example, only seasonal villages or camps were in use, occupied only during the warmer months of the year. Each of the other valleys had one or more villages, and the people in each were, to a degree, considered as a separate social entity. For example, those living in American Valley were known as the *silóm maˀá,* from *silóm koyó*, their name for the valley. Those living in Indian Valley were the *tasáy dɨm*, after *tasím koyó,* their name for that valley; and those living in Genesee Valley were the *yetámmetom maˀá* after *yetámmetom,* their name for Genessee Valley. It is evident that group differentiation for the Maidu was dictated by geographical considerations (Riddell 1968).

The northern portion of Maidu holdings is an area typified by a juniper-sage environment; however, demonstrating that portions of this region were economically productive is the archeological recording of an unnamed, abandoned village three miles east of Susanville with some 22 observed house pits remaining. Susan River and Willow Creek, with their sloughs, meanderings, and tributaries, support extensive meadows and marshes before flowing into Honey Lake, thus providing a superb habitat for fish and waterfowl. In addition, the ever-important acorn-bearing oak groves are within easy collecting distance.

Whereas the Maidu occupied an area generally 4,000 feet above sea level or higher, the Konkow territory included a portion of the Sacramento Valley floor and a section of the sierra foothill east of Chico and Oroville. The valley floor generally presented a vast savanna environment in which grasses and oaks formed a natural parkland.

The climate of the Konkow region was characterized by a wet winter and a dry summer season; in winter there were occasional freezing temperatures, and fog and rain occurred with varying intensity.

As to tribal territory, some difference of opinion might exist between the Maidu and their neighbors, Paiute, Achumawi, Washo, and Yana, although certain prominent physiographic features were used as boundary markers to generally delimit the Maidu territory. Border areas of value for hunting and gathering might be used by both the Maidu and their neighbors by consent or by incursion.

The Maidu penetration into the Great Basin was greater in earlier times than at the first American contact around 1850 (see fig. 1). By their own admission, the Maidu at some earlier date held all of Honey Lake Valley and its environs. At some time in the relatively recent past, possibly circa A.D. 1700, the Maidu withdrew to the west side of Honey Lake, and the vacated area was taken over by the Paiute. Although the Maidu traditionally claim the area, they cannot name any villages and few physiographic features. This is in contrast to the Paiute who are able to give explicit details of use and village and camp names, as well as being able to name all the significant physiographic features (Riddell 1960). Although this loss was apparently relatively insignificant to the Maidu, the gain to the Paiute certainly was of considerable importance as the marshlands of the mouth of Susan River at Honey Lake, as well as two hot spring areas, provided new territory of higher economic potential than the strictly sage desert environment from which the Paiute emerged. In fact, groves of oaks on the western edge of Honey Lake in the vicinity of Milford became directly available to the Paiute for the first time.

The Konkow people derive their name from the anglicization of the native term *kóyo·mk̓àwi* 'meadowland' (see Hodge 1907–1910, 1:725). The division line between the Konkow and their Maiduan neighbors, the Nisenan, lacks clarity for a diversity of reasons, among which is the early decimation by disease, slaughter, and removal of people who would be in a position of authority on the subject. Also, it seems probable that the boundary between the two groups did not have quite the same importance as it might have between the Konkow and Nomlaki, for example. In fact, the people living along Honcut Creek, between the Yuba and Feather rivers, appear as possibly being dialectically transitional between the Konkow and the Nisenan (Kroeber 1925:393). The line may have gone from the Feather River up Honcut Creek to the North Fork of Honcut Creek and up the latter to its headwaters at Wyandotte Lake, and then sharply east to the North Yuba River and then northeasterly up Slate Creek to its headwaters at Pilot Peak.

The Konkow were divided into several village communities: Kewsayoma'a (*kíwsewimàˀa*), *yínommàˀa,* Totoma'a (*tó·tommàˀa).* The last two, along with several others now forgotten, composed a larger unit called *tá·yi* 'west people'. (Merriam gives a number of divisions for the Konkow and Maidu that provide a somewhat different set of boundaries from that given here; cf. Heizer 1966:42–43.)

