



Paipai Sam Ochurte at home at Rancho Pinacate (Stinkbug Ranch).

## BAJA'S PAIPAI INDIANS:

# PEOPLE FROM AN ANCIENT TIME

By Michael Wilken

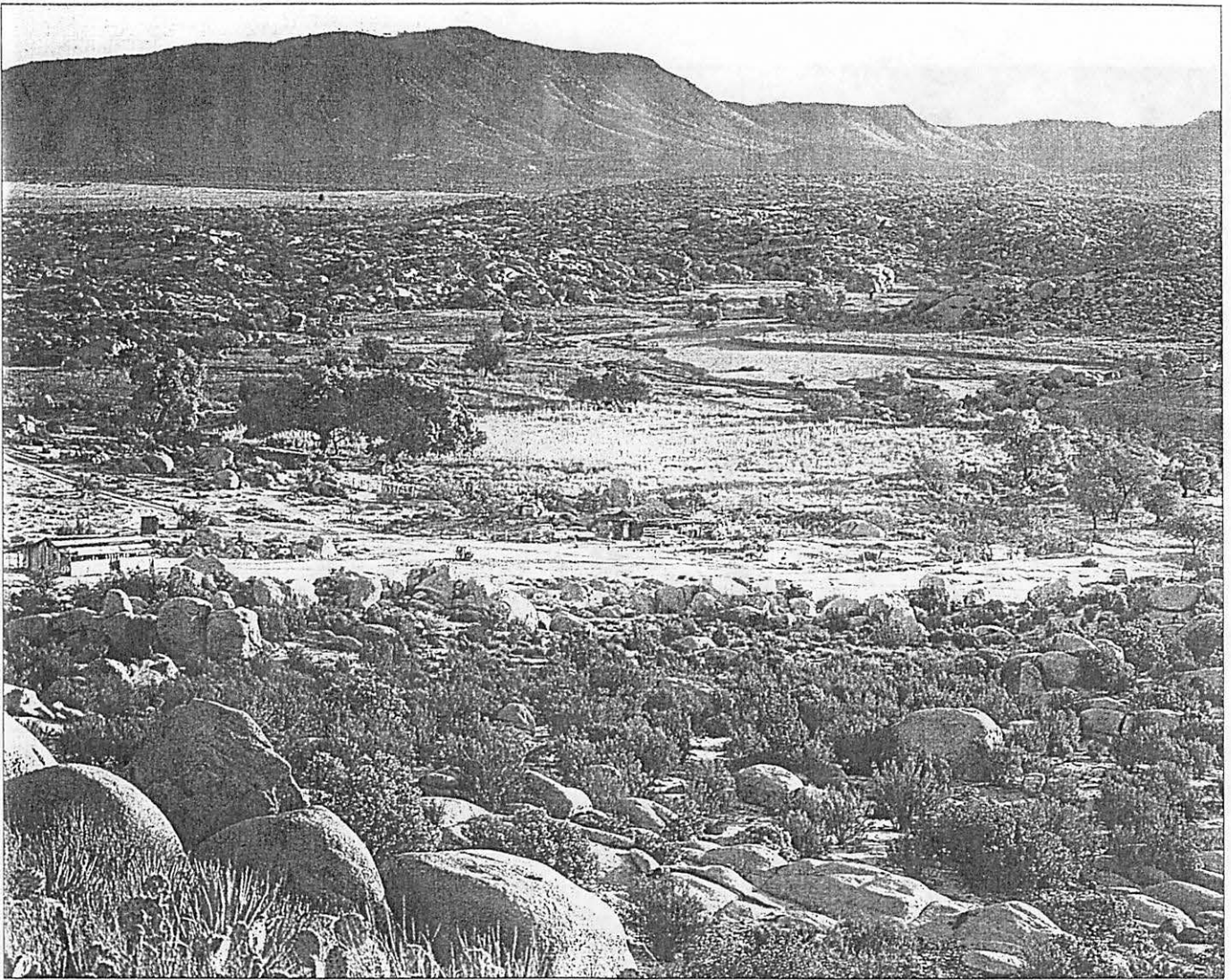
For thousands of years, the native people of Baja California have used their ingenuity and the wisdom of their ancestors to carve out a living in a land that challenges even the hardest soul to survive. With only the bare essentials, Baja's Indians have learned to live in a forbidding desert land through an extraordinary knowledge of their environment, combined with sheer physical tenacity.

Today, a few Indian communities carry on the ways of the ancient ones in isolated desert and mountain regions of northern Baja.

With a population of about 250, the Paipai are Baja's largest remaining indigenous group. Paipai is actually two words: *pa* and *ipai* together mean the "living" or "clever people," an appropriate name for the surviving descendants of the peninsula's early inhabitants.

### WHO WERE THE "SAVAGES"?

The earliest written accounts — mostly by Spanish missionaries — of the Paipai and other Baja Indians can provide valuable information, but only if read with an understanding of the authors' motivations



and cultural prejudices.

The Spanish were primarily concerned with expanding and protecting their newly colonized territories and furthering the spiritual conquest of the church. The missionary documents reflect the need to justify the "christianizing" of the native populations, the first step in stabilizing the region for Spanish colonization.

Descriptions of the Indians' simple material culture, their native customs and their nomadic lifestyle were meant to serve as proof of what Padre Luis de Sales called the "stupidity, degradation and laziness" of the natives. Typical of the chroniclers of his time, Father Francisco Clavigero wrote:

*"The Californians were entirely barbarous and savage. Neither architecture, agriculture, nor the many arts useful to human life were known to them. They maintained themselves with those fruits which grow wild or without taking the trouble to cultivate the land, sow crops, or raise some animals. Each tribe, composed of several related families, usually lives near some spring, but with only the sky for a roof and the bare ground for a bed."*

By taking control of the best lands and the most important water sources, the Spanish effectively put an end to thousands of years of the Baja Indians' nomadic way of life. Many Indians were required to live in the missions, where they were taught to be ashamed of their heritage and where they were often exposed to European diseases.

Few tribes were able to live through the drastic changes in their way of life and the epidemics which plagued their wounded cultures. The tribes that did survive were profoundly changed forever.

#### THE ULTIMATE SURVIVORS

Baja's last Indian groups — the Paipai, the Kumi-ai, the Kiliwa, the Cucapa, and the Cochimi — all live in northern Baja. Some 1,200 in all, they are probably descendants of the last migrations of Yuman tribes into the peninsula from what is now Arizona and southern California.

