

Contents

PREFACE	2
TRIBAL DISTRIBUTIONS	3
POPULATION STATUS, AND PSYCHOLOGY	5
SEASONAL OCCUPATIONS	6
SEED GATHERING AND PREPARATION	7
Fig. 1. a—i, potsherds; j, cross.-section of mortar.	8
DOMESTICATED ANIMALS	9
TRADE AND TRANSPORTATION	9

ETHNOGRAPHY OF THE OWENS VALLEY PAIUTE

BY
JULIAN H. STEWARD

PREFACE

The following account of the ethnography of the Owens Valley Paiute is based on two visits of about six weeks each to Owens valley and Mono lake during the summers of 1927 and 1928 and a short visit in December, 1931. The first two trips were made under the auspices of the Department of Anthropology, University of California.

I wish to express gratitude to Mr. W. A. Chalfant for access to the manuscript of a new edition of his *The Story of Inyo*, which contains much excellent ethnographic material on the Paiute; to Messrs. Frank Parcher and Charles Forbes for much information and for permission to examine the material in the Eastern California Museum at Independence; to the Harry Mendenhall studio at Big Pine and the former Dietrich studio at Bishop for many of the photographs herein reproduced; to Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, for permission to study some of its ethnographic material; to Dr. H. L. Mason of the Botany Department, University of California, for identifying the plant materials collected; to Dr. Walter P. Cotton of the Botany Department, University of Utah for identifying plant materials; to Dr. Ralph Chamberlin of the Department of Zoology, University of Utah, for identifying some of the fauna; to Mr. Eickbaum, Stovepipe Wells, Death Valley, for permission to study his excellent Shoshoni collection; to the proprietors of Furnace Creek Inn for permission to examine their ethnographic material; to the Century Company, New York, for permission to quote from *The Yosemite* by John Muir; to Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, for permission to quote *My First Summer in the Sierra* by John Muir; and to the Century Company, New York, for permission to quote *The Mountains of California* by John Muir.

Abbreviations used herein are as follows: M.L., Mono lake; O.V., Owens valley; R.V., Round valley; B.P., Big Pine; Bish., Bishop; L.P., Lone Pine; F.S., Fish Springs; B.R., Black Rock; D.S., Deep Springs.

TRIBAL DISTRIBUTIONS

The Owens Valley Paiute are the southernmost of that widely distributed Shoshonean group, the Northern Paiute, which occupies most of northern Nevada.

They call themselves *nüm*¹, the "people," and were called by the Shoshoni, *pana_nwitü*, "western place" people, which term they [Paiute] used for people west of the Sierra Nevada mountains. "Paiute," probably derived from *pa*, water, and *ute*, has little meaning to the Owens Valley Paiute though it is a name used in the region today. E. L. derived it from Payote, a "South Fork" (*Tübatübalal*?) Indian with a remarkable character and a charmed life. G.C. thought it meant "fish-eater" in some other language. G.C. gave this designation for the Owens Valley people: *nü_nwa paya hup ca'a' otuu'm*², we are water ditch coyote children.¹ Eastern Mono,² a name now generally employed for these people, has no justification. The Indians never heard it; anthropologists cannot explain its origin. Paiute, rightly implying a cultural and linguistic relationship with the Great Basin people rather than with the Western Mono, is preferable.

Paiute boundaries.—On the west, the boundary is the Sierra Nevada, the watershed between the Sacramento-San Joaquin rivers of California flowing west and those flowing east into Great Basin salt lakes. (See map 1.) Western neighbors are the Miwok, south to the Fresno river, and the Western Mono or Monachi south of them, called by the Paiute, *pana_nwitü*. *Tübatülabal*, south of the Monachi, probably abutted Paiute territory at Owens lake. Paiute intermarried and traded with all three, especially with the Western Mono, their cultural and linguistic kin.³ The San Joaquin valley Yokuts were called *wa'avite*, "stranger."

On the north of Yerington, Nevada, were Washo, traditional enemies of the Paiute.

On the east and south were Shoshoni, called *tavainua*, "people who live beyond" (perhaps beyond the mountains), and differing in lang-

¹Mythologically, the Paiute are Coyote's children. Owens valley is the "water ditch."

