

CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS OFFICE OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Tomo-Kahni

THIS CALIFORNIA HISTORICAL LANDMARK NOMINATION CONTAINS RESTRICTED INFORMATION

Archaeological and traditional property locations are considered confidential and public access to such information is restricted by law (Section 304 of the National Historic Preservation Act; Section 9(a) of the Archaeological Resources Protection Act; Executive Order 13007; Section 6254.10 of the California State Government Code). The following summary of the description and significance of the above-named resource is available for public access.

Tomo-Kahni, Winter Village in the Kawaiisu language, is a late prehistoric/protohistoric site affiliated with the Kawaiisu and is located in the southern Sierra Nevada Mountains near Tehachapi, California. Tomo-Kahni State Historic Park became a unit of California State Parks in 1993. The site contains a range of features associated with long term occupation, and includes numerous discrete locations throughout the area of the park. A number of features have been recorded at the site, including food processing areas with bedrock mortars, milling slicks, rock art panels on boulders and within shelters or caves, and concentrated deposits of artifacts. Artifacts display a wide variety of activities at the site and include ceramic wares (including Owens Valley Brownware), beads of stone, marine shell, and glass, and flaked and ground stone tools. In 1954, the Phillips Ranch Site (CA-KER-230) within the current park boundary was recorded as having "16 to 20 house rings, approximately 300-500 bedrock mortars and a large stone outcrop interpreted as a sharpening device for bone awls" (Price 1954).

Tomo-Kahni represents an important period in the history of California's Native American population, and in California's history. It is one of the principal areas of occupation of the Kawaiisu. The Kawaiisu have occupied Tomo-Kahni in a continuous span from 2000 years before the present into historic times. The rock art recorded throughout the site contains stylistic elements from the Great Basin and Central Valley cultures, as does Kawaiisu basketry and foods, representing a unique amalgam of cultural traits. The site includes a complex of ceremonial features, and the "living descendants of the Kawaiisu consider the rock art sites (at Tomo-Kahni) to be sacred and a significant part of their heritage" (Lee 1999:41).

Archaeological investigation at Tomo-Kahni, though not always conducted with rigorous methodology in the past, has revealed that the site was an area of extensive occupation and contains potential data for better understanding community and village life in the local area as well as on a state-wide level. The site is uniquely located to take advantage of three cultural provinces within California; the Central Valley, the coast, and the desert. Situated midway between the coast and desert provinces, it held an important place for trade between these areas and the southern Central Valley. The Kawaiisu of Tomo-Kahni held a distinctive place in Native Californian culture that is reflected in their art and culture, and can still be felt and experienced at the site of their Winter Village.

Due to the extremely sensitive nature of the site, Tomo-Kahni State Historic Park is available to the public by tour only. These tours are led by trained State Park Volunteers on weekends during the spring and fall months.