

Chapter 11. Conclusion: Ohlone/Costanoan Cultural Affinities

The Ohlone/Costanoan peoples of the San Francisco Bay and Monterey Bay areas were different from one another in language and culture in the ancient past, at the time of Spanish contact, in their Mission Period histories, and in their twentieth-century community reformations. Thus the ethnographic local tribes of the San Francisco Peninsula, who have only one known descendant family today, have more ties of historic continuity to today's Ohlone/Costanoans from other parts of the San Francisco Bay Area than they do with today's Ohlone/Costanoans of the Monterey Bay Area.

In the 1770s the San Francisco Peninsula was divided among separate local tribes—Aramai, Chiguan, Cotegen, Lamchin, Oljon, Puichon, Ssalson, Urebure, and Yelamu—all of whom are presumed to have spoken the Ramaytush dialect of the San Francisco Bay Costanoan language. By 1820 their elders were gone and their young people, by then Spanish-speaking Doloreños of Mission Dolores, were raising children with spouses that were often from distant groups, Bay Miwoks, Coast Miwoks, and Patwins. Over the next 100 years even the children of the old Doloreños disappeared from the public stage.

Only one descendent family of San Francisco Peninsula Ohlone/Costanoans can now be identified. The family descends from Francisca Xaviera of the Aramai local tribe (of modern Pacifica) and her husband Jose Ramos (from Tulanzingo, Mexico), who married at Mission Dolores in 1783. Their children and grandchildren considered themselves to *gente de razón*, and were so considered within the hierarchal world of early Hispanic California. Their modern descendents, who carry the surnames Cordero, Robles, and Soto, among others, have not participated as Indians in the modern cultural or political arenas.

The one thing all present-day Ohlone/Costanoans have in common with one another, that distinguishes them from other California Indians, is their ancestors' membership in a single abstract language family. That common language family heritage does not, in and of itself, create community or denote shared cultural history.

TODAY'S OHLONE/COSTANOANS ARE UNIFIED AND DIVIDED

Most contemporary Ohlone/Costanoans feel a primary identification as descendants from a specific Franciscan mission community. They see themselves as descendants of Mission San Jose Indians, as Mutsuns of Mission San Juan Bautista, or as Rumsens (or regrouped Rumsens-Esselens) of Mission Carmel. Insofar as they

work to protect traditional values or to seek economic justice, it is local identity that concerns them. But not all Ohlone/Costanoan descendants feel that way. Other emphasize what might be called a “Pan-Ohlone/Costanoan” view, that the work to protect traditional values and the struggle for economic justice should be carried out by all Ohlone/Costanoans together, from Monterey to San Francisco Bay.

Present-day Ohlone/Costanoans fall into three groups regarding “local versus global” ethnic identity, according to our recent series of interviews:

- Some Ohlone/Costanoan descendants take the global view, that all descendants of all early Ohlone/Costanoan local tribes, from Big Sur to Carquinez Straits, are the equal heirs to a single aboriginal Ohlone/Costanoan culture, defined by a shared ancestral language family affinity that marks them as different from the other central California language groups, such as the Pomos, Miwoks, Patwins, Yokuts, and Wappos.
- Some take the local view, that each original Costanoan language area had its own culture, and that descendants from the Santa Clara Valley and East Bay tribes have a stronger cultural tie to the San Francisco Peninsula than do descendants from the Big Sur and San Benito River local tribes far to the south.
- Some descendants hold both points of view, regarding identity as flexible, either wide or narrow, depending upon the nature of the issue under consideration.

SEPARATE TRADITIONS ON MONTEREY AND SAN FRANCISCO BAY

The Ohlone/Costanoans of the San Francisco and Monterey Bay Areas have separate cultural traditions that we have traced in the linguistic, archaeological, ethnographic, and historic records:

- Linguistics: The San Francisco Peninsula people, and all other Costanoan-speaking groups around San Francisco Bay except the divergent Karkins (of Carquinez Strait), spoke dialects of a single language, San Francisco Bay Costanoan. The Monterey Bay people spoke four other Costanoan languages (Awaswas, Chalon, Mutsun, and Rumsen). The six languages of the Costanoan language family are as different from one another as French, Spanish and Italian, although undocumented intermediate dialects probably existed at the boundaries of the major language groups (Chapter 2).
- Archaeology: Archaeological cultures have been distinct since the appearance of the mortar-based Berkeley Pattern on San Francisco Bay at least 3,700 years ago. The distinction increased around A.D. 1050, when the San Francisco Bay Area people began to participate in the Augustine Pattern, with its rich variety of specialized wealth objects (flanged pipes, flower-pot mortars, specialized fish spears, etched bone whistles, banjo abalone ornaments) that was still in place among San Francisco Bay Costanoans, Coast Miwoks, Patwins, and Plains Miwoks when the Spanish arrived. The Monterey Bay Area people, whose post-A.D. 1200 culture was the Rancho San Carlos phase, made few elaborate wealth items, although etched whistles and banjo abalone ornaments did reach south to Watsonville. Both areas used the bow-and-arrow, but the first arrow type into the north was the Stockton serrated from the northeast, while the first arrow type into the Monterey Bay Area was the Desert Side-notched from the east or southeast (Chapter 3).
- Ethnography/Archaeology: The San Francisco Bay Area people of the Late Period (just as the Spanish arrived) participated in the clam shell disk bead trade with Coast Miwoks, Patwins, Bay Miwoks, and Plains Miwoks to their north and east. The Monterey Bay

Area people were not part of that trade network; instead they utilized the Olivella lipped beads and circular disk beads common at the time in southern California (Chapter 3).

