

IDAHO YESTERDAYS

Fall Issue, 1965: Volume 9, Number 3

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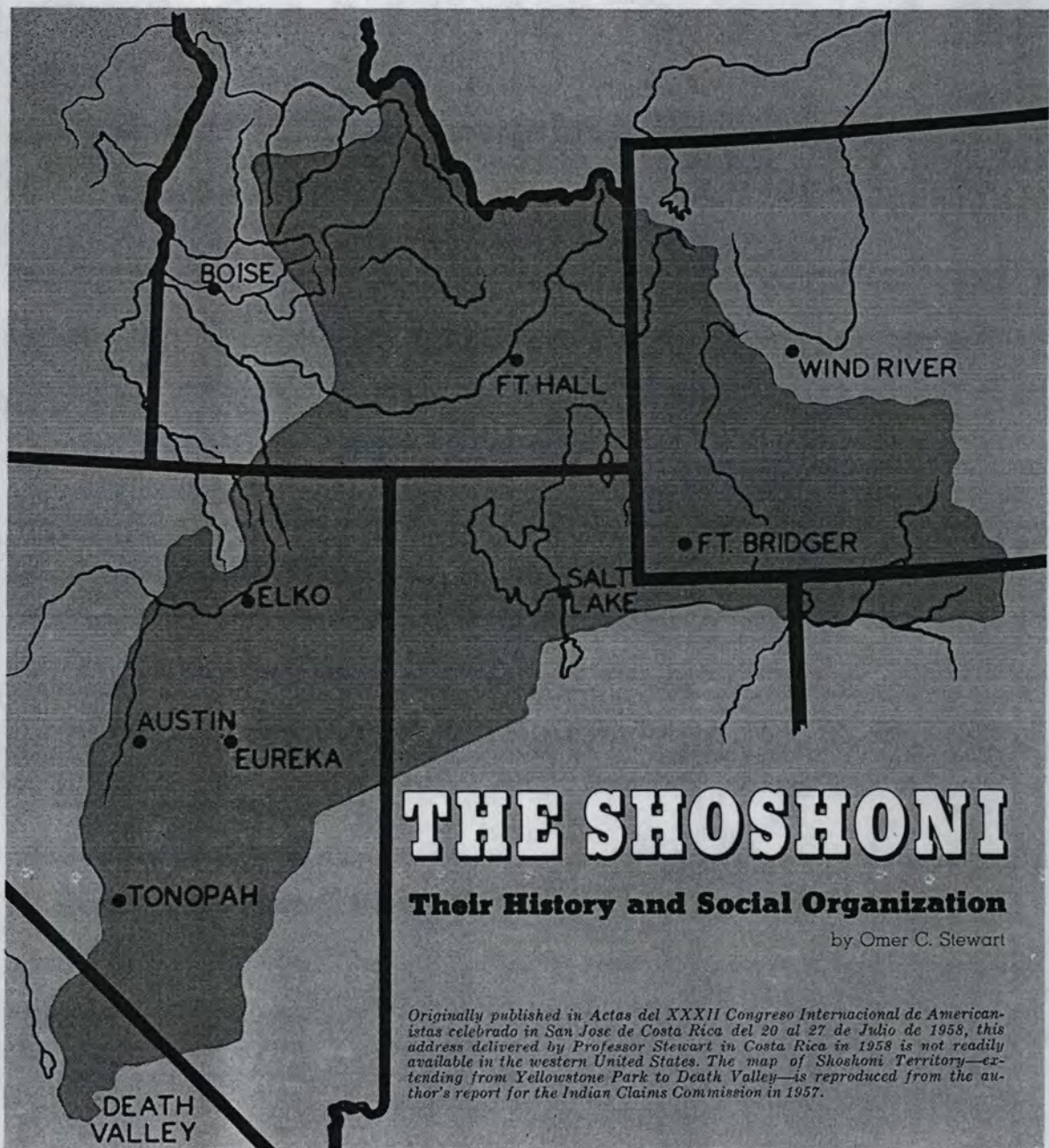
Our cover story, dealing with Idaho's sugar beet industry, begins on page 16 with an opening picture showing beets being unloaded at the old Nampa sugar factory described on pages 25-27. The cover design is the work of the society's art director.

