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An Examination of Otis T. Mason's Standard of Authenticity:
Salvage Ethnography and Indian Baskets at the Smithsonian Institution

by

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B.A. University of Montana, 1997

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This thesis discusses the concept of authenticity as it was applied to Native North American Indian baskets accessioned by the Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of Natural History prior to 1910. There is a central focus on the work of Otis Tufton Mason, the Museum’s resident basketry expert during this time. Baskets currently on display are used as a sample, and archival documents from the Smithsonian are used as supporting evidence. Research was conducted at the National Museum of Natural History in Washington, D.C., and the National Museum of Natural History Museum Support Center in Suitland, Maryland.

The standard of authenticity that was engaged by Mason and his contemporaries is analyzed on the basis of information contained in Mason’s writing and in the accession records of the Museum. Relatively few baskets accessioned during this time appear to meet the standard of authenticity. This contradiction is explained in terms of Mason’s evolutionist theoretical orientation. Mason’s use of facts as evidence to support a theory that he had already fully accepted allowed him to overlook obvious inconsistencies in his data.

Mason and his standard of authenticity are then discussed in terms of the larger historical trend towards control over native people perpetrated by the United States. This leads to a discussion of the implications of this relationship for today’s anthropology.
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Chapter One: Introduction and Literature Review

The Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of Natural History in Washington, D.C. is an incredible edifice, a massive building two blocks wide, whose entrance is hidden behind a row of gargantuan columns that crown a cascade of smooth stone steps. Walking through the columns to face the immense bronze doors gives a sensation of leaving the world through a narrow, almost subterranean, passage, until the doors swing wide to reveal an airy rotunda vaulted by a tremendous dome rising from the center of the building. The interior is floridly neo-classical, resplendent with marble arches, columns, porticoes, and colorful rococo details. The overall scale of the place is monumental; it is larger than life, like a cathedral, a memorial, a temple, or a palace. And like these places, visitors are drawn to the Museum by the promise of extraordinary things within. The Smithsonian keeps the moon rock and Fonzie’s jacket, the giant squid and Bill Clinton’s horn. Normal everyday objects would never be housed in such a proud setting, for this is the national repository of America’s treasures. People flock here to see, in person, objects that are outside the realm of their everyday lives. “Natural History,” as locals say, features certain key attractions for which it is widely known; the Hope diamond, the mounted blue whale, and the dinosaurs attract the most attention by far. Other galleries in the Museum are often quiet and sparsely peopled, even on weekends, when throngs of citizens and visitors wait their turn to crowd in for a glimpse of Mrs. Hope’s storied blue diamond, and murmur about how small it is compared to the rest.

The other, often overlooked, exhibits do house treasures of their own, of course. Not every last thing in Natural History is necessarily rare or extraordinary, but their
presence in the Smithsonian serves to move each one of them out of the category of ordinary objects. And as with everything else kept in museums, they are preserved not only physically, but also with their information of particular details that were recorded at the time of their acquisition. In the case of ethnographic specimens, these details are glimpses into the past, windows onto the thought of the anthropologists who first faced the very same objects on view today. As visitors wander past the life size dioramas and cases arranged with costumes and weapons, they are witnessing the work of anthropology. Some of the earliest names in ethnography, like Frank Hamilton Cushing and James Mooney, collected objects still on display, and some of the earliest Smithsonian curators, like Otis Tufton Mason, took these things in and cataloged them. In part, because of its unique situation as a National Institution, the Museum preserves a valuable impression of these men as they passed through its mechanisms on their way to becoming the framers of modern ethnography and museology.

This thesis uses North American Indian baskets accessioned before 1910, and currently on display in the Native Cultures of the Americas Hall at the National Museum of Natural History, to explore certain aspects of historic American anthropological thought and collecting activity. Specifically, the thesis analyzes the historic standard of authenticity engaged by the early Smithsonian ethnologists during the era of “salvage” ethnography. Generally, salvage ethnographers sought to collect those items that they believed were unacculturated styles or types over those that showed evidence of contact with non-natives. According to the logic of salvage anthropology, the presence of foreign stylistic elements was symptomatic of the pending disappearance of native traditions that they were trying to forestall. This automatically created an a-priori
dialectic between “authentic” and “inauthentic” objects, with those items perceived to be pre-contact types considered more appropriate for museums than those which showed evidence of non-native influence. Using baskets on display as a sample facilitates observation of the baskets themselves, since their observable characteristics are an important source of information. Additionally, the baskets on display come from a variety of origins, which serves to provide a sample varied in character. There is a possibility that the criteria used by exhibitors to select baskets for display might somehow bias the sample, but the circumstances that led to the current group of baskets on display serve to insulate the sample from this influence, a feature fully addressed in Chapter 2. Data contained in the accession records, and obtained through observation of the baskets themselves, suggests that most of the baskets collected do not meet the standard of authenticity contemporaneous with their accession and professed by the ethnologists themselves. A wider survey of the state of North American Indian basketry at the time suggests that this standard was, in reality, impossible to meet. Accordingly, the thesis explores the motivation for this standard that seems to have been simultaneously expounded and ignored by its proponents.

Information relevant to this study is present in a wide variety of sources. Apart from the baskets themselves and their accession records, several different types of published literature contain meaningful data. The nature of the published material varies quite widely, but it can be roughly grouped into works that deal with museums, baskets, and interpretive analysis. The first includes museum theory and practice as well as historical surveys and archival materials. The second includes both anthropological and art historical texts necessary to accurately associate particular basket types with their
original contexts. The third draws from a wide variety of texts, including symbolic analysis, commodity exchange, construction of ethnicity, political economy, and power relations. This first chapter explains the sources, the second methodology, the third is a discussion of authenticity, the fourth gives a detailed historical background of the baskets on display, and the fifth offers some explanations and conclusions.

Museums

Theory and Criticism

Modern museums have deep roots in European and Mediterranean civilization. Museums have enjoyed close examination by scholars from both within and without, like so many other aspects of the cultural legacy of the European elite. The Smithsonian is no exception, and is certainly one of the most reflexively and critically examined of any museum in the country. An example of this is the 1988 conference entitled "The Poetics and Politics of Representation," hosted by the International Center at the Smithsonian Institution. Papers presented were subsequently published under the title *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, edited by Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine. These papers, many from Smithsonian curators and staff members, represent a significant contribution to the contemporary analysis of museums and their activities, and provide a logical and appropriate point in the literature from which to begin the analysis.

Karp broadly suggests that the type of museum presents a general context, which significantly influences the presentation of the materials within, in his introductory essay to Part 1 of *Exhibiting Cultures*, "Culture and Representation." An art museum presupposes that the objects displayed are of a certain type, different from a history
museum, for example. Karp also identifies the assumptions held by the group of individuals staffing the museum, and creating its displays and installations, as a major influence on the ultimate presentation of materials (Karp 1991: 11-12). This basic premise informs the effort to make meaningful interpretations based on the record left by past museologists in their work. In his introduction to Part 5, "Other Cultures in Museum Perspective", Karp comments on the production and representation of "the Other," particularly in natural history museums. His description of how similarities and differences between the exhibiting culture and those on display are presented and manipulated is particularly relevant to the early history of the Smithsonian, when museum ethnography was charged with demonstrating the evolutionist theories of the day. Even the modern disposition of the various museums of the Institution, and its positioning of the Department of Anthropology in the Museum of Natural History, reflect this foundation in nineteenth century science (Karp 1991a: 374-5, 376-77, 379).

The other contributors to Exhibiting Cultures each speak to particular issues, many of which provide important directions for this research. Particularly relevant is the work of Svetlana Alpers' "The Museum as a Way of Seeing," in which she explores the visual basis for the experience of objects in museums. No matter what the original context of an object was, when placed in a museum it becomes something primarily experienced visually by museum visitors (1991: 26-27). Baskets were collected by collectors and then displayed and interpreted by curators, activities that usually happened quite independently of one another during the Smithsonian's salvage era growth. Artifacts were commonly received with little or no documentation and as a result, visually observable characteristics were prominent among the criteria used by the early
ethnologists to evaluate objects’ authenticity. Alpers’ discussion provides a simple platform from which to explain this trend. Susan Vogel also addresses the issue of visual primacy in her article "Always True to the Object, In Our Fashion," which describes the display of African objects in ways ranging from conventional ethnographic displays to modern “fine art” gallery style. Vogel finds the tendency to treat ethnographic objects as art to be problematic. She articulates this problem by questioning whether the creators of objects treated as art “thought of themselves in terms that correspond to our definition of ‘artist’” (1991: 192). Ironically, it appears that the reverse was engaged by the early NMNH, and objects that were essentially art, and made by people whose activity closely corresponded to the concept of “artist,” were treated by the Museum as functional ethnographic productions. While Vogel and Alpers tend to characterize the visual mode of museums as a potential barrier to accurately conveying cultural information, not every contributor to Exhibiting Cultures is as critical of this tendency.

Elaine Heumann-Gurian, in her piece "Noodling Around with Exhibition Opportunities," reflects on different aspects of exhibit creation, and how the assumptions of museum professionals inform the overall effort. While her work is presented as a current commentary on the field, she identifies certain trends, which are evident throughout the history of museums. She rightly identifies any given exhibit as a “cultural artifact” in its own right, a perspective that necessarily underlies any critical analysis of museums (1991: 178). Heumann-Gurian also makes a key point with the observation that objects put on display “are simultaneously real and emblematic” (1991: 181). This concept cuts in several directions, and describes a tendency (of objects to become emblematic) fundamental to the functioning of the historic standard of authenticity. In
place of the baskets’ actual function as commodities and souvenirs, the descriptions given
them were emblematic of nineteenth century ideas about Indian culture. Michael
Baxandall, with his paper "Exhibiting Intention: Some Preconditions of the Visual
Display of Culturally Purposeful Objects," provides a useful analysis of the museum
experience as socially and culturally conditioned. An exhibitor's attempt to "represent a
[particular] culture" to viewers automatically becomes an effort to substantiate some
underlying general theory of culture (Baxandall 1991: 37). This trend is especially
pronounced in the historical Smithsonian, and provides a basis for efforts to use the
museum as a “text” that contains information about its creators. Working backwards, the
assortment of baskets accessioned can be unraveled to reveal some of the assumptions
and understandings held by those who originally assembled the collections.

An interesting argument for privileging objects' representational value over their
provenance is presented by Spencer R. Crew and James E. Sims in their piece, "Locating
Authenticity: Fragments of a Dialogue." The authors suggest this technique as an option
for historical museums faced with a dearth of original artifacts. Crew and Sims reassure
exhibitors of social histories that the particular provenance of objects are less important
than "the authenticity of the...concepts that the artifacts represent" (Crew and Sims 1991:
170). This identifies a key element in the way museums function that manifests naturally
in the efforts of the early NMNH to collect objects of a timeless ethnographic past from
living modern tribes. For the early ethnologists, demonstrating the authenticity of the
concepts was contingent upon the authenticity of the artifacts, an important aspect of their
understanding that strongly influenced their treatment of the baskets they accessioned.
The contributors to *Exhibiting Cultures* cited above provide some of the main concepts underlying this research.

Other kinds of background material come from other sources; *Museums, Objects, and Collections*, by Susan M. Pearce (1992) is an extensive survey of the theory, philosophy and history of museums. She systematically considers the activities of collecting and exhibition while providing a broad historical overview of the development of various European museum traditions. Her analysis of collections and collecting provides a particularly relevant historical framework. Systematic collecting was a fundamental methodology of early museum ethnologists, and this work places it in historical context within the development of modern scientific methods and models in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries (Pearce 1992: 68-72, 84-87). The Bureau of American Ethnology, under whose auspices many of the accessioned baskets were collected, emerged from these new modes of scientific thought, and the goal of obtaining a complete, systematic collection of baskets from North America is apparent throughout the published and unpublished writings of the era. Pearce also acknowledges the role of the French post-structuralist thinkers, especially Pierre Bordieu and Michel Foucault, in addressing the problematic dimension of “the ubiquitous power plans, the universal schemes of domination and subservience, inclusion and exclusion,” that support and reinforce the museum, and its activities, in society (Pearce 1992: 228-229, 232-235). The Smithsonian Museums present a unique and particularly meaningful example of this often overlooked or uncommented on aspect because of their role as the National Museums of the United States. The treatment of objects can be seen in terms of both explicit national and more abstract nationalistic agendas. Native objects accessioned by
the nation in a particular historical era have multiple levels of meaning and association. Because of the National status of this institution, the baskets can be interpreted as representative of almost any dimension of the nation's relationship with the people who produced them. This ranges from the particular historical circumstances of individual pieces, such as those collected by officers on military campaigns, or more generally, in terms of legislation and national policy detrimental to the cultural well being of people contemporaneous with systematic valuation of their cultural productions. Pearce is one of the few museological scholars willing to argue for the relevance of these European intellectuals to the understanding and analysis of museums.

W. David Kingery's edited volume *Learning From Things: Method and Theory of Material Culture Studies* includes two articles that provide relevant information. Catherine S. Fowler and Don D. Fowler's piece, "Formation Processes of Ethnographic Collections: Examples from the Great Basin of Western North America," gives an important overview of how the logistical particulars of historic collections influence their current character in museum contexts. They rightly point out that systematic collections assembled by ethnographers and popular collections assembled by touristic consumers both find their way into museums. Additionally, they differentiate between the collector in the field and the curator in the museum as two different stages in the formation process of museum collections (Fowler and Fowler 1996: 129, 131-133). These two stages operated almost entirely independently of one another at the Smithsonian during the salvage era. This article provides a framework for evaluating the two stages accordingly. The Fowlers go on to briefly review the activity of four different collectors in the Great Basin, ranging from the 1860's to the 1930's, including Smithsonian collector Stephen
Powers, and the great hero of the Colorado River, Major John Wesley Powell (1996: 133-136). Their treatment of Powell and Powers provides an excellent background of typical Smithsonian and BAE ethnographic collecting from the salvage era. Also present in Kingery is Nancy J. Parezo's article, "The Formation of Anthropological Archival Records," a thoughtful look at the various ways in which anthropologists leave a sort of "data trail" throughout their careers in letters, manuscripts, lectures, papers, and the like (Parezo 1996: 147-150). Parezo sounds obvious warnings about the need to approach this kind of information somewhat critically, with an appreciation for the historical context in which it was generated (1996: 165-166). This approach is especially important to this thesis, which relies heavily on archival documents including personal letters and memorandums for evidence. While these materials may be inconvenient to work with, and even problematic at times, they are essential to fully understanding the dynamics of authenticity as it was understood by the historic Smithsonian curators.

Ruth B. Phillips comes the closest to directly addressing the issues taken up in this thesis with her 1995 article "Why Not Tourist Art? Significant Silences in Native American Museum Collections," published in After Colonialism: Imperial Histories and Postcolonial Displacements, edited by Gyan Prakash. Phillips identifies the effort to exclude touristic or souvenir productions as a means "to support the standard museum representation of Native Americans as other, as marginalized and as premodern" (Phillips 1995: 100). She provides an excellent discussion of the manner in which ethnographic collecting and categorization of Indian objects relates to and correlates with western concepts of fine art and natural science. Phillips uses archival documents from a number of museums to illustrate the way historic collectors sought items that met their
expectations of authenticity and genuineness, presenting this in opposition to commercial production (Phillips 1995: 107, 109-110). These accounts point to the collector's perception of the object as the instrumental feature in determining the (perceived) authenticity of a given artifact. The question left unanswered, and taken up here, is why baskets that clearly did not meet the standards for authenticity were treated as if they did.