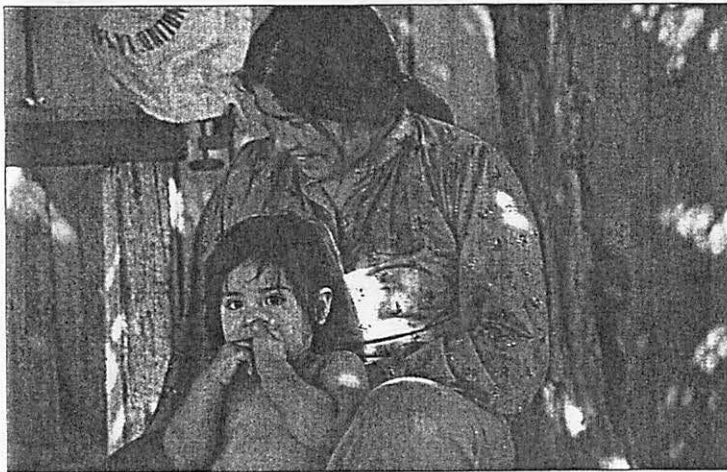
Archaeologists believe these migrations began some 2,000 years ago, when changing climatic conditions forced some of the Yuman tribes from around the mouth of the Colorado River to look for more favorable lands for survival. Some may have moved north and east up into Arizona, while others moved southwest into the northern regions of Baja California.

*Santa Catarina Valley in the Sierra Juarez. For thousands of years the perennial streams have drawn the native people to this region.*

Michael Wilken photo



Michael Wilken photo



Clockwise from top: A Paipai Pickup: Taking recycling to new heights.

Benito Peralta holds a lariat he made out of rawhide strips.

A young Paipai woman and her child escape the summer sun in the shade of a ramada made of water willow branches.

While still closely related culturally and linguistically to their U.S. counterparts, those groups that settled in Baja have in many ways maintained a more traditional lifestyle because of their geographical isolation and fierce independence. Some ancient practices, such as the making of pottery and basketry, have been lost among the more acculturated Yuman peoples. But these practices continue among the indigenous people of Baja California.

#### FOLLOWING THE WATER

High in Baja's Sierra Juarez a shallow, sandy stream winds through the heart of a small community. The water's path takes it by some scattered ranches, past an old graveyard, then tumbling over stones with a few brush houses nearby. As it passes through a small pool, a woman stoops to fill a clay pot with the cool water.

The arroyo then opens into a broad streambed where two girls wash clothes in the shade of a cottonwood tree. Farther on, the watercourse passes by more houses — some made from cement block — and eventually winds by a wooden schoolhouse before disappearing down into the desert sands. To a first-time visitor, the place might appear to be a typical sleepy town anywhere in rural Mexico.

However, upon closer inspection, the stream's winding path reveals a town with deep roots steeped in the history of Baja California. The dependable,



Wallace Driver photo

year-round water from the stream has attracted native people to the area for thousands of years. Many of the scattered ranches are traditional Indian settlements with indigenous names mentioned in the earliest records of the region.

The residents are often extended family clans, following the typical pattern of living arrangements for Indian groups since the days of nomadism.

The graveyard was originally established by the Spanish missionaries who built a mission on the small knoll above it in 1797. The structure was destroyed by rebellious Indians 43 years later, leaving only the graveyard and some boulders pocked with grinding holes, where the corn for the meals of the neophytes was ground. The missionaries introduced agriculture and livestock, which continue to be important parts of the Indians' economy.

The native name for the village is Jaca-tobojol, which translates as "Water Flowing Over Stones." Local legend has it that where the water goes tumbling over and around a series of boulders there once lived a Bigfoot type of monster that would devour any living being that came near its lair. "Who knows if it's true," says Paipai Don Benito, the Indian elder who lives in one of the brush huts above the arroyo, "but that's how my grandfather told it."

The clay pottery made in the community represents one of the oldest surviving traditional arts.



*A local girl carries sotole, a wild plant used for thatching*

Other handicrafts include carrying nets made from agave fiber, cradle boards, bow and arrow sets, war clubs, and boomerang-like hunting sticks. Handicrafts learned from the Spaniards include rawhide lariats, horse hair cinches and *alforjas* (rawhide saddlebags).

Underneath the old cottonwood, two young women laugh and discuss local gossip in Paipai, their native language. Most people in the community are bilingual, speaking the Indian language amongst themselves and Spanish to outsiders. Paipai is closely related to other Yuman languages of Baja California, southern California and Arizona.

At a recent pow-wow held in the Paipai community, some of the Indian groups from the southwestern United States were reunited with the Baja group. The Indians found striking similarities between their languages and cultures, and there was a re-establishing of the ancient connection between these closely related native peoples. Both the Yavapai and the Walapai of Arizona have oral traditions telling of a separation of tribes in the distant past, raising speculation that perhaps the Paipai Indians are the living descendants of the lost tribe.

#### LEGENDARY REUNION

Not long ago a small delegation of Yavapai Indians found their way from Prescott, Arizona to the remote mountain village of the Sierra Juarez where a gathering of indigenous people was being held. In the mid-

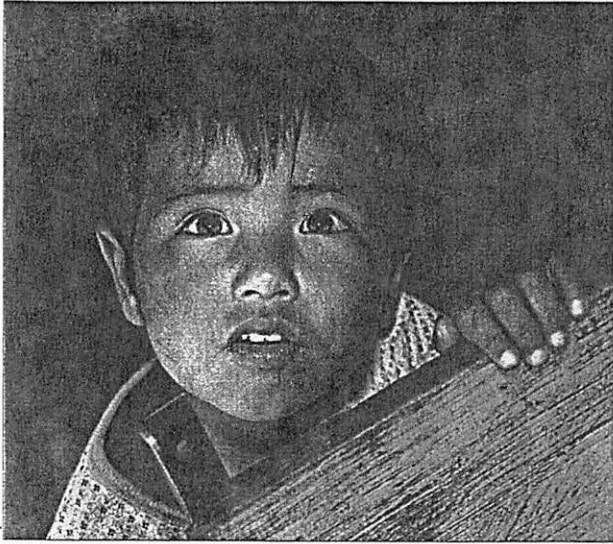
dle of the hubbub of singers, dancers and voices carrying on in a variety of Indian languages, the oldest member of the group had an urgent request. "I wish to speak to your elders," she said, "I have a message for them from my people."

She was taken to see Don Benito, one of the few remaining Paipais who still remembers the old stories and the ancient ways. In the cool shade of a willow ramada overlooking a rocky arroyo, the Yavapai elder and the Paipai elder spoke to each other slowly and deliberately, but with a quiet excitement. They soon found they could understand each other's native language amazingly well.