1. Date of filing: September 30, 1965. 2. Title of publication: Idaho Yesterdays. 3. Frequency of issue: Quarterly. 4. Location of known office of publication: Idaho Historical Society, 610 N. Julia Davis Drive, Ada County, Boise, Idaho 83706. 5. Location of the headquarters or general business office of the publishers: Idaho Historical Society, 610 N. Julia Davis Drive, Ada County, Boise, Idaho 83706. 6. Names and addresses of publisher, editor, and managing editor: Idaho Historical Society 610 N. Julia Davis Drive, Ada County, Boise, Idaho 83706. Editor: H. J. Swinney, 610 N. Julia Davis Drive, Boise, Ada County, Idaho 83706. Managing editor: Merle W. Wells, 610 N. Julia Davis Drive, Boise, Ada County, Idaho 83706. 7. Name: Idaho Historical Society, Address, 610 N. Julia Davis Drive, Boise, Ada County, Idaho 83706. 8. Known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 percent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages or other securities: None. No advertising.

IDAHO YESTERDAYS is published four times a year by the Idaho Historical Society, whose headquarters are in the Idaho Historical Museum, 610 North Julia Davis Drive, Boise, Idaho.

Editor Merle Wells
Editorial Associate Roy Limbaugh
Art Director Lowell Hocking
Business Manager Hilma Peterson

SECOND CLASS POSTAGE PAID AT BOISE, IDAHO



THE SHOSHONI INDIANS, a linguistically uniform group made up of many small bands or villages, constituted one of the language groups of the Shoshonean subgroup of the Uto-Astecan linguistic stock. Groups of Shoshoni Indians occupied a triangular-shaped territory with the long base to the north along the Wind River Mountains of Wyoming and the Bitter Root Mountains of Idaho, and extending southwestward from Yellowstone Park about 700 miles to the Sier-

ra Nevada Mountains beyond Owens Lake and Death Valley in California. The base of the triangle extended almost 500 miles along the mountains from central Idaho to north central Colorado and included the headwaters of such streams as the North Platte River, the Colorado River, the Green River, the Snake River, the Salmon River and the Humboldt River of Nevada. Within the territory were Great Salt Lake, Bear Lake in Idaho and Utah, and the semi-desert of east central

Nevada. This territory, which was the central homeland from which the Shoshoni Indians raided and to which they returned, and into which other tribes at times made raids for horses and from which other tribes withdrew, is within the modern states of Wyoming, Idaho, Utah, and Nevada, with small extensions into northwestern Colorado and southeastern California.

The boundaries of the Shoshoni territory described and outlined on Map 1 were determined during research in connection with the claim of the Shoshoni Indians before the United States Indian Claims Commission, in which the Indians requested payment for their aboriginal lands. This outlined territory was the area which I determined as exclusively the possession of the Shoshoni, primarily because they occupied and used it, and because no other neighboring Indians laid claim to it.

During many years the Shoshoni periodically hunted beyond the territory outlined,¹ particularly on the headwaters of the Missouri River in Montana and on the high plains of Wyoming. The Wind River Reservation, the largest territory now owned by the Shoshoni Indians, is actually beyond that outlined as the ancient homeland of the Shoshoni. In order to determine the area occupied by the Shoshoni during their entire aboriginal history — from the time they were first visited in 1805 until their occupation was entirely disrupted about 1870 — I attempted a review of all the historical, ethnographic, archaeological and literary material dealing with the Shoshoni and their neighbors. This review indicated to me that the Shoshoni, throughout the historic period were made up of diverse types of societies and cultures, despite the fact that they remained a linguistic unit, having a mutually intelligible language over the entire area. The purpose of this paper is to present a theoretical framework for understanding the diversities recorded.

In most respects my research has confirmed the opinion of previous writers concerning the basic gathering culture pattern

¹D. B. Shimkin, *Wood River Shoshoni Ethnogeography*, University of California Anthropological Records (1947), 5:245-288.

