

from
"Indians of Idaho"
Howard Walker
1978

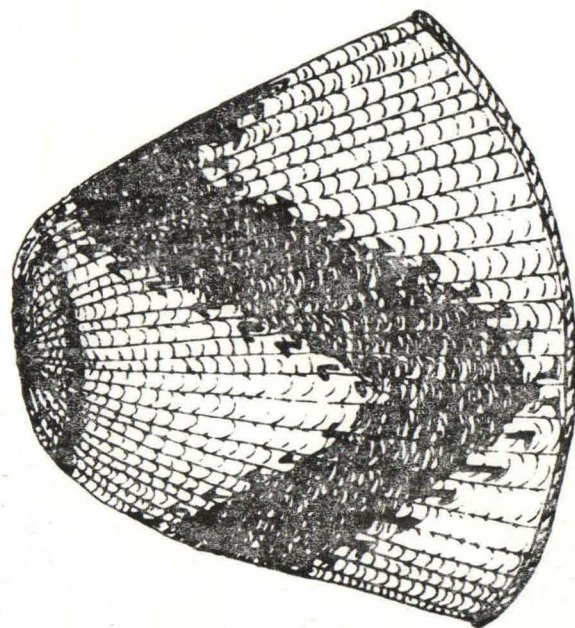
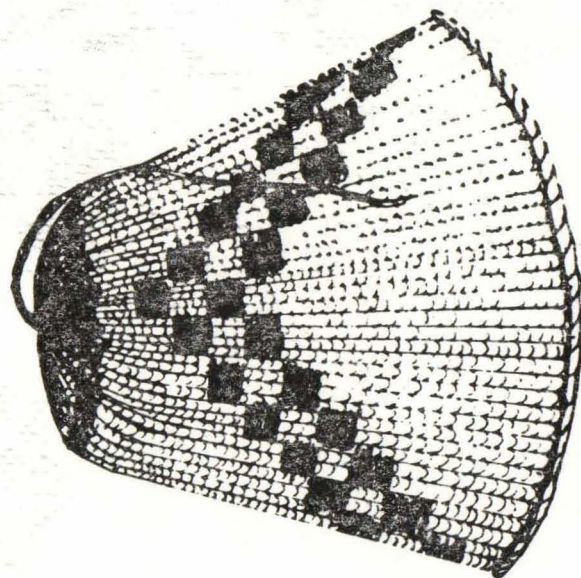


Fig. 48. Women's basketry hats.

SHOSHONE-BANNOCK

By now the reader will have noted the great similarities in subsistence among the aboriginal cultures of northern and central Idaho. The Kutenai, Kalispel, Coeur d'Alene, and Nez Perces shared a broadly similar environment with a healthy margin of survival (Figures 7, 8, 9 and 10). Their foods, tools, housing, and clothing were remarkably similar. Although influenced by Plains culture traits because of their easterly position in the Plateau culture area, they all shared the basic cultural patterns of the Plateau.

The aboriginal inhabitants of the northern Great Basin culture area followed a very distinctive way of life. They lived in an environment of comparatively low subsistence potential with very sparse population, and their economic patterns exemplify these facts quite clearly. The Shoshone-Bannock included two linguistically distinct groups — the Northern, or so-called Snake River Shoshone, and the Bannock. The Snake River Shoshone were divided into a number of bands such as the well-known Lemhi Shoshone. The Bannock minority were a small intrusive group who spoke a dialect of the Northern Paiute language (Figures 4 and 5). There is some evidence that until recently the Bannock were located farther west as part of the widespread Northern Paiute of Oregon, Nevada, and the eastern portion of modern California (Figure 3). Although occasionally acting independently, their common possession of the horse and exploitation of the same natural environment had produced similar social institutions among the Shoshone and Bannock by the time Euro-Americans moved into the region. Therefore, it is logical to lump the aboriginal Shoshone-Bannock into a single culture for purposes of general description. The aboriginal population density of this composite group ranged from 1.5 to 2 persons per 100 square miles (Figure 12). In prehorse days local groups rarely reached 100 individuals.

The aboriginal territory of the Shoshone-Bannock extended across most of southern Idaho into western Wyoming and well down into Nevada and Utah. This area rarely received more than 15 inches of precipitation annually, and many areas went for years without recorded rainfall. However, the higher elevations on the northern and eastern peripheries of their territory received



Fig. 49. Hot baths: A — submerged hot bath, overhead view; B — the same, side view.

greater annual precipitation. Here vegetation and animal life were more abundant. Similarly, the presence of the Snake River running across southern Idaho added to the area's capacity to support human life.

The Shoshone-Bannock, as well as their neighbors the Northern Paiute in southwestern Idaho, regularly took salmon below Snoshone Falls. Roots were more abundant here, particularly around present Weiser. In the prehorse period and more recently among the horseless groups of Shoshone-Bannock, there was an important reliance on small game, birds, insects, seeds, and nuts. They closely resembled the Northern Paiute in this respect. Groundhog, jack rabbit, cottontail, porcupine, prairie dog, rodents, and badger were important sources of meat. Grasshoppers, crickets, ants, and larvae of various insects also were regularly taken, and bird eggs were collected occasionally. It has been reported that some inhabitants of this region exploited well over 100 different types of seed plants. Acquisition of the horse probably decreased Shoshone-Bannock dependence on small game and plants. Those with horses began hunting large game more often and dug camas and other roots in distant, well-watered regions such as Smith Prairie, Camas Prairie on Wood River, and other places in southeastern Idaho. Large game hunted here were deer, antelope, mountain sheep, and several types of bear.

