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Beidler: *Fig Tree John. An Indian in Fact and Fiction*

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geographic setting, and Chapter 3 is a brief summary of Plains Miwok culture, based primarily on the salvage ethnography of the 1900's. Chapter 4, "Ethnogeography: Problems and Sources," is of most general interest, particularly the introduction (pp. 17-24) which discusses how one does ethnogeographic research. The subsequent sections on historical, ethnographical, and archaeological sources of information for Plains Miwok ethnogeography are essential reading (and have been since 1961) for students of central California anthropology. Chapter 5 is a detailed discussion of Plains Miwok tribelets and their locations, which takes the reader through the sources of information and the processes by which Bennyhoff arrived at his conclusions regarding tribelet existence and location. Chapter 6 discusses the boundaries of the Plains Miwok linguistic group which may be deduced if the conclusions of Chapter 5 are accepted; especially important is the discussion of the separate Bay Miwok linguistic group which was not recognized in early linguistic mappings of the area. Chapter 7 states general conclusions of the work, including the observation that Plains Miwok boundaries followed the general California pattern whereby one group occupied both sides of rivers and streams, with linguistic boundaries following drainage divides or transecting areas unsuitable for permanent habitation. Another conclusion is that tribelets were grouped into larger cooperative units as evidenced by military alliances, resistance to missionization, and patterned intermarriage, since the cooperative units deducible from historical evidence cross-cut environmental divisions and do not consist solely of immediately adjacent tribelets, Bennyhoff argues that the cooperative units were aboriginal, probably based on economic interchange of use-rights to the different resources controlled by member groups.

The work is an excellent presentation of methodology for ethnogeographic study, par-

ticularly in its exhaustive discussion of historical sources and the threads of reasoning followed in reaching conclusions. The ethnographical and archaeological data are treated in less depth than the historical, although adequately for the use to which they are put. Readers should be cautioned against wholesale acceptance of Bennyhoff's archaeological "districts" for central California. In this work they are not adequately defined, and some underlying assumptions need to be questioned (e.g., that "rare traits from one site will be typical of the district" [p. 48]) as well as Bennyhoff's use of "type sites" in characterizing a "district." He does not offer the "highly detailed comparisons of cultural inventory" referred to by Fredrickson (1973:94), and until these are forthcoming, use of his "districts" outside the context of Plains Miwok ethnography is unwarranted. I would welcome a report from Bennyhoff on the archaeology of the Plains Miwok area, preferably of the quality of this stimulating ethnogeography.

REFERENCE

- Fredrickson, David A.
1973 Early Cultures of the North Coast Ranges, California. Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Davis.



Fig Tree John. An Indian in Fact and Fiction.
Peter G. Beidler. Tucson: University of Arizona Press. 1977. 152 pp., Illus. \$4.95 (paper), \$10.50 (hardbound).

Reviewed by E.N. ANDERSON
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This brief book compares the historic Fig Tree John—a peaceable Desert Cahuilla—with the fictional Fig Tree John, a savage

Apache. The fictional Fig Tree appeared in a novel by Edwin Corle entitled *Fig Tree John*, which appeared in 1935 and which attracted considerable attention at the time and is still read as a classic by aficionados of Southwestern. The first part of Beidler's book describes the real Fig Tree John, more accurately Juanito (or Juanita, as he preferred it) Razón; the second part discusses Corle's novel and the transformation of Fig Tree into a most wild and woolly character indeed. The first part was considerably more interesting to the present reviewer. The second part is of some interest as literary criticism, but Beidler had a rather hard task set out for him in trying to show that a novel centering around the savage "instincts" of "the Apache mind," and the resulting rather silly violence of the Apache in question, is worthy of much attention after forty-odd years.

The real Fig Tree John seems to have been a very much more interesting and complex character than the fictional one. Juanito Razón was a true Desert Cahuilla: individualistic, adaptable, able to bounce back from misfortune, willing to be friends with White or Indian but well able to stand up for his rights and maintain his case when push came to shove. Beidler has been able to extract from early letters and books a fairly complete picture of old Fig Tree (his younger days are lost in obscurity): his economic pursuits, which were varied; his family life; his aid to desert travelers; and much else.

The most valuable and (in this reviewer's opinion) the most interesting part of the book is the story of Fig Tree John's attempts to protect his land, especially when it turned out to be included in the alternate sections bestowed by the U.S. Government on the Southern Pacific Railroad. The original Fig Tree John Spring was on one checkerboard, and when that was covered by the Salton Sea old Fig Tree moved to the next spring over, only to find that that was also on a Southern Pacific

section. He sought out a lawyer and fought a long rearguard action against the railroad (whose officials seem to have been surprisingly sympathetic—willing to let him lease the land or just stay on it) and against the local Indian agents, who were unsympathetic and bullying. Amazingly, he succeeded, and was allowed to stay at Agua Dulce Spring ("legally or illegally"—p. 62) till he died in 1927 at a very advanced age. The railroad drew the line at letting his children inherit, but he had maintained his rights (against them and others) by invoking the full panoply of techniques available, from legal action to direct threat. Beidler has extracted from files a long and fascinating run of letters about this case, spanning almost 20 years. These are most interesting for their revelations of the workings of bureaucratic minds, especially the Indian Affairs subvariety thereof.

Beidler's account seems balanced, and as accurate as he could make it after extensive searches of files and consultations with appropriate authorities. His analysis of Corle's novel is also generally fair, if a bit too pro-Corle for some tastes. However, this is not a deep or profound book. It is not only quite short, it is also highly repetitious—in particular, all interesting comments from the primary sources are cited in extensive extracts from the sources, which is thoroughly commendable, and then given again in shorter extracts and/or summaries, which is possibly useful but becomes wearying quite rapidly. The style of the book is in general loose and rambling. In short, one might have hoped for a more searching and detailed study. However, the book is a useful study, bringing forth some valuable primary documentation, and interesting enough to be worth reading, for it brings into sharp focus a rather ordinary California Indian (a class of individuals rarely biographized) and his modest but real success in coping with the changes and pressures of the early part of this century.