

Shifting Boundaries: Violence, Representation, and the Salt Songs of the Great Basin Peoples

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Imagine a culture ordered by song. A culture ordered by song, not commerce, politics or war. Imagine a history woven like latticework across a landscape sculpted into one of basin and range. Envision a song cycle, one in its singing that travels a thousand-mile journey across deserts, mountains, and rivers, one that touches even the edges of oceans. Imagine a people pushed to the farthest edges of their own deserts, marginalized, absent and forgotten by everyone, everyone expect to themselves, a people who lived through the historical processes of conquest, colonization, and violence; and violence is very much a historical process in deed, thought, and representation when discussing the historiography of the Great Basin Peoples. Imagine these people, after suffering so many traumas, opening their culture, a culture ordered by song, to the rest of the world to let their songs cover the land once again.

The story of the people of the Great Basin is one of endurance and success. In discussing them we must first look to that range of land defined by valleys, basins, mountains, rivers, and deserts: a swath of land encompassing over 400,000 square miles between the Sierra Nevada Mountains and the Rocky Mountains, land that now includes all of Nevada and Utah, most of western Colorado, portions of southern Oregon, Idaho, and Wyoming, as well as southeastern California, and portions of northern Arizona and New Mexico. It is a land typified since the first European encounter as a dreadful wasteland and as the “Great American Desert,” one of the last blank spots on the maps of Spanish and Anglo-European incursions, a place described by John Charles Frémont as late as 1842 as “*more Asiatic than American in its character*”¹ (emphasis added). A land cordoned off in great swaths to be used as nuclear testing and dumping ground for the armaments of the 20th and 21st century.

The written history of the Great Basin Peoples is one of violence and dispossession, both literal and representational. The language used to articulate the topography and geology of the land, *terra incognita*, *terrible stillness*, *wasteland*, has also been used to describe the band-centered families who share their own Numic languages, as well as economic and historical ties. These people, who in the historical records have borne the brunt and stigma of the language used to describe their deserts, so much so that one could be seen as an outgrowth of the other: if the land is so wasted, then so must be

¹ John C. Fremont, “*The Great Basin*.” 1848. <http://www.longcamp.com/1848map/GB.html> . Oct. 26, 2011).

the people. The Shoshone, Washoe, Bannock, Ute, Chemehuevi, Kawaiisu, and Paiute, distinct among and within themselves, make up the existing thirteen “groups” of people who have lived in Great Basin since before the time of first Spanish and Anglo-European incursions. These well-adapted, culturally rich bands of people practiced agriculture in the desert, hunted game in the mountains, and had demonstrably sophisticated interactions with each other and their environment. The Southern Paiute, in particular, had, and retain, a vast knowledge of plant populations and communities of plants extending from the flat plateaus of the Mojave desert to the summits of Mt. Charleston (Nuva Kiav).²

The classes of science that we recognize today as taxonomy, morphology, and physiology were being practiced by the Numic-speaking people of the Great Basin; and like most indigenous people, they well understood the diverse ecology of which they considered themselves to be a part. These were cultures ordered by song, with deep knowledge of themselves, their communities and their landscapes. Recent ethnographic work has typified lands of the Southern Paiute (Nuwuvi) as songscapes with two distinct categories. One is connected with specific physical trails and the other with a trail taken by the Nuwuvi after death. These two trails can merge so that specific locals become spiritual guideposts, and multiple days (or sundown to sunrise ceremonies) of singing become an important culture referent point to identity and place.³

Yet for all their sophistication, the people of the Great Basin, in particular the Shoshone and Paiute, have been represented, if represented at all in the discourse of American Western history as the bottom basement floor of human evolution.⁴ Testament to this type of violent misrepresentation can be drawn from the first written records of the Spanish conquest from the 17th century, from colonial Mexican church records in the 18th century, the diaries and maps of Anglo explorers and Mormon settlers of the 19th century, the published and celebrated works of famous writers, the musings of anthropologists’ ethnographic studies in the 20th century, and even in standard works of reference found in 21st-century modern libraries. The maligned reputations of Great Basin Native Peoples, and in particular the Nuwuvi, can be understood through an analysis of the violence, both physical and representational, that has been visited upon them since conquest and colonization swept through the region. The pattern of written and physical violence can be traced back to the first narratives written about the Paiute as they appear in colonial records. Trying to reconcile the dispossession of millions over the passage of hundreds of years is, as Ned Blackhawk clearly articulates, a sobering challenge.⁵ But written and representational records exist. If we are to feel the import and resonance of what the Salt Songs represent in the 21st century, a look back at their long past is necessary.