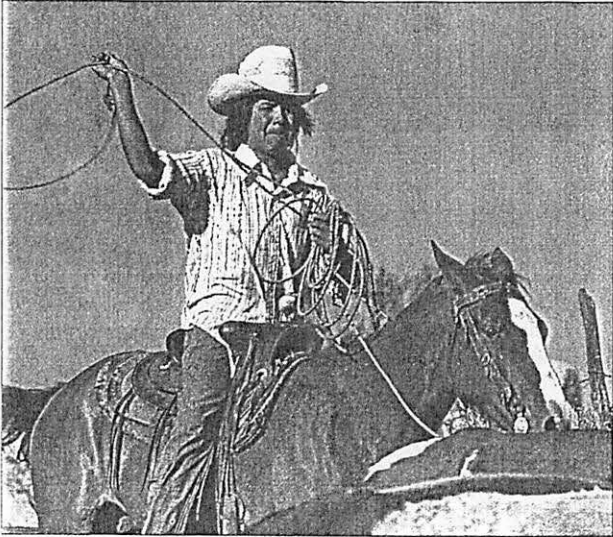
"The old people of our tribe used to tell a story," began Esther, the Yavapai woman, "about a group that broke off from ours a long, long time ago. It all started because there was a young couple who fell in love, but the tribe could not allow them to marry because they were cousins. So they were banished, but some of their relatives went with them because they knew that the young couple would face certain death if they were left on their own.

"The group wandered out through the wilderness until they came to the land of the Walapais. They were allowed to stay for a time, long enough for the new group to intermix and even to intermarry with the Walapais. But eventually the Walapais had to ask them to leave because they realized that the new

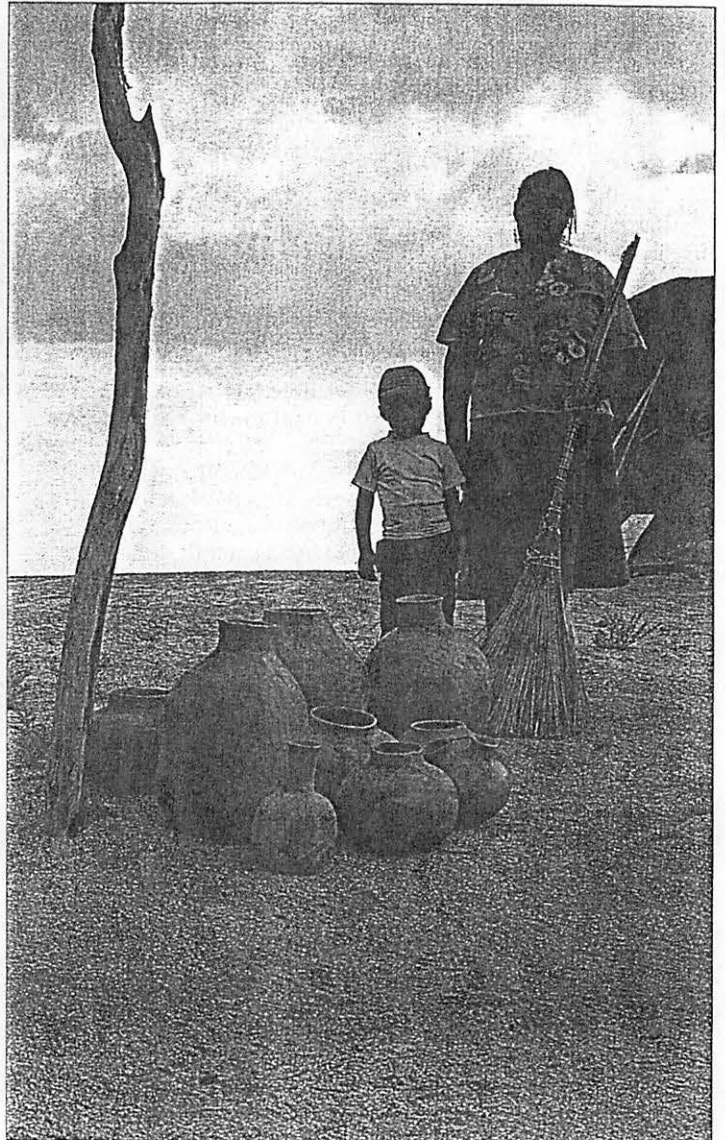
Wallace Driver photo



Michael Wilken photo



Wallace Driver photo



*Clockwise from top: Looking up: Paipai children today speak their native tongue but also learn to read and write in Spanish. Paipai potter Teresa Castro and her son Miguel. Paipais are highly skilled cowboys.*

group's presence might provoke war with the Yavapai.

"So the banished group moved westward until they came to the land of the Mojave Indians. Again they were allowed to stay for a while, mixing in with the Mojaves and probably intermarrying, but they were eventually asked to leave for fear of reprisals from the Yavapais.

"Finally they came to the Colorado River, where they built a boat and sailed south down the river. That was the last we knew of them until a few years ago, when we heard that there was a group of Indians down in the mountains of Baja California who speak almost the same language that we do.

"It always seemed like such a sad story to me: that couple being banished. But, now it's a happy day for us because it feels like a big family reunion."

A group of Walapai singers and dancers also found their way to the pow-wow. Like the Yavapai, they could understand the Paipai language surprisingly well. One of their elders offered a different and equally intriguing story about a separation of tribes.

According to Walapai oral tradition, the areas

around the Colorado River were originally inhabited by one large nation, with one chief and several sub-chiefs. But the time came when there were too many people for the land to support, and they began to have problems between the different clans.

The problems started with the children, whose mock war games with mud balls turned fierce when they started putting cactus spines and little bits of sharp rock into the mud balls. As they began hurting each other their parents got involved in the conflicts and started squabbling amongst themselves. The squabbles escalated into full-fledged war between the different groups until the chief had to step in and separate them.

Each group was sent to a different area according to their special talents — some to be agriculturalists and grow corn, some to be roaming hunters and some (the Walapai) to be runners. One group was sent down into the land that is now Baja California and was not heard from again. "When I hear the Paipais talk," the elder commented, "I hear some very ancient words that the old-timers of our tribe used to use. Makes me wonder if these might not be the descen-

# PAIPAI POTTERY

By Michael Wilken

Early on a clear spring day a Paipai Indian woman grinds earth in a *metate* (grinding stone) to make clay for pottery. Just as her grandmother taught her, she must pulverize the earth several times until all that remains is a fine powder with tiny flecks of glittering mica. Then she will add some water, knead the mixture thoroughly and let it sit for a few days.

