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THE ROMAN ARCHITECT VITRUVIUS, IN HIS TREATISE *The Ten Books on Architecture*, included a chapter on the proper placement of different rooms. For example, about dining rooms he wrote, “winter dining rooms should have a southwestern exposure; dining rooms for spring and autumn should face to the east; summer dining rooms to the north.” Of course, space was used with unusual freedom in Vitruvius’s time; rooms were not assigned a permanent purpose. Nonetheless, his description of proper exposures would necessarily involve seasonal movements from room to room, a different sequence and direction of passage depending on the time of year.

Such adaptive migrations occur in a variety of ways, over miles or only a few feet. At one extreme, people have taken their dwellings with them; at the other, they have simply moved across a room. Regardless of distance or mode, such movements can eventually develop into processions that express deep feelings about life in a particular place. Consider first the Paiute of Owens Valley, California, who maintained permanent dwellings but left them seasonally to migrate across a high-desert valley.

Moving with Time and Seasons

One hundred and twenty miles northeast of Los Angeles is Owens Valley, now the source of much of the city’s water. The long and narrow valley runs 120 miles (193.1 km) from north to south. It is contained on the west by the giant blue cliffs of the Sierra Nevada. Twenty miles (32.2 km) to the east, across the perambulations and oxbows of Owens River, are the gentler peaks of the Inyo-White range. Within this dramatic setting, the Paiute Indians once lived in a relatively dense and stable society.¹

This high-desert valley changes dramatically over the day.