

SOUTHEAST ASIAN BAMBOO ART: CONTEMPORARY  
HANDWOVEN AND CLASSICAL CARVED

By

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

From ancient times, human aesthetic feeling has been a reflection of one's feeling toward nature. The Chinese are particularly fond of nature and thus the creation of Chinese poetry, painting and philosophy results from the reflection of their soul-searching, thinking and imagination towards nature.

Bamboo can be found in China and several other countries in Southeast Asia. In their long history, the Chinese became gradually attracted to bamboo and a close relationship developed between bamboo and their daily life. For thousands of years, bamboo has been used by Chinese as a symbol to depict a scholastic integrity. In The Bamboo Wood of 1001 Uses, Christopher (1976, p. 26) stated:

Bamboo is sumptuously intertwined with the roots of the Orient's entire culture. In the midst of pre-history, for instance, China already honored bamboo as one of the revered fair gentlemen: the orchid, the plum tree, the chrysanthemum--and the bamboo. Bamboo held pride of place among the three friends (along with the plum and the pine): bamboo symbolized the divine Buddha; the others personified the philosophers Confucius and Lao Tzu.

The Chinese appreciate the admirable qualities of bamboo and, above all, know how to put it into practical use.

The development of the bamboo handcraft in China can be traced back to the carved "Bamboo Book" of the Shang or Yin dynasty (1401 B.C. -1122 B.C.) which also is known as the beginning of Chinese bronze

sculpture. The "Bamboo Palace" of the Han dynasty (202 B.C.-220 A.D.) was made totally of bamboo and became popular for its architectural originality. In the Tang dynasty (618 A.D.-907 A.D.), bamboo was used to make furniture in the imperial court. Since then, Bamboo has affected the Chinese people in many aspects of their daily life.

In the modern world of Chinese culture, bamboo can be found in the makings of fences, beds, chairs, baskets, hats, folding fans, ornaments, chopsticks, musical instruments, pens, and brushes, as well as paper. Even the bamboo shoots are used widely in Chinese cuisine. Using bamboo as the raw material with skilled hands and imagination, Chinese not only accommodate their own daily needs but also contribute greatly to the development of handicrafts. Thus, these bamboo handicrafts have become a unique part of Chinese art.

It is rather regrettable that a book dealing particularly with Chinese bamboo handicrafts has not been written. For thousands of years, the profession of bamboo handicrafts has been handed down through the traditional system of "apprenticeship"--the professional weaver teaches the apprentice about 80 percent of his skills but retains about 20 percent to assure that the apprentice does not become a better weaver than the teacher. As a result, many rare and precious bamboo handicrafts of aesthetic originality were unfortunately lost through the generations.

Taiwan has a bountiful resource of bamboo. Though there were many factories of bamboo handicrafts in scattered locations around Chu-Shan (Bamboo Mountain) and Kuan-Miao in central and southern Taiwan, the development of bamboo handicrafts on the island has been

generally slow because of the lack of innovative designs, new techniques and financial aids.

Man is a part of nature and, therefore, he must have some affection towards the things produced from natural materials. This affectionate feeling usually becomes stronger if the product has something to do with man's own effort or imagination. Bamboo handcrafts are the combination of both natural material and efforts of man. It is the purpose of this study to analyze and evaluate the characteristics of the bamboo handcrafts in a hope to enable us who live in the modern age to appreciate and enjoy an unsophisticated but nonetheless genuine form of art.

#### Purpose of the Study

The purposes of the study were:

- a) To identify different uses of bamboo, including carving, weaving and as structural materials.
- b) To understand techniques involved in the preparation of the bamboo material and the making of bamboo objects.
- c) To relate these objects with historical background and discuss their evolutionary trends and improvements as they are produced today.
- d) To appreciate the beauty of these objects and their possible roles as a part of modern art.

## CHAPTER II

### THE CLASSIFICATION AND CHARACTERISTICS OF BAMBOO

Bamboo is the common name for tall, tree-like grasses comprising the tribe Bambuseae of the family Poaceae. More than 75 genera and over 1,000 species have been proposed in botanical literature, but many names are synonymous and thus not considered legitimate.

Because of massive varieties of bamboo, classification in this report is limited to those varieties that are grown in Taiwan and only those that are used in daily life are emphasized.

#### The Geological Distribution and Usage of Bamboo

There are many varieties of bamboo grown in Taiwan. The applications of each variety in the bamboo industry are summarized below (Sui, 1970):

- 1) Thorny bamboo is grown in central and southern Taiwan and is used for construction material, farm equipment, furniture and weaving handicrafts.
- 2) Long-Branch bamboo or long-shoot bamboo is grown in Taiwan, Kwan-Mian and is a good material for construction, farm equipment and tools. It is also one of the best materials for weaving bamboo handicrafts.

- 3) Moso bamboo is widely used for construction, furniture, tools and weaving handcrafts. The shoots are edible. It is grown in Nan-Toe and Chia-Yi.
- 4) Makino bamboo is grown in central Taiwan. One of the most abundant variety, its resistance to heat and humidity and easiness in processing makes it a good material for construction, farm equipment, tools and weaving handcrafts.
- 5) Fish pole bamboo is grown in central Taiwan. The flexibility of fish pole bamboo is about twice that of makino bamboo. It is a good material for making fishing poles, sticks, whips, umbrella handles and structural decoration. The shoots are edible.
- 6) Thill bamboo is used for construction, furniture, weaving, glued handcrafts and raw material for pulp and chopsticks. The bamboo shoots are edible and it is grown in south Taiwan.
- 7) Machu or Taiwan giant bamboo is used to make rafts, farm equipment, furniture and pulp material. The shoots are edible. Dried bamboo shoots and leaves can be used to brew wine. Ju yeh ching, one of the famous liquers made by the Taiwan Monopoly, is brewed from the leaves of machu. The culm sheath is a raw material for pulp. Machu is grown in Chia-Yi and Nan-Taw.
- 8) Black bamboo has an exceptional combination of properties; weatherability, toughness, strength, hardness and elegant texture. These properties make it one of the precious

materials for handcrafts. It is also a very precious indoor potted plant and is grown in Yun-Lin and Chia-Yi.

- 9) Arrow bamboo is grown in central Taiwan. It has been used to make handcrafts, Chinese brush holders, fishing poles, vases and toys.
- 10) Green bamboo or old-ham bamboo can be used as raw material for handcrafts and as pulp. The bamboo shoots are tender and delicious and it is grown all over Taiwan.

#### The Curing and Tempering Methods of Bamboo

The processes involved in making bamboo objects may be divided into six steps:

- 1) Sorting - Since the characteristics differ from one variety of bamboo to another, a specific variety is selected to meet the requirements of products. As an example, makino bamboo is the best choice for making baskets, fruit plates and the like.
- 2) Sawing - After sorting, the selected bamboo canes are cross-cut into several segments with a saw. The length of each segment depends on the products to be made. When sawing bamboo, one should hold the saw perpendicular to the cane and turn the cane slowly in order to attain a good cross section.
- 3) Rough Splitting - Each segment is split into several equal strips as desired. The bamboo strips should have uniform width. Usually, each segment is bored to remove the membrane between sections before splitting.

- 4) Scraping - The green skin of bamboo is scraped off. However, some bamboo does not need this procedure. For instance, makino bamboo shows beautiful, lusterous, natural color; no scraping is needed.
- 5) Fine Splitting - Bamboo strips, after scraping, are further split into finer strips. The thickness of bamboo strips depends on the products to be made. The fine strips are passed through a set of equidistant blades to assure uniform width. The surface of each strip is then smoothed.
- 6) Coloration - A variety of colors can be dyed on bamboo strips. The dyeing procedures are as follows:
  - a) Place water in a dye jar. Add adequate amounts of dye-stuff to the water and stir until a homogeneous solution is formed.
  - b) Bring the solution to a boil. Add bamboo strips to the solution and boil them for ten to forty-five minutes, depending on the thickness of the bamboo strips.
  - c) Take the bamboo strips from the dye jar, wash with cool water, and let dry in air.

After the dyed strips are dry, they are ready for weaving various kinds of products. The preservation of bamboo articles is rather difficult. Until recently, only a few recorded methods of preserving bamboo crafts were available. One of these methods is to keep them in a wooden cabinet and polish them with alcurites seed-oil once every two or three years. A few drops of the oil in the worm-eaten holes can also prevent further deterioration.

In summary, the large varieties of bamboo grown in Taiwan are used in many handicrafts, as well as furniture building and paper pulp. The understanding of curing and processing of bamboo may help us to understand the design, strength and originality of bamboo. This will be discussed in Chapters IV and V.



## CHAPTER III

### THE APPRECIATION OF CLASSICAL BAMBOO CARVING

#### ART IN CHINESE HISTORY

According to records, Chinese have used bamboo to make housewares for six dynasties (317-589 A.D.). But the use of bamboo in artistic carving began only in the T'ang dynasty (618-907 A.D.). During the Ming dynasty (1368-1644 A.D.) bamboo carving became very popular. Due to its delicacy, the bamboo craft is difficult to preserve. Even with careful preservation, most bamboo handcrafts last no more than a hundred years. The following are some Chinese bamboo carving masters living through the ages (Wang, 1972, p. 16):

Chan Cheng: A master bamboo carving craftsman of the early North Sung dynasty (960-1127 A.D.). He was best known for fine houses, figures, flowers and birds carved on a piece of bamboo slip.

Pu Chung-chien: A Ming dynasty craftsman, popular for his use of bamboo nodes. He was one of the masters of the Nan-king school.

Chu Sha-sung: One of the founding masters of the Chia-ting school. His grandfather Chu Sung-lin and father, Chu Hsiao-sung, were also great bamboo carving artists. The Chu family style became known as 'Chia-ting' school because they were natives of Chia-ting, a prefecture of the coastal province of Chekiang in east China.

Most of the great bamboo carving artists during the Ching dynasty, such as Chin Cien-tsai and Wu Chih-fan, belonged to the "Chia-ting" school. Among all bamboo carving crafts, "Chia-ting" carving is probably the most popular in China. In the late 1930's, just prior to

the breakout of the second Sino-Japanese War, there were between 40-50 bamboo carving shops in Chia-ting alone. "Chia-ting" carving of the republican era, though its quality was not as excellent as those of the Ming and Ching dynasties, was still the best in the country.

In summary, the bamboo carving art collections of the National Palace Museum shows that before the Ching dynasty (1644-1911 A.D.), the emphasis of Chinese bamboo arts was on laborious carvings. The value of these arts is comparable to that of porcelain arts, and none of the contemporary bamboo arts can surpass their beauty. This type of processing and carving of bamboo is one of the outstanding art characteristics of the Ching dynasty. Figures 1-6 are examples of these Chinese bamboo carvings.



Figure 1. Bamboo Brush Holder, Ming Dynasty (1368-1644 A.D.)

Selection of masterworks in the collection of the National Palace Museum (1972, p. 126): "During the Ming dynasty there were two schools of carving, the Chia-ting and the Nan king schools. The Nan king style tended to be carved in lower relief than the Chia-ting. On the bamboo brush holder in Figure 1, a group of graceful female figures is rendered in bas-relief. The carving was executed by Chu San-sung, a celebrated bamboo craftsman of the Chia-ting school."

Armrest is used by Chinese to sustain the arm when doing calligraphy. Figure 2 shows a bamboo armrest. Both the bamboo tree and Chinese poem are carved in lower relief in order to preserve the green skin. The method is called "green-preserving carving."