²W. Lloyd Warner, *American Life: Dream and Reality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), 55-65.

³Francis Haines, "The Northward Spread of Horses among the Plains Indians," *American Anthropologist* (1938), 40:429-437.

⁴Journal of Pierre Gaultier de Verennes, Sieur de la Verendrye, in *Exploration de Affluents du Mississippi et Decouverte de Montagnes Rocheuses* (Paris, 1888), 6:598, 601-605.

⁵J. B. Tyrell, ed., *David Thompson's Narrative of his Explorations in Western America, 1784-1812* (Toronto, 1916), 131, 326-343.

⁶Washington Irving, *Astoria* (1837).

of the ancient Nevada Shoshoni and the modern Plains-type culture of the Wyoming and Idaho Shoshoni. My analysis of the historical documents, however, has led me to the conclusion that the historical social structure of the Shoshoni of the north has been misrepresented until now, because it has been forced into the more primitive and probably the more ancient pattern of the Nevada Shoshoni. I wish to propose instead that the Shoshoni Indians of Idaho, Wyoming and northern Utah had become organized into a primitive democracy and a social system of three classes, including all northern Shoshoni, but excluding the Shoshoni of southern Nevada and of the Death Valley region of California. The class system is like that of the United States defined by Warner.²

The division might be better characterized by the distinction between the horse-using Shoshoni of the north and the pre-horse or non-horse Shoshoni of the south. The horse appears to have reached the Shoshoni of Idaho, northern Utah and southwestern Wyoming by 1700.³ Between 1700 and 1805 these horse Shoshoni developed a peculiar social structure suited to the combination of the horse culture and their ancient foot culture. The early accounts of the Shoshoni by Verendrye⁴ in 1742 and by David Thompson⁵ in 1800, the latter reporting an incident of about 1732, indicate that the Shoshoni became powerful and wealthy horse-using Indians early in the 1700's. Yet the Blackfeet and other Plains Indians, having received horses from the Shoshoni and then having obtained firearms from the British and French traders, were able to force the Shoshoni to retreat into their mountain bastions by 1800. Even then the Shoshoni obviously were rich in horses and had a memory of much roaming. The repulsion of the Shoshoni from the Plains and their struggle for their interior basin heartland were primarily the result of their failure to obtain guns in the quantities equal to those of their northern and eastern Plains neighbors.⁶ With the arrival of American fur trappers and traders in the 1820's, the Shoshoni again asserted their power and fought on equal terms with the formidable Blackfoot, Crow and Sioux Indians of the Plains. After that, and until peace was established by the American government in the 1870's, the territories north and east of the Bitter Root Range in Montana and the Wind River Mountains in Wyoming were contested periodically by the Shoshoni

and the Plains tribes. In the century and a half during which the northern Shoshoni changed from hunting and gathering peoples to courageous and successful cavalry warriors, their linguistic kin in the south and central Nevada preserved their ancient simple foot culture. As late as 1866, whenever the southern Nevada Shoshoni could capture a horse, their first concern was to kill it and strip the meat to eat or to dry.⁷

Because of the many basic similarities in language and other cultural items between the Nevada Shoshoni and those of Idaho and Wyoming, we can quite safely postulate that the entire Shoshoni Indian language group probably had an ancient sub-culture similar to that of the southern Nevada Shoshoni before those in the north obtained horses, which was around 1700. It was the acquisition of the horse and the cultural developments resulting from that acquisition which brought about the remarkable changes so well recorded up to now. Notwithstanding years of excellent study by a number of well-known anthropologists, the historic social structure of the northern Shoshoni has, in my opinion, remained unclear because of the failure to realize that the ancient and the new had combined to form a remarkable fluid, almost modern class system, which had developed during historic times in Idaho and Wyoming. Anthropological reports of the northern Shoshoni such as those of R. H. Lowie⁸ in 1909, E. A. Hoebel⁹ in 1938 and Ake Hultkrantz¹⁰ in 1958, the latter presented at the Copenhagen meeting of this organization, have indicated that the northern Shoshoni had in aboriginal times a number of distinct named groups or bands. All of the previous anthropological work, however, has revealed that the ancient social structure was extremely simple and based upon exploitation of a small area by a few loosely organized families. These local units do not correspond with any of the modern tribal subdivisions which were reported by numerous official and scientific reporters.