Rolling coils of clay between her strong hands, she remembers the pots that her grandmother used to make — large, open-mouthed jars for water; strong upright pots for acorns, pine nuts and other foods; smaller jars for herbs or for canteens; and occasionally a double-mouthed wedding pot.

As she forms the new pot, she pats, smooths and evens out the clay, creating an elegantly simple vessel with a shape that seems to echo from out of an ancient time.

Finally she burnishes the pot with a smooth stone and leaves it to dry for a few days. When it is ready to be fired, she will place it in a pit with dried yucca stalks, light it on fire at sunset and leave it to burn. The delicate interplay of earth, air and fire will create the distinctive markings known as "fire clouding," giving many of the pots a raku type of finish.

Native Baja Californians have been making and using this same type of pottery for ages, as evidenced by the multitude of pottery fragments scattered around ancient habitation sites, as well as the occasional vessels found in archaeological excavations.

Pots were sometimes used to store food in caves from one year to the next. Surplus seeds or other food from one year may have been stored in a sealed pot as a kind of insurance for the next year. A Paipai Indian folktale describes how the clay jars also served as funerary urns to hold the ashes of the Paipai's cremated dead:

"... so coyote's grandmother took the remains of coyote's bones and put them up in a pot and put the pot in a cave. Then she began to cry for four nights ..."



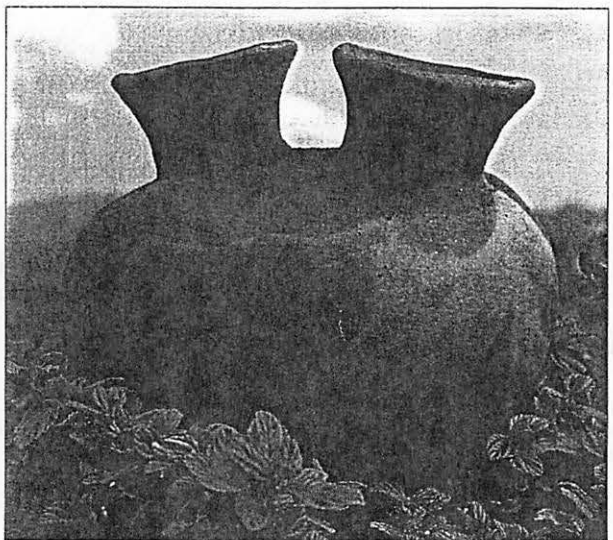
Burnishing the pot with a smooth stone gives the surface a polished look.



Margarita Castro builds up the wall of a pot by attaching a series of clay coils.

Today, a few Paipai women continue to make pottery in the traditional style. Several years ago the art seemed to be dying out as metal, glass and plastic containers became available. However, growing interest among collectors has created a new demand for the vessels as art objects, and now some of the potters' daughters are taking up the craft.

As many Paipai traditions disappear, collectors' demand for Paipai pottery may provide these Indians with a new and sorely needed source of income while ensuring the survival of their ancient art. ■



Earth, air and fire combine to create the distinctive markings known as "fire clouding" on this wedding pot.

Michael Wilken photos

# EARLY ARRIVALS

By Michael Wilken

Many modern historians mistakenly attribute the "discovery" of the peninsula to Fortun Jimenez in 1533. The arrival of the Spanish in search of pearls, gold and "an island called California ... inhabited by black women without a single man among them" is only a relatively recent event in the vast time scale of human habitation of the peninsula.

The earliest human "discoverers" of the peninsula probably arrived 9,000 to 11,000 years ago, toward the end of the last ice age when wetter climatic conditions created a lush landscape very different from the parched Baja desert of today. These first Baja Californians may have hunted big game such as bison and mammoth, which abounded in the moist environment of the time.

As the climate of the peninsula became dryer, the native people adapted by relying less on hunting and more on gathering of plant materials and

seafood. Despite the increasing aridity, waves of migration from the north as well as possible contact from peoples of the Pacific added to the population of the peninsula. Before the arrival of the first Europeans, some 40,000 to 50,000 Indians speaking a variety of languages inhabited the land.

Roaming from the sierras to the seashores, their nomadic lifestyle allowed them only a minimum of material possessions — those things that could be carried on their backs or hidden away in caves or crevices. The cultures of the early Baja Californians emphasized adapting to their environment rather than changing it, and consequently they left behind few material remains.

Also, the funerary customs of many of the indigenous groups required the destruction of all the material possessions of the deceased, hence contributing to the scarcity of archaeological remains. However, the intriguing clues that exist — circles of stone, cave paintings, potsherds, and stone tools — paint the picture of people with a highly developed oral tradition and cosmology. ■

dents of that tribe that disappeared."

## PAST MEETS PRESENT

The encroaching influence of modern life is easily observed in the Paipai community. Communication by drums and runners has been replaced by radios and in at least one ranch a satellite dish. Many old-timers remember the three-day journeys by foot to the coast to glean leftover wheat from the fields after harvest, carrying the bags of grain home on their backs. Today most families have horses or pickup trucks.

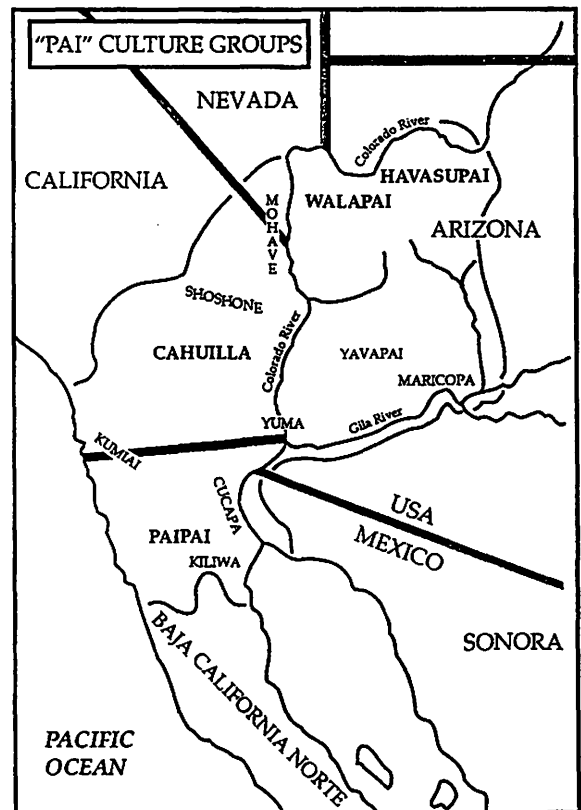
Cement block houses and the schoolhouse in this community are recent projects of the Mexican government. Children can receive basic elementary school education from Indian instructors who speak in Spanish and Paipai. For further education, children must leave the community. Most children end up working when still quite young and are not afforded the luxury of a higher education.

