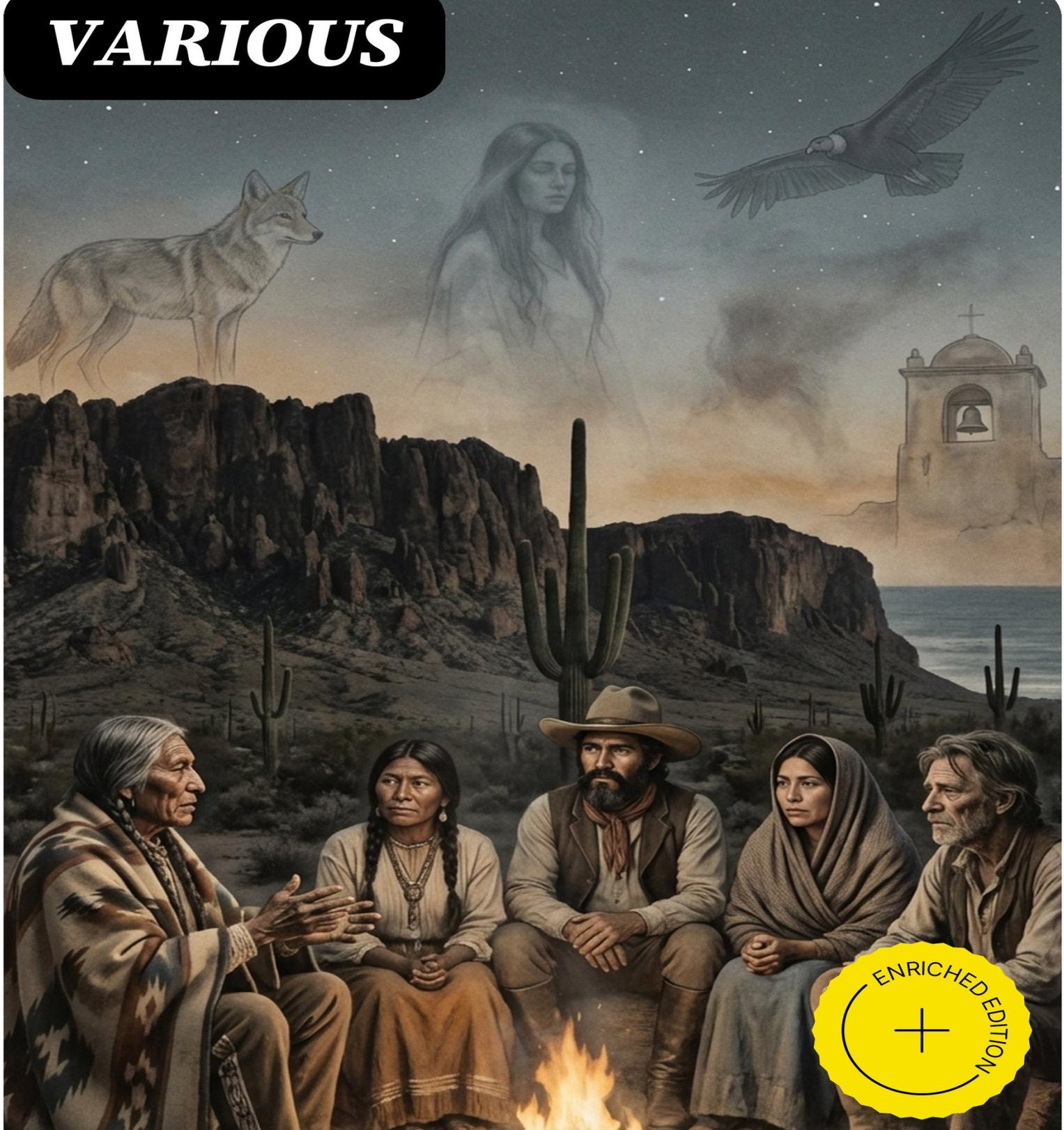


VARIOUS



**MYTHS AND LEGENDS  
OF CALIFORNIA AND  
THE OLD SOUTHWEST**

**Various**

# **Myths and Legends of California and the Old Southwest**

**Enriched edition.**

*Introduction, Studies and Commentaries by Bryce Emerson*

EAN 8596547363385

Edited and published by DigiCat, 2022



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# Introduction

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This collection gathers myths and legends that map the imaginative geography of California and the Old Southwest, binding cosmos, landforms, animals, and human communities into a single narrative field. Across its span, beginnings and renewals stand beside memories of floods, fires, and migrations, while songs, speeches, and tales of transformation furnish a living vocabulary for understanding place. The unifying thread is a regional vision in which mountains, valleys, deserts, waters, and skies are not mere backdrops but active participants. These works present a coherent world where origin stories, landscape etiologies, and moral instruction converge, revealing an integrated sense of order, relation, and responsibility.

The opening constellation of cosmogonies stages a vigorous dialogue about how things came to be. Accounts such as Old Mole's Creation, Spider's Creation, The Creation of the World, and How Old Man Above Created the World present distinct vantage points on first making. The Search for the Middle and the Hardening of the World, Origin of Light, Pokoh, the Old Man, Thunder and Lightning, Creation of Man, The First Man And Woman, and Old Man Above and the Grizzlies extend this inquiry to balance, illumination, and kinship. Read together, they illuminate recurring questions about equilibrium, power, and care as the world acquires form, habitation, and obligation.

Equally resonant is the cluster of flood traditions—The Creation of Man-Kind and the Flood; The Birds and the Flood; Legend of the Flood; The Great Flood; The Flood and the Theft of Fire; Legend of the Flood in Sacramento Valley—where deluge is not merely calamity but a crucible of renewal. Variations across titles suggest multiple paths through danger toward restoration, often paired with the acquisition of vital arts and materials. The Earth-Hardening After the Flood implies a reestablishment of stability, echoing The Search for the Middle. Together these works explore how communities imagine survival, responsibility, and the recalibration of social and natural orders after upheaval.

