



# Tomo-Kahni State Historic Park Red Rock Canyon State Park Volunteer Refresher: Part 1



# Presentation

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  - 40 years working in the Eastern California Region
  - Author of Prehistory of Kern County, Archaeology and Rock Art, and co-author of the Handbook of the Kawaiisu

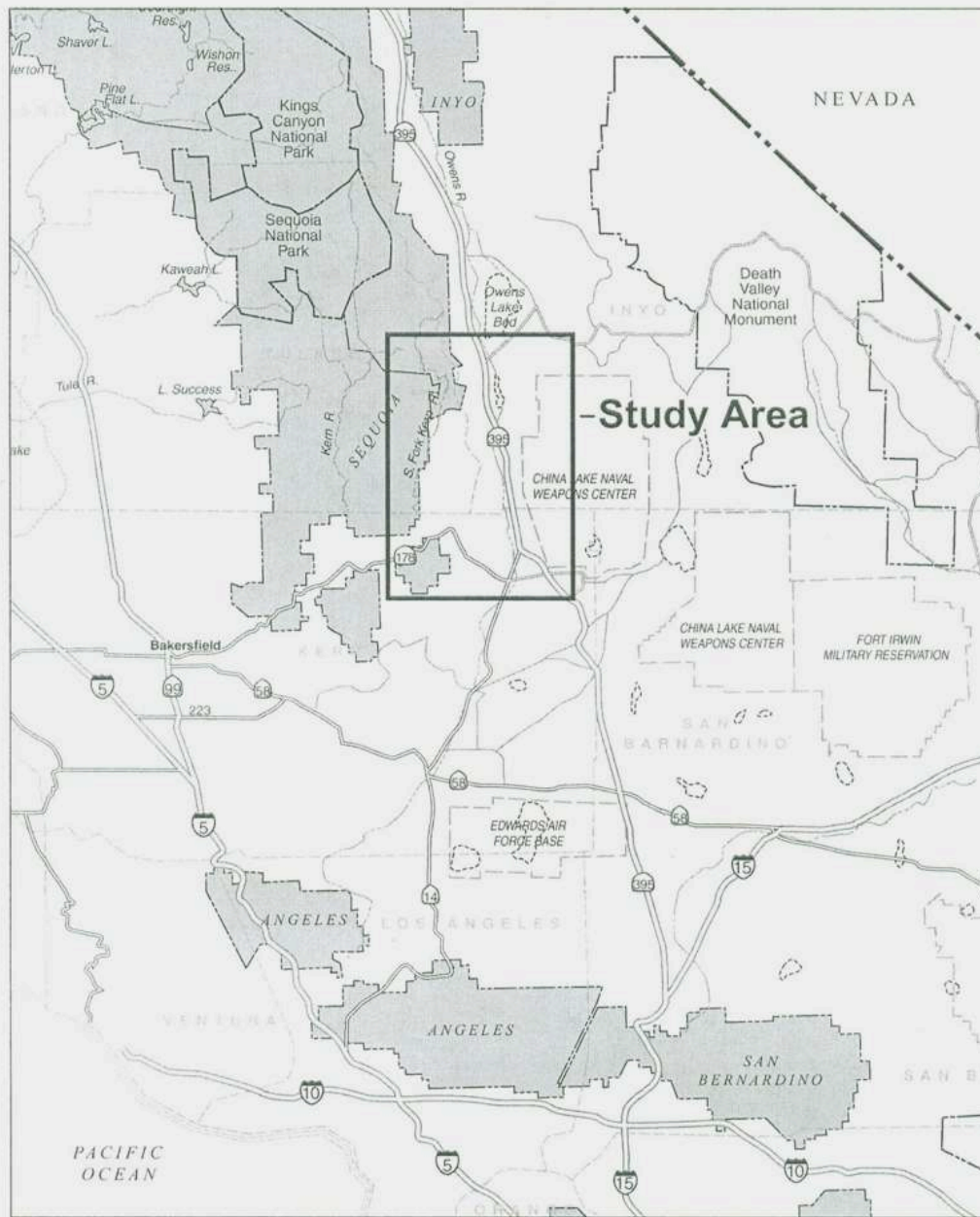


# Natural and Cultural History of the Tehachapi Region and Eastern California:

Local Native Americans - Language, Land,  
Religion, and Prehistory



# The People – Language, Culture, and Worldview: Indians, Lifeways, and Religion



KILOMETERS  
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- Dry Lakes
- National Forests

