

inside coffins, and the other twelve have certainly fallen out of destroyed coffins. HEDIN found two similar ones in graves, and STEIN, who was the first to publish these handsome objects, has five specimens originating from three graves. His baskets seem to be less decorated, or maybe more worn, than ours.

At first I regarded these baskets as made of the stiff 'camel grass' so characteristic of the Central Asian steppes and deserts, and which the Mongols call Tsaghan derisun. Its Latin name is *Lasiagrostis splendens*. This has been proved only partly correct. Mr. LJUNGH'S microscopical investigations have revealed the fact that the warp consists of dicotyledonous stems and the weft of grass and root fibres mixed. In the specimen No. 36:6 an *Artemisia* root has been used. This determination may be valid for all of the rest in this collection.

They are made in the following manner. Two groups of from five to twelve warp stems have been placed perpendicularly and fastened to one another (Pl. 13: 1b and 14: 5b). In some cases the number of the warp stems at the beginning is not the same in each group Pl. 13: 1 has for instance 8 and 11 stems, 5: 146 has 11 and 12. The spaces in the corners between the two groups of original warp stems have been filled out with radially arranged stems, and to widen the diameter new stems have been added subsequently, Fig. 17. Before the maximum width is attained there is as a rule a border of three-strand braid, which is repeated near the mouth. The rest of the wall comprises very close plain twined weaving. All of the baskets in this collection are decorated (though some of the specimens have almost obliterated designs because of wear) with horizontal stripes, triangles or oblique borders of step-like or zig-zag designs. These elements recur on nearly all specimens though they are arranged in slightly different ways.

The basket No. 5:70 is an interesting example of how the decoration of these baskets has been applied on top of the main weft element. The whole surface is much worn from long use. At the first glance it seems to be plain and undecorated. On closer examination small fragments of "extra" strands are observed in the grooves between the warp elements. They are the remains of the otherwise totally worn out decoration. A patient study of these remnants has revealed a pattern of the same oblique zig-zag bands as on most of the other baskets from here. Only in one detail does it differ from the rest: on the top part between the mouth and the three-strand braid running about 3.5 cm. below it. Here the ornaments are plaited over two warp stems and form irregular crescents.

The decorations are made up of split stems of grass the smooth and shiny surface turned outwards, thus affording a pleasing contrast effect.

It is quite evident that all have been made in a very limited region. Around Loulan the patterns are already different. A symbolic meaning of these ornaments is



Fig. 17. Detail from the basket No. 5:70. Size 2/3.