### Historical Surveys

In 1981 Curtis M. Hinsley, Jr. authored *Savages and Scientists: The Smithsonian Institution and the Development of American Anthropology, 1846-1910*. Major individuals in Smithsonian ethnology, and their influence on the development of both museums and anthropology, receive a thorough treatment. Hinsley considers some collecting activity, but his primary focus is on the intellectual development of the men who created the first National Museum. His presentation of their background is helpful for fully understanding their published work from yesteryear. Hinsley's work also provides important logistical details about the administration and disposition of authority within the Institution during different periods of its evolution. A good deal of his research comes from the collected personal papers of these historic anthropologists. Since the National Anthropological Archives are currently closed to research, this makes Hinsley’s work especially relevant for the unpublished materials cited therein.

Works considering institutions other than the Smithsonian are also instructive. Aldona Jonaitis, in *From the Land of the Totem Poles: The Northwest Coast Indian Art Collection at the American Museum of Natural History* (1988) provides an excellent review of the early development of the American Museum of Natural History in New York. Focusing on the Northwest Coast collection, she provides a cogent overview of the
various individuals who collected under the direction of Franz Boas. Both the AMNH and the NMNH relied on some of the same collectors during their formative years, including George Emmons, a freelance collector discussed at length by Jonaitis, some of whose acquisitions are still on display. Jonaitis often cites Douglas Cole's (1985) historical survey *Captured Heritage: The Scramble for Northwest Coast Artifacts*, a study that reveals a significant sense of competitiveness between the major institutions with workers in the field. Most importantly, Cole (and to a lesser extent Jonaitis) provides information necessary to reconstruct who was collecting what, where, when, and for whom on the Northwest Coast. This historical background is necessary to fully contextualize certain objects that only have their accession records present in the Museum's archives, with no other supporting documentation.

Archival Documents

Historical documents are also very valuable. The Annual Reports of the Bureau of American Ethnology provide a rich source of detailed information from the BAE's golden age of salvage ethnography under Major John Wesley Powell, around the turn of the twentieth century. These efforts produced the seed of the collection that would become known in later years as "the nation's attic." Each ethnologist submitted their own monographs detailing their collecting activity, usually illustrating the acquisitions that made it into the Museum's growing collection. In many cases, the highly personal accounts of these historic ethnographers provide enough information to sufficiently establish the original context of a given basket and position it in relation to the standard of authenticity.
Popular texts from this era provide a different perspective, useful for understanding the public that the museum was hoping to reach with its exhibitions. Otis Mason, a curator of the early National Museum rather than a field ethnographer, published *Indian Basketry: Studies in a Textile Art Without Machinery* in 1904. This two-volume work for the general reader was based on Mason’s long career with the Institution, and the numerous papers, monographs and articles he had published over his long career. Three years prior, George Wharton James published *Indian Basketry*, based largely on Mason's work (and dedicated to him). It is part travelogue, part advice for collectors, and part ethnography. The value of James' book in particular is the way it represents a popular interpretation of the science of the day. His sources include BAE reports, current anthropological and scientific journals, as well as popular interest and travel magazines. In addition, the illustrations from both of these works furnish a benchmark in time for stylistic trends evident in the evolution of commercial genres of basketry. The role of these sources' information, and the cautions necessary to effectively utilize it, are treated fully in the chapter on methodology.

Unpublished archival materials are essential for establishing the original contexts of the baskets on display. The original accession catalog cards and files of the NMNH are housed at the Museum Support Center in Suitland, Maryland. Files kept at the Museum Support Center include copies of correspondence and documentation relevant to the accession of objects by the Museum. The Smithsonian Registrar keeps the complete accession documentation. Further material, including field notes and papers, are housed in the National Anthropological Archives, currently being transferred to a new facility.
and closed to research. All of the accession catalog cards and associated documentation and correspondence cited here are from the files of the NMNH Museum Support Center.

**Baskets and Collecting**

A number of different types of texts are used to reconstruct the original contexts of the baskets on display. They are presented from a variety of perspectives, including popular works for a general audience, material culture surveys of given tribes, historical surveys, and treatments of particular collections. Many require somewhat critical readings, but they all contain information valuable for reconstructing the particular historical circumstances and original contexts of the baskets on display, so that they may be compared to the standards for authentic baskets as described by the early curators.

*Indian Baskets*, by William A. and Sarah Peabody Turnbaugh, is the broadest in scope, providing a culture-area overview of all North America; a number of early examples from Harvard University's Peabody Museum provide a useful contrast to the later pieces in the NMNH collection. This volume is intended as a guide for current collectors of Indian basketry, and while its exhaustive typology is quite helpful, there is a conspicuous absence of certain other types of information. Specific details about the particular specimens illustrated are usually missing, in favor of descriptions that reinforce them as typical examples of tribal styles.

Writing for an academic audience, Marvin Cohodas has made a number of valuable contributions to the scholarly analysis of American Indian basketry. In his 1997 book, *Basket Weavers for the California Curio Trade: Elizabeth and Louise Hickox*, he gives a tremendously detailed account of these two weavers and their major role in the larger basketry trade that supplied both museums and fashionable Victorian homes. The
circumstances of the Hickoxes and their artistry defied the conventional interpretations that Cohodas found in anthropology and art history, leading him to a somewhat unconventional, but particularly appropriate, approach. He describes his earlier work, based on placing baskets along the continuum of tradition-acculturation dialectic, (comparable to an authentic-inauthentic model), as unsatisfactory, citing Richard Wilk (1991) to show that all dialectic analyses of basketry types are analogous as "parallel reductive dichotomies" based on the well-worn theoretical division of the world into modern and pre-modern, developed and developing, core and periphery, or whatever (Cohodas 1997: 38). His effort to treat the Hickoxes on their own terms, and then situate them within the circumstances of history, rather than resorting to familiar models, is somewhat akin to Michel Foucault's "genealogical" approach to history, which "rejects the metahistorical deployment of ideal significations and indefinite teleologies" in favor of attempting to "record the singularity of events outside of any monotonous finality" (Rabinow 1984: 76, 77). Cohodas' characterization of the dominant cultural themes of the Late Victorian era is especially useful, since this corresponds closely to the years of salvage ethnography. Many of the baskets on display were accessioned from private individuals who were participating in the pronounced trend of collecting Indian baskets for household display during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. His contribution to The Arts of the North American Indian: Native Traditions in Evolution, edited by Edwin L. Wade (1986), "Washoe Innovators and Their Patrons," wherein he discusses the primarily commercial development of Washoe fancy basketry in the early twentieth century, preceded his book on the Hickoxes. Most recently, he expanded on his Hickox research with the article "Elizabeth Hickox and Karuk Basketry: A Case Study in
Debates on Innovation and Paradigms of Authenticity," published in Ruth B. Phillips and Christopher Steiner's edited volume *Unpacking Culture: Art and Commodity in Colonial and Postcolonial Worlds* (1999). This provides a succinct overview of different responses to curio baskets by a number of early institutions, including collecting by Alfred Kroeber and the Peabody Museum at Harvard. He also identified and described the process of recontextualization of commercial or curio forms to legitimate their presence in museum collections (Cohodas 1999: 151-153), a procedure closely related to the somewhat arbitrary standard of authenticity constructed by the early Smithsonian ethnologists.

From the same collection, Jonathan Batkin and Molly Lee each present a similarly revisionist perspective on the conventional interpretation of certain historical trends in American Indian material culture production. Batkin provides a time frame for the development of native commercial craft enterprises in the Southwest, while challenging conventional notions of commercial influence on Native art production, with his article, "Tourism is Overrated: Pueblo Pottery and the Early Curio Trade, 1880-1910." Batkin's work is a good example of how archival documents can provide information necessary to effectively reinterpret commonly accepted historical understandings (1999: 282-283). Lee furnishes a look at the collecting of northern objects with "Tourism and Taste Cultures: Collecting Native Art in Alaska at the Turn of the Twentieth Century." As well as referencing what kinds of objects were being collected in this area, Lee considers different ways that the authenticity of objects was constructed by those who collected and displayed them. She effectively shows how tourists and ethnologists each constructed
dubious histories to bolster the supposed genuineness of their objects (1999: 269-271, 277-279).

Southwestern basketry enjoyed the attention of Clara Lee Tanner, widely regarded as a pre-eminent authority during her lifetime. Her *Apache Indian Baskets* (1982) and *Southwestern Indian Baskets* (1983) are systematic, thorough examinations based on scientific material analyses and the formal and stylistic distinctiveness of each particular tribe's basket productions. The number of baskets illustrated with dates, and Tanner's own attention to the historical particulars of each, provide details valuable for placing the emergence of stylistic trends, often used as markers of authenticity, within their correct historical and chronological contexts (1982: 175-179; 1983: 52-55, 76-78). This helps to provide evidence that counters some of the more creative interpretations of the early curators and their donors. Andrew Hunter Whiteford takes a much more historical and ethnographic approach to the Southwest, identifying the influence of various historical factors that affected the development of the distinctive basketry types of the various tribes. Whiteford is also concerned with chronology, and marshals a good deal of evidence to support the dates that he assigns to the emergence and decline of different stylistic trends (1988: 38-40, 80-84).

Larry Dalrymple's *Indian Basket Makers of the Southwest: The Living Art and Fine Tradition* focuses primarily on contemporary weavers, but also includes some excellent discussions of their parents and grandparents: early twentieth century basket makers who were pivotal in the "preservation" of basketry, i.e. its transformation from a functional feature of everyday life to a commercial endeavor in a cash economy (2000: 38-40; 117-118). Dalrymple made a similar study of California weavers in *Indian Basket

Remember Your Relations: The Elsie Allen Baskets, Family, and Friends by Suzanne Abel-Vidor, Dot Brovarney, and Susan Billy, which traces the life and influence of the highly regarded Pomo basket weaver and teacher, Elsie Allen, among her relatives and students, is also in this vein. While these profiles are more biographical than ethnographic, they nonetheless provide information sufficient to make comparisons to the descriptions of the baskets accessioned by the National Museum. Such deciphering of details and reconstructions of context are guided by the efforts of other scholars working primarily in anthropology and art history.

Interpretive Analysis

Anthropology and Art History

Phillips and Christopher B. Steiner discuss concepts related to this thesis in a more general way in the Introduction "Art, Authenticity, and the Baggage of Cultural Encounter," to their (edited) 1999 book, Unpacking Culture: Art and Commodity in Colonial and Postcolonial Worlds. Writing as deconstructionist art historians, Phillips and Steiner provide a well-reasoned overview of the ways that "objects of cultural Others" have been treated by anthropology and art history (Phillips and Steiner 1999: 3). One example is a standard of utility, by which everyday utilitarian objects, like baskets, fall outside the category of "art", regardless of their stylistic features or commercial disposition (Phillips and Steiner 1999: 14). The work of the Smithsonian’s early ethnologists is characterized by many of the tendencies identified by Phillips and Steiner, making their article is a useful guide to the analysis of historical evidence.
Nelson H.H. Graburn is credited with innovating a systematic scholarly approach to the consideration of commercialized and commodified art forms. He edited the first major work in this field, *Ethnic and Tourist Arts: Cultural Expressions from the Fourth World* (1976). Graburn’s introduction to this volume spells out a framework for categorizing items produced by Indigenous and tribal communities, especially those folk art or souvenir productions considered to have little or no actual cultural relevance. An earlier formulation appeared in his 1969 article "Art and Acculturative Process", in *International Social Science Journal*, where he introduced his notion that then disdained "airport art" and souvenir production is a legitimate field of inquiry for anthropologists and ethnographers. Essentially, Graburn eschews the conventional criteria of formal and stylistic characteristics to determine the cultural purpose of an object, focusing rather on the understanding of the object held by its maker.

Power and Meaning

Questions arise in the course of the research for which conventional historical and anthropological explanations are ultimately unsatisfactory. The rather fluid definition of authenticity, and the flexibility of its application, suggests that cultural or political forces larger than just salvage era evolutionary thought were influencing the work of the early Smithsonian ethnologists. The implications of the authenticity standard are unlocked by situating evolutionary anthropological thought within the larger context of America’s ongoing relationship with Indian people. This relationship is treated in terms of control and resistance in all of its aspects, whether territorial, political, economic, or symbolic. Ultimately the goal is to connect the activities of historic individuals to the larger trends evident from the perspective of the present day. While not strictly a study of political
economy, nor a post-structuralist analysis, the thesis uses key ideas from these approaches to reach its conclusions.

The late Eric R. Wolf is not usually associated with post-structuralism, but he closed his career with an excellent analysis of the relationship between power, ideas and ideologies, *Envisioning Power: Ideologies of Dominance and Crisis* (1999). The study itself, which dissects the ideological basis of expressions of power by three different historic regimes in crisis, is not especially relevant in its topical particulars. The introductory discussion, however, provides a useful frame of reference for situating the authenticity standard in the larger dynamic of control and resistance that has played out between Indian people and America over the long term. Wolf identifies power as "an aspect of all relations among people," and focuses on the modality of structural power, "the power manifest in relationships that not only operates within settings and domains but also organizes and orchestrates the settings themselves" (1999:4-5). While Wolf's analysis of power is a bit thin, it provides a basis from which to develop a model that positions the discourse on authenticity within the larger historical trend towards control of Native people by the American state.

Wolf's study owes an intellectual debt to the work of the late Michel Foucault. While Foucault's historical inquiries into penalism, politics and sexuality never directly addressed museums or related endeavors, his statements on the nature of history inform the effort to relate the activities of individuals to larger historical trends. These direct explications of his approach come primarily from interviews and articles, rather than his books, collected in *Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984 Volume III: Power*, edited by James D. Faubion (Paul Rabinow, series editor) and published in 1994. Specifically,
"The Subject and Power" (326-348) contains concepts important for identifying the tendencies toward control manifest in the relationship between the work of the early ethnologists and the people who were their subjects.

The logic of the Smithsonian's early ethnologists is not always apparent in the archival record of their activities. The demonstration of current theories of culture permeated every aspect of the early anthropological endeavors of the National Museum, leading to apparent contradictions between their description of objects and the circumstances of the objects' accessions. The sources outlined above facilitate explanation of the historic understanding of the cultural materials brought into the first National Museum. Further, these sources allow the activity of past individuals to be situated in a larger historical context. The Smithsonian and its operators were inescapably part of their own society and culture at the time that they were founding the National Museum. Explanation of their activities, then, must be in these terms of the larger cultural trends relating to Indian basketry, of which the accessions into the Smithsonian were only a part.
Chapter Two: Methodology

Anthropologist John Whiting, upon asking his professor Leslie Spier about the possibility of a seminar on methods was told that this was “a subject to discuss casually at breakfast” rather than in a classroom (cited Bernard 2002: 323). Since Dr. Spier’s time, the field of anthropology has placed increasing emphasis on the necessity of systematic methods and the need to discuss them fully within the context of the research they guide. Despite the necessarily subjective quality of much of this research, the following is an effort to explicate the methods and operating assumptions underlying this thesis. The methodology is mostly based on the work of other scholars, although some is necessarily intuitive. This chapter first discusses the nature of the source materials, then research design and methods.

The essential nature of this inquiry is historical. Four types of historical resources are used: published works from the past, present-day works about the past, archival and unpublished materials from the past, and the baskets themselves on display. These materials all contain information necessary for the identification and analysis of the standard of authenticity. While all sources must be treated critically, each type requires attention to the circumstances of its original production. The intended audience, the training of the author, and the original purpose of the publication are all factors that affect how information is presented in a text. The effects of these contextual elements, or any other, on the presentation of material must be taken into consideration. Most present day works about the past have some sense of a critical perspective built in, ranging from Cole’s brief acknowledgement of his “white history about Indians” (1985: xi) to the lengthy reflections of Cohodas on the larger implications of who is saying what about...
whom (1997: xiii-xvi, 36-69). Regardless of the degree of critical self-examination an author includes, it is a relatively simple matter to contextualize contemporary scholars. Whether historical narrative, like Cole, Hinsley, and Jonaitis, theoretical and conceptual essays, like Vogel, Baxandall, or Parezo, or deconstructionist revision like Cohodas or Phillips and Steiner, the format and language of modern works are largely the same as that of this research. Some of these writers target others within their own field, and others clearly intend their work for a general reader. Of course, each of the various disciplines represented in this array of materials must be treated on its own terms, but they do not require the additional level of interpretation necessary for historic materials.

