of baskets unique to each tribe, see Shanks’ *California Indian Baskets*, Blackburn’s *Ethnohistoric Descriptions of California Indian Culture*, and Farmer’s *Southern California Luiseño Indian Baskets*. These are the main texts I referenced, but others exist as well.

chief container and major trade item, second only to shell beads on a list of ninety-one items traded by California tribes.”¹⁵² This fact helps to explain why the baskets made by the tribes of coastal Southern California display similar qualities.

Nonrepresentational Designs

In his publications Kroeber described basket patterns as “Mission” designs, but the examples he gave actually represent Southern California’s ongoing basket pattern tradition. A few patterns may have emerged during or after the mission years. Kroeber observed that Southern California weavers typically wove geometric patterns into their baskets, and later made baskets with “pictures” to gratify “white people.”¹⁵³ Even though new motifs emerged, geometric patterns continued to be used well after colonization. When European explorers encountered indigenous people in Southern California, they probably found baskets with geometric and abstract designs. Then, at the missions and later, weavers began to experiment with new designs inspired by images they saw on European and Euro-American goods. Weavers continued making baskets with geometric patterns, and they sometimes combined conventional geometric designs with European-inspired motifs, and still do so today. In her thesis on *Cahuilla Coiled Basketry*, Linda Agren notes, “in baskets made for sale after 1900, geometric designs remained very popular.”¹⁵⁴ After 1900, Cahuilla weavers combined popular geometric designs with realistic motifs that appealed to a non-native market. Like the Cahuilla, other Southern California weavers combined geometric and representational patterns in their baskets after contact with European settlers. Agren argues that animal and plant motifs, sacred beings, and “objects such as arrowheads and mission bells” began appearing on Cahuilla baskets around

¹⁵² López and Moser, *Rods, Bundles & Stitches*, 4.

¹⁵³ Kroeber, *Basketry Designs of the Mission Indians of California*, 8.

¹⁵⁴ Linda M. Agren, “Cahuilla coiled basketry: tradition and innovation” (M.A. Thesis, University of Washington, 1994), 41.

1900.¹⁵⁵ It is known that other tribes like the Chumash began using European-inspired motifs well before 1900. Scholars who like to track artistic styles by period may attempt to give a start date to each phase of Southern California basket patterning. It is nearly impossible to do so, since each tribe began using different patterns at separate points in time.¹⁵⁶ Conventional geometric designs seem to have always appeared on the so-called “Mission” baskets. That is not to say that all Southern California weavers use the same patterns, but they create baskets with similar geometric shapes and stylized designs. Kroeber’s publications include tables that chart the main types of motifs these weavers used in their baskets. The main shapes Kroeber identified are the cross, checkerboard designs, rectangular forms, triangles, diamonds, and v shapes (Figure 32). These motifs usually appear in clusters of the same shape or different shapes. Weavers would organize these designs in symmetric and asymmetric arrangements such as step-patterns or zigzags (Figure 33).

Petroglyph and Pictograph Designs

Early Southern California weavers also made patterns that are similar to petroglyph (rock carvings) and pictograph (rock paintings) designs. The earliest petroglyphs date “from about 500 B.C. to A.D. 900 or 1000” and pictographs date to “about A.D. 1300 or 1500.”¹⁵⁷ It is believed that coiled baskets were produced as early as 1000 B.C. , so baskets may have influenced petroglyph and pictograph designs and vice versa.¹⁵⁸ In Tongva territory, petroglyphs generally consist of abstract designs, and pictographs usually depict zigzag lines, parallel lines, diamond

¹⁵⁵ Agren, “Cahuilla coiled basketry,” 41.

¹⁵⁶ I use the word “unconventional” to refer to European-inspired motifs that diverged from the geometric and stylized motifs typically found on Southern California baskets. Rather than describing indigenous designs as “traditional” I call them “conventional” patterns. “Traditional” is a confusing and misleading term that I address in greater detail in chapter four of this thesis.

¹⁵⁷ C. William Clewlow, “Prehistoric Rock Art,” in *Handbook of North American Indians*, vol. 8, California, ed. Robert F. Heizer (Washington, D.C: Smithsonian Institution, 1978), 623-624.

¹⁵⁸ Elsasser, “Basketry,” 634.

and chevron shapes, and crosshatching.¹⁵⁹ These abstract and geometric patterns are all commonly found on baskets. Clay P. Bedford observed in 1980 that the designs on a “Mission” Utility basket in the California Academy of Sciences collection evoke petroglyphs (Figure 34). “The geometric motif is a very early one and is related to the designs in petroglyphs in the southern California area.”¹⁶⁰ Unfortunately, Bedford did not explain which petroglyphs the design resembles. The repeating parallel lines that appear on both ends of the oval shaped tray look like the typical petroglyph motifs described by Bedford. Petroglyphs appear in several regions of coastal Southern California, including the Chumash territory in modern day Santa Barbara County, the Tongva territory in Los Angeles County and in the Cahuilla region that includes Riverside County. If the design is based on rock art, then it is possible that a weaver who lived near a petroglyph made the basket. Or, an artist who carved petroglyphs either owned a basket in this style or knew of these basket patterns. The “Mission” utility basket is just one example that may represent the influences rock art and basketry had on one another. The repeating triangular design on the “Mission” Utility basket evokes a petroglyph found near Joshua Tree, CA at the Coyote Hole petroglyph site within Cahuilla territory (Figure 35).

In 1959, artist and scholar Kurt Baer observed that some of the anthropomorphic and zoomorphic motifs found on “Mission” baskets also appear in petroglyphs and some pictographs. “Some of the fairly realistic motifs of human and animal forms used by them in their caves, and sometimes on their baskets, could by extension be considered fairly representative symbols.”¹⁶¹ Baer suggested that the realistic forms that appear on baskets were related to the imagery typically rendered in cave paintings. A petroglyph depicting what scholars believe to be a shark

¹⁵⁹ McCawley, *The First Angelinos*, 140.

Clellow, Jr. “Prehistoric Rock Art,” 623.

¹⁶⁰ Clay P. Bedford, *An Exhibition of Western North American Indian Baskets: from the Collection of Clay P. Bedford at the California Academy of Sciences, Golden Gate Park, San Francisco, CA* (San Francisco: California Academy of Sciences, 1980), 54.

¹⁶¹ Kurt Baer, “California Indian Art.” *The Americas* 16 (July 1959), 29.

or killer whale was found in the Cave of Whales on San Nicolas Island. Baer asserted that weavers stopped using representational motifs in their art, mostly in the “Mission decorations,” because the priests forbade them from using these “diabolical” and “pagan” symbols.¹⁶² Europeans are usually credited with inspiring the realistic designs found on baskets made for the tourist industry. I would argue that the non-native interest in realistic motifs may have actually provided weavers with an opportunity to revive some of the early anthropomorphic and zoomorphic designs that were abolished at the missions.

Non-Indian collectors and dealers also contributed to the popularity of basketry within the souvenir trade. Grace Nicholson sold baskets from her curio shop in Pasadena, CA beginning in 1902. She sought out the best basketry produced in California, which she then sold to wealthy, non-native collectors, including the Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology.¹⁶³ Appendix C shows that the majority of the Southern California baskets in the Hearst Museum collection have non-representational patterns.¹⁶⁴ Even though the nonrepresentational designs appear to have remained the most popular and are uniquely indigenous, dealers would have marketed baskets made in Southern California as “Mission” baskets. This marketing strategy responded to a non-native interest in and nostalgia for California’s history as a Spanish colony. Even though baskets labeled “Mission” were typically made after 1834, a collector would have felt he or she was purchasing a souvenir from California’s mission days because of the (falsely) implied connection.

¹⁶² Baer, “California Indian Art,” 29.

¹⁶³ Marvin Cohodas, *Basket Weavers for the California Curio Trade: Elizabeth and Louise Hickox* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press and Los Angeles: Southwest Museum, 1997), 1.

¹⁶⁴ The statistics recorded on the charts are approximations. Museum records are unreliable, and should not be taken as accurate representations of basketry production.

European-inspired Designs

As coiled baskets gained popularity at the missions and later in the tourist market, weavers altered the patterns and shapes of their baskets. Even though he made generalizations about basketry and left out dates for the examples he gave, Kroeber's publication identified two main types of basket patterns in Southern California. Few examples of baskets made before 1769 exist today, but it seems that prior to the Franciscans' arrival in California, weavers used nonrepresentational geometric and abstract designs in their baskets. Baskets made in the nineteenth century have nonrepresentational designs, but weavers also experimented with new designs influenced by European imagery. As discussed in chapter two, Chumash weavers used Spanish coin designs in their coiled baskets at Mission San Buenaventura. While Spanish imagery influenced Chumash weavers, this was not the case at all the missions. It seems that weavers in other parts of Southern California continued using indigenous patterns in their baskets, and they may have made subtle alterations based on motifs they saw at the missions. Kroeber believed that one of the designs (Figure 36, Kroeber fig. 64) found on a "Mission" basket, which represents a church, "is a modern variant of the old native pattern."¹⁶⁵ Kroeber was referring to figure 64 on his diagram of "Mission" designs, but he did not give an image of the "old native pattern" to compare with the church-like motif. The similarities between the church-like motif and the abstract shapes that appear on Kroeber's chart may actually demonstrate the weavers' ability to adapt conventional designs to European imagery. Two other patterns, figures 12 and 37 found on Kroeber's chart (Figure 32) could also represent church structures. The rectangular outlines of these shapes call to mind church buildings, but unlike figure 64, crosses do not extend from their rooflines. When rotated 180° the white line that appears inside the black rectangular box in figure 37 looks similar to the outlined shape that

¹⁶⁵ Kroeber, *Basketry Designs of the Mission Indians of California*, np.

appears inside figure 64. Out of these three motifs, figure 64 is the most church-like in its appearance. Figures 12 and 37 may evoke flat-roofed church buildings, but they are quite abstract. I would argue that these two shapes were invented independently of the missions, and figure 64 may have emerged after native people came into contact with the mission churches.

Kroeber's work does shed light on the fact that nonrepresentational patterns are commonly found in Southern California baskets made after 1769. This proved that Southern California's indigenous people preserved many of their artistic traditions. While the tribes of Southern California make baskets using similar materials and motifs, they have also developed their own unique basket styles. Curator Bruce Bernstein writes, "The weave a basket-maker uses is a cultural choice, governed by time-honored tribal traditions. It is not a decision she makes individually, but rather one governed by the social setting in which she lives."¹⁶⁶ Even though weavers have changed their basket patterns to meet their patrons' interests, they generally adhere to conventions established by their ancestors. Chapter four will discuss contemporary basket weaving and the ways in which weavers respect convention while experimenting with new styles.

Chumash

The Chumash presentation or dedicatory baskets are the first known examples of European-inspired Southern California baskets. "They indicate that the Indians 50 years or so after the first Franciscan mission influence began to be felt were still carrying on a revered tradition with grace and enthusiasm, not to mention consummate skill."¹⁶⁷ The Franciscans established the first California mission in 1769, and twenty-two years later, Spanish explorers started collecting baskets. Joyce Herold wrote an article in which she discussed fourteen

¹⁶⁶ Bernstein, *The Language of Native American Baskets from the Weavers' View*, 17.

¹⁶⁷ Elsasser, "Basketry," 638.

Chumash baskets that Alejandro Malaspina collected during his 1791 expedition to California. These baskets are now in the collection of the Museo Arqueológico (Archaeological Museum) in Spain.¹⁶⁸ According to Herold, twelve of the baskets in the Malaspina Collection reflect typical Chumash characteristics.¹⁶⁹ One of the fourteen baskets (Figure 37), however, may embody European influences. “The only form not previously described for the Chumash is the beautifully-made lidded, deep ovoid bowl of squat globular shape. This basket has intriguing similarity to unlidded Pomo forms, and it again raises the question of whether lids were a trait introduced by Europeans.”¹⁷⁰ Weavers may have begun making lids after colonists arrived in California. No lidded baskets made before 1769 exist, so it is difficult to determine if Chumash weavers made lids for their baskets before colonization.

The basket bowl in the Malaspina collection (Figure 37) features geometric designs and four cross motifs, which appear on the basket’s base. Herold does not attempt to interpret the designs of the basket, however, multiple interpretations can be made. The diamond, butterfly and cross motifs could be examples of pre-contact basket patterns. The combination of these geometric forms and the crosses on the basket may or may not signify the hybridization of indigenous and Christian designs. Kroeber stated that the cross “is a native design.”¹⁷¹ In this case, the basket may be an example of early Chumash basket weaving. Crosses have a long pre-contact history in Native American art, especially in the southern United States. In Pima basketry “traditional design motifs ... combined with variations of the whorl, spiral, rosette, or cross, are not only the most common but the oldest as well.”¹⁷² In Cherokee culture, the cross is part of a motif that represents their creation story: “the circle containing the equal-armed cross

¹⁶⁸ Joyce Herold, *Chumash Baskets from the Malaspina Collection* (Scottsdale, AZ: American Indian Art, Inc., 1977), 68.

¹⁶⁹ Herold, *Chumash Baskets from the Malaspina Collection*, 71.

¹⁷⁰ Herold, *Chumash Baskets from the Malaspina Collection*, 72.

¹⁷¹ Kroeber, *Basketry Designs of the Mission Indians of California*, np.