- Ethnography (general culture): J. P. Harrington, more than any other ethnologist, gathered together facts about material and social culture differences within the Costanoan language area. Finding little material for some locals, he lumped the Costanoans into two groups, North (San Francisco Bay) and South (Monterey Bay) (Chapter 3).
- Ethnography (mythic narrative): San Francisco Bay Costanoans shared a system of mythology much like that of the Coast Miwoks, Pomos, Wappos, Patwins, Bay Miwoks, and Sierra Miwoks. The narrative myths of the Monterey Bay Area Costanoans, on the other hand, contained many aspects in common with south-central California groups (Chapter 3).
- Ethnogeography: Marriages seldom occurred among local groups greater than 25 miles apart, so that the San Francisco Peninsula local tribes traditionally married contiguous groups, including those just across San Francisco Bay, but only the Point Año Nuevo and south San Jose people ever married people from as far south as the present Santa Cruz area, and never all the way south to the Monterey Peninsula. This restricted interaction meant that important aspects of culture developed at the local level (Chapter 3).
- Mission, Rancho, and Early American History: While the history of missionization created a common cultural experience for all missionized Indians from San Diego north to San Francisco Bay, the people at each mission were brought into a unique language mix in a unique geographic setting. Thus by the close of the mission period the people of each mission thought of themselves as a single group, such as, for instance, the Doloreños of Mission Dolores, the Chocheños of Mission San Jose, the Cruzeños of Mission Santa Cruz, and the Carmeleños of Mission Carmel (Chapter 7). Mission-based identity concept persisted up through the Jurisdictional Act enrollment of 1928-1931 (Chapters 7, 8, 9).
- Recent History: The Monterey Bay and San Francisco Bay Indians met in separate groups to respond to the Indian Claims Commission Act of 1946. Still more recently, separate geographically based Ohlone/Costanoan groups have petitioned for federal recognition on the basis of continuous history in specific historic mission areas (Chapter 10).
- Today: Most Ohlone/Costanoan groups with constitutions and large memberships recognize their separate Monterey, San Juan Bautista, and San Francisco Bay Area geographic bases for purposes of relationships with government agencies and public communication, although they may join with other groups on occasions of mutually recognized benefit. Other Ohlone/Costanoans, most often acting as individuals or representing extended family groups, tend to have more of a “Pan-Ohlone/Costanoan” view of interaction with governments and the public at large. Most people who take the Pan-Ohlone/Costanoan point of view act as individuals or representatives of limited extended family groups. However, there have been exceptions in which members of one or another of the larger groups have claimed the right to represent all Ohlone/Costanoans throughout the traditional language family territory.

THE MULTIPLE LEVELS OF CULTURAL AFFINITY

While most Ohlone/Costanoans currently identify with their local homeland areas, there is no reason why that could not change in the future. Ethnic identity is always developing within individuals and groups in a give-and-take with the larger community. Future Ohlone/Costanoan

groups may choose to build a single coordinated political group, much as the Cherokee and Creek did in an earlier period of American history.

The following quote from anthropologist Fredrik Barth addresses ethnic identity in the modern world in words that are relevant to the Ohlone/Costanoans.

Being an indigenous person does not mean that you carry a separate, indigenous culture. Instead, it probably means that at some times, at some occasions, you say, "This is my ethnic identity. This is the group to which I wish to belong." And you will cherish some particular signs that this is your identity. And it surely means that you will have learned some things that show a cultural continuity of tradition from previous generations of the indigenous population. But that knowledge, those ideas and skills, are certainly not exhaustive of what you have learned, of the culture that you command (Barth 1995:4).

People share an ethnic identity through common cultural practices, experiences, sometimes in physical characteristics, that contrast with majority culture. People who have never met one another may share ethnic identity through common acceptance of a central "identity narrative" based upon common genetic background and recognition of past injustice. Ethnicity is based upon contrast:

To think of ethnicity in relation to one group and its culture is like trying to clap with one hand. The contrast between 'us' and 'others' is what is embedded in the organization of ethnicity: an otherness of the others that is explicitly linked in the assertion of cultural differences" (Barth 1995:5).

The Ohlone/Costanoans today, a very small minority in a sea of Californians representing numerous larger ethnic communities, can choose to identify themselves at a number of levels of contrast with others.

- In the context of contrast to all other Native Americans who have moved to California during the American Period, they proudly identify as California Indians.
- In the context of contrast to other California Indians, such as the Yuroks, the Pomos, or the Miwoks, they may speak of all Ohlone/Costanoans as members of a single language group, even though they do not all agree on its name (Ohlone or Costanoan).
- In the context of decision-making in relation to governmental agencies of west-central California, or the public interpretation of past cultural practices, the deeper disagreements about local identity emerge.

In the final analysis, the answer regarding 'cultural ties' of Ohlone/Costanoans may vary for each aspect of culture.

- When it comes to questions of language revival, certain geographic groups of Ohlone/Costanoans are coming together to work with the body of linguistic material of their own area.
- For the resurrection of basketry traditions, however, so much has been lost for some areas that bits and pieces of tradition from many local areas may be brought together to resurrect an overall Ohlone basketry tradition.
- For politics and governmental relations, the answer is not completely in the control of the Ohlone/Costanoans themselves, because the way governmental representatives and other members of the public interact with them can lend weight to the global view or to the local view.

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In summary, we conclude that the the closest cultural and genetic relatives of the Spanish-contact tribal people of the San Francisco Peninsula are the descendents of other San Francisco Bay Costanoan-speaking local tribes. We have done what we could in this report to illustrate the ambiguities and contradictions that surround the question of modern Ohlone/Costanoan identity. We have presented evidence that frames current relationships in light of similarities and differences between the original local tribes of the San Francisco and Monterey bay areas. We can clearly say that the Ohlone/Costanoans are not now a single community in any important sense of the term, and that the differences between them emerged out of the deep past.