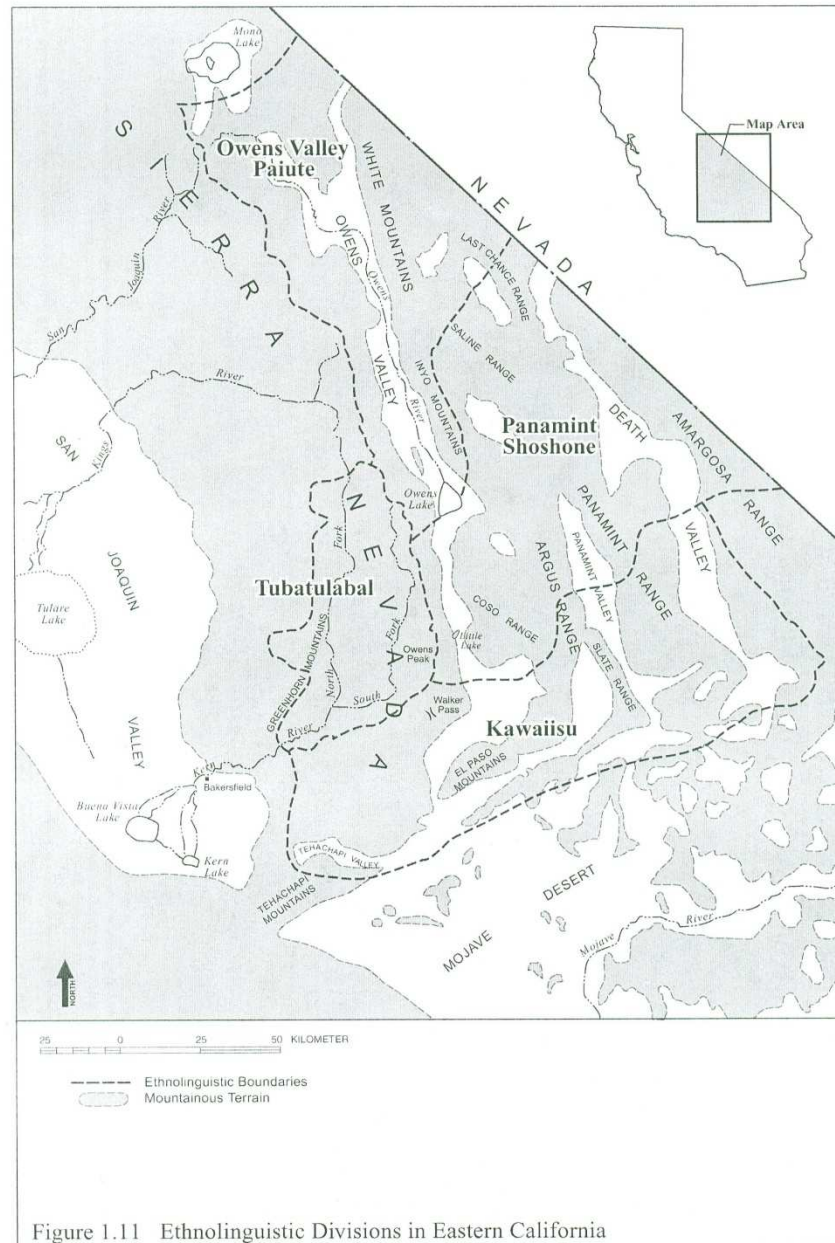
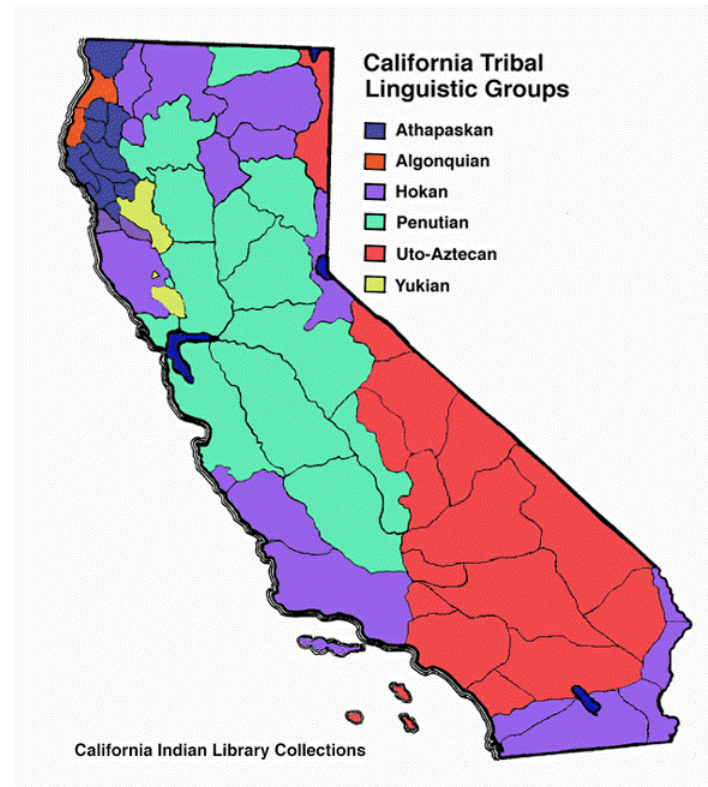