The I.N.I. (National Indigenist Institute) is the Mexican government's official agency for dealing with Indian Affairs throughout Mexico. In Baja California the institute faces a complicated situation: the number of native Baja Californians is quite small compared to the great numbers of Indians who have recently migrated from the Mexican mainland in search of work. This means that the scant resources available for Indians throughout the peninsula must be stretched even farther to accommodate the ever-growing population of those migrating north into Baja from the mainland.

The Paipai, who have made this land their home for thousands of years, now face new challenges to their survival. While many Indians still collect native foods like pine nuts and acorns, they also must look for newer ways of making a living. Some raise corn, beans, squash, and other crops. Some raise livestock. Many cut manzanita and juniper to sell for firewood and fence posts. Most Paipai men are skilled cowboys and can hire out as workers on cattle ranches throughout the region.

With better roads connecting their community with Baja's cash economy, many younger Paipais leave their land for opportunities in the city.

Like their ancestors, the Paipai must cleverly adapt to the changes in their world if they are to survive. For thousands of years they have been a part of the Baja California landscape and they intend to continue walking in the paths of the ancient ones. "It's a rugged life here," says Don Benito, "but it's ours." ■





*Living off a barren land, Paipai Indian Teresa Castro and her grandson Miguel comb the desert for firewood near Santa Catarina. The Paipai were so isolated that they escaped deadly epidemics of smallpox, measles, and other diseases that*

*spread from mission to mission. Like her ancestors, Teresa uses a fire pit to bake agave, a staple of the Indian diet. "It's not easy to get food from cactus," she observes. "But if we work hard, God gives us just enough to live."*



# DISCOVERY

A Monthly Publication of the San Diego Museum of Man

June 1993  
Vol. 10, No. 6



*Benito Peralta, Paipai Indian from Baja California. Photograph by Roberto Córdova Leyua*

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Children painting clay pots in the Indian Fair Crafts Corner.

## CRAFTS CORNER

Here's a chance to create an Indian craft to take home as a keepsake of the day. Children of all ages can design their own Indian arts at the Indian Fair Crafts Corner. Beads will be available for making jewelry items. There will be clay pots to paint with Indian designs and feathers to be fashioned into hair ornaments.

The costs range from \$1.50 to \$2.00 per item and scrip tickets must be purchased to pay for each craft item.

## INDIAN FAIR FOODS

A must for all visitors at this year's Indian Fair is the chance to taste authentic Indian foods. Among the delectable delights are posole made with wild tepary beans, Hopi piki bread made from blue cornmeal and cooked on a hot stone, parched corn, and Navajo fry bread served with either salsa and beans or honey and powdered sugar.

## RARE VISIT BY BAJA CALIFORNIA INDIANS

Most people are aware that California Indian tribes such as the Kumeyaay and Luiseño still exist and maintain many of their old traditions. But there is little knowledge about Indian tribes south of the border—relatives of the Kumeyaay who, in the mid-1800s, were cut off from communication with the San Diego Kumeyaay by an artificial dividing line.

The Museum is sponsoring a group of Paipai and Kumeyaay Indians from Baja California as guests at the Indian Fair, June 12 and 13. This rare appearance, difficult because of immigration laws, marks one of the few times in recent history that these tribes will be able to visit with their Kumeyaay relatives north of the border. Mike Wilken, an anthropologist and director of the Cuna Institute, will coordinate the trip. The Paipai will participate in the Indian Fair by demonstrating pottery and basketry techniques, dancing, singing traditional chants, and selling their artwork. A special slide-illustrated lecture by Mike Wilken discussing the history of Baja California Indians will be given each day at 1:30 p.m.

Archaeologists believe that Baja California's last Indian groups probably migrated from what is now Arizona and Southern California about 2,000 years ago. While still closely related culturally and linguistically to their U.S. counterparts, the Baja California Indians have maintained a more traditional lifestyle due to their geographical isolation in the Sierra de Juarez mountains. Early Spanish accounts of Baja California Indians are invaluable because they chronicle native culture, customs, and lifestyles. These accounts were not without prejudice, however, and depict the Indians as barbarous and savage. The Spanish also effectively ended thousands of years of traditional lifeways through settlement at missions, which destroyed their native culture and left few survivors. The Paipai of Baja California are one of a handful of Indian communities which survived intact, still carrying on the traditions of their ancestors. Many of their scattered *rancherías* are traditional Indian settlements, with original names mentioned in the earliest records of the area.



Paipai Josefina Ocurte.  
Photograph by Roberto Córdova Leyua.

Striking similarities in language and culture between the Indians of Baja California and those of Southern California confirm an ancient lineage between the two peoples. Reunions have revealed that both groups speak nearly the same language and suggest a connection broken long ago. The Paipai can understand San Diego's Kumeyaay, but not vice-versa.

We are looking forward to the visit of these Indians from Baja California, which will add a special interest and historical background to the Indian Fair this year.

# Baja Indians are visiting Sycuans

By CHET BARFIELD  
Staff Writer

## SYCUAN INDIAN RESERVATION —

Like a reunion of long-distant relatives, nine Mexican Indians from Baja California have arrived for a rare visit with local Kumeyaay tribal members, their ancestral cousins, before participating as honored guests in the San Diego Museum of Man's Indian Fair this weekend.

The Paipai Indians, many of whom have never been north of the border, are being hosted by the Sycuan band near El Cajon. They are scheduled to spend today meeting elders of Sycuan and other nearby Kumeyaay reservations.

"They're very closely related," said anthropologist Mike Wilken, whose non-profit Native Cultures Institute in Ensenada is coordinating the trip. "Their roots go back thousands of years, but they've been separated in the last couple hundred years . . . by the U.S.-Mexican border."

Members of more than 30 American Indian tribes — including Sioux, Cherokee, Navajo, Hopi, Zuni, Pima and Apache — will take part in the fair tomorrow and Sunday at the Balboa Park museum. The 10th annual event features a variety of Indian songs, dances and storytelling, plus dozens of booths offering native arts, crafts and food.

Admission is \$4 for adults and is free for children under 6. A schedule of events is available from the museum, 239-2001.

Of all the tribes participating, the Paipai (pronounced PIE-pie) are the crown jewel of this year's fair, said Susan Bernstein, education coordinator for the Museum of Man.

"It's historical in a lot of ways," she said of the Mexican Indians' appearance. "Two of them will be singing social songs or court songs. . . . There will be basket-weavers and potters that will demonstrate their work as well as sell their pottery."