²A suggested origin is Mono, Spanish for monkey. A relatively unimportant Paiute food plant, *mono*, could hardly be the source. See Kroeber, Handbook of California Indians,

³Although the Paiute said they were at peace with these people Muir mentions "Digger Indians" below Yosemite, probably Miwok, seeking protection from Paiute enemies who plundered their stores and stole their wives (My First Summer in the Sierra, 31).

guage, somewhat in mythology,⁴ and slightly in culture from the Paiute. The Shoshoni-Paiute dividing line ran from the Pilot mountains, Nevada, south through Columbus salt marsh, through Fish Lake valley (occupied by both tribes), through Eureka; Valley (uninhabited and seldom visited by either), through the Inyo mountains, and around the south shore of Owens lake. Saline, Death, Panamint, and Koso valleys were occupied by Shoshoni groups differentiated by habitat. Although C.D., a Shoshoni, regarded the Panamint as distinct linguistically, A.G. and others said they did not differ from other Shoshoni. Paiute-Shoshoni relations were generally friendly, with occasional intermarriage. I.H., whose first wife was Shoshoni like himself, married M.H., a Deep Springs Valley Paiute.

Paiute subdivisions.—Though fairly homogeneous culturally, the Paiute were differentiated by habitat and dialect. Owens valley even had differences of dialect, though all were mutually intelligible.⁵ Distinctive dialects occurred at: Owens lake and Lone Pine; Fish Springs; Independence; Big Pine; Deep Springs valley; Bishop, Laws, and Round valley. Benton, said by some to resemble Mono Lake, was difficult to Owens valley people. Mono lake speech, which Bridgeport resembled, was more difficult; Walker lake was scarcely intelligible.

Groups north of Benton were designated by a characteristic, though not always important, food or by a geographical term. The suffix *dika* means "eater"; *witü*, place. North of Walker lake were the *cuiyui dika*, from a fish. *Winnemuka*,⁶ applied to people north of these, has doubtful significance. Walker Lake Paiute were *agai dika*, fish-eaters. East of them are the *pahu mu witü* (some derivative of *paya'a*, water). The Soda Springs Valley Paiute, easternmost in this latitude, are *ozav dika*, alkali eaters. Mono Lake Paiute called themselves *cutza dika*, and Bishop called them *cuzavi dika*.⁷ G.C. at Fish Springs called their habitat *tuniga witü*, "around the foot of the mountain"-place.

South of Mono lake, Paiute are designated by terms descriptive of their habitats. Benton was *ütü'ütü witü*, hot place. The following were districts of Owens valley and neighboring valleys, each with communistic hunting and seed rights, political unity, and a number of villages: Round valley, *kwina patü*, "north place"; Bishop, *pitana patü*, "south place,"⁸ extending from the volcanic tableland and Horton creek in the

4 Leonard, 166—167, found Shoshoni ("sho-sho-coe") at Humboldt lake.

5 Compare the Mono Lake and Owens Valley vocabularies, pp. 331, 332.

6 Supposed by early explorers to be the chief of all Paiute.

7 *Cutza*, *cuzavi* the larvae breeding in Mono lake. See p. 256.

8 Chalfant says these reciprocal terms, *kwina patü* and *pitana patü* were used between Mono lake and Owens valley also.

Sierra to a line running out into Owens valley from waucodayavi, the largest, peak south of Rawson creek; ütü'ütü witü (also applied to Benton hot place," from the warm springs, now Keough's, south to Shannon tovowahamatü, "natural mound place," centering at Big Pine south to Big Pine creek in the mountains but with fishing and seed rights along Owens river nearly to Fish Springs; panatü, the Black Rock territory, both to Taboose creek; tunuhu witü, of uncertain limits. Other Paiute districts extended to the south shore of Owens lake, east and south of which were Shoshoni. Deep Springs valley was ozanwitü, salt place," from the saline lake. Saline valley, ka'o witü, "very deep valley" place, was Shoshoni with a few intermarried Paiute, but was accessible to Paiute for salt.