Celestial order and human ingenuity intersect in narratives of the sun and the fire. Coyote and Sun, The Course of the Sun, The Foxes and the Sun, and two entries titled The Theft of Fire reflect on warmth, time, and the conditions of culture. Here gravity and play coexist: the solemn rhythm of daylight converses with the resourceful, sometimes unruly actions of trickster beings. The surrounding cycle of animal tales—Coyote and the Hare; Coyote and the Quails; Coyote and the Fawns; How the Bluebird Got its Color; Coyote's Eyes; Coyote and the Tortillas; Coyote as a Hunter; How the Rattlesnake Learned to Bite; Coyote and the Rattlesnake—extends these contrasts between instruction, humor, danger, and craft.

Place-making emerges with particular force in etiologies of terrain and flora: Origin of the Sierra Nevadas and Coast Range; Yosemite Valley; Legend of Tu-Tok-A-Nu'-La (El Capitan); Legend of Tis-Se'-Yak (South Dome and North

Dome); California Big Trees; Origin of Clear Lake; Origin of the Saguaro and Palo Verde Cacti. These works read the land as archive, assigning meaning to granite walls, domes, forests, and desert sentinels. Historic Tradition of the Upper Tuolumne offers another register of memory beside legend, while The Migration of the Water People and Traditions of Wanderings trace movement through fragile ecologies. The Guiding Duck and the Lake of Death and The Great Fire underscore journeys where geography and fate are inseparable.

Ritual, song, and visionary arts give the collection a performative dimension. The Children of Cloud, The Cloud People, and multiple Rain Song entries contemplate weather and blessing; The Corn Maidens and The Search for the Corn Maidens entwine sustenance with reverence. Hasjelti and Hostjoghon, The Song-Hunter, and Sand Painting of the Song-Hunter suggest ceremonial exploration of sound, image, and power. Transformation tales such as The Boy Who Became A God and meditations on elsewhere like The Spirit Land expand the spiritual horizon. Speech on the Warpath and Why the Apaches are Fierce introduce oratory and ethos, while Origin of the Raven and the Macaw and The Thirsty Quails bind artistry to instruction.