By A.D. 1700 the horse had diffused north from Spanish territory and reached the Shoshone-Bannock somewhat before it reached central and northern Idaho. Although not all people who adopted the horse were equally affected, in most cases the effect was revolutionary. As in northern and central Idaho, the horse was quickly integrated into the Shoshone-Bannock way of life and drastically modified their economic and political institutions. Groups of greater political scope emerged, and class differences began to appear as certain families amassed great wealth in horses. Some authorities believe that the horse enabled the Shoshone-Bannock to hunt the southeastern Idaho bison to the point of extinction. As a result, they were drawn farther and farther east into the Great Plains for bison as their horse herds and proficiency increased. It has been estimated that when Euro-Americans first arrived, there were from 1 to 2

horses per individual. Considering the aridity of the Shoshone-Bannock environment, this is a relatively large number.

The Shoshone-Bannock horse complex resembled the northern Plains type found throughout much of aboriginal Idaho. Men, women and children were mounted on several types of saddles made from rawhide and tanned hide on a wooden or antler base. The parfleche, travois, and pack saddle were used for transporting goods by horseback. Horse trappings were primarily of rawhide and horsehair and often decorated. Selective horse-breeding was practiced, and boys were the principal herders.

The annual subsistence cycle began in the spring with some groups going into the mountains for large game and roots and others going to favorite fishing locations on the Snake River. This phase continued until mid-summer when some joined into large groups to hunt bison in Wyoming and Montana. The midsummer period was also a time of large intertribal gatherings in areas such as Weiser and the Lemhi Valley. Here fishing, hunting, and root digging temporarily supported the large numbers who came from all directions to trade. Women gathered berries, roots, nuts, seeds, and insects intensively during the spring, summer, and early fall. Birds were taken during all seasons, but particularly in the summer. The late fall was a time of intensive preparation for winter; meats and various plant foods were cached in protected, well-drained locations where people would return to pass the winter months. When necessary, some winter hunting was conducted, but in general the period from December through February was one of limited hunting and gathering.

Shoshone-Bannock fishing implements included spears, harpoons, traps, dip nets, seines, and weirs. We are told that the Shoshone-Bannock originally borrowed most of these from groups to the north, such as the Nez Percés (Figures 37, 38, and 39). Twined conical baskets normally used for gathering seeds also were used for dipping fish from small streams. Fish weirs and traps were limited primarily to locations on the Snake River, and the community usually cooperated in their construction and use. Because of the dispersed distribution of the deer population, communal hunts were rare. However, there was

some communal net hunting for antelope, rabbits, and certain waterfowl (Figure 50 and 51). Waterfowl were killed with clubs or by wringing the neck. Snares and spring-pole traps also were used for birds and small game. Deadfalls, pitfalls, decoys, and blinds are reported to have been used generally by the Shoshone-Bannock (Figure 52). Rodents were smoked out as well as extracted from their burrows by the "rodent skewer," a long thin pole that was twisted into the animal's skin. Both wooden and horn bows were backed with sinew and knives and arrow tips were made of obsidian. Bowls, pots, cups, and pipe bowls were made of steatite, but bone was used for salmon spears, awls, and other small tools. Eating utensils were primarily from bison and mountain sheep horn.

Like most cultures of the aboriginal Great Basin culture area, the Shoshone-Bannock gathered and transported many types of seeds in conical carrying baskets. Twined basketry seed beaters or sharp wooden and bone seed knives were used to knock the ripened seeds into the basket (Figure 53). Foods were transported in woven sagebrush, and bark baskets were supported by pack straps of skin or vegetable fibers. The pitch-lined, water storage basket was used widely. Although most basketry was twilled, occasional coiled examples are reported (Figure 54). Food was stone boiled in baskets covered with rawhide. A mixture of sunflower seeds, lamb's quarter, and serviceberries was ground into a loaf resembling bread. Seeds were pounded and roasted in willow trays and chokecherries were mashed and sun-dried. Camas and similar tuberous roots were baked in earth ovens and formed into sun-dried root loafs. Meat was either broiled on an open fire or sun-dried.

Before adoption of the conical skin lodge from the Great Plains, the Shoshone-Bannock lived in conical pole lodges thatched with bundled grass, bark, or tule mats (Figure 55). Sunbreaks and windbreaks were occasionally used for shelters (Figure 56), and some early explorers reported seeing a few Shoshone living in caves, a practice observed elsewhere in the Great Basin. Sweat houses and menstrual huts were common and resembled those found in northern and central Idaho. Very simple, temporary structures sometimes were made by placing blankets or robes over bent willows inserted into the ground.



Fig. 56. Wind and sun shelter.