External Relations

In terms of cultural similarities and differences between the Maidu and Konkow on the one hand and their non-Maiduan neighbors on the other, there are few outstanding elements of difference and many of similarity. One difference is the occurrence of the Kuksu cult among the Konkow but not among the neighboring Yana or among their kinsmen, the Maidu. They did share this cult trait with the Nisenan and many non-Maiduan central California people (Dixon 1905:322).

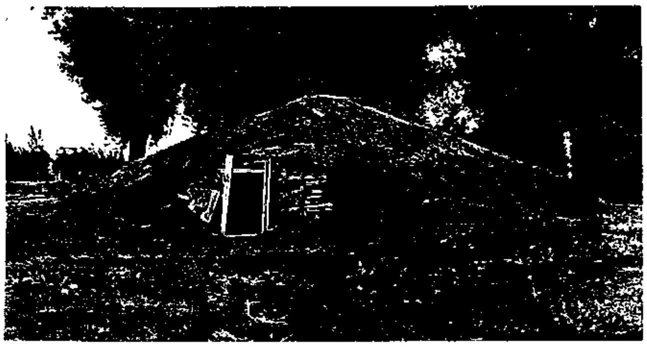
Differences recognized by the people themselves stem from language and locational considerations. Although the Maidu and Konkow territories were laced together by a network of trails, it would have been unusual for a person living in a village to go more than 20 miles from home during his lifetime. This distance might have been somewhat greater among those Konkows living within the flat Sacramento Valley. Mountain people are recorded to have been driven west to a low elevation in the foothill area because of famine during a harsh winter. The lowland people were reported to have responded with compassion, possibly because their distant mountain kinsmen were, in that instance, few in number and thus posed no threat according to informant Tom Epperson (Riddell 1960–1974).

Although an individual may not have traveled far, trade items were widely distributed from village to village and from group to group. Such items changed hands at intervillage gatherings through the hand game, a form of gambling. Trade of local goods for those more common to other areas also took place.

Settlement Pattern

A settlement pattern of "village communities" (Kroeber 1925:398) served as the only political organization of the Maidu. A village community was recognized as an autonomous unit and consisted of several adjacent villages. Central to the village community was the village displaying the largest *ƙúm* (Konkow *ƙúmi*), a semisubterranean earth-covered lodge (fig. 2) provided as a ceremonial assembly chamber. The central village, although not always the most populous, was probably the residence of the most authoritative man of the village community, who used the *ƙúm* as a regular dwelling (Kroeber 1925:397). Among the Maidu and Konkow, this headman was primarily an advisor and spokesman (Dixon 1905:224). The separate villages were self-sufficient and not bound under any strict political control by the community headman. The central location around the largest assembly chamber of one village was primarily for ceremonial and subsistence activities.

On a basis of five persons in a house and seven houses in a village, precontact village population can be estimated at 35 persons. The number of villages in a community varied, but it is estimated that the group size did not exceed 200 (Kroeber 1925:397). Each village-community, therefore, probably consisted of from three to five villages. A village-community owned and defended a known territory, which was a common hunting and fishing ground for all members of the community. In the mountains, the Maidu villages were segregated into existing valleys, and each village-community was well defined. Because the Konkow, in the northwestern foothills, settled in a more widely dispersed pattern along river canyons, the territory of a single community was less determined (Kroeber 1925:398).



NAA, Smithsonian.

Fig. 2. Konkow semisubterranean earth-covered dance house at Chico. Photograph by Henry W. Henshaw, 1893.