¹⁷² Peter T. Furst and Jill L. Furst, *North American Indian Art* (New York: Rizzoli, 1982), 33.

... symbolizes the Sacred Fire.”¹⁷³ Native people like the Pima of Arizona and the Cherokee, originally of the southeastern United States, began using crosses in their art well before Europeans colonized the Americas.

Early Chumash basket weavers made baskets with geometric designs well before the Spanish arrived in California. “In general, Chumash baskets show a preference for narrow design elements over solid masses of color, and these design elements were always purely geometric until after Spanish contact.”¹⁷⁴ This style can be seen in a Chumash basket from the Malaspina collection (Figure 38). Four zigzag elements radiate out from a circle at the center of the tray expanding towards the border band. Each zigzag is comprised of three black stepped lines that move in perfect unison, which attests to the weaver’s skill. These black lines stand out against a solid tan-colored background. A band appears below the outermost rim of the basket, which contains the zigzags. “Almost all Chumash baskets have a ‘principal band,’ a border band placed about its own width below the rim. The rim is often finished with short segments of alternating dark and light stitches, called ‘rim ticking’.”¹⁷⁵ The band on the Malaspina Collection basket appears below the rim, and it has alternating wefts of dark and light materials. Some weavers later combined the conventional principal band and rim ticking with Spanish-inspired designs in their baskets. It seems that Chumash weavers stopped making Spanish-inspired baskets after the missions were secularized in 1834.

Tongva

Chumash baskets display the missions’ direct influence on basket patterns, but this appears not to have been the case south of Chumash territory. A photograph taken sometime

¹⁷³ Sara Bates, “Honoring,” in *Native American Art in the Twentieth Century*, ed. W. Jackson Rushing, III (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 198.

¹⁷⁴ Timbrook, “Native American Arts in the Spanish Missions,” 327.

¹⁷⁵ Timbrook, “Native American Arts in the Spanish Missions,” 327.

between 1895 and 1923, which is now in the Braun Research Library Collection at the Autry National Center, depicts Tongva basket weaver Jacinta Serrano (Figure 39A). Part of the photograph's caption reads, "Jacinta Serrano, one of the last of the basket makers of San Gabriel."¹⁷⁶ Serrano sits in the center of the black and white photograph surrounded by metates, stone bowls, a basket and blankets. The basket tray and stone bowls represent the survival of Tongva artistic practices and food preparation customs.

A sign rests against the brick wall on the right side of the photograph, to Serrano's left, which reads: "Jacinta Serrano Basket Maker. She is 90 years old and lived at San Gabriel in the early days of the mission. [Illegible text] for sale." If the photograph was taken in the late nineteenth century as the object records indicate, it is possible that Serrano lived at the Mission San Gabriel before it was secularized. The photograph does not offer a good view of the basket that sits to Serrano's right hand side. It looks like the basket tray might have lettering on its outer rim, but the photograph is not very clear and the rest of the basket's design is unclear (Figure 39B). Serrano, or whoever made the basket may have woven words into the basket's rim like the Chumash weavers who made the presentation baskets. Historical evidence indicates that the Tongva weavers who lived at the missions did not make baskets with heraldic patterns. If the mission leaders influenced Tongva basket weavers, their impact on Tongva basket designs was very subtle when compared to Chumash baskets. Few scholars acknowledge any direct effect the missions had on Tongva basket designs. Crosses appear on Tongva baskets, including one in the Hearst Museum collection (Figure 40). This basket has a cross motif with legs of equal length that Kroeber lists as a pattern (Figure 32, fig.1) typically found on "Mission" baskets, and these crosses do not look like Christian crosses. Aside from the Chumash, it seems that most

¹⁷⁶ Autry National Center, "Search," accessed February 4, 2012, <http://collections.theautry.org/mwebcgi/mweb.exe?request=record;id=M138314;type=101>.

Southern California weavers did not begin using unconventional, non-native inspired designs until after the mission years. Even though tribes developed unique patterns in response to non-native interests, it appears that most tribes share many of the same conventional basket patterns.

According to Shanks, “Gabrielino coiled basketry was transitional between the Chumash and that of the Luiseño. About half the coiled baskets documented or attributed to the Gabrielino/Tongva are very similar to Chumash baskets, differing primarily in small details in design placement and some minor differences in technical features.”¹⁷⁷ It makes sense that museum labels often list Gabrielino and the name of a second tribe, such as Luiseño, as the culture of origin for these baskets. “Much of what Gabrielino people used has not survived, with the exception of things made of stone, shell and bone. For the most part, perishable items such as baskets are in museums and private collections and date from the Mission period.”¹⁷⁸ Few Gabrielino/Tongva baskets exist today, so very little can be said about the changes Tongva basket patterns have undergone.¹⁷⁹ In 1962, Bernice Eastman Johnston wrote that the Gabrielinos were an extinct race of people.

Hugo Reid wrote that the Gabrielino baskets were so well known as to require no description, little thinking that the next century would relegate both the baskets and the makers, to all practical purposes, into a class with the fabled Dodo. We have, however, a few examples, and many more of the work of other “Mission Indians,” so that we can form a good idea of the splendid artistry which had been achieved in this field.¹⁸⁰

Johnston believed that the limited number of Gabrielino baskets in existence in the 1960s was a sign that the Gabrielino people were extinct, which was not the case. The Gabrielino/Tongva population had decreased by the time Johnston wrote her book, and many Tongva people had stopped weaving. Johnston cited Hugo Reid who wrote about Gabrielino/Tongva culture

¹⁷⁷ Shanks, *California Indian Baskets*, 43.

¹⁷⁸ Miller, *The Gabrielino*, 114.

¹⁷⁹ Appendix B shows that museums have very few, and in some cases no baskets made by Gabrielino/Tongva weavers.

¹⁸⁰ Johnston, *California's Gabrielino Indians*, 32.

eighteen years after the secularization of the missions. In 1852 Gabrielino baskets were so well known Reid felt he did not have to describe them. When Robert F. Heizer published Reid's letters in 1968 he included an image of the Hearst Museum's Tongva basket (Figure 40). Heizer noted in the caption that the date of manufacture is unknown, but he did point out that the basket bowl was made "at San Gabriel."¹⁸¹ Perhaps he meant that the basket was made at Mission San Gabriel, in which case it probably was made during the years in which the mission operated from 1769 until 1834. Shanks notes that the basket was made before 1906 in San Gabriel, but not specifically at the Mission San Gabriel. Whether or not it was made during the mission years, this basket is a good example of the type of basketry Tongva weavers produced after contact with colonists. It also represents the continuity of conventional designs, such as the cross motif and horizontal banding.

In 1991, Bruce Miller described Gabrielino/Tongva basket designs as "sometimes quite complex, though primarily geometric."¹⁸² Miller highlighted the probability that "every type of basket and every design element had some meaning that has now been lost to us. This was true of other tribes in California and elsewhere."¹⁸³ Perhaps there were sacred or cultural reasons why basket weavers did not share the symbolic significance of basket motifs, if they had any symbolism. It is more likely, however, that the meaning of each basket design was never recorded because early basket weavers did not have a written language. Weavers might have explained the significance of a basket's design through stories passed down orally. The arrival of colonists and changes in Tongva lifestyles prevented elders from passing on their stories to younger generations, who could no longer speak their indigenous languages.

¹⁸¹ Heizer, *The Indians of Los Angeles County*, 28.

¹⁸² Bruce Miller, *The Gabrielino* (Los Osos, CA: Sand River Press, 1991), 50.

¹⁸³ Miller, *The Gabrielino*, 51.

Cahuilla, Luiseño, Ipai, Tipai

By studying baskets in museum collections scholars have observed that Tongva baskets are quite similar to Luiseño baskets. Tongva basket “techniques and designs were similar to [those of the] Luiseño, and those baskets that have survived are often designated as Luiseño.”¹⁸⁴ Like the Tongva, Luiseño weavers typically weave horizontal bands with geometric shapes into their coiled baskets. Although they rarely used zoomorphic, anthropomorphic and other representational patterns in their baskets, Luiseño basket weavers made a few baskets with eagles, floral motifs and other realistic shapes around 1900. “Luiseño baskets, by comparison, are quite subdued in pattern and... contain one or several narrow black horizontal bands on their sides. With certain exceptions, pattern motifs are mostly horizontally oriented and geometric in form, with few zoomorphic, anthropomorphic, or natural phenomenon motifs.”¹⁸⁵ Realistic designs did not gain much popularity among the Tongva, Luiseño, Ipai and Tipai communities.

While the Ipai, Tipai, Luiseño and Tongva continued making baskets with conventional patterns through the nineteenth century, other Southern California tribes adopted realistic motifs. Scholars make different arguments as to why certain Southern California tribes used realistic designs and others did not. Shanks argues that the tribes of Southwestern California used “figures of rattlesnakes, butterflies, humans, birds and other representational forms” because they were in contact with Europeans longer than other California tribes.¹⁸⁶ Some of these communities, which he refers to as “Southwestern California” tribes, actually did not use representational motifs as often as others did in their baskets. As a matter of fact, rattlesnake designs did not appear on Southern California baskets until after the mission years. The Cahuilla are known for incorporating anthropomorphic and zoomorphic shapes in their baskets, especially

¹⁸⁴ López, and Moser, *Rods, Bundles & Stitches*, 5-6.

¹⁸⁵ Farmer, *Southern California Luiseño Indian Baskets*, 15.

¹⁸⁶ Shanks, *California Indian Baskets*, 69.

rattlesnake designs. The rattlesnake design became popular with the Cahuilla and other Southern California tribes after 1900.¹⁸⁷ Donna Largo (Cahuilla) tells a story about the rattlesnake in Cahuilla culture:

My grandmother told me a story about the rattlesnake and how it got into the basket. She said the women would all sit around on the ground making baskets and a rattlesnake kept coming toward one lady. And she'd chase him away and chase him away. And he kept coming back. And finally she told the rattlesnake, 'If you don't go away, I'm going to put you in my basket.' Well, he wouldn't go away, so that's how we got rattlesnakes in our baskets.¹⁸⁸

Largo's story shows how some basket patterns like the rattlesnake are culturally unique. This realistic pattern also came into use after 1900.

Representational Designs

Prior to the 1890s, most Southern California weavers had not begun to experiment with representational patterning. "Quite obviously a basket collected in 1900 was made prior to 1900 and thus very likely represents a style-technique only minimally influenced by outsiders. It is quite evident that a well worn storage or utility basket collected in the 1890's, represents an item created well before 1890, with little or no Non-Indian influence."¹⁸⁹ Farmer refers to the era in which Southern California weavers made baskets for sale to tourists as the "Basket Renaissance."¹⁹⁰ It was during this period from 1890 to 1930, known as the "Arts and Crafts Movement," which valued homemade objects, when weavers experimented with new patterns and designs that appealed to Euro-American preferences.

Some Euro-American collectors and tourists who viewed California Indian baskets in galleries and at World's Fairs may have found realistic designs more appealing because the figures were recognizable and familiar. Bruce Bernstein notes, "During the early part of the 20th

¹⁸⁷ Bibby, *The Fine Art of California Indian Basketry*, 92.

¹⁸⁸ Donna Largo in Bibby, *The Fine Art of California Indian Basketry*, 92.

¹⁸⁹ Farmer, *Southern California Luiseño Indian Baskets*, 74.

¹⁹⁰ Farmer, *Southern California Luiseño Indian Baskets*, 21.

century, non-Indian buyers requested more realistic birds and other naturalistic representations on baskets. Weavers complied by reducing the amount of abstracted iconography, as well as by simplifying design layout and complexity.”¹⁹¹ While some collectors struggled to make sense of the ambiguous geometric designs seen on early baskets, connoisseurs could easily identify human, animal and plant-like shapes on newer baskets. Rather than trying to understand Native American culture and the historical significance of early basket designs, some collectors sought out baskets that appealed to their own tastes. Kroeber and Bernstein argued that European and Euro-American collectors did not appreciate the unrealistic patterns found on baskets. I would argue that non-native collectors have a wide range of tastes. It is evident that collectors liked the conventional baskets that do not have European-inspired designs, because many of these are housed in museums today.

Museum collections have made it possible to document basket patterns. The numbers recorded in Appendix C, which are based on the five museums’ collections I studied, show that nonrepresentational patterns outnumber representational and European-inspired patterns. Collections numbers show that nonrepresentational patterns remained popular in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. More specifically, most of the baskets in the Southwest Museum collection that were made between the 1880s and 1920s have nonrepresentational designs (Appendix D). It should also be noted that not all baskets have patterns. These might have been made quickly for personal use without patterns, or the patterns faded over time.

In the early twentieth century, anthropologists praised baskets and other Native American artworks made without European influences as authentic representations of America’s indigenous cultures. Kroeber believed that conventional baskets were the only authentic

¹⁹¹ Bruce Bernstein, *The Language of Native American Baskets from the Weavers’ View* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of the American Indian, 2003), 19.

examples of Southern California basketry. He criticized collectors for buying baskets with new designs because they were not accurate representations of native art. Kroeber also stated that non-native collectors preferred realistic patterns to the geometric patterns that appeared on typical native baskets. “Most of the Mission designs that can be recognized as being pictures of something – rattlesnakes, birds, human beings, or the like – occur in comparatively modern pieces made after the weavers discovered that many white people take more interest in even a poor picture than in a beautiful geometric design that carries no meaning to them.”¹⁹² Kroeber was comparing conventional Southern California baskets with those that have European-inspired designs, such as letters from the alphabet and non-indigenous animals, and later aboriginal inventions like the rattlesnake. In the process of comparing post-colonial basket decorations to conventional patterns, Kroeber overlooked the fact that non-native collectors fervently collected conventional baskets. Kroeber also oversimplified and dismissed the complexity of basket designs that emerged after colonization. The geometric designs associated with Southern California basketry are beautiful, but so are the realistic figures seen on later baskets. Two anthropologists who came after Kroeber shared his sentiments.