Although few clothes were worn in prehorse times, by the time Euro-Americans arrived, the mounted Shoshone-Bannock groups were wearing typical northern Plains buckskin dress. Men wore a long, fringed shirt of deer, antelope, or big horn sheep skin. Women wore long dresses made from the same types of hide and decorated with porcupine quills, and a girdle of dressed leather. Men wore fur caps and fringed leggings which were sometimes ornamented with scalps; women also wore shorter leggings and basketry caps. Both sexes wore robes of bison, antelope, deer, or big horn sheep skin. Generally, the skins had the hair on them, but summer robes were often dehaired. Other skins used for robes were wolf, ground hog, rabbit, and beaver. Winter moccasins had fur linings and were sometimes stuffed with sagebrush bark. In warfare, men sometimes protected themselves with armor made of laminated antelope skin cemented together with glue and sand.

NORTHERN PAIUTE

The Northern Paiute of southwestern Idaho are part of a large language (Figures 4 and 5) and cultural grouping extending south from southern Oregon and Idaho to south-central Nevada and eastern California. According to one authority, 21 distinct bands made up this widely spread group. The Ko'a'agai and Tagö bands lived in Idaho, their territory centering on the upper Snake and Owyhee rivers, respectively. Unlike some bands to the west in Oregon and particularly to the south in Nevada, these two bands had annual salmon runs and relatively abundant root crops. As might be guessed, they often exploited the same resource areas as the Shoshone-Bannock, primarily fishing locations and associated root fields. They also had the same population density as the prehorse Shoshone-Bannock, but local groups rarely exceeded 50 individuals (Figure 12). Outside the favored river valleys, Paiute territory was less productive than Shoshone-Bannock territory. Indeed, it was typically desert with little water, alkaline soils, and very sparse flora and fauna. Rainfall rarely reached 15 inches annually and many areas had no rain for years (Figures 8, 9, and 10). Unlike Shoshone-Bannock territory, Northern Paiute territory had few mountains to relieve the heat and desiccation of the desert.

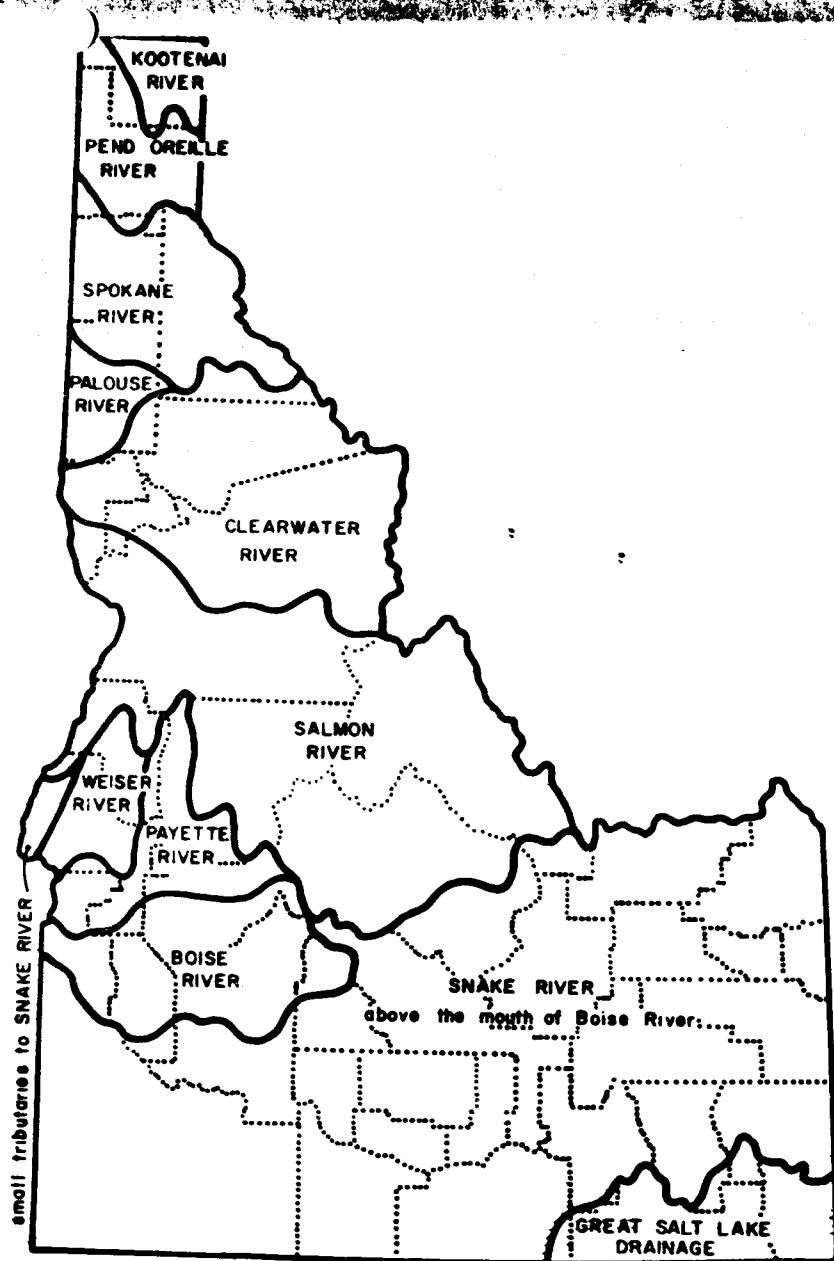


Fig. 2. Idaho drainage basins.

