

palakuc, CA-Ker-17: Prehistory, History and Rock Art of the Tubatulabal



- The Lodge at Painted Rock
- Isabella, California
- Dr. Alan Garfinkel,
Cultural Resource
Manager

Study Area / Ethnolinguistic Groups

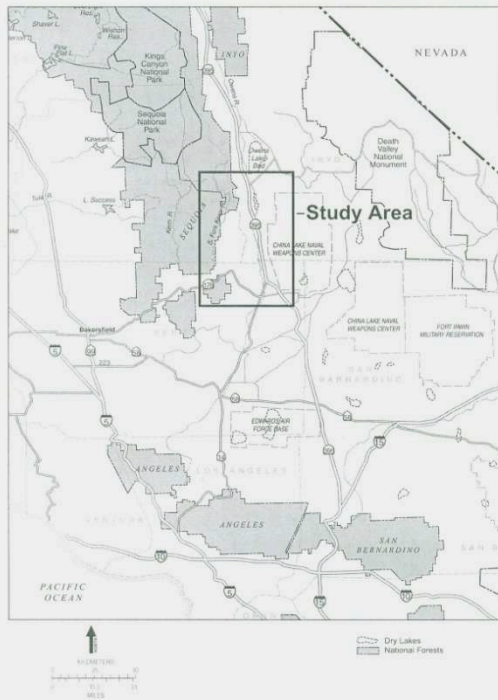


Figure 1.1 General Location of Study Area

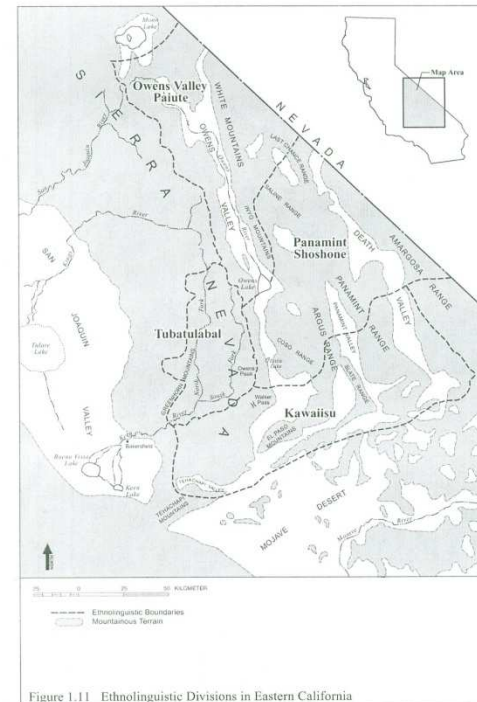
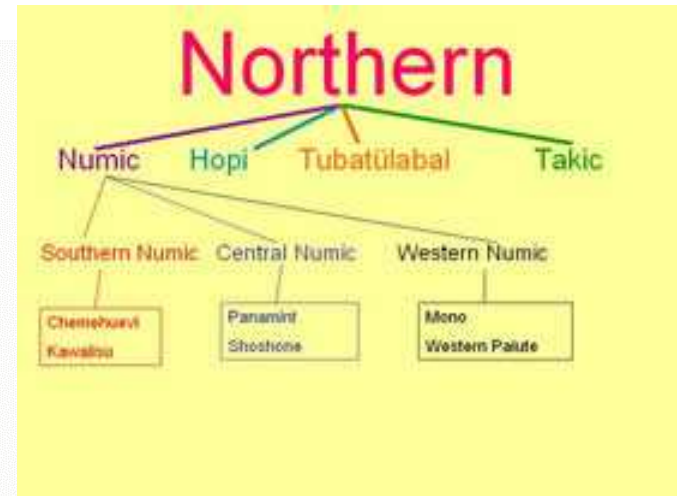
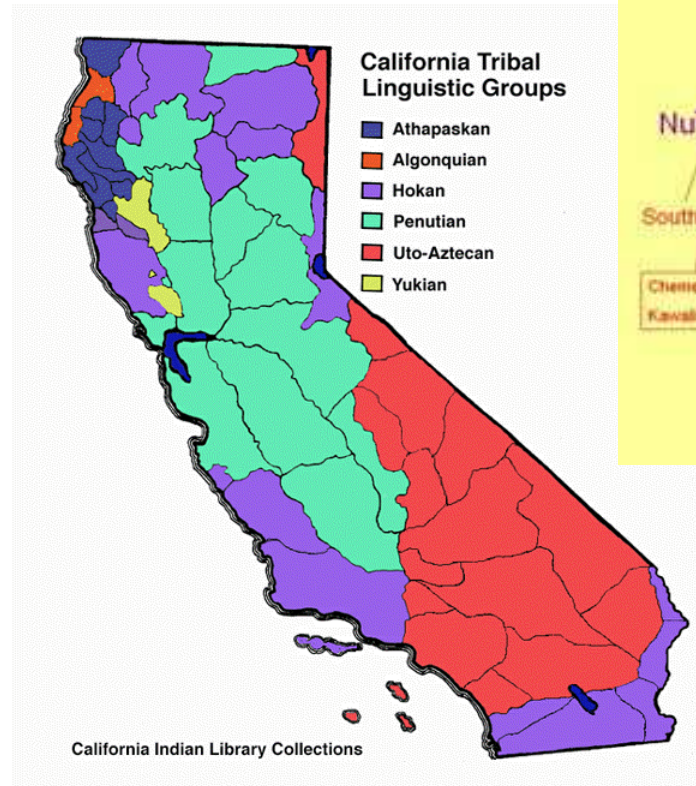