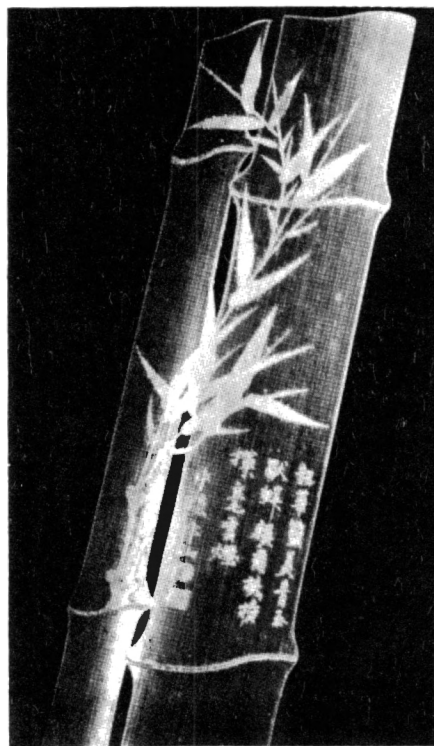
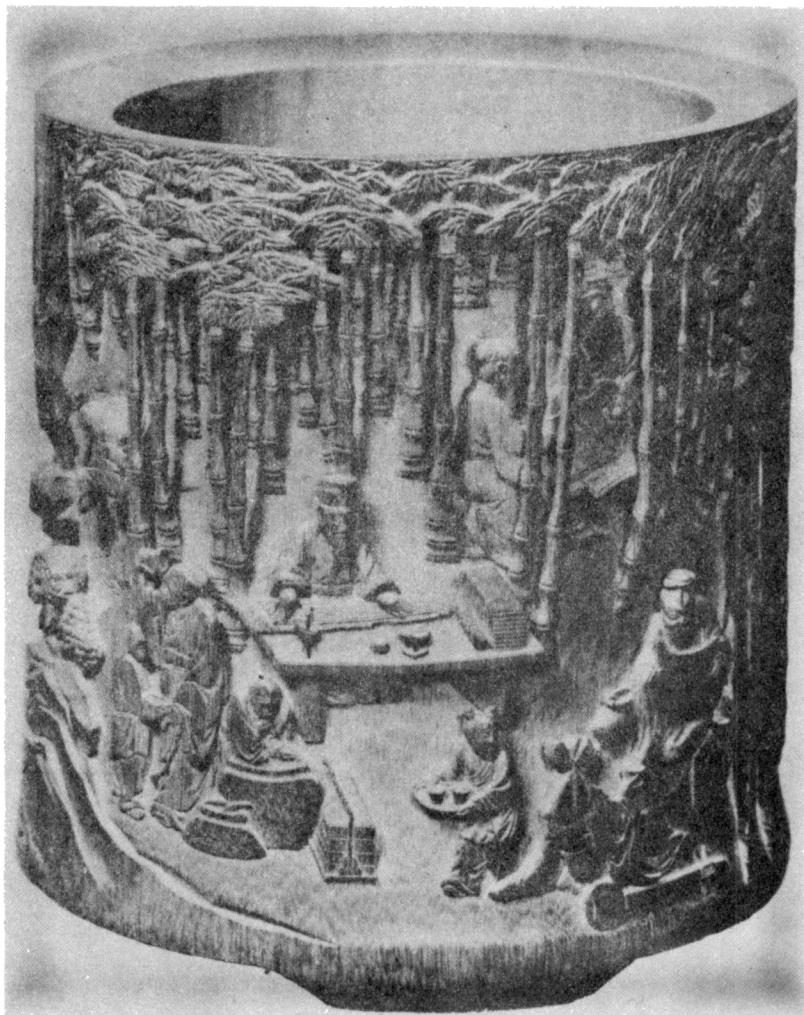
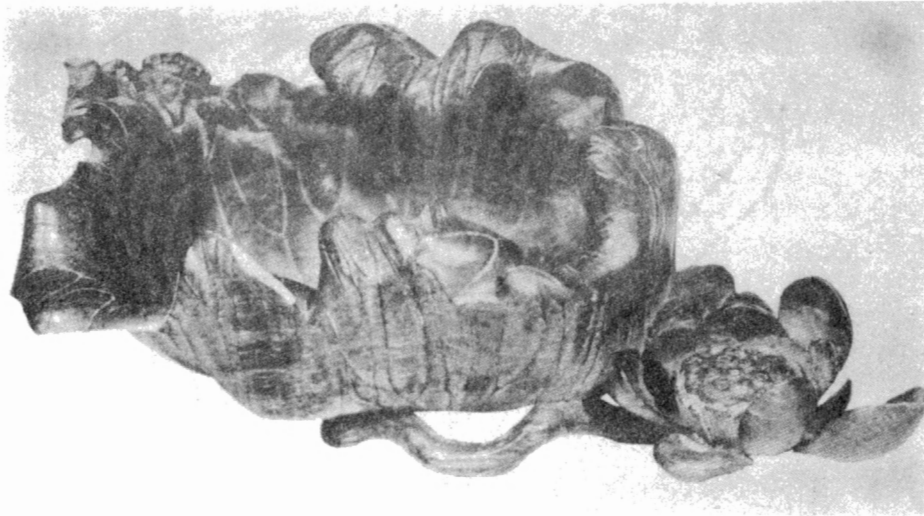


Figure 2. Carved Bamboo Armrest, Ching Dynasty (1644-1911 A.D.)



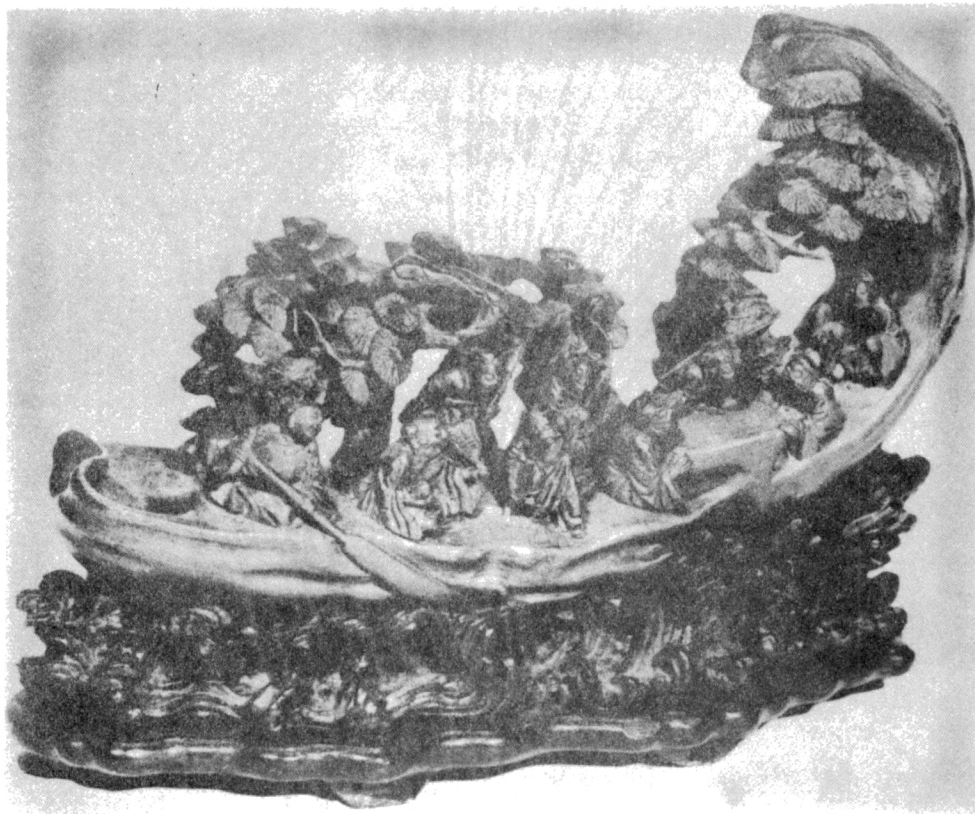
Selection of masterworks in the collection of the National Palace Museum (1972, p. 104). "This brush holder carved from a large bamboo segment depicts the seven sages of the bamboo grove. These seven wealthy recluses lived during the early years of the Chin dynasty (265-316 A.D.) and loved engaging in philosophical debates, composing poetry, enjoying nature and drinking. The carving of this piece is superb, though the craftsman remains anonymous."

Figure 3. Bamboo Brush Holder, Ching Dynasty (1644-1911 A.D.)



The National Palace Museum (1972, p. 103) states that: "This exquisite piece, carved in bamboo in the form of a crinkled and withering lotus leaf and blossom, once graces a scholar's study, perhaps serving as a container for water used in making ink." On the reverse side of this vessel is inscribed the name of the carver, San-sung, who descended from a family of master carvers famous during the Ming dynasty.

Figure 4. Bamboo Water Container in Lotus Leaf Design,  
Ming Dynasty (1368-1644 A.D.)



The bamboo is carved in the shape of a fanciful, crescent boat. This work is an especially animated expression.

Figure 5. Carved Bamboo Boat, Ching Dynasty (1644-1911 A.D.)



The National Palace Museum (1972, p. 106) states: "This relatively large piece was carved from a stump of bamboo. Either naturally or through careful cultivation, the bamboo stalk grew elliptical in form, thus the body is oval rather than round. The piece is in the shape of a ritual bronze hu with t'ao-t'ieh decor."

Figure 6. Hu Vase with Tubular Handles  
and T'ao-t'ieh Decor in  
Carved Bamboo, Ching Dynasty,  
(1644-1911 A.D.)

## CHAPTER IV

### BASKET WEAVING TECHNIQUES AND BASKET TYPES

#### IN TAIWAN ABORIGINES

Taiwan aborigines live in high lands of Taiwan where bamboo trees are plentiful. Many of their necessary daily life objects are made from bamboo, especially woven baskets. From the study of these basket weaving techniques and basket types, one can see that many of the contemporary woven designs of Taiwan are derived from these basic techniques. However, many of the objects are not very useful in modern society and are not ordinarily seen in households. Now only a few of them are exhibited in museums. In this chapter, basket weaving techniques of the Taiwan aborigines are discussed. They are very much related to contemporary Taiwan bamboo weaving arts which will be discussed in Chapter V.

Chen (1968, p. 87) stated that

There are two major types of basket-making. In the first, the disposition of the elements is comparable to that of the warp and weft of woven cloth, and these are therefore called woven baskets, though no form of loom or frame is employed; in the second method, the foundation of the basket consists of a spiral coil, the turns of the spiral being sewn together, and these baskets are spoken of as coiled or sewn. In aboriginal Formosa both techniques are found, and each has its own variations.

The main varieties of woven baskets found among the Taiwan aborigines are depicted in Figures 7 through 11.





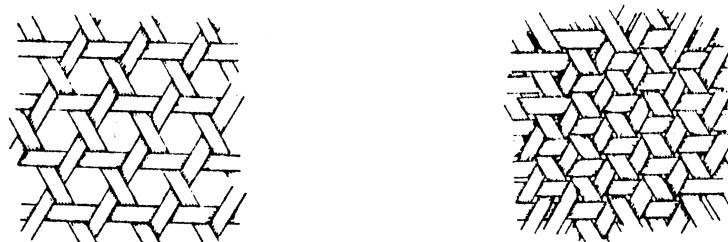
"Checker, in which warp and weft of equal width and thickness pass over and under each other single, as in woven cloth" (Chen, 1968, p. 87).

Figure 7. Examples of Checker Bamboo Strips



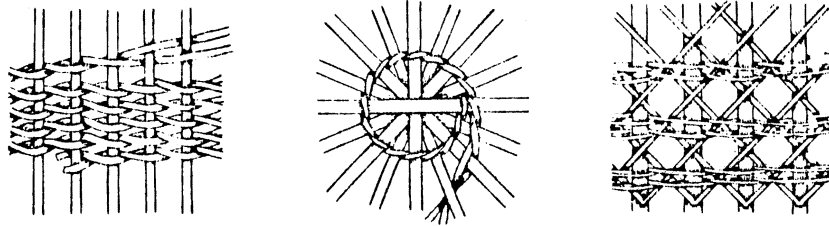
"Twilled, in which each weft passes over and then under two or more warp elements" (Chen, 1968, p. 87).

Figure 8. Examples of Twilled Bamboo Strips



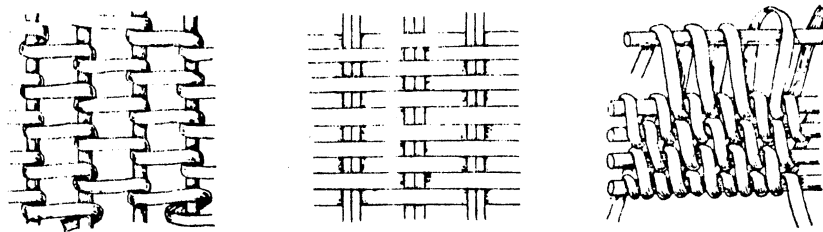
"Latticed or open-hexagonal, in which the weft elements, instead of being horizontal and vertical, are worked in three directions, forming open-work hexagonal spaces" (Chen, 1968, p. 87).