Figure 1.11 Ethnolinguistic Divisions in Eastern California

# LANGUAGE DISTRIBUTIONS: Uto-Aztecan



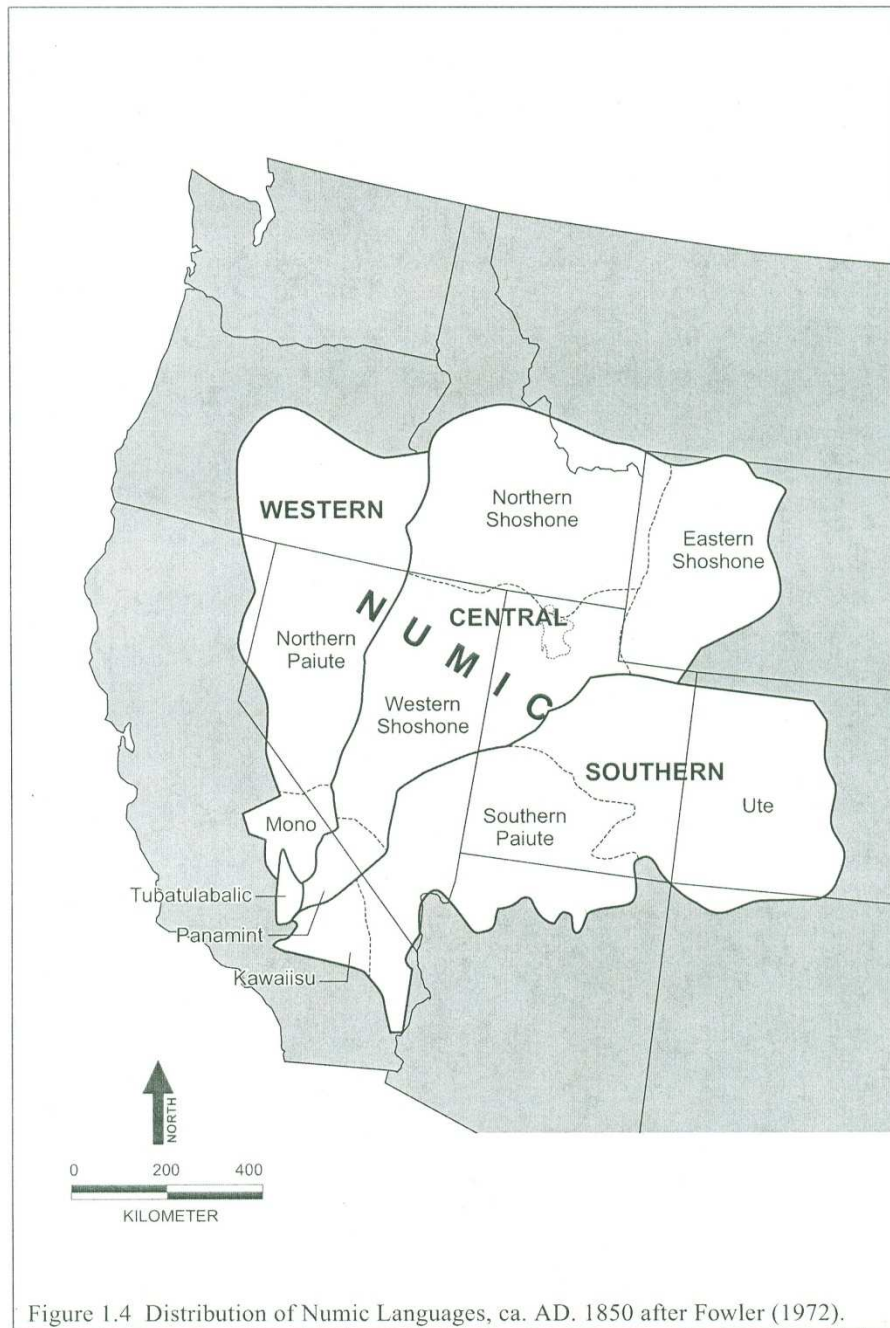


Figure 1.4 Distribution of Numic Languages, ca. AD. 1850 after Fowler (1972).