The Palace of Governors in Santa Fe, New Mexico was originally constructed in the early 17th century as Spain's seat of government for what is today the American

² Inter-Tribal Council of Nevada. *Nuwuvi: A Southern Paiute History* (Reno, 1976), 13-14.

³ Richard W. Stoffle, “Cultural Landscapes and Traditional Cultural Properties: A Southern Paiute View of the Grand Canyon and Colorado River.” *American Indian Quarterly* 21.2 (1997). *Academic Search Complete* (25 Oct. 2011).

⁴ Ned Blackhawk, *Violence Over the Land* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 4.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.

Southwest. One of the oldest buildings still standing in the continental United States, it now serves as New Mexico's state's history museum. In its time, as the center for a sprawling colonial empire, it was also the center from which ripples of violence reached out far beyond its geographic location. The demands of Spanish colonial economy required labor and the non-equestrian tribes of the Great Basin became a ready source for raiding tribes equipped by successive Spanish Governors. These tribes were supplied with horses and weapons to act as a buffer against other tribes, and as economic mercenaries. The Utes in the early part of the 18th century began enslaving tribes in what is now Southern Utah, Nevada, and California. Great Basin tribal people were being violently incorporated into the Spanish empire.⁶ This type of intertribal violence and the successive waves of slaving warfare is on display at the Palace of Governors current website in the digital representation know as the *Segesser Hide Paintings*. The paintings are believed to have been created sometime between 1720 and 1758. One can plainly see depicted in the painting known as *Segesser I* the record of a battle believed to have taken place sometime between 1693 and 1719. In it Indian attackers, using Spanish weapons, armor and horses, are routing defenders armed only with lance and shield⁷

It is through an analysis of baptismal records at the Palace of Governors that we first encounter the Paiute and others from the Great Basin. Though only a fraction of the total number of slaves taken during the colonial period of between 1730 and 1850 are documented, the terms *Yuta* and *Payuche* begin to appear in the colonial record to describe different but culturally related groups of Numic speaking people. In an analysis provided by the Navajo historian David Brugge, it can be read that though hundreds of miles from the center of Spanish colonial military domination and language, and even over a century away from physical contact with modern European or Anglo power, the distorting ripples of violence emanating from the Palace of Governors was affecting the people of the Great Basin.⁸

The first well-known Spanish and then Anglo excursions into the lands of the Southern Paiute began with the Rivera Expedition of 1765 and the Dominguez-Escalante Expedition of 1776. The Anglo Yount-Wolfskill Fur Trapping party followed in 1830.⁹ These three incursions did much to set tone for ensuing centuries, when the native people encountered in these journeys were described as timid and prone to fleeing, rather than attempting to contact or trade. It can be seen from the vantage point provided by historians such as Brugge and Blackhawk, that this response was more than justifiable, due to the fact that these people had been living on the edges of an equestrian slaving empire for over two hundred years.

It was George C. Yount, and William Wolfskill, who made one of the first journeys over what would become the Old Spanish Trail, the southwestern route into California. In his journal, Yount records that the people he encountered had a language comprised of only a few words, a blatant distortion that set the stereotype established

⁶ Ibid., 57.

⁷ *Segesser Hide Paintings*. <http://www.nmhistorymuseum.org/hides/> . 29 Sept. 2011.

⁸ Brugge, David M. *Navajos in the Catholic Church records of New Mexico, 1694-1875* (Tsaile, AZ: Navajo Community College Press, 1985), 31.