Figure 9. Examples of Latticed Bamboo Strips



"Twilled with a foundation rod, in which rods are added to the two sets of elements, the warp and the weft" (Chen, 1968, p. 87).

Figure 10. Examples of Bamboo Strips Twined with Auxiliary Splints

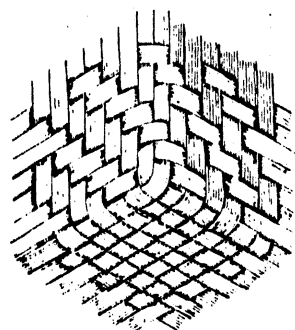


"Wicker, in which the warps or stakes are more rigid and the more flexible wefts bend in and out. Also, the simple over-sewn coil, in which the two spiral coiled rattan rods are sewn together with a flat and soft rattan splint, each stitch passing over the new portion of the foundation soil and piercing a portion of the coil below" (Chen, 1968, p. 90).

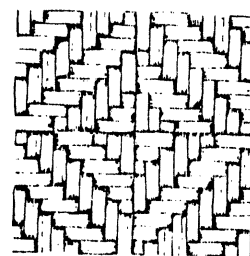
Figure 11. Examples of Bamboo Strips in Wicker, with the Warps or Stakes Being More Rigid and with the Two Spirals Coiled

The most common kinds of bases are:

1. Checkered Base - This is the technique most frequently seen among the aborigines. Twilled, hexagonal, and wickered baskets may also start from the usually checkered base (Figure 12a).
2. Twilled Base - Twilled bases are also square. In the quartered twilled base, the base is divided into quarters (Figure 12b).



(a)



(b)

Figure 12. Examples of Bamboo Strips with Twilled Base

3. Latticed Base - Latticed base is mostly for a round based basket, and the whole basket is always made using the same technique (Figure 13).

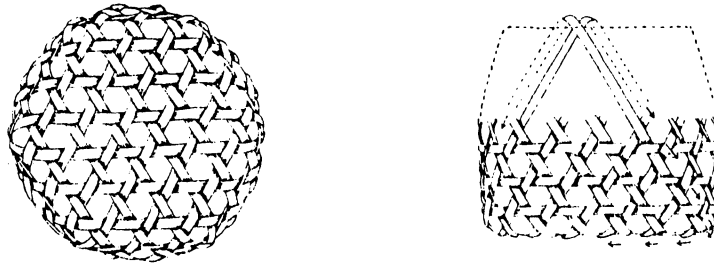


Figure 13. Examples of Bamboo Strips with Lattice Base

4. Hexagonal Base - This base is divided into six equilateral triangular parts. It is made by first laying six splints to form a hexagon in the center (Figure 14).

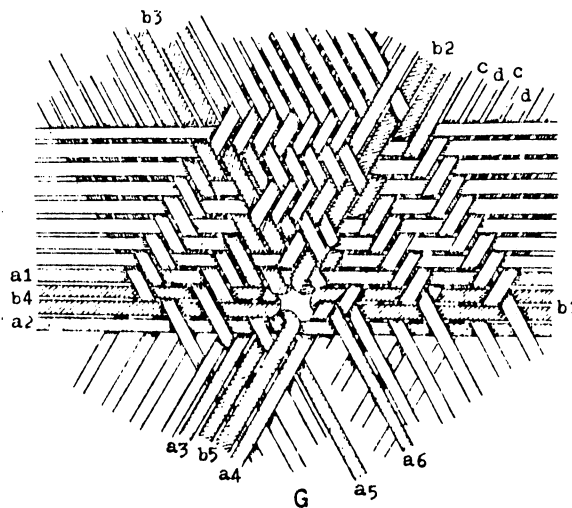


Figure 14. Examples of Bamboo Strips with Hexagonal Base

There are many methods for finishing edges and making borders and knots. The most important ways are shown in Figure 15.

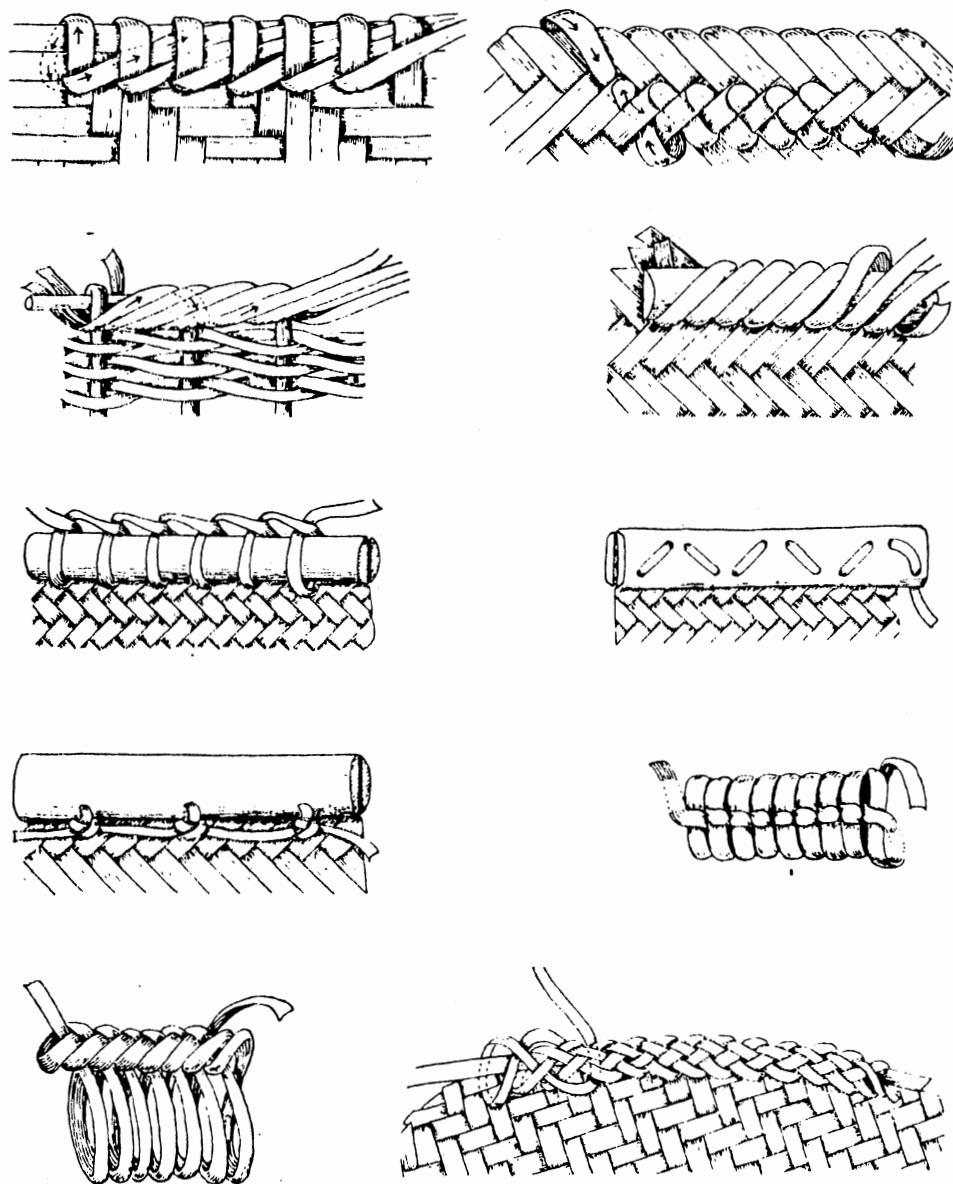


Figure 15. Examples of Bamboo Strips Illustrating Finished Edges

After we study the varieties of woven baskets found among the Taiwanese aborigines, we can gain a better understanding of their background environment and lifestyle. In addition, we can see their appreciation of natural beauty. The aborigines live in poor highlands and their lives depend very much on the natural environment and wildlife which produce their main source of food. Thus, their daily lifestyle reflects simplicity which in some parts is reflected in their basket weaving (Figures 16 through 23). Figure 24 shows two brush holders. They are carved columns, but the style is typical of Taiwanese aborigines.

Because of the low quality of bamboo and heavy uses of these bamboo objects, many of them do not last more than a year or so in aborigine society. The pictures show only those that have been carefully preserved by antique lovers or museums. Therefore, these handcrafts are probably less than 50 years old.

