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COVER: *GHOST DANCER* by Oscar Howe, *Yanktonai Dakota*. 1975. Casein. 46.3cm x 60.3cm. Courtesy of Oscar Howe Art Center, Mitchell, South Dakota. (See pages 42-51.)

It seems ironic that the finest early collections of ethnographic materials from the area that is now California are in Europe. With the onslaught of the Gold Rush in 1849, the lives and culture of the natives of central California were never to be the same, and collections made prior to this time were never again duplicated. While most Euro-Americans viewed these Indian people at best as a troublesome irritation or a work force to be exploited (Heizer 1974), certain Europeans were intrigued by the cultures of the native inhabitants they found flourishing in this new land. Many made special efforts to acquire artifacts that were representative of these cultures or of special interest for their novelty or aesthetic appeal. Of these collections, only that gathered by the Spanish expedition led by Alejandro Malaspina (1791) has received well-deserved literary recognition (Feder 1977; Herold 1977; Weber 1976). Other notable and equally important collections include those of Captain F. W. Beechey (1825-1828) at the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford, England; Baron F. P. Van Wrangell (1833) in the Senkenberg Museum, Frankfurt, West Germany; Ferdinand Deppe (1837) in both the British and Berlin Museums, and A. F. Belcher (1825), also in the British Museum (Bates 1982a). However, by far the most significant in terms of diversity

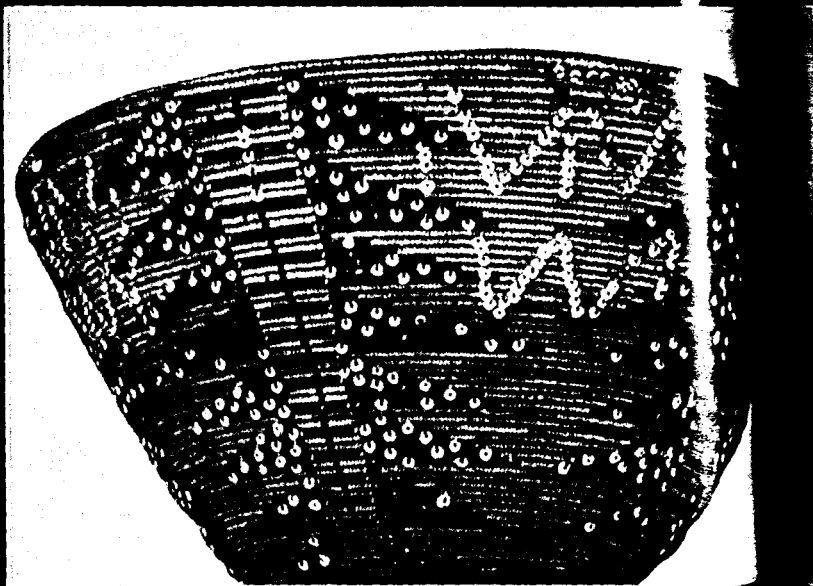
# California Collection

Photographs are published courtesy of  
*Journal of Anthropology and Ethnography*,

1. *Unidentified necklace with disc beads, unidentified*  
 (Scale bar = 30cm. Cat. No. unavailable).

2. *Unidentified objects collected on trip to California. Note feathered regalia on right, and beaver skin regalia on left. Approximate length of cloak, 1.8m. The beaver regalia was probably done by the beaver mode of wearing the cloak.*

3. *Unidentified necklace (Scale bar = 30cm). Collected by I.G. Voznesenski (Scale bar = 30cm to wingtip), approximately*



and quantity is the collection of I. G. Voznesenski at the Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography in Leningrad.

In 1840 and 1841, less than a decade before the discovery of gold would forever alter the land called California, the Russian-American Company's ship *Nikolai* made repeated voyages between California and Alaska. It is fortunate that the *Nikolai* plied this perilous route without incident, for it carried a precious cargo. Packed in wooden crates by the young scientist I. G. Voznesenski, were artifacts that represented the material culture and wealth of the native people of central California. Among the cargo was a variety of ceremonial regalia including a cloak of condor feathers, woven belts decorated with beads and feathers, finely incised bone earrings, shell necklaces, feathered capes and headgear; a large bundle of reflexed sinew-backed bows, twenty-six distinct arrows, each inscribed with the name of the village where it was secured, milling implements, burden nets, hunting disguises, netted bags, a woven feather robe, thirty-four baskets and a variety of other objects. This collection eventually made its way to Leningrad. While certainly of antiquarian interest, the collection is important in establishing regional styles of material culture

at the time of European contact, and serves as an example with which to compare later collections for signs of cultural change and European influence.