Wilken said much of the reason for the

separation between the American and Mexican tribes is the paperwork required to cross into the United States.

"The problem is, many of the Indians (in Mexico) don't have even the most basic documents," he said. "Luckily, the National Indian Institute down here — the Mexican version of the BIA (U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs) — has been getting people birth certificates.

"Just a passport is about \$80. Most of the Indians don't have that kind of money."

The Paipai are believed to have migrated from what is now Arizona and Southern California to Mexico 2,000 years ago, according to Museum of Man researchers. Today they inhabit dry, rugged mountains that run like a spine down the Baja peninsula.

The largest Paipai village, Santa Catarina, has a population of 240 and is about halfway between Ensenada and San Felipe, which is on the gulf side of the peninsula 120 miles south of Mexicali.

The Mexican Indian visitors — five women and four men, all elders — are artisans, singers and musicians, Wilken said. One member of the group, a singer, is a native of the Kiliwa band from Arroyo León, about four hours southeast of Ensenada.

"These people have managed to survive because they live in very isolated places," Wilken said. "On the one hand they've been very poor, but on the other hand they have kept a lot of the culture alive because they haven't been as influenced by the outside world."

Long ago, before there were state or international borders, the Kumeyaay and Paipai were branches of an indigenous family tree that spread across what is now Southern California, southwestern

Arizona and northern Baja California, Wilken said.

"The groups up north and the groups down here have things to offer each other," he said from his office in Ensenada. "A lot of the cultural aspects that have been lost up north, the people here have kept alive — like the language, the hand-crafts, the gathering and processing of wild foods."

On this side of the border, the visit is being coordinated by Louie Guassac, a Sycuan casino employee and member of the Mesa Grande band north of Ramona.

Guassac said the visitors, who speak the native Kumeyaay language, will be lodged in an Alpine motel and will have potluck meals at the Sycuan and Viejas reservations.

"I wish I could tell you we're going to have a big sun dance like we did in the old days, but that won't be the case," Guassac said. "It will be a get-acquainted of the elders. This is actually a really big ground-breaking day to have the Indians here be the host."

"At one time there was the free ability of the band to walk back forth across the border. As you know, that is no longer the case. Maybe this is the start of that re-birth, the ability of the band to know each other again."

Sycuan and Viejas tribal leaders could not be reached for comment. But Guassac, 34, said the visit is causing a great stirring of positive energy throughout San Diego County's 12 Kumeyaay reservations. He said elders from Sycuan, Viejas and elsewhere are eagerly looking forward to sharing meals, stories and conversations in the ancient Kumeyaay tongue.

"This will make a big impression on the elders . . . and hopefully the children," he said. "What it means is an awakening. It's almost an indescribable feeling to meet with your ancestors."

"It's like looking back at my ancestors, and here they are. Right here."

# Long-Lost Brothers, Long-Lost Sisters

## Indian Fair Hosts Bi-National Reunion

**T**here is a prophecy reportedly common to several groups of North American Indians, but best known as an Aztec legend. Some day, these ancient people said long ago, we will be visited by blue-eyed foreigners from across the sea and they will dominate our land for a while, and then the land will return to us.

In many ways, it is what you might call a "typical" prophecy, or a prophecy that might sound familiar to any modern American acquainted with the received prophetic tradition detailed in the Bible: an enemy will come, will conquer, but in the end, justice will be done.

Americans have for so long seen their country's history re-

28, 1992, Tecate Peak, a 3,900-foot mountain straddling public land on the U.S.-Mexico border, became the first property listed on the National Register of Historic Places solely for its importance to the Kumeyaay Indians of San Diego County and Baja California. The religious sites of the blue-eyed men have turned to dust, but Tecate Peak, a holy mountain to the Kumeyaay, has endured.

Kumeyaay culture also has endured in other ways. When San Diegans utter certain local place names, Jamul or Jamacha, for example, they are uttering Kumeyaay words. (The "ja" in these names means "water.") These words are traces, or rem-

ing continued for centuries until the Spanish came and erected their missions. Anthropologists estimate that at the time of the Spanish arrival, 40,000 to 50,000 Indians lived in Baja California; today there are only a thousand left who speak an Indian language and pursue a traditional way of life.

Most San Diegans, when thinking of the Indians of Baja California, if they think of them at all, probably remember the colorfully dressed women along Revolución in Tijuana. These short women, with babies slung across their backs, hawking dolls, or gum, or necklaces, are in no way related to the Kumeyaay or the Paipai, another group indigenous to the area, but instead are usually Mixtecs from Oaxaca.

The Paipai and Kumeyaay living in San Diego and Baja California are actually part of a larger family group found in pock-



flected in old prophecy — America as the "Holy Land" or "New Jerusalem," black slaves in the South and the Jewish slaves of Egypt — that we might miss the faint irony in the Indian legend of the blue-eyed conquerors. The string of 18th-century Jesuit missions, built along Baja California to convert the peninsula's Indians, are now in ruins. But on October

nants, of a culture that came to this area some 2,000 years ago when Indians from what is now Yuma, Arizona, migrated southward through San Diego and down into Baja California. They were a nomadic people who seasonally commuted from one location to another to gather the nuts and plants that made up their diet. This low-key pattern of coming and go-

ets scattered as far south as Nicaragua. Tribes related to the Paipai exist throughout Arizona — the Yavapai, the Hualapai, and the Havasupai who live in the Grand Canyon. Even after the border was established, there was considerable contact between all these groups until the 1960s. Until that time, the INS allowed these people, who rarely held passports or entry visas, to cross the border to visit their ethnic compatriots on the other side. For reasons that are still unclear, the INS discontinued this practice, and for almost 20 years, cultural exchange between the var-

low, and river grass that their ancestors used thousands of years ago.

Although Wilken's organization has been incorporated officially for only nine months, he and his 50 volunteers have already orchestrated several Kumeyaay and Paipai get-togethers in San Diego, Ensenada, and in various parts of Arizona. These informal meetings have been very successful, Wilken says, and both the Mexican and American Indians have been delighted to meet each other. "Not long ago, I took a group of Paipai elders from Baja to meet a group of

distance, still ethnically related.

He adds that the Kumeyaay and Paipai have expressed interest in sharing more than culture. "Whenever I visit them in the U.S. or here in Mexico, the elders always say, 'Bring us the young people. We want to meet the young people.' They'd like to see some marriages between them. They're all actually doing well. Although the communities are small, they're thriving. And they get real tired of having people say to them all the time, 'You know, you guys are on the brink of extinction.'"