I wish to propose that the difficulty and the uncertainty in regard to the subdivisions of the northern Shoshoni result from the fact that the ancient local grouping and food-named bands had been entirely superceded and, in general, replaced by a new socio-political structure which included all of the northern Shoshoni of Idaho, Wyoming, and Northern Utah, but that these Indians were subdivided into a class structure made up of



TAGI

individuals from the entire northern area. Furthermore, the Bannock Indians, a Northern Paiute-speaking group from Oregon, had also been integrated into this new class structure of the northern Shoshoni. Some memory of the ancient, pre-horse subdivisions persisted among the very poor and aged who had remained tied to the soil, subsisting on small game and seeds, which had constituted the pre-horse basis of survival of these Shoshoni. The majority, however, had become participants in the larger structure, in which those with many horses and sufficient goods to travel widely formed the upper class. In the middle class were those having a few horses and participating partially in the nomadic life of the upper class, or the more fortunate fishermen settled at very productive spots. Finally, in the lower class were individuals who remained without transportation and had to depend upon the gifts or generosity of the wealthy Shoshoni and upon their own hunting of rodents and gathering of roots, seeds and insects in the ancient fashion on foot.

The ancient aboriginal political structure described by Lowie¹¹ persisted and was adapted to the wider and more mobile situation of the horse culture. This might be characterized as a primitive democracy in which the power of the chief always rested upon his personal influence and the following he could attract.

The evidence for my proposal comes from a large number of the early historical accounts, and, in fact, the theoretical proposition and the details of the structure were actually defined many times by the observers of early northern Shoshoni life. Its significance seems to have escaped my anthro-

pological colleagues, because a simple democratic political organization, built with a fairly elementary class system based upon ownership of horses or the absence of such ownership, did not seem to be consistent with our other knowledge of the very simple political structure and social organization of the Great Basin Shoshoni. The basis for my present formulation is found in the records of many trappers and explorers who lived with the Shoshoni and observed the extremely different statuses or positions found in the same area at the same time or at different times. In other words, the problem faced was how to account for the presence of horse-using Indians, with buffalo robes and skin tents, living side by side with Indians in grass huts, naked and subsisting on grasshoppers.

In 1805 Lewis and Clark¹² observed two of the Shoshoni classes during their crossing of the Bitter Root Mountains, a passage from the headwaters of the Missouri River to the Columbia River drainage. The first Shoshoni they met were well mounted buffalo hunters living in skin lodges. Their important head chief, flanked by sub-chiefs, received the travelers with pomp and ceremony. Yet he had to cajole and persuade the independent minded warriors to aid the travelers. On the Lemhi River, beside the horse Shoshoni camp, Lewis and Clark¹³ found a small village of brush huts of salmon-fishing Shoshoni, constituting a sedentary class with distinctive habits and ambitions. The information received by Lewis and Clark¹⁴ from the Indians,

concerning Shoshoni territory not visited by these explorers, makes it evident that the horse Shoshoni traveled widely within this country as well as far beyond the limits of their ancient homeland.

A similar picture of the northern Shoshoni is found in the reports of Hunt and Stuart,¹⁵ who passed over much more of Shoshoni territory in 1811-1812. Whereas Lewis and Clark passed through a corner of Shoshoni land, Stuart and Hunt traversed it entirely at its broadest east-west section. Near the Boise River, at the far western edge of Shoshoni country, among the destitute Shoshoni subsisting on fish and roots, Stuart engaged a guide who knew the route (and who preferred buffalo to salmon) to take him to the high plains.¹⁶ Along Snake River Stuart saw a few horses but was impressed by the fish, root and berry diet of the miserable brush-hut dwellers.

