

Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History Vol XX Part III Notes on Shoshonean

An Ethnographic Review of Grinding, Pounding, Pulverizing, and Smoothing with Stones

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Abstract

This paper reviews some of the ethnographic literature describing the use of metates, manos, mortars, and pestles and the materials processed using these implements. The data presented herein are taken primarily from ethnographic literature from southern California, although some literature from bordering areas was also consulted. As archaeologists, we often make assumptions about ground stone implements, their use, and the inferences that can be drawn from their occurrence in a prehistoric site assemblage. The over 70 items described herein that were processed in these implements suggests that we should look more closely at our assumed use of these items and that microbotanical and protein residue analyses may be necessary to test our hypotheses.

Archaeologists often infer that metates were used for grinding seeds and grains and that mortars were used for processing acorns, mesquite, and piñon nuts. Although these may be the primary uses, other items were equally important and should not be ignored. California, as a whole, prehistorically was a rich state leading Kroeber (1925:239) to note that the native Californian had a "fairly liberal margin between needs and acute want ... [and] did not go for long without procuring food, but the very diversity and multifariousness of supply gave him comparative security against want." It is this diversity that archaeologists are ignoring in their assumptions about food processing with ground stone implements. In addition, the material being processed probably was correlated with the shape and type of implement employed. According to Kroeber (1908:12), "Food and mode of subsistence were of course most directly dependent on environment, and the implements of their gathering and preparation varied accordingly." In order to document the wide range of material processed with various grinding, ethnographic literature from southern California and some contiguous areas was reviewed.

Metates and Manos

Although various shapes of metates have been reported for different groups, the data are often contradictory. Drucker (1937:14) reported that the Serrano, Cahuilla, Cupeño, Luiseno, Diegueño, Yuma, and Chemehuevi used rectangular metates on only one side. Kroeber

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Publications, volume 5, part 3, ; collated and revised with the assistance of Mrs. (e) Notes on Acoma and Laguna
(American Anthropol- ogist, N.S., vol. 20, pp. Notes on Shoshonean Ethnography. Robert Lowie's death not only
removed from anthropology one of its most wrote three other books that indicate the wide scope of his interests a popular
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