

**CONTRIBUTIONS
OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH FACILITY**

Number 23

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ETHNOGRAPHIC INTERPRETATIONS: 12-13

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Socio - Religious Aspects of Resource
Management, and Practices of
Warfare Among California Indians

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EDITOR'S PREFACE

The two papers presented in this number of the Contributions are among a dozen based on research and writing produced during the nine weeks of the Spring Quarter, 1974, in course Anthropology 195, an undergraduate research seminar offered as a continuation of the lecture course on Indians of California.

The main title is not original, but is copied from one coined by Alfred Kroeber and used by him as an umbrella title to cover a series of brief papers on California ethnography, eleven of which were published in University of California Publications in American Archaeology and Ethnology 47 (2, 3), 1957, 1959. This reuse, or continuation, of Kroeber's title and number series is deliberate, and I believe that he would have approved both of our doing so and of the papers themselves.

In the last major California ethnographic monograph brought to completion before his death in 1960 (*More Mohave Myths*. Anthropological Records 27, 1972) Alfred Kroeber provided us with a statement on the history of this particular piece of research and the process of "conveying to the intellectual world of an organized body of new information." Among other things he says in this quite personal declaration is the following:

"I have long pondered to whom we owe the saving of human religious and aesthetic achievements such as are recorded here. It is probably not to the group that produced them. Why should we preserve Mohave values when they themselves cannot preserve them, and their descendants will likely be indifferent? It is the future of our own world culture that preservation of these values can enrich, and our ultimate understandings grow wider as well as deeper thereby."

That statement, taken literally by someone who did not know Kroeber and who knew nothing about the Colorado River Mohave Indians, might be interpreted as an ethnocentric declaration in which the writer was congratulating himself for having the foresight to record some fragments of native perception of which their creators and latter day bearers were unappreciative. And a casual reader who knew neither the anthropologist nor the people he was studying, might even suppose that Kroeber himself took a poor view of the Mohave. But that was surely not the case. Kroeber loved and admired the Mohave as a particularly warm, generous, spontaneous and sensitive people, and for whose intellectual achievements in creating a particularly rich, complex and imagery-full mythology he was much impressed.

It is, of course, perfectly true that the Mohave have been unable to preserve their "values," but the reason for that failure has not been that they were indifferent

to or unappreciative of these, but rather that these values came to mean less and less as the whites fought and killed them off, took their lands, and forced the Mohaves to accept the white man's values at the same time excluding them from entering as participants in the new culture. That is amply illustrated in A. L. and C. B. Kroeber's A Mohave War Reminiscence, 1854-1880 (University of California Publications in Anthropology 10, 1974) as well as in the annual reports of agents of the Colorado River reservations to the Commissioner of Indians Affairs.

If Kroeber rescued for "our own world culture" some examples of Mohave myths in the original tongue from survivors of the violence of white encroachment, he was thereby serving as the essential instrument for the conservation of this amount of an ancient past and of an alien civilization whose fatal weakness was that its bearers were neither sufficiently numerous nor adequately armed to fend off the American onslaught. And, in addition to rescuing this knowledge of a now-extinct civilization for our own world culture, I believe that it will turn out that Kroeber also did this for the Mohave who survive today and who will be born in the future, as well as for other Native Americans whose ancient tribalism has given way to a unity which transcends the time of their earlier independence.

The recorded facts about Native Californian cultures will continue to be used in various ways. One of these will be by anthropologists who go back to the documentary records and try to sharpen our understanding of the ways in which these people organized their lives. Such efforts, if they are soundly done, are important to use today in providing examples of alternatives. It is all too easy to become blind to, and thus prejudiced against, the ways and attitudes of others, and it is therefore essential that we have the opportunities to reach beyond ourselves and, as it were, look at the world through the eyes of other cultures. Anthropologists can provide one of these kinds of relativism; novelists another; historians still another.

Mr. Swezey's paper offers a new way of looking at the socio-religious system (s) of food procurement. The harmonizing of economic needs, with the subtly variable food supply obviously needed some form of pattern and direction, and here we have a suggestion of how this was effected; one which seems to me to be a sound one. The value of Mr. Swezey's analysis lies not in showing us, today, an alternative direction is which we might turn in a world whose order is disintegrating, but rather that order and pattern are necessary even on the relatively simple level of the cultures of Native California.

Ms. Graziani and Mr. James have collected and presented a very considerable body of data on that form of conflict which is termed warfare. Here again, the purpose is not to argue this as a desirable model for war between today's great powers armed with hydrogen bombs and MIG - 23 or F-4 Phantom supersonic interceptor planes. There is too much at stake here to destroy these weapons and go back to re-learning how to use the bow and arrow. What we can read in this survey of group

conflict among California Indians is the message that national entities composed of human beings with all of the fundamental emotions of fear, hate, envy, greed, pride, self-consciousness and the like had been able to manage or control these feelings sufficiently so that they did not kill each other off. If they could do it, there may be a chance that we can also learn this mode of survival -- at least their example proves that this is a workable alternative.

The Archaeological Research Facility had filed as Manuscript No: 469 an extensive collection of xerox copies of ethnographic data on California Indian warfare. This had been consulted by Ms. Graziani and Mr. James, but it is so extensive that it can still be mined with profit.

Although there are no firm plans to do so, we may publish from time to time more such papers under this same title.

Robert F. Heizer
March 20, 1975