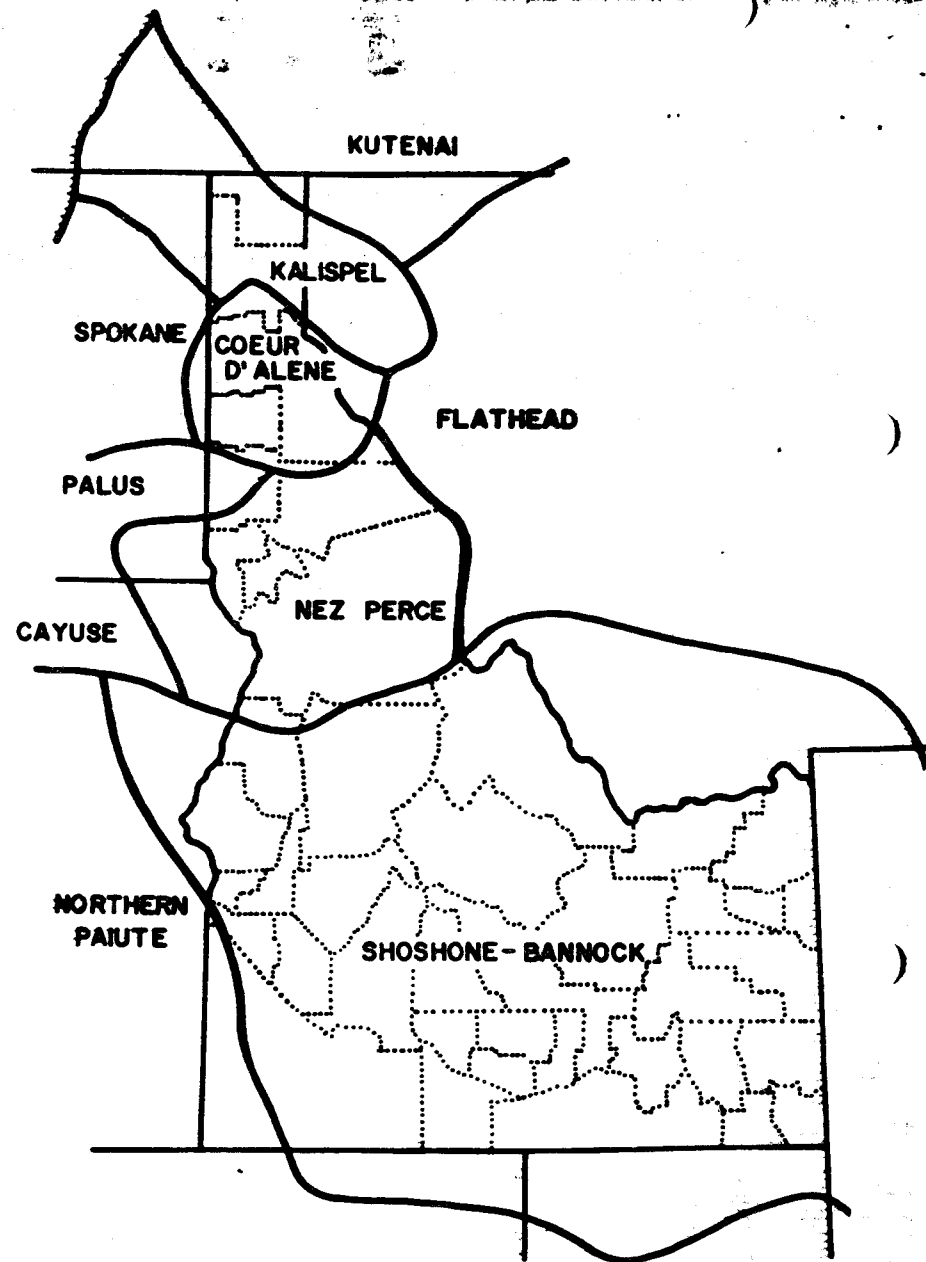


Fig. 3. Indian tribes of Idaho.

around his brothers-in-law. However, he joked with his wife's sisters in a rather intimate manner which related to the fact that one of them would marry him if his wife died, or if he decided to take an additional wife. Conversely, the bride showed respect for her mother-in-law and sisters-in-law, but joked freely with her brothers-in-law. This relates to the practice of the levirate, wherein the wife would usually marry the eldest of her husband's brothers should he die.

Among the aboriginal Nez Percés age brought wealth and power. The older males commanded respect widely and occupied the most important leadership positions. The death of such high ranking persons disrupted the normal functioning of social life and was followed by elaborate ceremonies. If a person thought he was about to die he normally made known whom he wished to receive his surviving property and his tutelary spirits. He also might recommend that certain sons succeed him in the various offices he held. Where this was not done, a long period of disorder often ensued as rivals competed for his property and positions. Of course, this was not as important for less powerful figures in the society.

As soon as death occurred, it was announced by a herald or crier. Close female relatives immediately began a high pitched wailing, sometimes called *keening*, and a group of relatives and friends congregated around the corpse to wail until it was buried the next day. The corpse was ritually bathed, combed, and decorated with red face paint and elaborate new clothes. The grave was normally dug by volunteers on a talus slope or high geological eminence overlooking the village, and was marked by a wooden stake. Subsequently, it was avoided. When prepared for burial, the corpse was wrapped in a robe, taken to the grave on a horse-drawn travois, and interred with a number of the deceased's favorite valuables. Occasionally, after the grave was covered the favorite horse that had drawn the travois was killed and left in the vicinity. The ceremony ended with rituals by the shaman to prevent the ghost of the deceased from returning to haunt the living.