# Tubatulabal

- Territory and Population
- Villages, subsistence-settlement
- Sociopolitical organization
- Religion and cosmology



# Territory



- Traditional Tubatulabal territory is centered in the far southern Sierra.
- Territory includes the region naturally drained by the Kern River.
- Territory begins at the North and South forks of the Kern River, near Mount Whitney.
- It ends terminates below the confluence of the two forks in the Kern River Canyon, at a place just above the rapids.
- That is the end of the Lower Kern River Canyon northeast of Bakersfield.

# Population



- Estimates place their precontact population between 500 and 1,000.
- The Tubatulabal were composed of three distinct bands: Tolowim, Pahkanapil, and Palegewan.
- Each occupied geographically demarcated areas during the winter.
- The Palegewan were in the Kern River Valley and the Pahkanapil inhabited the South Fork Valley of the Kern where most of the people lived.

# Tubatulabal

- Women gathered, men hunted and fished in a relatively lush environment with both central Californian and Great Basin resources.
- They lived in an area encompassing riverine, pinyon-juniper and high Sierran environments.
- Two major dietary staples, pinyon nuts and acorns. Fish were next in economic importance.



# Tubatulabal: Sociopolitical Organization

- The Tubatulabal were organized into three semi-independent, politically differentiated bands, each with its own chief.
- Associated with each band were several “hamlets” or permanent winter villages and each village included from two to six extended families.
- The Tubatulabal were territorially based and claimed property rights as a community recognizing certain geographical boundaries marking their territory.

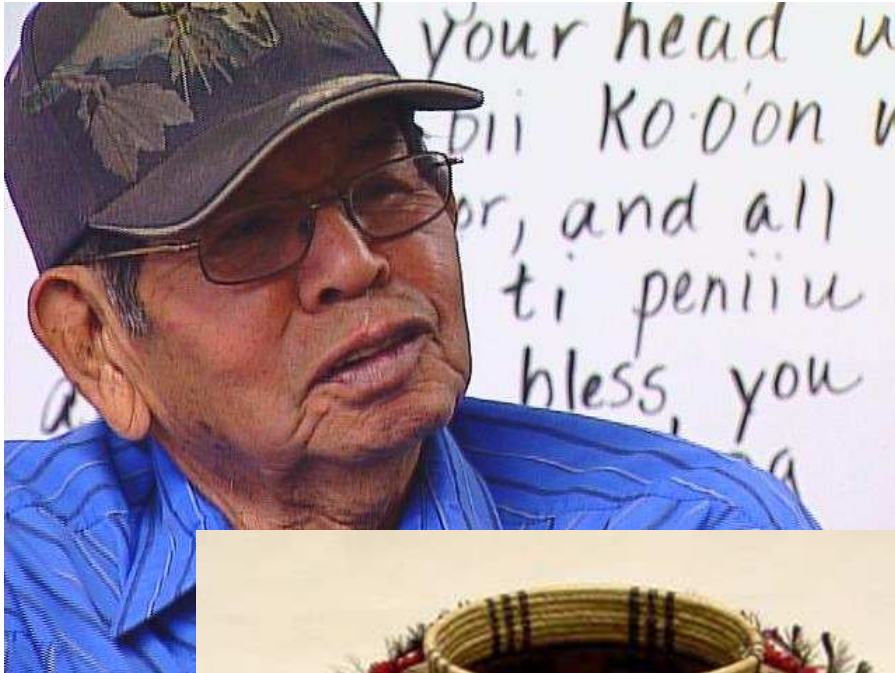


# Tubatulabal: Sociopolitical Organization



- Each band's chief acted as a counselor, arbitrator and representative of his band.
- His responsibilities included leadership in war and peace, handled internal disputes and the admonishment or punishment of shamans suspected of bad behavior.
- The band chief held an appointed office and, upon his death, an assembly was called and a new man was chosen.

# Tubatulabal: Religious Life



- A religious concept centered around the concept of a dying benefactor and was related to their use of jimsonweed (*Datura* spp.).
- Believed the world was inhabited by supernatural spirits in both human and animal forms.
- Spirits were shaman's helpers and treated with reverence..
- Shamans included both men and women and served as doctors in curing ceremonies or, when malevolent, as witches.
- Other shamans included rain doctors who produced rain when needed.
- Bear shamans uncommon but occasionally shamans obtained bears as guardian animals.

