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A Brief History of the San Juan Paiute Indians of Northern Arizona

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THE San Juan Paiute Indians are a native people who have resided on their present homelands since prehistoric times and maintained their distinctive ethnicity, their language, and their customs despite the fact that their lands have been incorporated into the Navajo Reservation. They are now petitioning for federal acknowledgement under the provisions of the Federal Acknowledgement Act as specified in the Code of Federal Regulations (25CFR54). Documentation demonstrating their "identification as an Indian entity by anthropologists, historians, or other scholars" (25CFR54) has been provided to the San Juan Paiute Indians for submission to the Federal Acknowledgement Office of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (A. Turner 1983). The law requires the submission of:

a statement of facts establishing that the petitioner has been identified from historical times until the present on a substantially continuous basis, as 'American Indian,' or 'aboriginal' [25CFR54.7(a)].

The present paper is based on the documentation generated in support of the San Juan Paiute petition. This is not an ethnographic or an ethnohistorical study. It is simply to put on record the historic notations of where the

San Juan Paiute were living during the past two hundred years, and the fact that they indeed deserve identification as a recognizable and distinct group of Southern Paiute people.

In brief, the record of observations of Paiute people inhabiting the area south of the San Juan River and east of the Little Colorado is continuous from 1776, when the Spanish Franciscan Fathers Dominguez and Escalante made the first recorded contact, to the present time when several anthropologists are engaged in active research with this group.

The consensus that can be derived from the data is that the San Juan Paiute occupation of the area southeast of the San Juan-Little Colorado confluence *far predates* that of the Navajo and that the latter migrated to that territory after the 1867 Bosque Redondo incarceration. The antiquity of Paiute occupation was probably as early as A.D. 1300.

THE HISTORICAL RECORD

The documented history of the San Juan Paiute Indians begins in 1776 when Fathers Dominguez and Escalante made the first reported contact with them. Escalante's map of the Interior Basin (Fig. 1) shows clearly the location of the "Yutas Payuchis" south of the San Juan River. On November 7, 1776, the party made the difficult crossing of the Colorado River at a point known later as the "Crossing of the Fathers." Said Escalante:

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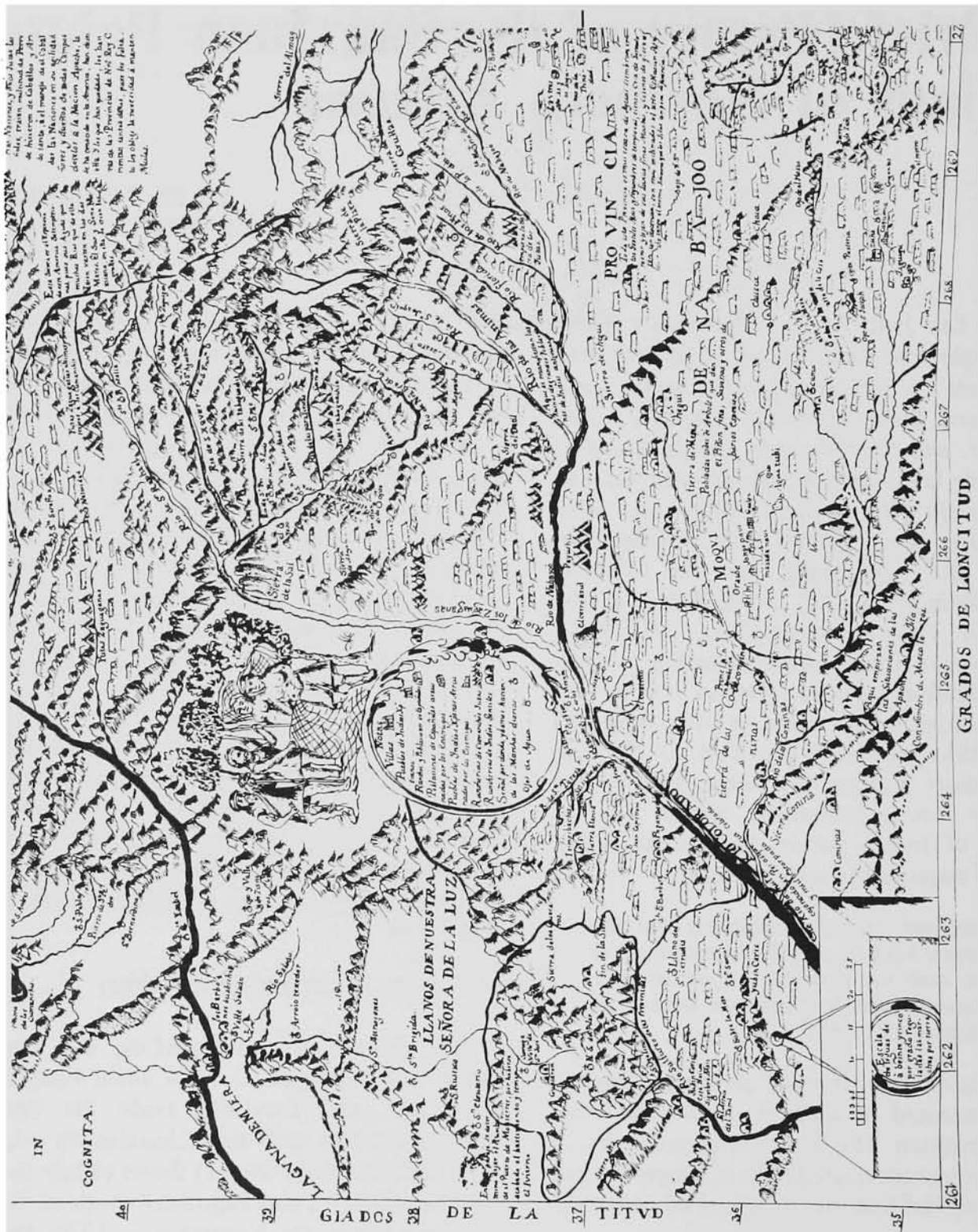