In the mountain environment of the Maidu, soft-bottomed glacial valleys were covered with snow during the winter months. Melting snow transformed the valleys into spongy meadow or marsh and sustained a heavy river flow during the summer season (Kroeber 1925:396). The Maidu "selected sites along the edges of these valleys, and rarely lived out in the middle of the level stretches" (Dixon 1905:175). Archeological evidence, too, shows that the village sites were located above the meadow or marshy valley floor (Riddell and Pritchard 1971). This placement provided excellent views of the surrounding country and enabled the dwellings to be constructed among a mixed coniferous forest. The winter months were difficult; preserved and stored food provided the main sustenance. Some families moved to lower elevations for the winter; however, most groups of Maidu remained in the permanent village sites throughout the winter months (McMillin 1963:63).

In Konkow territory, the Feather, Yuba, and American rivers wind their way through the northwestern foothills carving deep, narrow canyons. The Konkow settlements were situated by preference on the ridge, high above the rivers and generally on small flats on the crest of the ridge, or part way down the canyonside (Dixon 1905:175). Sites were further located on elevated knolls in reference to attack and defense considerations.

Subsistence

The Konkow followed a yearly gathering cycle that took them away from their winter dwellings on the river ridges. In the summer, they journeyed up into the mountains for hunting, and dried deer meat was brought back to the winter villages. Food gathering during the spring took the Indians into the valley areas to collect grass seeds, especially wild rye (Duncan 1964:15). At the summer camps the Konkow constructed a roofless, circular brush enclosure large enough to house three or four families, which could also be used for ceremonies. There was a fireplace in the center and two openings oriented toward the east and west or south (Voegelin 1942:62). Maidu knowledge of the native flora and fauna was complete. Most plants and animals had multiple uses serving subsistence, religious, and material necessities. They utilized the flora and fauna to the fullest: the root, stems, leaves, and seeds of plants and the flesh, skins, horns, bones, and hoofs of fauna were used for specific items of food, shelter, clothing, tools, and medicine.

Women and children gathered nuts by hand and collected seeds with the aid of a seed beater. The seed beater was used to strike the grass or plant head causing the seeds or grass head to fall off into a tray-basket held underneath (Dixon 1905:187). Both nuts and seeds were transferred, after gathering, to burden baskets held on the back by a shoulder or head strap.

Acorns provided by oak species were the primary source of nut meats. Three varieties were distinctly preferred: those from the black oak (*Quercus kelloggii*), the canyon or golden oak (*Quercus chrysolepis*), and the interior live oak (*Quercus wislizenii*). Two other species are particular to the northeastern mountain region: huckleberry oak (*Quercus vaccinifolia*) and bush chinquapin (*Castanopsis sempervirens*) (McMillin 1963:35-36).

The acorn flour was bitter because of tannin in the acorns and had to be made edible by leaching with warm water. Flour was spread over the interior of a flat, shallow excavation in sand. Cedar sprigs laid over the flour prevented it from being disturbed as warm water was poured into the basin. As the water seeped through the meal, it was absorbed by the sand. This was repeated numerous times, each time using hotter water, until the bitter tannin was leached out. The dough was then cooked with water by adding hot stones to the cooking basket to form a soup, or if thicker, mush. Bread was made from the dough by wrapping it in oak (Dixon 1905:187) or wild grape (Duncan 1964:78) leaves and baking under a pile of hot stones. "The resulting bread is very solid and heavy, resembling almost a lump of putty, and is, like the soup and mush, almost tasteless" (Dixon 1905:187).

In the foothills the Konkow gathered nuts from the digger pine (*Pinus sabiniana*). The nuts were eaten whole or ground into flour and the shells made into beads. The Maidu used the mountain species, sugar pine (*Pinus lambertiana*) and yellow pine (*Pinus ponderosa*). They ate the nuts plain or cooked into a soup or patties. Hazelnuts (*Corylus cornuta*), the nut of the buckeye (*Aesculus californica*), and wild nutmeg (*Torreya californica*) were other nut-meat sources. The buckeye nut had to be processed, as the acorn, but it took more thorough leaching to remove the poisonous, bitter-tasting prussic acid. The nutmeg required even more processing, and these nuts were first cracked and then buried in the ground for several months. They were then dug up and roasted in ashes (Dixon 1905:188).

