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Archaeological Investigations

in the

Yucaipa Valley

by

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# ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS IN THE YUCAIPA VALLEY

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## The Yucaipa Valley and the Excavations

The fertile Yucaipa Valley, a small eastern extension of the larger San Bernardino Valley, has yielded abundant evidence of Indian occupation from very early times to the present century. Within the last two decades, much material has been recovered, but a variety of circumstances has prevented its publication. This report will describe as much of this material as possible, and attempt to point out its relations to other Southern California sites, with emphasis on those in the San Bernardino Mountains and vicinity. The bulk of the material which has been recovered from Yucaipa is of the late prehistoric period, but some of it is earlier, and there are indications that additional excavation could provide a good record of culture change from very early times to the historic period. It is to be hoped that the publication of the results of the investigations made so far will not deter others from doing additional work at the site.

In addition to surface collecting, excavations were conducted in 1947 by Dr. Gerald A. Smith at a site near the center of the valley. During the next two years, excavation at this site was continued by students under the direction of Dr. Gilbert Becker of Redlands University. Dr. Smith has kindly placed the material gathered by him and others at my disposal, and the report to follow is based primarily on this

material. Appreciation should also be expressed to Dr. Charles Rozaire, of the Southwest Museum in Los Angeles, through whose assistance collections in the museum were examined.

The site consists essentially of two parts: (1) an area on a low rise affording a view of the lower part of the valley; this was principally on the land of Charles Simpson, and produced material mostly of late prehistoric date. (2) an area on a high knoll on the property of John Greven, adjoining and overlooking the Simpson land, where surface material was for the most part earlier.

Benedict (1924: 368), Kroeber (1925: 617 and Plate 57), and Strong (1929: 8) clearly demonstrate that the Yucaipa Valley was occupied by the Serrano at the time of the earliest European contact. The Serrano, like many other Southern California Shoshonean tribes, were divided into a number of local groups, probably lineages, each of which claimed possession of a particular region or the most valued lands within it. In such locations they lived for most of the year, making occasional excursions to other areas where particular foods, such as pinon nuts, were seasonally abundant. Both Benedict and Strong indicate that only one such local group occupied the Yucaipa Valley (Benedict, 1924: 368; Strong, 1929: 11). The precise locations of the settlements cannot be determined from historic sources, however. Caballeria (1902: 39, 46), who lists Yucaipa as one of six Indian rancherias in the San Bernardino Valley during mission times, apparently had access to mission records which may have provided such information, but these have since been lost (Beattie, 1951: 5).

The Yucaipa Valley is one of the most fertile and productive parts of the old Serrano territory, and it may be expected to have supported an unusually large population. This is, in fact, indicated by Benedict (1924: 368), who states that only here and in the Morongo Valley could "more than a small number of families" be supported in a single local group. The valley is enclosed by hills and canyons on the north, east, and south, and opens into the San Bernardino Valley on the west. It is a broad, gently sloping basin, its lowest part being in the west, a region known today as Dunlap Acres. This was a marshy place in aboriginal times, where water was plentiful for men and animals. Immediately to the east of Oak Glen Creek, the principal stream flowing into Dunlap Acres, is a low ridge overlooking this marshy area. Traces of Pre-European settlement have been reported all along this ridge. The Simpson property, on which the principal excavations were made, is located on one of the lower parts of this ridge, very close to a small stream, with a good view of the lowest part of the valley. Additional material, much of it apparently earlier in date, was found on the knoll overlooking the Simpson land, hereafter referred to as the Greven knoll.

Excavations made by Smith in 1947 consisted of one long trench, 5 by 25 feet, and three smaller test pits, all on the Simpson property. The fill in these excavations, in contrast to that from the Greven knoll and an explored area to the south, is dark, and contains many fragments of broken and burned animal bone, as well as stone chips and other cultural debris. In all trenches, a layer of stones was encountered several inches below the surface, a situation also present at Deep Creek, a site on the north side of the mountains. The site appears to have been one of the prin-