In 1964, Lawrence Dawson and James Deetz criticized Chumash baskets made after 1834. “A few baskets are known to have been made after this date and one may have been made as late as 1910, but these are poor degenerate remnants, lacking the regular features of the once rich and splendid tradition.”¹⁹³ Although the authors acknowledged that the Chumash continued to make baskets after the missions were secularized, they were highly critical of these baskets. It seems that Dawson and Deetz preferred early baskets because they were considered “authentic” representations of Native American art. Art Historian Ruth B. Phillips notes that the idea of

¹⁹² Kroeber, *Basketry Designs of the Mission Indians of California*, 8.

¹⁹³ Lawrence Dawson and James Deetz, *Chumash Indian Art* (Santa Barbara, CA: University of California, 1964).

authenticity is grounded in primitivist notions of the Native American population's romanticized past.

An empty space gapes in accounts of the history of Native art during almost the entire modernist century; in standard accounts, the production of 'authentic' and 'traditional' art is perceived to end in the reservation period, while a contemporary art employing western fine art media did not begin until the early 1960s. The traditional Native arts promoted by the primitivists were defined as belonging to a tribal past, available for appropriation as a means of restoring authenticity to modernist western art. As a corollary, contemporary makers of "traditional" art were regarded as inauthentic if they were guilty of innovative incorporations of "modern" Euro-North American genres and styles.¹⁹⁴

Phillips' explanation of primitivist perceptions of Native American art in the twentieth century underlines the issues in Kroeber's publications and Dawson and Deetz's work. These anthropologists believed that baskets with European-inspired motifs were inauthentic because they were made at a time when most Native American people had assimilated into modern society. Anthropologists believed that "real Indians" only lived in the past when their lifestyles were undisrupted by colonization. This attitude is unrealistic and dismisses the fact that aboriginal people maintained many of their values and customs while adapting to contemporary society.

Contemporary Basketry

American Indian art is and always has been changing. "Indian art is the sense of motion and creation expressed symbolically in objects and it is to be understood as a way of living. Indian arts have always been dynamic, challenging conventions and adapting, reinterpreting, and improvising."¹⁹⁵ Native American art, like European art, constantly evolves as artists experiment with new styles. In the case of Southern California Indian baskets, weavers have always challenged convention whether for their own interests or to appeal to collectors. Some basket

¹⁹⁴ Ruth B. Phillips, "Art History and the Native-made Object: New Discourses, Old Differences," in *Native American Art in the Twentieth Century*, ed. W. Jackson Rushing, III (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 103-104.

¹⁹⁵ Bruce Bernstein, "Contexts for Growth and Development of the Indian Art World in the 1960s and 1970s," in *Native American Art in the Twentieth Century*, ed. W. Jackson Rushing, III (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 68.

weavers adopted new patterns after foreign settlers arrived in California, but that does not mean they completely abandoned conventional designs. “In general the design elements and principles of layout were the features most resistant to European influence.”¹⁹⁶ Some Southern California weavers changed the shapes of their baskets to meet European interests while they maintained the basic indigenous design elements. Aside from making baskets for non-native collectors, early weavers also made baskets for personal use and for members of their communities. They may have created baskets with realistic images for collectors, but they probably made other baskets with stylized abstract designs for use within the tribe. Today weavers make baskets as gifts for relatives and when they receive commissions from tribal members. They often weave baskets with designs created specifically for the person who will receive the basket. Before colonization weavers also would have made specially designed baskets for relatives and friends.

Weavers experimented with new shapes and patterns after 1769, but they continued using the same materials and coiling techniques, which is what makes Southern California baskets unique from the rest of California. In spite of their differences, the tribes of Southern California consistently used geometric patterns in their baskets, which is perhaps one reason why Kroeber grouped them together. The word “Mission” is misleading, but the idea of grouping these baskets together was logical. Southern California weavers have always influenced each other’s work since before Spanish colonization and later when government officials forced native people to live together at the missions and on the reservations. By the 1920s, Southern California weavers had maintained their basket customs, including basket materials, shapes and patterns. Basket weavers preserved the basic structure of basket weaving, which is why California baskets are so recognizable today. Most contemporary weavers continue to follow the conventions

¹⁹⁶ Dawson and Deetz, *Chumash Indian Art*, n.p.

established by their ancestors. Chapter four will discuss the ways in which weavers maintained their ancestors' customs while adapting basket weaving to current needs and interests. Tradition is not lost, but rather it is always changing.

Chapter IV: Basket Weaving Today and Revitalization

Contrary to Kroeber's prediction in the 1920s that basket weaving would die out, basket weaving survived and it is a custom California's native people practice today. In the mid-twentieth century, many Native American people fell out of touch with their indigenous customs. As Bibby pointed out, it was not "chic" to be a basket weaver in the 1940s and '50s, nor was it cool to be an Indian. People often hid their aboriginal identities out of fear of racial discrimination. When communities saw traditional knowledge diminishing with the passing of the older generations in the 1980s, they began reviving their customs. California's indigenous populations are working together today to revitalize the basket weaving practices of their ancestors. In 1992 a group of basket weavers created the California Indian Basketweavers Association (CIBA). This organization, as well as the Southern California basketweavers group Nex'wetem, promotes traditional basket weaving education. Thanks to the efforts of basket scholars and weavers, indigenous people can learn how to weave like their ancestors did and pass on that knowledge to future generations.

Chapter three examined the changes conventional basket weaving underwent as weavers responded to changes in their social environments. This chapter will discuss the revival and re-invention of traditional basket weaving in the late twentieth and the early twenty-first centuries. First, it will highlight the role organizations and museums play in promoting basket weaving knowledge and education. Then, it will discuss conventional basket weaving and what "tradition" means in an indigenous and contemporary context. This chapter seeks to underscore the role current basketweavers play in disseminating aboriginal knowledge and reviving interest within native communities in this traditional art practice.

Basket Weaving Organizations

Basket weaving knowledge in Southern California's early aboriginal communities was customarily passed on from grandmother to granddaughter. By the mid-twentieth century few granddaughters wanted to learn basket weaving. As a result, many grandmothers today cannot teach their grandchildren how to weave. Some elders learned how to weave in their younger years and they share that knowledge today with novice weavers within and outside of their families and communities. A few weavers who did not learn how to weave from their grandmothers sought out the guidance of weavers from neighboring communities.

Contemporary weavers from numerous tribes can learn and develop their skills by watching master weavers demonstrate their work at gatherings held throughout California. CIBA hosts an annual gathering every June for weavers from all over California.

In June 2011, I attended CIBA's 21st annual gathering where I gained valuable insight on the organization and the programs it supports. The CIBA gathering is a three-day event that is open to members and non-members. Unlike a formal conference held indoors, the gathering took place outdoors in a peaceful setting where weavers and vendors set up tables to display and conduct their work. The 2011 gathering was located in Charles Howard Park in a small town outside of Sacramento called Ione, which is located in Miwok territory. The gathering began on a Friday when the local Miwok (aka. Mewuk) people welcomed the weavers. On Friday and Saturday weavers taught classes and gave weaving demonstrations, which I witnessed when I attended on Saturday.

Prior to the gathering I contacted the vice chairwoman of CIBA, Carrie Garcia (Cahuilla/Luiseño) to find out if any Southern California weavers would be present for potential interviews. At the gathering, she directed me towards Tashina Ornelas, a Luiseño weaver and

educator who descends from the Apis people of Temecula Village. When I approached Ornelas, she kindly offered to answer a few questions about how she learned to weave and what she teaches to young weavers. Ornelas even showed me how to split juncus into three pieces for weaving. Like most Southern California weavers, Ornelas uses juncus and other materials like yucca and deer grass in her coiled baskets. She explained that weavers prepare these materials in different ways. Ornelas pounds yucca, but other weavers shred yucca with a knife.¹⁹⁷ Her description of the processes of preparing plants shed light on the fact that there is not one correct way to prepare materials. While early weavers depended on stone tools and flint knives, weavers today have the option to use modern tools when creating baskets. They also continue to collect materials from the same plants that their ancestors depended upon. Most weavers respect the plants that provide basket weaving materials, but some people cut yucca stalks from the base of the plant, which disrupts future growth. Ornelas teaches her students to bend and break the yucca stalk at its base so that the plant can continue growing normally. People who do not know how to properly collect materials take short cuts like cutting plants, and they sometimes gather in the wrong places. Conscientious weavers make an effort to educate their students on how to respectfully gather materials.

Like their ancestors, contemporary weavers value the connection they have to their hereditary land and its resources. While some weavers experiment with unconventional materials such as waxed thread and horsehair, most native weavers work with the same materials their ancestors used to create coiled and twined baskets. The majority of native people no longer depend solely upon the land for food, but some continue to weave baskets modeled after those made by their ancestors who used them for storing, gathering and preparing food. Weavers first learn to gather materials during the seasons when plants are ready for harvesting. Each weaver

¹⁹⁷ Tashina Ornelas, personal interview, June 25, 2011.

also tries to find his or her own area for gathering so as not to disturb the spots where other weavers collect. When plants have new growth and are ready to be harvested, weavers collect only as much as they need. Basket weaving requires that weavers learn the practices necessary to maintaining and cultivating the environment.

After students learn how to gather materials, they can identify plants whose colors will be used in patterns. Plants like juncus dry one color, and they can also be dyed. Before the introduction of foreign materials and plants, weavers used resources like redbud (dark red) and sumac (tan) to create contrasting patterns in coiled baskets. Contemporary weavers dye juncus black by soaking it in water with walnuts and nails. Weavers use a variety of natural and synthetic resources to dye materials for making patterns in their baskets: “infusions of bark, ground nuts, plant sap, sometimes seaweeds, already colored stems of differing materials, or aniline dyes.”¹⁹⁸ A few weavers use synthetic ingredients to dye weaving materials today, but most create baskets using the same principles their ancestors followed.

People in the modern world can quickly access food and cooking utensils by driving to the nearby store or shopping online. Glass and metal vessels have replaced cooking baskets. Contemporary weavers honor their ancestors’ customs and make baskets using materials not found in stores. Weavers often struggle to find juncus, deer grass, tule, yucca and redbud in places where they once grew in abundance. Master weavers show their apprentices sites where they can collect materials, but they sometimes face obstacles in reaching those gathering sites. Unlike their predecessors who lived in environments undisturbed by pollution and urban development, contemporary basket weavers deal with impediments to gathering materials. The state of California owns most of the land where weavers prefer to gather materials. In order to

¹⁹⁸ Dolan H. Eargle, Jr., *Native California: An Introductory Guide to the Original Peoples from Earliest to Modern Times* (San Francisco, CA: Trees Company Press, 2008), 63.

collect materials on government land, weavers must obtain permits. Organizations like the California Indian Basketweavers Association (CIBA) and tribal governments help weavers gain access to resources on state land.

According to the CIBA website, the association's "vision is to preserve, promote, and perpetuate California Indian basket weaving traditions while providing a healthy physical, social, spiritual, and economic environment for Basketweavers. We work to create a functioning network of Basketweavers who support one another in their gathering and weaving activities, and who pass their tradition to the next generation."¹⁹⁹ This statement demonstrates the valuable role that the association and individual weavers play in sustaining basket weaving practices. CIBA helps basket weavers find places to gather basket materials, and it "strives to educate agencies, environmental groups and the public about traditional plant management techniques as practiced by basketweavers."²⁰⁰ The association also works with native basket weavers outside of California who are trying to revitalize their own basket weaving practices. Basket weaving revitalization is not a phenomenon unique to California. In 1996 a group of basketweavers from the Pacific Northwest founded the Northwest Native American Basketweavers Association (NNABA) to represent the indigenous peoples of Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana and British Columbia.

As part of my research on contemporary basket weaving, I attended the 2011 NNABA gathering to learn more about the state of basket weaving along the northern coast of the western United States. At the gathering I had the opportunity to participate in a workshop on tule doll making. A young native girl from Oregon led this workshop as well as a class on making tule duck decoys. Numerous weavers at the gathering offered classes, but I chose the doll-making

¹⁹⁹ California Indian Basketweavers Association, "History," accessed April 1, 2011, <http://www.ciba.org/about.html#history>.

²⁰⁰ "California Indian Basketweavers Association, Ongoing Projects," accessed April 1, 2011 <http://www.ciba.org/ongoing.html>.

workshop because Southern California people also make dolls out of tule. Tule dolls are not baskets, but they are made from tule, which is a material commonly used in hand-made objects. Tule dolls and other non-basket objects exemplify the continuity of aboriginal knowledge. In the early days, mothers made dolls out of natural materials for their children. Though plastic toys have replaced these traditional toys, weavers still make them to pass on their appreciation for native knowledge and customs to their children.