The Maidu and Konkow drank a wild mint tea and manzanita cider. The cider was prepared in large quantities by crushing manzanita berries and mixing with water to form a stiff dough. The dough was placed on a willow sieve over a soup basket. Water poured over the dough dissolved the sweet berry flavor. The resulting liquid was a light amber color and had a strong, sweet taste not unlike that of apple cider (Dixon 1905:191).

Roots were eaten raw, roasted, boiled, dried, or pounded and mixed with berries, then baked in small, flat cakes (Dixon 1905:189). A digging stick aided in gathering roots and bulbs. This was a straight stick, a yard or more in length, with one end hardened by fire. Utilized roots included blue camas (McMillin 1963), the Indian root, cattail root, and the tule root (Duncan 1964:47, 76, 77).

Yellow jacket larvae, angleworms, locusts, grasshoppers, and crickets were caught and eaten. To gather locusts and grasshoppers, a fire was started around a large hole in a meadow and the insects were driven into the pit and collected in quantity. They were eaten dry or roasted and were stored for use during the long winter months (Dixon 1905:191).

Eels were speared and the meat was cut into small pieces and stewed. Salmon were caught with a salmon-gig, fashioned from bone or antler, and dried by hanging on a pole. The whole fish when dried was pounded into a coarse powder, stored in baskets, and eaten dry (Dixon 1905:185). The Konkow regarded the first salmon catch of the season as an occasion for ceremony. The first fish had to be speared by a shaman, and after it was cooked each man ate a piece. Only then was fishing begun in earnest (Dixon 1905:198).

Fishing was also accomplished with the use of nets or fish traps. The nets varied in size with heavy or light cord woven into a large or small mesh, depending on the use of the net. The Maidu nets were of the bag type, which were held open at the mouth by a piece of elastic willow wand. A pole tied to the opposite side of the net mouth was raised when fish entered, thus closing the mouth and trapping the fish. Seine nets of the Konkow were large and capable of stretching across the width of a stream (Dixon 1905:143, 147).

Animals, as a food source, were hunted or captured. Of the species available in the Maidu and Konkow environments, only the coyote, dog, and wolf were not eaten. The Konkow also did not eat bear and mountain lion. Buzzards were avoided, as were lizards, snakes, and frogs (Dixon 1905:185).

Hunting necessitated knives, spears, bows and arrows. Hard black basalt was used for knives and spears. The stone was fastened to a handle of wood and secured with pitch. Spearpoints were inserted in the end of a wooden spearshaft, pitched and wrapped with sinew. Arrow points were made from obsidian, which was obtained through trade. Silicate material was also used, and some came from a cave near Oroville. The Table Mountain Cave was regarded as sacred, and a person going to get flint brought with him offerings of meat and beads for the spirits. Exploitation of this resource was somewhat controlled, and "a person was allowed to take only as much flint as he could break off at a single blow" (Dixon

1905:133). Having obtained the stone, the person in respect had to crawl out backwards. Bad luck or poor quality stone would result if these customs were not followed.

The Maidu, living in the mountains, depended much more on game than did the lowland people and, thus, became more skillful hunters (Dixon 1905:192). Good hunting dogs were highly prized. Hunting could be attempted as a single or collective (deer drives and bear hunts) effort.

The grizzly bear was hunted for its hide, which was used in ritual dances. In the spring a ceremony was held in the front of the cave of a bear nearing the end of his hibernation. In the ceremony, the men addressed the bear, instructing it to stand up and let them shoot, as its life had already been paid for. The participants concealed themselves behind trees in the vicinity of the cave. The first man would approach the bear and shoot one or two arrows. He then ran, with the bear in pursuit, to the hiding place of another hunter. This continued until the bear, his body full of arrows, finally succumbed (Dixon 1905:194).