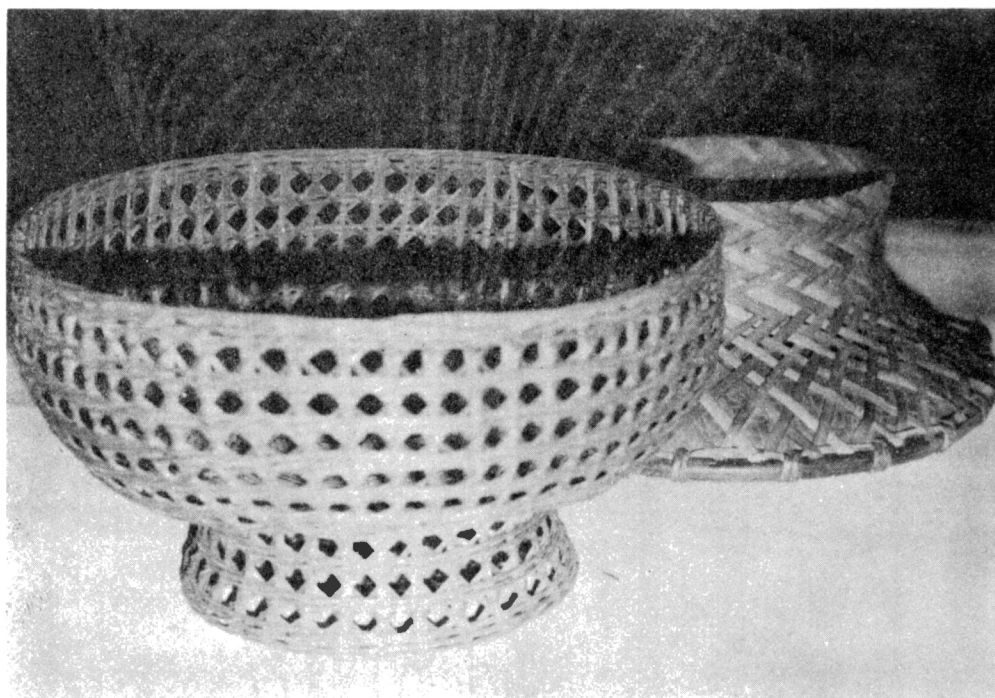


Figure 16. Old Taiwan Aborigines Baskets



Figure 17. Old Taiwan Aborigines Baskets



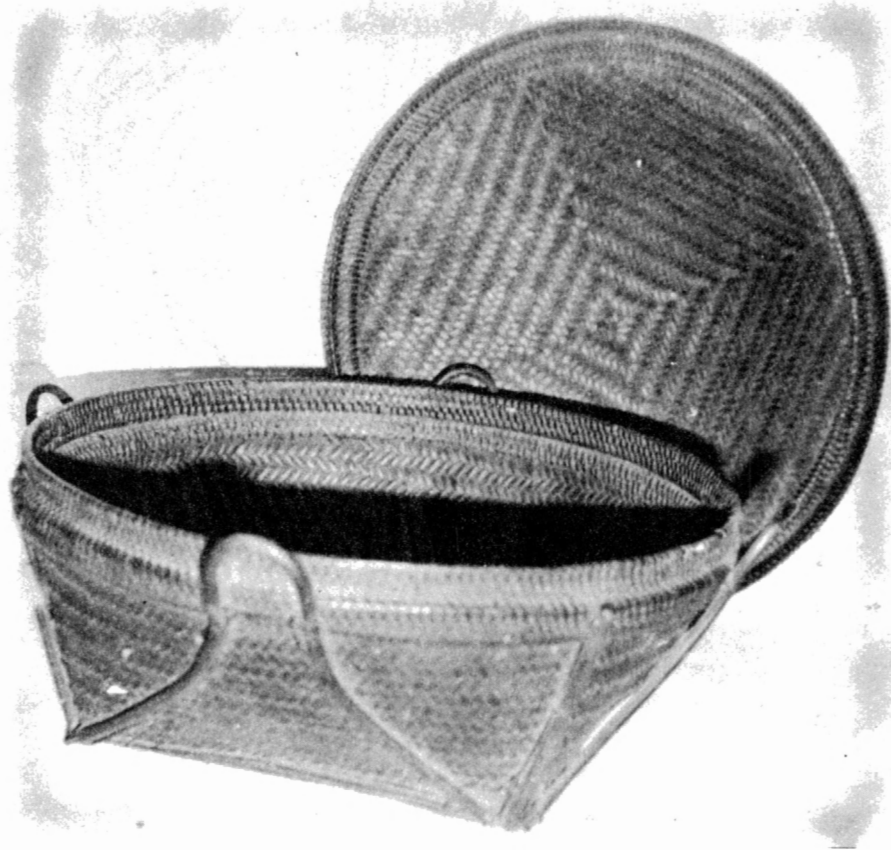


Figure 18. Old Taiwan Aborigines Basket

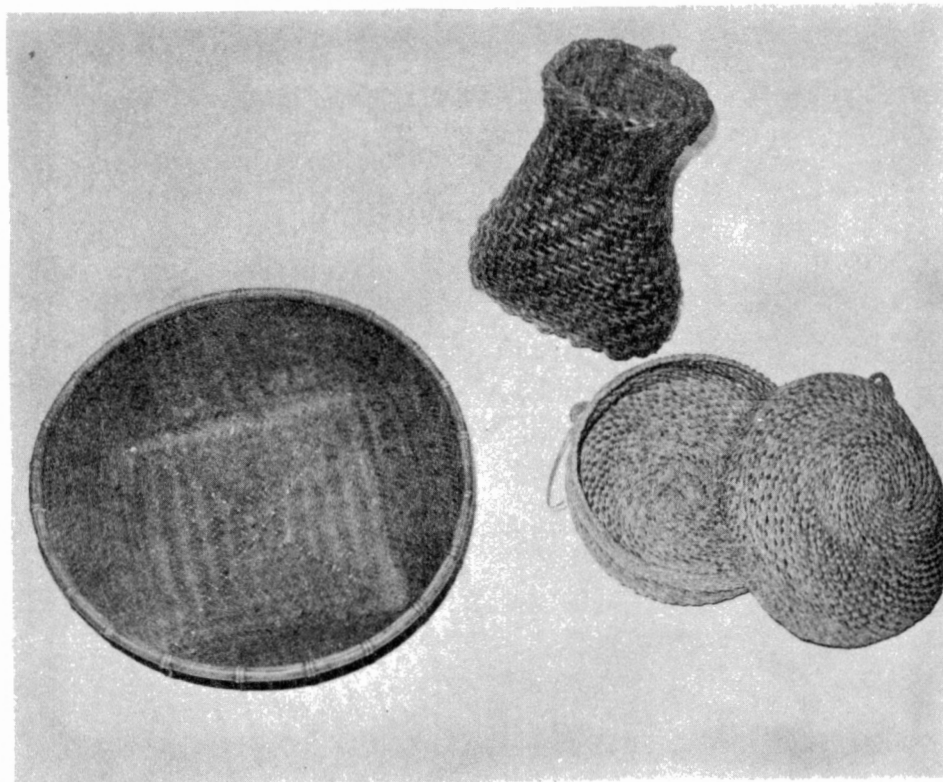
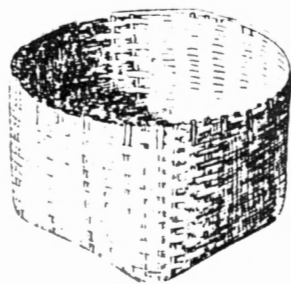


Figure 19. Old Taiwan Aborigine Baskets

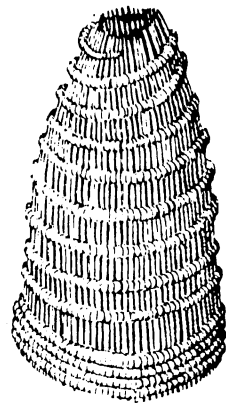


(a)

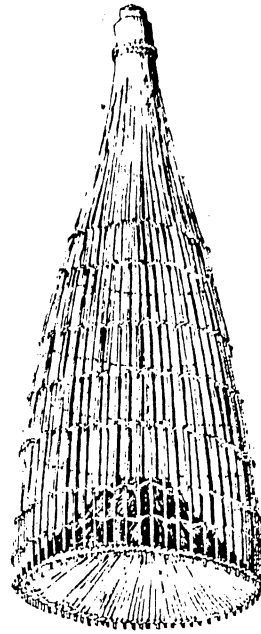


(b)

Figure 20. Old Taiwan Aborigine Baskets

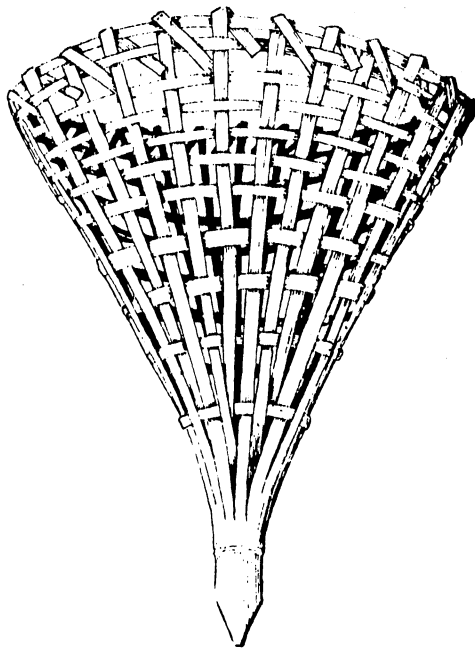


(a)

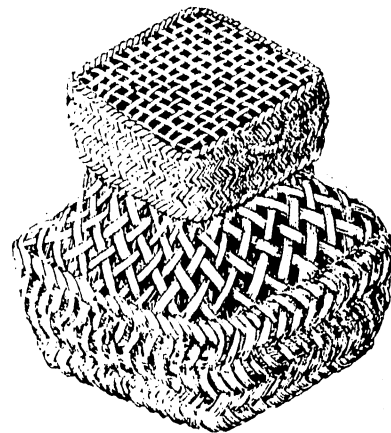


(b)

Figure 21. Bamboo Fishing Tools

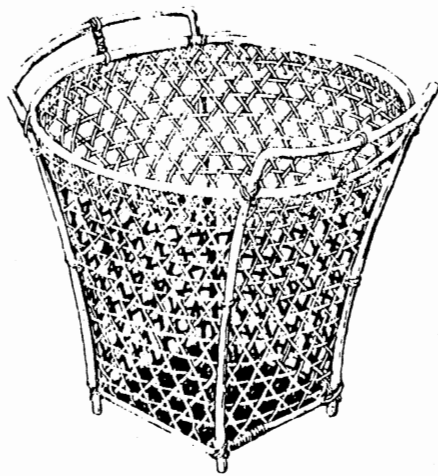


(a)

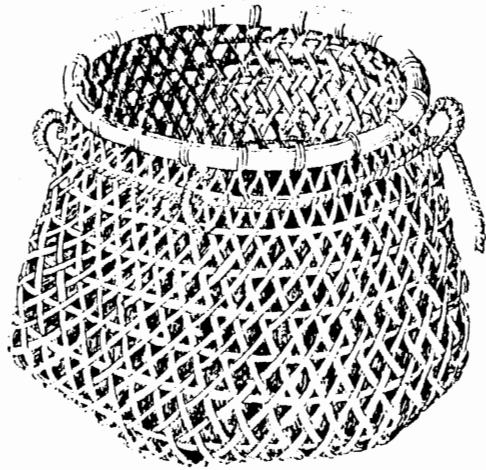


(b)

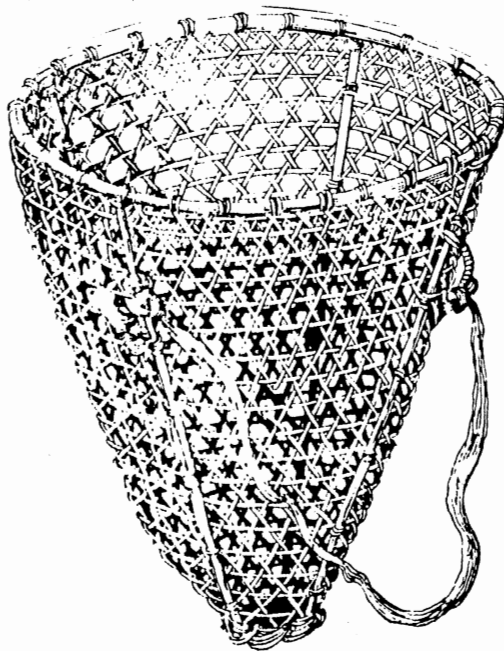
Figure 22. Bamboo Horticultural Tools



(a)



(b)



(c)

Figure 23. Bamboo Horticultural Tools



(a)



(b)

Figure 24. Bamboo Brush Holders

## CHAPTER V

### THE WEAVING TECHNIQUES AND STRUCTURAL DESIGNS OF BAMBOO AS THEY ARE TODAY

In this chapter, a variety of weaving techniques as they are today will be discussed. The basic techniques are very similar to those used by Taiwan aborigines; however, many intricate patterns have been added. These techniques have been discussed extensively by Lin (1974).

In recent years the bamboo strips have been used in a variety of weaving patterns. Some of them are:

1. Ninety Degree Angle - This type of weaving consists of two cross strips at a 90 degree angle. Patterns can be varied by changing the number of warp strips which the weft strip passed over and under (Figure 25). Other patterns can be created by leaving spaces between strips (Figure 26). When two different colors or shades of bamboo are used in two crossing lines, many more intricate patterns can be created (Figure 27). The variation can be extended to use different sizes of strips (Figures 28 through 30).
2. Sixty Degree Angle - When three strips are woven in 60 degree angles, many pattern variations can be created. Because of the angle, holes are formed in the middle of the pattern (Figures 31 and 32).