The published materials from “the past” (for the purposes of this thesis, those originally published before 1920) cited herein were mostly written by ethnologists for their peers. While monographs published in the Bureau of American Ethnology Annual Reports were read by avocational ethnographers and archaeologists, they mostly found their audience in the burgeoning academia that was emerging as the main setting for social science research. Because this was relatively early in the development of anthropology it is important to understand these writings in terms of the ideas that were pre-eminent in the field at the time. The variety and variability of human cultural expression was seen as a result of the developmental trajectory of the human species, and early anthropology was largely concerned with comprehending this trajectory. This general goal, of plotting the development of human cultures on a timeline, was often taken as implicit in anthropology by the early contributors whose work is cited here. Jargon with new definitions specific to anthropology appeared almost immediately to represent these new ideas about humanity. One example is the term “savage” which,
following the scheme laid out by Lewis Henry Morgan in *Ancient Society* makes specific reference to a limited range of cultural expressions. This additional level of historic contextualization is most important when dealing with the Museum’s Annual Reports and Bulletins, when the ethnologists were writing for one another, and not for the general public. While the BAE reports provided a platform for lengthy monographs, the early annual reports of the U.S. National Museum were written for the U.S. Congress and the Smithsonian Regents. These reports contain succinct letters of summary from the various divisions of the Museum, along with exhaustive itemized lists detailing their acquisitions and expenditures. The accounting of the staff included in these reports is invaluable for referencing the role of individuals whose names appear throughout the accession documentation.

Otis Tufton Mason, who served as Curator of Ethnology at the National Museum during the 1880’s and 1890’s, was the resident basketry expert during his time with the Smithsonian. As a result, his writing is among the most relevant to this research. Mason’s life work was a monumental volume on American aboriginal basketry published in 1904, towards the end of his life. Throughout his career he contributed papers to the Annual Reports of the Bureau of American Ethnology, many of which were edited into his monumental book. He also contributed to the Annual Reports of the National Museum, sometimes referencing specific baskets that were accessioned by the Museum.

The unpublished, archival materials referenced herein include the catalog cards for the baskets on display, and documents associated with their accession held by the Smithsonian Registrar. The complete card catalog is housed at the National Museum of Natural History Museum Support Center in Suitland, Maryland. The supporting
documentation from the Registrar is available on microfilm at the Museum Support Center (?). A given basket may have no supporting documentation beyond its accession card, or it may enjoy a whole series of letters and records. Every basket on display is keyed to its catalog number in an illustrated reference to the exhibits. Every basket on display has a catalog card, although one is identified with an incorrect catalog number in the legend, moving its catalog card out of the reach of research. The format of the cards has remained essentially unchanged over the years. Appendix I shows examples of cards from three different eras of the Museum. Every card has the following fields for the entry of information:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Catalog Number</th>
<th>Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>People (or Tribe)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accession Number</td>
<td>Locality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collector</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Original Number</td>
<td>Acquired Dates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Placed</td>
<td>Size</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marks</td>
<td>Remarks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of course, not every card has an entry in every field. More challenging to the historic researcher, however, is the ambiguity of some entries, especially those in the “collector” field. In some cases it is clear that the individual named as collector is the donor or seller of the object to the Museum, and not necessarily the individual who actually originally obtained the basket. In other cases, the collector named was an employee of the Institution, and collecting under their auspices. For some baskets, only the Bureau of American Ethnology is named as the collector. Sometimes the individual from the BAE
who obtained the basket in the field is named elsewhere in the accession documentation, sometimes not. When enough information is present it is relatively simple to arrange the logistical details, but obviously it is not possible to do so for baskets that lack sufficient supporting documentation.

Existing documents other than the catalog cards usually include a memorandum to the Registrar regarding the accession in which the item was included. Most of the information in these memos is reproduced on the catalog cards, excepting a few additional details such as addresses of donors and prices paid for the purchases. Like the catalog cards, the format of these memorandums has changed somewhat, but they mostly contain the same information. Throughout the changes in form, they always include an admonition to forward copies of all related correspondence to the Registrar. Appendix II includes examples of these memorandums. This correspondence, where it is present, is sometimes between individuals within different areas of the Smithsonian, and sometimes between agents of the Institution and their sources. Of the latter, only those received by Smithsonian staff are present; as Parezo (1996: 153) points out, few anthropologists have ever been very meticulous about preserving their papers in an orderly fashion for the benefit of their professional posterity. The records also sometimes contain itemized lists of objects in an accession, and informational notes supplied by the donor, or generated by Museum staff.

It is especially important to maintain a critical perspective when dealing with these archival materials. While handwritten letters give the impression of subjective opinions, the catalog cards have an air of authoritative objectivity in their spare listings of the bare facts about an item. Nevertheless, it is evident that the information contained in
the cards was simply taken at face value from the descriptions provided by the donors or collectors. This is especially apparent in terms of the basket's described type; is it a tray, a plate, or a plaque? As far as the baskets in this sample, they appear to have been cataloged as whatever the donor or collector said they were. It is essential to recognize the Museum's documentation as an artifact in its own right, as preserved evidence of the actions and decisions of past individuals, rather than an objectively reported determination of the nature of the baskets accessioned. Ultimately, the baskets themselves are the only wholly objective sources, since the information they transmit is contained in their physical nature, which is essentially unchanging through time. Interpreting this information, however, is a necessarily subjective endeavor.

The baskets accessioned prior to 1910 and currently on display contain quantitative data that is subject to both quantitative and qualitative analysis. The physical, formal, and observable characteristics are all quantitative, but using this information to determine a basket's original or intended function, or to classify it in stylistic terms, is necessarily a qualitative analysis. The size, shape, type of weave, material(s), design element(s), decorative embellishment(s), and use wear (or lack thereof) are all relatively straightforward observations whose accuracy can be empirically evaluated. There is nothing especially interpretive about determining whether a basket is twined or plaited, for example. Likewise, there is no question about whether a design element is geometric or figurative. Whether or not figurative elements are a strictly post-contact phenomenon, however, is a matter of some debate, as is the nature of certain basketry shapes, such as the variety of small bowl shapes widely known as “trinket” baskets. There are sufficient clues scattered throughout the literature to satisfactorily
address some of these questions as they pertain to the baskets in the sample, and certainly
even enough information to make a reasonable comparison of these baskets’ historic
descriptions to their actual conditions.

Several considerations informed the design of this research. The Smithsonian
Institution is a relevant site for a variety of reasons. The Institution emerged at a time
when relatively few major museums were engaged in serious anthropological endeavors.
More significant, however, is the Smithsonian’s role as the National Museum of the
United States. This creates a unique place for the Institution in the history of
anthropology. The political and social implications of the Smithsonian’s role as National
Museum are not discussed at all by the early ethnologists. They did not appear to have
thought of the national anthropological endeavor as different in any way from any other
major institution working in the field at the time. Nonetheless, the idea that a national
endeavor supported financially by the government is of a different nature than those
supported by private philanthropy does carry enough currency today to set the history of
the Smithsonian apart from its institutional peers.

Baskets on display at the Museum of Natural History are an ideal sample for a
host of practical reasons. Being on display, the baskets are readily and easily observable
and photographable. Access to materials that are not on display, on the other hand, is a
much more significant burden on the resources of the Museum and the researcher. To
examine a basket not on display first requires that the item is accurately identified via its
catalog information so that it can be retrieved from storage. There would then be a single
opportunity to observe the basket, under the direct supervision of Smithsonian staff, and
it would then be returned to storage. Conversely, the baskets on display can be observed
at any time, repeatedly, and for any length of time, without any special arrangements, and
without any additional supervision. Exhibited baskets are also likely to have at least
minimal documentation, since they are (somewhat) active in the Museum’s curatorial
system.

While the accessibility of pieces on display is a plus, there are potential problems
with this design. One is that the baskets on display are not a random sample. At some
point in time, each of these baskets was selected for display on some basis. This creates
the distinct possibility of a non-representative sample, which would undermine the
quality of broad conclusions drawn from the data. Unfortunately, generating a random
sample of the Museum’s total collection of North American Indian baskets is not at all
feasible for this research. The sheer number of objects held by the Museum would make
the selection of a random sample of baskets accessioned prior to 1910 an impractically
complicated procedure. There is also a significant possibility that baskets identified
randomly would be unsuitable for some reason. Any given basket of that age could
to potential be too fragile for handling, too worn or damaged to be of use, difficult to
extract from storage, or simply lost. The historical particulars of the American Indian
exhibits in this Museum, however, ensure a varied enough sample to effectively account
for these issues.

Exhibits in the Peoples of the Americas Hall can be grouped generally into three
types, which correspond to the different approaches to exhibition taken over the last
hundred years. The earliest exhibits are “life-groups,” or life-size dioramas that use
actual artifacts with groups of mannequins engaged in different activities. This was
innovative museology at the turn of the last century (Jacknis 1985: 97-103; Jonaitis 1988:
135), and today the life-groups have a historical character all their own (Fitzhugh 1997: 209-211). Objects were selected for these displays based less on the accuracy of their provenance, and more on the basis of their suitability for filling a need in the display. For example, the life group that depicts John Smith trading with the locals in 1607 obviously substitutes later baskets for the sake of representing an event from which no artifacts survive. In other cases, baskets from several different tribes with similar or closely related traditions are used in a display representing a single tribe; the Hupa life group contains baskets from the nearby Klamath and Shasta, as well as the more distant Pomo.

The second type of display is evident in exhibits mounted in the mid-twentieth century. By this time exhibitors had moved away from efforts to re-create scenes out of life, and were moving towards a “fine art” style of display in which the objects are presented independently of context, with minimally descriptive labels. The effort to comprehensively represent individual cultures by using their material productions had not disappeared completely. Objects were displayed in cases arranged by culture or culture area, with descriptive labels about their use, rather than showing them used in naturalistic settings. Mannequins were still used to display articles of clothing and personal effects, but the mannequins were placed standing in a row, rather than in poses of activity. This style of exhibit, with objects in groups and their information printed around them is sometimes described as “anthropological wallpaper.” For the exhibitors who created these displays the provenance of the object is important, because the object and the text are the only sources of information. Without labels, a Pomo basket can illustrate how Hupa women carried things in diorama, but a Huron box cannot adequately represent an Ojibwa box if it is presented alone in a case beside the label “Ojibwa.”
By 1990, when the “Masterpieces of American Indian Basketry” alcove was installed, the fine-art mode of display had completely taken hold. Baskets from several different cultures are displayed together on the walls of the cases, with numbers keyed to labels at the front edge. Descriptions are minimal, and include tribe, a basic identification of type (“hat,” “tray,” etc.), a date and a donor or maker. Context is provided elsewhere in the exhibit, in a video of a Mohawk basket maker playing between the cases, and an interactive map of the country that reveals the geographic origins of the baskets beneath little doors. The criteria for selection in these displays appear to be wholly aesthetic. There is no effort to transmit information specific to any particular tribe with the baskets themselves on display. They are masterpieces, a designation indicating that their value is in their artistic excellence. The three sets of criteria used to select objects for display under each of these approaches are sufficiently different to ensure variability in the sample.

As noted above, some of the methodology engaged here is basically intuitive. The main theme of this research is authenticity during the era of salvage ethnography. The analysis begins with a description of how “authentic” was defined and understood by the ethnologists at the Smithsonian during the salvage era. The various qualities and features of baskets that were associated with genuineness or authenticity by these early ethnologists are the basis for identifying a set of criteria that are collectively referred to as the standard of authenticity. This designation is a part of this research, and is not a concept that was articulated anywhere in the historic materials. The topic was widely discussed historically, but not in terms of a standardized set of criteria. Applying this concept of a standard is entirely appropriate for the purposes of describing and discussing
the work of past anthropologists. Even though their investigations and determinations of authenticity were never presented systematically, they did make comprehensive assessments on the basis of expressed criteria.

The absence of a systematic discussion makes extracting the standard of authenticity from the corpus of relevant materials somewhat daunting. Essentially, all of the material must be examined for relevant data. This is an intuitive methodology: since relevant details can be present almost anywhere in a historic text, the entire text must be examined carefully to find all of the information. The organization of historic texts often follows a theoretical logic no longer in currency, making it especially important to read everything in a text, and not only what appears relevant to the research. Commentary on authenticity often appears in places that the modern researcher might not expect them. A similar tactic is necessary with the archival materials, although the relative paucity of documentation makes this task not nearly so overwhelming. This varied commentary on authenticity is synthesized into a standard based on the qualities identified throughout the source materials. Once this standard is established, the baskets in the sample are evaluated in two ways. First, whether or not the early ethnologists considered them to be authentic, and second, how the basket's actual attributes measure up against the authenticity standard. Sources other than the Museum's own descriptions are used to reconstruct the baskets' historical circumstances. The standard of authenticity includes both objective and subjective qualities. While both of these are easy to identify, defining the subjective qualities of authenticity can be somewhat problematic. The objective aspects of the standard of authenticity roughly correspond to the types of quantitative information described above.
Subjective features are somewhat more difficult to identify, and much more difficult to evaluate. These are non-formal qualities expressed about native productions generally, rather than traits identified with particular tribes or types of basketry. These features are usually discussed in terms referencing a basket’s nature or character. This is often presented in terms of the basket’s intended purpose, or in attributes of the basket not readily observable, such as the technology employed in its manufacture. For example, Otis T. Mason disapproved of anthropomorphic figures in the decoration of Western Apache baskets, describing them as “obtruding themselves among the old” patterns, in the very first illustration in his book (1988[1904]: 1). Anthropomorphic designs are an objective, observable feature that are either present or not. Mason also disapproved of “modern innovations” in form, since “aboriginal shapes...express the Indian mind” (1902: 4). The dividing line between aboriginal and modern is a subjective feature that is significantly more debatable than observable, making it much more difficult to determine whether a given basket was considered modern or aboriginal, i.e., inauthentic or authentic. While the early ethnologists’ criteria for making these subjective determinations was not necessarily systematic or predictable, there is enough of a record of their commentary on specific pieces to reconstruct their impressions of the baskets they accessioned.

The internal correspondence regarding the accession of particular baskets preserved in the Smithsonian archives is used alongside the published writings to reconstruct the history of each of the baskets on display. These histories are then compared with the criteria for genuineness applied by the ethnologists.
The baskets themselves provide a great deal of information about their history solely from their observable characteristics. The depictions of baskets’ functions in the dioramas are not always reliable indicators of how particular basket types were used. In many cases stylistic or design features serve as reliable temporal markers. Many of the basketry forms reliably indicate their commercial or functional nature. The condition of the basket is also a strong indicator; most specimens on display supposed to be functional show no signs of wear.

Analyzing baskets in this way suggests, to some extent, that a museum display can be treated as a sort of “text” of meanings that can be “read”, or interpreted. This mode of analyzing museums as a cultural practice in their own right has been put into practice by several notable scholars, including Donna Haraway (1994). Her piece “Teddy Bear Patriarchy” explores Carl Akeley’s American Museum of Natural History African wildlife dioramas on a (exhibit) case-by-case basis, looking for direct symbolic expression of his dominant ideologies. While Haraway’s procedures are valuable lessons in symbolically deconstructing historic exhibits, some of her more revisionist interpretation loses relevance to the historic context of her subject. Akeley’s African Hall is an excellent example of how the status quo of his day was reflected in his recreations of the natural world, but it is very unlikely that Akeley deliberately decided to try to reinforce the subservient position assigned to women in Victorian America via the arrangement of his wildlife dioramas. Akeley was representing what, to him, was a sensible and logical natural order, not consciously endeavoring to symbolize the role of women in relation to his own position of patriarchal privilege. Rather than interpret the
activities of past exhibitors in terms of recent perspectives on history, this research aims to decipher their historic understanding of their subject.