# Tubatulabal: Religious Life



- Rattlesnakes were sometimes guardians of vision seekers and shamans.
- Those who had such associations could cure rattlesnake bites.
- Group ceremonies included an annual mourning ceremony for the dead.
- When the ritual took place images and possessions of the deceased were burned.
- The “little fiesta” was conducted for the survivors of a deceased person, before they were able to resume eating meat.
- Young men and women, using *Datura* sp. to obtain visions and spiritual guardians, performed a jimsonweed ritual.



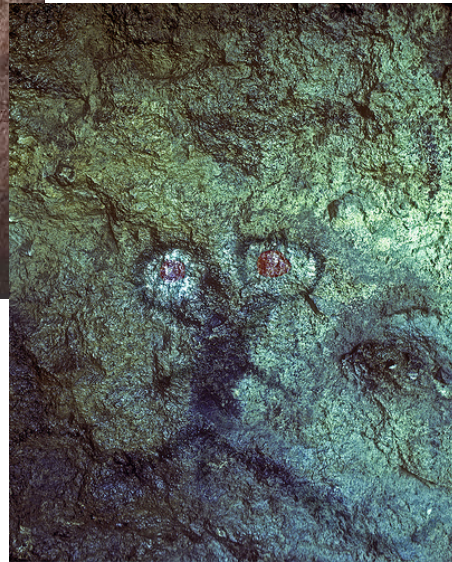


# Kawaiisu and Panamint Shoshone: Numic Peoples

- Territory
- Subsistence-settlement pattern
- Sociopolitical organization
- Religion and cosmology



# Territory and Population



- Zigmund (1986) identified the Kawaiisu as centered in the far southern Sierra Nevada, principally in the Piute and Tehachapi Mountains.
- Precontact population for the Kawaiisu has been estimated at no more than 500 and the Panamint Shoshone (aka Coso) had not more than 300 people.

# Numic Seasonal Round



- The Numic Panamint Shoshone and Kawaiisu environment was less productive than that of their neighbors, the Tubatulabal, especially with reference to the availability of water.
- The Coso area is just one valley system away from Death Valley - one of the driest places on earth.
- Hence, the Shoshone were much more residentially mobile than the Tubatulabal.
- Their seasonal round varied depending on the relative abundance and location of key food sources.

# Numic Seasonal Round

- In the winter people lived on the valley floor villages next to streams. Along along the eastern scarp of the Sierra.
- They occupied pit houses and lived mainly on stored seeds and nuts and hunted rabbits.
- In spring some families moved to Haiwee Spring to gather greens.
- In late spring/early summer some people hunt rabbits.
- At the same time other families would travel and convene for communal antelope drives.
- Such drives were held in Bakersfield, at Brown (near the modern town of Inyokern), at the southern end of Owens Lake or the north end of Saline Valley (Steward 1938).



# Numic Seasonal Round



- The drives involved cooperative efforts with neighboring
- During the middle of summer families would travel to Saline Valley or sometimes Death Valley to gather mesquite beans.
- In late summer people moved throughout the Coso Range to gather plant foods.

In the fall most all families traveled to the productive pinyon grounds in the Cosos and the southern Sierra).

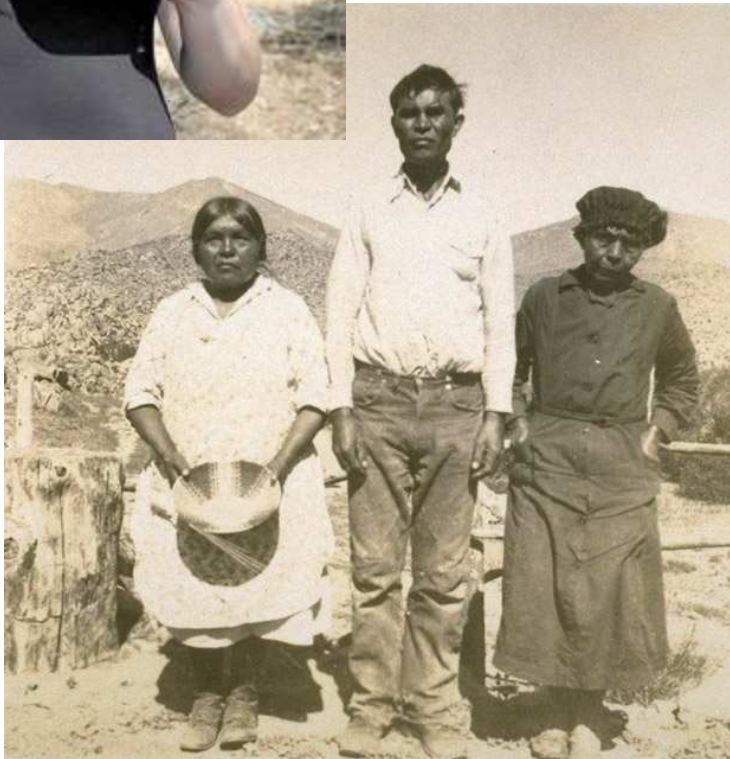
Alternatively, if the crops failed they would move to the Panamints (Steward 1938).