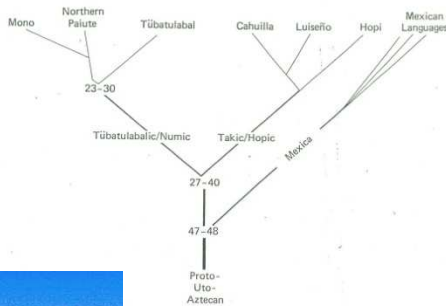
Figure 1.11 Ethnolinguistic Divisions in Eastern California

Language Distribution and Classification: Uto-Aztecan, Tubatulabal and Numic



Time Depths for Languages

- Lexicostatistical dating
- Glottochronology
- Genetic Classifications



Tubatulabal Settlement Pattern



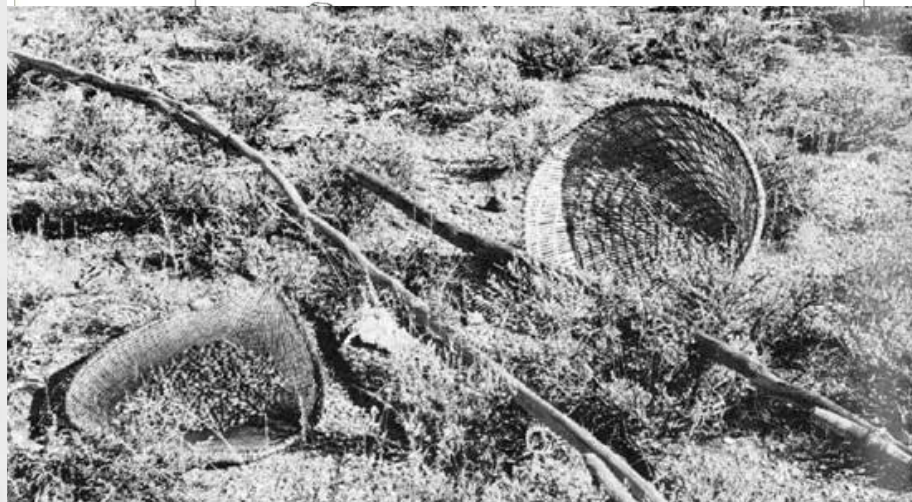
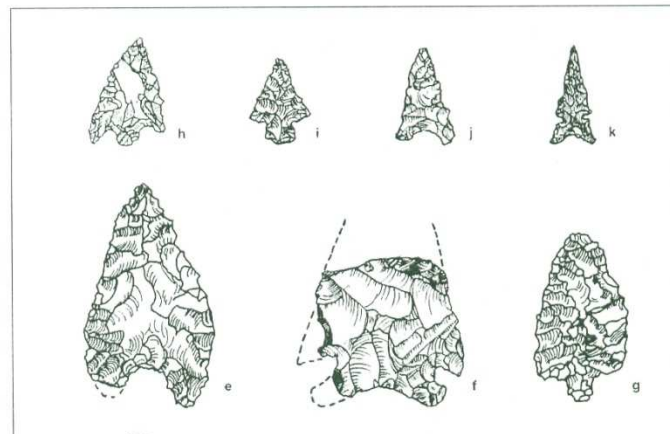
- Semi-permanent winter villages were centered in the South Fork of the Kern River Valley.
- Many now under the waters of Lake Isabella.