At the NNABA and CIBA gatherings weavers of all ages worked side by side making baskets in a variety of styles and materials. At the CIBA gathering, I listened to the intergenerational panel in which three generations of weavers spoke about their relationships with basketry. The young people on the panel emphasized the important role basket weaving has played in bringing their families together and in developing an appreciation for their indigenous heritages. They also spoke enthusiastically about basket weaving and their desire to share those skills with others. By attending these gatherings I learned that master weavers are not just elders, but also young people. When native youth attend gatherings and see young people teaching classes, they are more likely to pursue weaving.

CIBA and Nex'wetem are not the only organizations that offer basket weaving classes in California. The Miwok Archaeological Preserve of Marin (MAPOM) in Novato and the Idyllwild Arts Academy in Idyllwild promote native arts education. The MAPOM offers classes in basket weaving as well as other traditional crafts. Even though the Miwok people are from Northern California, the MAPOM's programming demonstrates the widespread effort California's native communities are making, with the support of non-native allies, to preserve and pass on basket weaving knowledge. Likewise, the Idyllwild Arts Academy located in the

San Jacinto Mountains of Southern California, offers classes taught by indigenous artists and plant experts.

During the summer of 2011 the Idyllwild Arts Academy offered several classes on Native American arts, including a class taught by native plant expert Barbara Drake (Tongva) and basketweaver Abe Sanchez. Even though basketry was not the focus of the class, it provided participants with knowledge about gathering materials commonly used in baskets. According to the course description:

Participants will learn ways to save and utilize native plants from helping the environment to medical alternatives. Native plants are taking their rightful place in health and nutrition. This class will offer a hands-on experience in collecting, growing and using these culturally valuable plants today. Students will have an opportunity to make a soap root brush and a pine pitch stick as a take home project.²⁰¹

Soap root brushes typically do not appear in books about baskets, but like baskets they are made out of natural materials and, at one time, served everyday purposes (Figure 41). In order to make a soaproot brush, one must dig the root of the soaproot plant (*Chlorogalum pomeridianum*) using a digging stick. The soaproot bulb has long fibers that native people use as a brush. One end of the bulb is usually tied with cordage or sinew to hold together the fibers. Early people throughout California used soaproot brushes for numerous purposes, such as hair grooming, cleaning and scrubbing cooking utensils, and sweeping floors.²⁰²

At the CIBA and NNABA gatherings, weavers showcased a variety of woven and handmade objects, including soap root brushes, cradles, yucca sandals, acorn granaries, medallions (Figure 42), dolls and duck decoys (Figure 15) among other things. This thesis focuses primarily upon baskets, but there are other woven works of art that are being made

²⁰¹ Idyllwild Arts, "Native American Arts," accessed January 24, 2012, <http://www.idyllwildarts.org/summer.aspx>.

²⁰² Campbell, *Survival Skills of Native California*, 98-99.

today. When museums exhibit Native American baskets they often include other indigenous materials to give visitors a better feel for how early aboriginal people lived and what they used.

Museums and Living Basketweavers

Basket weaving associations are not the only organizations promoting basket weaving education and cultural revitalization. Some museums throughout California feature contemporary baskets in their exhibits, such as the seven discussed in chapter one, and they host artist in residence programs for local native artists. The Cooper Regional History Museum works closely with the local Tongva people to develop content for its Tongva exhibits. It is a history museum, but the Cooper Museum's exhibits are not constrained to representations of the past. The 2011 Tongva exhibit displayed early and contemporary objects, including replicas of baskets, sandals, and soap root brushes made by living weavers. The exhibit also included photos of a variety of native plants that early Tongva people traditionally ate and used. The exhibit highlighted the technological accomplishments of the Tongva people who like other Southern California aboriginals, made complex baskets and tools only using natural and local materials. Unlike basket weaving, there is not a market for these utilitarian objects today. In some instances, native experts will make soap root brushes, cordage, and yucca sandals for museums to represent the type of items their ancestors relied upon before the introduction of modern technology. The Cooper Museum plays a significant role in underlining the accomplishments of Southern California's first people and their ability to sustain cultural knowledge. Other museums that continue to exercise outdated exhibition practices and do not acknowledge living native peoples typically do not have the funds to update their exhibits.

Scholars must acknowledge living descendants of California's first people when discussing their Native American culture. "It is important that we do not relegate California

Indians to a time that has come and gone, but recognize that contemporary Native people and their cultural traditions have much to teach us about the future of California.”²⁰³ Museums often complicate modern day patrons’ understanding of California Indians. Many historical objects, such as those on display at the Hearst Museum perpetuate the idea that California Indians only existed in the past. “Museum specimens are all fine and good, but they refer to chapters in the state’s history that have little bearing on us today.”²⁰⁴ This observation highlights one of the major problems museums create for living California Indian populations. Unless a museum patron sees an early basket sitting next to a modern day basket, with perhaps a photo of the weaver, he or she will leave the museum thinking California Indians are extinct.

According to Dartt-Newton, missions typically provide very little information on the people who made the baskets displayed in their museums:

Baskets, pottery, and other hand-woven items can be found at all missions, but in many cases these are accompanied by text placards indicating only that they were made by Indian people. In all but two cases, this is the only information available about the artisans. More commonly (at 12 missions), the attribution for baskets and other materials is the donor. In two instances, the materials used in the basket are described and the only date given is the date of donation to the mission. This leaves the visitor to assume baskets were woven during the mission period.²⁰⁵

Without information about the people who made the baskets, the displays perpetuate the idea that California Indians lived only in the past. If museums included dates with the baskets, visitors would learn that most of the baskets seen in museums today were made during or after the mission years. If museums, particularly mission museums, displayed contemporary baskets, visitors would learn that basket weaving is a living art and that it survived along with the

²⁰³ Lightfoot and Parrish, *California Indians and Their Environment*, x-xi.

²⁰⁴ Lightfoot and Parrish, *California Indians and Their Environment*, 2.

²⁰⁵ Deana Dartt-Newton, “California’s Sites of Conscience: An Analysis of the State’s Historic Mission Museums,” *Museum Anthropology* 34 (2009), 100.

descendants of those who lived at the missions. An exception is the Autry National Center, which has developed exhibits focused on living basket weavers.

Seven out of the eleven museums I visited are now turning their attention toward contemporary basketweavers and developing programs geared toward basket weaving education. In 2009 the Autry National Center located in Los Angeles, opened a temporary exhibit entitled “The Art of Native American Basketry: A Living Tradition.” This exhibit, which closed on May 6, 2012, featured ancient and contemporary baskets made by weavers from eleven regions of North America, including California. In conjunction with this exhibit, the Autry organized basket weaving workshops and classes that were open to members of the general public. At these workshops, weavers from various tribes taught museum visitors how to make baskets.

In addition to exhibition work, descendants of early weavers are now working with museums to bring basket records up to date. At the 2011 CIBA gathering, two Miwok men spoke on the panel “California Stories Through Indian Eyes” about their work with the Phoebe A. Hearst Museum. By opening their collections to these men, the Hearst Museum obtained valuable insight on who made certain baskets in the Miwok collection. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, few collectors recorded weavers’ names. Indigenous people sometimes assume that just because they inherited a basket from a relative that someone in their family made it, but this is not always the case. Weavers traded baskets or gave them away as gifts. When the two Miwok men studied the Hearst Museum’s collection they found that some basket records were inaccurate. Since both presenters had grown up watching women weaving baskets in the Miwok community they identified and corrected some of the basket labels based on their knowledge of individual weavers’ styles.

Though the Hearst Museum is collaborating with basket weavers and experts to update their collection records, their current basket exhibit is outdated. The Hearst Museum is working to improve its documentation about baskets, but as of my visit in June 2011, the public spaces did not yet reflect these changes. In the small exhibit space dedicated to California Indian culture, baskets sit on crowded shelves along with other native-made objects in glass display cases. These baskets are typical examples of basketry produced in California around or before 1900. Museums like the Hearst Museum play a prominent role in perpetuating antiquated perceptions of traditional aboriginal arts. In contrast, the Santa Monica History Museum acknowledges contemporary basket weaving and the living indigenous communities.

For example, the Hearst Museum exhibits conventional coiled baskets, but the Santa Monica Museum displays what appears to be a pine needle basket (Figure 43). The raffia strands extending from the unfinished end of the basket indicate that this is a pine needle basket, not a typical coiled basket made of juncus. Early Southern California weavers predominantly made coiled baskets and a few twined baskets, but before colonization weavers also may have made pine needle baskets. Some scholars have argued that pine needle baskets are not traditional because colonists introduced them to Southern California. “Pine needle basketry was long taught as a craft in government Indian schools. It is said to be of African-American origin in the South. Pine needle basketry is also found among several Southern U.S. Indian tribes, including the Seminole, Alabama-Koasati and others.”²⁰⁶ When people from western and central Africa arrived in the southeastern United States to work as slaves, they brought a rich tradition of basket weaving. The Gullah people of South Carolina, the descendants of African slaves, make pine

²⁰⁶ This quote was taken from a footnote in which Shanks states that this information was obtained through a personal communication with basket scholar Margaret Mathewson. Unfortunately, none of Ms. Mathewson’s publications record this information.
Shanks, *California Indian Baskets*, 69.

needle baskets.²⁰⁷ Native American people from the southeast, such as the Coushatta people of Louisiana and the Seminole of Florida, may have learned to make pine needle baskets from the Gullah people, but it is hard to say for certain.²⁰⁸ “Because the threading material used in the earliest pine needle baskets disintegrated, however, and because written records of the history of this craft are so sparse, the origins of pine needle basketry may always remain shrouded in mystery.”²⁰⁹ Government schools may have introduced southeastern pine needle basketry to Southern California natives. That does not rule out the possibility that native weavers started making baskets using pine needles well before Europeans arrived in California. It is not known for certain if Southern California weavers made pine needle baskets before European contact, but I would argue that they are a significant part of Southern California’s weaving culture, and have been for at least 100 years.

Farmer points out that pine needle baskets are a controversial topic in Southern California basket studies. Farmer does not stake a position, but he writes, “It is safe to say that Pine Needles were used by a very small group of Indian weavers.”²¹⁰ He also does not say if weavers made pine needle baskets before 1769. He does point out that a Diegueño lady made pine needle baskets on the Pechanga reservation.

Perhaps, the best known of the weavers using Pine Needles was the late Juanita Nejo Lopez. She was an Ipai lady who married Mr. Lopez, a member of the Pechanga Band and lived her married years on the Pechanga reservation. She made literally hundreds of Pine Needle baskets, including a number of such hats. The only other known Pine Needle users were members of the Osuna family near Santa Ysabel in San Diego County and an unnamed weaver in Mesa Grande.²¹¹

²⁰⁷ Judy Mofield Mallow, *Pine Needle Basketry: From Forest Floor to Finished Project* (Lark Books, 1997), 105.

²⁰⁸ “The Coushatta Tribe’s most significant and lasting cultural contribution is its basket weaving. The practice, which makes use of the Louisiana native longleaf pine needles, perpetuates a rural tradition of past generations of the Coushatta people.” Coushatta, “Longleaf Pine Needle Basket Weaving,” Accessed April 3, 2012, <http://www.coushatta.org/culture/crafts>.

²⁰⁹ Mallow, *Pine Needle Basketry*, 105.

²¹⁰ Farmer, *Southern California Luiseño Indian Baskets*, 9.

²¹¹ Farmer, *Southern California Luiseño Indian Baskets*, 9.

Lopez was born in 1882 on the Inaja Reservation, and later in life she lived on the Luiseño Pechanga Reservation (Figure 44). She passed away in 1973 after a lifetime of basket weaving.²¹² Lopez may have started making pine needle baskets before the first boarding school was established in Southern California. The Sherman Institute was established in Riverside, CA in 1902. Mary Osuna, of the Osuna family, made a pine needle basket in 1935 that was featured in the 1981 Riverside Municipal Museum exhibition, *Rods, Bundles and Stitches* (Figure 45). Pine trees are native to Southern California, so it is likely that weavers used pine needles in their baskets well before contact with Europeans.

Early weavers like Lopez and Osuna would have used local materials to weave pine needle bundles together. Farmer notes that in her pine needle baskets Lopez used sumac and cordage to create the foundation and then she wrapped juncus around a pine needle foundation (Figure 46).²¹³ I have also observed basket weavers using cordage instead of raffia to wrap bundles of pine needles together to create pine needle baskets. In Southern California, the Chumash make cordage out of dogbane, milkweed, nettle, yucca, seagrass and human hair. The Luiseño also use dogbane and sometimes Mohave yucca fiber.²¹⁴ After gathering these materials, creating cordage is a multiple step process. A woman typically cleans the fibers, and with the help of her husband or an assistant, she rolls strands of fiber on her thigh to create a twisted cord.

Some weavers use cordage in their pine needle baskets, but CIBA does not consider pine needle baskets traditional. At the 2011 gathering, CIBA only accepted baskets made out of natural materials for its showcase, which did not include pine needle baskets. CIBA membership only includes weavers who use “traditional” materials. Pine needles and cordage, which are

²¹² López and Moser, *Rods, Bundles & Stitches*, 214.

²¹³ Farmer, *Southern California Luiseño Indian Baskets*, 16.