Ruth Phillips (1995: 100-102) includes a cogent interpretation of the arrangement of objects within one particular case of Iroquois objects at the George Gustav Heye Center in New York in her excellent piece on collecting and colonial museum display. Phillips understands museum collections from this era to be “historical deposits produced by complex, diachronic processes of textual negotiation” (1995: 99). Her treatment of museum display as interculturally negotiated text is somewhat more grounded than Haraway’s, and does an admirable job of accounting for the various social actors who play a role in the processes that facilitate the display of Native objects. This project’s methods closely follow those of Phillips, who uses close readings of historical documents, including correspondence, alongside critical analysis of historic museum displays.

Ivan Karp (1991a: 379) indirectly suggests the appropriateness of this approach when he posits that older ethnographic exhibits provide a window on earlier forms of thought about cultural others. This is certainly the case at the NMNH, where the accession histories of the baskets on display clearly reflect the museological standards that were in effect during the time that they were collected. Those standards, engaged by the curators and directors of yesteryear, determined what made it into the Institution to then be subsequently displayed and interpreted. What was selected and what was passed over or refused suggests a great deal about the construction and perception of authenticity that was current in the minds and practices of the early ethnologists. Once their understanding of the subject has been adequately explained, it can be appreciated from a
more critical perspective. This aspect of the past is relevant in part because it is not very
distant in the past. The field of anthropology, and its treatment of others represented
through their objects, is far enough from Otis Mason to forget about his authenticity, but
not so far as to be immune from its influence.
Chapter Three: The Construction of Authenticity

Authenticity and genuineness as understood by the Smithsonian's salvage ethnographers was discussed, directly and indirectly, in a variety of texts. The National Museum published Annual Reports, as did the BAE, and the Smithsonian Institution published Research Bulletins and Contributions to Knowledge. Between these publications the ethnologists had venues for monographs and detailed papers, as well as platforms for succinct statements of theory or politicking. Authenticity of objects was of paramount concern to the curators who were creating the National Museum, and it was discussed somewhat extensively. Their understanding of authenticity was based on the evolutionary model of cultural change prevalent at the time. This theoretical outlook, which drove salvage ethnography, provides the general conceptual context for the standard of authenticity.

The field of anthropology began to gain relevance in the middle of the nineteenth century. A series of events dovetailed to point towards the true antiquity of humanity, and inspired middle class intellectuals to suppose the need for a new kind of scientific enquiry. Debates about the antiquity of humanity, the age of the planet, and the meaning of ancient artifacts had been swirling for some time by the 1850's, when one excavation in particular sent ripples of implication through the different sciences of the day. In 1858 stone tools were excavated from beneath a significant layer of rock deposited by stalactites in a cave in southern England. Since geologists and archaeologists were aware of how slowly stalactites deposit stone, the tools were demonstrably of an antiquity far deeper than the date of Creation offered by proponents of that theory. The following year Charles Darwin published *On the Origin of Species*, introducing the scientific community
to the idea of adaptive biological evolution (Trigger 1998: 59). In light of the great age of these simple tools, the inevitable implication was that humans were adaptive over time, just like other species. This strongly challenged both the Enlightenment tenet of the "psychic unity" of the human race and the Creationist assertion that degeneration was responsible for the "primitives" of the world (Trigger 1998: 62-64). Anthropology took up these questions as its own, and began in earnest to collect evidence with which to empirically demonstrate the evolution of the human species to its present state.

These early movements in anthropology were largely sponsored by museums and driven by the passion of the ethnographers for their work. Unique among the early institutionalization of anthropology in the United States is the Bureau of American Ethnology, the personal vision of Major John Wesley Powell. Powell fully dedicated his life to science following the Civil War, and became one of the most powerful figures in the Smithsonian's early anthropological endeavor. By the time Congress created the U.S. Geologic Survey in 1879, Powell had spent almost ten years directing various scientific surveys and expeditions throughout the west. The same year that his Rocky Mountain Survey became part of the new USGS under the Interior Department, the Bureau of Ethnology (later the Bureau of American Ethnology) was created under his leadership within the Smithsonian Institution. The BAE was modeled on Powell's other scientific surveys, and its ethnographers served as a de facto collecting service for the National Museum (Hinsley 1981: 146-148, 236). The BAE was to become a major site of anthropological practice in the years before the field became established as a university based science. Major Powell was already a significant figure whose place in history had been secured by his first descent of the Colorado River when he came to Washington.
Powell had strong views on what he considered appropriate ethnology, and he used his Annual Reports as a platform to proclaim his views. This, combined with a penchant for bombastic scientific declarations, exerted quite an influence over the direction of research at the BAE.

Powell's theoretical orientation does not fit easily into any of the usual categories of historic anthropological thought. While he admired the work of Darwin, Powell did not believe that biological evolution provided a model applicable to the development of cultural forms. Powell did believe that there was a universal principle guiding the advancement of human societies that could be ascertained by science. The wide array of cultural variation extant in the world, which fascinated Powell, could be sorted out to demonstrate the fundamental natural laws guiding the development of all of the various forms of cultural expression. This is evidenced in his 1888 address as retiring president of the Anthropological Society of Washington, when he stated that

The law of evolution which is called "the survival of the fittest in the struggle for existence" does not apply to mankind. Human progress is guided by other agencies and in obedience to other laws (Powell 1888: 304).

Powell's modus operandi is best expressed in a letter he wrote to Lewis Henry Morgan in 1877, referencing Morgan's just published, enormously influential scheme of unilineal evolution, in which he stated "I have many facts which fit perfectly into the system which you have laid out...I believe you have discovered the true form of social and governmental organization among the Indians" (cited Hinsley 1981: 133). This is the tack that he took as Director of the BAE, echoing the tone of the Smithsonian, and much of the field, at the time. Among the most prominent of the early museum ethnologists working closely with Powell's BAE at the nascent Smithsonian was Otis Mason.
Having graduated from Columbian University in Washington, D.C. in 1861, Mason went on to spend much of his tenure there as the principal of Columbian's affiliated preparatory school, eventually earning a Ph.D. and lecturing at the University level on English, history and anthropology. Over the course of his career, Otis Mason became increasingly interested in the emerging ethnological endeavor to chart the history of the development of the whole of the human race, a goal commonly espoused by nineteenth-century anthropology (Hough 1908: 661-663). In 1869 Mason, whose main interest at the time was the Eastern Mediterranean, heard about some Semitic texts at the National Museum and arranged to view them. At this meeting Spencer Baird, who would go on to become Secretary of the Smithsonian, took an interest in the young professor and entreated him to take up the study of the Americas rather than foreign lands (Cockerell 1906: 80-81). Mason did exactly that; in the years following that first meeting, Mason came to both rely largely on the Museum for his own research, and contribute significantly to its evolution as it underwent a period of rapid growth. The climate within the Washington scientific community at the time allowed many more contributors and participants at the Smithsonian than there were staff positions, volunteers that were credited in the Institution’s annual reports as “resident collaborators.” Mason was an influential fixture at the Museum for years before he was actually hired into a position. The museum, being one of natural history, was manned primarily by zoologists and geologists, with a handful of eccentrics and visionaries who fancied themselves scientists and called themselves ethnologists. The inter-disciplinary exchange of ideas and influence fostered an atmosphere of intellectual excitement among the Institution's inner circle, and the influence of the more established natural sciences on
the theoretically immature field of ethnology was profound. The Linnaean taxonomy that informed the natural sciences created a context within which all scientific analysis took place. The scheme of the animal kingdom has a label and slot for every varied species of bird, fish, snail, cat, toad, or whatever. Even though the shape of the “tree” is different, the natural order of various human societies along the unilineal stages of development was considered analogous. Mason was distinctly impressed and influenced by the work of Gustav Klemm of the Leipzig Museum of Ethnology, who organized his displays around the model of unilineal development so prevalent in the thinking of the day (Mason 1873: 396-397). Mason's affiliation with naturalists and zoologists at the National Museum must have further influenced him towards a taxonomic approach to cultural materials. In 1884 Mason was finally officially hired, as Curator of the Division of Ethnology, after over a decade of working closely with the Museum and its collections.

Faced with an enormous range of objects, and not much context beyond the tribal affiliation of the village or region they were collected from, Mason set out to organize the collection in such a way that would illustrate currently accepted principles of cultural development by ordering the technologies based on the stage of development they represented. Mason was quite explicit about his organizational approach in his “Report on the Department of Ethnology in the United States National Museum, 1885”:

The curator [Mason himself]... commenced, the present year, to arrange the different kinds of objects upon the following basis: Considering the whole human race in space and time as a single group, and all of the arts and industries of man in the light of genera and species, the arrangement shall be such as to show the natural history of the objects. All of the lines of investigation pursued by naturalists in their respective fields may here be followed (USNMAR 1885: 63).

This short statement has tremendous implications for museum practice. To “consider the whole human race in space and time as a single group” means that objects were displayed
independently of their cultural or geographic origin. The “natural history of the objects” referred to the development of the diversity of particular forms, such that combs from the world over were displayed alongside one another to show the development and relationship of the various forms of comb; likewise, plows, looms, bows, or baskets. Evolutionary theory drove this approach, and the displays thus created drew the criticism of the innovative young ethnologist Franz Boas in 1887. Boas felt that museum displays should be arranged on the basis of ethnic or tribal divisions, with the whole of the exhibit arranged geographically (Jacknis 1985: 79-80). His direct criticisms of Mason’s displays are a clear example of Boas’ developing sense of the need for historical particularism in any kind of ethnographic inquiry. Ultimately, Powell was drawn into the debate, and he and Mason essentially brushed aside Boas’ suggestions that their approach was inappropriate. While the National Museum did eventually follow the trend towards single-culture displays such as life-groups and dioramas, this did not reflect an intellectual reorientation on the part of its curators (Jacknis 1985: 82-83).

The goal of representing all “genera and species” of object exerted a substantial influence on objects selected for accession and display by Mason and his staff. They were attempting to demonstrate the development of human culture through its various stages by displaying the evolution of material cultural forms. This required that the examples from each of the various stages not show the influence of contact with later stages of development. This is one of the keys to the construction of their standard of authenticity: the material productions of any given “tribe” had to correspond to the level of cultural evolution to which they were assigned by the anthropologists. Baskets that the ethnologists believed reflected pre-contact attributes were considered authentic. Mason
wrote “[i]t is a matter of profound regret that already over much of the United States the art has degenerated, or at least has been modified” (Mason 1988 [1904]: 8). The implications of his statement are twofold: change of any kind is negative, and baskets that do not show these changes are better than those that do. In practical terms, the standard for what constituted a pre-contact form or style was arbitrary, haphazard, and inconsistent. Regardless of a basket’s origin, those with figural designs or decorations, including letters, dates, logos, and the like, were considered “degenerated,” while baskets with geometric or abstract designs were considered aboriginal. Natural dyes and plant materials were considered authentic or genuine, while synthetic or commercial dyes were considered inauthentic. In terms of form, functional types, even when relatively miniaturized, were always considered genuine. Non-functional forms which fit Western categories of useful objects, like bowls, trays, platters, were generally considered appropriate for museums, while hats, cups and saucers, basketry covered bottles and flasks, wallets, and the like were considered spurious. Beyond its observable characteristics, there was another significant aspect to authenticity: whether the basket was actually used in a functional context by tribal people, and not merely made to sell.

Mason wrote that “the demand and influence of mercenary motives drown the cry of the ancient spirit in the lowly artist” (1988 [1904]: 8). This literary turn of phrase reveals what is described in plainer language elsewhere: the ideal basket, the most authentic, is the basket made for an indigenous purpose and actually used as such. Mason’s description of commercial motives as a regrettable change making baskets not true to genuine, undegenerated Indianness engages several typical nineteenth-century characterizations of Indian people. Overtones of the “noble savage” echo from the
invocation of the timeless, pre-contact (pre-commercial) past. Because the tribes rightly belong to a pre-commercial level of culture, the production of baskets for a cash economy is equivalent to degeneration, not advancement. This kind of reasoning is absurd by current standards, but it is the basis of Mason’s rejection of commercial baskets as not genuine. This is an interesting inconsistency, since the only way to acquire an Indian basket in the late nineteenth century was to buy one.

The economic dimension of collecting baskets was studiously ignored in Mason’s work, apart from the lament cited above. While he recognized that post-contact technologies had largely replaced many of basketry’s pre-contact functions, he nonetheless made a detailed analysis of basketry’s various functional roles among the tribes. (Mason 1988[1904]: 214-215) He describes in great detail baskets as “carrying industry….in defense and war….dress and adornment….preparing and serving food….gleaning and milling….in house building and furniture….mortuary customs….as a receptacle….in religion….in social life….in trapping [and]….in carrying water.” (Mason 1988[1904]: 217, 222, 223, 228, 230, 238, 239, 242, 244, 247, 248, 249) The possibility that any basket was ever made to sell is utterly absent. He explained the purpose of non-functional forms as satisfying “the desire to produce something beautiful in itself without any regard to other motives” (Mason 1988[1904]: 133). This is somewhat ironic since, based on the unilineal model of evolution, “art for art’s sake” is a feature of more advanced forms of culture. All of Mason’s descriptions are in the present tense, giving the sense of a timeless past free of the civilizing influences that were simultaneously elevating and degenerating tribes. Many of the plates illustrating Mason’s book show baskets owned by individual collectors. Mason even included a
chapter titled “Collectors and Collections” listing, by name and city, nine museums and universities and over one hundred individuals in possession of noteworthy collections of baskets (Mason 1988[1904]:105-111). Yet Mason is silent on how these collectors acquired these baskets. And he never suggests that selling to collectors could have motivated a weaver to make baskets.

Mason’s work reflects Powell’s vision of ethnology providing the evidence for the kind of unilineal evolution most closely associated with Lewis Henry Morgan. Mason’s association of a unilineal scheme of cultural development with a natural order extant in creation led him to view post-contact indigenous culture change as reflecting degenerative adoptions from civilization. This was not the same as a natural evolution to more complex forms, and emerged in rhetoric as a motive for salvage ethnography. This was not the degenerationism of the 1850’s presented as a counter to the emergence of evolutionary theories (Trigger 1998: 62), but Mason’s own application of logic to generate conclusions in the face of observations contrary to an essentially immutable model.
Chapter Four: Historic Collecting

In 1840 James Smithson granted the United States $500,000 and in 1846 the Congress moved to create the Smithsonian Institution with this bequest. It was almost twenty more years before the young Institution seriously took up the business of gathering its own materials rather than acquiring existing collections of curiosities. The early Institution, and its U.S. National Museum, though officially created by Congress, were largely designed, and subsequently controlled, by a relatively small group of individuals. The anthropological endeavors of the Institution took place within the Division of Ethnology, an old boy colloquium of scientifically minded men abuzz with the excitement of a newborn branch of science. The Smithsonian was one of a handful of major museums serving as facilitators of ethnographic research before the field was established in university departments. There was not yet formal training in anthropology or ethnography, and the early innovators were drawn to ethnology from a variety of other fields. Inevitably, the occasional colorful character lurks among the early giants of anthropology.¹

Major John Wesley Powell fully dedicated his life to science following the Civil War, and became one of the most powerful figures in the Smithsonian's early anthropological endeavor. By the time Congress created the U.S. Geologic Survey in 1879, Powell had spent almost ten years directing various scientific surveys and expeditions throughout the west. The same year that his Rocky Mountain Survey became part of the new USGS under the Interior Department, the Bureau of American Ethnology was created under his leadership within the Smithsonian Institution. Despite Powell's vision of the BAE as an ethnological survey existing in its own right, he faced the
expectation that his men in the field would be collecting specimens of natural history for
the new National Museum (Fowler and Fowler 1969:165-66, 170). The era of Bureau
men in the field salvaging ethnography from the vanishing primitives was relatively
short-lived, due more to the decline of Major Powell than to any vanishing on the part of
the tribes. By the turn of the nineteenth century to the twentieth, Powell was director
primarily in title only, with most of his day to day correspondence and administrative
duties handled by W.J. McGee, a close associate and protégé of Powell's who followed
him from the Geologic Survey to the BAE (Fowler and Fowler 1969: 171; Hinsley 1981:
233,246). Throughout these years, and even after his death, Powell's intellectual
leadership dominated the style of BAE anthropology and museology.