Some families would travel to Owens Lake to hunt waterfowl.

Fall was also the time for the large communal rabbit drives.

Important supplements to the largely vegetal diet were the hunting of bighorn in the Cosos.

Deer and bighorn in the Sierra, and fishing in the Owens River and Little Lake (Steward 1938).



# Subsistence

- Zigmund (1986) mentions that Kawaiisu territory was not richly endowed with subsistence resources.
- He also states that at times the Kawaiisu verged on starvation or suffered from lack of provisions.
- Steward (1938:84) recounts that the Kawaiisu from Panamint Valley would harvest mesquite (*Prosopis juliflora*) at their Warm Springs winter village.
- They would also venture to higher elevations to gather seeds and pinyon nuts and hunt mountain sheep.
- Families would also venture to the Argus Range and Coso



# Subsistence



- Mountains for chia and bunch grass.
- Groups living in the Tehachapi Mountains had both acorns and pinyon nuts to gather during the fall. In the spring various seed-producing plants were gathered.
- Among the most important were rice grass (*Achnatherum hymenoides*), tick seed (*Coreopsis* spp.); blazing star (*Mentzelia* spp.); and chia (*Salvia* spp.).
- Some fishing was done but few good fishing steams were available. Rabbits were hunted communally.

# Sociopolitical Organization

- Social organization centered on the family group with little supra-familial political organization.
- Chiefs were known but no single individual united the groups as a whole.
- Leaders were simply individuals who possessed sufficient personal wealth but no real coercive authority.
- They supervised feasts and bore much of the expense for such group ceremonies (Zigmond 1986).





# Religion and Ceremony



- Group ceremonies among the Kawaiisu included an annual mourning ceremony.
- Images and possessions of the deceased were burned, and a ritual when boys and girls a few years after puberty used jimsonweed to obtain visions and spiritual guardians.
- The religious world of the Kawaiisu was similar to that of their neighbors, the Shoshone, with guardian-spirit beliefs, elaborate mythology and shamanism.

# Shamanism

- Three kinds of shamans were known.
- Curing shamans diagnosed and healed illness.
- Evil shamans might attack their victims through supernatural agents and cause them to become ill or die.
- Weather shamans were a specialty of the Kawaiisu and could produce rain or snow.



# Numic Desert Home

- In the desert brush huts served as temporary homes.
- Possessions were few and were carried when they moved to a new home.
- Baskets of many kinds were very important: pack, winnowing, sifting tray, eating bowls, basket hats.



# Numic Desert Home



- Here is a picture of a Panamint Shoshone woman from Death Valley.
- She is holding a basket bowl.
- It was used to eat from and also as a pot to boil food.
- Hot rocks were added to the water and stirred to cook soups and porridge.

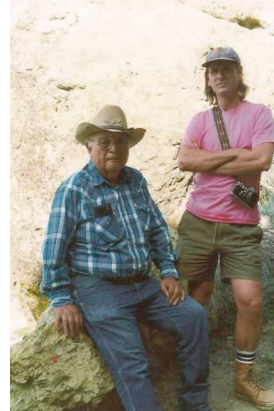
# Creation Cave in Sand Canyon



- Creation Cave is in Sand Canyon (CA-KER-508) in *Tomo Kahni* State Historic Park. The rockshelter contains many painted figures in red, black, and white.
- The paintings depict a number of anthropomorphic and zoomorphic creatures (**bears, turtles, bighorn sheep, and snakes**).
- The cave is mentioned in two separate myths.
- Kawaiisu tell us that this is the location where the animal people conducted celebrations and it was here, at this rockshelter, where the world was created.

# Creation Cave

- A mortar hole marks the spot.
- Grizzly Bear called the animals together and this was where the animals decided what they wanted to be and each painted his own picture.
- 
- It was Grizzly Bear who lives in the rock coming and going through the fissure and he is the guardian of the cave.
- Andy Green identified a white anthropomorphic figure at the cave as a snake and to not touch the paintings or it would make him blind.



# Tomo Kahni and Creation Cave

- Andy Greene said that Teddy Bear cave was a place that his mother would go to pray.
- She and others of his tribe would go and bring offerings. Sometimes they would sing.
- Andy Greene indicated that natives who used the cave were sometimes took jimsonweed before coming to the cave.



