

Handbook of North American Indians

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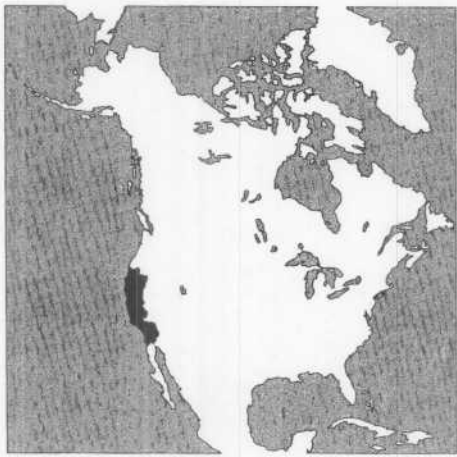
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Cupeño

LOWELL JOHN BEAN AND CHARLES R. SMITH

Language and Territory

The Cupeño (kōō'pā,nyō), one of the smallest linguistic groups in southern California (less than 750 people), occupied an area more or less circular in shape about 10 miles in diameter in a mountainous area at the headwaters of the San Luis Rey River and encompassing the broad open valley of San Jose de Valle. The Cupeño language belongs to the Cupan subgroup of the Taki family of Uto-Aztecan (Bright and Hill 1967; Lamb 1964). Within Cupan, Cupeño is closer to Cahuilla than to Luiseño. As the Cupeño were bordered on the south by the Yuman-speaking Ipai, a few Yuman linguistic elements appear in their language.*

Ecologically, Cupeño territory was quite similar to that of the Luiseño, but unlike them, the Cupeño had no direct access to the sea coast. Their principal foods were acorns, small seeds, berries, cactus fruit, deer, quail, rabbits, and other small mammals.

Prior to 1902 the Cupeño occupied two permanent villages: *kúpa* (at the base of Hot Springs mountain) and the smaller and more linguistically mixed village of *wilákalpa* (fig. 1). Although united by marriage and social intercourse, the two villages were politically independent. Table 1 describes the relationships of moiety and clan within the villages. The clans were bound by social, religious, and territorial ties; but each maintained its distinctness, had its own gathering areas, and usually had its own clan leader.

Culture

Cupeño social organization was complex and represented the amalgamation of several historically different

* Several orthographies have been used for Cupeño. Perhaps the most representative is the "morphophonemic" level orthography in Jacobs (1974). An orthography modified for use by nonlinguists, emphasizing maximum pronouncibility with minimum need for rule application, is in Hill and Nolasquez (1973). Italicized Cupeño words in this Handbook have been respelled by Jane H. Hill (with doubtful spellings indicated by parenthetical question marks) using the Hill-Nolasquez orthography with the following substitutions of symbols to agree with Handbook standards: *e* for Hill-Nolasquez *e*, *ə* for their *e*, raised dot for vowel length where Hill-Nolasquez write a double vowel, *č* for *ch*, *š* for *sh*, *š* for *sh*, *k* for *kw*, *x* for *xw*, *q* for *qw*, *ʔ* for *ʔ*, *δ* for *d*, *γ* for *g*, *nʷ* for *ny*, *ŋ* for *ng*, *b* for *ly*. *R* is a continuant while *r* is a flap; these and *f*, *δ* *γ* are relatively rare sounds that appear in words borrowed from Spanish and English. Stress is marked ' , where Hill-Nolasquez underline the vowel.

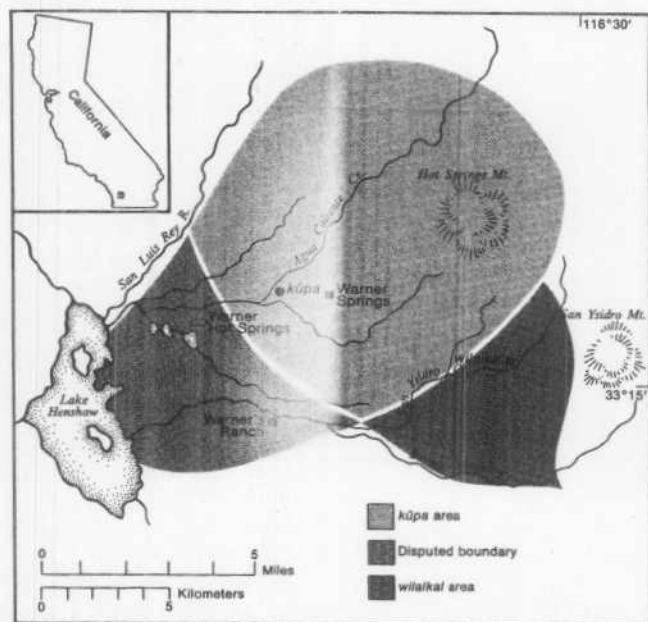


Fig. 1. Tribal territory and villages.

groups—an amalgamation that began as early as A.D. 1000-1200 and resulted in a new tradition, rooted in Cahuilla customs but "changed by an intricate interaction with the peoples around them" (Hill and Nolasquez 1973:i). While maintaining the complex Cahuilla social organization of exogamous moieties, patrilineal clans, and ceremonial exchange parties, they acquired some of the Chingichngish religious rituals from the Luiseño, to which they added an "older complex of funerary rituals" while exchanging and adopting ceremonies with the Ipai (Hill and Nolasquez 1973:i).