Habitat.—Owens valley falls within the geographical region of the Great basin, experiencing little rainfall, the few streams ending in salt lakes. Owens river ends in Owens lake. Hot summers and moderately cold winters are the rule. The aridity limits vegetation to hardy, drought resisting plants, e.g., *Artemisia*, which is very common. Owens valley, however, had extensive marshes and grass lands watered by streams from the snow-capped Sierra Nevada mountains (pl. 2c). The arid Great Basin mountain ranges, always running north-south, supported junipers, piñons; and some pines above 6000 feet altitude (pl. 2d).

POPULATION STATUS, AND PSYCHOLOGY

Estimates have placed the Paiute population in and around Owens valley at near 1000. The following data were collected by Chalfant: In 1855 von Schmidt estimated the Owens Valley Paiute at 1000. In 1863, 906 Indians left Owens valley for Fort Tejon, and the commander thought twice as many remained. Indians had come from outside the valley for the war, however. Major H. C. Egbert, in 1870, estimated: Round valley, 150, Bishop creek, 150, Big Pine, 200, Independence, George's creek, and Lone Pine, 400 to 500, Cerro Gordo, 150, Koso and southeastern localities, 250, a total of 1350 approximately, or about 1000 for Owens valley proper. The United States census, somewhat unreliable in early years, gave: 1880, 637; 1890, 850; 1900, 940; 1910, 792; 1920, 632; 1930, 736. But a 1030 Indian Service survey recorded 970. Thus the population has been maintained at close to 1000 with relatively little decrease—about 2.5 persons per square mile.

The Owens Valley Paiute live in "camps" at each of the towns. A living is made by ranch and highway labor, occasional hunting, pine-

nut excursions, and some seed gathering. Present native art products include: the summer willow house, baskets, some rabbitskin blankets, cradles, metates, and mullers. Doctoring by the shaman and use of herbs continues. The remainder of Paiute culture has practically disappeared.

Psychological abnormalities are rare. T.S. described a girl, about 16 years old, who was deaf and dumb but otherwise normal. She conversed by motions. Two brothers,¹⁰ (254) _____ and (255) _____, were both dumb and died by 20 years of age. Their sister, (253) _____, was normal but died at 30. Another sister, (256) _____, is normal and living. A boy, 3 or 4 years old, wore diapers and could not talk. His family was normal. An old woman talked and wandered in the fields all night, becoming normal in the morning and returning home. T.S. attributes this to old age. Indians have no special explanation for abnormalities. Insanity: a middle-aged man, weighing about 200 pounds, would not work, was shy and hid from visitors. Once at his mother's home he chopped up the stove with an axe. He was finally put in an institution. His family seemed normal. One or two instances of temporary insanity, evidently stirred by sex jealousy and leading to murder, were reported. Berdachism is called *tüdayapi'*, "dress like other sex." One such man dressed like a woman, associated with females, and did woman's work, washing for the white people, and did not marry; but he had no other abnormality. A young boy dressed like a girl, went to a girls' dormitory in a Nevada school, was put into the boys' dormitory, then put out of school, married a boy who was granted a divorce when the judge learned the facts. He is probably in Nevada now.

SEASONAL OCCUPATIONS

Summer. People kept headquarters in valley villages, fishing, seed gathering in the valley or hills—sometimes traveling as far as Fish Lake valley from Big Pine, for certain seeds—or making trips north in small family groups for *piüga*.

Fall. When seeds were gathered, people of large districts assembled at certain villages for a week or so of dancing and gambling and communal rabbit dirves. These were the only communal endeavors, except occasional hunting and fishing parties.

¹⁰ See appendix 6, Genealogy.

Winter. Pinenut expeditions of small groups wintered in the mountains in the timber when crops were good. When pinenuts failed, they wintered at valley villages, eating stored seeds gathered in summer and fall.

Spring. People wintering in mountains moved to valleys, bringing remaining pinenuts.

Hunting occurred at all seasons, communal hunting chiefly in the fall. Seasonal movements were within an average radius from the valley village of 15 or 20 miles, within prescribed bounds, the territory being owned by the district.