Deer could be hunted alone, but were more often caught during large deer drives. Such a hunting effort involved great numbers of men, lasted several days, and ranged over a large extent of land. Deer were either driven over a steep cliff or routed along their favorite runways and then shot by concealed hunters. Squirrel, rabbit, and elk were shot with arrows. The elk were followed for days and killed with arrows when exhausted. Rabbits were caught in nets and then clubbed to death. Quail were snared along known runways. Because it brought bad luck, the eagle was never shot. Geese and duck were either shot or caught in nooses that were hung by a cord above the water's surface (Dixon 1905:192, 195).

Meat was prepared by baking or roasting. Fire was started with a buckeye fire drill, which was twirled between the palms of the hands to ignite dry grass and tinder wood (Dixon 1905:191, 181). In baking, rocks placed in a hole were heated by a fire and then the fire was raked out. The meat, wrapped in broad, flat maple leaves, was placed in the pit and the hot stones were piled on top. The hole was filled with earth, and in one or two hours the meat was ready. For roasting, meat was placed directly on the coals (Dixon 1905:191; Duncan 1964:32).

The hides of animals were used for clothing, for adornments such as headbands and belts, and for sinew for tools. Tanning was an occupation of the women. Bone or stone scrapers were used to remove hair and the hide was then placed on a slanting post set in the ground. A cake of dried deer brain was dipped into warm water and rubbed over the skin. Following this, the hides were soaked in water, wrung out, and rubbed down before a fire until dry (Dixon 1905:142).

Salt was obtained from local salt deposits but was not used extensively (Dixon 1905:191). Among the Konkow, other condiments used included dandelion, deerbrush flour, hazelnuts, watercress, wild garlic, and onion (Duncan 1964:12).

Culture

Clothing and Adornment

Although the climate of the Maidu and Konkow environments differed considerably, the same clothing was worn by both groups and did not vary with the seasonal temperatures. All year around, the clothing was scant. In the heat of summer, men, as a rule, went naked or wore only a breechcloth of buckskin (Dixon 1905:155). Women wore an apron skirt consisting of two tassels in front and back. In the foothills, the tassels were of grass or of willow or maple bark. In the mountains, the apron was made of buckskin or bark.

Moccasins were worn only by the Maidu. In the severe cold of winter, grass was stuffed inside to give added warmth. Moccasins were of unsoled deer skin. They were sewed with a seam up the front and reached above the ankle. For protection against the snow, an additional piece of deer hide was worn from the ankle to the knee. This legging was worn with the hair side in and fastened at the knee and around the bottom of the moccasin. Snowshoes were also used in winter (fig. 3) (Dixon 1905:162-163, fig. 34; Kroeber 1925:405).

Robes of deer or mountain lion skin were worn with the fur side in, draped over the shoulders. Older men in the mountain area wore a netted cap called the *ʔolé* (Konkow *wík̓a·*) This was used during dances to attach ceremonial headdresses. Maidu women wore as a head covering a basket hat or cap made of tules in a manner characteristic of those worn by the Achumawi, Klamath-Modoc, and Sahaptin women. Thus, they differ from those worn by the Shasta, Yurok, and Karok (Dixon 1905:162).

The Maidu wore their hair long and left hanging loosely, while the Konkow cut their hair shorter. Soaproot was used for washing, and hair was trimmed with a hot ember. Beaten pine cones and porcupine tails were used as hairbrushes. The Konkow men plucked beard and mustache growth, while the Maidu did allow mustache growth that was slight (Dixon 1905:163).

Ornaments were of shell, bone, feathers, and wood (Dixon 1905:164). Necklaces were made from colored shell and dentalia. Women pierced their ears and wore ear ornaments (fig. 5) of bone or wood with woodpecker scalps or quail tips attached. Men pierced the septum of the nose and wore one or two woodpecker feathers. Among the Konkow, the nose was pierced as a part of the initiation into the secret society.

Paint was made of white or red clay, a red stone, fir tree fungus, or charcoal. It was applied before ceremonial