Contemporary readers will find in these works a multidimensional resource for cultural, artistic, and intellectual renewal. Their plurality refuses single origins and single genres, modeling ways to think with rather than about landscapes and beings. Environmental imagination is sharpened by stories that see mountains, rivers, animals, and storms as partners in community. Artistic practice can

draw upon their layered forms—song, speech, tale—for structure and inspiration. Intellectually, they propose a philosophy of relation and resilience, where knowledge is narrative and place-based. The presence of *Song of the Ghost Dance* affirms continuity amid change, reminding us that tradition is both memory and ongoing creation.

# Historical Context

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## Socio-Political Landscape

In creation cycles like The Beginning of Newness, The Men of the Early Times, and How Old Man Above Created the World, authority appears as relational rather than centralized. The Gods and the Six Regions and The Search for the Middle and the Hardening of the World map a polity ordered by cardinal directions and a negotiated center, suggesting councils and balances rather than monarchs. Origins of the Totems and of Names ties civil identity to lineage emblems, while Hasjelti and Hostjoggon emphasizes ceremonial stewardship. These narratives present governance as ritual competence, reciprocity with nonhuman powers, and communal obligation anchored in territory, kinship, and cosmological place.

Conflict narratives double as constitutional debates. The Creation of Man-Kind and the Flood, The Birds and the Flood, Legend of the Flood, The Great Flood, and The Flood and the Theft of Fire imagine catastrophe as a reset that tests law, responsibility, and survival. Parallel tellings of The Theft of Fire stage contests over knowledge, technology, and distribution, treating power as custodial rather than proprietary. Coyote and Sun, The Course of the Sun, and Speech on the Warpath weigh transgression against social order, articulating limits on force and boast. Why the Apaches are Fierce frames martial fierceness as protection of lifeways amid pressured borders.

Land and memory underwrite political sovereignty throughout. Yosemite Valley, Legend of Tu-Tok-A-Nu'-La (El Capitan), and Legend of Tis-Se'-Yak (South Dome and North Dome) transform cliffs into charters of belonging. Historic Tradition of the Upper Tuolumne (As given by Mr. Stephen Powers, 1877.) alerts readers to mediation by outside recorders, a sign of unequal power and voice. Origin of the Sierra Nevadas and Coast Range and California Big Trees treat mountains and groves as patrimony. Song of the Ghost Dance refracts hopes for renewal under disruption, while Traditions of Wanderings and The Migration of the Water People remember displacements, alliances, and negotiated continuities across contested homelands.

## **Intellectual & Aesthetic Currents**

The Preface and the volume's architecture guide readers from cosmology to local etiologies, reflecting an editor's aim to preserve breadth and permit comparison. Compiled and Edited by Katharine Berry Judson, the collection juxtaposes multiple creation strands, flood traditions, theft-of-fire scenes, and place-legends without forcing synthesis. The arrangement foregrounds the autonomy of each narrative voice while inviting patterns to emerge across California and the Old Southwest. Paratexts such as attributions to narrators or sources, including the note As given by Mr. Stephen Powers, 1877, signal the editorial scaffold and the anthology's reliance on remembered speech, translation, and performance cues drawn from oral delivery.

Philosophically, the anthology orients readers to a living cosmos. Origin of Light, The Gods and the Six Regions, and

The Men of the Early Times lay out a layered universe of beings whose obligations shape human law. The First Man And Woman, The Spirit Land, The Boy Who Became A God, and The Guiding Duck and the Lake of Death consider thresholds between life, death, and divinity. The Corn Maidens and The Search for the Corn Maidens bind subsistence to ritual. The Coyote cycle—including Coyote and the Rattlesnake and Coyote as a Hunter—tests boundaries, proving that wit, hubris, and reciprocity govern moral consequence.