²¹⁴ Paul D. Campbell, *Survival Skills of Native California* (Salt Lake City: Gibbs-Smith Publishers, 2009), 52-53.

natural and native materials, do not fit into this category according to their rules. I would argue that pine needle baskets are traditional because native weavers have been making them for over 100 years. Pine needle baskets do not have the elaborate designs found on juncus baskets, but weavers could create unique patterns by dyeing the pine needles or cordage. I have not seen this done, but I have seen pine needle baskets in which weavers use different types of stitches to wrap around the pine needle foundation, such as the split stitch and in between stitch. Since pine needle baskets are not difficult to make, they are, in my opinion, a good way for beginning weavers to learn how to make coiled baskets. Pine needle baskets also represent the changes Southern California basketry has undergone.

Traditional Basket Weaving

Through my research on basket weaving I found that scholars and weavers have contrasting attitudes on the issue of *traditional* basket weaving. Most weavers typically prefer to use natural materials like juncus and deer grass in their baskets because of the connection they have with the land that provides those resources. Today's weavers experiment with their baskets' designs to give their work a personal touch or to appeal to their patrons. "Indian arts have always been dynamic, challenging conventions and adapting, reinterpreting, and improvising. Indian art reflects a particular community's aesthetic that is firmly rooted within the daily lives of the people."²¹⁵ Like any art form, basket weaving is not static and it changes as weavers try out new styles. There is no doubt that prior to 1769 weavers from different communities exchanged ideas with one another through trade and intermarriage. Likewise, at the missions, local weavers learned new approaches to basket weaving from weavers who had been recruited from neighboring communities. Each tribe had, and still has, its own unique

²¹⁵ Bernstein, "Contexts for the Growth and Development of the Indian Art World in the 1960s and 1970s," 68.

styles and shapes, but most Southern California weavers follow the same basic principles when they make baskets.

Southern California basketry is a highly regarded art form through which indigenous people can express their creativity. Today basket weavers work in a diversity of styles and materials to meet their own needs and interests. Some academics believe that weavers from individual tribes worked within a set style, but this was not necessarily the case. “Too often, when people think about Native American baskets, we assume that the weavers who make them are hemmed in by rules that govern the ‘traditional’ arts. Nothing could be further from the truth. Tradition is not a list of rules, but rather a set of values that guide the weaver’s work.”²¹⁶ Weavers had, and still have, the flexibility to make their baskets unique from those made by other weavers. Regardless, there are certain cultural and regional constraints that influence a weaver’s work. The availability of materials plays a major role in the type of baskets and patterns a weaver can create.

In spite of the changes basket production has undergone, Southern California’s first people maintained the knowledge systems that are essential to weaving baskets. By passing on their basketry knowledge to future generations, indigenous people are weaving a connection with their ancestors whose presence is felt in the creation of each basket. Baskets can be made out of numerous materials, but by using native plants, a contemporary weaver helps to sustain the cultural knowledge that Southern California’s first people depended upon for centuries. After decades of cultural devastation aboriginal communities are finally reviving interest in traditional customs. Basket weaving provides a valuable avenue for native people to engage their indigenous identities and exercise aboriginal knowledge.

²¹⁶ Bernstein, *The Language of Native American Baskets from the Weavers’ View*, 20.

Unlike their ancestors who used baskets for everyday functions, modern day basket weavers create baskets, basket hats, baby cradles, as well as other handmade objects, for sale, as gifts and for educational and artistic display purposes. About fifty Kumeyaay, Paipai and Ipai weavers in San Diego and Baja California make baskets for a living.²¹⁷ These weavers sell their baskets in gift shops and at Native American cultural events like powwows, conferences and basketry gatherings. Most basket weavers, though, only weave in their free time. Few indigenous people can take the time to weave baskets as their ancestors did because everyday responsibilities prevent them from spending the time to learn. Several weavers make baskets as a way to relax or socialize with other weavers at gatherings. In my interviews I learned that some weavers do not feel comfortable selling their baskets. After she finishes a basket, a weaver may chose to give it away as a gift. The act of gifting a basket establishes a relationship between the weaver and the recipient that cannot be felt through a sales transaction. Sometimes weavers make basket hats to honor an elder or relative. In some cases, expecting parents will commission a weaver within the community to make a baby cradle. Other weavers still make and use baskets for utilitarian purposes. While numerous basket weavers adhere to the practices that their ancestors carried out prior to contact, it is important to recognize that Southern California basket weaving has undergone significant changes. These modifications reflect not only the evolution of basketry as an art form, but also indigenous peoples' responses to changes in their cultures and communities. It would be unrealistic for weavers today to make baskets exactly as their ancestors once did.

²¹⁷ This number is based on information provided online through California Indian Arts & Crafts. The Kumeyaay Nation includes the Paipai and Ipai communities of Baja California and Southern (Alta) California, respectively. The Kumeyaay are also known by the Hispanicized name "Diegueño." Kumeyaay.info, "California Indian Artists Directory," accessed April 3, 2012, http://www.kumeyaay.info/california_indian_artists/.

Some contemporary weavers see basketry as a medium in which to voice political commentary. Linda Aguilar (Chumash) is a weaver who uses unconventional materials such as horsehair, “shells, beads and other material she ‘picks up and stores in her pockets’” to make decorative baskets.²¹⁸ Aguilar’s work challenges the boundaries of “traditional” basket weaving (Figure 47). An article published by the *Native Peoples* magazine, describes Aguilar as “a ‘contrary’ ... a person with a magical power, who if told what to do, will often perform exactly the opposite.”²¹⁹ Many weavers today chose to gather native plants to make baskets like their ancestors, but they are finding that these resources are hard to find. Aguilar uses materials that are more readily available and which allow her to create unique works of art that contrast conventional coiled baskets. Early weavers worked with materials that were available, so if waxed linen thread and horsehair had been accessible before colonization, they probably would have used them too.

Aguilar is not the first native person to use unconventional materials, and she is not the first weaver to insert political commentary into baskets. In the Pacific Northwest, First Nations artist, Joseph Feddersen (Okanagan and Lakes) weaves political statements into his baskets. Feddersen weaves patterns drawn from modern life into his baskets that he makes “using traditional techniques but with waxed linen instead of dogbane (Indian hemp).”²²⁰ In 2003 Feddersen made a series of nine twined saddlebag baskets with patterns from the urban landscape, such as a *High Voltage Tower* (Figure 48). This basket with its patterns representing high voltage towers and its unconventional materials signifies the impacts urbanization has had on the lives of Native American people. By making baskets that break away from convention, weavers like Feddersen and Aguilar draw attention to contemporary issues native people face.

²¹⁸ Margaret Dubin, *The Dirt is Red Here: Art and Poetry from Native California* (Berkeley, CA: Heyday Books, 2002), n.p.

²¹⁹ Richard A. Payne, “Linda Aguilar,” *Native Peoples* 16 (2002), 74.

²²⁰ Rebecca J. Dobkins, *Joe Feddersen: Vital Signs* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2008), 46.

Indigenous communities everywhere struggle to maintain their aboriginal customs, but they must adopt new lifestyles in order to survive in the modern world. This thesis has shown how weavers have always influenced one another and experimented with materials and patterns to create original artwork. I foresee basket weavers embracing new resources and sharing unprecedented approaches to basket weaving at future gatherings hosted by CIBA, NNABA and other organizations.

Chapter V: Conclusion and Future Studies

This thesis brings an indigenous and art historical perspective to the field of Native American basket studies in Southern California. Unlike Euro-American scholars who place labels on objects and artistic styles, California's first people did not use terms to categorize baskets. Therefore, I did not create a new category to describe the basket designs produced in the region of Southern California I discussed. Early collectors did not record weavers' names, but individual names are important in aboriginal communities. I propose that collectors and basket custodians identify baskets by their makers, rather than placing them under a category that dismisses artistic ingenuity and cultural differences.

Had Kroeber used a word other than "Mission," his publications might have had a different impact on Southern California basketry studies and museum practices. Kroeber published a book in 1905 entitled *The Basket Designs of the Indians of Northwestern California* on Northern California basketry, but in 1922 he chose to title his work on Southwestern California basketry using a politically charged term instead of the more appropriate regional term. Kroeber even noted in the longer version of his "Mission" basket publication that his choice of words was misleading. "The term which appears in the title to this publication is therefore historically rather unjustified and misleading; but it is fixed in public, governmental, and trade usage."²²¹ He recognized that his publication did not cover the basketry of the tribes surrounding all twenty-one missions. Kroeber still used the word "Mission" because it was commonly used in the 1920s to represent many of Southern California's native people. At the time, "Mission" was an acceptable term used to describe objects and people. One anthropologist could not have been solely responsible for the word's proliferation in museum collections and early twentieth century publications.

²²¹ Kroeber, *Basket Designs of the Mission Indians of California*, 153.

Scholars today are sensitive to terminology that misrepresents indigenous art and cultures. This thesis functions as a call for museums to take action in re-evaluating the terminology they use when labeling and cataloguing baskets from Southern California. “Mission” is confusing and has different meanings to different people. Museums ought to identify baskets by tribe, and when the tribe name is unknown, they should use “Southern California” or the appropriate place name to designate the baskets’ approximate geographic origins. As a result of my research, the Burke Museum has already updated its terminology so that the culture of origin for baskets from Southern California is listed as “Mission” –with quotation marks to show that *Mission* is not a tribe. In the future, the museum ought to hire experts who can help to identify the geographic and tribal origins of the baskets to replace the word “Mission” altogether. It is my hope that this thesis will make more museums and basket collectors aware of the need to recognize not only the tribe a basket represents, but also its maker. Thanks to the efforts of basket experts and weavers, museums are now recording weavers’ names and attributing baskets to specific tribes. Early collectors rarely recorded basket weavers’ names, so in some cases we will never know who made some of the earliest baskets.

The idea behind this thesis was partially inspired by my concern that the title of Kroeber’s publications on “Mission” basket designs was misleading. In chapter two I examined the history of the word “Mission” and how it has been used in anthropological, political and social contexts. The patterns found on baskets made at Mission San Buenaventura were inspired by Spanish influences introduced through the missions, so they could be called “Mission” baskets. However, labeling them as such still dismisses the indigenous heritages of the weavers who made them. Basket weavers who made baskets at the missions made the most of the unfortunate circumstances these institutions created for them. They managed to preserve their

weaving knowledge and gain recognition from the mission leaders. Ideally, basket patterns should be attributed to their makers and tribes, but that information is rarely recorded. Rather than using post-colonial terminology, I chose to describe patterns as representational and non-representational since evidence indicates that Southern California weavers have always used geometric and zoomorphic designs in their baskets. Moreover, in my interviews I found that some weavers of Native American ancestry call themselves “Mission” Indians and some do not. In the context of basketry studies, I believe it is best to record a weaver’s name and his or her tribal affiliation to avoid confusion.

Art history is not only concerned with artworks, but also with artists, which is why weavers’ perspectives informed this thesis. In chapter three I showed that weavers are responsible for the changes basketry has undergone, and in chapter four I credited them with preserving and reviving this artistic tradition. Some scholars have tried to argue that traditional indigenous arts only existed in the past, but this thesis proves that tradition changes as a result of outside (native and non-native) influences and new ideas. Weavers experiment with new basket patterns and shapes, but they also maintain relationships with their ancestors whose knowledge is embedded in each basket. By gathering the same plants and utilizing similar weaving techniques as their predecessors, weavers produce baskets today that are both traditional and contemporary. Bernstein notes, “As the weavers reminded us during our two-day session, basket-makers ‘have always been and will always be contemporary’.”²²² The first Southern California weaver who used the cross design was an innovator for her time, just as Maria Marta may have been the first Chumash weaver to weave her name into a basket. Weavers like Maria Marta who made baskets that appealed to patrons’ interests managed to save the art of basket weaving from going out of practice well after modern lifestyles replaced indigenous ones. People made baskets long before

²²² Bernstein, *The Language of Native American Baskets from the Weavers’ View*, 10.

the missions were established, and they continued making them well after the missions were secularized.

Future Studies

Through my interviews and by conducting research I learned a great deal about the history of basket weaving in Southern California that helped to answer the main questions I had when I started researching for and writing this thesis. Along the way I found myself asking new questions that were not answered here, but that can be answered through future studies. As noted, this thesis did not account for the characteristics that are unique to each tribe's basketry customs. Further studies could examine basket collections to provide statistics on a greater number of basket patterns, such as the tribal origins of certain patterns and when they (approximately) came into use. Credit should also be given to the collectors and dealers who supported basket weavers by popularizing their work within and outside of California. The souvenir trade encouraged Southern California weavers to use nonrepresentational motifs, but it also enabled weavers to revive anthropomorphic and zoomorphic designs that existed on baskets before foreign settlers arrived.

A separate study ought to be conducted in Mexico, Spain and other European countries to find out where other Chumash presentation baskets might exist. In the future, I also hope to study the Burke Museum's collection more closely so as to identify, if possible, which tribe and weaver produced each "Mission" basket. It was beyond the scope of this research to closely study the connection between rock art and basket patterns, but this is a topic that deserves greater attention and should be studied in the future. This thesis also opened up the question as to when pine needle baskets first began being made in Southern California. This is a question that could be addressed at greater length in future studies as well. It was beyond the scope of this thesis to

interview basket weavers from all the tribes I discuss here. Future research could include the perspectives of more basket weavers, especially from the Cahuilla, Ajachmem, Cupeño and Serrano communities. Justin Farmer's books have been extremely useful and gave my thesis an Ipai perspective. Though I focus more on Chumash and Tongva basketry, it was not my intention to favor one tribe over others. However, I could focus future research specifically upon the basketry customs of the Tongva or Chumash. This thesis set out to look at the issues Southern California tribes share in common when it comes to basket weaving, and it accomplished that goal.