Fig. 1. "Plano geographico, de la tierra descubierta." A portion of the map of Escalante and Dominguez showing the location of the "Payuchis" south of the "Rio de Nabajoo," now known as the San Juan River (Bolton 1950).

eight or ten leagues to the northeast of the ford, there is a high, rounded peak which the Payuchis, whose country begins here, called Tucané which means Black Peak, and it is the only one hereabouts which can be seen close at hand from the river crossing [Bolton 1950: 119].

Tucané is known now as Navajo Mountain yet the Paiutes of the area still refer to it as Tucané or as Paiute Mountain.

Escalante recognized the linguistic and political unity of the peoples of the Interior Basin and included the Payuchis, or San Juan Paiutes, within the larger sociopolitical domain with other Numic speaking peoples.

They were all of one race and spoke the same language . . . and might be called 'a kingdom divided into five privincies, known by the common name of Yutas' . . . the divisions were Muhuachis, Payuchis, Tabehuachis, Sabauganas, and Cobardes [Bolton 1950: 119].

On November 9, 1776, the Spaniards lost their trail and followed Navajo Canyon eastward to a mesa which temporarily blocked their progress. "Near this mesa they found some tents of Yutas Payuchis, neighbors and friends of the Cosninas [Havasupai]" (Bolton 1950:120). From this point the party continued through the Hopi villages on their way to Santa Fe, thus concluding their failed attempt to locate an alternative route to the missions of Monterey.

The next reported contact was that of Armijo in 1829. The Paiute were "still in control of at least the left bank of the Colorado when he [Armijo] passed through in 1829, and the Navajos were still to the east" (Euler 1966: 106). As Armijo, with the first recorded pack train over the Old Spanish Trail, crossed the San Juan country, he first saw Navajo, then Paiutes.

Antonio Armijo . . . left Abiquiu, November 1829, and traveled to Los Angeles, Califor-

nia . . . South of the San Juan River he mentioned seeing Navajo Indians . . . As he went west he passed the vicinity of what is now known as Paiute Canyon, east of Navajo Mountain, and mentioned the water hole of the Payuches Indians, where Southern Paiute Indians are still living [Stewart 1966:180].

After leaving Abiquiu on November 6, 1829, Armijo wrote in his journal:

The gentiles of the Payuche nation inhabit the vicinity of the above mentioned river [the Colorado]; their living quarters are *jocales*, and they live on grass seeds, hares and rabbits, using the skins of the latter to cover a small part of their body [Hafen and Hafen 1954: 158-165].

In 1852, the Assistant Surgeon of the United States Army, Dr. P. G. S. Ten Broeck, was in one of the Hopi villages in northern Arizona. His journal records:

I saw three Payoche Indians today. They live on a triangular piece of land, formed by the junction of the San Juan and Colorado of the West [Schoolcraft 1860, Vol. IV: 82-83].