Ivan Gavrilovich Voznesenski was born in 1816 in St. Petersburg. The son of an employee of the Academy of Sciences, he received no formal education beyond the elementary level, and at the young age of eleven was placed as an apprentice at the Zoological Museum in the St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences. In 1829 he accompanied a scientific expedition to the Caucasus and Transcaucasia and, upon his return, he was assigned as an apprentice to the curator of the Academy. In 1834, at the age of eighteen, he obtained the position of laboratory assistant at the Academy's Zoological Museum (Liapunova 1967:6).

A report presented at the Conference of Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg in 1839 told of the necessity of dispatching a naturalist to the Russian colonies on the Northwest Coast of America to assemble zoological and botanical collections. In August of that year the conference selected Voznesenski as the naturalist, and charged him with the additional duties of obtaining artifacts from the native people to add to the Ethnographical Museum of the Kunstkammer of the St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences. A plan for the pro-

# of I. G. Voznesenski

Craig D. Bates



curement of these objects was organized by curator E. I. Schroeder and, like most plans made during this time, it concentrated on the acquisition of objects to the nearly complete exclusion of data regarding the social organization, religion and history of the native people (Liapunova 1967:6-10).

The trip to America was not an easy one. Voznesenski left Kronstadt, an inland naval base in the St. Petersburg harbor, on August 20, 1839. After an eight-month voyage, he reached New Archangel, Baranof Island, on May 1, 1840. Immediately afterward, he began collecting, cataloguing and shipping zoological, botanical, mineralogical and ethnographic objects (Liapunova 1967:10). His activities would eventually cover the bulk of Russian America from California to Alaska and form the basis for a superb amassment of materials for the Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg. Voznesenski's assemblage of Northwest Coast materials is well known and portions of it are illustrated in several publications (Siebert 1967; Collins et al 1973).

After spending a month in the north near Baranof Island, Voznesenski sailed for California on July 7, 1840, aboard the Russian-American Company's ship, the *Helena*. His collecting began upon arrival in California, where he visited widely scattered points throughout the central portion of the state such as Fort Ross, Bodega Bay, Cape Mendocino, San Francisco, Santa Clara, San Jose, San Leandro, San Pablo, Pinole, Napa, Petaluma, Sonoma and Sacramento. After spending more than a year collecting in California, he left for Alaska on September 5, 1841 (Aleksyev 1977:34-37; Liapunova 1967:9-14).

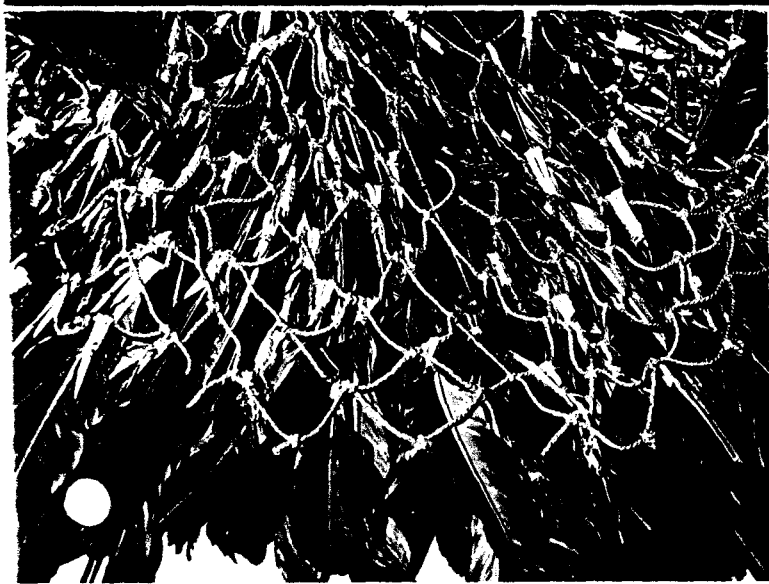
Voznesenski's efforts during this time were fruitful;

and an excellent assortment of ethnographic objects accompanied his shipments of natural history specimens to the Academy. The objects, presently at the Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography in Leningrad, are in a remarkably good state of preservation. It is unfortunate that collecting data, as well as a catalogue regarding the exact provenance of each object, are for the most part lost. Voznesenski's letters do, however, contain references to specific objects:

After sending off all the objects I collected relating to ethnography, which are on the ship *Nikolai* from Fort Ross, I have not had a favorable opportunity to barter with the Indians, since then until now. Now, however, by making my way a number of miles into the California interior, I hope to find there, from what people here assure me, some dwellings of Indian tribes who roam along the Rio del Sacramento. Under peaceful conditions I will try to obtain all kinds of things from the inhabitants of this country. I now have the honor of reporting to your honor about the dispatching of box no. 21 which contains the following items belonging to the Suisun Indian tribe: 1) a belt used during festive games, called a *kala* in the above mentioned language; 2) a hairpin worn on the head, called a *sipek*; and 3) ear-rings or *alok*; and 4) a head-band, or *uaglku*.

The *kala* (belt) is a donation to the Ethnographical Section of the Academy of Sciences from Padre Tijos, a Franciscan friar from Mission San Rafael. This item is very highly valued among Castilians and visiting Europeans, since the Indians do not willingly agree to exchange a work so hard for them to make for a few glass beads, even with a dress or a blanket thrown in for the bargain (Voznesenski in Liapunova 1967:16; Fig. 5).

Voznesenski's papers, as well as a list of what are apparently village names that he recorded, indicate that he visited the Suisun Patwin, the Valley Nisenan village of *Seku*, the Plains Miwok villages of *Lelame*,



*Seuamne*, *Locolmne* and *Tihuechemne*, in addition to the Coast Miwok whom he calls the *Khukiyuze*, and perhaps other Valley Nisenan people whom he calls the *Tsuellisk* (Liapunova 1967:13; Bennyhoff 1977:164). It is interesting to note that in Voznesenski's account, the Nisenan village of *Seku* is rendered as *Sekumne*, a Plains Miwok version of the word using the *-umne* ending common in Plains Miwok village names. Perhaps Voznesenski had a Plains Miwok guide when, assisted by Captain Sutter, he visited the villages in the region (Wilson 1982).

Available data indicates that Voznesenski's work in the Sacramento Valley, the home of the Plains Miwok and Nisenan peoples, was intense, perhaps more so than in other regions. He wrote of this part of his trip some years later:

On February 20, the long-awaited chance presented itself to go...from San Francisco up the Sacramento River to the property of Captain Sutter, which he called 'New Helvetia'. I spent 31 days on the then virginal banks of the Pele (as the local Indians call it). Upon the recommendation of Mr. Rotchev and others, Sutter welcomed me quite cordially, and I stayed the whole time with him under the same cabin roof. Accompanying Mr. Sutter around his land, which the Mexican government had just ceded to him, we reached the Monte des trois Buttes, crossed the (now) gold bearing rivers Rio de la Plume and Tio Kiski en des Americaine a few times and spent the nights along their banks. I found many different objects of natural history in these places, and with Captain Sutter's assistance I acquired some rather rare items in the area of ethnography (Voznesenski in Liapunova 1967:15-16).

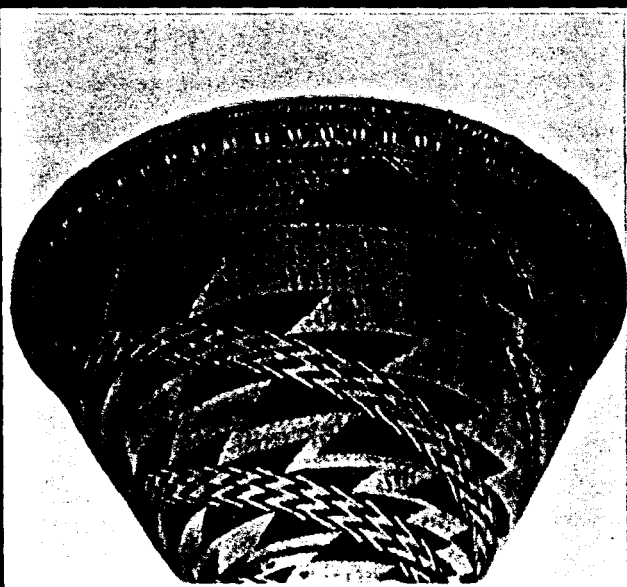
Sutter's influence among the Indian people in the southern Sacramento Valley is well documented (Clark 1959; Butscher 1973; Sutter 1939). No doubt Sutter's

power was crucial in Voznesenski's obtaining objects that would have been otherwise difficult to secure. Two unique objects, one an enveloping cloak of crow (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*) feathers, the other the skin of a California condor (*Gymnogyps californianus*), are extremely rare in ethnographic collections, and are among the most supernaturally powerful items from a native standpoint. Voznesenski relates:

When I brought the *molok* and *kukshui* costumes to the Sacramento River, the Indians who saw them were terrified and were astonished that I could keep such a thing in my room as a *kukshui*, in which Satan himself lived; whereupon they considered me a shaman (Voznesenski in Liapunova 1967:26; also Alekseyev 1977:40).