In conclusion, ancient and contemporary indigenous people have overcome obstacles in preserving the artistic practice of basket weaving. As current weavers and future generations of native people continue to make baskets, tradition will take on new meaning. It is my hope that with a growing interest in basket weaving, scholars and weavers alike will discover new information about Southern California basketry to answer some of the questions raised here. This thesis has highlighted several of the misconceptions regarding "Mission" Indian culture and identity. This thesis has opened up a crucial discussion regarding issues of identity and the "Mission" designation that must be explored further in the future. I hope future native and non-native collectors and patrons will have a greater appreciation for the artists who make baskets along the southern coast of California, and remember them by their names and their communities.

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Appendix A: Images



Figure 1.

Map of the California Coast and Missions

Reprinted from *Parallel Histories: The California Missions*, The Library of Congress



Figure 2.

Chumash steatite bowl

Early to mid-1800s

Southwest Museum of the American Indian, #311.G.119



Figure 3.
Basket tray
“Mission” – Southern California
Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture, #2-1595
Photographed by Yve Chavez



Figure 4.
Basket tray
“Mission” – Southern California
Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture, #2-1662
Photographed by Yve Chavez

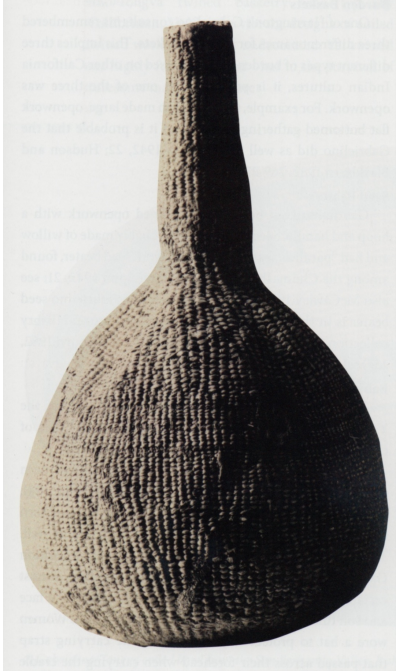


Figure 5.

Photograph of twined water bottle

Juana Maria (Tongva)

1840s or 1850s

C. Hart Merriam Photographic Collection, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley

Reprinted from Shanks 2010: 49



Figure 6.

“Ancient Chumash and Storage Baskets, Coiled Found in a Cave”

Reprinted from Kroeber 1925: 560

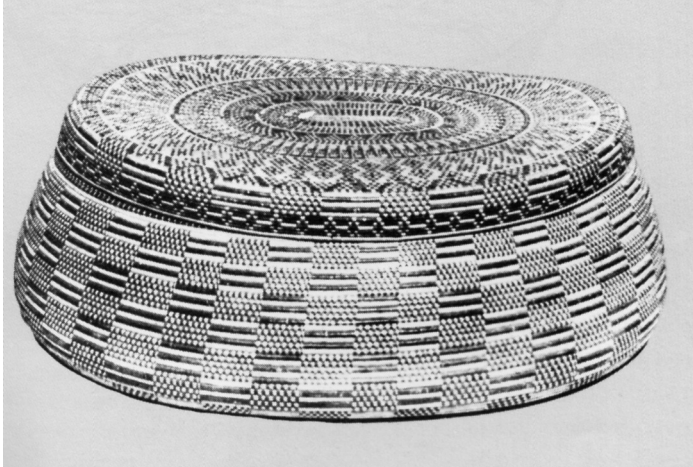


Figure 7.
Storage basket
Chumash
Museo de América
Reprinted from Polese 1977: 17



Figure 8.
Padre's basketry hat
Chumash
c. 1790
British Museum, #VAN 196
Reprinted from Timbrook 2009: 328



Figure 9.
 Presentation basket
 Maria Marta (Chumash)
 c. 1822
 Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology, #1-22478
 Reprinted from Bibby 1996: 9



Figure 10A.
 Petra Pico and Donancia Salazar
 c. 1890
 Ventura Historical Museum

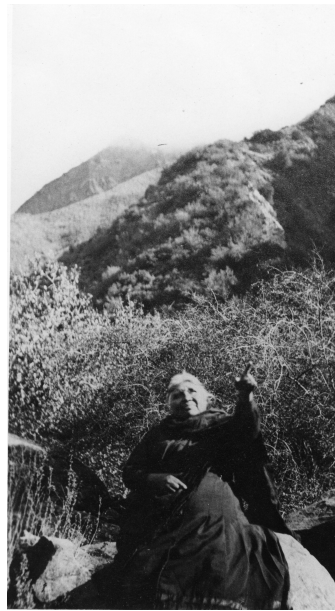


Figure 10B.
 Candelaria Valenzuela
 Ventura Historical Museum



Figure 11.

“Andrea Quevas and Maria Ignacio Nejo Wachena (Kumeyaay) as part of a living display at the California Pacific International Exposition in San Diego’s Balboa Park, 1935.”

Reprinted from Frank and Hogeland 2007: 104



Figure 12.

Coiling

Autry National Center

Photographed by Yve Chavez



Figure 13.

Chumash baby cradle (with purse, basket hat and tray)

Tima Lotah Link (Chumash)

Photographed by Yve Chavez



Figure 14.
Tule boat
Chumash
Photographed by Tima Lotah Link.

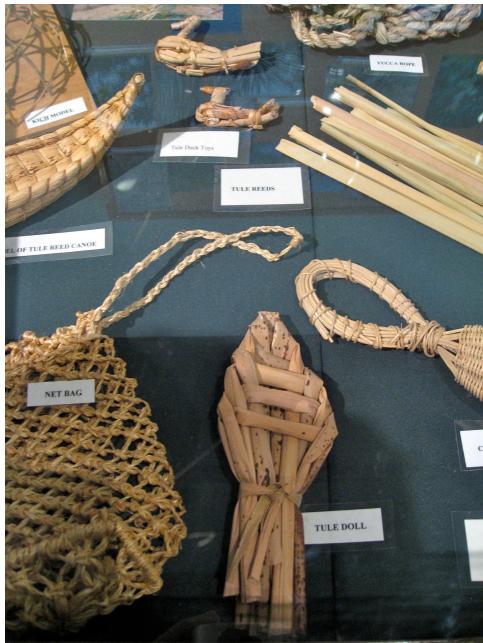


Figure 15.
Tule doll (foreground) and tule ducks (background)
Cooper Regional History Museum
Photographed by Yve Chavez



Figure 16.
Kiys (thatched hut)
Tongva
Rancho Santa Ana Botanical Gardens
Photographed by Yve Chavez

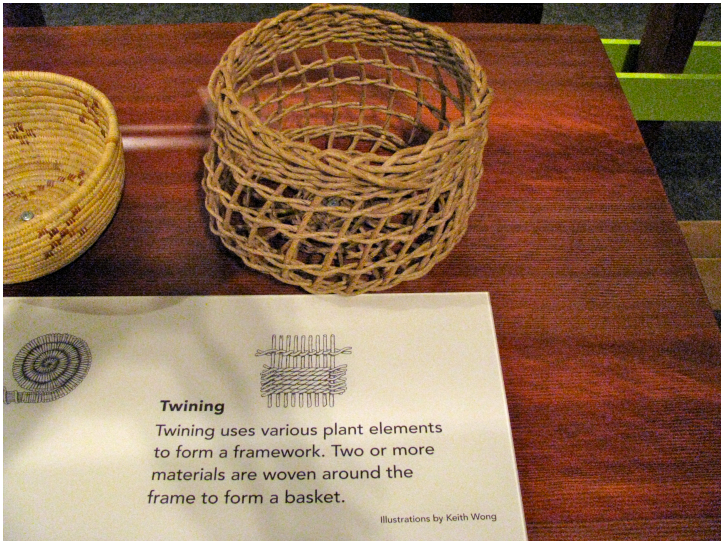


Figure 17.
Twining
Autry National Center
Photographed by Yve Chavez



Figure 18.

Twined gathering (burden) basket

Tima Lotah Link (Chumash)

c. 2011

Photographed by Tima Lotah Link



Figure 19.

Water bottle basket

Chumash

Early 1900s

Southwest Museum of the American Indian, #217-L-9

Reprinted from Shanks 2010: 34



Figure 20.
Seed beater
Gabrielino/Tongva
Before 1925
Southwest Museum of the American Indian, #144.L.1
Reprinted from "Collections," Autry National Center



Figure 21.
Twined woodpecker trap
Kimberly Johnson (Tongva)
Photographed by Yve Chavez



Figure 22.
 Mono woman with a burden basket
 c. 1885-1901
 Braun Research Library Collection, Autry National Center
 Reprinted from "Collections," Autry National Center



Figure 23.
 Basket hat
 Desert Cahuilla
 1920
 California State Museum, Courtesy Morongo Band of Mission Indians
 Photographed by Yve Chavez



Figure 24.
Basket hopper
Gabrielino
Southwest Museum of the American Indian, #811.G.778
Reprinted from "Collections," Autry National Center



Figure 25.
Leaching tray
"Mission Indian"
Late 1800s to early 1900s
Southwest Museum of the American Indian, #457.G.255
Reprinted from "Collections," Autry National Center



Figure 26.
 Serving or cooking bowl
 Attributed to Petra Pico (Chumash)
 c. 1890
 National Museum of the American Indian, #15/9013
 Reprinted from Bernstein 2003: 41



Figure 27.
 Acorn granary
 Eva Salazar (Kumeyaay)
 Photographed by Yve Chavez



Figure 28.
 “Mission” tray
 Probably Luiseño
 Late 19th to early 20th century
 Southwest Museum of the American Indian
 Photographed by Yve Chavez



Figure 29.
 Bottleneck treasure basket
 Chumash?
 1800s
 Southwest Museum of the American Indian, #811.G.1709
 Reprinted from “Collections,” Autry National Center



Figure 30.

Basket

Cahuilla band of Mission Indians

1909

Pomona College Museum of Art Collection, #P1235

Reprinted from "Collections," Pomona College Museum of Art



Figure 31.