Aesthetically, song, image, and place-name etiology intertwine. The three Rain Song entries reveal flexible performance, with refrains suited to seasonal need and communal voice. Hasjelti and Hostjoghon, The Song-Hunter, and Sand Painting of the Song-Hunter exhibit ceremonial arts where chant, gesture, and pictured designs form a single rite. The Children of Cloud and The Cloud People show mythic meteorology as lyric narrative. Place-legends such as Origin of Clear Lake, Legend of Tu-Tok-A-Nu'-La, and Legend of Tis-Se'-Yak act as landscape poetics. Humor and repetition in Coyote and the Tortillas, Coyote's Eyes, and Coyote and the Quails sharpen memory while disciplining desire.

## **Legacy & Reassessment Across Time**

Because the anthology preserves multiple treatments of the same motif—two versions of The Theft of Fire, numerous flood accounts, and repeated Rain Song texts—later readers have treated it as a record of plurality rather than a single canon. The Preface's preservationist framing invites

discussion of translation choices and context lost or gained in condensation. Attributions like Historic Tradition of the Upper Tuolumne (As given by Mr. Stephen Powers, 1877.) foreground layered authorship and responsibility. Debates have turned on the degree of editorial smoothing, the balance between accessibility and fidelity, and how to signal tribal specificity within the umbrella of California and the Old Southwest.

Reassessment has also centered on ethics and function. Song of the Ghost Dance now circulates not only as lament but as political theology of renewal; Speech on the Warpath is reread as a crafted rhetoric of restraint and obligation. Sand Painting of the Song-Hunter has prompted reflection on the propriety of reproducing ritual designs outside ceremonial settings. Place-legends like Yosemite Valley and California Big Trees are increasingly interpreted as assertions of environmental reciprocity and territorial memory. Across editions and classrooms, interpreters emphasize community voice, careful attribution, and the recognition that these narratives act as living law as well as literary art.

# **Synopsis (Selection)**

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## **Framing Materials (Compiled and Edited by Katharine Berry Judson; Preface)**

A brief framing note establishes the collection's span across California and the Old Southwest, signaling varied voices and mythic modes. It primes attention to recurring motifs—creation, flood, trickster, ceremony, and place—that echo and contrast across the volume.

## **Creation Myths I: World-Making (The Beginning of Newness; Old Mole's Creation; The Creation of the World; Spider's Creation; The Gods and the Six Regions; How Old Man Above Created the World; The Search for the Middle and the Hardening of the World; Origin of Light; Pokoh, the Old Man; Thunder and Lightning)**

These cosmogonies recount how earth, sky, directions, and light are shaped by animal and sky-beings through acts of digging, weaving, seeking balance, and setting boundaries. Their sacred, spare tone establishes first order and measure, later tested and reconfigured by flood cycles, sun-path tales, and the quests to obtain fire.

## **Creation Myths II: First People and Lifeways (The Men of the Early Times; Creation and Longevity; Creation of Man; The First Man And Woman; Old Man Above and the Grizzlies)**

Accounts of first people define kinship, mortality, and interdependence with animals, drawing lines between species and custom. These intimate beginnings ground the ethical frame for later trickster disruptions, totem origins, and migration stories.

## **Flood Legends (The Creation of Man-Kind and the Flood; The Birds and the Flood; Legend of the Flood; The Great Flood; The Flood and the Theft of Fire; Legend of the Flood in Sacramento Valley; The Earth-Hardening After the Flood)**

Multiple deluge traditions tell of cleansing waters, survival through vigilance and aid, and the world's rehardening after retreating floods. Their cyclical unmaking and remaking amplify the cosmogonies and intersect with fire-theft episodes, migration trails, and sun-orderings.

## **Sun and Celestial Tales (Coyote and Sun; The Course of the Sun; The Foxes and the Sun)**

Brief etiologies explain the sun's path and temperament through contests, bargains, and cautionary cleverness. They echo the 'Origin of Light' while offering a terrestrial counterpoint to the fire-theft and flood cycles.