Information from Stuart and Hunt, the Astorians of 1811-1812, led Washington Irving to the conclusion that defeat had produced among the Shoshoni "a scattered, broken-spirited impoverished people . . . subsisting chiefly on fish. Such of them as still possess horses . . . are called Shoshonies; but there is another class, the most abject and forlorn, who are called Shuckers, or more commonly Diggers and Root Eaters".¹⁷

Alexander Ross¹⁸ also depicted the Shoshoni of Idaho as composed of three distinct classes or divisions, united in the "great Snake nation headed by the two principal chiefs Pee-eye-em and Ama-qui-em".¹⁹ The three divisions were camped together along Snake River when visited by Donald Mackenzie in 1818. Ross designated the three classes as 1) Sherry-dikas, "the real Shoshones", who often live in the Plains hunting buffalo; 2) War-are-ree-kas, fishermen; 3) Mountain Snakes, predatory wanderers.²⁰ Where Stuart saw only destitute huts of fishermen in 1812, Mackenzie saw in 1818, in addition, a camp of skin lodges for ten thousand souls.²¹

Captain B. L. E. Bonneville²² reported on the "miserably poor" "hermit race" of Shoshoni, who were "scattered about" in the mountains, after residence in the Rocky Mountains in the 1830's.²³ He also told of the "Shoshokoes, or Root Diggers", another branch of the great "Snake tribe".²⁴

An independent trapper by the name of Osborne Russell,²⁵ who had learned to speak

¹²A. F. White, July 5, 1866, to the Nevada superintendent of Indian Affairs, in the Nevada file, Bureau of Indian Affairs, letters received, National Archives.

¹³Robert H. Lowie, *The Northern Shoshoni*, American Museum of Natural History Anthropological Papers (1909), 2:189-300.

¹⁴E. Adamson Hoeber, "Bands and Distributions of the Eastern Shoshone," *American Anthropologist* (1938), 40:410-413.

¹⁵Ake Hultkrantz, "Tribal Divisions within the Eastern Shoshoni of Wyoming," *Proceedings of the Thirty Second International Congress of Americanists* (Copenhagen, 1938), 148-154.

¹⁶Lowie, 208.

¹⁷Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed., *Original Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, 1804-1806* (New York, 1904), 2:348-350, 3:1-52.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 3:13-14.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, vol. 3, maps.

²⁰Phillip Ashton Rollins, ed., *The Discovery of the Oregon Trail: Robert Stuart's Narratives . . . and Wilson Price Hunt's Diary* (New York, 1935), 80-188, 288-300.

²¹*Ibid.*, 84.

²²Irving, 257-258.

²³Alexander Ross, *The Fur Hunters of the Far West*, ed. by Kenneth A. Spaulding (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1956), originally published in 1855.

²⁴*Ibid.*, 165.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 166-167. Ross was confused on at least one of his band names: Sven Liljeblad, a linguist who has studied Shoshoni reports that *Sherrydika* is the Shoshoni name for Arapaho.

²⁶*Ibid.*, 168.

²⁷Washington Irving, *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville* (Portland, 1956), 357.

²⁸*Ibid.*, 179.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 211.

³⁰Osborne Russell, *Journal of a Trapper* ed. by Aubrey I. Haines (Portland, 1955), 179 pp.

Continued from page 5

Shoshoni, kept a journal of his hunting experiences in the Rocky Mountains from 1834 to 1843. Russell outlined the political fortunes of several Shoshoni chiefs, including that of Whoshakik, indicating that the influence and power chiefs were earned and could be lost. The people made or broke the power of chiefs by their willingness, or lack of willingness, to follow the chief and do as he suggested.²⁶

Because chiefs were named by many travelers, the movements of peoples and the composition of various tribes or sub-tribes can be best understood through an analysis of various chiefs. The chiefs were political leaders of groups of varied size and composition.