After the burial a feast was given by the deceased's relatives who also directed the distribution of his remaining personal wealth. Horses, robes, necklaces, and implements of hunting,

fishing, and warfare were among the items distributed for males; whereas beaded bags, robes, and cooking implements were given away to females. Relatives might also contribute numerous additional gifts to the assembled friends and relatives. The deceased's wishes were closely observed in the distributions which were normally regulated by prominent leaders, but everyone attending was supposed to receive something.

Relatives began mourning immediately after the death. Those who had attended the corpse ritually purified themselves, and spouses cut their hair short, wore old clothing, never laughed or appeared happy in public, and were barred from remarriage for at least one year. When a man had several wives this was not a great inconvenience, but for men with only one wife or for women, it was a period of substantial personal deprivation. Typically a surviving spouse attempted to eradicate all memories of the deceased. The deceased's name could not be mentioned and houses were sometimes abandoned or destroyed. New household furnishings were acquired and the deceased's sweat house was usually destroyed. At the end of one year, the deceased's spouse's relatives formally released the surviving spouse from mourning by providing a new set of clothes and a new spouse, if an unmarried brother, sister, or close cousin was available. If none existed, the survivor was permitted to seek a new spouse from another family.

SHOSHONE-BANNOCK

The so-called Northern Shoshone and Bannock were largely intermixed by the time Euro-Americans arrived in southern Idaho, and most of them seem to have been bilingual in the two languages. The Bannock probably came from an eastward migrating group of Northern Paiutes who were among the Northern Shoshone when horses were first acquired. Although some authorities have sought to assign the two groups separate territories, they probably occupied a common area and performed most activities together. There is some evidence, however, that the Bannock became more politically self-conscious during the signing of treaties and establishment of the Fort Hall Reservation. This may have been encouraged by government agents who mistakenly assumed that the Shoshone

and Bannock of southern Idaho were distinct political groups.

To understand Shoshone-Bannock political organization, it is necessary to begin with the prehorse period which ended about A.D. 1700. Throughout this vast time period, the inhabitants of the Great Basin appear to have spent most of their time in small groups of closely related families called *patrilocal bands*, referring to the tendency of the bride to move in with her husband's family.

A very democratic style of leadership was exercised in these small bands, primarily by more experienced family heads. Although there were regional subcultural groupings, there was little political unity above the level of the patrilocal band. This form of political organization is common in many parts of the world. These bands made up regional subgroups normally identified by names based on their subsistence orientation — "mountain sheep eaters," "squirrel eaters," "sage brush eaters," etc. Regional subgroups of this type also usually occupied a small river basin drainage or other naturally unifying geographical area. Bands encountered one another occasionally in their wanderings during the warmer months and would camp together temporarily. Several families might also winter together in protected locations where food was either stored, available, or both. This occasional interaction led to repeated intermarriage between bands, and it is quite probable that regional subgroups came to speak distinctive dialects of Shoshone or Paiute.

Effects of the horse were not uniform among the Shoshone-Bannock. A few Shoshone, notably the Sheep Eater Shoshone of the mountainous areas of the Lemhi country, seem to have retained the pre-horse cultural patterns, while others dropped them rapidly. For example, the Lemhi River Shoshone quickly adopted horses and many other Great Plains cultural traits (Figures 65, 66, and 67). Like the Bannock and Shoshone around Fort Hall, they came to depend on bison and were soon known as "buffalo eaters." Two major political effects stemmed from the horse — larger local groups and stronger, more specialized leadership. The former small patrilocal bands became politically unified into larger composite bands under leaders which closely resembled the aboriginal band leaders of the Upper Kutenai and

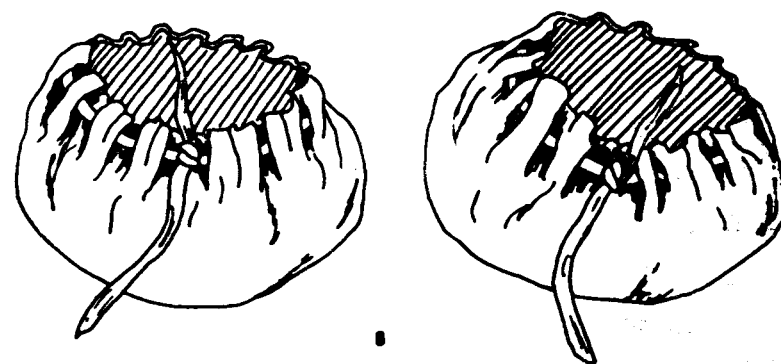
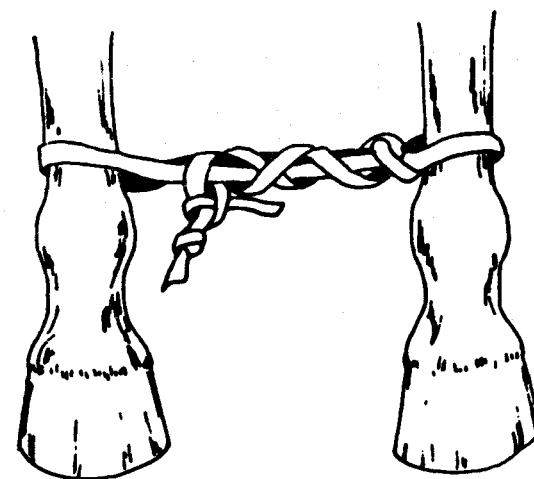


Fig. 65. Riding implements: A — rawhide hobble; B — rawhide horseshoes.