A study of the terms used to describe these ceremonial garments—*molok* and *kukshui*—helps us to narrow the possible place of collection of the two pieces (Figs. 2,3). The word *molok* associated with an entire skin of the condor used in a dance honoring the bird is found among the Valley Nisenan at the village of *Pujune* (Kroeber 1929:269), which is only two miles distant from the village of *Seku* that Voznesenski visited and even closer to Sutter's home. Data for neighboring Plains Miwok people's dances is lacking; but their Sierran relatives, the Central Miwok, used an entire condor skin in the *moloku*, a dance honoring the condor (Gifford 1955:287-288), which suggests that the intervening Plains Miwok could have had a similar dance.

The term *kukshui* associated with a long, all-enveloping cloak of crow feathers is reported for the Valley Nisenan with the nearly identical term *kuksui* (Kroeber 1929:268). While descriptions of the costume are lacking, with the exception of a crow feather



4. Kukshui cloak, Nisenan(?). Collected by the Wilkes expedition, 1841. Native hemp cordage and bark; crow, turkey vulture and white swan or goose feathers; willow shoots. Approximate length, 2m. Detail shows crow feathers bent in pairs at knots of netting and bound with hemp bark strips. Average net mesh 5.5cm. Courtesy Smithsonian Institution. Cat. No. 3326. Photograph by the author.

5. California items collected by I.G. Voznesenski at the Imperial Academy, St. Petersburg, 1873. Note the feathered topknot with white feather attachments, the woven feather blanket and two woven bead and feather belts. Copy from an old photograph in the Photothèque of the Musée de l'Homme. Courtesy Robert Heizer Collection, Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History.

6. Dance cape, Central California. Collected by I.G. Voznesenski, 1841. Approximately 50cm x 70cm. California condor, bald and golden eagle feathers, native hemp cordage. Cat. No. 570-3.

7. Burden basket, Central California. Collected by I.G. Voznesenski, 1841. Approximately 60cm x 80cm. Although similar to Pomoan specimens, this bears a marked resemblance to burden baskets collected from the Chico Maidu at the turn of the century, raising the possibility of a Valley Nisenan association, with whom the Chico Maidu kept close family, ceremonial and economic ties. Cat. No. unavailable. Photograph by Leo and Pearl Pawek.

"bighead," a dancer called *kuksui* also appears among the Coast Miwok (Kelly n.d.:101 in Slaymaker 1977:73-74). Northern and Central Sierra Miwok people use the term *kuksuyu* in describing the long, enveloping cape of crow feathers (Gifford 1917; Gifford 1955:267-272; Kelly 1968), however, thus making it difficult to determine the origin of the cloak. Perhaps because of Sutter's influence, Voznesenski was able to acquire the *kukshui* cloak and the condor *molok* regalia from people at *Sekumne* or from the Nisenan whom Sutter had moved close to his residence from their original home on the Consumnes River (Wilson and Towne 1978:396). Ultimately both garments could have been the work of Valley Nisenan artisans.

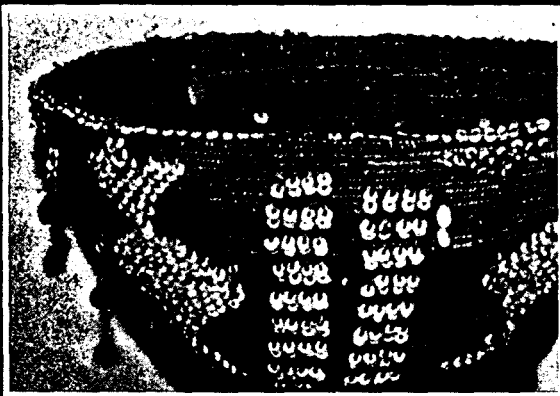
A comparison of the *kukshui* cloak in Leningrad with another at the Smithsonian Institution collected in California by the Wilkes Expedition in 1841 shows remarkable similarities (Fig. 4). A curious feature of these cloaks, making them unlike other net-based feathered regalia from central California, is the use of strips of hemp (*Apocynum cannabinum*) bark to tie crow wing and tail feathers (the quill bases of which have been flattened) in pairs at the knots of the netted foundation. In other feathered regalia of this type, single feathers are used at these junctures; and they are either tied with cordage, wrapped with deer sinew or attached by having the feather's quill end cut and tucked into itself. Additionally, thrust into the headpieces of both the Smithsonian and Leningrad cloaks are willow (*Salix sp.*) shoots to which are attached wing feathers of the turkey vulture (*Cathartes aura*). The curious occurrences of hemp bark wrapped feathers in groups of two and of auxiliary vulture feather ornamentation on two cloaks collected at the same time