Washakie,²⁷ for example, became the strongest Shoshoni chief and negotiated the treaties to establish the Wind River Reservation on the edge of the Plains east of the historic homeland of the Shoshoni. During his 60 years as chief, Washakie received the temporary allegiance of many other chiefs, like Pocatello and Tagi, who withdrew from Washakie's group and led their people independently. The high class horse Shoshoni of Pocatello's band moved freely from northern Utah to Montana and Wyoming for periods of months and then returned to their old homes and rejoined their poorer kinsfolk who had remained home and collected roots and jack-rabbits.

Nick Wilson,²⁸ the White Indian boy, wrote of the close relationship of Pocatello with Washakie and of Pocatello's submission to Washakie while they traveled and hunted together in Montana. Pocatello was identified as the principal chief in northern Utah, except when Washakie was also present.

Tagi was a Bannock chief and leader of the high class northern Paiute-speaking Indians, who had affiliated themselves with the upper class Shoshoni who had a way of life dependent on having many horses and traveling widely. Although Tagi became the head chief of the Shoshoni and Bannock on the Fort Hall Reservation, he led his Bannock and Shoshoni horsemen and their mounted families on annual trips east to hunt and visit with the Washakie Shoshoni and then five hundred miles west to fish for salmon on Snake River of southern Idaho and to dig roots at the Camas Prairie nearby. While the high class Bannock and Shoshoni of Snake River were traveling back and forth across Wyoming

and Idaho, there were always some of the poorer Shoshoni remaining in the ancient food-name band territories.

My theory would justify the survival, in the horse-using Shoshoni area of Idaho and Wyoming, of the older, localized territorial bands as the homelands of the poorer, lower class Shoshoni, who remained without horses and who regularly met in this territory and called Shoshocoes or Walkers. Their wealthy brothers, uncles, and aunts joined with the wealthy of other food-named bands to form a special tribal elite. The mounted elite traveled throughout northern Shoshoni country from the Humboldt River of Nevada and the Goshute area west of Great Salt Lake to the Lemhi River of Idaho and the Beaverhead region of Montana, and from the Wind River Plains of central Wyoming to the salmon fisheries of the Snake River in southwestern Idaho.

The horse-riding elite on the Humboldt River of Nevada seen by John Bidwell²⁹ in 1841 may have later stayed with their high class kinsmen of Idaho and Wyoming, since the tradition of use of horses in Nevada died out and was later revived in the 1860's.