⁹ Inter-Tribal Council of Nevada, *Nuwuvi*, 22-24.

between the years 1829 through 1850, when more and more contact was being made as early settlers and trappers traversed the Old Spanish Trail through the canyons, mountains and deserts of Southern Utah, Nevada, and California.¹⁰ The early Spanish Empire, followed by Mexican Colonial authority, Anglo-American commercial interests, and a powerful Ute raiding nation lay behind the definitions of a little understood or known people, a people who had adapted superbly to a desert and mountainous environment that colonizers saw only as a harsh wasteland inhabited by bands of Indians characterized as itinerant scavengers.

In reality the Southern Paiute, who literally moved between the Basin floors and the elevations of the Range, were guided by their knowledge of specific plants and solid familiarity with the seasonal blooming of each species.¹¹ In this light the movements and migratory lifestyle of the Nuwuvi can be seen as anything but random. As a people, they were accustomed to exploiting the entire range of environments within the Great Basin. They were also accustomed to farming small patches along the Colorado and Virgin Rivers, a practice that was eventually destroyed with the opening of the Old Spanish Trail and the flood of wagon trains passing through their land that began with the Yount Expedition. Their carefully tended gardens were soon overwhelmed by the traffic of annual caravans headed out from Santa Fe to California.

As more and more people began to pass through their land, the non-equestrian people of the Great Basin began to undergo serious levels of dispossession. Already prey to over two hundred years of slaving economies, originating from both Spain and Mexico, they still found themselves being hunted by Ute warlords like Walkara well into the mid 19th century. Walkara, who profited greatly in this trade until his death in 1855, was merely the latest embodiment in a cycle of violence that continued to push and dispossess the Nuwuvi and others from their homelands. The Spanish Empire from far across the Atlantic had claimed Paiute land, though it had never held any real administrative or political control over the basin and range. Their claim passed over to colonial Mexico, which in turn ceded this swath of the southwest to the United States in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848.¹²

The cycle of dispossession, appropriation, and dismissal continued with the arrival of Mormon Settlers into the Nevada territories, where outright slavery was replaced by indentured servitude. Much has been written detailing the relationships between the religious orders of Brigham Young and the indigenous communities of the Great Basin. The religious orders did play a part in ending outright physical violence, but they refused to see that by settling into lands already inhabited, they were responsible for creating poverty among those natives they were purportedly trying to “save.”¹³

¹⁰ Inter-Tribal Council of Nevada, *Nuwuvi*, 38-40.

¹¹ Martha Knack, *Boundaries Between: The Southern Paiutes, 1775-1995* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 14-16.

¹² Knack, 47.

¹³ Inter-Tribal Council of Nevada, *Nuwuvi*, 68.

Mark Twain (1835-1910), America's humorist from the post Civil War era, 20th-century ethnologist Julian Steward (1902-1972), and the anthropologists Gould, Fowler & Fowler (1972), can serve as examples for the type of representational violence that runs as a current in the modern historiography of Great Basin Peoples. Because these writers have in the past, and to an extent continue to be seen as respected moral and socially scientific experts, it is important that they be singled out for review. The significant manner of representational violence these writers have inflicted bears examination, if we are to view in proper light the success and endurance of modern Great Basin people today.

In his autobiographical account of his journey through the American West *Roughing It*, Mark Twain crystallized the image of the "Digger" Indian, while passing through Nevada in 1870:

These Goshoots...who produce nothing at all, and have no villages, and no gatherings...a people whose only shelter is a rag cast on a bush to keep off a portion of the snow, and yet who inhabit one of the most repulsive wastes that our county or any other can exhibit.¹⁴

This well-known passage, in which Twain decries the image of a noble savage to be a false romantic notion, one bearing little resemblance to the impoverished Shoshone people he encounters in his travels, has been debated over the years. His disappointment is utter, but it is his inability to see the historical conditions that molded those he meets that is most distressing in light of the championship he later undertook for other ethnicities such as Chinese immigrants and Black Americans.¹⁵