Daily activities. People arose before daybreak. Hunters in bed after sunrise had bad luck. Two meals a day were eaten, one at early morning and one in the afternoon. Women gathered seeds and men hunted, when food could be had, to lay up supplies for future use. Leisure time was spent gambling. Winter evenings were devoted to relating myths. In 2 valley villages, old and young men lived at sweat-houses, smoking, talking, and gambling.

SEED GATHERING AND PREPARATION

Women, working in groups, gathered seeds by beating them from plants with seed beaters, *tanugu* (Bish.), *tsigu* (M.L.), into conical carrying baskets, *cususi*. Mixed seeds were later separated by sifting through a twined basket. Heads of some plants were picked, carried home, threshed and winnowed—e.g., sunflowers. Tubers and roots were dug, with sharp pointed sticks, *tavodo*, of a hard species of mountain mahogany, *Cercocarpus*, called *tunap*, or robbed from rodent stores.

Seeds and roots, collected mostly in summer and fall, were stored in the ground in pits lined with grass and covered with grass and earth against future need. The California elevated cache was not used.¹¹

For eating, seeds were ground on a metate, *mat^a*, a slab of rock about 12 by 18 inches and 2 to 5 inches thick,¹² with a muller or *mano*, *tusu*, a flattish, hard rock roughly rectangular and worn on both sides. To remove husks they were then winnowed. Sometimes roasting in coals preceded this, the meal being ground into a flour and eaten dry. Meal was

¹¹ Simpson (482) found in Owens valley some water plants plaited together like onions for keeping.

¹² E.g., U. C. spec 1-27046. See pl. 4*h*, *i*. A 3-legged lava metate, of Mexican origin, was collected from M.H. (see pl. 5*g*). Two similar ones were observed in Death valley at Stovepipe Wells.

also boiled in pots in Owens valley to make mush, meat frequently being added. It was stirred with the looped stick. At Mono lake mush was made in baskets with hot rocks. Generally several species were mixed, pinenuts being the base.

In Death valley, the mortar and pestle replaced the metate. Mr. Eickbaum at Stovepipe Wells has a large collection of mortars, some being tree sections up to nearly 2 feet tall and 12 inches in diameter, others

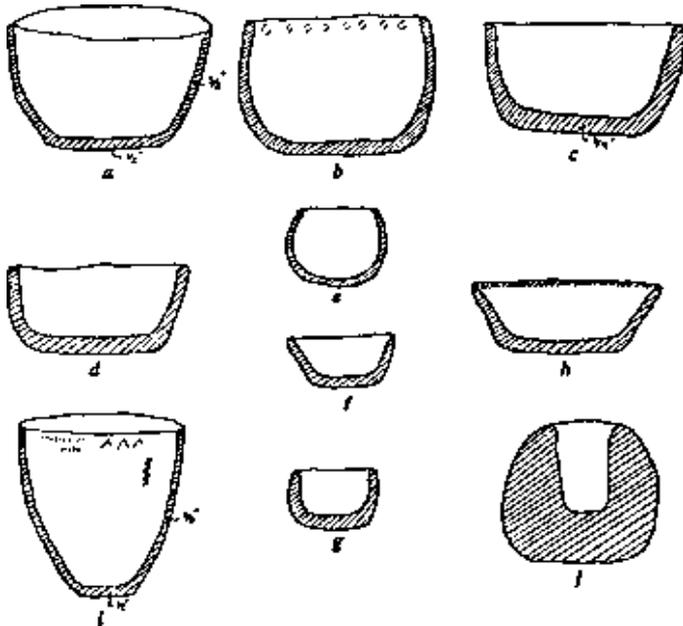


Fig. 1. a—i, potsherds; j, cross.-section of mortar.

spherical boulders about 10 inches in diameter with holes about 4 inches in diameter and 6 inches deep. Figure 1j gives a typical cross-section. Pestles, worked and unworked, were of stone, about 12 inches long, 3 inches in diameter. One was said to be 3 feet long by $2\frac{1}{2}$ to 3 inches in diameter. Indians at Furnace creek were observed pounding screw beans in a tree section mortar, 12 inches tall, 10 inches in diameter with a hole about 4 by 6 inches. An iron bar served as pestle. Metates and mullers of the Paiute type though occurring in Death valley were rare. Furnace Creek Inn has several metates from the vicinity, one having a double depression, suggesting the Utah type found in Pueblo mounds.