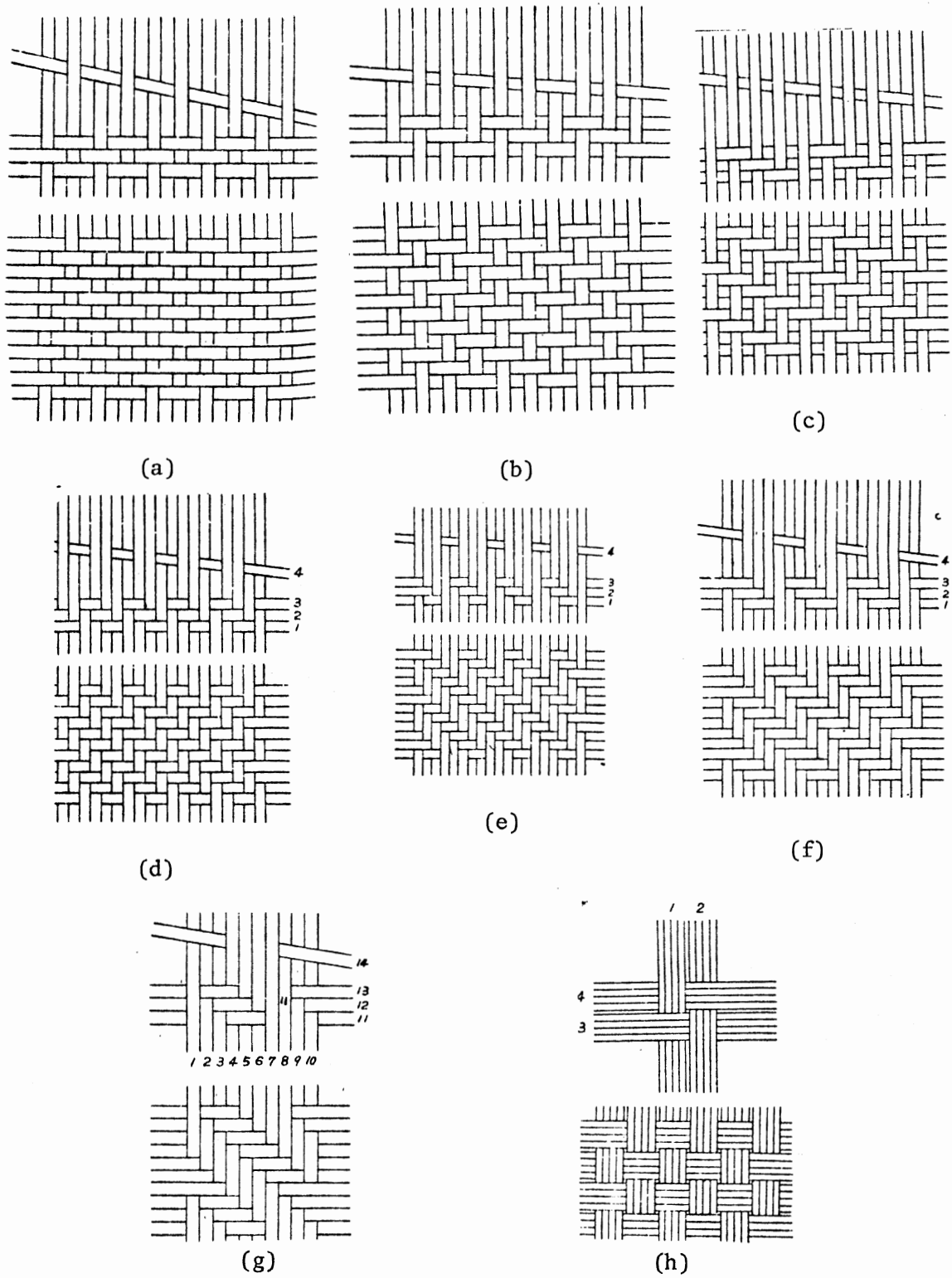


Figure 25. Ninety Degree Angle Weaving--(a) 1/1 Pattern, (b) 2/1 Pattern, (c) 3/1 Pattern, (d) 2/2 Pattern, (e) 3/2 Pattern, (f) 3/3 Pattern, (g) 4/3 Pattern, (h) 4/4 Pattern



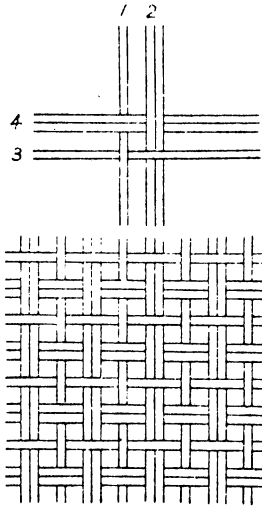


Figure 26. Checker Pattern

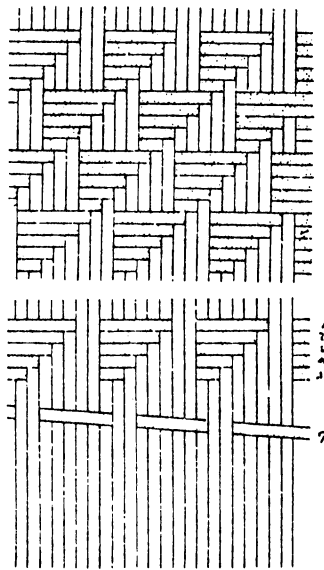


Figure 27. Stair Pattern

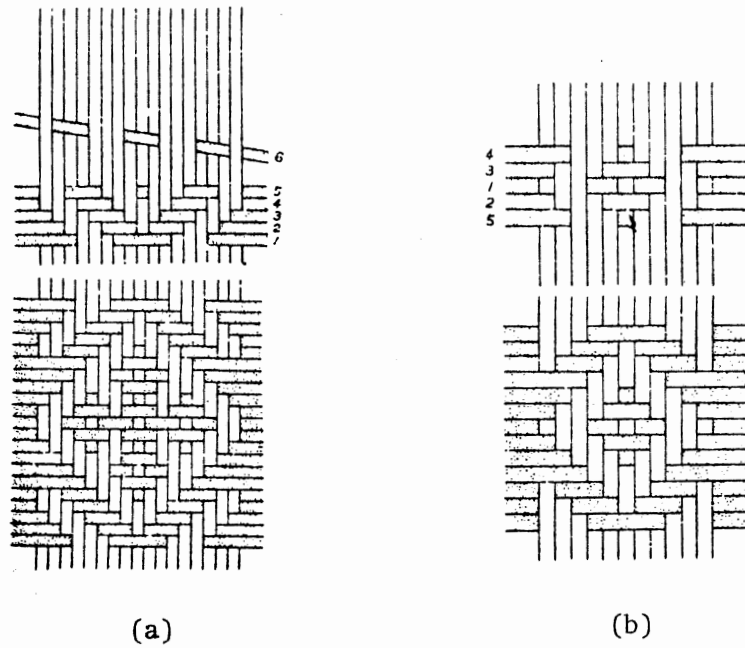


Figure 28. Diamond Pattern

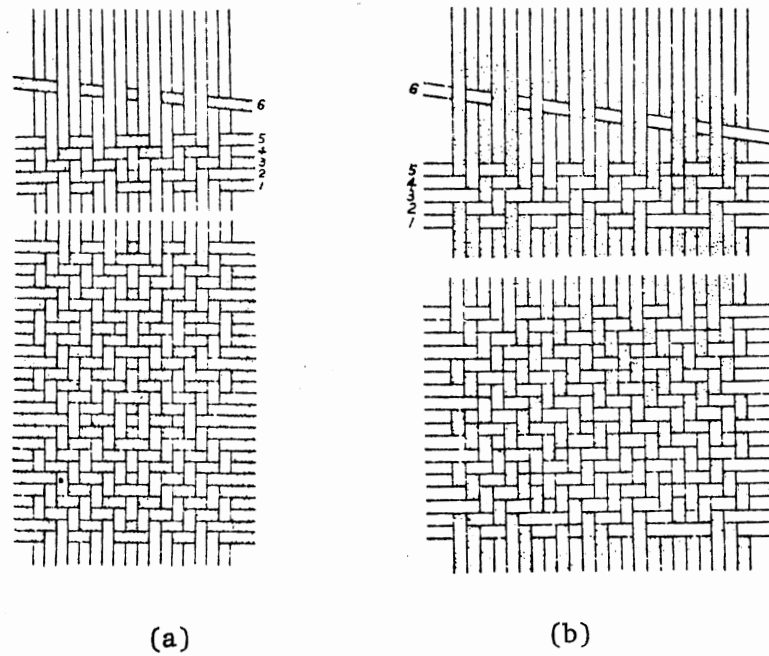


Figure 29. Zig-Zag Pattern

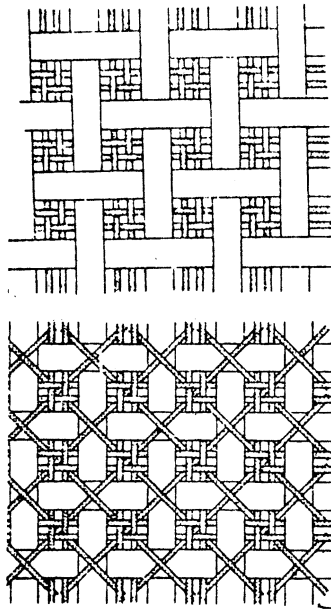
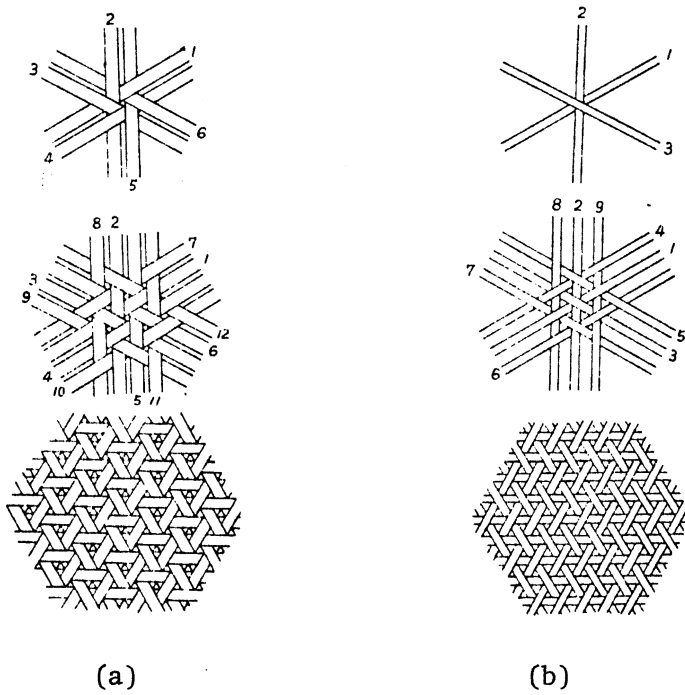


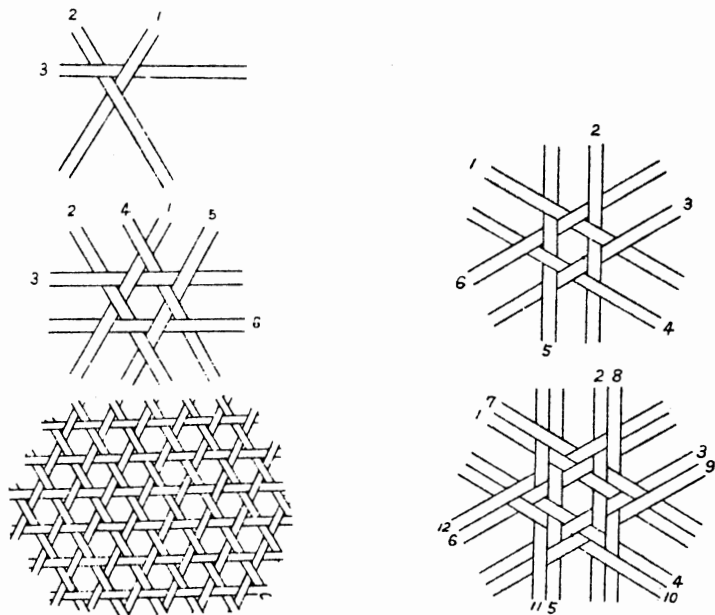
Figure 30. Variation of Zig-Zag Pattern



(a)

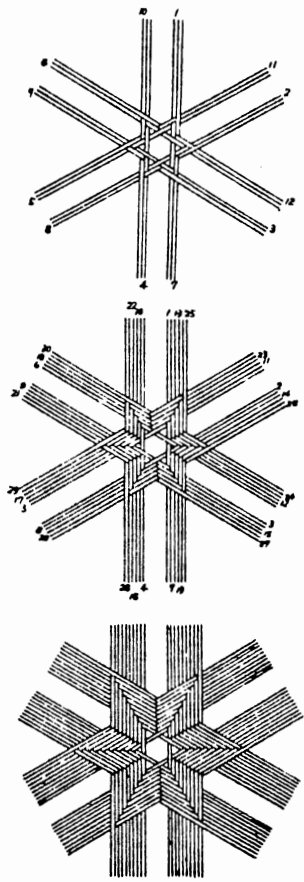
(b)

Figure 31. Triangular Pattern



(a)

(b)



(c)

Figure 32. Hexagonal Pattern

3. Forty-Five Degree Angle - This type of weaving is made by four strips woven in 45 degree angles. An octagonal hole is always formed in the middle of the pattern (Figure 33).