Powell's days afield were largely behind him when he settled into Washington,
D C. as director of the BAE. His Bureau was supposed to encompass a total
anthropological survey of the United States. While Powell's ideas about social change
and development have failed the test of time, the comprehensiveness of his “four-field”
approach is admirable, and deserves recognition. The BAE published papers on
anthropometry, linguistic analyses, vocabularies, grammars, myths, stories, ceremonies,
excavations, ruins and artifacts. While each ethnographer was not necessarily trained
comprehensively, their individual research was presented as part of the same endeavor,
under the auspices of the same publicly funded institution. Otis Mason, as Curator of
Ethnology for the National Museum, did not work under Powell, but was largely
dependant upon his ethnographers for the materials coming in to his Museum. In
addition to accessions from the BAE, the National Museum received baskets as gifts from
private individuals, and purchased them from private collectors and professional curio
dealers. Examples of all of these sources are present in the baskets currently on display in today’s National Museum.

The Baskets

The earliest accession on display is a Cherokee pack basket from North Carolina, which came into the Museum as one of “22 Specimens of Ethnologica” collected by James Mooney in 1888 (SIR 21,450). In Mooney’s own handwritten “Supplementary Catalog” (see Appendix III) he describes the basket as “a poor specimen, made to order, the work not being honestly done” (Mooney 1888: SIR 21,450). Mooney shared the ideas of Powell and Mason, that objects made expressly to be sold were inherently of a lesser quality than baskets made to be used. Mooney’s notes explain that pack baskets had been replaced by sheeting wrapped in such a way as to facilitate carrying. This basket is exhibited in a diorama entitled “Capt John Smith Trading With Powhatan Indians On The James River in 1607”, standing in for an artifact from a people whose basketry tradition was too far distant in the past to collect (see figure 1). According to Turnbaugh and Turnbaugh (1986: 104) Eastern Cherokee basketry closely resembles that of the historic Powhatan. (It is quite possible that Turnbaugh and Turnbaugh make this comparison based on the Smithsonian’s use of a Cherokee basket to stand in for a Powhatan, since this is the only piece of information on Powhatan baskets that they offer.) It is quite significant that Mooney notes in his own explanation of the specimen that it is of a commercial nature, and thus “poor.” This suggests an awareness that the ideal example was unattainable; indeed Mooney writes that genuine carrying baskets made for carrying are “now very rare” (Mooney 1888: SIR 21,450). Two years later, on another excursion among the Eastern Cherokee, Mooney was able to find his very rare
functional specimen. Mooney’s note to William Henry Holmes, one of the original BAE ethnologists, describes one basket as “modern inferior” and the other simply as “old” (Mooney 1900: SIR 37412). The day that the baskets were delivered W.J. McGee, who had succeeded Powell as director of the BAE, sent a memorandum to the Assistant Secretary in Charge of the U.S. National Museum, drawing his attention to the old basket. The same valuation of functional types over commercial is indicated by the greater “ethnological interest” associated with the “pre-historic” type of basket. Nonetheless, this basket appears alongside the other in the Powhatan Indian diorama. In the case of these “Mooney baskets,” a functional example and a commercial example were collected together, accessioned together, and displayed together. Yet the discourse and dialogue among the collector and curators constructs the meaning of these two different baskets very differently, with much higher values assigned to the functional basket.

The accession records for a quilled birch bark box on display in the “Woodland Indian Crafts” exhibit provides an example of the same kind of discourse applied to a purely commercial form. The quilled birch bark box emerged in the early nineteenth century, and was a well-established form of souvenir production by the middle of the nineteenth century (Phillips 1990: 26). While some souvenir types were very similar in form to functional objects, such as bags and moccasins, the quilled birch bark box developed in response to market demands, and was not based on a functional form (Phillips 1999: 34-35). The box on display, attributed to Angeline Ko-go-maw, was purchased in August 1902 from private collector D.C. Lee (NMNH 215,503; see figure 2). Mr. Lee wrote to Otis Mason offering for sale “very fine specimens of the Chippewa Indians quill [and] basket work.” Lee knew just how to present his objects to Mason:
If the Nat. Museum wishes to obtain specimens of this work, especially the quill work, it's highly important that they should act at once, as the writers [sic] product will soon be scattered to the four winds.

The "hedge hog" from which the quills are obtained is fast nearing extermination, and every year the work is diminished by one half, and 2 years hence it will be almost impossible to obtain fine specimens (SIR 39,776: D.C. Lee to O.T. Mason June 14, 1902).

Two weeks later Mason sent a brief memo to the Head Curator regarding Lee’s offer:

In ordering insist strenuously on the preservation of the aboriginal designs and get, as far as possible, their meaning (SIR 39,776: O.T. Mason to Head Curator June 25, 1902).

The following month Mason sent a letter regarding Lee’s quill work to his colleague William Henry Holmes. Mason was in Pennsylvnania receiving one of his regular treatments for the paralysis that came as a result of a stroke he suffered in 1898 (Hinsley 1981: 113). Another colleague, Walter Hough, had reported to Mason on the arrival of Lee’s pieces, and Mason wrote to Holmes:

Walter tells me that Mr. Lee has sent in a collection of quill work and that the decorations are modern. Alas, it is the best that can be done. If you will look in one of the Kensingtons in Catlin Hall you will see some old porcupine work in the same fix. The French early began to acculturate the Indians….But the bark work is all Indian, so is the quill work. It also marks an epoch and a phase of culture progress. Don’t fail to secure some of it. (SIR 39,776: O.T. Mason to W.H. Holmes July 26, 1902; see Appendix III).

Ruth B. Phillips (1999: 37) has shown how decorated birch bark containers were, from their emergence, a post-contact phenomena. So, in the sense that Mason uses the word, there are no aboriginal birch bark boxes to be had. Nonetheless Mason describes the pieces in opposition to an authentic aboriginal type supposed to exist. The piece in question is decorated with floral motifs, which had emerged as a post-contact motif somewhat earlier than quilled boxes emerged as a post-contact form (Phillips 1990: 32-33). This raises the question of how Mason could see modern designs on a prehistoric form, when an awareness of the emergence of floral motifs should presuppose cognizance of the post-contact emergence of quilled boxes. The ideal type that Mason pines for is a historic impossibility.
The original contexts of these baskets are relatively straightforward. Baskets from California in the diorama “Hupa Indians of Northern California” are somewhat more difficult to historicize (see figure 3). There are twelve baskets on display, but one is misidentified in the Museum Support Center key to exhibits on display, so there is accession information for only eleven. These represent ten different accessions from between 1885 and 1946, only four of which are described as Hupa. The others, described as Klamath River, Pit River, Shasta, and Pomo, are all from other parts of California. Of these, six were accessioned during the salvage era, making them relevant to this study.

The diorama depicts a food-processing scene: one woman pounds acorns into meal while another woman pours acorn meal to the ground. A baby in a cradleboard looks on, while a woman carrying a pack basket approaches, and a man works a bow drill to start a fire. The three women wear basketry hats, the meal is poured to the ground from a large shallow basketry bowl, the acorns are ground in a basket hopper, five baskets sit on the ground, a pack basket is carried, and the baby is in a basketry cradleboard. The hats are (left to right in the diorama) Pomo, Hupa, and Shasta, accessioned 1940, 1946, and 1931, respectively (NMNH 381,191; 385,619; 360,912). The shallow bowl is a Klamath River tray with no accession date. The basket hopper, described as being used to pound manzanita berries, is from the McCloud River Indians of Shasta County, with no accession or collection date (NMNH 19,294-5). The large deep bowl in the center foreground is a Hupa basketry kettle, purchased in 1899 from Jeremiah Curtin, along with the enormous “storage” basket in the background (NMNH 131,146; 131,171). The basket to the seated woman’s right is a Hupa “tobacco basket,” also part of the same purchase from Curtin (NMNH: 131,171). In front of that basket is a
Hupa “dish for serving sow-how,” or acorn soup, collected by Lieutenant P.H. Ray of the 8th Infantry, who was serving as Acting Indian Agent at Hoopa Valley in 1886 (NMNH 126,540). To the left of the woman with the hopper, filled with meal, is a Pit River basketry bowl, gifted by the U.S. Commissioner of Fish and Fisheries in 1900 (NMNH: 206,376). The baby’s cradleboard is keyed to a catalog number for a brush collected from the McCloud River Indians in Baird, California prior to the twentieth century (NMNH 126,817). The pack basket that the women on the left of the diorama carries is a Pomo piece collected in Ukiah, California by William Henry Holmes in 1885 (NMNH 200,016). This pack basket, the Pit River bowl, the three Curtin baskets, and the Klamath River tray were all accessioned during the salvage era, and are within the scope of this study. The fact that pieces from different California tribes were used as “stand-ins” of a sort in a Hupa diorama is the topic of another inquiry.

The Klamath River basket, described as a “close worked tray,” is one of four “deposited” with the Museum by George Gibbs, and has no accession number (NMNH 7567-70). Two others of this set were illustrated in the 1902 Report of the U.S. National Museum, and described as “food bowls of the Klamath Indians of Southern Oregon.” Mason explains that “these old specimens were among the first received at the U.S. National Museum” (ARUSNM 1902: 290), associating them with the attributes of authenticity. Their age is no indication of their authenticity on the basis of Mason’s standards, since they fall squarely within the era of widespread souvenir production of baskets from this area. The tray in the diorama, however, does show evidence of use; the design elements are noticeably faded, and it shows significant wear on the rim. This suggests the possibility that George Gibbs may have collected this tray out of a functional
context.

If Jeremiah Curtin sold his baskets to the National Museum within twenty years of having collected them, then he was active during the height of the Late Victorian curio trade in California (Cohodas 1997: 4). All three of the Curtin baskets are examples of pieces produced expressly for commercial purposes, despite their functional forms. The cooking basket, for example, shows no evidence of wear or use beyond the ash from the diorama firepit (see figure 4). A functional cooking basket “had to be replaced frequently because of the hard use it received,” (Dalrymple 2000: 8) and by the late nineteenth century these basketry forms were widely available as souvenir or curio productions.

Pomo weaver Annie Ramon Burke (1876-1962) wove a cooking basket, which was in the collection of her daughter, Elsie Allen. Allen’s niece and protégé, Susan Billy, describes this basket as being “in pristine condition” (Abel-Vidor, Brovarney and Billy 1996: 33-34). A weaver Annie Burke’s age would have learned to weave from older women in her family, indicating that cooking baskets continued to be woven after their functional application had been replaced. Kettle type baskets (large deep bowl, high walls, twined weave) are present in illustrations of basket and curio dealer Grace Nicholson’s Pasadena, California gallery in an undated photo, c. 1910 (Cohodas 1997: fig. 5.4). They are also illustrated in photos of private collections in Mason (1988 [1904]: pl. 177) and James (1972 [1909]: fig. 346). Lila O’Neale, in her excellent treatment of Yurok-Karok commercial basket production, points out that bowl and tray forms, including “cooking” baskets, were the functional forms persisting in the marketplace alongside commercial innovations such as “fancy” baskets (O’Neale 1932: 41, 149, 157). Indeed, Dalrymple (2000: 6) illustrates a cooking basket made by Yurok weaver Nettie McKinnon in 1980.
It is quite likely that the Hupa kettle purchased by the National Museum from Jeremiah Curtin was made expressly to be sold, despite its typological conformity to a functional form.

A similar set of circumstances surrounds the small “dish for serving sow-how” collected for the Museum by Lieutenant Ray. This basket also shows a notable lack of use wear (see figure 5), and dates from a time when introduced utensils had largely replaced baskets for serving food. Food bowls with circumstances similar to those described for the cooking basket are present in all of the same sources. Lieutenant Ray wrote that “baskets can only be obtained [sic] by purchase,” further indicating that utilitarian forms, like most baskets, were made to be sold. The idealized basket collected from use could no longer be had.

The other Curtin baskets are somewhat harder to figure. The very large storage basket is a type that was made ethnographically, and is remembered by O’Neale’s informants. O’Neale illustrates a Yurok basket just two inches shorter than Curtin’s three-foot Hupa specimen (O’Neale 1932: 38-39, pl.39). While Grace Nicholson’s gallery had a very large storage basket made by well known Pomo weavers William and Mary Benson mounted on the front lawn (Cohodas 1997: fig. 5.3), these large baskets are largely absent from photographs of curio shops (Batkin 1998: 78; Cohodas 1997: fig. 5.2) and collections featuring California baskets (Cohodas 1997: figs 1.3, 1.4; James 1972 [1909]: figs. 15, 75, 76, 77, 94, 346; Mason 1988 [1904]: plates 177, 178) with the exception of one private display of California basketry photographed in 1899 (Cohodas 1977: fig. 4.2). James does illustrate a coiled basket large enough to accommodate him and two female associates, but the text is absent any reference to the basket itself.
California baskets of this type were predominantly twined, rather than coiled, so it is difficult to ascertain any information about this basket described simply as “large,” other than the fact that is from the collection of a Mrs. Jewwett (James 1972 [1909]: 168). This suggests that, while uncommon, large baskets of this type were not totally unavailable to collectors. It is doubtful, however, that by the 1890’s any baskets available to collectors were left over from the days of pre-contact technology. Based on Nicholson’s role as a professional curio dealer who contracted work from local weavers, it is safe to assume that her giant basket was made to order by the Bensons. Accordingly, it is not totally unreasonable to assume a similar provenance for Curtin’s large Hupa basket.

The Hupa tobacco basket is an example of a functional type, which has remained in production for use throughout the historic and modern eras (Hupa Tribal Museum). This accession is the only one of Curtin’s that has a legitimate possibility of having been made to use. The specimen on display is somewhat obscured in the diorama, making it difficult to visually ascertain the use wear that would suggest this piece was collected out of a functional context, and would meet the standard of authenticity. The fact that these tobacco baskets are used as ritual paraphernalia in religious observances makes it likely that Curtin obtained a replica. While the sale of ritual paraphernalia is often prohibited, replicas are usually understood by their makers to be a different category of object (Graburn 1976: 14-15).

The Pit River bowl does not fit into any particular category of functional basket. It shows no signs of wear, and baskets of a similar type from all tribes all over California are ubiquitous in the collections cited above. The Pomo pack basket collected by William Henry Holmes has a story similar to the other functional forms discussed above.
Like the large granary or storage baskets, twined pack baskets are not frequently represented in historic collections of California baskets, but they are not wholly absent. There is a possibility that this basket could have been collected from a functional context, since there are no religious associations with pack baskets, but it does not appear to have seen much use.

Another early diorama preserved in today’s Museum, “Interior of a Hopi Apartment,” includes eight baskets (see figure 6), six of which are identified as Hopi, Moki, or Moqui, the latter two terms being synonymous with the first. The scene in the Hopi household is somewhat similar to that in California. Four women process corn: two grind meal, which is mounded in a large coiled bowl, one cooks batter covering her pot with a basketry lid, and one cooks pika bread, piling the finished product in a small plaited basket. A man enters with a rabbit and a pack basket, while another woman weaves a basket in the foreground. A wicker plaque and coated basketry water jug hang from the wall with a piece of pottery, and a wicker pack basket in the foreground spills out the ears of corn the young women are grinding. All of the baskets were accessioned during the salvage era, and a few are connected to giants of early ethnography. The coated water basket, the wicker pot lid, the plaited pika tray, and both pack baskets all have their collectors listed simply as Bureau of Ethnology (NMNH 68,517; 166,377; 166,435; 70,932; 84,024). Matilda Coxe Stevenson collected the hanging wicker tray, and later sold it to the Museum, and James Mooney collected the unfinished plaited basket that shows the method of the technique (NMNH 130, 518; 166,757).