The year 1859 saw an intensive exploration of portions of the San Juan Paiute territory. United States Army officers, Captain Walker and Major Shepherd, were in charge of a reconnoitering expedition. In the vicinity of the present Marsh Pass and Tsegi Canyon, they remarked:

In this canon which is of considerable length there is said to be several lagunas and good grazing and [it] is the home of a band of Pah-Utahs.

Later it was noted that

Beyond the *Mesas de las Vacas* [present Black Mesa near Kayenta] there are one or two canons mentioned by my guide [a Navajo] as having water and grass, but they are within the Pah-Utah country with whom the Navajos have been at war for sometime past [Bailey 1964: 85, 89].

Additional important evidence for San Juan residency can be derived from ethnographies and consultant testimony collected later. In 1938, for example, Omer Stewart (1942) interviewed Joe Francis, a Paiute born around 1858 in the "Badaway Country" between Highway 89 and the Colorado River south of Lee's Ferry. He lived in "Arizona [north] of Tuba City and around Navajo Mountain all of his life except for ten years at Oraibi where he went at the age of about 16 years." Francis's information provided much data in Stewart's attempt to reconstruct Paiute culture in the era of the consultant's grandparents, presumably around A.D. 1800. Scalogram analysis of the resulting "cultural element distribution list" shown in Table 1 demonstrates quite clearly that the San Juan fit within a Shoshonean pattern of political organization. They do so despite their having adopted such Navajo material culture as cribbed hogans, dress styles, and weaving.

Photographs included in Stewart's study show, for example:

San Juan S. Paiute Indians in their hogan. Informant Dagaibitsi, born around 1868, on right. The rug on the loom was made by Dagaibitsi's granddaughter.

And, in Plate 2:

Joe Francis standing in front of his hogan, Navajo Reservation, 15 miles north of Tuba City, Arizona [Stewart 1942: 306].

The first acknowledgement of the San Juan Paiute by U. S. Government ethnologists occurred in 1873 when John Wesley Powell and G. W. Ingalls submitted a report to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs (Powell and Ingalls 1874). Referring to the San Juan Paiutes as the "Kwai-an-ti-kwok-its," a Paiute term meaning "the people living across the river," the government ethnologists noted their isolation and their population:

Table 1
SCALOGRAM OF POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONAL TRAITS BY BAND

	Moanunts	Taviwatsiu	Möwatici	Tömpänöwotsnunts	Wimönuntci	Pahvant	Möwatawatsiu	Antarianunts	Shivwits	Kaibab	San Juan	Goshute	Navaho
Temporary larger grouping	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Local band sovereignty	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Council, any men	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Community approved chiefs	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Council meets at chief's house	X	X	X	X	X	O	X	X	X				
Special dance chief	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				X	
One head chief, two assistants	X	X	X	X	X	X	X						
Successor named by incumbent	X	X	X	X	X	X							
Patrilineal succession ideal	X	X	X	X	X								
Assistant is announcer/messenger	X	X	X	X	X								
Special buffalo drive chief	X	X	X	X									
Special rabbit drive leader	X	X											
War bonnet for band chief only	X												

Coefficient of reproducibility = 1 - (E/N) = 1 - (3/169) = .98
Source: Stewart (1942)

There is a small tribe of Pai-Utes in Northern Arizona, on the east side of the Colorado River, known as the Kwai-an-ti-kwok-its, which was not visited by the commission. This little band lives in a district so far away from the route of travel that your commission did not think it wise to occupy the time and incur the expense necessary to visit them in their homes [Powell and Ingalls 1874: 48].

This band and others of northern Arizona were tabulated with respect to population and political affiliation. Included in the list were the now dissembled Uinkarets, the Shivwits who are headquartered near St. George, and the San Juan. The latter were said to be under the jurisdiction of chief Tau-gu whose domain extended to Cedar City. The San Juan numbered twenty-three men, seventeen women, and twenty-two children in the census of Powell and Ingalls (1874: 50).

The next governmental recognition of the San Juan Paiutes is in "Statistics of Indian Tribes, Agencies, and Schools, 1903" (United States Bureau of Indian Affairs 1903: 108). This report included population data on eight "tribes,"

Shewits band, Pah-utes	129
Pahranagat band, Pah-utes	53
Cedar band, Pah-utes	30
Kaibab band, Pah-utes	185
Grass Valley band, Pah-utes	25
Rabbit Valley band, Pah-utes	100
Kanash band, Pah-utes	100
San Juan band, Pah-utes	120
TOTAL	742

Although the reliability of the 1873 and 1903 enumerations may be questioned because we do not know how the population figures were determined, they do suggest a doubling of the San Juan population in thirty years. More important to our discussion, however, is the fact that there has been continuing *de facto* recognition of the Paiute Indians of the San Juan area by agents of the federal government.

