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BOUND NET WEIGHTS FROM 45SN100

BY DEL NORDQUIST

BOUND NET WEIGHTS FROM 45-SN100

By Del Nordquist

Fifteen identifiable bound net weights were found in the Snoqualmie site last year. All are related in type as illustrated in the accompanying plate. Credit is extended to the members of the Washington Archaeological Society who excavated them and took care in their preservation. At least four are complete, several nearly so, and all in one way or another retaining part of their original bindings. How many smooth stones have been cast away from excavations because they seemed no more than part of the deposit, but, which, in reality, may have been the only remaining part of net sinkers or other artifacts?

The lower drawings on Plate I suggest how the bindings may have been done. Without actually destroying one of the better examples the technological considerations of this paper are only broadly hypothesized into three phases which will be described later. The illustrations do not positively purport the actual specifications of the binding and must be considered only as interpretive.

In the construction of the "Snoqualmie-type" weight, a smooth river cobble was selected between one or two inches in length. The stones were usually longer than wide, decidedly less in thickness than in width, and uniformly smooth and

rounded. A split withe was taken, kerfed and bent around one end of the stone leaving a V-shaped opening above. The ends extended below the stone on either side. The withe was placed tangent to the outer edges of the stone held with the longer, longitudinal axis vertical.

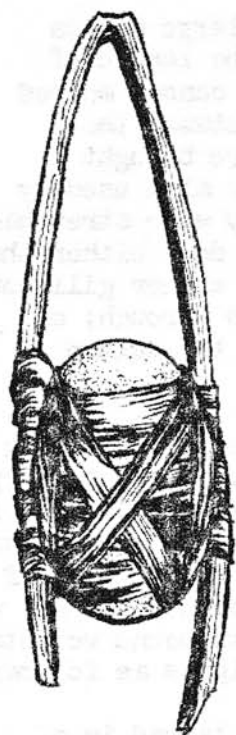
The binding material was wild cherry bark (*Prunus emarginata* (Dougl.)). Once the withe and stone were in position the circulatory binding was commenced. At present there is no evidence to state how the beginning loose end was disposed into the body of the weight, nor whether the binding started at the top or bottom and proceeded in a clock-wise or counter clock-wise direction. It is possible only to position the binding sequences broadly. The first phase consisted of simply wrapping the withe to the stone in a series of from four to seven rounds as observed from the more complete specimens. The second phase was the cross tying. Illustration a, showing the first sequence, makes its transition to b simply by reaching under the stone across its face, around and diagonally across the opposing face, etc., until a crossed configuration is completed. Only one specimen seemed to vary from this system of binding by dropping one of the crossings. More variance takes place in phase three which is the final tying as shown in the two examples illustrated in b¹. The two best examples show the use of the crossing over and under the ends of the withes and confined to the outside of the rods themselves. It is quite evident that this last phase served to tighten all previous bindings and assure a secure hafting of the stone to the stick. In one example the cross tying was dispensed with and the binding simply wound around the other binding elements just within the withe and next to the stone.

No evidence of a gum or adhesive has been noted. It is unlikely that such evidence would be apparent for all examples were excavated from the water-soaked river gravels.

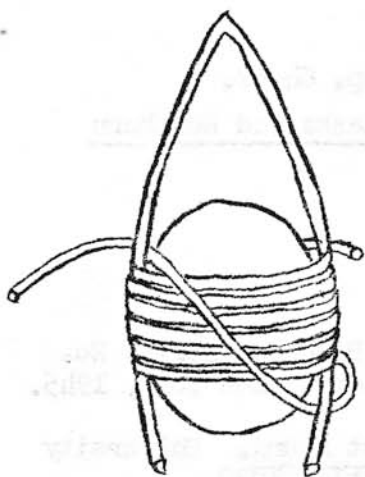
The actual method of using the weights found no solution from in situ examination. All were found in a relatively confined area (within a 12' radius of each other) and intermingled with the mixed contents of the deposit. The author personally observed and assisted in the removal of one weight which was in close proximity to a heavy piece of twisted cordage. There was no apparent fiber connecting the two. That the weights were suspended is rather obvious from their construction. The "eye" or upper part was probably laced or tied to some other object, by which it is supposed either a net, rod, or line.

If a net, it is assumed that the type was the seine which is reported to have been extensively used in river fishing. (See Smith, Marian: pp. 263 and 264; Haeberlin, Hermann and Erna Gunther: p. 27.) Pliny E. Goddard offers the following description of Salish seine fishing:

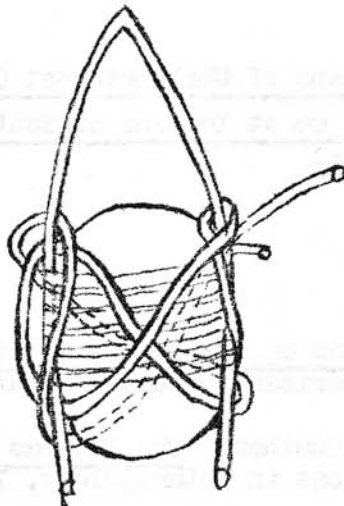
"Long nets were formerly used by the Salish who lived near Victoria. Nets were woven from nettle fiber twine. When the salmon run began, the chief who owned a fishing place invited his relatives to join him for the season. During the season the men were divided into two groups, living with their families on either side of the salmon drying racks. The chief's quarters were at the end of these racks, opposite the water. From these two groups were chosen the crews



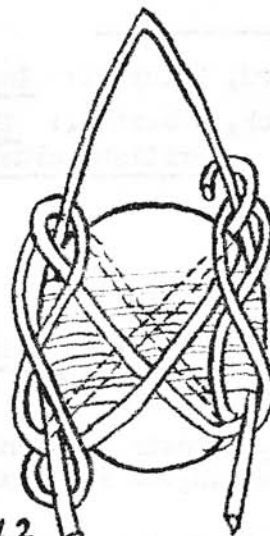
3 views, 45SN100/158



a



b'



b²

JN

PLATE 1 - Net weights or sinkers from 45SN100

for the canoes employed in fishing. Two anchors of large stones were placed at a distance from each other equal to the length of the net. Buoys were attached to the anchors and the canoes moored to them during the fishing. The net was stretched between the canoes until it was full of fish, when the canoes were brought towards each other, the net was pulled in. Nets were also used by the other tribes especially in the rivers, where they were stretched between two canoes by means of which they were drawn down either the current or against the flow of the tide. These were either gill nets, in which the fish were caught when they tried to pass through; or they were provided with trailing pockets, into which the salmon passed."¹

It is unlikely that the average ethnologist would have found time to ask about the particulars of how weights were made and hung to nets. It is no surprise to find this information lacking in almost all sources investigated. Therefore, it is gratifying to report one source, Albert P. Niblack's report on the Indians of Southern Alaska and Northern British Columbia which gives positive proof of use of similar weights among the Haida of Queen Charlotte's Island. In his work he illustrates a seine on Plate XXXII, figure 162, which shows bound weights suspended from the lower edge of a net. He describes the weights as follows:

"The sinkers at the foot are black pebbles or stones lashed in a circular wooden hoop and spaced from 8 to 10 inches apart."²

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1. Goddard, Pliny E.: Indians of the Northwest Coast, pp. 64-67.
 2. Niblack, Albert P.: The Coast Indians of Southern Alaska and Northern British Columbia.
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