This weekend, June 12 and 13, you'll have an opportunity to witness one of Wilken's happy reunions when the San Diego Museum of Man will host groups of both Mexican and American Paipai and Kumeyaay as part of the museum's Indian Fair. The Paipai have planned demonstrations of their crafts and native songs, and Wilken will offer slide-shows and lectures on the history of Baja Indians. Artists and performers from more than 30 other Indian tribes also will participate; a Santa Fe-style market, dancing, drumming, singing, and storytelling are planned. Traditional Indian foods will be sold and children will be able to make Indian crafts for a small fee.

— Abe Opincar



ious indigenous groups has been very limited.

Anthropologist Michael Wilken, who directs the Native Cultures Institute near Ensenada, is a sort of bi-national matchmaker who hopes to reintroduce these people to each other. The American Kumeyaay and Paipai especially have much to gain from their Mexican counterparts, he says. The Baja Californian Indians, because of their greater geographic and cultural isolation, have preserved more of their language and traditions. One indication of Indian culture's continuity south of the border can be found in the names of many Paipai ranches still dotting the peninsula. They are the same names mentioned in the accounts of the first Spanish to explore the area. And the Baja Indians, Wilken says, still build their homes and make their native crafts from the same kinds of clay, wil-

Paipai elders in an isolated part of Arizona," Wilken remembers. "They were so happy to find other people who spoke their language and shared their traditions. They said it was like meeting members of their long-lost family."

In addition to improving the Indians' social lives, the meetings have also been good for anthropology. The Kumeyaay and Paipai on both sides of the border can usually understand each other when speaking their slightly different native languages. This, contends Wilken, in addition to cultural similarities, shows that all these people, from Arizona to Ensenada are, despite time and



**Indian Fair**  
**10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.,**  
**Saturday and Sunday,**  
**June 12 and 13**  
**San Diego Museum of Man,**  
**Balboa Park**  
**Adults \$4, members \$3,**  
**ages 13-18 \$2, ages 6-12 \$1,**  
**under 6 free**  
**239-2001**



Union-Tribune / NELVIN CEPEDA



## Traditional way

*Manuela Aguiar of Baja California, using a stone to smooth a pot, was among the Paipai Indian elders who taught pottery making and basket weaving this week at the Museum of Man in Balboa Park.*

7-30-94 SDUT

## A tradition lives on in Campo

## Gather ye acorns while ye may . . .

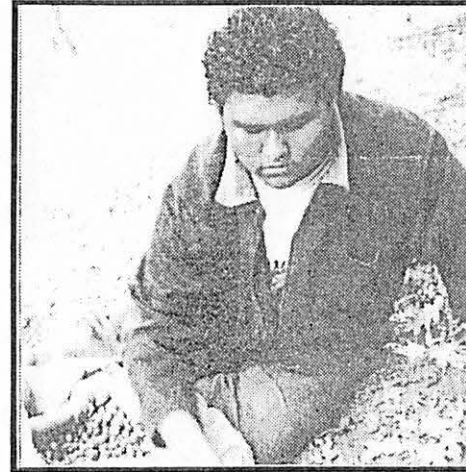
by Ed Lane

Stepping in the footprints of their grand fathers, teenagers from several local reservations recently met at Cuyapaipe to gather acorns.

According to Sandy Martin who, along with her husband Jim, was the organizer of the gathering, "This is the Valley of Finger Peak which, in the Kumeyaay language is called Cuia-pa-ti which sounds like hhhhwi-ti. These are the sweetest of all acorns. Kumeyaay came from far away to gather their yearly supply here."

The teenagers, who came from Barona, Viejas, Campo, and Manzanita, sampled the acorns--some finding them indeed sweet and others pronouncing them "yucky!"

All in attendance agreed that there are worse ways to spend a sunny afternoon than roaming among the huge and ancient oaks that fed their ancestors.



(Above) David Largo gathers acorns.  
(Below: from left) Sandy Martin, Terri Sloan, Timberlie Ceballos, the Martin children, Janine Ceballos, Natasha Cuero and Andrea Mason.

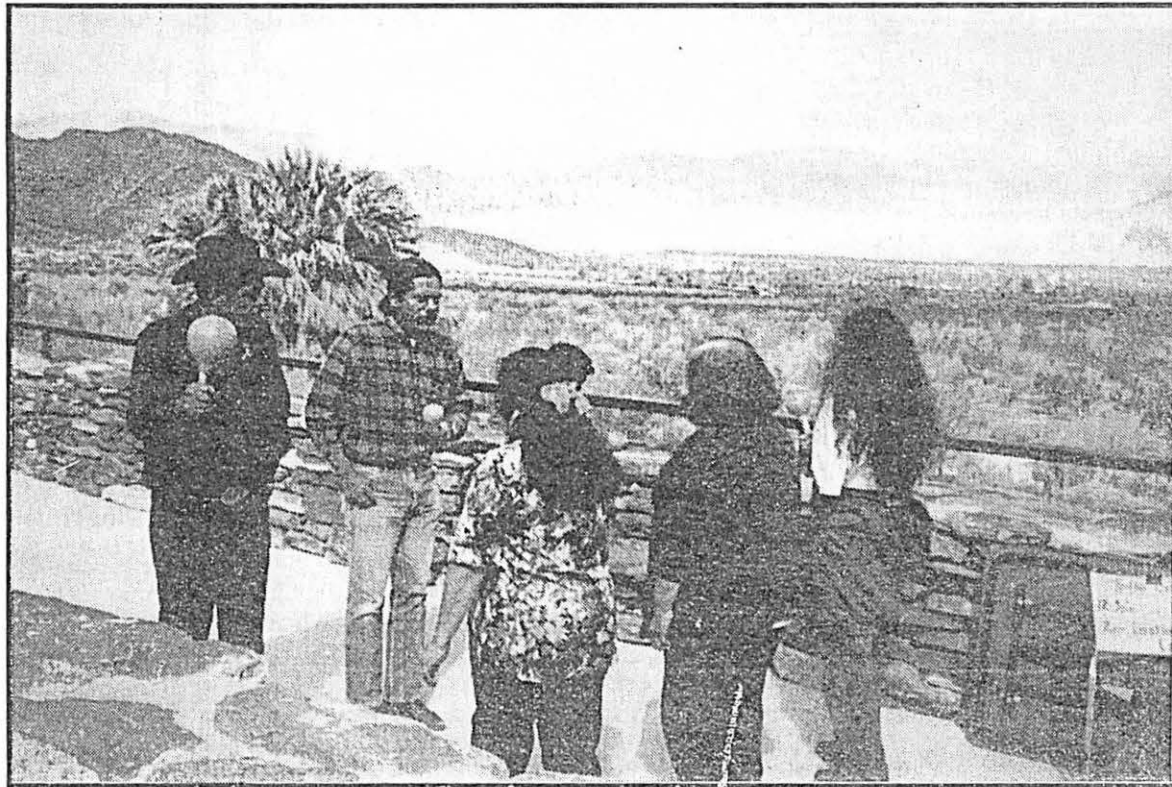


CAMPO RESERVATION-Gloria Casteneda and Celia Silva held a basket weaving class at Camp Tribal Hall recently for the benefit of those who were interested in learning the ancient craft.

