DIS-Basket-Navajo-Wedding

The Navajo Ceremonial basket, also called a Wedding basket, is used in weddings, girls’ puberty rites, and traditional healing ceremonies,  and are viewed as  a  map  through  which  the Navajo  chart  their  lives. The central spot  in  the  basket  represents  the sipapu,  where the  Navajo  people emerged from  the  prior world through a reed.  The  inner  coils of  the basket  are  white  to  represent  birth. As you travel outward on  the  coils you  begin  to  encounter more  and more  black.  The black represents darkness, struggle and pain.  As you make your way through the darkness you eventually reach  the  red  bands, which represent  marriage; the mixing of  your  blood  with  your  spouse  and creation  of  family.  The red is pure. During this time there is no darkness. Traveling out of familial bands you encounter more darkness, however, the darkness is interspersed with white light. The light represents increasing enlightenment, which expands until you enter the all white banding of the outer rim.  This banding represents the spirit world, where there is no darkness.  The line from the center of the basket to the outer rim is there to remind you that no matter how much darkness you encounter in your world, there is always a pathway to the light.  This pathway during ceremonies is always pointed east.  The last coil on the basket rim is finished off at this pathway to allow the medicine man to easily locate it in darkness.

Prior to the late nineteenth century, baskets played an important utilitarian role in everyday Navajo life. They served as containers for food and water and were important objects of trade, as well as ceremonial use. Navajo women are traditionally the basket weavers, and techniques are handed down throughout each generation, as well as the stories and symbols that inspire basket designs.