The ethnologist Julian Steward, whose influential career was launched by his studies carried out on Native Great Basin peoples in the early decades of the 20th century, and who served as director of the Bureau of American Ethnography from 1935 to 1946, wielded important policy-making decisions over the people he was studying, and further cemented the tone put into place by Twain's popular account. In Steward's analysis he put forth the view that subsistence lifestyles, based on seemingly random migratory routes, combined with the lack of formal political structures surrounding Shoshone and Paiute family life, contradicted known notions of what constituted tribal structures, and thus the people of the Great Basin were typified as timeless "*primitives*" belonging to the "*dusty shelves of prehistory.*"¹⁶

Steward's view was carried out to such an extreme, and this is why it bears scrutiny, that at one point in 1936, when the Shoshone were attempting to secure federal recognition as a tribal people, he argued in a report to Commissioner of Indian Affairs John Collier that the Shoshone should *not* be granted recognition. They were too far down the evolutionary scale to be considered anything but loose-knit bands, and to grant them recognition would be a violent disruption and disfigurement of their current status as the last Stone Age peoples on the continent; a decision such as this would only "baffle

¹⁴ Mark Twain, *Roughing It*, (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1871) 132.

¹⁵ James C. McNutt, "Mark Twain and the American Indian: Earthly Realism and Heavenly Idealism," *American Indian Quarterly*, no.4 (1978). *JSTOR* (10 Sept. 2011).

¹⁶ Blackhawk, *Violence*, 278.

them.”¹⁷ Simply put: simple climates produced simple people and in his view families were not tribes, and were thus ineligible for Federal recognition. That the biological environments of the Great Basin, or the cultures of Native Peoples are neither simple nor barren, and to characterize them as such is little more than a continuation of racial and intellectual prejudice begun hundreds of years earlier, did nothing to lessen the impact and influence of his ethnographic work. Ultimately, Commissioner Collier did not heed the advice of his anthropologist, and the Native people of the Great Basin were granted their allotments of land, but Steward’s theories of cultural relativism held sway for most of the 20th century.

In an article published in the prestigious *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* (Autumn 1972) ethnologists Richard Gould, Don Fowler, and Catherine Fowler authored a work citing the similar failures of two groups of indigenous people: the Aborigines of central and western Australia and the Numic-speaking Indians of the Great Basin. The very title of their work (one offered up without a trace of irony and one can only suspect intended as an alliterative pun) speaks directly to the social and intellectual racism prevalent in the written word surrounding Great Basin Peoples: *Diggers and Doggers: Parallel Failures in Economic Acculturation*. That the very term *Diggers* might be considered objectionable, and that *Doggers*, an Australian term of slang used to describe shirkers or welfare cases, was even more so seems not to have mattered one whit to the authors. It does highlight the ongoing violence of language that has been used effectively in the past to marginalize indigenous people.

In the view of these social scientists, the failure of western desert Aborigines and Native Americans of the Great Basin to engage in viable relationships with the world economy was, and is, consistent with the values of timeless primitives. They did not recognize that these indigenous people were, at the time of the study in the latter half of the 20th century, pursuing models of dependence thrust upon them, and that refusing to assimilate into dominant economies and cultures was a matter of cultural self-preservation, and in fact are better seen as adaptive strategies.

In a very real and succinct manner *Diggers and Doggers: Parallel Failures in Economic Acculturation* fails completely to take into account the marginalization, violence, and dispossession that had occurred based on centuries of colonial inequity. It is nothing more than a continuance of violence carried out on the representational level. It is important for current scholarship to take direct aim at this type of ethnographic timelessness, because of the direct reinforcement leading to ongoing historiographic marginalization.¹⁸

Until very recently, this articulation of primitive timelessness has stood in the way of clearly seeing the history of dispossession that has been a defining feature of the Great Basin. The dominant written narratives of the Great Basin region and its original inhabitants have characterized the area time and time again as being inhospitable, spiteful, and silent in its barren reach: a landscape of “terrible stillness” inhabited by

¹⁷ Ibid, 279.

