

Archaeological Survey of the University  
of California Los Angeles 90024

Feb. 4, 1966

PROGRESS REPORT FOR THE YEAR 1965

Purpose of the report. This report is submitted in compliance with the Uniform Rules and Regulations, Sec. 10 and is a brief account of field work and test excavations in Panamint Valley, Inyo County, California, under permits from the Department of the Interior.

Nature of the work. Between January and June, 1965, test excavations were made at three Early Man sites, associated with the Lake Mohave cultural stage and located about the margins of Lake Hill Island. Fourteen pits were dug by hand and the contents carefully screened, 1/4, 1/8, 1/16 inch. Six trenches were cut with a bulldozer along the edges of the sites and stratigraphic information, pollen samples, and indications of further cultural deposits were obtained.

Carbon 14 dates on organic mats and burned reeds associated with the ancient lake bed are  $10,520 \pm 150$  and  $10,020 \pm 100$  years B.P.

In addition to the various excavations, surveys were conducted within two extensive areas of dunes, the Great Dunes at the north end of the north Panamint basin and the Indian Ranch dunes near Ballarat in the central Panamint basin. These surveys recorded some 80 campsites and established the existence of continuous cultural developments, similar to those in Death Valley, from about 8,000 B.C. until the present century. During this long span of time, the various visiting bands of people progressed from a non-milling stage of hunting and collecting, through the use of mortar grinding, then to slab-and-handstone milling and finally to the adoption of pottery-making, together with a late Desert Culture artifact assemblage.

Importance of the work. This is the only 'Playa Culture' site known so far where lake-bottom and shore-contact stratigraphies have been exposed in association with buried cultural deposits. It is essential that the work be pursued for as many seasons as are necessary, in order to reconstruct the climatic cycles of this post-Pleistocene environment and then to make sure how these fit with the cultural deposits.

At present, there is good (but not unquestionable) evidence that the Lake Mohave and Silver Lake artifacts lie in secondary deposits of soil which once mantled Lake Hill Island but have now washed down, covering the former lake bed and shore to a depth of several feet and forming the substance of the shallow aprons now surrounding the island foot. Pollen indicates a former moist cycle during Lake Mohave occupancy.

Interdisciplinary studies. In order to set up in advance a program designed to solve these problems, experts in other fields were called in as consultants last season. A pedologist, several geologists, a geomorphologist and a paleo-ecologist have visited the sites and are contributing to the first publication (in preparation). When present material has all been submitted for publication, another proposal will be written, applying for funds to continue this promising research. Initial studies have been supported by National Science Foundation grant GS-650-Davis/True.

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