

## INYO ONCE AGAIN

In 1972 I published in this journal a discussion of the California place-name *Inyo* (*Names* 20:1 [March, 1972], 56-59). I there presented evidence to show that the traditional derivation from an expression of the local Indians meaning "the dwelling place of a great spirit" (accepted in the classic survey of California place-names by Erwin G. Gudde, third edition, 1969, s.v.) had no foundation at all in the Eastern Mono (also called Paiute) language which was spoken in the region in aboriginal times. I therefore suggested that this traditional explanation, which could not be literally true, may have arisen through a misunderstanding by both whites and Indians; I proposed to see the source of *Inyo* in a word of that or closely similar shape widely diffused in the native tongues of the state, which was derived from the Spanish *Indio* and meant "(an) Indian."

The principal shortcoming of this suggestion, it now seems to me, was my failure to confront the problem of how a term of such ethnic reference could have become a toponym. Although without conviction that this problem has been solved, I want to draw attention now to certain additional data which may be relevant.

There is on the map of California a name *Indio*, in Riverside county; it is used to identify a town, some "hills," and a "mountain." Of this name Gudde's dictionary says: "When the Sunset Route of the Southern Pacific reached the place in May, 1876, the station was named after the near-by (still existing) Indian Wells. Before 1879 the name was changed to the Spanish name for 'Indian.'" Here then is, if my etymology of *Indio* is correct, another occurrence of that word as a place-name within the state. We may note, first, that the name was given within a few years of its application farther north; and second, that many native Americans, the Cahuilla of Palm Springs, do not live far from *Indio*. These people are of the same linguistic stock as the Paiutes of Owens Valley, and therefore could have had similar naming practices. If the replacement of *Indian Wells* by *Indio* was intended as a translation, it was neither effective nor accurate.

Another instance of this kind of naming has come to my attention. There is a town called *Hiko* in Lincoln county, Nevada, founded in 1866, and also in territory inhabited by speakers of the same linguistic stock as those of *Inyo* and Riverside counties in California. The name is said to mean "white man" in Uto-Aztecan. One of the authorities for this translation is George Stewart; he says, however (*American Place-Names*, 1970, p. 206): "[the] reason for [its] application [is] uncertain." Stewart's caution is justified by the lack of testimony in any of these three cases about the motives of the namers. But I shall consider that my case for the etymology of *Inyo* is strengthened by the discovery of two other place-names, bestowed at roughly the same period in territory of the same linguistic stock, and motivated, it would seem, in like ways: they may be interpreted as evidence for a regional naming pattern.

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