Based on catalog numbers, which are assigned sequentially, the earliest accession in this grouping is the coated water jar, collected from Zuni Pueblo (NMNH 68,517).
This basket was certainly collected by James Stevenson, as many others collected by him at Zuni are discussed by Mason, with catalogue numbers very close to that of the piece on display. Catalogue number 68,515 is identical, as described by Mason: “a water tight jar from the Zuni Indians. The whole surface of the object is in the twilled type of twined weaving and well saturated in pitch. The characteristic features are the lugs of wood on the side for the carrying strap, and flattening the surface in between these lugs, as in a canteen. This is partially shown in the photographs, but is quite apparent on the jar itself” (Mason 1988 [1904]: 448-449; see figure 7). Mason gives these baskets a likely Apache attribution, crediting trade for getting them to Zuni where Stevenson collected them (Mason 1988 [1904]: 447-448), a diagnosis whose likelihood is supported by evidence in Tanner (1983: 97-98) and Whiteford (1988: 84-85). In light of this, it is probable that this basket was collected from a use context by Stevenson when he was at Zuni. While the market for Southwestern Indian crafts has always been one of the largest in the country, Zuni was typically associated with pottery by collectors. While Zuni pottery production for the curio and souvenir market is well documented, there is no record of commercial basket production at Zuni.

Hanging alongside the water jug from Zuni is a Hopi wicker plaque, collected by Matilda Coxe Stevenson, and sold to the Museum in 1888. Otis Mason wrote an excited letter to Secretary of the Smithsonian Samuel P. Langley in November of that year, strongly encouraging him to purchase Mrs. Stevenson’s “whole collection of pueblo pottery, sacred baskets, stone implements, navajo [sic] jewelry, apache [sic] basketry, and three sacred blankets for $500, which is indeed very cheap. I am extremely anxious to retain her attachment [listing the collection] to the museum.” The cause of Mason’s
urgency is that “the Tiffanies of New York have offered her [Stevenson] two hundred dollars for six pieces, which are the very best examples of the old uncontaminated pueblo work.” He points out to Langley that if they miss this opportunity they “shall have the mortification of owning thousands of pieces of modern pueblo pottery and none of the old cave pottery” (SIR 21,664). This is somewhat odd, since Mrs. Stevenson was in the field at the same time as her husband, who was in the employ of the Bureau of Ethnology, which was required to collect artifacts for the National Museum (Fowler and Fowler 1969: 165). It is unlikely that she somehow “out-collected” him, snatching up the good stuff for herself. They may have recognized the inherent value of the goods they were dealing with and devised a scheme whereby they could benefit from their access to desirable objects, but this is simply speculation. As for Mason, this letter makes very clear his understanding of the value of ethnographic artifacts. Older things are of greater scientific value to a museum because they are “uncontaminated,” while modern, “contaminated” pieces, even thousands of them, are not as desirable. The authenticity of older pieces is invoked by the idea of “uncontaminated” artifacts being the only really worthwhile ones to have.

The other wicker plaque in the diorama is being used as a lid for a cooking pot, a practice for which no ethnographic evidence was found. Mason describes these plaques as “sacred meal baskets” (1988 [1904]: 454). James illustrates an Antelope altar from Hopi using coiled trays to hold ritual paraphernalia (1977 [1909]: 38). In a photograph of the famous Hopi “Snake Dance,” dated 1897, women are shown carrying baskets of meal described as being of Hopi and Havasupai manufacture (James 1972 [1909]: 41). At least one of the baskets in the photograph appears to be of Apache manufacture as well.
As far as how prehistoric such a plaque really could be, it is almost certain to have been manufactured within the lifetime of whomever Stevenson collected it from. As far as the functional versus commercial disposition of the object in its original context, it is as likely to have been one as another. Like virtually every other tribe in the country, many of baskets’ utilitarian functions had been replaced, yet basket weavers continued to produce functional types for other purposes. Modern ethnographic data from Hopi suggest that these baskets are produced in two different contexts: some are made to be sold, others are made for use within the community, circulating in reciprocal gift exchanges (Tiewes 1996: 51-53).

The small plaited ring basket is a souvenir size of a functional form. These baskets are widely produced at Hopi, and historically have been just as widely available for purchase. While miniature coiled plaques are commonly made for a variety of functional uses, plaited trays are not useful for their sifting, storing and serving functions if they are small. Full size trays of those sorts are somewhat impractical for display in household curio collections, so commercial versions of these baskets were usually miniaturized.

“Masterpieces”

In 1990 two new alcoves were installed in the exhibit hall, entitled “Masterpieces of American Indian Basketry” and “Contemporary Masterpieces of American Indian Basketry.” The first alcove shows baskets made prior to 1920, and the other post 1920 pieces. These exhibits include baskets from several different unrelated tribes, selected and displayed solely on the basis of technical or aesthetic masterpieces. This is a common twentieth century approach to the valuation and display of culturally foreign
objects in museums (Vogel 1991: 192-193, 195). Considering only the first alcove, seven of these fourteen baskets were part of the basketry collection of Mrs. Ella F. Hubby of Pasadena, California, who donated a group of 302 baskets to the Museum in 1920. Mrs. Hubby was an active collector around the turn of the century, and her personal catalog cards were incorporated directly into the Museum’s own card catalog. Mrs. Hubby, named in Otis Mason’s chapter on collectors, may very well have read Mason’s recommendation to collectors to keep their own descriptive cards (1988 [1904]: 502). By the time the Museum received this gift, in 1920, the giants of salvage ethnography had passed on, leaving only their great legacy to echo in the halls of the nation’s attic, and although the baskets themselves are lovely, there is nothing in their accession relevant to the salvage era production of authenticity. The same may be said of the small Pomo basket included as part of a 1916 gift to the Museum from Mrs. Caroline E. Bates of Washington, D.C. The gift was primarily Asian textiles and 18th century European weaponry; based on the frequency of types of items, the basket may have been part of her household furnishing rather than the object of her collecting efforts (SIR 59,652). In any event, it was sent to the national attic, and dusted off a few decades later, once the fine art standard had come to rule the selection of baskets for display.

Regardless of the modern reasons for their display, the accession details of salvage era baskets provide a glimpse of how authenticity was constructed in their historic selection. The only really functional form, a Haida basketry hat collected by J.G. Swan in 1883 in the Queen Charlotte Islands, was purchased by him from the local Hudson’s Bay trader, suggesting that it was made with the intention to sell (SIR 13,804). A covered basket from the nearby Tlingit was purchased from Lieutenant George
Thornton Emmons, an avocational collector active in Alaska during the 1880’s (NMNH 168,272-78). Emmons certainly collected authentic items, since he was not opposed to salvaging them from the graves of important shamans, a guarantee that they were not made to be sold (Jonaitis 1988: 92-93). The small lidded basket, however, is a well documented form of souvenir curio from mid to late nineteenth century Alaska (Lee 1991: 6-8, 12; Lee 1999: 267-68, 273-276). Both of these Northwest Coast pieces came as parts of much larger accessions with relatively little comment. Two other baskets in this case, a bowl by famed Washoe weaver Louisa Keyser and a Pomo feathered “jewel” basket, were the objects of somewhat more attention from the ethnologists when they made their entrance to the National Museum.

The Louisa Keyser bowl was among a collection of Washoe basketry purchased by the Museum from Eugene Mead in 1900, upon the recommendation of Otis Mason. Louisa Keyser (also known by the nominally Indian name Dat-So-La-Lee) was patronized and promoted by Lake Tahoe curio dealer Abe Cohn from 1895 until the 1920’s. During this time he had exclusive rights to her work, and since her work enjoyed relatively little distribution prior to this arrangement (Cohodas 1986: 203-204), it is likely that the piece in the National Museum originated from this context. Mead, in his own description of the collection, describes the Keyser basket as “made by the last of the old Washoe basket makers” (SIR 36,244), a misrepresentation that he may have been unknowingly transmitting, since Abe Cohn’s wife Amy “wove an increasingly tangled web of falsification to create an artificial mystique around Louisa Keyser’s basket weaving” in the interest of effectively marketing them (Cohodas 1986: 208). Otis Mason, in a memorandum to the Secretary recommending the purchase of Mead’s
collection, exults that “the Washoe baskets are absolutely unique with us and are richly worth the money” (SIR 36,244). The bowl acquired from Mead and subsequently displayed was considered by Mason to be noteworthy enough to warrant inclusion in his book (Mason 1988 [1904]: pl. 179). He also consulted Amy Cohn for information about Washoe basketry (Cohodas 1986: 208); it appears that Cohn described Dat-So-La-Lee to Mason, who applied this description to Washoe basketry in general. Louisa Keyser was an innovative weaver of exceptional ability, and Mason describes an attribute of Washoe basketry in general which really only she had mastered: “stitch after stitch, over and over, increases in width and length with the swelling and shrinking of the basket,” (Mason 1988[1904]: 401). This “profound visual poetry,” whereby Keyser modified individual elements of the basket according to their position relative to the overall shape of the piece, is described by Cohodas as “her greatest achievement” (1986: 207).

The last basket in the sample discussed here is a Pomo “jewel” basket, a small basket completely covered with multicolored feathers from a variety of bird species, and further embellished with disc shaped beads of white clam shell (see figure 8). This piece was collected in 1896 by Dr. J W. Hudson of Ukiah, California, and purchased by the Museum in 1899. The correspondence surrounding Dr. Hudson’s collection includes some excellent statements on genuineness from the great John Wesley Powell himself. Three letters are present in the accession records for the Hudson basket. The first is to Otis Mason from Hudson, the second from Secretary Langley to Major Powell, and the third is Powell’s response to Langley. The content of these letters indicate that there was at least one other that is not present: Otis Mason’s original inquiry to Hudson about his basket collection, which the doctor references in his reply to the curator. Langley’s letter
to Powell makes it clear that Mason contacted him about purchasing the collection, although no record of that correspondence is present in the accession documentation. Langley sought Powell's opinion as to whether or not the collection was worth purchasing. Mason clearly felt that it was; his voice echoes in Langley's explanation to Powell that he was told "there will not come another opportunity of securing such a collection as this, as Doctor Hudson knows the name of the tribe who manufactured each object and understands also their technique, so that with the material a catalogue would be furnished which would give every piece the value of a type" (SIR 35,435). Mason's position in the Museum makes him the most likely one to have told the Secretary that this was a collection that ought to be purchased; Mason's great affinity for organization and typology echoes in Langley's words. Powell responded with the explanation that the collection, "especially rich in basketry," was considered for purchase in 1892 for the Columbian Exposition, but that the collection was passed over because, as Powell explains,

while certain pieces are aboriginal and valuable for museum purposes, a considerable part of the objects have been manufactured in modern times by new methods learned from white men, and would therefore be misleading to students and others if placed on exhibition.

He goes on to say:

In view of the conditions, I should recommend that the collection be not purchased without careful examination by a trustworthy anthropologist, preferably on the ground, where the history of each specimen can be ascertained; and that, in case of such examination only those specimens found to be aboriginal be acquired for the Museum....The baskets of California are of very great interest, and many collections have been made of aboriginal art, but in modern times they have been manufactured for sale and the new baskets in no sense represent the arts of the Indians (SIR 35,135).6

It is quite possible that Hudson took his first rejection to heart, because in his 1897 letter to Mason, he writes "I have been enabled to find but 14 pure types, but have on the other hand disposed of about 50 because they were ornamented or designed with foreign
figures, including Greek, Tuscan even English letters. So I have now only about 300 purely aboriginal baskets” (SIR 35,435). Another indication that Hudson may have divested himself of part of his collection is his asking price of $3,100, which is considerably lower than the 1892 price of $5000 referred to by Powell (SIR 35,435). It is also possible that Hudson lowered his price because he simply wanted to divest his collection quickly, but the impression that emerges from the correspondence is much more that he trimmed out the obviously unacceptable baskets, such as those with foreign characters and letters. While the accession files hold these letters from the spring and summer of 1897, there is no indication as to why the baskets were not purchased until 1899.

From these artifacts come clues to the way that Mason, Powell, and their fellow framers of the field understood the objects that they were collecting and curating. All of these objects entered the Museum during a time when museum anthropology was operating with a distinct agenda based on the currently accepted theories that they were endeavoring to demonstrate. The conclusions that follow are drawn primarily from the material outlined in this chapter, and focus particularly on Otis Mason. Mason is especially relevant because he was not an innovator during his time; he applied the theories and methods of the innovators. Rather than contribute to the design of anthropology during its formative years, Mason practiced anthropology within the theoretical design of others. Regardless of how irrelevant these ideas may seem to current students, today’s anthropology quickly descended from, and thus is still closely related to, the way that men like Mason went about their business.
Mention must be made here of perhaps the most colorful character of them all: Frank Hamilton Cushing. Sadly for this researcher, Cushing contributed little on basketry, and has no role in the text, but he deserves mention as an individual who innovated what was to become a stereotypical prohibition within the field: he went native. The best treatment of Cushing is doubtless *A Zuni Cartoonist Looks at Frank Hamilton Cushing* by Phil Hughte.

According to McGee “the art [of double walled basketry] has long been lost,” but Cherokee basket makers Eva Wolfe, Emma Taylor, and Rowena Bradley were all exhibiting double walled, or “doubleweave” baskets at the Qualla Arts and Crafts Mutual in the 1960’s and 1970’s (Qualla Arts and Crafts Mutual 1987: 1-4, 49-52, 57-60).

Despite Lee’s prediction, this researcher was able to purchase a newly made quilled birch bark box in 2000, with no shortage of selection from several different Chippewa artists. Clearly neither the hedge hog nor the art has suffered much extermination.

An interesting situation is present in this display: an error from one of Hubby’s cards is repeated in the text of the exhibit. The very well known and widely documented weaver Elizabeth Hickox is misidentified by Hubby as “Mrs. Hitchcock,” and that is the only attribution present in the exhibit text, despite a corrective note added to the card by a museum worker. Coincidentally, Turnbaugh and Turnbaugh misidentify one of her baskets as being woven by “Mrs. Hukon” (1986: 179). Ironically enough, Hickox was a weaver of truly extraordinary ability, and no other weaver has successfully reproduced her individual stylistic innovations, making her work somewhat unmistakable to basketry aficionados.

Elsewhere in the Cultures of the Americas Hall are personal items of religious paraphernalia, such as Tlingit shaman’s amulets, purchased from Emmons, suggesting the possibility that they were removed from burials.

It is quite likely that this letter was drafted by Powell’s secretary, William J. McGee. After 1895 Powell was dedicated to completing his book *Truth and Error*, and his amputation became increasingly problematic, requiring subsequent surgeries. Hinsley’s excellent historical research in the records of the 1902 Congressional Investigation of the Bureau of American Ethnology has shown how McGee was essentially in control of the day to day duties of the Director during this time. While the text of the letter is likely McGee’s, the opinion is certainly Powell’s, as McGee was the prime transmitter of Powell’s anthropology to the world (Hinsley 1986: 246).
Chapter Five: Interpretations and Conclusions

Making sense of the contradictions between the expressed standards and the baskets accessioned requires more than simply mapping out the logic underlying Otis Mason’s authenticity. While understanding how it was constructed is a helpful first step, the larger historical context of the standard is the key to explaining how baskets that clearly did not meet prescribed specifications came to be treated as if they did. To understand this, the baskets from the Museum are contextualized in terms of the overall state of Indian basketry at the end of the nineteenth century. The baskets own characteristics are then compared to the typical characteristics of authenticity. This leads to the discussion of how such seemingly obvious inconsistencies could be allowed. This understanding is gained by contextualizing Mason and his contemporaries in terms of their theoretical orientation anthropologically, as well as their political and social roles in relation to the people whose cultural productions they were interpreting. Caution is necessary, lest a zealously critical researcher assign motivations based on present day sensibilities to actions from the past. Appropriate academic rigor notwithstanding, the ideas of these men from the past can be put into terms of larger theoretical and political-economic trends.