# Creation Cave

- A prominent image of a bear adorns the cave. Andy Greene tells the story of when his mother was chased by a bear out of the cave. This may have been a common bear or a spirit bear.





# The Story of Yahwera: *Yahwe'era Kahniina (Yahwera's House)*



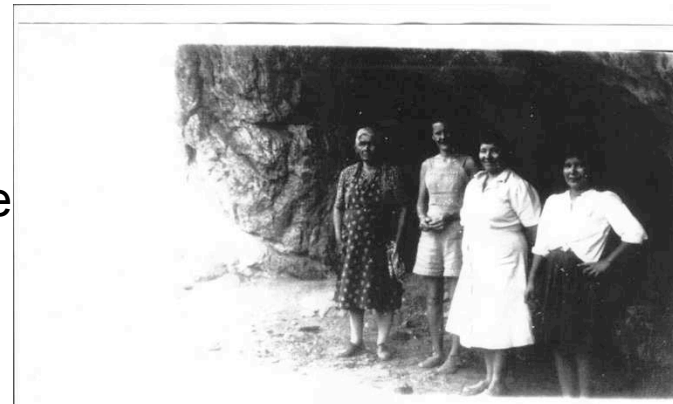
- Located in Back Canyon in Walker Basin
- Entrance to the Underworld.
- Limestone pillar and spring there
- Traditional story told of *Yahwera*, Master of the Animals
- One entrance is there in Back Canyon – home is a hole in that rock.



- Another entrance is a cave on Indian Creek. (Marie Girado, Lida, and Dorothy at the cave.)

# *Yahwera*'s House

- When you visit you see many different animals – deer, bear, snakes.
- These were animal people who spoke just like the Kawaiisu.
- Near the mouth of the tunnel the man saw bows and arrows. These were the weapons by which deer were killed. The deer leave them when they go inside *Yahwera*'s house.
- A man went to visit *Yahwera*.
- He saw the horns of all the deer that have been killed.
- *Yahwera* said that the deer were not really dead.



# *Yahwera*'s House

- There were many different kinds of luck on the cave walls.
- The man saw a bow and arrow of a good hunter in a prominent place and the bows and arrows of inferior hunters in subordinate positions.



# *Yahwera*'s House

- The man took something for his luck. The man began to walk through the tunnel.
- He stumbled and climbed over a large gopher snake (*kogo*).



# *Yahwera*'s House



- Farther along he came to a rattlesnake, as big as a log (*tugubaziiti-bi*) and he climbed over it.



# *Yahwera*'s House



- Then there was a brown bear (*mo'orii-zhi*) that he passed by and then he came to a grizzly bear (*pogwiti*) and went past it.
- Then he didn't see any other animals.

# *Yahwera*'s House



- He kept walking and he saw *Yahwera*.
- *Yahwera* wore a **mountain quail** feather blanket. He looked like a **hawk**.
- The man said he was sick and wanted to get well. *Yahwera* knew all about his illness without being told.
- *Yahwera* gave him some acorn mush, pinyon, or deer meat, and every time he ate some the same amount reappeared. He couldn't eat it all! He gave it back to *Yahwera*.

# *Yahwera*'s House

- *Yahwera* took him into a room where he kept the medicine.
- *Yahwera* asked him which of the songs he wanted and named all the songs. The man took a song.
- The man was ready to return home, so he kept going to the other end of the tunnel.





# Exiting *Yahwera*'s House



- He saw water that was like a window but it wasn't water, he passed through and didn't get wet.
- He came out and found he had exited far away from the entrance *in the desert* somewhere (**Redrock Canyon or Little Lake**) and wasn't sick anymore.
- He had been gone for a long time and his relatives didn't know where he had been.

# A Quick Overview of Archaeology

# What is Archaeology?

- The study of past cultures and their physical remains.
- Archaeology is the scientific study of peoples of the past, their culture and their relationship with their environment.
- The purpose of archaeology is to understand how humans in the past lived and to preserve this history for present and future learning



# How Do Archaeologists Work?

- Work done on a dig site can be at times painstakingly slow.
- Soils have to be analyzed a small amount at a time to find any remnants of an older culture. Soils are usually filtered and might turn up half of an old tool or a fragment of bone.
- These finds are then carbon dated to determine their age.
- Often digs are initiated when a tiny artifact is found, suggesting that there may be additional artifacts in a particular area.
- On digs, archaeologists usually excavate material in a one or two meter square in 10 centimeter levels.
- Digging must be done carefully to not destroy buried features or smaller artifacts.



# How Do You Know Where to Dig?

- Archaeologists first perform surveys to find sites.
- They walk the ground looking for traces of past human activity.
- We also use heavy machinery to excavate below the ground to locate buried sites and features.