Nez Perces. In contrast to the Kutenai and Nez Perce, however, these new bands probably were not territorially identified.

Leaders among the Shoshone-Bannock horse bands were elected by councils comprised of male family heads and prominent warriors. As in northern Idaho, the position was semihereditary and carried considerable power, but Shoshone-Bannock leaders seem never to have exerted as much authority as Kutenai, Coeur d'Alene, or Nez Perce leaders. Murder and other crimes were handled by relatives, and democratic forms typical of the pre-horse period persisted in most social relations. Rarely did a band leader overrule his council, and we are told that there was much switching of band affiliation by dissident members.

During the bison hunts conducted to the east in Wyoming and Montana, however, the leaders were usually unquestioned and enforced their authority with the aid of special warrior societies closely resembling the warrior societies of the Great Plains. We are told that membership in these societies was semihereditary but validated by feats of bravery. During the hunt, members of these societies preceded the main column and others brought up the rear. They acted as scouts, warriors, and policemen making sure that the band leader's orders were obeyed.

Renowned warriors were elected to lead the composite bands, and most Shoshone-Bannock leaders came from prominent families. As in northern Idaho, such leaders were usually good orators, generous, had sound judgment, and a handsome appearance. They were elected and held office as long as they retained a large following among band members, particularly the council of family heads.

The Shoshone-Bannock horse bands of the Fort Hall area seem to have been the major political force in southern Idaho. Together with the horse bands of Shoshone in eastern Idaho and Wyoming, they were able to resist the Blackfeet and Crow on the Plains. Although often on hostile terms, they joined with other groups from northern and central Idaho for mutual protection when out in the Great Plains; one authority notes that they joined with the Nez Perces to oppose the Blackfeet. As many as 150 lodges have been counted in the large circles in which they camped during such times. Largely because of their success in

the Great Plains, sharp differences of wealth and prestige soon separated the various Shoshone-Bannock groups. One authority noted the emergence of a definite upper class among them which produced a class structure similar to that of the Nez Perces. Below this group was an incipient middle class of moderately well-to-do people, and below them a small group of slaves obtained in trade and through raiding. This class structure was more prominent among the eastern groups, whereas the western groups of Shoshone, and particularly the Northern Paiute, retained the pre-horse patterns of life. The western groups lacked the prestige of the horse groups and became an occasional source of slaves and new recruits for the horse bands.

Family ties among the aboriginal Shoshone-Bannock were not significantly altered by their adoption of the horse, and life was still spent primarily with relatives. The life cycle retained many pre-horse characteristics. During pregnancy the elderly female relatives were careful to prevent the expectant mother from breaking important taboos, and care was taken that she avoid fattening foods lest the baby grow too large to deliver easily. Her diet included many roots and she usually drank heated water. She also exercised great care to protect the baby from chills, sudden shocks, and similar deleterious influences.

At the first sign of labor, the expectant mother was removed to a special house where she usually remained until after the birth of her child. Midwives, who were thought to have special powers, assisted her and usually were older women with many children. She was also attended by several female relatives who employed prayer, herbs, and physical manipulation to assist her. After delivery, the baby was washed and wrapped in fur. Sometimes the baby's father ritually bathed at this time and often would fast from the time of birth until loss of the umbilical cord which was not saved, as in northern Idaho, but buried with a prayer that the baby would grow up strong. Apparently midwives did not call in shamans during difficult deliveries, but used their special powers to solve the problem. A new mother rarely returned to the community or saw her husband for several weeks until her isolation ended with a special bath after which she donned a new set of clothes.

