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2009

Native Californian prehistory and climate in the San Francisco Bay Area

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31979/etd.645p-hkrf>

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NATIVE CALIFORNIAN PREHISTORY AND CLIMATE IN THE SAN
FRANCISCO BAY AREA

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Anthropology

San José State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirement for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Stella D'Oro

May 2009

UMI Number: 1470972

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SAN JOSÉ STATE UNIVERSITY

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FRANCISCO BAY AREA

by
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ABSTRACT
NATIVE CALIFORNIAN PREHISTORY AND CLIMATE IN THE SAN
FRANCISCO BAY AREA

By Stella D'Oro

The Middle/Late Transition Period in California (1,100 - 750 B.P.) has recently been viewed by archaeologists as a time of dramatic environmental and archaeological changes, such as shifts in diet and the emergence of complexity among some Native American populations. Recently, paleoenvironmental and archaeological data presented by L. Mark Raab and Daniel O. Larson (Raab and Larson 1997) argue that the Medieval Climatic Anomaly (MCA), which involved a long period of drought, played a prominent role in the cultural changes noted in the greater Southern California Bight. This thesis tests the Raab and Larson "Southern California Model" in the southern San Francisco Bay Area and does not produce the same sort of behavioral changes during the anomaly. While the Southern California Model documents settlement disruption, increased violence, malnutrition, and intensification of resources, similar phenomena did not take place in this study area. I propose that prehistoric populations in the study area were not significantly impacted by the Medieval Climatic Anomaly.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis is the result of the efforts of many individuals. First, thanks are due to Dr. Mark D. McCoy, my committee chair. Without his dedicated assistance and strict deadlines, this thesis would never have been written. Secondly, great appreciation is due to Mark Hylkema whose willingness to share his faunal data has resulted in new analyses and conclusions about the effects of drought in the diets of prehistoric Californians.

Much of the unpublished "gray" literature was generously supplied by Alan Leventhal of the Department of Social Sciences at SJSU. His first-hand knowledge of San Francisco Bay Area mortuary sites contributed significantly to this thesis. Additional thanks must be extended to Chuck Striplen, Leigh Jordan, Dr. Mark Raab, Denise Wills, and Charlotte Sunseri who assisted me with locating important site-specific and paleoenvironmental information. Lastly, I wish to thank Dr. Mark W. Allen and Dr. Thomas S. Garlinghouse for providing valuable input regarding theory and writing style. Their contributions have made this an interesting and readable thesis.

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