## **Theft of Fire (two versions) (The Theft of Fire; The Theft of Fire)**

Twin versions of the fire-acquisition motif follow cunning raids on jealous keepers, dramatizing the costs and

responsibilities of culture. They resonate with flood-linked theft and with Coyote cycles where appetite and ingenuity reshape relations among beings.

## **Origins, Names, and Migrations (The Origins of the Totems and of Names; Traditions of Wanderings; The Migration of the Water People)**

These narratives trace how clans and names arise and why peoples journey, mapping identity onto trails, rivers, and animal allies. They bridge cosmic beginnings with place-legends, showing society as a living map renewed after cataclysm.

## **Landforms and Places of Power: Sierra and California (Origin of the Sierra Nevadas and Coast Range; Yosemite Valley; Legend of Tu-Tok-A-Nu'-La (El Capitan); Legend of Tis-Se'-Yak (South Dome and North Dome); Historic Tradition of the Upper Tuolumne (As given by Mr. Stephen Powers, 1877.) (4); California Big Trees; Origin of Clear Lake)**

Place-etiologies and traditions anchor mountains, cliffs, domes, giant trees, and lakes in memorable deeds, taboos, and reckonings. These tales render landscape as moral archive, conversing with creation cycles and trickster episodes about balance, pride, and kinship.

## **Cloud, Corn, and Ceremony (The Children of Cloud; The Cloud People; Rain Song [three**

**(various versions); The Corn Maidens; The Search for the Corn Maidens; Hasjelti and Hostjoghon; The Song-Hunter; Sand Painting of the Song-Hunter; The Guiding Duck and the Lake of Death; The Boy Who Became A God)**

Interwoven hymns, quests, and ritual scenes bind rain-beings, corn spirits, and song-power, with art itself portrayed as a living, protective practice. Their reverent cadence offsets harsher fire, war, and flood tales, recasting survival as reciprocity with clouds, food, and form.

**Fire and Transformation (The Great Fire; Origin of the Raven and the Macaw)**

A sweeping burn and the gifting of traits to birds show how catastrophe can both scar and bestow identity. This pairing deepens the collection's change-through-trial motif shared by flood narratives and Coyote's risky gambits.

**Coyote Tales I: Trickster and Trials (Coyote and the Hare; Coyote and the Quails; Coyote and the Fawns; Coyote's Eyes; Coyote and the Tortillas; Coyote as a Hunter)**

Comic-moral vignettes track Coyote through hunger, boasting, and miscalculation, turning ordinary foraging into lessons. Their earthy humor counterpoints sacred cosmogonies and foreshadows sterner encounters with serpents and celestial order.

## **Coyote Tales II: Serpents and Lessons (How the Rattlesnake Learned to Bite; Coyote and the Rattlesnake; Coyote and the Mesquite Beans)**

Encounters with venom and sustenance convert meddling into cautionary lore about danger, remedy, and restraint. These sharpen the ethical edge of the trickster cycle and link to animal origins and the theft-of-fire's peril.

## **Animal and Plant Origins (How the Bluebird Got its Color; Origin of the Saguaro and Palo Verde Cacti; The Thirsty Quails; The Boy and the Beast; The Fable of the Animals)**

Concise etiologies explain colors, habits, forms, and bonds among creatures and plants, often born of thirst, bargains, or trials. Their gentle instruction echoes ceremonial songs and softens the severity of war, death-journey, and catastrophe pieces.

## **War and Identity (Why the Apaches are Fierce; Speech on the Warpath)**

A cause-story for fierceness and a trail oration show how conflict forges group character and disciplined resolve. Their stark cadence contrasts with rain hymns and complements trickster and fire tales in testing limits and obligations.

## **Spirit Lands and Revivals (The Spirit Land; Song of the Ghost Dance)**

Visions of the afterworld and a movement song gesture toward return, hope, and communal renewal. They close the