

RESEARCH ISSUES IN SAN DIEGO PREHISTORY

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Introduction

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LINGUISTIC PREHISTORY

Evidence from native languages spoken in San Diego County during the historic period offers potential insights into prehistoric patterns of ethnic migration, interaction among communities, and cultural change. Several studies have addressed these issues within wider geographical contexts (e.g., Foster 1996, Golla 2007, 2011; Laylander 1985, 2010; Moratto 1984; Sutton 2009).

From three to seven distinct languages were spoken in the area of San Diego County at the time of European contact. In the north, the general consensus is that three languages were spoken: Luiseño in the northwest, including Juaneño as a dialect of Luiseño in the northern portion of Camp Pendleton as well as in southern Orange County; Cahuilla in the northeast; and Cupeño, closely related to Cahuilla but



considered a distinct language, in a small area around Warner's Springs (Goddard 1996; Mithun 1999). In the central and southern portions of the county, the Diegueño language or group of languages prevailed. The general view of linguists seems to be that the Diegueño group included at least three distinct languages within the county: Ipai in the northwest, Kumeyaay in the center, and Tipai perhaps in the extreme south but extending into northwestern Baja California (Langdon 1990; Goddard 1996; Campbell 1997; Miller 2001; Mithun 1999). However, some observers have considered Ipai, Kumeyaay, and Tipai to be dialects of a single Diegueño or Kumeyaay language, or have grouped Kumeyaay and Tipai under the designation of Tipai (Luomala 1978).

Relationships based on shared linguistic descent among the region's languages are fundamental in reconstructing linguistic prehistory. Luiseño, Cupeño, and Cahuilla belong to the Uto-Aztecan family, widely distributed from the northern Great Basin to central Mexico. Within Uto-Aztecan, these three languages are classified within northern Uto-Aztecan, the Takic branch, and the Cupan group. Related languages within the Takic branch include Serrano and Gabrielino, spoken to the north and northwest. No relationship of common descent is discernible between the Uto-Aztecan languages and the languages of the Diegueño group, which belong to the Yuman family, its Core Yuman division, and the Delta-California Yuman branch, affiliations that it shares with Cocopa. Yuman has been included within a very tenuous Hokan phylum, with sister families scattered around the periphery of California and south into Mexico.

Malcolm J. Rogers (1945) developed an influential model for the region's linguistic prehistory, although one that was based more on archaeology than on linguistic evidence. He saw Yuman origins in the pre-ceramic La Jolla culture of the coastal area. A subsequent expansion to the lower Colorado River area occurred, perhaps impelled in part by a Uto-Aztecan expansion into coastal southern California to the north, the so-called "Shoshonean Wedge" between Hokan-speaking Yumans and Chumash that had previously been hypothesized by A. L. Kroeber (1923). On the Colorado River, the Yumans received ceramics from the Southwest and subsequently expanded back again

to the west coast to become the historic Diegueño, according to Rogers.

Estimating the time depths of the genetic relationships among languages is problematic, although some rough estimates have been attempted. Estimates relevant to the native languages of San Diego County have been based both on general impressions of the degree of linguistic divergence between present-day languages, as compared with relationships of known time depth among Old World Romance and Germanic languages, and on the more quantitative but controversial technique of glottochronology. The resulting estimates have often been widely divergent, but nonetheless they suggest some very generalized timeframes for the separations that are most likely to have been relevant to San Diego County's prehistory:

- Yuman from Cochimí, ca. 2000 B.C.
- Core Yuman from Kiliwa, ca. 2900 B.C.-A.D. 100
- Delta-California Yuman from Core Yuman, ca. 1500 B.C.-A.D. 700
- Diegueño from Cocopa, ca. 500 B.C.-A.D. 1000
- Ipai, Kumeyaay, and Tipai from each other, ca. A.D. 600-1200
- Takic from northern Uto-Aztecan, ca. 2600 B.C.-A.D. 1
- Luiseño from Cahuilla-Cupeño, ca. 1500 B.C.-A.D. 1000

(Sources for these estimates include Golla 2007; Goss 1968; Hale 1958; Hale and Harris 1979; Hill 2001; Jacobs 1975; Laylander 1985, 2010; Miller 1983, 1984; Ochoa Zazueta 1982a, 1982b; Robles Uribe 1964; Shaul and Hill 1998; Sutton 2009; and Swadesh 1963, 1967.)

Attempts have been made to infer the homelands of the linguistic groups represented in San Diego County and the directions from which they entered the county. Suggested Yuman homelands have included the lower Colorado River valley (Law 1961), northern Baja California (Laylander 1985), and an undetermined location having neither marine nor riverine resources (Mixco 2006). Suggested homelands for the Takic branch of Uto-Aztecan have generally been located either in the Mojave Desert or in the San Joaquin Valley (Fowler 1983; Golla 2007; Sutton 1994, 2009)

Linguistic evidence also provides hints of prehistoric interactions among different language groups, based on apparently borrowed phonological traits, grammar, or lexicon. A substratum of lexical items in Gabrielino and Luiseño may identify those languages' predecessors in coastal southern California as having been non-Yuman and non-Chumash (Bright and Bright 1976; Laylander 1985). However, other arguments have been advanced that the Takic groups' predecessors were Yumans (Hinton 1991) or Chumash (Bull 1977).

PROSPECTS

Additional linguistic studies may be able to clarify the genetic and non-genetic relationships among the native languages of San Diego County and surrounding regions, including the time depths of those relationships. Archaeological investigations may be able to match prehistoric discontinuities in material culture traits with episodes of linguistic displacement, or to link cultural continuity with linguistic stability. When probable linguistic discontinuities are identified, the likely sources of external influences may be identifiable archaeologically.