In the early twentieth century the federal government recognized the Paiute of the San Juan area to the extent that the area in Utah south of the San Juan River was the "Piute Reservation." Byron Cummings, working in Cottonwood and Montezuma Canyons in 1908, reported that

There were then a good many Piutes living on what was known as the Piute Reservation extending between the San Juan River and the Utah-Arizona boundary line from the 110th meridian westward to the Colorado River. That was known as the Piute Strip and was a Piute reservation at that time. A good many Piutes were still living on the Strip and there was continual clashing between the Piutes and the Navajos because the Navajos were continually attempting to go in on Piute territory and crowd out the Piutes [Cummings 1958].

The record is not clear regarding the authority under which the Piute Reservation was terminated and how it fell under the jurisdiction of the Navajo Reservation.

There was a flurry of ethnographic interest in the San Juan Paiute in the 1930s. In 1934, Isabel Kelly mapped their territory on the basis of consultants' testimony (Fig. 2).

Roughly the area extended from Monument Valley to the Little Colorado and from the San Juan River to Black Mesa and Moencopi Plateau, without including either of the latter [Kelly 1964: 167].

Her data on the San Juan Paiute are categorized in terms of territory, neighbors, habitat, settlement, subsistence, shelter, dress, crafts, manufactures, and trade (Kelly 1964: vii).

William R. Palmer, an historian and official of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, made an unpublicized field trip to the San Juan country in 1935. His purpose was to determine the ethnicity of the San Juan Indians, i.e., to discern whether they

