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Wilke: *Background to a Prehistory of the Yuha Desert Region*

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Author

Wallace, William J

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notes that his final phase, Bidwell, which should occupy the final 400-600 years of the prehistoric period, was not found on the sites he excavated but was evident elsewhere in the valley. He attributes this to the small sample of sites excavated. However, a similar situation prevailed in the Warner Valley, which adjoins Surprise Valley to the north. Here, too, Desert Side-notched points are not found on sites with deep deposits. Rather, they occur in other locations in association with rock architecture. I believe that O'Connell has overlooked another set of changes in settlement pattern, one that is at least as suggestive, if not as well documented, as the earlier one which draws his attention, and one that is crucial to understanding the relevance of models derived from ethnography for the study of adaptive processes in the Great Basin.

As is often the case when field investigation is limited and not explicitly designed to yield the data critical to the questions the investigator wants to explore, O'Connell's discussion and conclusions are speculative and suggestive, but not strongly substantiated. He suggests tests for the climatic explanation of change, but does not offer testable alternative explanations.

O'Connell proposes a synthesis that recognizes three regional settlement-subsistence systems within the Great Basin, but it seems unlikely that this typology will prove useful. Surely dependence on pine nuts in areas of the Great Basin where they occur in quantity resulted in a distinct settlement-subsistence system. However, Madsen and Berry (1975) have challenged the assertion that pine nuts could have been important prior to 3000 B.P., so there is a question as to the time depth of the Reese River strategy. He differentiates the Lower Humboldt and Surprise Valley types by the greater use of fish and marsh resources and larger, more stable settlements in the former. However, the Surprise Valley and Lower Humboldt Valley are perhaps better under-

stood as two examples, chosen somewhat arbitrarily, from a range of variation which changed both spatially and temporally in the better watered valleys of the Great Basin.

REFERENCES

- Madsen, David B., and Michael S. Berry
1975 A Reassessment of Northeastern Great Basin Prehistory. *American Antiquity* 40: 391-405.



Background to Prehistory of the Yuha Desert Region. Philip J. Wilke, ed. Ramona, California: Ballena Press *Anthropological Papers* No. 5. 1976. 109 pp. \$4.95 (paper).

Reviewed by WILLIAM J. WALLACE
Redondo Beach, California

Originally prepared as a background study for the Bureau of Land Management, the six papers making up this publication survey the geology, ethnography, ethnohistory, and archaeology of the Yuha Desert, a sandy, inhospitable tract occupying the southwestern portion of the arid Salton Sea Basin of California.

In the first paper, David L. Weide sketches the region's surface geology. Of special interest is the history of Lake Cahuilla which at times inundated the land. During the lake's stands the Yuha Desert offered much more favorable circumstances for human exploitation and settlement than it does today.

A summary of ethnographic material, prepared by James P. Barker, follows. In historic times the Yuha Desert lay between

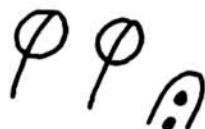
territories of the Kamia of Imperial Valley and the Southern Diegueño of the Peninsular Range. Neither group made much use of the area, though travelers and traders passed through it. A topical arrangement (agriculture, gathering, hunting, etc.) is followed in handling the ethnographic data. Perhaps separate synopses of Kamia and Southern Diegueño cultures might have been more meaningful.

Next, the ethnohistorical sources are dealt with fully and admirably by Harry W. Lawton. Because all routes from the Colorado River to the Pacific Coast crossed the Yuha Desert, many travelers trudged across its sandy wastes. But most of these wanderers did not linger long, for, until they reached Carrizo Wash, there was no large and certain supply of water. Consequently, their journals and diaries contain at best only brief mention of the region's native inhabitants. Although no complete picture of Indian life can be drawn from these scraps of information they do provide some valuable insights into aboriginal utilization of the land.

The remaining three papers, all written by Margaret L. Weide, are concerned with archaeology. The first presents a history of prehistoric research. To date, no study of the Yuha Desert as such has been undertaken. Nevertheless, parts of it have been searched, most often in connection with larger investigations, beginning with Malcolm J. Rogers' pioneer explorations in the Colorado and Mojave Deserts. A rapid and rather superficial survey of museum collections makes up the second paper. The problem of human occupation is tackled in the third. Scanty evidence points to two main periods of habitation. The earliest (corresponding to Rogers' hazy San Dieguito I) began about 9000 years ago when the countryside was much better watered. Then followed a long time span for which only scant traces of man's presence exist. With the final filling of Lake Cahuilla, ca. A.D. 1050, people entered the region in some numbers.

Around A.D. 1400 or 1500, however, the lake began to evaporate rapidly and a population movement out of the Yuha district occurred.

Taken together, the six papers provide a useful summary of current knowledge about an interesting stretch of desert country and its native inhabitants, historic and prehistoric.



Death Valley: Geology, Ecology, Archaeology. Charles B. Hunt. Berkeley: University of California Press. 1976. 234 pp. Illustrations. \$14.95 (cloth). \$6.95 (paper).

Reviewed by WILLIAM J. WALLACE
Redondo Beach, California

A refreshing feature of this attractively produced book is that its primary data come from fieldwork and first-hand observation rather than from the body of tired, overworked facts and non-facts so often drawn upon by writers of general accounts of Death Valley. From 1955 to 1960, the author, Charles B. Hunt, studied the geology of Death Valley for the United States Geological Survey, concentrating his efforts in and around the salt pan, a great expanse of rough and pitted salt in the lowest part of the valley floor. The results of his work appeared in three of the Survey's professional papers. At the same time, his wife, Alice Hunt, made an archaeological reconnaissance of the same general area. Her findings were published by the University of Utah as one of its *Anthropological Papers*. The essence of the four reports is presented here in a very readable, often witty style.

As expected, the bulk of the volume deals with earth history. After a brief introduction to this famous (or infamous) valley, its geology is