The most productive food-gathering spots were owned by clans, with the intervening areas free to all for both hunting and gathering. Each clan was headed by a *nát*, an office that usually passed from father to eldest son. If that son was thought unfit, a younger son or an uncle in a collateral line might serve as *nát*. The *nát* kept the clan bundle and lived in the clan's ceremonial dance house. His duties included controlling trade with non-Cupeño groups, regulating production and distribution of goods, articulating intra- and interclan relationships, deciding when ceremonies would be held and who would be invited, and collecting and distributing goods and gifts to

Table 1. Moieties and Clans

Village	Moieties	Clans	Supposed Origin
kúpa	Coyote (<i>isl'am</i>)	<i>kávalim</i> ^a	Cupeño
		<i>pəmtəmʔa</i>	Cupeño
		<i>túlnikčam</i> <i>təməxawəčim</i>	Cupeño
wílálkalpa	Wildcat (<i>túktam</i>)	<i>sivimúʔatim</i>	Ipai-Tipai
		<i>áwlinvaʔačim</i>	Ipai-Tipai
		<i>takáʔatim</i>	Luseño
wílálkalpa	Wildcat (<i>túktam</i>)	<i>čútnikat</i>	Ipai-Tipai
		<i>tšvikiya</i>	Cahuilla

^a The *sáwvalim* clan is a group of Cahuilla who moved from Los Coyotes canyon about 1840. Since that time they have lived with the *kávalim* clan on their lands and subject to the *kávalim* clan leader's authority.

guests at ceremonies. Everyday affairs concerning an entire village were discussed by all the *nát* until a mutually satisfactory decision was reached.

The clan leader's assistant was the *kutvəʔvaʔaš*, a hereditary office, passing in a lineage as did clan leadership. In addition to being an administrative assistant the *kutvəʔvaʔaš* performed certain organizational functions at ceremonies, saying prayers and distributing goods.

Sometimes a *nát* would also be a shaman, although this did not have to be the case. Shamans were powerful, respected, and often feared members of their community. Their supernatural power, acquired individually through trances and dreams, enabled them to hear and understand natural and supernatural phenomena, divine, cure, and witch. Certain powerful shamans could influence crop growth, while especially powerful ones could transform themselves into deer or bears (Hill and Nolasquez 1973: 91; Gifford 1918:209).

Most marriages were parentally arranged, a boy's parents selecting the prospective wife, exchanging gifts with the girl's parents, and taking the couple to the *nát* of the boy's clan, and in his presence holding a feast and distributing gifts. Postmarital residence was usually patrilocal.

Children were born away from the villages and brought back when they were about two to three weeks old. At a later date they were given names at special naming ceremonies given by any clan having several children to name (Strong 1929:254). When girls were between 9 and 10 years old they underwent a puberty ceremony, each clan hosting its own, while boys between 10 and 18 went through an initiation ceremony. Both rituals signified the transition from child status to adult status.

Perhaps the most significant ceremonies for all involved were those held in connection with deaths in the clan. The first was actually a series of three ceremonies: the burning of the deceased body almost immediately

after death; the burning of all the deceased's possessions a few weeks to several months later; and the annual or biannual image-burning ceremony, which devoted as many as eight days and nights to feasting, dancing, and singing and which culminated with a burning of images of all those who had died since the last ceremony.

Another ceremony held in memory of the dead was the eagle-killing ritual, held once a year, usually by the *kávalim* clan since they owned the only eagle nest, and hence the rights to the eagle, in Cupeño territory. If no *kávalim* clan member had died the eagle was given to the opposite-moiety clan in which deaths had occurred. This ritual gift was only a small manifestation of a much larger economic-ritual reciprocity organization operating throughout southern California and the functional equivalent of the "elaborate shell money exchange" found in northern California (Strong 1929:263).

Cupeño cosmology and values were essentially like those of the Cahuilla. The world was divided into three parts—below, on, and above the earth; and everything was created by *təməyawət* and *múkat*, the twin creator gods. Most tales and myths involve the activities of the "old ones," those who lived before the Indians. Animals figured predominantly in Cupeño tales with Coyote assuming the traditional trickster-transformer role he occupied in most forms of Takic mythology. One unique Cupeño cosmological figure was a giant rabbit, a key figure in the origin tale of the *kúpa* clans.