argues for their manufacture by a specific individual or tribelet, and may well constitute a relict technique which did not survive into later historic times.

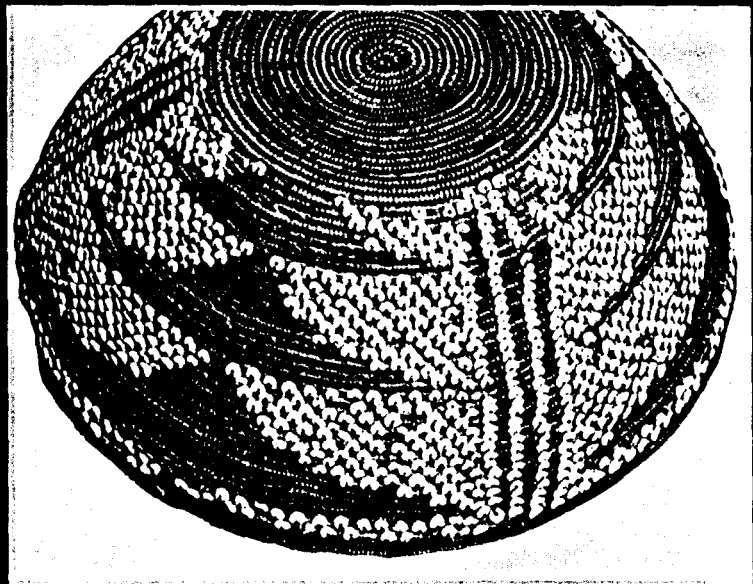
Since Voznesenski apparently left no collection record, the documentation of baskets in his collection becomes enigmatic as well. Some of the baskets in the collection are like Pomoan and Maidu pieces, while others are unlike extant pieces elsewhere. Since we know that Voznesenski collected among the Valley Nisenan and Plains Miwok, as well as the Costanoan, Coast Miwok and Pomoan groups, the solution seems simple enough. However, documented baskets from all but the last of these people are nearly nonexistent: fewer than two dozen Costanoan baskets are known to exist in the world today; fewer than half that number are known from the Plains Miwok, a regrettably smaller number from the Valley Nisenan, and none from the Coast Miwok.

However, certain solutions present themselves in taking these problems into consideration and studying the available baskets from these groups—although these were often obtained years after Voznesenski's visit. Burden baskets included in the collection are made similarly to and are decorated with linear bands and swirling triangular motifs nearly identical to those of Chico Maidu and Pomoan specimens (Fig. 7). Perhaps, then, these were produced by some of the Pomoan or Nisenan groups, or even by the Coast Miwok whose baskets may have resembled those of their Pomoan neighbors. A basketry hopper in the collection appears similar to extant Pomoan examples.

Other baskets, heavy with shell bead decoration, are of particular interest (Fig. 8). The use of shell disc beads as auxiliary decoration on coiled baskets is