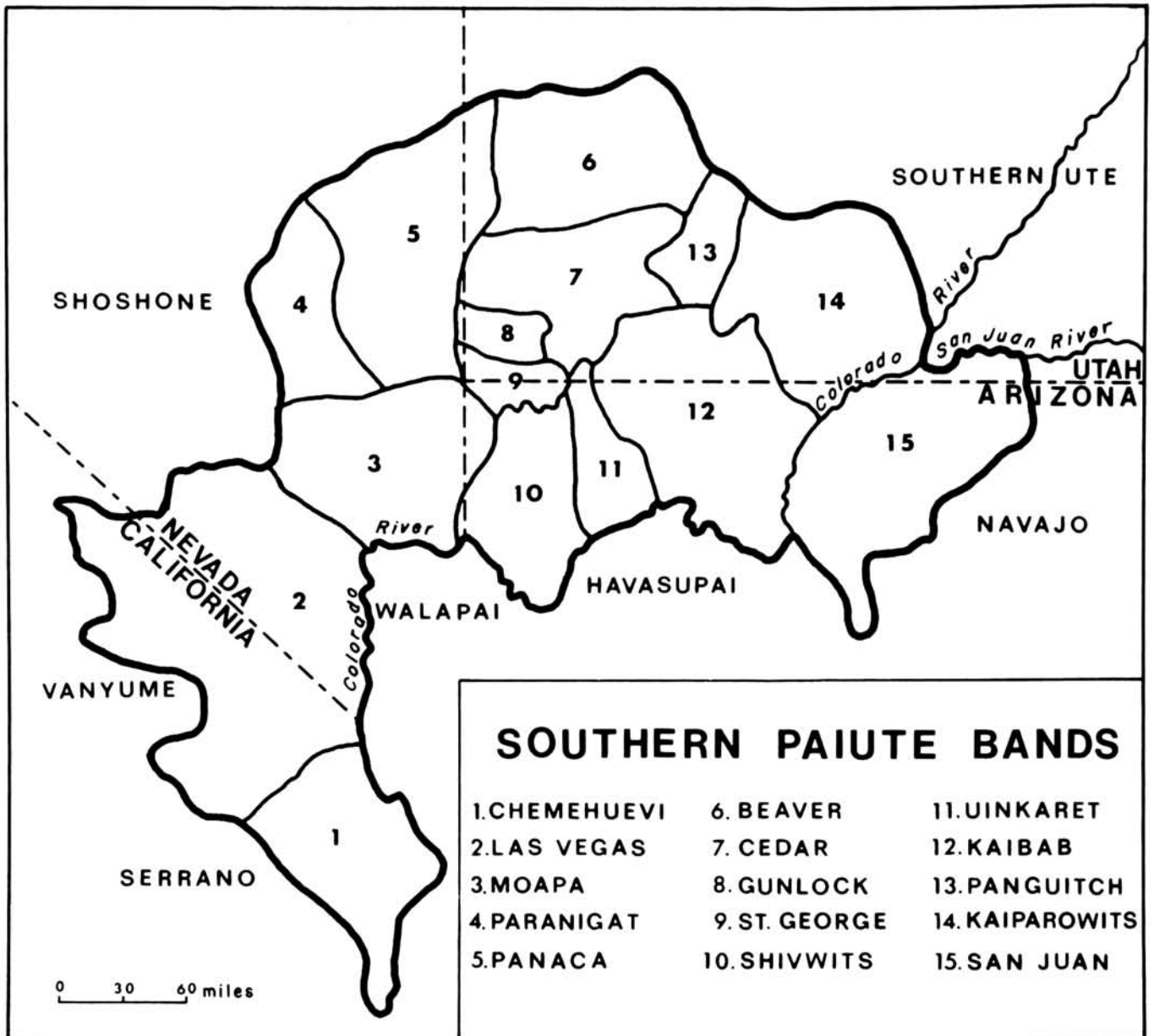


Fig. 2. Southern Paiute bands (Kelly 1934).

were “true Paiutes or mixed Utes and Navajoes.” He concluded on the basis of linguistic and folkloristic data that the San Juan were Paiute:

Woots [a Cedar City Paiute who served as translator] had no difficulty in talking with [Old Jim Mike] so there was little question but that he was a Pahute These Indians are a long way (100 miles or more) [from Cedar City] and I tried to find out how long they have lived out there. They said

“always.” Their fathers have lived there for so many generations that no one knew when they went there nor where they went from. There has been practically no contact with the Pahutes over here in Cedar, Kanosh, etc., and yet their language is pure and they have the same legends [Palmer 1936].

Photographs in Palmer’s report include those of Jane Lehi, Annie Dutchie, Bessie Box, Katie Deer, Anson Cantsee, and Mancon George. In his photograph album, Palmer

(1935) recorded Paiutes north of Tuba City, Arizona, near where Paiute continue to live. These photos carry the following notation:

- (1) Pa-lan, Alfred Lehi, Unk-kah, Answ-ein, and Nattle, Tall man with turban is Alfred Lehi. His home is 6 miles from Tuba City at Water Spring. Other man is Pa-lan. He lives now at Koosharem. Two little girls are Alfred's children Anse-wood and Nat-tle.
 (2) San-ats, Kat-ats, O-wat-se, Anse-wood, Nat-tle, Ka-tah and Alfred Lehi. 1. San-ats, 2. Kat-ats (1, 2, Alfred's boys), 3. O-wat-se (Alfred's brother), 4. Anse-wood, 5. Nat-tle (Alfred's girls), 6. Kat-tah (Alfred's grandson), 7. Alfred Lehi (Kina). All live at Water Spring (Pah-it-spika) 6 miles from Tuba City.

Also, in the 1930s is Stewart's recognition of the San Juan people and their historical occupancy of the area. The photograph on page 27 of his study (Stewart 1938) of the Navajo wedding basket is captioned:

Hannah Splitting-meat and Dagaibitsi, Southern Paiute Indians, in their hogan, near Tuba City. Hannah's third attempt at weaving a Navajo-type blanket is on the loom, and a wedding basket made by Dagaibitsi is between them.

Stewart recounted that:

I saw them [wedding baskets] being made by the Southern Paiute near Tuba City . . . and I was told that they were made by the Southern Paiute near Navajo Mountain . . . the Paiute now on the Navajo Reservation have been surrounded by Navajo since about 1860 when the latter took over the former Southern Paiute area (from about Tuba City and Kayenta north to the Colorado and San Juan Rivers [Stewart 1938: 27]).

There is a thirty-year hiatus in the ethnographic record which ended with Christy Turner's report of house types in the Navajo Mountain community (C. Turner 1962). Turner's study seems to indicate a long-term occupancy of the area by Southern Paiute that long precedes that of the Navajo.

Today the canyons and mesas are the

domain of the Navajo There are in highly isolated pockets a few Paiute families that have yet to be absorbed by the increase in number of Navajo. The extent and duration of Paiute occupation in the Glen Canyon region is currently (not known) but it is felt that the Paiute preceded the Navajo into the region Whether or not the Paiutes (as living remnants of the Desert Culture) were living in Glen Canyon concurrently with the Anasazi still remains to be fully explored [C. Turner 1962: 8].