History

When the Cupeño were first encountered by Europeans in 1795 they probably numbered between 500 (Kroeber 1925:689) and 750 persons (Bean 1973). From 1795 until 1810, the Cupeño had little direct contact with the Spanish; but in the next 10 years *asistencias* were built, cattle grazed on their lands, Europeans used the hot springs as a health spa and meeting place, and a chapel was erected at *kúpa*. During this period and continuing throughout the Mexican and American periods, Cupeños worked in serflike relationships to their "over lords." Shortly after United States takeover of California, a *kávalim* *nát*, Juan Antonio Garra, attempted to organize a revolt among all southern California Indians to either kill or drive out all foreigners. The attempt failed, Garra was executed, and *kúpa* was burned (Evans 1966). In the late 1890s, with their population less than 225, the Cupeño were faced with a new threat: the "owners" of Cupeño territory wanted them (Cupeños) removed. After several years of litigation, public protest (reaching national concern), and studies, the California Supreme Court ordered the Cupeños removed to Pala Reservation in Luiseño territory (see "Impact of Euro-American Exploration and Settlement," fig. 5, this vol.; fig. 2).

By 1973 less than 150 people claimed Cupeño ethnicity. Few spoke their native language, and little or nothing



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Fig. 2. One of the houses that the Cupeño were moved into at Pala Reservation after their eviction from Warner's Ranch. Photograph possibly by J.O. Means, June 1928.

remained of precontact lifeways, although there was some ritual involvement in funeral ceremonies, both intra- and interreservation.

Synonymy

The word Cupeño is of Spanish derivation, adopting the native place-name *kúpa* and appending Spanish *-eño* to mean a person who lives in or comes from *kúpa*. It does not appear in the literature until 1906 (Morrison 1962:28) when Hudson called the Indians living at *kúpa* (then called Warner's Ranch) "Cupeños or Warner's Ranch Indians." Other terms applied to the Cupeño are: Jajopin, a 1795 Spanish spelling of Ipai-Tipai *xa'kupin* 'Warner's Hot Springs' (J.J. Hill 1927:1; Couro and Hutcheson 1973:19); *xək'wáč*, the Ipai-Tipai name for the tribe (Boas 1896:261; Couro and Hutcheson 1973:20); Agua Caliente; Warner's Ranch Indians (Hodge 1907-1910, 1:27); Kupanakiktum, kupa-ngakitom, and cupanga-kitoms (renderings of the Cahuilla name for those living at *kúpa*) and tochil (the *wilákalpa* group) (Gifford 1918:192, normalized; Kroeber 1925:689; Forbes 1965:327); Jecuiche (Forbes 1965:327), a name also applied to the Cahuilla; chay mukatem (Harrington 1925-1928, normalized); and Qakwat (Bean 1973).

Sources

Written observations describing the Cupeño begin as early as 1795 with the writings of the Spanish explorer Juan de Grijalva (Wagner 1942). B.D. Wilson (1952) described briefly general living conditions among the



Southwest Mus., Los Angeles.

Fig. 3. Man with a woven yucca-fiber pack blanket. Photograph by Charles F. Lummis, about 1890s.

Cupeño, and Jackson and Kinney (1884) focused national attention on the deplorable living conditions forced upon the Indians of southern California (including the Cupeño) by the Americans. Between 1890 and 1902, Charles Lummis (1902) and the Sequoia League worked with the Cupeño in preparing a legal brief for a government report on the question of Cupeño removal.



NAA, Smithsonian.

Fig. 4. Juan Chutnikat demonstrating method of carrying a wooden mortar in a net. Photograph by John P. Harrington in 1925 or before.

Anthropologists who have visited the Cupeño since 1909 have written on the following topics: Kroeber (1925), a general ethnography; Gifford (1918), the basic social definition of the amalgamated Cupeño community; Faye (1928), linguistic and ethnographic studies; Strong (1929), a study more in-depth than previously; Harrington (1925-1928), linguistic and ethnographic fieldwork; Hill (1969, 1970, 1972) and Bright (1965a), linguistics; Hill and Nolasquez (1973), oral tradition and oral literature; and Bean (1973), ethnographic and ethnobotanical studies. Unfortunately, no archeological research has been conducted in Cupeño territory.

Institutions that have collections of Cupeño material culture and/or photographs of Cupeño peoples include the Smithsonian Institution, Washington (baskets, yucca fiber blankets [fig. 3], photos) and the Cupa Cultural

Center, Pala Reservation (a representative collection of material culture augmented by photos). The most outstanding photographic collection is in the San Diego Museum of Man, San Diego, California, while both the Lowie Museum of Anthropology, Berkeley, and the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, New York, have smaller photographic collections.

Archival documents are concentrated at the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley (Juan José Warner Reminiscence, Paul L. Faye Papers); the Kupa Cultural Center, Pala Indian Reservation; the Malki Museum, Morongo Indian Reservation; the Junipero Serra Museum, San Diego; and the National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution, Washington (John P. Harrington field notes).