¹⁸ Ned Blackhawk, “The Primacy of Violence in Great Basin Indian History.” *Journal of the West* 46.4 (2007). *Academic Search Complete* (1 Sept. 2011).

“Stone Age bands lost on an unvisited plateau.”¹⁹ So much has been written in this vein over the centuries, that the region of the Basin and its inhabitants have by default been seen as peripheral and primordial in the larger dialog of American Western History.²⁰ The complex ecologies of the Basin region were distilled in the written record to a place that could only produce people after its own image, as though the Nuwuvi, the Shoshone, and the Chemehuevis were nothing more than wandering mendicants lost beneath a merciless sky.

Gratefully, in the waning decades of the 20th century, these notions of primitivism and static definitions of culture have been discredited and are being dismantled. Notions of environmental determinism championed by Steward have been largely defrocked, so that to outsiders the complexity of the Numic-speaking people has become less straddled by the weight of history.²¹ The process of self-definition reaching critical mass is a long one, but the work of historians like Ned Blackhawk, in his magisterial study *Violence Over the Land: Indians and Empires in the Early American West*, are standing in place as a much needed corrective. In the epilogue to *Violence Over the Land*, Blackhawk asks “how have Native peoples fashioned responses to such social and intellectual racism?”²² By all the understanding put forth in the fields of ethnology and anthropology, let alone politics and history, the Nuwuvi should have disappeared long ago.²³ If any people who stood athwart the twin travails of violence and colonialism were to vanish like so many before, it would be the Southern Paiute. Five hundred years of trespass, violence, and misrepresentation should have obliterated this people. Yet it has not, nor has it destroyed other Native peoples of the Great Basin. Today in the 21st century, small bands of families engage fearlessly with the complex machinations of federal and state bureaucracies, to retain and reclaim what is rightfully theirs: tribal governments are in place, contracts are drawn, and children are educated. In part, this is the answer to Professor Blackhawk’s question.

These outdated notions are also being dismantled by the very people who have been under study in the written records. The indigenous people of the Great Basin until very recently have had few avenues for their own voices and stories to be told, at least none that could move beyond the very real physical isolation of their communities. The dominant narrative of westward expansion in American history has been so thoroughly engrained in both popular culture and perception that at times it seems unassailable, yet it *is* subject to challenge, and the people who have hereto only made sparse appearances in the written records of the West, and who might have been summarily erased from any dialog surrounding the Great Basin, have refused to disappear. These voices might have vanished, but they have not. It is essential that native voices be allowed to define and

¹⁹ Wallace Stegner, *Beyond the Hundredth Meridian: John Wesley Powell and the Second Opening of the West* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1954), 48.

²⁰ Thomas. G. Andrews, “Native Homes of Violence and Hope.” Review of *Violence Over the Land*, by Ned Blackhawk. *Reviews in American History* 35 (2007): 335-343.

²¹ Warren L. D’Azevedo, *Introduction. Handbook of North American Indians*, Vol. 11, *Great Basin* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1986), 4.

²² *Ibid*, 280.

²³ Knack, 1.

speak for themselves, and no finer example in relation to the historiography of the Great Basin and its people can be found than in the Salt Songs of Nuwuvi.

The almost incessant misrepresentations of Great Basin History uncovered in the course of researching this paper has led to this focus on one particular people, the Southern Paiute, or as they call themselves: the Nuwuvi. It is their adaptive response to the traumas of history through the recent reseeding of the Salt Song Trail, as practiced by a community of Chemehuevi and Nuwuvi elders and ceremonies documented by young indigenous filmmakers Cara McCoy (Chemehuevi) and Bridget Sandate (Chemehuevi), that can serve as a contemporary refutation of what has been written about their cultures over the past centuries.²⁴

And the songs are coming back.