Just how long their occupancy precedes that of the Navajo remains unclear, although data gathered by the junior author suggest that the Paiute may have been in place as early as A.D. 1300 (RCE).

Subsequent studies in the 1960s and early 1970s have not been located. In 1977, however, the senior author (ACT) made a series of fact-finding visits to the San Juan Paiute at Willow Springs, Paiute Canyon, and Navajo Mountain. These people expressed concern over the continuing Navajo pressure on Paiute homesites and gardening areas, especially those in Paiute Canyon. It was their claim that the Navajo political system was not responsive to Paiute problems and that they were powerless within their own homelands (A. Turner 1977).

Several meetings were held that were attended by representatives of several Southern Paiute bands including Kaibab, Shivwits, Cedar City, Indian Peaks, and Las Vegas. As a result of these meetings, a solidarity among these several bands emerged and a short-term and long-term strategy were determined. The first involved soliciting legal assistance from attorneys for the Tuba City office of the Peoples' Legal Service. Heretofore, the Paiute had had the misapprehension that this organization served only the Navajo, but on introduction to the legal staff the Paiute spokesman was assured that the staff would provide personal legal services involving trespass but that they were not willing to engage

in intertribal disputes because of a potential conflict of interest (A. Turner 1977).

The long-term strategy involved analysis of federal statutes with respect to federal recognition of the San Juan Paiute as a distinct legal entity. It was reasoned that if the San Juan were recognized they would no longer be dependent on the Navajo tribe but would qualify for direct federal assistance in such areas of critical concern as road construction, housing, employment, and other kinds of community development projects. To that end, the senior author assisted the San Juan in drafting a petition for acknowledgement in accord with the provisions of the Federal Acknowledgement Program as specified in the Code of Federal Regulations (25CFR54). The petition was submitted by the San Juan Paiute to the Federal Acknowledgement Office of the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Since that time several anthropologists have been engaged in support of the San Juan Paiute petition. Drs. Charles Hoffman and James Sexton of Northern Arizona University conducted extensive ethnohistorical and demographic research on behalf of the Paiute. In 1983, the early historical (1776-1962) content of the present paper was submitted, in expanded form, to the San Juan Paiute group as material for Exhibit A of their petition (A. Turner 1983).

Petition research on behalf of the San Juan Paiute has accelerated with their acquisition of a grant from the Administration for Native Americans, administered by the Peoples' Legal Service. Drs. Omer C. Stewart and Pamela Bunte have been retained as consultants. Stewart has a long-standing involvement with the San Juan Paiute, it will be recalled, and Bunte has been conducting linguistic studies since 1979. We anticipate that the San Juan Paiute people will be successful in their petition for acknowledgement, in part because of the interest of

anthropologists, but mostly because of their determination and persistence.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

It is generally accepted by anthropologists that the San Juan Southern Paiute Indians were the established occupants of the territory south of the San Juan River in northern Arizona long before the recent expansion of the Navajo and the establishment of a Navajo Reservation on ancestral Paiute lands. They may well have been in place as long ago as A.D. 1300.

The historical record shows that the San Juan Paiute were in place in 1776 when they were contacted by Dominguez and Escalante. They were still there in 1829 when Armijo led a pack train through their territory.

Agents of the United States government including Army officers and ethnographers and others observed and reported data on the San Juan Paiute in 1852, 1859, 1873, and 1903.

The recent ethnography of the San Juan Paiute includes the studies of William R. Palmer (1928, 1935, 1936) in the 1920s and 1930s, of Isabel Kelly (1934, 1964) in the 1930s, of Omer Stewart (1942, 1966) in the 1930s and 1940s (and continuing to the present), of Christy Turner, II (1962), of Allen C. Turner (1977), of Charles Hoffman and James Sexton between 1979 and 1982 (personal communication 1982), and finally, of Pamela Bunte between 1979 and 1983.

Despite the fact that the San Juan Paiute are a small, isolated enclave now encompassed by the Navajo Indian Reservation, they have persisted in maintaining their form of self-governance and their distinctive Paiute ethnicity. It is their stated desire to be recognized as a tribal entity by the United States government and by other Indian tribal groups. Their claim to being continuously recognized by historians, anthropologists, and other scholars is quite clear in the recorded

history from 1776 to the present. The foregoing brief history of the San Juan Paiute Indians provides substantial evidence in their behalf.

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