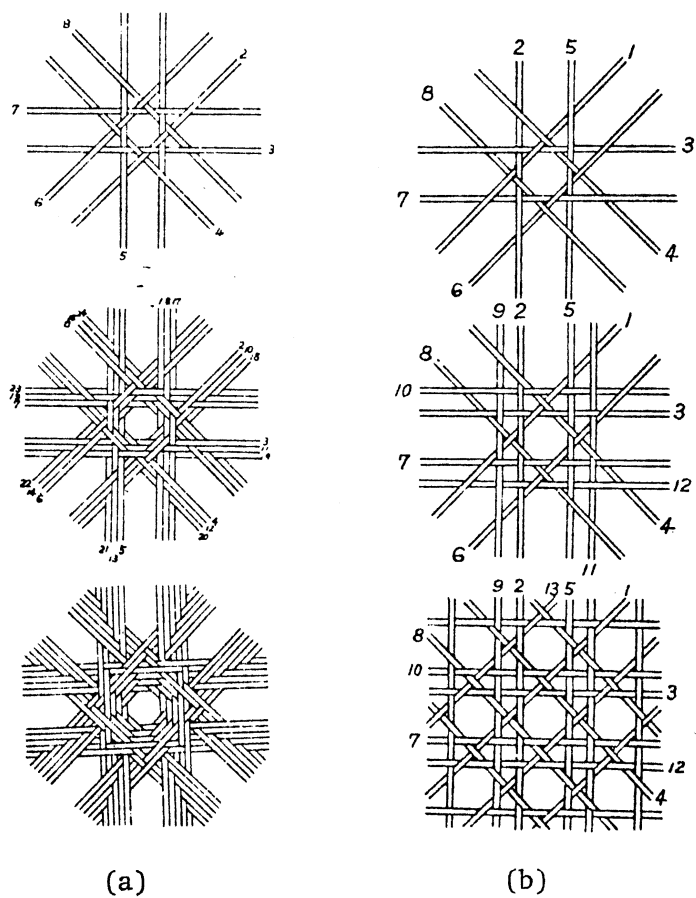


Figure 33. Forty-Five Degree Angle Weaving

4. Very Small Angle - This technique is very often used in basket weaving where a large circular hole is needed. By using many strips crossing in very small angles, a circular hole in the middle can be created (Figure 34).

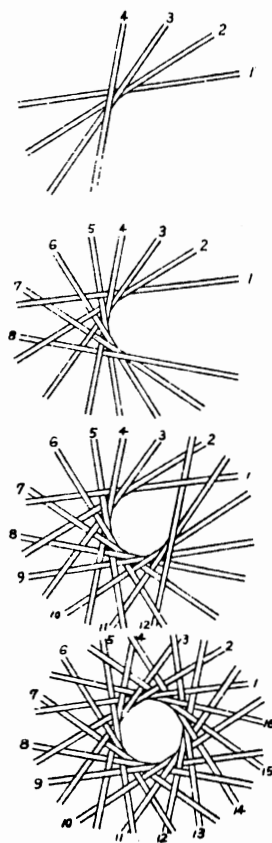


Figure 34. Small Angle Weaving

These weaving techniques are the most basic ones used in bamboo furniture and small articles. These basic techniques can be applied in numerous ways to create artistic designs by varying the size and color of the bamboo strips.

The weaving techniques used by aborigines are simple, reliable and rough. The techniques used today by factories or amateurs are more involved; some of which may require machines and the patterns and designs are more advanced. They can be used not only for what they were meant for, but also for decorations or amusement.

## CHAPTER VI

### APPRECIATION OF BAMBOO WORKS

#### Contemporary Handwoven Bamboo Art in Taiwan

Taiwan has unique and abundant resources of bamboo. One can find green bamboo groves in villages, beside dikes, or spreading over hills, dancing in the wind with the music of nature. Bamboo has long been a favorite subject of Chinese poets and painters (Kong, 1976). With plum blossoms, orchid and chrysanthemums, bamboo is admired by Chinese intelligents as one of the "four sages" of the plant, which they like to use in their works to reflect their own personality. But, in today's Taiwan, people are living in a rapidly industrialized society and they are working hard to make a living. Most of them cannot afford to take the leisure to appreciate the spirit and beauty of bamboo from the viewpoint of a poet or an artist.

Nevertheless, in central and southern Taiwan, bamboo plays an important role in people's daily lives. Most of the bamboos used by craftsmen come from these parts of the island, particularly from Chu-Shan (Bamboo Mountain), a small town of Nantou prefecture in central Taiwan, and Kuan-Miao, a small town of Tainan prefecture in southern Taiwan. Kuan-Miao is best known for its fine, splint-made crafts. At Kuanmiao many local residents, young and old, learn the skill of bamboo craft-making and one can find bundles of bamboo splints lying



outside many houses. Though most of these craftsmen work mainly for a living, among them do exist a few masters who create unique style and do their job with imagination and the touch of an artist. They deserve support and appreciation from all art lovers. There is a beautiful short lyric circulating about the small bamboo crafts-town of Kuan-Miao. It goes like this:

Having split too many bamboos to count the nodes,  
To weave tens of thousands of baskets.  
As the years went by and left wrinkles on my forehead,  
Forever young are those basketful memories,  
Forever precious are those basketful folk-customs.

Thus, we may conclude that Taiwan's bamboo crafts are able to win world-wide admiration because the beautiful island has not only abundant bamboo resources but also diligent people who are willing to work hard for less pay. These two valuable resources enable Taiwan's bamboo crafts to grow stronger and thus preserve one of the most representative characteristics of the island. The following section presents pictures of some carefully selected samples of bamboo crafts that are currently made in Taiwan (Figures 35 through 48).



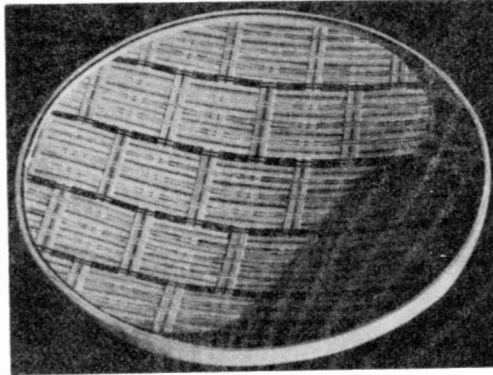
According to Mr. Li hsieh-i, a craftsman specializing in the traditional wedding gift basket, the method of making this type of basket was brought to Taiwan by craftsmen from Fukien Province more than a century ago. However, due to the westernization of Chinese wedding ceremonies, the traditional wedding gift basket is gradually losing its popularity as well as its fineness.

Figure 35. Wedding Gift Basket

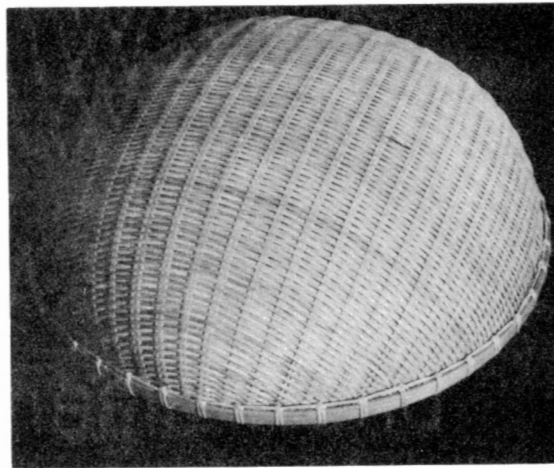


This basket was made in 1910 when Taiwan was still ruled by Japan. Thus the style and color reveals a strong Japanese influence.

Figure 36. Multi-Layer Wedding Gift  
Basket (or Kami Basket)



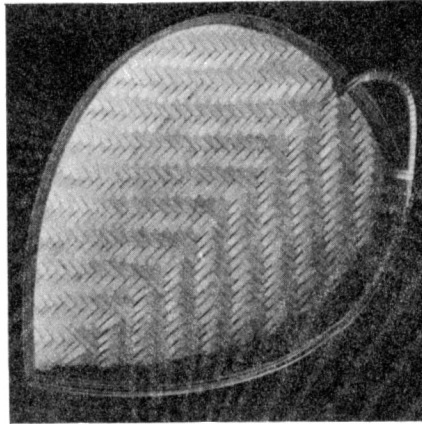
(a)



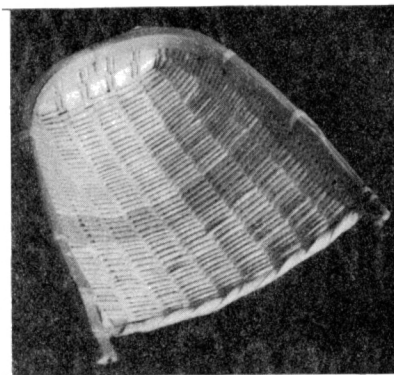
(b)

The bamboo sieve and riddle shown in (a) and (b), respectively, are woven crossly with bamboo splints. The weaving is simple, but it can be of various styles and sizes.

Figure 37. Bamboo Sieve and Riddle



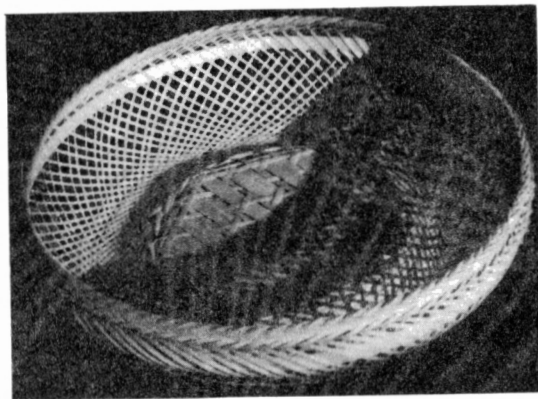
(a)



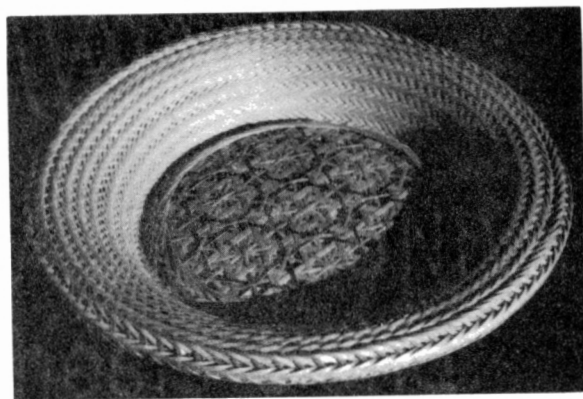
(b)

The tray (a) is made of bamboo splints. This style, though simple, reveals an oriental artistic taste. The object (b) was originally used as a dust pan. Since most of the dust pans are now made of metal or plastic, these miniature bamboo baskets are used as decoration.

Figure 38. Bamboo Tray and Dust Pan



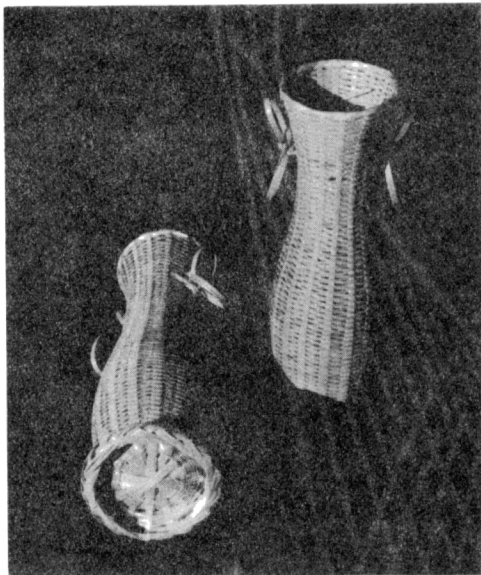
(a)



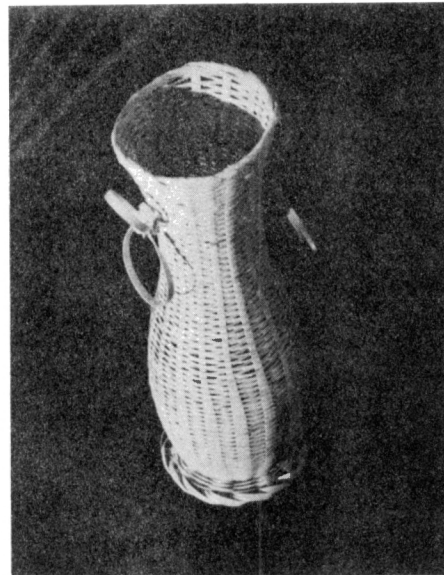
(b)

Because of its many uses, the bamboo tray is one of the few bamboo crafts with new styles and patterns continuously appearing. These trays show excellent design and pattern.