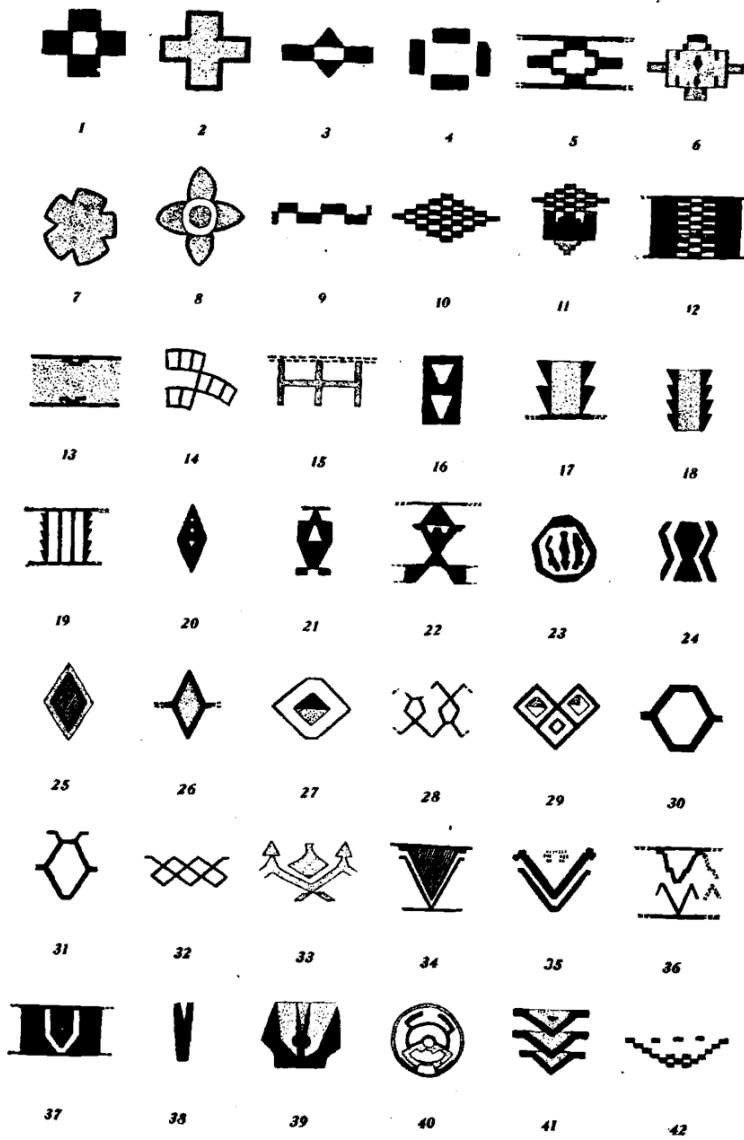
Basket

Mary Quintano

1908

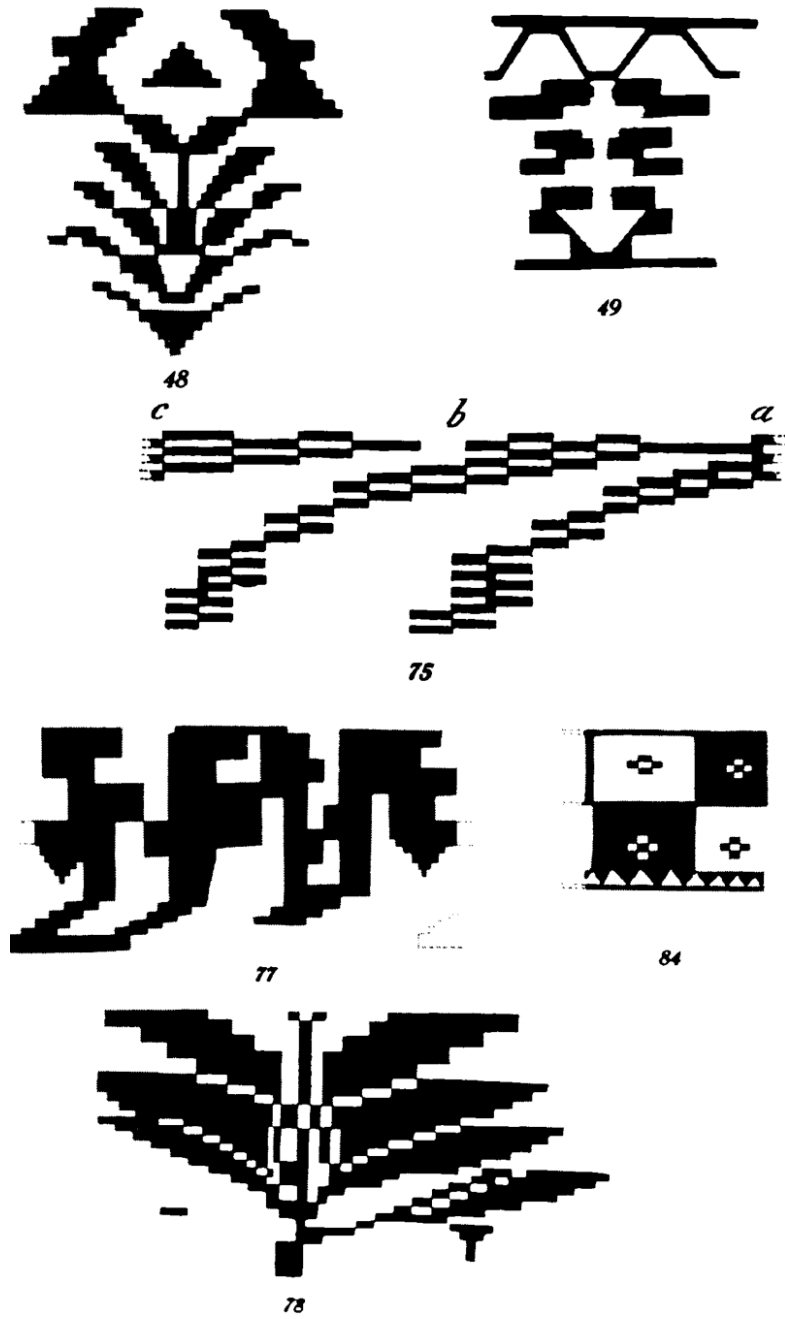
Pomona College Museum of Art Collection, #P1242

Reprinted from "Collections," Pomona College Museum of Art



Figures 1-42

Figure 32.
Analysis of Designs, Figures 1-42
1922
Reprinted from Kroeber 1922



FIGS. 48, 49, 75, 77, 78, 84. Elaborated Designs.

Figure 33.
Elaborated Designs, Figures 48, 49, 75, 77, 78, 84
Reprinted from Kroeber 1922



Figure 34.

“Mission” utility basket

Clay P. Bedford Collection, California Academy of Sciences

Reprinted from Bedford 1980: 54

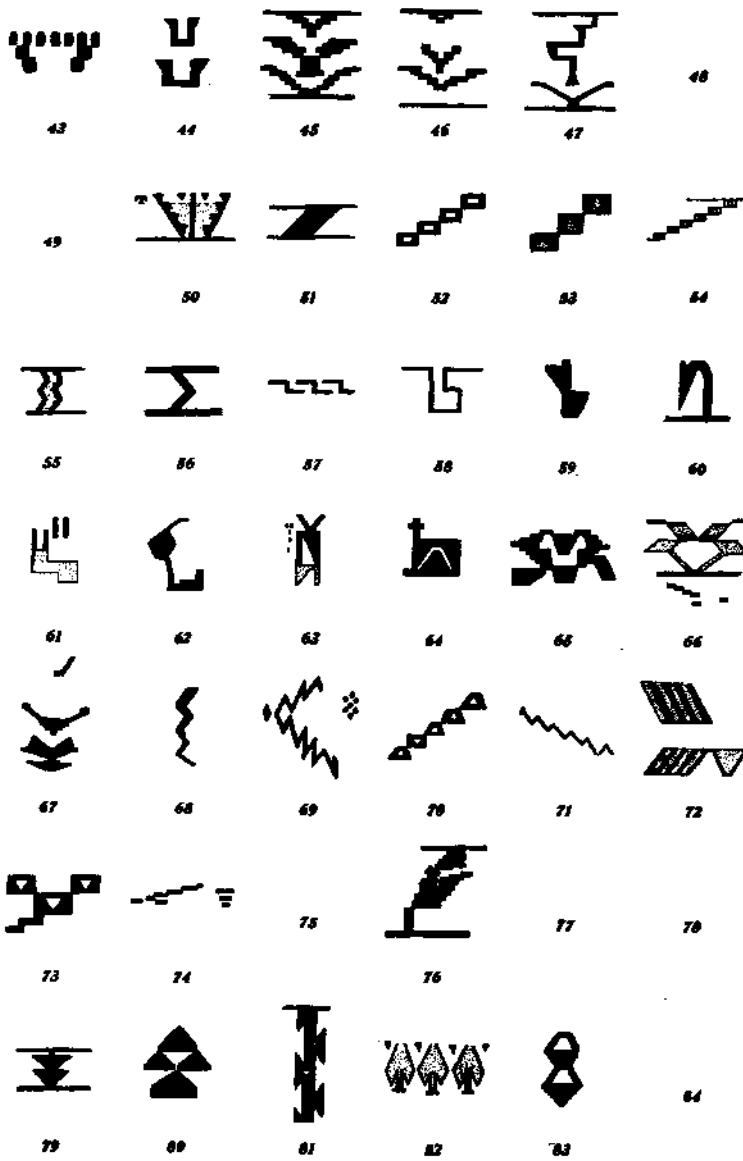


Figure 35.

Petroglyph

Coyote Hole petroglyph site

Reprinted from “Coyote Hole Petroglyphs,” Petroglyphs



Figures 43-84 .

Figure 36.
Analysis of Designs, Figures 43-84
Reprinted from Kroeber 1922



Figure 37.
 Chumash bowl
 Museo Arqueológico, #13929
 Reprinted from Herold 1977: 73



Figure 38.
 Chumash basket
 Museo Arqueológico, #13926
 Reprinted from Herold 1977: 70



Figure 39A.
 Jacinta Serrano (Tongva)
 1895-1923
 Unidentified photographer
 Braun Research Library Collection, Autry National Center
 Reprinted from "Collections," Autry National Center



Figure 39B.
 Detail of basket tray



Figure 40.
 Bowl
 Gabrielino/Tongva
 Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology, #1-20916
 Reprinted from Shanks 2010: 40



Figure 41.
 Soaproot brush (left) and pine needles (right)
 Cooper Regional History Museum
 Photographed by Yve Chavez



Figure 42.
 CIBA Gathering 2011
 Objects in foreground (from left to right): pine needle baskets, yucca sandals, twined fishing net
 Background: coiled and beaded medallions, acorn granary, doll dressed in regalia, sage bundles, rattles
 Eva Salazar (Kumeyaay)
 Photographed by Yve Chavez



Figure 43.
 Beginning of pine needle basket
 Seth Johnson (Tongva)
 2010
 Santa Monica History Museum
 Photographed by Art Morales



Figure 44.
 Juanita Nejo Lopez (Diegueño) with her pine needle baskets
 1966
 Photographed by Sam Hicks
 Reprinted from López and Moser 1981: 215



Figure 45.
Pine needle basket
Mary Osuna (Diegueño)
1935
Justin Farmer Collection
Reprinted from López and Moser 1981: 193



Figure 46.
Pine needle bowl
Juanita Nejo Lopez (Diegueño)
c.1964
Gerald Smith Collection, #GSC. SBCM-A5-1116
Reprinted from López and Moser 1981: 103

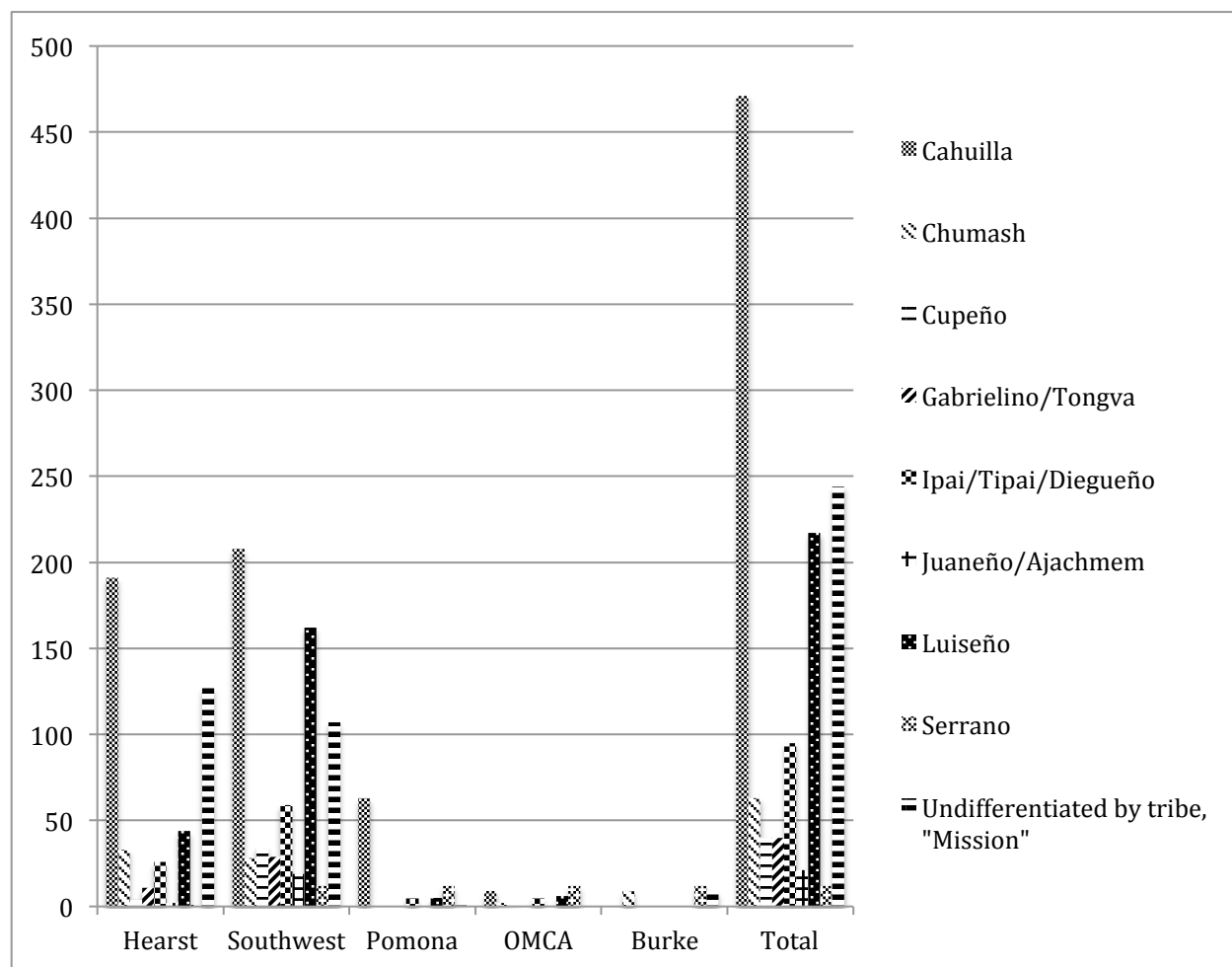


Figure 47.
Jingles, Bells, Shells, and Polliwogs
 Linda Aguilar (Chumash)
 1999
 Reprinted from Dubin 2002: 36



Figure 48.
High Voltage Tower
 Joe Feddersen (Okanagan and Lakes)
 2003
 Froelick Gallery, Portland, Oregon
 Reprinted from Dobkins 2008: 47

