



## The Coast Miwok of Point Reyes



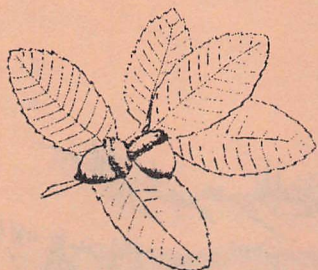
**Tule Kotca**

Before the Europeans came to California, the Coast Miwok people were the inhabitants of what we now call Marin and southern Sonoma Counties. They knew and blended with this bountiful land for thousands of years, developing a rich economy based on gathering, fishing and hunting. Village communities of 75 to several hundred people developed in sheltered places near fresh water and plentiful food. "Kule Loklo" (meaning "Bear Valley") is a recreated village. It stands where no village ever was, but where one might have stood.



**Basket and Clam  
Shell Disk Bead  
Necklace**

Coast Miwok life was intricately woven into the changing seasons. In the late spring, fresh new greens of Indian lettuce, young nettle leaves and clover were gathered. Fire hardened digging sticks were used by the women to reach deep set roots and bulbs. The ocean provided kelp in large amounts, some to be eaten fresh the rest dried and stored for the winter. Tule was gathered in the fall for skirts and tule baskets. The summer sun ripened grasses and flower seeds, gathered by hitting the ripened seed with a beater basket and letting them fall directly into a collecting basket.

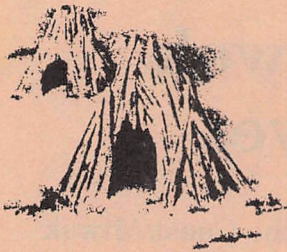


**Tanbark oak  
leaves and acorns**

Fall was the season for collecting a variety of nuts: acorns (stored in a granary for year-round consumption), buckeye, hazel and bay. Tule was cut and dried for kotcas (houses), boats and mats. Gray willow for baskets and traps was abundant. Winter and early spring were times of shortage when stored acorns, seeds and kelp became important food sources.

The ocean provided food year-round. Crab, clams, mussels, abalone, limpets and oysters were some of the animals gathered by the women in the tidal zones. Cleaned of meat, the shells were also fully utilized. Abalone shells were made into beautiful ornaments. The Washington clam was one of the most important shells; these were ground into circular, flat disk beads with a hole drilled in the middle. Strings of these beads were the main trade item (money) and were used extensively through Northern California.





**Redwood Kotca**



**Northern  
Flicker**

Many different techniques were adopted by the men for fishing. Dip nets (bags of netting attached to wooden frames on a handle) were used to scoop up fish, and woven surf nets were used along the open beaches. Conical shaped traps of woven gray willow were set up in creeks and mouths of rivers. With hook and bait one could successfully catch halibut and rock fish year-round.

Hunting by use of traps and bow and arrow supplied the Coast Miwok with meat, fur and tools. Traps were used to capture such game as quail, acorn woodpeckers and rabbits which were highly valued for their fur and meat. Deer were usually hunted with bow and arrow, and provided many necessary items. Antler tips were used for shaping arrowheads, sinew (muscle tendon) was used to fasten points to arrow shafts and leg bones were made into awls (needles used in basketmaking) and hair pins. In this way, the Coast Miwok wasted little of the animals they hunted.

As you explore Kule Loklo, try to imagine the lives of the people who lived so intimately with the land. In the old days, a village like Kule Loklo would have been a busy place ... acorns being pounded into meal by women with stone mortar and pestle, basket weavers chatting as they worked under the sun shade, cooking fires smoking with mussels baking or deer roasting, children laughing and playing, new dancers learning songs and steps in the dance house, hunters flaking obsidian for knife blades ...

The Coast Miwok people lived in the same village, such as this, for hundreds of years. As we contemplate their existence here, we may learn from them an approach to life and land which could be sustained for hundreds or thousands of years. As the first caretakers of Point Reyes, the Coast Miwok people continue to teach us much.