Figure 39. Bamboo Trays



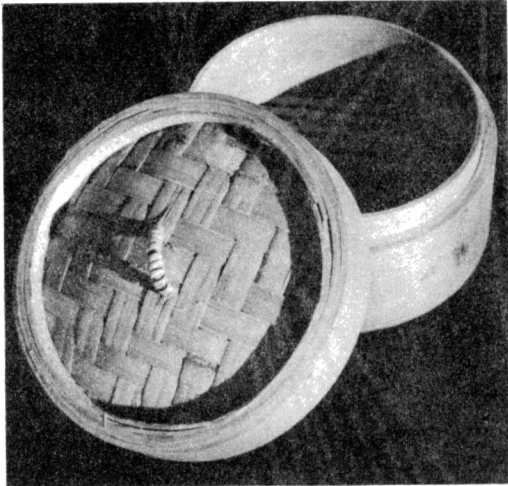
(a)



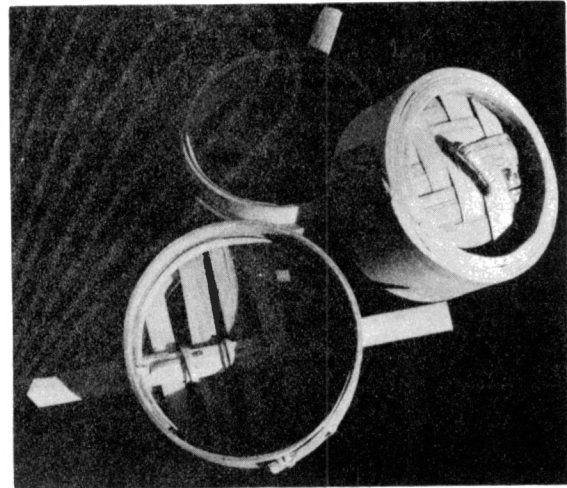
(b)

The bamboo vases made of splints and of various styles are becoming popular recently because of the appearance of plastic, ribbon and paper flowers. Bamboo vases and artificial flowers go together perfectly.

Figure 40. Bamboo Vases



(a)

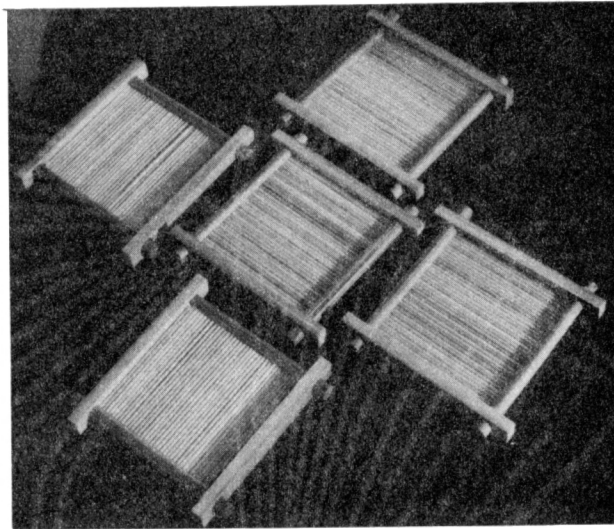


(b)

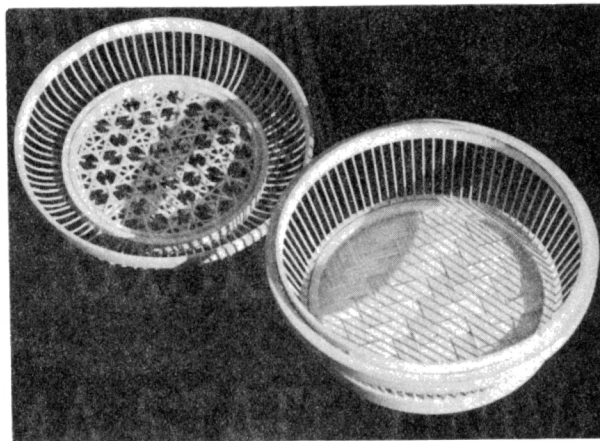
Bamboo steamers have been one of the most useful Chinese bamboo handcrafts. They are an indispensable cooking utensil in the Chinese cuisine. Many delicious Chinese desserts could not be made without the bamboo steamer. The steamer's style is reflective of Chinese culture and custom.

Figure 41. Bamboo Steamers





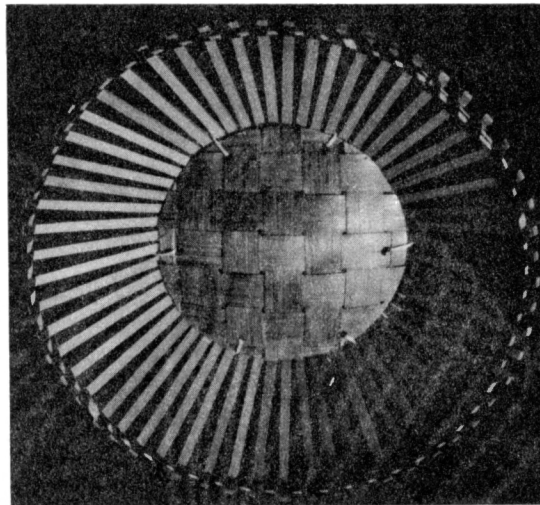
(a)



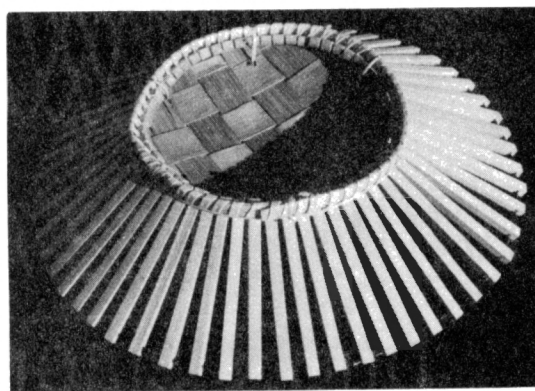
(b)

With the bamboo stick machine, the mass production of bamboo stick becomes possible. Today, machine made bamboo stick replaces the handmade ones in making these elegant trays. Though simple, these patterns represent the best example of balance, symmetry and aesthetics of lines.

Figure 42. Bamboo Trays



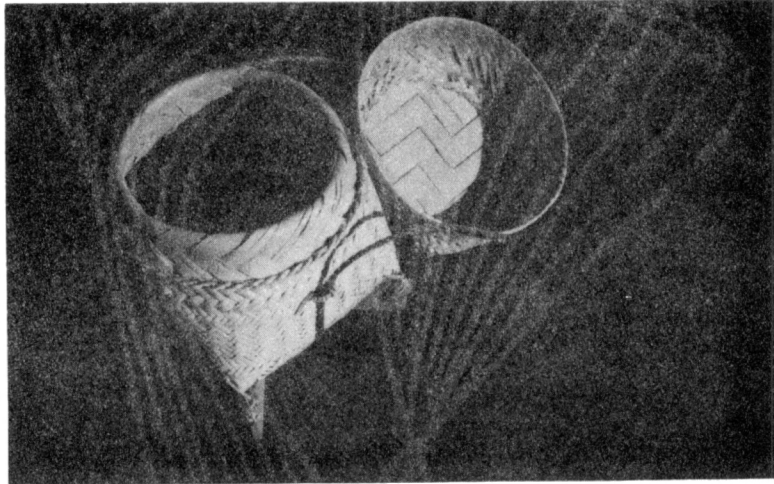
(a)



(b)

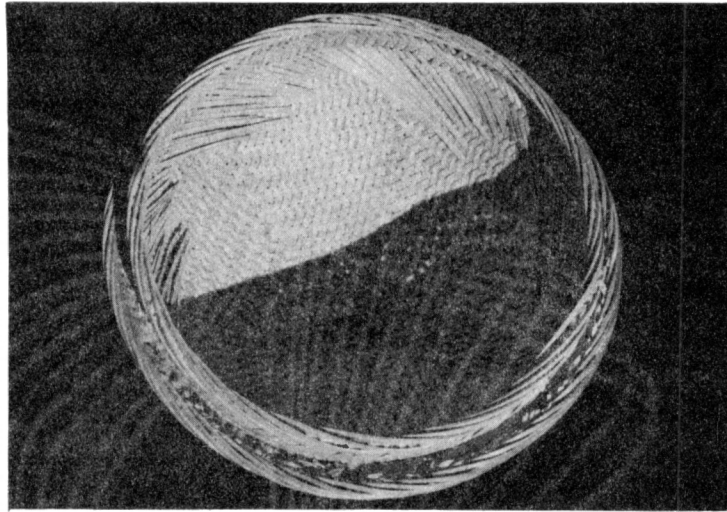
This bamboo fruit tray is handmade of bamboo strips. It is another good example of symmetry.

Figure 43. Bamboo Fruit Tray

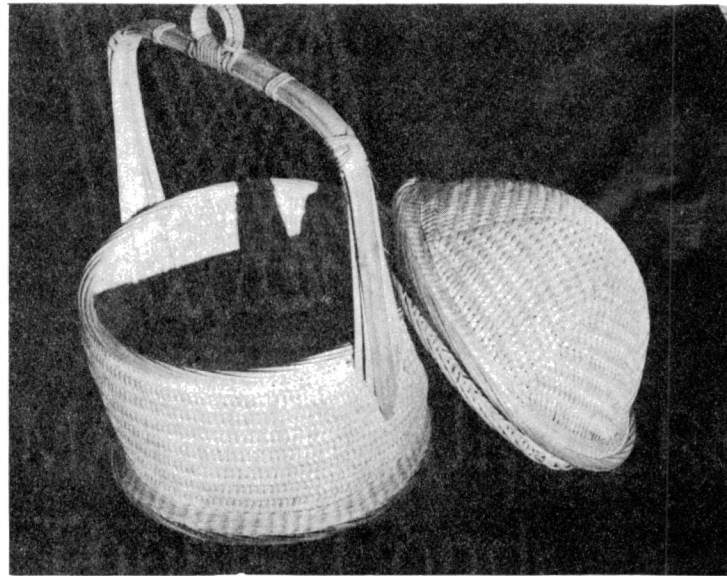


This tightly woven hamper is made of thin, soft bamboo splints. Since the early Republican era (1912-1940), Chinese in some provinces and southeast Asia prefer to boil or steam their rice in the bamboo hamper. Rice thus cooked tastes delicious and has a bamboo fragrance. This style is neat and pleasant.

Figure 44. Tightly Woven Hamper



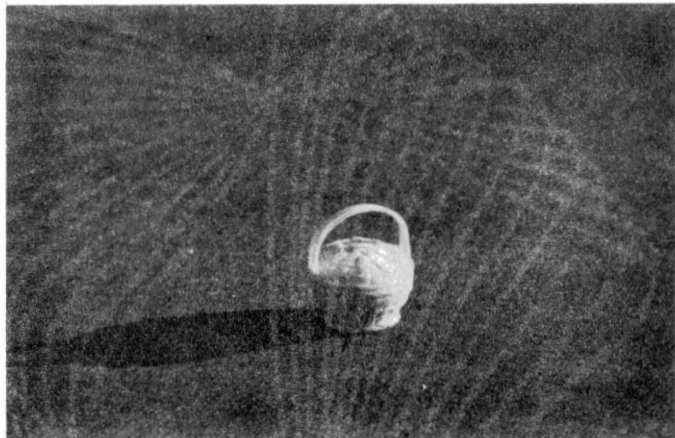
(a)



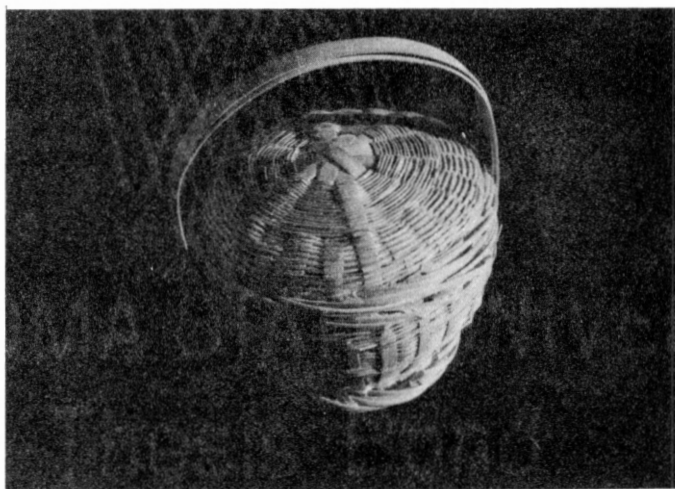
(b)

Depicted here is a new style gift basket, mainly used for picnics. The style is very similar to the traditional wedding gift basket but it is more durable in structure. The configurations are delicate and unifying.

