

**THE YOKUTS LANGUAGE
OF SOUTH CENTRAL
CALIFORNIA, VOL.
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A. L. KROEBER

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BY

A. L. KROEBER

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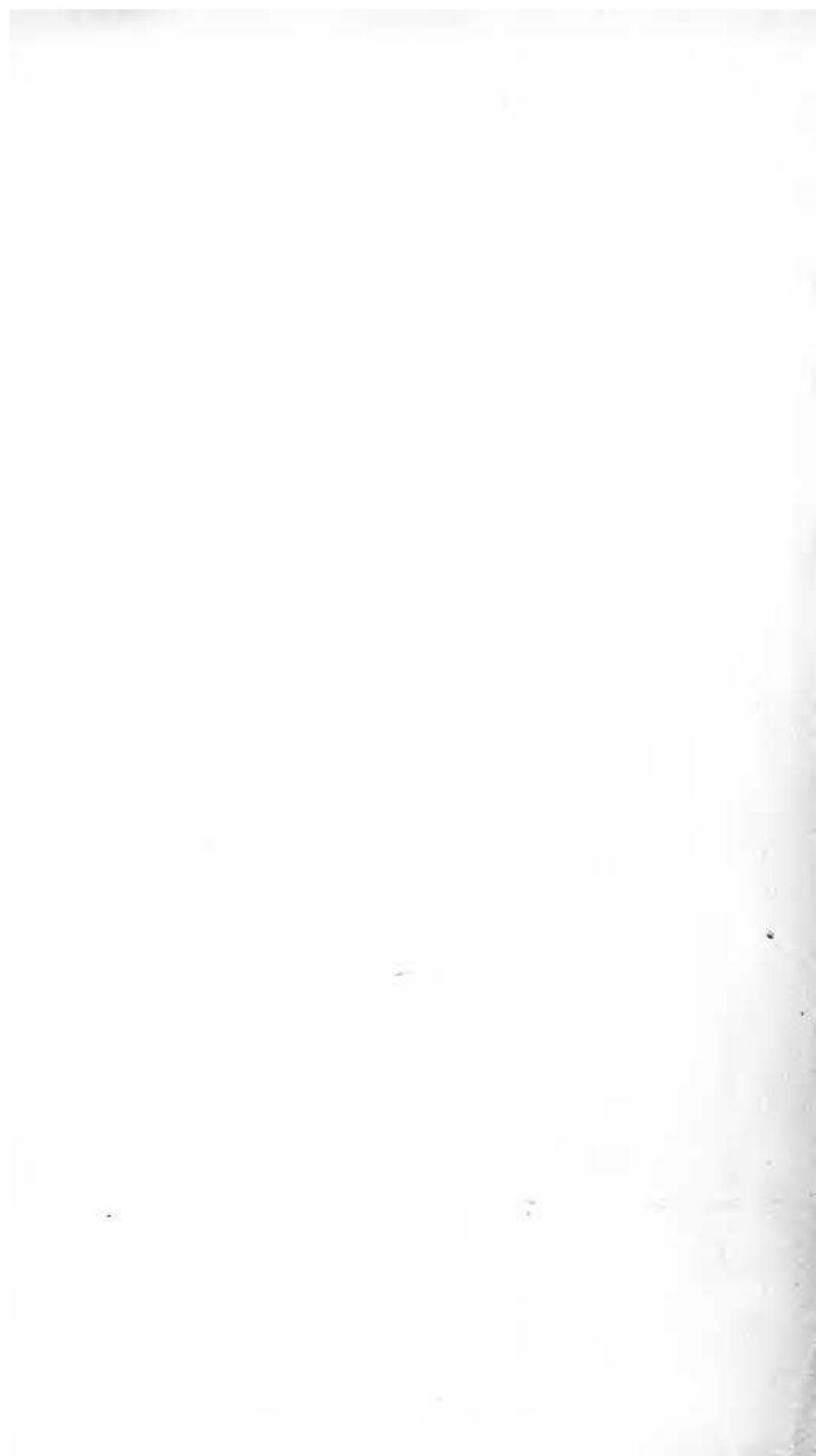
A. L. KROEBER.

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THE YOKUTS LANGUAGE OF SOUTH CENTRAL CALIFORNIA.

The Indians of the Yokuts linguistic family, sometimes also called Mariposan, inhabited the southern end of the San Joaquin basin in California. Roughly, their territory extended from the Sierra Nevada to the Coast Range, and from the Tehachapi mountains which shut off the San Joaquin basin on the south from the desert, to the Fresno and Chowchilla rivers in the north. The higher Sierras all along this territory, and certain foothill regions in the south, were occupied by Indians belonging to the Shoshonean family. The great level stretch of valley throughout, and in most cases the foothills also, were occupied by the Yokuts. A detached branch of the family, known as the Cholovone, inhabited a small area on the east bank of the San Joaquin, in the vicinity of Stockton, considerably nearer the mouth of this river than the remainder of the stock. The Cholovone are perhaps entirely extinct and are certainly practically so. Their language is unknown except from one published vocabulary, which shows it to have been a Yokuts dialect not very different from the remainder of the family.

The Yokuts were divided into a large number of groups somewhat resembling small tribes. As is not uncommon in California, each of these groups had a dialect, but, what is unusual in California, each had a distinct tribal name as well. The various dialects are on the whole closely related. Their general structure and their phonetic system are virtually identical. There is also considerable similarity in vocabulary. It is probable that Indians from Kern river and from Fresno river could have conversed,

and that they could have learned to understand each other perfectly in a short time. The greatest divergences in vocabulary were seemingly shown by small groups geographically or otherwise more or less isolated from the others, the speech of the more important tribes through the whole range of territory of the family differing only dialectically. From many tribes vocabularies have never been obtained. For this reason the grouping of the dialects can only be determined approximately. The available evidence on this point is summed up at the end of the paper. For the present it is enough to state that there were two main branches of the family, which include the more divergent dialects peculiar to small groups such as the Palcuyami of Poso Creek. The two branches have been here called the Valley division and the Foot-hill division, from the fact that the former includes nearly all the valley tribes while the latter consists principally of the hill tribes on Tule river, Kaweah river, Kings river, and Dry creek.

The differences between the vocabularies of the many dialects consist both of phonetic variations of words and of radical differences. Prominent among the variations are vocalic mutations. These seem to be similar to a scheme of vowel changes which constitutes one of the most important means in the language of expressing structure. The radical differences in words between dialects that on the whole are closely related are sometimes surprising, occurring frequently in the most common words, such as man, woman, person, house, stone, eat, and sleep. A similar tendency toward as marked a prevalence of radical as of phonetic differences exists in the dialects of other linguistic stocks in California. At least one cause of this feature is certainly the universal tabu of the names of the dead; but it is scarcely possible that this cause alone is sufficient to explain the extent of the phenomenon. Among the Yokuts the people speaking one dialect generally understand and often know the radically different words of other dialects though they do not use them.

We owe the name Yokuts to Stephen Powers. It is the word denoting person or people in the majority of the dialects of this linguistic family, but in the usage of the Indians its application is not confined to individuals of their own linguistic family.