Appendix B: Southern California Basket Statistics¹



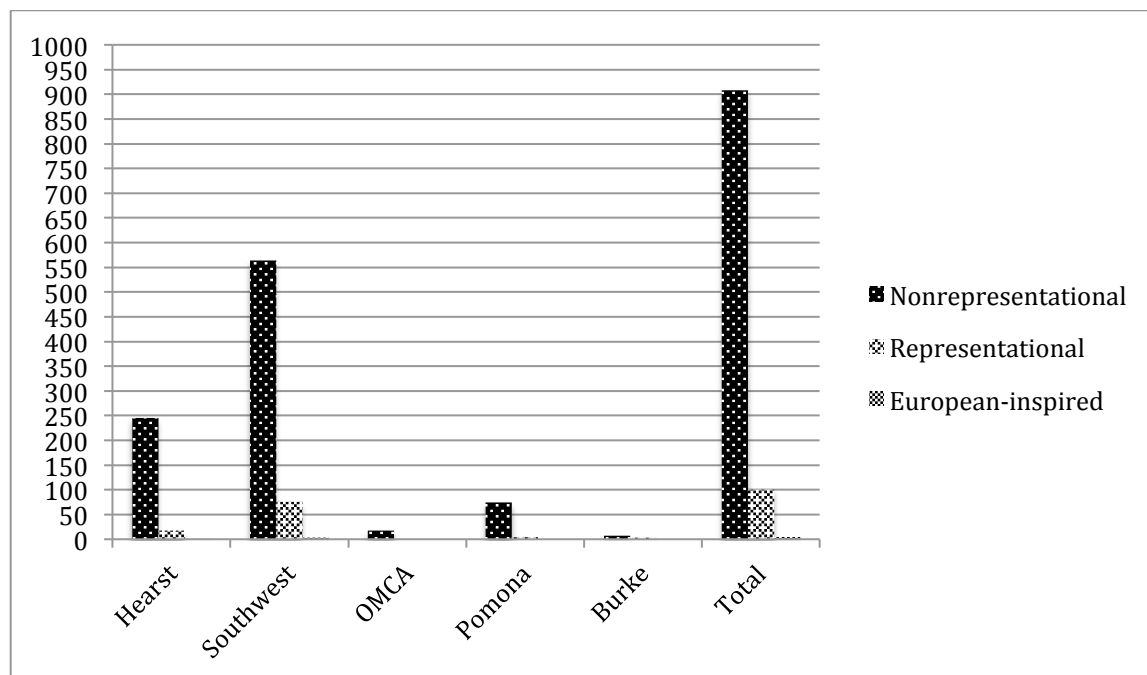
¹ These numbers are all approximations based on the museums' online collections. Some baskets may be mislabeled. Many have more than one tribe listed as the possible culture of origin. The numbers given for the Phoebe A. Hearst Museum were obtained from a list of Southwestern California baskets provided by Collections Manager Natasha Johnson.

	Phoebe A. Hearst Museum ²	Southwest Museum of the American Indian	Pomona College Museum	Oakland Museum of California	Burke Museum	Total
Cahuilla	191	208	63	9	0	471
Chumash	33	28	0	2	0	63
Cupeño	4	35	0	1	0	40
Gabrielino/ Tongva	11	29	0	0	0	40
Ipai/Tipai/ Diegueño	26	59	5	5	0	95
Juaneño/ Ajachmem	2	19	0	0	0	21
Luiseno	44	162	5	6	0	217
Serrano	1	11	0	0	0	12
Undifferentiated By tribe, “Mission”	127	107	1	0	9 ³	244

² These numbers are based on the museum's online catalogue.

³ Two of the baskets labeled “Mission” are also labeled as “Miwok?”

Appendix C: Basket Patterns¹



	Nonrepresentational Patterns ²	Realistic/ Representational Patterns ³	European-inspired Patterns ⁴
Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology	245	18	1
Southwest Museum of the American Indian	564	76	3
Oakland Museum of California	18	0	0
Pomona College Museum of Art	74	4	0
Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture	7	3	0
Total	908	101	4

¹ These numbers are approximations. Some scholars might argue that patterns I consider to be nonrepresentational actually represent figures that people from certain tribes might recognize. Also, some baskets do not have any patterns. Either they never had patterns or the patterns faded. I counted baskets with faded patterns in the nonrepresentational category when the remnants of those patterns were decipherable.

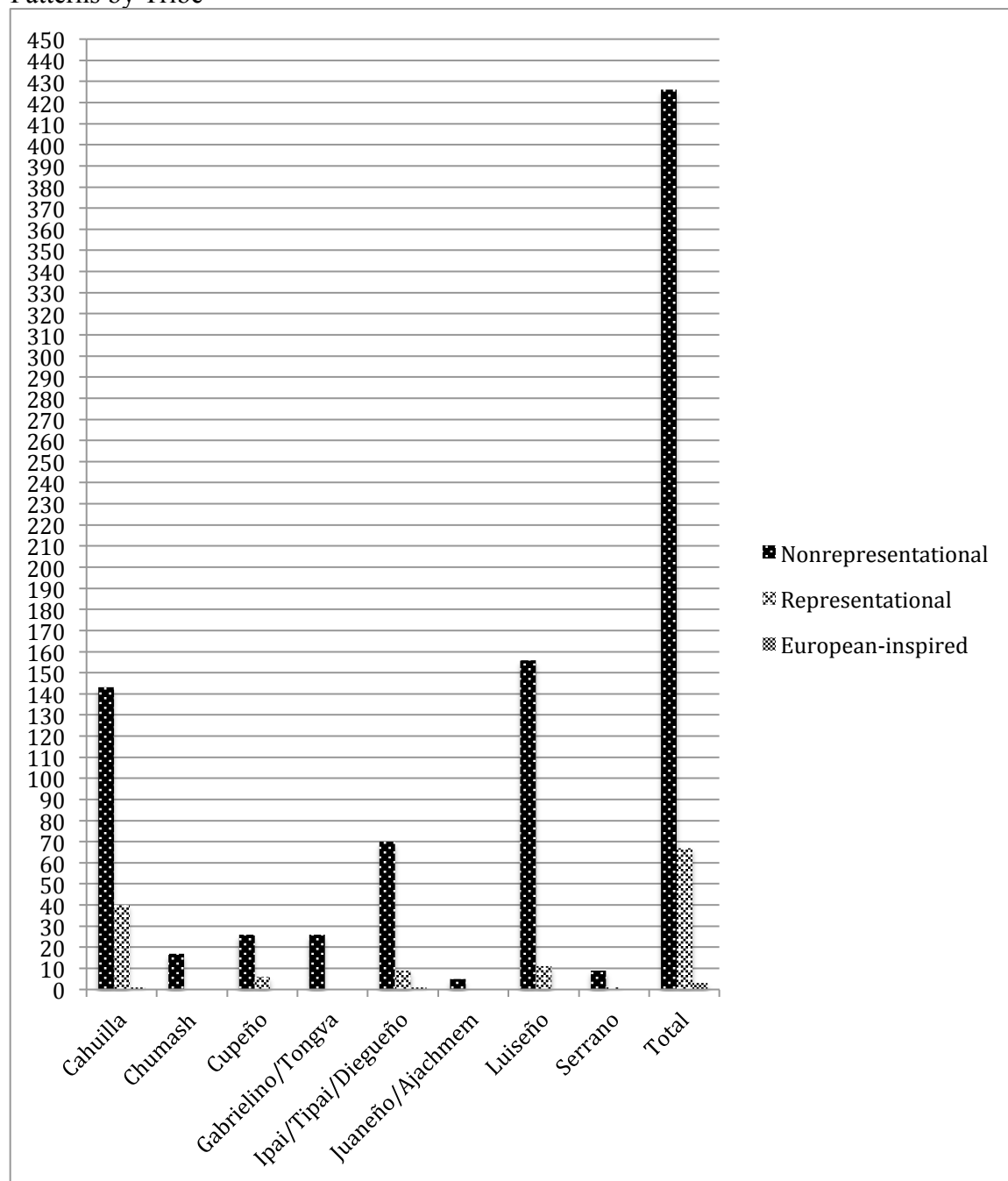
² By nonrepresentational, I mean any patterns that are abstract and geometric in nature. Some of these patterns may be connected to rock art as well.

³ Any of the following types of patterns can be considered realistic or representational: zoomorphic, anthropomorphic, and floral designs. Some of these designs appear alongside geometric motifs. I counted any basket with realistic motifs as part of this category, but not in the nonrepresentational category.

⁴ By "European-inspired" patterns, I mean those that display obvious European influences such as the Spanish heraldic and coin designs found on Chumash presentation baskets. This category also includes baskets with lettering.

Appendix D: Southwest Museum of the American Indian

Patterns by Tribe



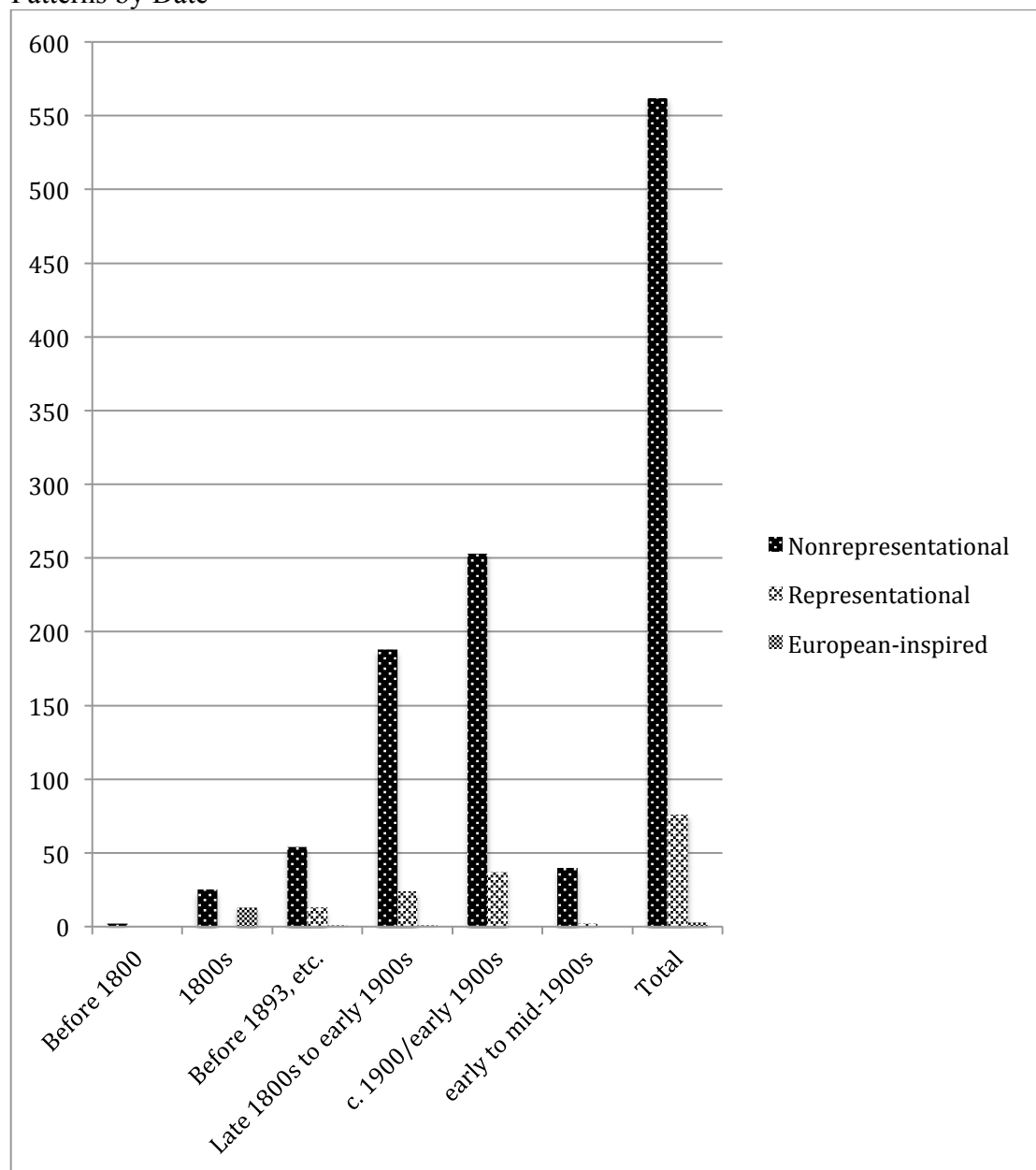
Patterns by Tribe

	Nonrepresentational Patterns ¹	Realistic/ Representational Patterns ²	European-inspired Patterns ³
Cahuilla	143	40	1
Chumash	17	0	1
Cupeño	26	6	0
Gabrielino/ Tongva	26	0	0
Ipai/Tipai/ Diegueño	70	9	1
Juaneño/ Ajachmem	5	0	0
Luisseño	156	11	0
Serrano	9	1	0
Total	426	67	3

¹ By nonrepresentational, I mean any patterns that are abstract and geometric in nature. Some of these patterns may be connected to rock art as well.

² Any of the following types of patterns can be considered realistic or representational: zoomorphic, anthropomorphic, and floral designs. Some of these designs appear alongside geometric motifs. I counted any basket with realistic motifs as part of this category, but not in the nonrepresentational category.

³ By “European-inspired” patterns, I mean those that display obvious European influences such as the Spanish heraldic and coin designs found on Chumash presentation baskets. This category also includes baskets with lettering.

Patterns by Date⁴

⁴ The dates listed here are not trustworthy. The high number of baskets for c. 1900 might be a reflection of the collection dates or accession dates.

Patterns by Date

	Nonrepresentational Patterns	Realistic/ Representational Patterns	European-inspired Patterns
Before 1800	2	0	0
1800s	25	0	1
Before 1893/1900/1903/ 1904/1909/1910/ 1918/1922	54	13	1
Late 1800s to early 1900s	188	24	1
c. 1900/early 1900s	253	37	0
Early to mid- 1900s	40	2	0
Total	562	76	3