The Salt Songs are the sacred songs of the Nuwuvi people and describe a physical and spiritual landscape spanning the topography of the Great Basin, from its deserts, mountains, and rivers to the edges of the Pacific Ocean. Sung at memorial ceremonies to assist the departed in their sacred journey through the afterlife, the songs reflect a deep and resonant mirror to the land. At memorial ceremonies Salt Song singers perform the 142-song cycle from sunset to sunrise. The landmarks delineated in the song cycle describe ancient villages, gathering sites for salt, sacred areas, trading routes, ancestral lands, and other historical sites.²⁵

A 142-song cycle is evidence of deep thought and reflection. It demonstrates a vivid awareness of biological, cultural, and physical environments of great character. It is a testament to a complex spiritual ethos and is equal to anything in the Western canon of liturgical works: be it the hymns of Homer, Mozart's Requiem, or the lamentations found in the Book of Job. The songs represent real physical trails, as well as the storied world of a religious reality. It is a landscape both physical and spiritual, a real and vital link to the world of the Basin and Indigenous belief. The knowledge of the 142 songs is alive, alive after five hundred years of cultural violence, dismissal, and misunderstanding.

In fact, it is the point of view of Chemehuevi Southern Paiute tribal elders, such as Larry Elder and Vivienne Jake of the Kaibab Paiute, that the knowledge of the songs were merely dormant, like the seeds of many desert plants, and were simply awaiting a time until someone was ready to be responsible for that knowledge again.²⁶ It is also the view of Anishinaabe scholar Lawrence Gross that "as long as the sacred stories of a people remain viable, their religion and culture can remain functional"²⁷

²⁴ *The Salt Song Trail: A Living Documentary*. Directed by Bridget Sandate and Cara McCoy. Produced by The Cultural Conservancy 2009. DVD.

²⁵ Matthew Levias and Vivienne Jake. "The Salt Song Trail Map." (2009). Map

²⁶ Melissa K. Nelson, "From *Oral Tradition, Identity, & Intergenerational Healing through the Southern Paiute Salt Songs*." In *Cultural Representation in Native America*, ed., Jolivet Andrew (New York: Altamira, 2006), 96-110 at 103.

²⁷ Lawrence Gross. "Cultural Sovereignty & Native American Hermeneutics in the Interpretation of the Sacred Stories of the Anishinaabe." *Wicazo Sa Review* 18.2 (2003). *JSTOR* (29 Sept. 2011).

The Salt Songs made their first appearance in Western literature in an article by Edward Sapir in the 1910 issue of *The Journal of American Folklore*, where they were described as mourning songs declaimed “in few instances as Paiute, but belonging to a language as unintelligible to the singers.”²⁸ In other words, the ceremonies were being carried out with no idea of what was being practiced. It should come as no surprise that this kind of overbearing ethno-historical prejudice was in place after centuries of misunderstanding concerning the people of the Great Basin. Again and again, a pattern of dismissal has been the standard. The culture of the Basin peoples had been described as so “simple and amorphous that there was little to be destroyed by European contact.”²⁹ Yet as with any people with a deep knowledge of place and attendant spiritual knowledge, it is important to relate the words of ethnologist Jay Miller, who in his study of Numic religion was quick to point out that “*while the societies were rather elementary, the mental elaboration of the cultures was on par with any other culture*”³⁰ (emphasis added).

The real work of revealing the richness of Paiute cultures to Western eyes began with Carobeth Laird, the writer and ethnographer. Her ethnographic studies were published in two books *The Chemehuevi* (1976) and *Mirror and Pattern* (1984), and they represent some of the finest ethnographic studies of the Great Basin Native peoples to appear. It is in these two books that the sites along the geographic trail sung about in the Salt Songs were first documented for a Western audience. Considering that “*primitive*” Yuma Indians first made their appearance in the written chronologies of imperial Spain in the 18th century, the appearance of an elaborate song cycle tied to physical and spiritual trails, one mapping an elegant interior and spiritual life, coming to light in the final quarter of the 20th century is cause for sober reflection on the limits of written records, and the language used, inherent in the Anglo-American narratives of the intermountain West.