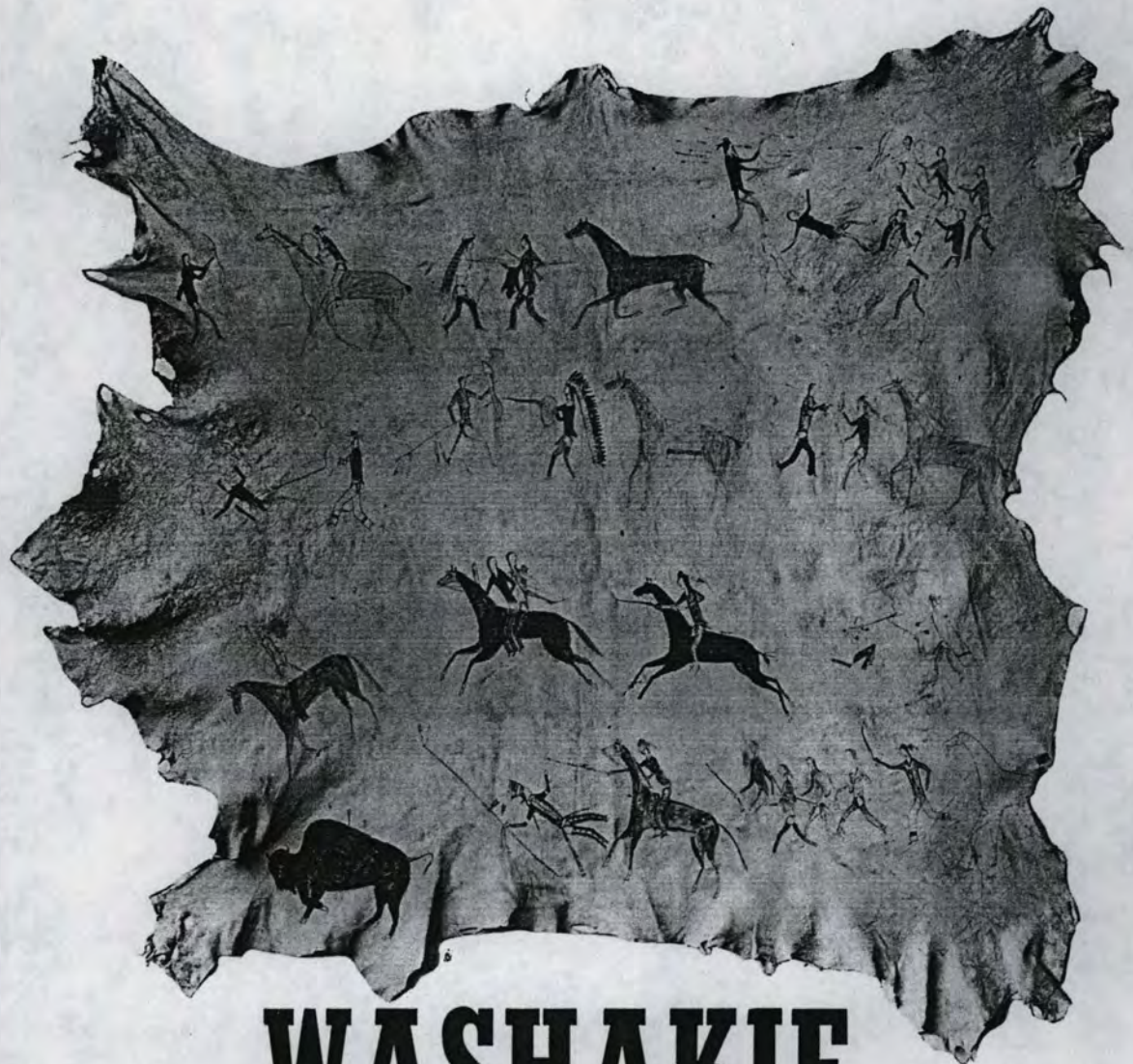
The actual history of the northern Shoshoni Indians from 1805 to 1870 suggests that the ancient territorial food-named bands, with slight need for political leadership, were overlaid by a widespread, simple democratic tribal structure by which the wealthy horse owners of all ancient local bands combined and followed the chief they wished. The larger groups combined or broke up as individual Shoshoni Indians elected to give allegiance to one chief or another. This loose democratic government of wide geographical extent was the product of a single, unified upper class of horse-using Indians. The older, local, food-named bands thus became, in fact, lower class people who lived in a small area which could be exploited on foot. The sedentary Shoshoni, living beside the productive salmon fisheries, appear to be a middle class, intermediate between the poor Shoshocoes or Root Diggers and the "real Shoshoni" or Buffalo hunters. To support the proposition set forth in this paper, there is a great deal of documentation which cannot be presented because of lack of space.

²⁶*Ibid.*, 115.

²⁷Grace Raymond Hebard, *Washakie* (Cleveland, 1930), 330 pp.

²⁸E. N. Wilson, *The White Indian Boy* (New York, 1919), 222 pp.

²⁹Charles Kelly, "The Salt Desert Trail," *Utah Historical Quarterly* (April 1930), 36-52.



WASHAKIE

SHOSHONI LEADER



Although Washakie was a friend of the whites, he fought assorted Blackfoot, Sioux, Ute and Cheyenne Indians for control of the Great Plains and other Shoshoni borderlands. These drawings illustrate his career as an Indian warrior; in most of them Washakie emerges a victor over his foes. The scene at upper left shows him killing a Sioux. Directly below, he ran a spear through a Blackfoot. Altogether he eradicated twelve of his enemies depicted here, including Crazy Horse's brother at bottom center. Only once did he seem to have trouble (upper right), but he managed to outfight seven Blackfoot braves despite the arrow sticking in his nose. The only non-human casualty is the buffalo at lower left which Washakie killed with three arrows. His portrait and these tableaux are reproduced by courtesy of the Bureau of American Ethnology.