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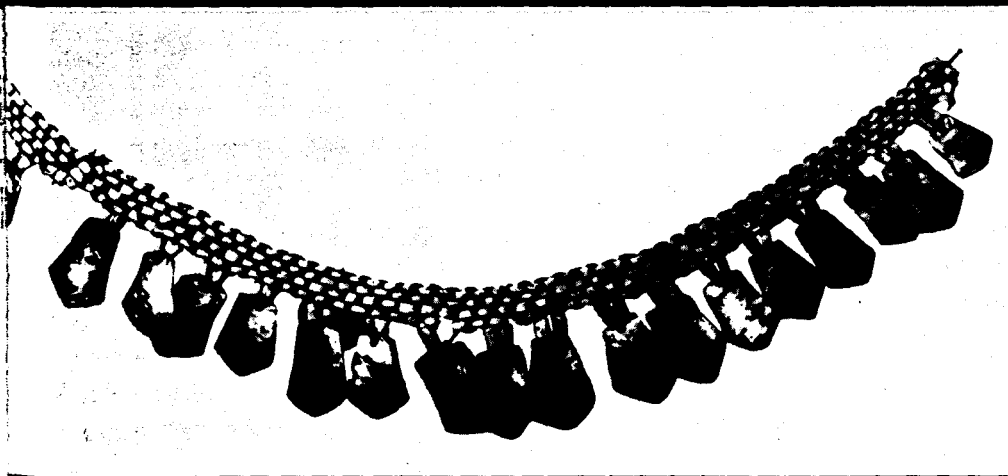
apparently an old technique in California. Among other old collections, at least one comparable basket of this type was collected between 1778 and 1785 (Heizer 1968), while several others in various institutions are without specific documentation. One, however, obtained from the Costanoan people of the San Francisco region and in the collection of the Smithsonian Institution is similar to some of the Voznesenski pieces (Fig. 9). They are alike in being of three-rod construction with split sedge (*Carex sp.*) sewing strands, and in having a vertical design worked in olivella shell disc beads on a field of acorn woodpecker (*Melanerpes formicivorus*) scalp feathers, now deteriorated with age. Other baskets in the collection, of similar construction but lacking the feathers and with a design in dark sewing strands accentuated by olivella disc bead patterns, are unlike those in collections elsewhere (Fig. 1). The design style of these, while different, is somewhat reminiscent of one extant Plains Miwok basket, purchased from Chief Wallentein at the village of *Lelame* at the turn of the century (Bates 1982b:7). Since Voznesenski visited *Lelame*, perhaps at least some of these baskets are from this village. Still another coiled basket in the collection, with glass bead decoration, is reminiscent of more recent historic Pomoan specimens.

Other objects in the collection include a feather dance cape made primarily of California condor feathers, with the entire tail of a golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*) attached to the tie cord (Fig. 6). This piece is similar to those produced by a variety of California peoples and bears no distinguishing characteristics with which to ascribe a specific tribal origin. A feathered topknot collected by Voznesenski (Cat. No. 570-4) is unique, however, in that it has small, white

fluffy feathers attached to the tips of the large wing feathers. The only record of similar decoration used in this manner in California is contained in a daguerreotype of Central Miwok people taken in 1856 in Sonora, California. Perhaps this represents a design style shared by the Miwok and their neighbors in early contact times. Likewise, one abalone shell necklace bears a resemblance to those collected from both Miwok and Maidu people (Cat. No. 570-21), while another is similar to extant Pomoan examples as well (Fig. 10). A feather rope in the collection, made by wrapping split feathers between two parallel cords, is nearly identical to Northwestern Valley Maidu examples collected at the turn of the century.

While Voznesenski's collection presents problems to those trying to establish provenance for specific objects, we must be thankful that the collection is still in existence. Within a few years after Voznesenski's visit, the villages of these native people were subjected to the ravages of disease and the devastation wrought by hordes of men that the Gold Rush of 1849-1850 brought to California. A number of Voznesenski's artifacts may well represent the sole examples of the diversity of the material culture of a number of central Californian peoples. Perhaps buried in the voluminous Academy of Sciences Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography Archives in Leningrad there lies a catalogue of Voznesenski's collection which will help us to place these artifacts in the context of the villages of their creation. For now, however, we must be content to appreciate them as more generally representative of the ancient beauty and artistry of central California.

California Collection continued page 79



8. Decorated basket, Costanoan(?), Miwok(?). Collected by I.G. Voznesenski, 1841. Scraped shoots, sedge roots, olivella and clamshell disc beads, abalone shell ornaments, native cordage (feathers disintegrated). Approximate diameter 25cm. Cat. No. unavailable. Photograph by Leo and Pearl Pawek.

9. Coiled basket, Costanoan, c.1780-1820. Sedge root, scraped shoots, olivella shell disc beads, acorn woodpecker scalp feathers and quail topknots (partially disintegrated). Diameter 30cm. From an old Spanish family in Santa Clara, California. Courtesy Smithsonian Institution, Cat. No. 313,234. Photograph by Lawrence E. Dawson.

10. Shell necklace, Pomo(?). Collected by I.G. Voznesenski, 1841. Abalone shell pendants, clam disc and tube beads, cordage. Approximate length, 50cm. Resembles examples collected from the Pomo at the turn of the century. Cat. No. 570-23.



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