In the wake of Carobeth Laird’s work a number of other scholars, such as Richard Stoffle, Melissa Nelson, and Philip M. Klasky, also began taking a closer, and much more respectful, look at the cultures of the Great Basin peoples. In 2001, at the dawn of a new century, two Southern Paiute Leaders felt that it was time to share some of their oral traditions with the outside world.³¹ Paiute elder Vivienne Jake and Chemehuevi leader Matthew Levias asked the Cultural Conservancy, a non-profit indigenous rights advocacy group created in 1985 (one dedicated to the preservation and revitalization of stories, songs, and languages), to assist in the first audio recordings of their historic Salt Songs. These recordings, led by Philip Klasky, the director of The Storyscape Project of the Cultural Conservancy, and a lecturer in the Department of American Indian Studies at San Francisco State University, were the impetus to begin work on the Salt Song Trail Map.

²⁸ Edward Sapir. “Song Recitative in Paiute Mythology.” *The Journal of American Folklore* 23, no.90 (1910). *JSTOR* (19 Sept. 2011).

²⁹ Jack Harris, “From *The White Knife Shoshone of Nevada*.” In *Acculturation in Seven American Indian Tribes*, ed. Ralph Litton (New York: Columbia Press, 1940), 39-119 at 117.

³⁰ Jay Miller, “Numic Religion: An Overview of Power in the Great Basin of Native North America.” *Anthropos* 78, (1983). *JSTOR* (Sept. 19, 2011).

³¹ Nelson, 107.

In conjunction with representatives from the numerous bands of the Southern Paiute and Chemehuevi, Klasky and Dr. Melissa Nelson interviewed elders to locate specific sites along the trails mentioned in the Salt Songs. They were able then to wed the knowledge of the elders with digital cartographic images gleaned from satellite technology to create the Salt Song Trail Map. The project proceeded under the direction of Vivienne Jake and Matthew Levias, and is bringing the important resonance of the Salt Songs of the Nuwuvi to a greater audience.

The map establishes the Nuwuvi's historical presence, and as multi-dimensional tool cannot help but to invite a different sort of imaginative engagement with the land, as well as promote new histories that help mitigate the destructive effects of colonial expansion. A key question that is being asked more and more is how to best conceptualize Native American cultural resources?³² In an ongoing attempt to reassemble the dissociated elements of Native Culture, due to the pressures of colonialism, the Salt Song Trail Map Project is a display of cultural pride. It is also an occurrence of the power of healing that happens through cultural revitalization and the resistance to the violence of colonialism.

The Native peoples of the Great Basin have stood a long time before the various powers washing across their lands: Spanish Imperial, Mexican Colonial, inter-tribal slaving, Anglo miners and trappers, Mormon settlements, American federal and state governments, academics and ethnographers. The Salt Songs of the Nuwuvi have in the past have been either unknown, dismissed, misinterpreted before finally being brought to witness in the modern world of the 21st century. It is through the documentation of their sacred landscapes that the Nuwuvi and others of the Great Basin are successfully defending their rights. In doing so, they are reaching across a cultural divide, a divide with a centuries-wide chasm.

The songs, like all cultural knowledge, are self defining tools of great power. They stand as a true definition of the Nuwuvi in stark contrast to the definitions imposed upon them, beginning with the journals of the Escalante-Dominguez Expedition of 1776, and most recently in the writings of well-intentioned, but severely comprised, academic investigators of the middle 20th century. It was the wish of Moapa elder Juanita Kinlichinee that the songs be visible to the wider world the Nuwuvi view, one that articulates a value of "creation being brought back together to remind us of our connection to the land."³³ It was at the first recording session at the Moapa Paiute Reservation in Nevada in 2001, the session that brought the songs out of their long dormancy, the session that set the template for the creation of the Salt Song Trail Map, that Ms. Kinlichinee reminded everyone present that the "songs are our yesterday, today and tomorrow."³⁴

³² Ibid., 103

³³ Philip Klasky. "The Salt Song Trail Map: The Sacred landscape of the Nuwuvi People," *The Storyscape Project of the Cultural Conservancy* (2009).

³⁴ Ibid.