Silva and Casteneda, from the village of San Jose Del Zorro about 40 miles south of Tecate, are expert in the ancient Kumeyaay art of basket weaving and were eager to pass along their knowledge to their American cousins.

The many in attendance, men, women, children and family groups, delighted in the thrill of creating the simple yet elegant baskets which were so important in the lives of their ancestors.

Debbie Cuero provided various tasty treats from the kitchen through the dinner hour and, when everyone had the basics of basket weaving under control, Gloria and Celia headed back to Baja California. Pictured (left to right) Marcus Cuero, Cimmaron Rodriguez, Cheyene Lelafu, Deanna Ferrin and (front) Timothy Cuero.

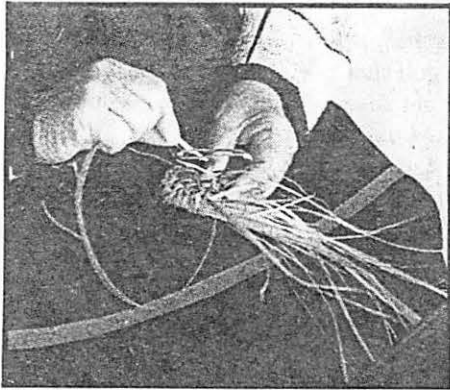


*A celebration of Native American culture: Anza-Borrego Desert State Park's "Native American Days" held recently, featured Kumeyaay and Paipai basket-weaving and pottery demonstrations as well as a cultural symposium including several Native American leaders.*

## TURNING TOWARD SUN

# Native American culture shared at celebration

Photos and article  
by  
**WILLIE MAE WILLIAMS**



**BASKET** begins to take shape as split palm fronds are woven together.



**KIEARA** Doren paints replica of Indian art on dried gourd.

The Paipai elder woman's weathered face glistened as she turned toward the morning sun. The soft rattle of a squash gourd mixed with the calm words of Josefina Ochurte as she chanted about a lost love. In slow methodical steps she performed an age-old dance of her ancestors for the audience gathered in the new outdoor amphitheater at the Anza-Borrego Desert State Park (ABDSP) Visitor Center during Native American Days held Feb. 10-11.

"It is the custom of Native American performers to always face the morning sun when they sing or dance," said Park Interpretative Specialist Joanie Cahill, coordinator of the event.

Over 2,500 people attended this year's celebration to learn more about the cultural heritage of the Cahuilla and Kumiai (also spelled Kumeyaay) that are a big part of Borrego's history, said Park Aide Karyn-Gaye Barnett.

Events included a presentation about the daily chores of Native American women and a session of the games that Native Americans have played for centuries, said Barnett.

There was also a special blessing of the new Nierenberg Plaza and amphitheater by Paipai elder Benito Manuela Aguiar. Sage was burned "to cleanse the area of any possible unhappiness," said Barnett.

"We had several Native Americans

**KUMIAI** - Eva Guadalupe Salazar takes a break from her exhibit of baskets and wooden carvings with her son Mickey, who wears hat woven by his mother.

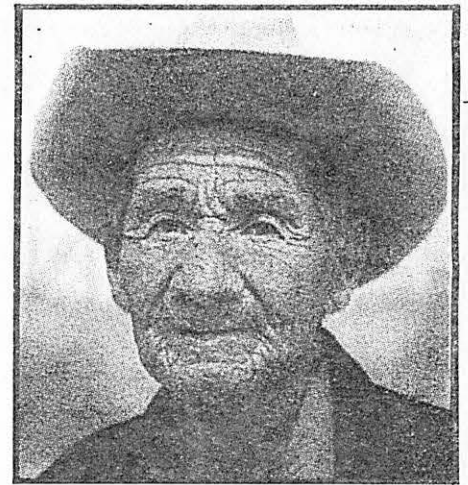


demonstrate the grinding of black oak acorns, the main staple in the earlier Native American's diet," she said.

Accompanied by their interpreter Mike Wilken, executive director of the Cuna Institute of Chula Vista, the performers and artists from three native communities of Baja exhibited and sold basketry, elaborate beadwork, pottery, and carved bows and arrows.



**VOLUNTEER** naturalist Marge Hatcher explains the many uses of agave plant and its importance in Cahuilla and Kumiai cultures. Program took place in the Newt and Mary Ann Williams Garden atop underground Visitor Center.



**BLESSING** of new Nierenberg Plaza was performed by Benito Aguiar.



**KUMIAI** Juan Bernardo Aldama shows his bow and knife handiwork.

**SAT., NOV. 12:**

**California Indian Artways**—The S.B. Museum of Natural History presents traditional arts, stories, pottery, and basketmaking of Baja California's native communities, starting with an informal crafts viewing at 1 p.m. and presentation at 2 p.m. in the S.B. Museum of Natural History, 2559 Puesta del Sol. \$4 adults/\$3 seniors and youths ages 13-19/\$2 children ages 2-12. Members are free. Call 682-4711 for more info.



ART BRACKLEY

## BEST BET

It will be a day of storytelling, song, dance, and crafts on Saturday, November 12, as the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History holds a celebration of Native American cultural arts and traditions. The members of Baja California's native communities perform their traditional arts on the museum grounds in a multilingual program that starts at 1 p.m. with informal crafts demonstrations. The performers will speak in their native tongue as they tell stories about the natural world of their ancestors. Anthropologist Michael Wilken will provide simultaneous translation. A special welcome greeting will be given by Adelina Padilla, a Chumash Elder from the Santa Ynez Indian Reservation. Paipai storyteller Benito Peralta will relate myths, legends, history, and coyote stories. Native gourd singers will share their traditional music and invite the public to join in the dancing. Paipai Indian potters and Kumiai Indian basket makers will demonstrate their handicraft skills and other examples of their crafts. The program is free with the regular \$4 museum admission for adults, \$3 for teens and seniors, and \$2 for children. For more information, call 682-4711.