# What tells us people lived here?

- Soil is a different color
- It often is unnaturally dark
- This is called a midden
- The soil is blackened from the cooking fires
- It typically contains fire broken rocks, animal bone, stone chips, shell, beads, pottery, charcoal, and milling tools.



# What kinds of sites can we find?



- Open air camp sites
- Villages where people lived.
- Where they had their homes – rock rings and rock enclosures.
- Where they ate and prepared their food.
- Where they conducted religious ceremonies.
- Where they buried their dead.

# Site types

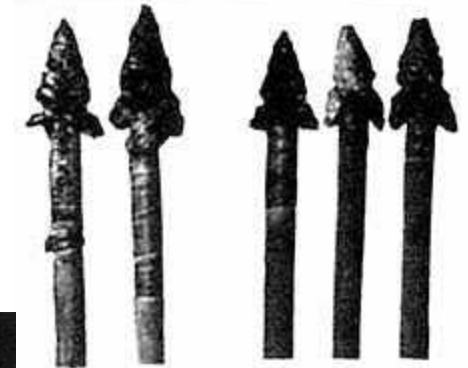
- Caves and rockshelters
- Contain midden and perishables
- Often find caches of artifacts – arrows, darts, quids, basketry,
- Stone tools – dart and arrow points
- Sometimes hafted to their foreshafts





# Perishables

- Basketry, cordage
- Arrow and dart foreshafts and mainshafts
- Sandals
- Atlatls
- Rabbitskin blanket



# Artifacts and Ecofacts

- In sites in California and the Great Basin desert we find mainly items that do not decompose readily
- Stone, bone, shell, and pottery.



Medieval "buff white" pottery shards

# Flaked Stone

- Arrow and dart points
- Scrapers
- Drills
- Burins
- Knives
- Reamers
- Flake waste



# Ground Stone

- Milling tools
- Portable and stationary
- Mano and metate (also known as a handstone and milling slab)
- Mortar and pestle
- Bedrock milling
- Bedrock mortar and bedrock milling or “slick”

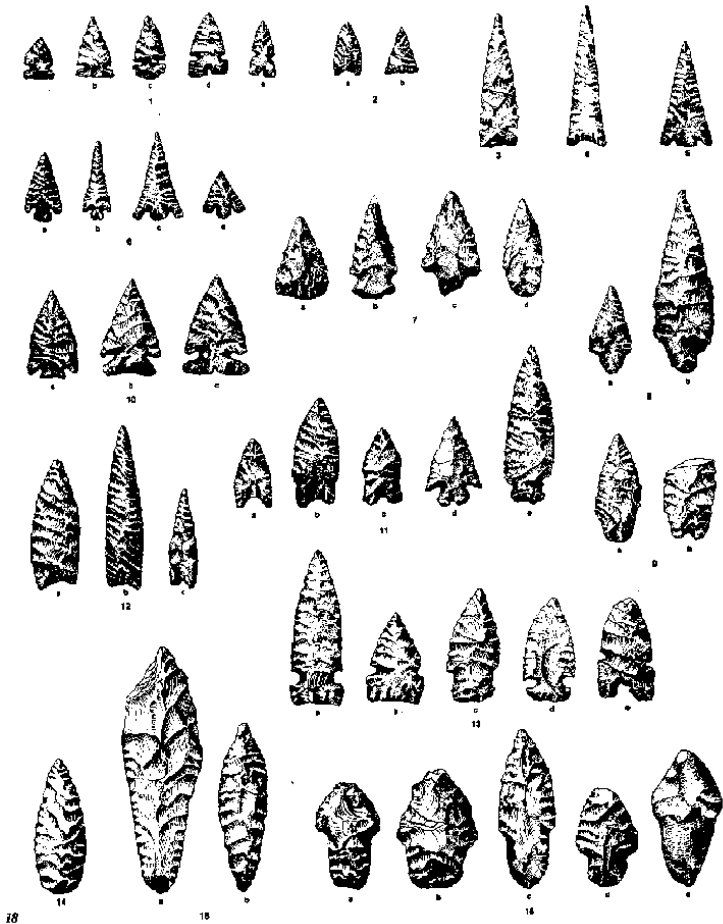


# Ornaments and Money

- Shell, glass, bone, and stone beads (soapstone and European glass)
- Shell beads are of Olivella or Abalone
- Olivella shell beads were a form of money for California Indians
- All manufactured on the Channel Islands.



# Dating



- How do we date the sites.
- Artifacts that are time diagnostic
- Volcanic glass – obsidian dating
- Organics – radiocarbon dating