When the mother returned to her family a cradle was made for

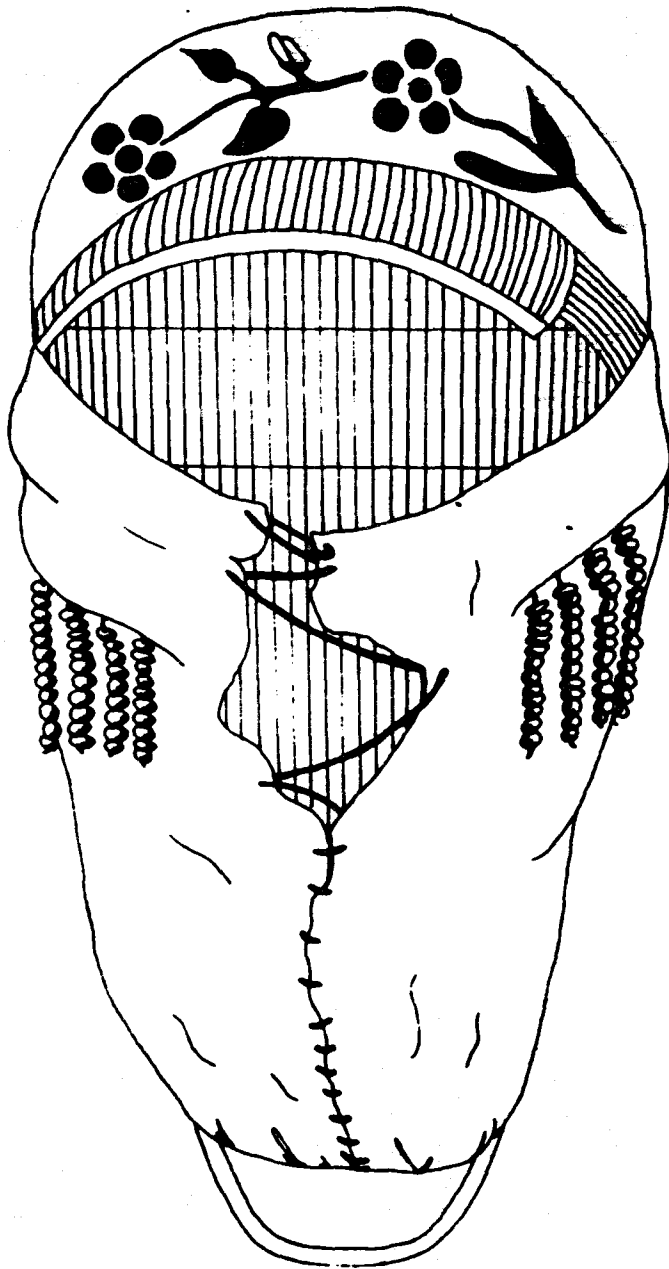


Fig. 68. Decorated cradleboard.

the baby which might be saved and used for the next baby if this one benefitted by it; otherwise the cradleboard would be destroyed for fear of harming the next baby (Figure 68). Although the baby was taken out for changing, most of his first year was spent bound to this device, and the mother either carried the cradleboard on her back or suspended it from the saddle if she were mounted. After about a year, the child was taken out of the cradleboard and carried in a robe on his mother's back. The baby was weaned at about age two when it began to talk. Men rarely took an active role in caring for infants.

When the child could walk, he was cared for by his siblings, cousins, and especially his grandparents who normally resided with the family. The aboriginal Shoshone-Bannock lived mostly in three-generation, extended family groupings where grandparents could help care for the young. Shoshone-Bannock children were indulged and rarely whipped because it was thought to break their spirit. Consistent with this was a belief that if a young boy struck his father it was a sign that he would be a brave man. In contrast to northern and central Idaho, where these practices were thought to produce strong adults, children were not required to take cold baths or submit to regular whippings. Names were given in infancy without any special ceremony, and nicknames were given later in life, as were special names for feats of bravery.

Shoshone-Bannock children, like the aboriginal inhabitants of central and northern Idaho, were surrounded by cousins and siblings whom they addressed as father and mother. All these relatives shared in the children's care and education. Important lessons were learned through playing with peers, toy bows and arrows, toy digging sticks, and dolls. It was believed that a child's dreams indicated what he would become and he was questioned carefully about them. This was especially true for children who were to become shamans. Often their dreams directed them to go to the mountains on vision quests, and parents and grandparents were careful to encourage proper attitudes toward these experiences.

Contrary to the sharp social transition experience by girls, adolescence for boys was a lengthy period of gradually intensifying changes that began early in childhood. Sometimes

there was a special ceremony for the boy's first big game kill. As time went by, he spent more and more time hunting, fishing, and journeying with his peers and adult males. As he matured he would join raids into the Great Plains and, if successful, would be invited to join a warrior society in his later teens. This gradual transition into adulthood ended with marriage at about age twenty.

Girls passed through adolescence quickly, beginning with the onset at puberty and ending relatively soon thereafter with marriage. At the first indication of puberty, a girl was isolated in a small house which contained its own fire and special furnishings. For about ten days she was kept here under the care of a knowledgeable, older woman who instructed her in matters relating to marriage and family life. As in northern and central Idaho, it was believed dangerous for her to eat meat during this time, but occasional roots were permitted. Ideally only water was drunk. The girl could sleep only at night and had to gather wood every morning. Unlike the aboriginal inhabitants of northern and central Idaho, the Shoshone-Bannock did not have a taboo regarding the girl touching her body, but like them, the Shoshone-Bannock believed that the girl's behavior at this time would help determine her adult personality. Consequently, her behavior was carefully controlled. The girl donned new clothes at the end of her isolation, but no further ceremony occurred.

After puberty, courtship became an almost constant preoccupation of boys and girls. There were many formal dances where boys and girls formed trysts, and adult supervision was minimal at such times. At night boys sometimes played flutes within hearing of a girl's tent, and if she were interested she would come out to meet him. Courtship did not last long, for girls usually married shortly after puberty. Infant betrothals and other family arranged marriages were also common, and in such cases marriage to the betrothed took place more or less automatically. If there were neither betrothal nor elopement, courtship normally commenced when a boy announced his marriage choice to his family, who then selected an older relative of either sex to serve as intermediary in the negotiations. If the relative prestige and wealth of each family were acceptable

to the other, the prospective groom gave the father of the bride-to-be a gift of horses which was reciprocated at the marriage ceremony. Among the Shoshone-Bannock the girl's family initiated marriage negotiations more frequently than among the groups of central and northern Idaho.