Tubatulabal Settlement Pattern

- Chimney Meadow and Bear Mountain: Pinyon Base Camps
 - upland villages
 - Ethnohistory, glass trade beads
 - Long term, unbroken occupation – 500 BC to historic era
 - Upland large game – archaeofaunal record
 - Pine nut exploitation – plant macrofossils



Chimney Creek Upland Pinyon Camp / Village



Tubatulabal Archaeological Pattern

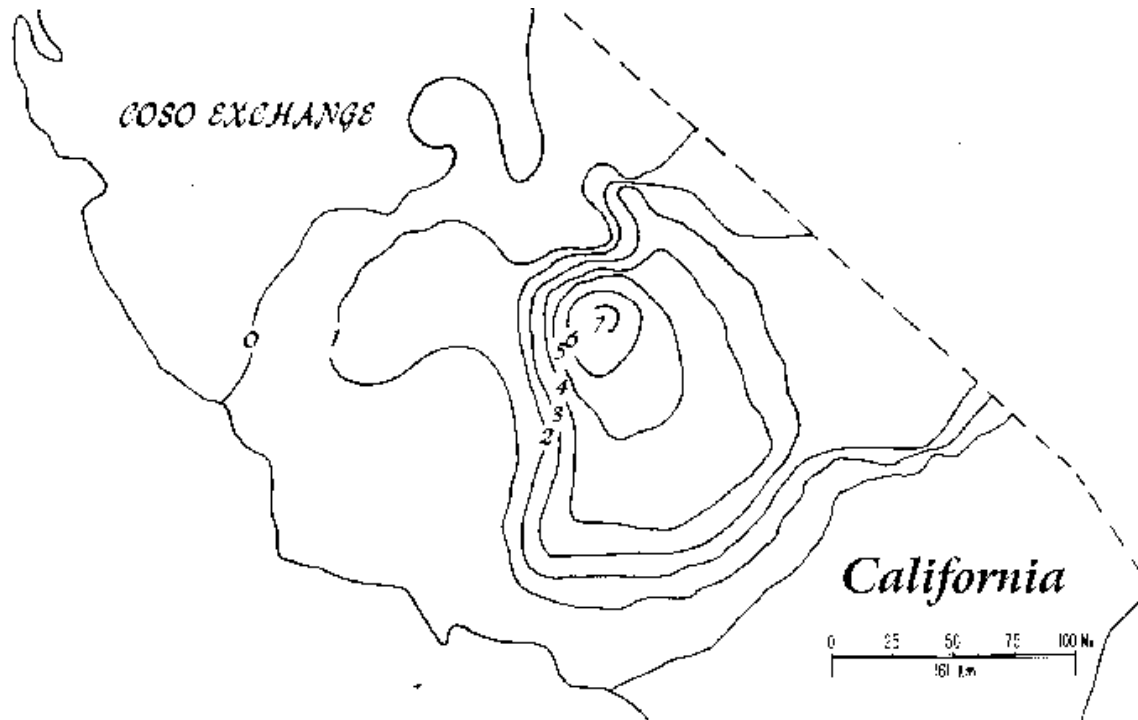
- Exclusive use of Coso obsidian – negligible use of any other toolstone
- Southern Sierra Painted Style pictographs
 - No other rock art technique or style



