Some Evidence for Basket Making
During the California Archaic

John Q. Public
General Anthropology (Section 2), Generic University
January 23, 2000
Michael Pilakowski, Instructor
California Indians have long been known for their skill in basketry (Maxwell 1990:268). Maxwell notes that the Pomo, “…a small group of tribes living on or near the coast [of central California],” were among the best (1990:268). Although much information about basketry has been drawn from ethnographic observation, Gregory White, of the Archaeological Research Program at California State University, Chico, has noted that the archaeological record is often mute with regard to the types of organic materials and methods used to create baskets in earlier periods (1998:Personal Communication). Despite the relative rarity of evidence for basketry in the California archaeological record, there is tantalizing evidence that California Indians were producing exquisite basketry in two main styles as far back as the Archaic period, which Fredrickson (1994) places between 8000 and 950 BP. White has excavated numerous sites in California, including Pomo-related sites near Clear Lake (1998:Personal Communication). The Archaic Pomo sites excavated by White have produced evidence of basketry in both of the two styles known from the ethnographic period — twining and coiling; each style was used for different purposes (1998:Personal Communication).

Evidence of twined baskets in Pomo sites does not come from remnants of the actual baskets themselves, but from imprints of the baskets made on the convex sides of clay sherds recovered from the sites. The existence of the imprints on the convex sides indicates that the clay was probably used to line the baskets, possibly to aid in waterproofing them. The bright red color of the clay sherds indicates that the baskets were subjected to intense temperatures, possibly due to some form of firing (White 1998:Personal Communication). Another explanation may be that the Pomos were using the baskets as cooking implements. California Indians are known to have heated many of
their foods by placing them in baskets along with water and hot stones to boil the food (Johnson and Ridenour 1934 in Scheller 1972:352); the heat of the rocks may have, over time, effectively “fired” the clay.

In addition to the evidence for twined basketry found at Clear Lake, White has also found evidence of coiled basketry. No direct fragments of Archaic coiled baskets have been recovered by White and his team, but evidence of coiled basket manufacture has been found. Throughout Native North America, coiled baskets are associated with bone awls used to mesh together the parts making up each coil of the baskets. There is no evidence for the use of awls during the manufacture of clothing by California Natives during the ethnographic period and the bone awls recovered by White and his team from the Clear Lake sites are almost identical to those used during the ethnographic period in the creation of coiled baskets. White thus concludes that the Archaic Poms were manufacturing coiled baskets (White 1998:Personal Communication).

Although both styles, twined and coiled, have been found at Pomo sites, this is atypical of the rest of California:

[T]he Poms made use of more weaving techniques than did their neighbors. Most tribes made all their basketwork by twining…. Others depended primarily on coiling…. Only the Poms used both processes with equal ease and frequency. In addition, they made use of four distinct variations on the twining process, often employing more than one of them in a single article. [Maxwell 1990:268]

The unusual occurrence of both main basketry types at Clear Lake may mean that the Pomo had a complex set of use needs to be met.

White has stated that the use of twined and coiled baskets at the same site indicates that they were used for different purposes. For instance, twined baskets are known to have
been used in the carrying of burdens and in cooking whereas coiled baskets were preferred for long-term storage in homes. This difference has been attributed to the relative ease with which coiled baskets can be made and fact that properly made twined baskets are more easily waterproofed for cooking or water carrying (Anonymous 2000: WWW site).

While White's work has shown that evidence of twined and coiled basketry utilized for different purposes has been recovered from Archaic period California archaeological sites, there may still be some question as to its validity. White's conclusions are inferential and may not convince some diehard skeptics that California's indigenous people were making exquisite baskets as far back as 9000 years ago. Nevertheless, much of what is known about the past comes from work like White's — careful, scientific, archaeological excavation and inference. If one calls into question such sound research because of a conflict of personal belief, then how much else that scientific investigation has revealed must one, by default, call into question?
References Cited

Anonymous


Griffin, M.


Harris, M.


Maxwell, R.A., ed.

1978 America’s Fascinating Indian Heritage. New York: Reader’s Digest Association, Inc.

Murad, T.

1997 Personal Communication. October 23.

Owsley, D.W. and W.M. Bass


Pilakowski, M.


Sling Blade


Wynne, J.S.