DOMESTICATED ANIMALS

Dogs.—Dogs, i'cavuk^ü (ica^a, coyote; vuk^ü, tame?), O.V., wi'civuk or tog^ü (from "dog"), M.L., resembled coyotes in build and fur but had shorter ears and were marked black, white, brown, and tan. They were chiefly pets.

Horses.—Horses, never of importance to Paiute; were got by Owens Valley from the south, by Mono Lake from the west, and were eaten prior to 1860. Pugu, M.L., means horse or any quadruped.

TRADE AND TRANSPORTATION

Little trade was carried on in the Great basin, except in salt from Saline valley and pottery chiefly from Big Pine. Trading was done across the Sierra Nevada by Owens Valley Indians with Western Mono, Mono Lake with Miwok. Routes are shown on map 1; people crossed from both sides, making hurried trips.⁶⁹

S.N.'s account pictured only men trading. Muir in 1870 saw women traveling barefoot, carrying the loads.⁷⁰

Owens Valley carried salt, pinenuts, and other seeds, obsidian including the "poisonous" variety, rabbitskin blankets, balls of tobacco, baskets, and buckskins. They received principally shell money (later glass beads), acorns, manzanita berries, apasa', and baskets.

Mono Lake traded pinenuts, piüga, cuza'vi, baskets, red paint, pijapi, white paint, ivi, and salt⁷¹ for bead money, acorns, manzanita berries, apo'sogwa, sow berry, tama, and elderberries, hubu'xia. They often wintered in Yosemite, especially when pinenuts were scarce, frequently

⁶⁹ An account of a trading expedition is given in Steward, *Autobiography*.

⁷⁰ *The Mountains of California*, S0—S1.

⁷¹ Muir mentions salt as their most important trade article, *My First Summer in the Sierra*, 228.

marrying Miwok. Muir says Miwok went to Mono lilke to trade or attend dances.⁷²

Strings of small, white shell discs, natsi'bhüd^ü, O.V., numu'k^{wa}, M.L. (white glass beads later had the same purpose and name) were money. One turn around the edge of the outstretched palm, starting and ending at the wrist bone, was called natsakwi'da.⁷³ Two turns, tagiva, O.V., equalled \$.25. Mono Lake also had long shell beads, perhaps dentalium, called pakuda (applied also to blue glass beads). Abalone, dentalium, and olivella shells were rare, if present, in Owens valley. Silver coins were called nau'aku.

In gambling, the unit bet was the kiva, 2¹/₂ turns around the hand, from the index finger, in front of the third and fourth fingers, behind the little finger, around the wrist, behind the thumb to the index finger. A borrower of money returned a little more than he received, but custom fixed no interest rate.

For transportation, the dog was used in no way. Women used conical carrying baskets (pl. 10a, b, c, f), supported on their backs by tumplines passing over their foreheads. Basketry hats protected their heads, especially in pine-nutting. Men bundled their goods in buckskins, tied with knots slung over the shoulder or with carrying straps of braided wiciva (*Amsonia brevifolia* Gray) (one said three-ply twisted ropes) or buckskin straps tied to the pack knot and this slung over the shoulder. Women sometimes use pack straps. Pieces of rabbit net sometimes served as carrying nets. One Field Museum buckskin carrying strap (E-71248) is from Western Mono of Jose basin; another (E-71377), braided of *Fremontica californica* Torr., is from Hooker's cove. A Western Mono carrying net (Field Museum spec. E-71377) is woven of *Asclepias speciosa* Torr., milkweed, and a species of *Gomphocarpus*, milk plant.

For duck hunting and some fishing a bundle of tules, saiv^a (*Scirpus*, probably *acutus* Muhl.), was bound with willows into a double-pointed bundle, 10 feet long, having, according to T.S., slight sides. Others described it as rather shapeless.

⁷² The Mountains of California, 80—81.

⁷³ Chalfant's informant corroborates this (MS).