The American public has had a continual interest in American Indian themes that has manifested in a variety of ways (Deloria 1998: 4-9, 182-183; Nottage 1998: 86-90, 100-105). Collecting the objects of tribal peoples (and other oddities and curiosities of the natural world) for personal display in the home began in the seventeenth century, and was a well established cultural pattern in Europe and America by the middle of the nineteenth century (Berlo and Phillips 1998: 12-13). Curiosity cabinets, designed
especially to hold these collections, eventually gave way to entire rooms dedicated to these collections in well to do homes. While the early collections of curiosities often contained strange assortments of bizarre objects, by the nineteenth century amateur collectors were focusing their activities around particular themes. Among the emerging United States middle class it became fashionable for urban homes to include a “den” or an “Indian room” in which the homemakers’ collection of tribal objects was kept (Cohodas 1997: 30; Lee 1991: 10-13). Of course, only those things that met collectors’ expectations of “Indianness,” usually understood as pre-modern manufactures, were displayed. This trend in Victorian homemaking created a pronounced demand for certain types of goods, and supported a vigorous trade throughout the country in a wide variety of goods produced by Indians and (usually) marketed by non-Indians. Baskets played an especially significant role, in part due to their quintessential association with the premodern. The late Victorian heyday of domestic collecting has been characterized as a “basket craze” (Cohodas 1997: 56-57); indeed, by 1902 articles on Indian baskets had run in Harper’s Bazaar, Ladies’ Home Journal, The House Beautiful, The Outlook, Sunset, Demorest's Family Magazine, the New York Tribune, and the San Francisco Chronicle (James 1972[1909]: 232-233).

By the time salvage ethnographers were taking the field for the Bureau, the commercial market providing baskets to homemakers was firmly established. When Mooney, Holmes, and Stevenson were in the field pursuing artifacts they were competing with local traders, private avocational collectors like Curtin, Mead, and Hubby, and professional dealers like Nicholson and the Cohns. Ethnographers like Mooney and Stevenson were working to acquire baskets that people had actually used in functional
contexts, like the Zuni water jug and Cherokee pack basket but, as Mooney's own report indicates, these things were relatively scarce. For the most part they settled for replicas of functional forms, which were also popular among domestic collectors at the time. Baskets, like most other commercial native material productions, simultaneously met and helped create the expectations of the buying public about the "Indianness" of objects. Replicas were marketed to individual consumers by weavers and retailers alike, alongside a variety of formal types developed expressly for sale: nameless bowl and tray shapes, basketry bowler hats, wallets, cigarette cases, covered flasks, and novelty shapes, such as animals or teacups.\(^1\) With the exception of the functional examples noted, all of these baskets were essentially part of a single supply of commercially produced Indian baskets that was marketed through different channels to meet different kinds of consumer demands.

According to the standard of authenticity, baskets made expressly to be sold were less genuine than those made for their intended purposes by their makers. Replicas were not the real thing to Mason and his peers in the Museum, nor to Mooney and Stevenson in the Bureau. Even though practical concerns might require that the genuine and the replicated be displayed together, it is clear that the commercial specimens are considered to be of a lesser character. The paucity of "original" specimens, and the need to rely on replicas, fed the paternalistic sentimentality over the supposedly vanishing Indian that pervaded the tone of salvage ethnography. The majority of baskets accessioned were exempted from the requirement to be non-commercial without comment, presumably because there was no other option available if the Museum wanted to have more than a handful of baskets in its collection. It appears that in at least one case Mason abandoned
this aspect of the standard completely: in 1903 he signed off on a purchase of sixty-four baskets from Fred Harvey, magnate of the Santa Fe Railroad's Indian tours of the Southwest (SIR 41,388). Presumably this indicates that the Museum purchased the collection from Harvey's extensive business operation, since he died in 1901 (Howard and Pardue 1996: 9). Nonetheless, Harvey is named as the collector of the Chemehuevi basket included in that purchase and now on display among the Masterpieces (NMNH 220,480; see figure 9). Harvey's extensive operations in association with the Santa Fe Railroad played a key role in creating public demand for Indian goods by heavily marketing Indian themes, and then helped meet that demand by wholesaling and retailing Indian goods from throughout the West. The Chemehuevi jar now on display is representative of the way the authenticity standard functioned: its obvious and irrefutably commercial nature was overlooked because it appeared to meet other expressed criteria for genuineness, namely in terms of its shape and design.

The other major features of the standard were form and decoration. As discussed above, functional forms were considered more authentic than non-functional shapes, even if they were replicas. It appears that this formal criteria was applied on the basis of a comprehensive logic about function, rather than on the basis of specific functional types used by particular tribes. The Chemehuevi jar is still a good example. In his book, Mason described the basketry of the Chemehuevi, and illustrated a group of jars and plaques from the National Museum. Mason obviously favored these baskets, which he described as finer than any other produced in that region (1988[1904]: 472). Tanner's survey of Chemehuevi basket shapes only includes plaques, jars, and bowls. This reflects the fact that Chemehuevi basketry, as it is known historically, represents only commercial
forms. Tanner suggests that these shapes were based on market demands, and were made to suit the needs of non-Indian consumers (1983: 217). For Mason, though, a small jar or bowl shaped basket did not represent a modern deterioration, even though these shapes were not necessarily made prior to the demand for them from non-Indian consumers. This is evidenced throughout the entire corpus of his work by his consistent and systematic application of a universal typology to all American Indian baskets (Mason: 1988[1904]: 213-254). A telling example is his description of a group of Western Apache baskets as “ollas, or large water jars” in the caption to their illustration (Mason 1988[1904]: pl. 42). In the accompanying text to this plate he acknowledges “these pretty jar-shapes have little significance as far as tribes are concerned” (Mason 1988[1904]: 139). With his extensive surveys of basket construction techniques (1884: pls. X, XIV, XXIV, 1988[1904]: 44-130) Mason must have realized that the coiled ollas were not likely related to the twined and pitched water jars made and used by the Apache, like the ones collected from Zuni by James Stevenson. Nonetheless, for Mason they are “water jars” because they are tall, high shouldered containers. It does not matter that Apache coiling is not water tight (as some unpitched, twined baskets are), or that their water jars are not decorated or coiled. If it is the shape of a water jar, then that is the kind of basket it is identified as, regardless of other conditions.

The criterion for authenticity associated with decoration on baskets is the easiest to identify and evaluate. Abstract or geometric designs that appeared to be appropriately primitive were considered “original,” while decorations intended to increase the appeal of baskets to non-Indian consumers were unacceptable. Thus, the dates, flags, place names, animals, arrowheads, and eagles that were popular decorative themes in baskets sold at
resorts and along travel routes (Cohodas 1986: 213; Dalrymple 2000: 51; Howard and Pardue 1996: 26, 52; Tanner 1982: 173-176; Tanner 1983: 141) were unacceptable to Otis Mason's authenticity. A peculiar expression of the elevation of primitive design is Mason's commentary on the quilled boxes with floral designs, discussed above. The unlikely combination of attributes that he wishes for must have made sense to Mason in some way. The key to understanding how is the role of objects in the application of his overall anthropological scheme to the classification of tribal productions.

For Mason (and Klemm, Powell, and others) objects of tribal manufacture were reflections of the level of development that the tribe in question had attained. This led to Mason's belief that by arranging these materials typologically, evidence of the whole order of the development could be ascertained. His colleague Walter Hough remembered being exhorted by Mason to "put like with like, and tribes and localities will take care of themselves" (Hough 1908: 662). This is why it was so important to him that baskets not show the influence of later stages of development. If they exhibited attributes not affiliated with their "natural" stage of evolution then the developmental order they illustrated when arranged would be inaccurate. Despite Mason's terrific methodological contributions to the systematic analysis and description of basketry materials and techniques, his application of theory to the organization and display of cultural materials was characterized by an adherence to his initial ideas in the face of data to the contrary. Functional forms (like boxes or bowls) were suitably primitive, regardless of when they actually emerged or whether Indians ever actually used them for anything other than selling to tourists. Likewise, European looking designs were unacceptable, especially if they appeared on a functional form. Systematically applying these standards made
Mason feel better about some objects (Hudson’s Pomo collection and Mead’s Louisa Keyser bowl) and not so good about others (the Angeline Ko-go-maw box and the ollas insignificant to the Apache), but it never fully served his purpose of demonstrating the natural order of the races through the genealogy of their artifacts.

Currently, Otis Mason is treated as a relatively minor figure in anthropology, whose ideas did not stand the test of time. Historians of material culture plumb his work for clues as to what some material in an old basket could be, and savvy appraisers use the historic collections he copiously illustrated as a benchmark to aid in dating baskets unearthed in attics or at auctions. Students of anthropology hear his name only in passing. The journals of the mighty John Wesley Powell’s daring first descent of the Grand Canyon are revered today by river runners the world over, who will never let him be forgotten for this most monumental achievement. His erratic pronouncements on the nature of the human race, however, are fading from the institutional memory of anthropology. Given the relative infancy of anthropology at the time, and the cadre of self-styled innovators at the National Museum, it is possible that the standard of authenticity that these men engaged was nothing more than a reflection of current popular perceptions, rather than any scientific understanding. It certainly appears that Otis Mason’s concept of authenticity was simply a repackaging of the popular discourse on baskets at the time: Cohodas points out that much of Mason’s book is “indistinguishable” from the popular literature of the day (1997: 188). However, this appearance is a result of the fact that the Museum and the popular collectors were both dealing with the same baskets, since they were competing in the same markets for the same objects, as described above. The work of these men deserves close attention for two reasons: they
practical application of historic theories that have since been discarded, and they were in positions of power within the Smithsonian, an institution of relevance both politically and socially.

It is especially important for anthropologists to have a thorough understanding of their own professional history. Anthropology’s traditional object of inquiry has always been subject to the colonialism of the anthropologists’ own society. While the last few decades has seen the field take a much more self-critical posture, the legacy of anthropology as a neo-colonial endeavor is very recent history. It is important for today’s practitioners to be aware of this legacy, since the context in which we work is still largely informed by the work of our predecessors. Situating Powell and Mason’s perspectives on authenticity within the context of the larger historical conditions in which they were working is the best way to see what anthropology has inherited from its antiquated founders. What Mason thought about authenticity made sense to him in terms of his theoretical orientation, and he likely never questioned that arrangement. It was not yet typical of anthropologists to worry about how they might be functioning as neo-colonial manifestations of structural power, a consideration becoming somewhat routine in the field. As practitioners, we are right to be concerned with these issues, as the founders and framers of our field did function in these terms, regardless of how they thought of themselves or their work.

It is the critical perspective of history that allows anthropology to realize the problematic dimensions of its legacy. Marvin Cohodas (1997), following Pierre Bourdieu (1979), makes a very strong statement on the nature of historical inquiry:

*Historical studies frequently operate under an illusion of autonomous practices rather than attempting to trace the articulations of pervasive socioeconomic processes....The illusion of autonomy among such separate spheres of inquiry into the same period must itself be*
considered an ideological process aiding in the misrecognition of political and economic means of constructing dominance.

One of the benefits of an anthropological perspective is the ability to analytically draw back from the object of inquiry, and critically analyze it in terms of larger historic social and cultural trends. In this case, the standard of authenticity must be related to not only what was happening to the perception of native people in the field of anthropology, but to other aspects of the relationship between native and non-native people and entities. This reveals how the standard of authenticity is more than simply a reflection of an outdated, erroneous scientific scheme. The discourse surrounding authenticity and genuineness can legitimately be seen as an expression or a manifestation of the overall tendency to control native people prevalent in American political discourse. This assertion does not identify this tendency as a motive driving the salvage ethnographers. Mason and the others can, and should, be taken at their word as to their motivations; they felt that they were preserving information and artifacts that would otherwise be lost forever to the knowledge of science. Understanding the effort to control as a pervasive theme in the United States’ dealings with the tribes, though, suggests that the arrangement of native people into a developmental scheme can be seen as a symbolic correlate to the effort to dictate their physical place on the landscape and the nature of their lifestyle. It is tempting to suggest that the Smithsonian’s role as National Museum implicates it as a part of the government’s effort to physically and socially control native people. This is not the case. Although certain agencies within the government, and the individuals who staffed them, were involved directly in perpetrating such actions (like forced relocations and forced acculturative educational campaigns), it is an inaccurate oversimplification to suggest that because “the government” was responsible for doing this, that the
Smithsonian played a role in the effort to perpetrate particular actions against native populations. As noted above, the expressed motives of the Smithsonian scientists had nothing to do with this. Suggesting a hidden agenda to minimize the political power of Indian people by applying a dubious scheme designed to prove their inferiority would be absurd. Mason and his contemporaries were concerned with their own scientific agendas, and were largely silent on the political issues of the day that rose up around the “Indian question.” They were not totally independent of these issues, however.

Even if Mason and his staff never thought of themselves as part of the campaign to control native people, they served functionally to support those efforts by providing scientific claims that Indian people were developmentally “behind” other Americans. This served to facilitate the paternalistic campaigns of forced acculturation that characterized late nineteenth-century America’s relationship with Indian people. The standard of authenticity is the element of Mason’s professional discourse that reflects this fact. The value of this analysis is twofold: first, it is an important exercise to examine how commitment to theoretical models can color an anthropologist’s understanding. Mason’s commitment to an evolutionary theory overrode the contradictions that emerged from his baskets. Data should always be primary, and theory a result of its interpretation. Second, is the lesson of structural power. Otis Mason did not think of himself as part of the effort to wrest control of the continent from the tribes; he sought only to understand them. Nonetheless, his life’s work had the result of supporting that effort. The implication for anthropologists today should be clear. The struggle between the Indigenous and the State continues to play out, and many anthropologists continue to
think of what they do as an effort only to understand the indigenous, not to undermine them.

Otis Mason’s issues of authenticity lurk mostly unnoticed in the annals of anthropology, appearing as nothing more than typical salvage ethnography. Little is typical in the trajectory of American anthropology over the last hundred twenty-five years, however, and Otis Mason is no exception. The contradictions that appear inherent in his work can be explained, and in the process a picture emerges of a scholar so totally committed to his mode of inquiry that the facts themselves need not behave exactly as they should. It would be a shortsighted disservice to the prospects for the field, and to Mason himself, to simply dismiss him. Mason and his work is a very effective example of how anthropologists and their work influence public perceptions and public policy. Ironically enough, the field today is abuzz with talk of anthropology moving out of academia, and applying its unique approach to public policy. Otis Mason’s authenticity shows how the commentary of anthropology on cultural “Others” always serves to influence public perception of these “Others” on a larger scale. Regardless of what an anthropologist thinks they are doing with their work, published accounts of cultural “Others” serve a variety of functions in American culture, not all of which are necessarily acceptable to the anthropologist. Insights like this are the goal of close critical examination of historic anthropological activity. It is a mistake to simply dismiss the refuted theories of the past; while the ideas are wrong by today’s standards, they contain important information, relevant for anthropologists today.

\[1\] Even today replicas of functional forms, and of the few well known “pre-historic” basketry artifacts, remain a mainstay of the current range of commercial Indian basketry styles produced.
Figure 1: John Smith life-group, with NMNH 209,215 at left with corn.

Chippewa birch-bark box
embroidered with porcupine quills.

Figure 2: Box made by Angeline Ko-go-maw (NMNH 215,503).
Figure 3: Hupa Indians life-group.

Figure 4: Hupa baskets, foreground left to right: serving dish (NMNH 126,540), kettle (NMNH 131,146).
Figure 5: Hupa serving dish (NMNH 131,146).

Figure 6: Hopi life-group.
Figure 7: Baskets hanging in Hopi diorama, left to right: pitched water jug (NMNH 58,517), wicker plaque (NMNH 130,518).