Coso Obsidian Source: Sugarloaf Mountain



Coso Obsidian Distribution



Faunal and Floral Record

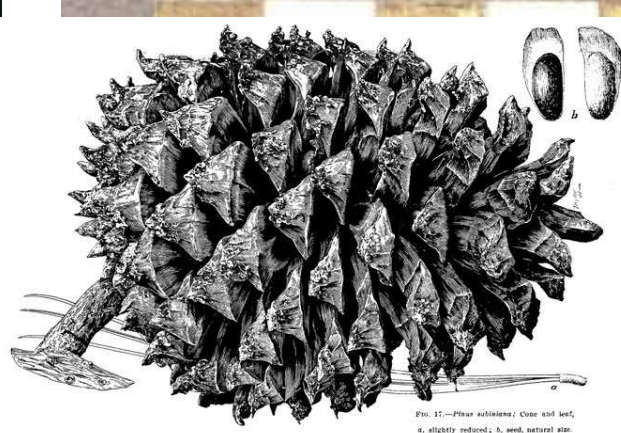
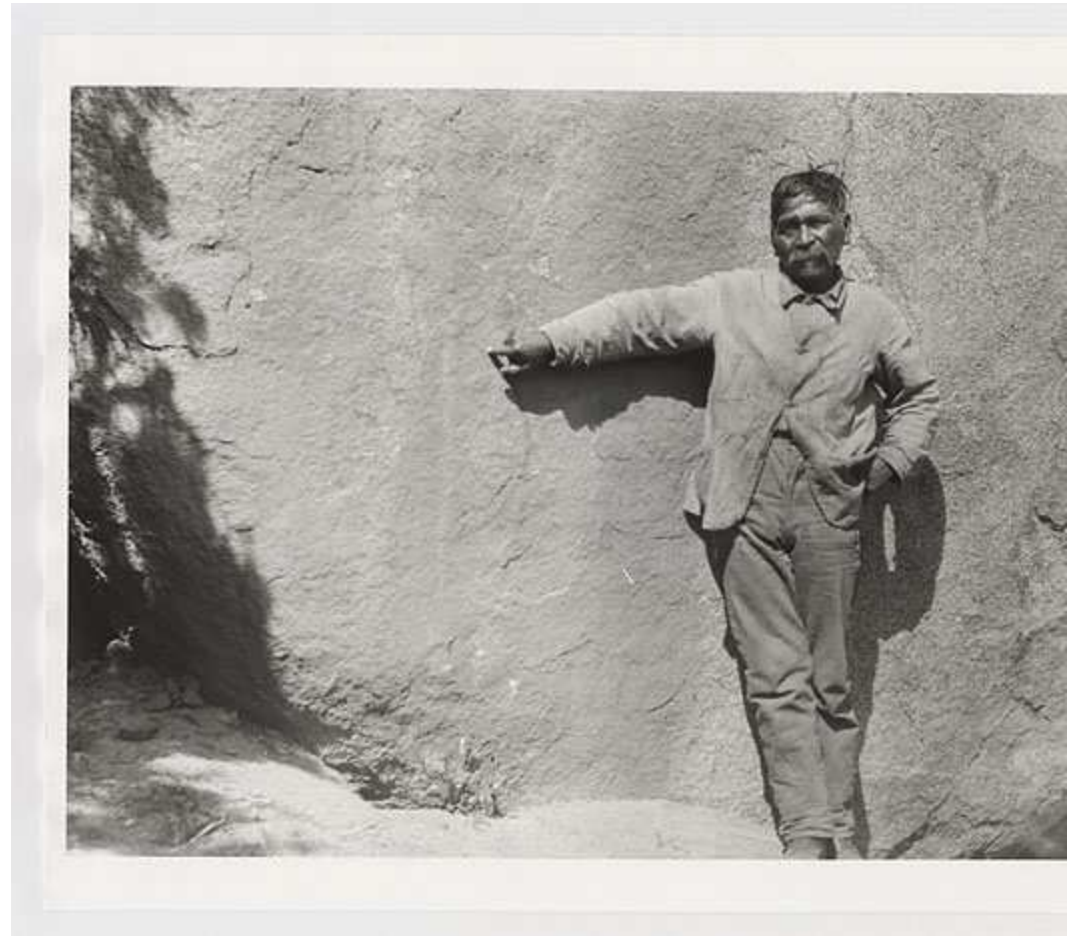


FIG. 17.—*Pinus subulimiana*; Cone and leaf, a, slightly reduced; b, seed, natural size.

Tubatulabal Pictographs: Southern Sierra Painted Style



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- The painting site is representative of this broad pictographic tradition found throughout the southern Sierra Nevada
- In Tubatulabal territory specifically – largely abstract, monochromatic
- Typically in caves, rock shelters, split boulders, sometimes out in the open (much rarer)



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- The painting is rendered in red, white and black
- Red is best preserved, next is white, with much of the black having been destroyed by the elements.
- Red pigment is red ochre also known as hematite
- White is chalky rock (chalk, limestone, diatomaceous earth, solidified volcanic ash), ash from wood fires, also shell
- Black is charcoal



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- Dated to about 1000 years old by radiocarbon assay
- Largest painting site in Tubatulabal territory – most elements and biggest renditions
- Identified by Erminie Voegelin as a fishing site

Kern River Native Fish



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- The sample of red pigment from *palakuč* was analyzed through AMS radiocarbon dating and returned a resulting age of 1010 ± 20 radiocarbon years before present (rcybp) with a delta C13 isotopic fractionation correction of -17.3‰ (CURL-10017).
- Using an online calibration utility, the radiocarbon date is revised to an age of 939 ± 10 rcybp with an age range approximating the period from 928 to 949 years bp with the present equivalent to AD 1950.
- Those dates would provide an age equivalent translation into calendar dates that range from ca. AD 1001 to 1022.

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- Researchers believe there may have been archaeo-astronomical significance to the site
- Typically such images were fashioned by Native medicine persons
- Possibly associated with fertility or hunting magic



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- Slaboszewicz and Cooper (1980) provide a detailed argument and test evaluating the proposition that the site may have served as a winter solstice sunrise observatory.
- They indicate that the sun rises, on that date, within a distinctive notch on the southerly horizon as can be seen from a vantage point at the site.
- They further posit that the single bedrock mortar hole found at the site may have been the locus of a vertical pole used to orient the viewers towards the proper location to see the sunrise on the horizon.