It would appear that the Shoshone-Bannock also differed sharply from most other aboriginal cultures of Idaho in their occasional practice of both polygyny and polyandry and permitting marriage among what Euro-Americans would call first cousins. Marriage between first cousins often occurs where societies are made up of relatively small, isolated groups, as for example, the Northern Algonquians, whose social organization closely paralleled that of the Shoshone-Bannock before the latter adopted the horse. Primarily, it was a way of adapting to a very limited number of marriage partners. Polyandry, the marriage of a woman to two or more men, was practiced by brothers for much the same reason, and in such cases the wife's children referred to each of her husbands as father. Both first cousin marriage and polyandry seem to have declined after acquisition of the horse because of the increased range of social contacts and size of local groups horse transportation made possible. Polygyny continued after adoption of the horse and may have increased because of the slave raiding practiced by some Shoshone-Bannock bands. It is said that older men rich in horses often used their wealth to acquire many wives. Consequently, younger men often were forced to marry very young girls or women captured during raids on other groups. Horses acquired on raids also improved a young man's wealth and chances of marrying, but desperate young men sometimes abducted married women and went to live with other bands. Where possible, however, most couples preferred to live with the relatives of the groom rather than go into exile. In such cases, the abductor usually made a substantial payment to the aggrieved husband.

Most aboriginal Shoshone-Bannock did not live to a very old age, particularly the men who were regularly subjected to the dangers of hunting and combat. Polygyny and the levirate are natural social responses to this fact. Although divorce was obtained easily, many remarriages were brought on by the early

death of the husband, and marriage to the eldest surviving brother was the rule. If a man lived long enough he might find himself married to all his brother's surviving wives. Because of the preference for marriage between sets of brothers and sisters, complications produced by such practices were kept to a minimum.

Death ushered in a year-long period of mourning for the surviving spouse and close relatives, during which time remarriage was forbidden. Hair was cut short, legs were sometimes gashed, and it was forbidden to mention the name of the deceased. Mourning spouses commonly were assisted by relatives and friends in preparing the corpse for burial. It was ritually bathed, dressed in the deceased's best clothes, and tied in a robe. Cremation and open air exposure of the corpse may have been practiced occasionally by the aboriginal Shoshone-Bannock, but in most cases the corpse was buried at the closest spot. Usually the corpse was extended with the head to the west, and shamans performed rituals to protect survivors from the ghost. The funeral ended with a feast and distribution of the remaining property of the deceased. It would seem that the aboriginal Shoshone-Bannock funeral customs were less elaborate than those found in central and northern Idaho.

NORTHERN PAIUTE

The Northern Paiute of southwestern Idaho possessed a social system closely resembling that of the pre-horse Shoshone-Bannock. The extended family was the largest permanent social grouping, but the smaller nuclear family was sometimes the prevailing local group. The highly dispersed and sparse nature of food resources in the Great Basin required dispersal of people in small groups. The small nuclear and extended families were the most efficient social groupings for exploiting the limited resources of this vast region. Larger social groupings were produced temporarily during the communal rabbit and antelope drives and fish runs, where a large amount of food could be obtained at one time. At the end of these seasonal activities, however, the population again dispersed into small family units.

Like the pre-horse Shoshone-Bannock, the Northern Paiute were organized into regional subgroups named primarily for

food orientation, e.g., "elk eaters," "wada eaters," etc. Such groups possessed little, if any, political significance, although they congregated occasionally for communal rituals. These regional groups were vaguely identified with a home territory, but they spent much of the year in temporary encampments. Even their winter camps varied in location from year to year. Thus, there was only a very vague division of Northern Paiute territory along political lines.

Daily life centered on the localized nuclear and extended families where the oldest able male of the extended family normally directed affairs. Euro-Americans often called this leader *Captain*, a term adopted throughout much of the Great Basin. The Captain decided when and where economic resources would be exploited, regulated intergroup relations, hosted visitors, and settled disputes. He was responsible for the general welfare of the extended family and was admired because of his exemplary behavior. Frequently, he was thought to possess special powers to cure or to locate game. Although not always hereditary, most Captains were succeeded by their sons. There were no councils of family heads, elders, or prominent members of the group as found elsewhere in aboriginal Idaho. Leadership above the family level was restricted to the seasonal communal undertakings, during which special leaders such as the *dance chief*, *antelope chief*, or *rabbit chief* held office temporarily. Justice was primarily in the hands of family groups who avenged murder, exiled the habitual thief, and ridiculed the habitual nonconformist.

The class differences based on relative wealth seen among the Nez Perces and Shoshone-Bannock were lacking among the Northern Paiute. Their limited wealth and small numbers made such distinctions impractical. Occasionally, slaves were encountered among the Northern Paiute by early Euro-American explorers, but it was a more common pattern for other groups to enslave them. If slaves were present, they usually were treated as another member of the family, and women slaves were taken as additional wives. Northern Paiutes captured by mounted Nez Perces, Cayuse, and Umatilla were enslaved and traded throughout much of the Northwest. Contact with the mounted Shoshone-Bannock groups to the east was extensive.