Figure 8: Pomo "jewel" basket (NMNH 203,415).
Figure 9  Foreground (number 9), Chemehuevi basket (NMNH 41,388).
(Note number 10, misattributed Elizabeth Hickox basket, in background)
Appendices

Appendix I: National Museum of Natural History Catalog Cards: 1909, 1919, 1888. page 83

Appendix II: Smithsonian Institution Registrar Accession Memorandums: 1909, 1899. page 86

Appendix III: Smithsonian Institution Registrar Associated Documentation. page 88
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<td>Purchase</td>
<td>Collected 140+ C ft, 6 ft wide</td>
<td>&quot;Making a living in the Woods&quot;</td>
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**Locality**

- **People:** Cherokee Indians

**Collector**

- James Mooney

**Acc. No.**

- 56312

**Acquired**

- Transfer Bu. Am. Eth. Dates: December 20, 1913

**Size**

- \(\frac{1}{2}\) acer with other

**Remarks**

- Cane, small, made by Ayasta age 79
- Split, various small sizes; handles modern type

**Marks**

- 281414, A2A3, B

**U.S. National Museum**

- ETHNOLOGY 13-125

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84
888.

Bureau of Ethnology.
U. S. National Museum.
Washington, D.C.

Accession Card:

To: Jos. Mooney

Date: Dec 7, 1888
Age No. 1,450
Cat. No. 624775: 91: 21

22 types of ethnologicals as follows:
1. Wood & Morfason's Publishing House
2. Cooperstown, Ball and Bute

1888-10 m
Enter:"
MEMORANDUM TO REGISTRAR.

September 22, 1909

Please enter as an accession from Mr. A. Harrington

(Address) 31 Adelaide Street
Detroit, Mich.

the following object (collected with or without the aid of a Museum outfit):

Description: (Description) illustrating the habitat of

Cost: $2.50

Papers appended: 2 letters, 1 shipping, 1 account, 2 invoices.

Gift, exchange, loan, deposit, transfer, collected for the Museum, purchased

made in the Museum.

The Assistant Secretary directs that ALL letters, or copies thereof, in the possession of
the Curator or his Assistants, which relate to this Accession, be attached
to this memorandum and forwarded with it to the Registrar.
SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION
UNITED STATES NATIONAL MUSEUM

MEMORANDUM TO REGISTRAR

Department of __Anthropology__________________

March 28, 1899, 189 __

Please enter as an accession from Bureau of Ethnology

(Address) __Through W. H. Holmes__________________

______________________________

the following object: __collection of anthropological objects

from California made during the fall of 1898 under the auspices of the Bureau of Ethnology________

______________________________

Transmitted __Exchange Tennis________

Gift, exchange, loan, deposit, purchase, for examination.

______________________________

W. H. Holmes, Head Curator.
Supplementary Catalog

Collected on the Reservation in 1888.

**Sioux Packing Basket**—Large upright basket of some oak ply, with flat bottom, about three feet in height. The base is square, about 12 inches across, and the same diameter preserved for about halfway to the top, when the basket widens out to a diameter of about two feet at the top. This is a poor specimen, made to order, the work not being honestly done. In good specimens (now very rare, as they have been superseded by burlap twined into bag fashion) the widening begins about 15 inches from the bottom, and the basket is about three feet in diameter at the top. About leather thongs were passed about the middle of the basket, which was then slung over the back, so as to rest upon the shoulders, which were bent over. The binding of the top consists of the inner bark of the hickory. The black dye used is from walnut; the red is aniline.

**Small Hand Basket with Lid**—This basket, made of oak splits and dyed with aniline, is an imitation of civilized
Prof. Holmes:

I send herewith
1 Ste (old)
1 " (modern size)
1 Pod Basket
1 Double-valled Basket

Collected on my recent trip to the East Cherokee Reservation in North Carolina. Some notes will follow.

Yours

James Mooney
Sir:

I have the honor to transmit herewith four baskets manufactured by the Cherokee Indians and recently collected by Mr. James Mooney on the Eastern Cherokee reservation in North Carolina. The specimens are duly labeled and a note from Mr. Mooney to Professor Holmes is enclosed.

One of the specimens is of great rarity and ethnologic interest; it is the double-walled basket manufactured by the Cherokee Indians during prehistoric times and found in common use by Adair, though the art has long been lost and very few specimens survive.

Yours with respect,

W. J. Molen
Ethnologist in Charge.

Dr. Richard Rathbun,
Assistant Secretary, Smithsonian Institution,
In Charge, U. S. National Museum.
Prof. J. March
American Inst.
Washington D.C.

Dear Sir:

At the present time there can be obtained some very fine specimens of the

attractive Japanese quilted work. If the U.S. Museum wishes to obtain specimens of this work, especially the quilted work, it is highly

important that they should act at once as the material produced will soon be scattered to the

four winds.

The ledge log from which the quilts are obtained, as fast

moving after miniatures, and every

year the work is diminished by one half; and 2 years hence
it will be almost impossible to obtain fine specimens.

If so desired, will be

pleased to give my time in

making a representative collection

on loan, of which we take shod

safety when at the museum.

The only charge or expense will

be the price paid the Indian

for their work, which will be

only remitted.

James Truly

D. E. Lee
Memo for the Head Curator

In order to conduct an accurate survey of the preservation of the original designs and get as full as possible, the meaning.

Ref. Ormaen.

June 25th.
Prof. O.T. Mason
Washington D.C.

Dear Sir:

I hope you to-day by Adams Express, one bale and bundle of Indian Quill work nice. For your information I am enclosing a fair representation of the end of the Atta Soyaparoma Indians. The floor mat is one of those they have produced this year. Last year they made 17. The work is composed of the inner bark of the baywood tree while the warp is made of balsam fir.

Now of these Indians trained received instruction in this work at Mission Schools, all fitting their originals with the Indians. They make in baskets and rest of their work.
but conference of good dies, that all
not fade.
You will find each article
numbered to correspond with this.
Select such as you may want
( or help us ) to return the balance.
If so desired, can obtain
specimens of any of the work in
partially complete.
Yours Truly

F. C. Lee

Not "Rep" as per your letter.
I am very much interested in learning more about your work. I believe it is important to support scientific research and I am interested in collaborating with you on future projects.

Thank you for considering my proposal. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Institution Name

500 Main Street

City, State, Zip Code
At this moment I am feeling much improved. They are giving me salt-baths and massage and I feel greatly encouraged in the hope to overcome my paralysis. If this is no promising result for me before September I should like to keep up the process in order to get this good out of it. I can save you and the Museum better. Every day a put-in time on the basket paper, pegging away at those drudgery parts of the book that can be finished better when one is not interrupted every moment. Don't fail to call on me if you can. I have the case of your brother. I hope you are quite cured of your malady.

I am sincerely yours,

[Signature]

[Name]

U.S. National Museum.
Washington, Nov. 14, 1883.

Prof. S. P. Langley,
Secretary of the Smithsonian Inst.

Dear Sir,

Mrs. Col. Stevenson

is anxious to sell her Pueblo collection. The
Tiffany's of New York have offered her
two hundred dollars for six pieces, which
are the very best examples of the old,
uncontaminated pueblo work. We have in
the Museum the "Kamins Collection," but it is on
deposit, is held at a fabulous price, and is heavily
mortgaged. There is no doubt that it will be re-
covered, in which case we shall have the mortgaga-
tion of owning thousands of pieces of modern pueblo

99
pottery and none of the old cave pottery. Mrs.
Stimson offers her whole collection of pueblo
pottery, sacred basketry, stone implements, moccasins,
jewelry, and apache basketry, and sacred flutes
for $500, which is indeed very cheap. I am ex-
tremely anxious to retain her attachment to the mu-
seum, for she knows more about the collections
from the southwest than any one else. She
will give us a minute account of each piece
to enable us to label her collection and all
other of the same character more well identified.
I beg you therefore to consider favorably my
request to buy this collection for the museum.
I have spent half a day examining the whole
 deadly company with Mr. Thomas Wilson.

I am very respectfully yours.

C. H. Mason

Curator.
MEMORANDUM TO REGISTRAR

Department of DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY

March 19, 1900

Please enter as an accession from Bureau of Ethnology
(Address) Through Smokey Hill Road

Grand Rapids

Ohio

the following object: Collection of Washoe baskets

2.9 baskets, sample basket material

3. Laramie, gift for US. Interior

3. Paroosha, bead work, Cridle

Purchased, Exchange, Bureau of Ethnology

Transmitted

Gift, exchange, loan, depot, purchase, for examination.

Frank Hatchett

86/69 [redacted] 43.90 - 1-18-1900
List of Collections:

Nov. 1 to 21 are harvest work and
samples of about all
they manufacture. It will be
observed that the coloring in these
bassets are of natural woods,
three kinds of woods entering
into them;

Willow - Indian name (Yabor) Däh-
Lîch (Split, prepared for weaving) v
Nīm-mōt - Round reed
The black root - the botanical name
I don't know - is Mañsh. The people
the they commonly call it "Dal-
myelie", meaning black, v the
Red wood (I do not think it is red
milled, they got it on the Red side
of the mountain) they call
Ich - Läh - ah. The name of "Lasket" in the Navahot tongue is Dang' - ohm, and of little Lasket - Dang' - ome - j. Basket No. 21, the smallest finely woven one, was made by the last of the old Navahot basket makers. It took twenty-two days in weaving, and this does not take into consideration the time consumed in gathering and preparing the material. The English names of the makers is Lonigo, and her son in law. His name is Dust - tol de. Nos. 13 + 14 are called "Nash-long-ohm" and "Nan-gnut" respectively. They are used for gathering yams, pine-nuts, and for general purposes. No. 18 is
For the Assistant Secretary:
The Washoe baskets are absolutely unique with us and are richly worth the money. Indeed three experts sat on the lot and the lowest estimate was $25. I recommend that the purchase be made out of the Secretary's reserve.

Respectfully,
O.T. Mason
Prof. Otis Mason,
Washington, D. C.

Your letter to hand just after having shipped "Old John's" portrait to Sect'y. Walcott at his direction. Tis a perfect likeness of our oldest and most truly Pomo and am glad the old boy will be placed in the midst where he can see only those objects he was born amongst and cling to with unchanging belief.

You ask about my basket collection. Within the past 12 months I have been enabled to find but 14 pure types, but have on the other hand disposed of about 50 because they were ornamented or designed with foreign figures, including Greek, Tuscan even English letters. So I have now only about 300 purely aboriginal baskets. With these there are also native weapons ornaments for person, accoutrements, dances etc. about 7000 pieces of gold and silver wampum.
utensils for household, gambling, games etc.

I wish you could see them and am perfectly willing that you should, for the simple reason that I can't afford the investment and care of them, so propose the following: If the Gov't. assured me of no loss while en route, transportation etc. I will pack them carefully and ship you on approval, to be returned within 60 days if not purchased by your Inst. I am certainly unwilling to see this collection scattered, though frequently pressed by dealers to do so, for I know they can never be gotten again in such perfection and furthermore tis gratifying to be honored by having them known by my name.

Now as to price, I will say $3100, which will about cover the original outlay, insurance special cases, for their preservation and interest at 6% for five years. I cannot afford to lose the money invested or I would have presented them to your Inst. years ago for there is where they belong. Now as to another matter. When seeing the loads of Navajo blankets you had in your thesaurus I have dreamt and thought about how I could induce the U.S.Gov't.
to part with **one genuine** fine big specimen to protect one certain country doctor, head and heels simultaneously. If we swap horses a blanket must be included unless you advise otherwise strongly. My two Navajos are not genuine injun; they are flabby, loose woven and modern as to dyes and wool. Bah! and I paid $50.00 in N. Mexico for them at a bargain!

Your criticism on my waumpum article is quite just and tis being cut and pruned and hammered down.

With hope of hearing from you at an early date.

Yours,

(Signed) J.W. Hudson.
Sir:

Doctor J.W.Hudson, of Ukiah, California, offers a collection of seven thousand ethnological objects to the Museum for $3,100.00. Doctor Hudson, who is probably known to you, is favorably known to the Museum, and he and Mrs. Hudson have been many years getting together the collection which he now offers for sale.

You are aware of the encroachment of the farmer and the miner on the Ukiah region. I am told there will not come another opportunity of securing such a collection as this, as Doctor Hudson knows the name of the tribe who manufactured each object and understands also their technique, so that with the material a catalogue would be furnished which would give every piece the value of a type. Some of the best pieces have been seen and appear to be of great value.

I have been asked to appropriate the remainder of the "Secretary's Reserve" fund for the present year, being $1,992.50, for the purchase of a portion of this collection, with the understanding that while the collection shall be brought to Washington free of expense to
Doctor Hudson, he may be expected to leave the entire body of material on view here for some months.

I shall be obliged for an expression of your opinion as to the advisability of such a purchase.

Very respectfully yours,

(Signed) S.P. Langley,

Secretary.

Major J.W. Powell,

Director, Bureau of Ethnology,

Smithsonian Institution.
SIR:

Replying to your communication of May 16, I beg to say that the collection offered for sale by Dr J. W. Hudson, of Ukiah, California, has been known to the Bureau for several years. It is especially rich in basketry, specimens of which were sent to Washington for examination in 1882. About the same time, also, a representative of the Bureau (Mr H. W. Henshaw) visited Ukiah for the purpose of examining the collection with a view to purchase, either directly for the Bureau and for preservation in the Museum or for exhibition in the Columbian exposition. The price then placed on the collection was $3,000. It was not at that time thought desirable to purchase the material for the reason that, while certain pieces are aboriginal and valuable for museum purposes, a considerable part of the objects have been manufactured in recent times by new methods learned from white men, and would therefore be misleading to students and others if placed on exhibition.

In view of the conditions, I should recommend that the collection be not purchased without careful examination by a trustworthy anthropologist, preferably on the ground, where the history of each specimen can be ascertained; and that, in case of such examination, only those specimens found to be aboriginal be accepted for the Museum.
In connection with this subject, I beg to call your attention to a consideration in regard to the purchase of miscellaneous objects relating to the Indian tribes of the United States, for use and display in the Museum. All such purchases stimulate the collection and acquisition of the works of the North American Indians by persons who have no farther interest in them but as articles of commerce, and this leads to their manufacture. In the last fifteen or twenty years there has been constant opportunity for observation of this process. Originally wampum was manufactured and became a medium of exchange between white men and Indians, and finally a medium of exchange between white men and white men, so that the great body of wampum in this country is a manufactured article, and does not represent Indian art. In more modern times a production of stone implements was developed in Virginia, and large quantities of elaborate and beautiful implements in slate were produced, a few of which are now in the National Museum, but properly understood. Such articles have been distributed to many museums, especially in Europe, and a wholly misleading condition of arts in stone has thereby been produced. The Indians also manufacture blankets, and these blankets have become curiosities and finally articles of commerce, and now they are manufactured in the east and distributed everywhere throughout the west, being sold to white men and Indians alike, and no longer, except in rare instances, can blankets be obtained of aboriginal manufacture. Large quantities of these blankets are sold in Washington as Navajo blankets, and several of the stores keep them constantly on hand. The blankets of California are of very great interest, and many collections
have been made of aboriginal art, but in modern times they have been manufactured for sale and the new baskets in no sense represent the arts of the Indians. In the same manner, by an investigation made by Mr Holmes when he was in the Bureau of Ethnology, it was found that large collections in Mexico were being made of articles of ceramic art, and that what now come to America and are spread across the ocean and to the museums of Europe are articles which in no sense represent Indian art. Another such industry is being developed in New Mexico in stone implements and still another in pottery, and only the expert is now capable of deciding whether any article found in the hands of a miscellaneous collector can be considered as genuine. It is by reason of this consideration that, for several years, I have been constrained not to recommend the purchase of articles from miscellaneous collectors, at least without careful examination.

I have the honor to be,

Yours with respect,

[Signature]

Director.

Honorable S. P. Langley,
Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Smithsonian Institution Registrar (SIR). Copies of accession documents held by the Registrar housed at the National Museum of Natural History Museum Support Center.


