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# Memorial to Theodore "Ted" Couro 1889-1975



Ted Couro, member of the Mesa Grande Band, teacher, missionary, artist, linguist, historian-anthropologist, and Contributing Editor to *The Journal of California Anthropology*, died in Escondido on January 25, 1975. He was the son of Roscendo Couro, former Captain of the Mesa Grande Band of Diegueño Indians, and Valeriana Tomau of San Felipe. He is survived by his wife, Lillie, the many children they raised and their children, by many nieces and nephews, by those of us fortunate to be his students, and a world-wide circle of friends.

He had many careers and activities throughout his life and excelled at all. Professional baseball player, violinist, and rancher in his youth, he had also organized the "Progressive American Indians" before World War I for the purpose of bringing educational and economic opportunity to Indian youth. He organized the farmers of Mesa Grande about the same time in a cooperative effort and succeeded in obtaining better prices for their produce.

After he married Lillie Damron in 1917, they became members of the Church of the Nazarene. He then entered training as a minister for the North American Indian District of the Church. Upon finishing training, he was sent to Yuma. For many years he was a minister, and both he and his wife were counselors and friends to the Quechan.

During World War II, he worked in an aircraft factory. Within weeks of beginning work, he had designed improvements for the machinery, improving the efficiency and safety of the machine operator. After he retired from war work and the ministry, he and his wife returned to Escondido. He helped coach boys in Little League Baseball and was also known in senior citizen circles as a champion horseshoe player. He began to study art and became well known for his paintings of southern California historical scenes.

When he was very small, he made what was to be a prophetic statement for his own life. Seeing a very aged *Kwaaypaay* 'leader' of



the Mesa Grande Band, he told the other children, "That Old One has seen and learned much, we should listen to what he has to say." He began working with anthropologists and linguists to record the history, culture, and language of his people. In doing this work, he had a tremendous concern for the accuracy, truth, and correctness in recording every detail. He was in demand as a lecturer in Diegueño history and culture. His classes in

the Mesa Grande Diegueño language were well attended for a number of years, and he co-authored several books in the language.

To simply list his major accomplishments does not truly describe a man who based his entire life, his career, and all his actions upon a firm belief in true justice, and in the dignity and equality inherent in all individuals. He worked with a conviction that all mankind must learn to live and work together in peace, harmony, and justice. He gave unstintingly of his time and love to all who came to him. His family, colleagues, and friends will sorely miss his keen wit, calm presence, and friendly help.

*Florence C. Shipek*

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY OF TED COURO

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## FRAGMENT OF TRADITIONAL DIEGUEÑO FUNERARY ORATION

From the early memories of Ted Couro, based on the style of Cinon Matawir, of Mesa Grande, as recorded and transcribed by Margaret Langdon under the auspices of the Survey of California Indian Languages of the University of California, Berkeley. The Diegueño orthography used in this text is as in Couro and Hutcheson (1973).

*Heyaay 'emat 'ekur 'Emaay  
'Ehaa, 'emat kwechuw, nyaapum  
'iikwich siny wechuw, 'animaal  
nyaamat wechuw. Puuch wechuw  
'iis, 'Iipay nyaamat.*

*Peyaa wiiches, 'Emaay 'Ehaavech:  
"Mewuuw temeyuuw, 'emat peyaach  
aavu uuttaq, pu'yuuk menyallyqh"  
wiich. "Pily kaam menyehatt ke-  
wuuw! Peyaa kumlayvech nyuk  
nesoom. Nyuk mewuuws, nyuk memiis,  
nuyk mewiiich mennewatt nyaamat.  
Metenyaally, maach pemeyuyh, nyaapum  
'emich ta'nyewayh. 'Enyaawapch  
'emich ta'nyewayh." Peyaa 'Emaay  
'Ehaavech nyuk wiich.  
Kumna, 'enaamh!*

Long ago, in a distant land, High Waters [God], maker of the earth, then made man and woman, and He made all the animals. I say He made them, all the Indian people.

And this is what He said, High Waters: "Look, you standing there, how this earth opens his mouth, thus to swallow you," He said. "Now leave and look after your stock! This person is dead and that's the end. Already you have looked at him, already you have cried, already you have finished everything. Tomorrow, it may be you, and then we will be crying. We are the ones who will be crying." This is what High Waters has already said.

So come on, let's go!