1967 Impact of the Civil War Upon Butte County. Master’s Thesis, History Department, California State University, Chico.

Please note that this sample page of references is NOT keyed to the preceding sample research paper and that the type size has been reduced from 12 to 10 in order to get it all on one sheet for you! Also note that the format here differs slightly from that given in the Moore and Parrish readings.
Guidelines for Grading Formal Papers in Pilakowski’s Classes

I. Title Page – First Impression and Accuracy
- Is there one present? (-5)
- Is the paper stapled and are the pages in the correct order? Use a single staple, NOT a plastic report cover. (-1 each)
- Is the title relevant to the topic — does it give some hint about what the paper will discuss, or is it just a topic? (-1 to -3)
- Is the relevant information present on the page: title, author, class, college, due date, instructor’s name? (-1 each)

II. First Page – Introduction, Thesis Statement and Appearance
- Is there an arguable thesis statement appearing as a single sentence in the introductory paragraph? (-1 to –3)
- Has the author highlighted or underlined his/her thesis statement? (-1)
- Does the paragraph tell what points will be covered in the paper and why the topic is relevant to the assignment and/or the class? Does the paragraph end with a good transition into the body? (-1 to –3)
- Is each page after the first paginated in the upper right hand corner adjacent to the author’s last name? (-1)
- Are the page numbers correct (page one is NOT the title page)? (-1)

III. Body – Paragraph and Sentence Structure
- Are there good transitions to and from each paragraph, or are there clear subheadings? (-1)
- Are the paragraphs of acceptable length — none too long or too short? (-1 each)
- Is there only a single recognizable topic in each paragraph? (-1)
- Is each sentence complete, with no run-ons, fragments, or miscellaneous grammatical problems? (-1 each)
- Is punctuation appropriately used, both in general structure and especially in quoting and citations? (-1 each)
- Are all modifiers, pronouns, prepositions, and other words used and/or spelled properly? (-1 each)
- Were contractions, abbreviations, colloquial terms, slang, and other poor language uses avoided? (-1 each)

IV. Conclusion – Impressions and Effectiveness
- Does the author summarize the main point(s) of the paper without being redundant? (-1 to –3)
- Has the thesis statement been returned to in some fashion and restated? (-1)
- Does the paper end conclusively or does it trail off or end too abruptly (is there obvious stretching or cutting)? (-1 to –3)
- Has the author avoided trite phrases like “to sum up” and “in conclusion”? (-1)

V. References and References Cited Page – Formatting and Appropriate Use of Sources
- Did the author use citations in text to note what sources were used and where in the text they were used? (-1 each)
- Has the author appropriately cited each idea that was not his or her own, as well as lines of directly quoted or paraphrased text? **Note: any author found to have used information that is not cited will receive a zero.** (-1 each to –100)
- Are the references from legitimate sources (no more than one Internet source)? (-1 each)
- Does the paper include a separate page entitled “References Cited” stapled to the back? (-10)
- Are all references in proper format? Anthropological or APA styles only. **Do not use MLA.** (-1 each)
- Are references alphabetized by author’s last name? Are all references present and accounted for? (-1 to –3)

VI. Layout – Attention to Detail and Formatting
- Are the margins even throughout, on top, bottom, and sides (use 1-1.25 inch margins only)? (-1)
- Did the author use only left-justified margins? (-1)
- Is the paper typed in an easy-to-read 12-point standard typeface? (Don’t use extra large or small types) (-1)
- Is the paper double-spaced throughout except for tables, block quotations, and so forth? (-1)
- Are paragraphs indented appropriately? (-1 each)
- Are block quotations properly formatted? (-1 each)
- Did the author avoid orphaned lines (a single line of a paragraph at either top or bottom of a page)? (-1 each)

VII. Content and Style – My Overall Impressions
- Does the author show analysis of the subject and critical thinking rather than just reporting facts? (-1 to –5)
- Does the author show an understanding of the specific material and how it relates to the assignment? Are there terms left undefined or improperly used? Were there inappropriate or insensitive uses of language? (-1 to –5)
- Is the paper of a length appropriate to the topic and assignment? Does it pass the infamous “fold test”? (-10 per page)
- Does the author appear to be “cheating” on length through “creative” use of type sizes, margins, and so forth? (variable)
- Did the author write in a formal, scientific style and avoid the use of first person reporting and/or opinion? (-1 to –5)
- Does it look like this paper was ever proofread before being submitted (i.e. does the author show some effort)? (-1 to –5)
- Is this paper “too” similar to those handed in by other students or does it show evidence of other plagiarism? (-100)

Any plagiarism will result in a score of zero, no matter how slight the infraction.
Any paper less than the required minimum length will receive a proportionately reduced grade.