Figure 45. Gift Baskets



(a)



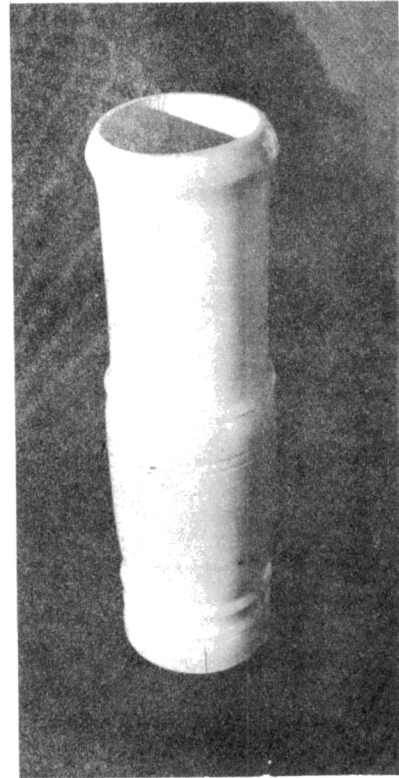
(b)

With skill and imagination, bamboo craftsmen can make miniature baskets as small as a thumbnail, the size of this basket. It is also known as an earring basket.

Figure 46. Miniature Basket



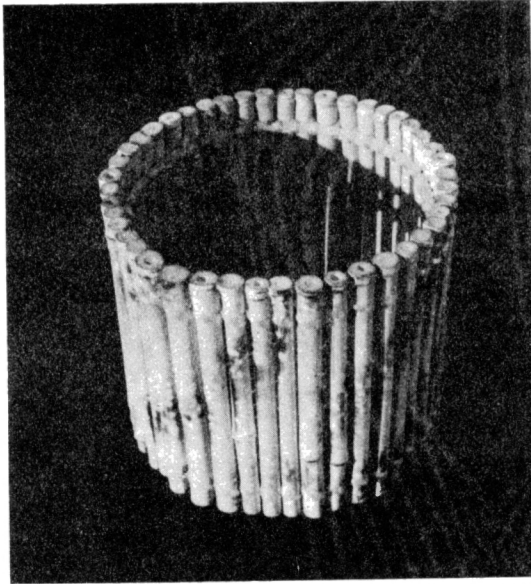
(a)



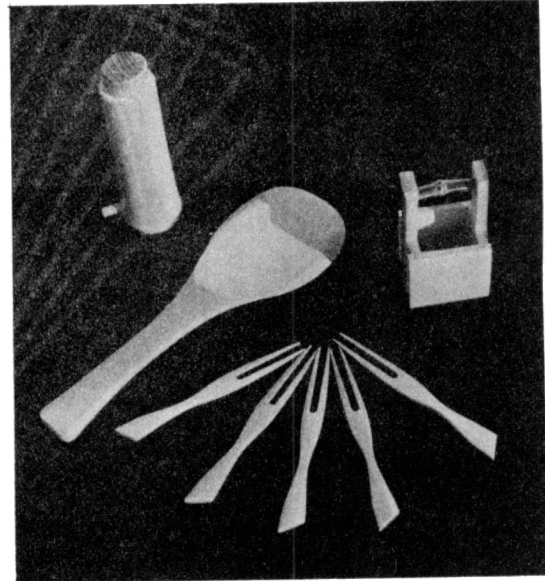
(b)

This vase and pen holder are made of bamboo culms. The model was made with a lathe and then polished with lacquer. The model and line can be varied and totally depend on the natural colors, graining and texture.

Figure 47. Bamboo Vase and Pen Holder



(a)



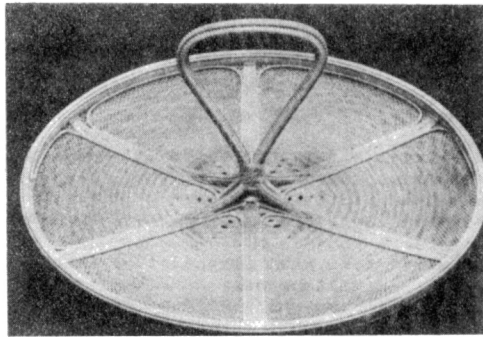
(b)

The flower pot is made of bamboo culms with no artificiality. Through its simple design the natural beauty of bamboo is preserved by the node, culm buds and branches. The Chinese also use bamboo to make dining utensils. Only a few samples of bamboo forks, salt shaker, spatula and toothpick holder are shown in (b).

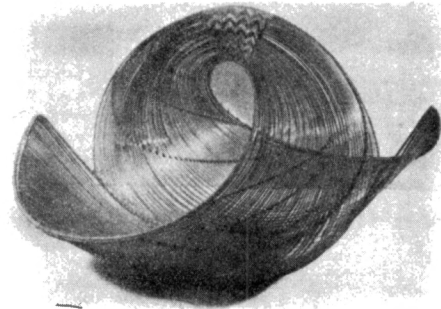
Figure 48. Flower Pot and Dining Utensils

### Contemporary Handwoven Bamboo Art In Japan

The Japanese are probably the most imitative people in the world and owe much of their culture to Chinese civilization. Though Japan's bamboo craft originated from China, the Japanese improved the style to suit their own taste. With financial support of the government, many Japanese craftsmen today can afford to do their best in preserving their crafts as well as adding new innovations. Figures 49 through 52 depicts some of these Japanese crafts.



(a)

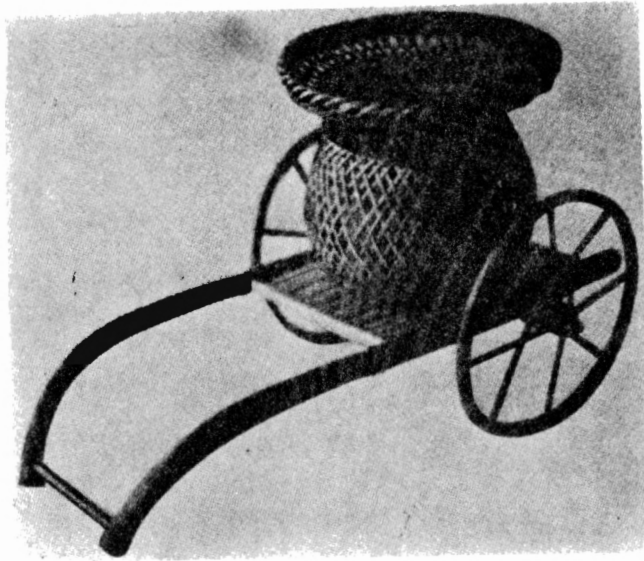


(b)

These are two masterpieces of bamboo craft done by modern Japanese craftsmen. The style and pattern reveal unreservedly the tender characteristics of bamboo.

Figure 49. Bamboo Trays





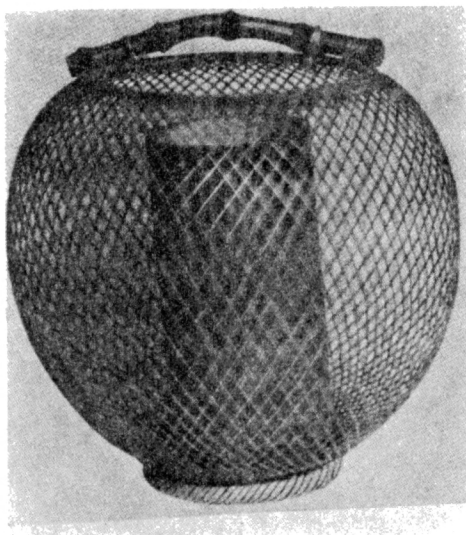
(a)



(b)

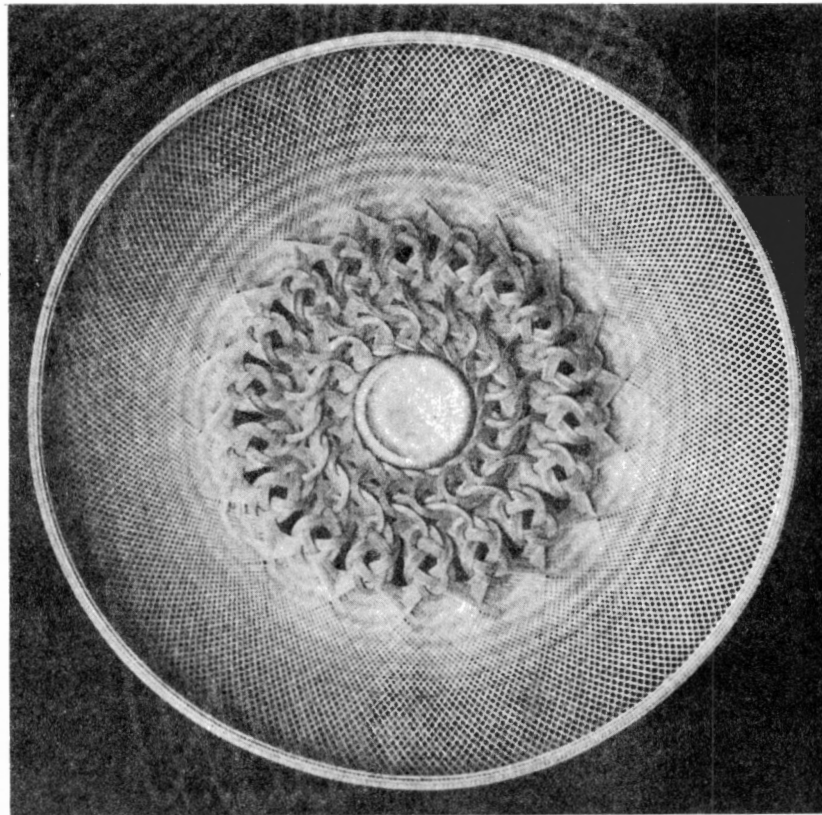
This classical style of flower basket has a taste or originality. It can be used for flowers which may enhance the beauty of a room.

Figure 50. Flower Baskets



This light stand is attractive and classical. It has a good design.

Figure 51. Light Stand



This object has a feeling of solitary and harmony. This laborious weaving is a special feature.

Figure 52. Decorative Object

## CHAPTER VII

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

It was the purpose of this writing to examine both classical and contemporary Chinese handwoven bamboo arts, to convey the meaning behind these objects, and to understand the relationships between the lifestyles and bamboo arts of certain periods, as well as between certain groups of people.

In any type of handcraft, the purpose of creating and designing the objects is often influenced by the characters and thoughts of people, their lifestyles and the geological environment they live in. The evolution of Chinese handwoven bamboo arts began in mainland China then transferred to Taiwan and Japan, changing tremendously in a rather short period of time. In the classical bamboo arts, the motives were generated from the desire for creativity and aesthetic appeal. The finished works were therefore often given great appreciation. This probably had something to do with the historical background in which the spirit of arts was emphasized. However, this spirit had dissipated after 1900. From that time until now, China has suffered under war, bureaucracy and hunger. The Chinese people then turned their art objects to more practical tools of everyday life. This was the beginning of bamboo weavings. At that time bamboo weavings were only seen in baskets and some agricultural tools. However, in recent years,

Taiwan handwoven bamboo arts have had a steady improvement, especially weavings which have incorporated some aborigine's styles.

Because of many influences from China, the Japanese also picked up the techniques of bamboo processing. Even though their basic weaving patterns are the same both in China and Japan, the Japanese had better form, beauty and creativity, in addition to a broad use of bamboo.

From the above study one can see that bamboo is just as good as any other natural materials for constructing art objects, as well as objects for daily life. Therefore, in the near future, bamboo furnishings, bamboo baskets, bamboo handcraft works, etc. will be seen in every corner of the world through the busy trading of modern society.

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