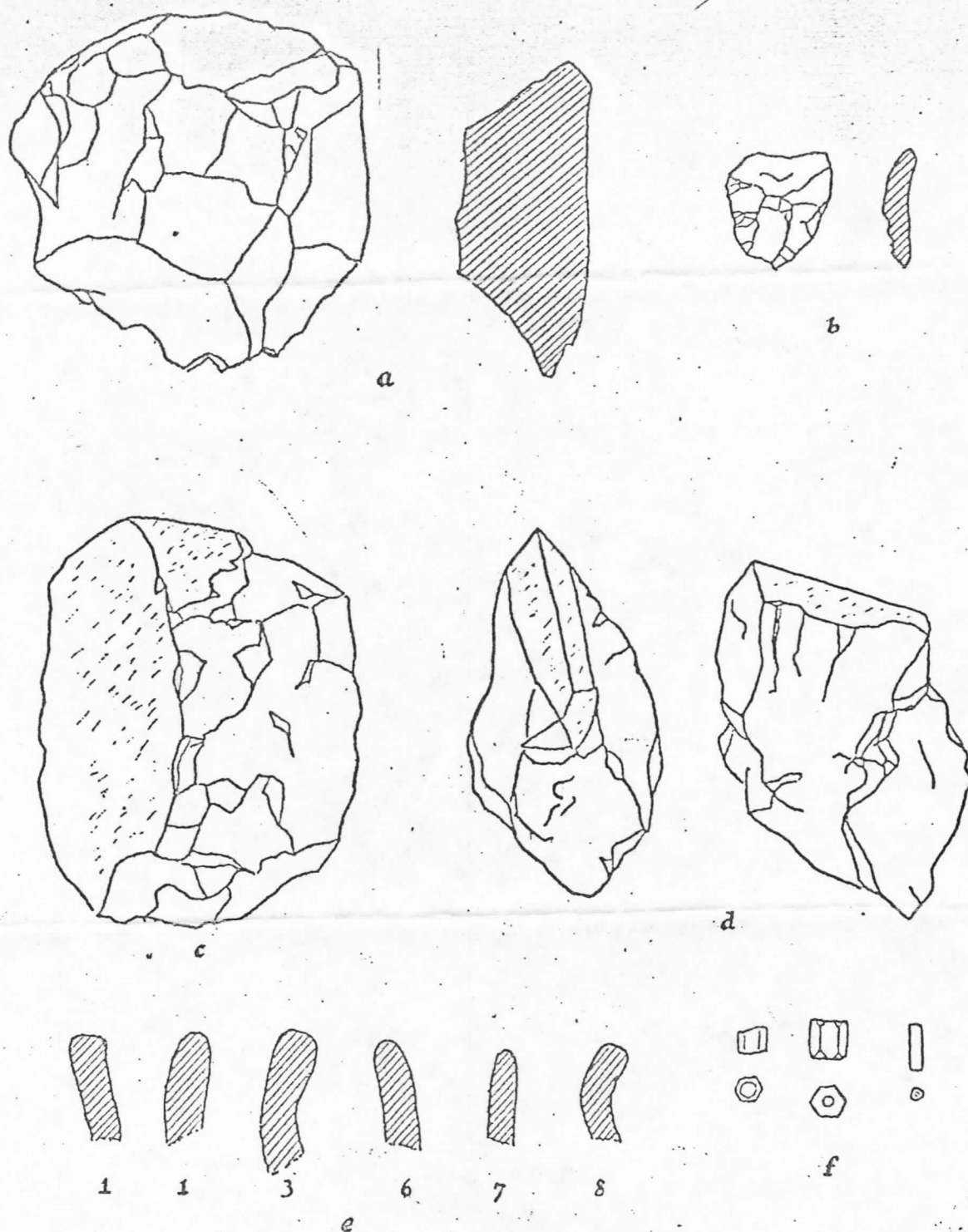


Fig. 6. a, b, scrapers. c, d, rocks with flat smoothed areas; d may have been used as a knife. e, pottery rim sherds; numbers refer to pottery type. f, glass beads.

### Pigments

The collections contain several large pieces of psilemelane, a hydrous oxide of manganese believed by Smith (1954, 1955) to have been used to obtain a black pigment. The specimens from Yucaipa show signs of having been rubbed, which tends to support the evidence compiled by Smith (1954) regarding their use.

### Objects of Non-Indian Manufacture

Glass beads, china fragments, and some metal pieces were found on the surface and apparently also in the upper levels of the excavations. These were found on property across the street, south of the Simpson property.

Four glass beads, of a type common in both the United States and Mexico in the mid-nineteenth century and slightly earlier are in the collections (identified by Clement W. Meighan). They are of blue glass, hexagonal and tubular, with bevelling producing facets at the edges.

Blue and white china fragments, probably nineteenth century styles, were found, as well as some more recent pieces.

Metal objects include three iron nails, a spent .22 cal. bullet, and a piece of copper cartridge shell.

### Summary of Yucaipa Valley Culture

The earliest periods at Yucaipa can be summarized briefly. The evidence for an occupation antedating the late prehistoric horizon is as follows: