

A.L. Kroeber
HANDBOOK OF
THE INDIANS
OF CALIFORNIA



With 419 Illustrations and 40 Maps

A.L. Kroeber

HANDBOOK
of the
INDIANS OF CALIFORNIA

Dover Publications, Inc.
New York

This Dover edition, first published in 1976, is an unabridged republication of the work originally published by the Government Printing Office, Washington, in 1925 as *Bulletin 78* of the Bureau of American Ethnology of the Smithsonian Institution.

International Standard Book Number: 0-486-23368-5
Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 76-19514

Manufactured in the United States of America
Dover Publications, Inc.
180 Varick Street
New York, N.Y. 10014

CHAPTER 31.

THE COSTANOANS.

Territory, 462; divisions, 463; population, 464; settlements, 464; shell mounds, 466; cultural status, 466; clothing, 467; food, 467; basketry, 467; houses and boats, 468; social institutions, 468; death, 469; games, 470; ritual, 470; shamanism, 472; mythology, 472.

TERRITORY.

The designation Costanoan is from Spanish *Costaños*, "coast people." Its awkwardness is in some measure atoned for by its consistency of usage in literature. The name would be difficult to replace by one coined from native sources, since the words denoting "men" or "people" vary from dialect to dialect within the group. But the appellation Costanoan is in one respect felicitous: The other main divisions of the Penutian family held the great interior valley of California as their habitat, while with the exception of a small branch of the Miwok, the Costanoan tribes occupied the whole of the shore districts to which the Penutians laid claim.

The San Joaquin River belonged to the Yokuts, the Sacramento to the Maidu and Wintun. At the point where these two streams debouch into San Francisco Bay Costanoan territory begins. The winding north shores of the bay were Wintun and Coast Miwok; but the entire southern border, including the long arm known as San Francisco Bay proper, was Costanoan to the Golden Gate. From here south their range followed the coast to beyond Monterey: to Point Sur, to be exact.

The Costanoan limits inland are not precisely known. They have sometimes been asserted, or loosely assumed, to have been formed by the San Joaquin River, but it is far more probable that the boundary was constituted by the interior chain of the coast ranges, the Mount Diablo Range of the maps.

The included territory falls into two natural divisions. The northern half drains into San Francisco Bay, or by short streams into the adjacent ocean. The southern half includes the catchment area of the Pajaro River and the lower courses of the Salinas and Carmel, all of which flow into Monterey Bay or the ocean just below. The main line of dialectic cleavage within the Costanoan group appears to coincide with the irregular line separating these northern and southern areas.

DIVISIONS.

Seven Franciscan missions were founded in Costanoan territory, and it was not many years before all members of the stock had been brought into association with these establishments. Here Indians not only of distinct villages, but of separate dialects, were brought together, and found themselves mingled with utterly alien converts from the north, the south, and the interior. As along the entire coast of the State, there was no political cohesion worth mentioning between the little towns. Native appellations of wider applicability were therefore lacking; and the result was that the dialects that can be distinguished are known chiefly by the names of the missions at which each was the principal or original one. Where native terms have obtained a vogue in literature, they appear to be only village designations used in an extended sense. Of this kind are Mutsun, for the dialect of San Juan Bautista; Rumsen or Runsien for that of Monterey; and Tamien for Santa Clara.

The records that have been preserved show one principal dialect for each mission. Only at the establishments of Santa Clara and San Jose the speech differed so slightly that the two idioms must be united in a single dialect group. On the other hand, in the extreme north, toward San Pablo and Suisun Bays, there appears to have prevailed a distinctive tongue—which may be named the Saklan after one of the principal villages—that failed to have a mission established within its limits. This makes the number of dialect groups seven, the same as the number of missions.

It is almost certain that minor divergences of idiom occurred in some of these areas. This is specifically mentioned at Monterey and at San Juan Bautista. Nothing is known, however, beyond this bare fact. Our information upon Costanoan speech is restricted to some records, often pitiful at that, of the idiom prevailing at such and such points that happened to be selected by the missionaries for their foundations. We can only start from these points as centers, and conjecture the limits of each dialect group by following the watersheds on the map.

The transition from the northern dialects to the southern seems to have been by way of the speech of Santa Cruz approaching that of San Juan Bautista. The extreme southern and northern idioms, those of Soledad and of Saklan, are the least known, and appear to have been the most specialized. The latter may be suspected of having shown particular affinities to Wintun, Miwok, or Yokuts.

The termination *-n* occurs in numerous names of places or tribes that were outside Costanoan territory but probably first known to the Spaniards through Costanoan guides or interpreters. Such are *Essele-n*, also *Esle-n* and *Ense-n*; compare *Esla-n-aga-n*, and, in the same territory, *Ekhe-aga-n*. Wintun divisions are: *Suisu-n*, *Karki-n*, *Tole-n*, *Pulpe-n*. Coast Miwok—*Baull-n*. Yokuts—*Choloo-n* or *Cholovo-n*. Plains Miwok or perhaps *Maidu*—*Hulpu-n*, *Olpe-n*. Unknown, perhaps Costanoan—*Umpl-n*, *Lama-n*, *Pitme-n*. Often the *-n* has been added to a term from a foreign language thus: *Hulpu-n* or *Hulpu-mni*, *Choloo-n* or *Chula-mni*.

Of the little wars—or village feuds—that agitated the Costanoan groups from time to time, the following have been recorded: The *Salso-n* against the natives of San Francisco; the *Sakla-n* against the same, or against the Oakland tribe transplanted to the mission; the *Ausai-ma* against the *Mutsu-n*; the *Wacharo-n* or others of the Soledad region against the northern Salinans.

SHELL MOUNDS.

The entire Costanoan frontage on ocean and bay is lined with shell deposits. San Francisco Bay in particular is richer in such remains than any other part of the State, except perhaps the Santa Barbara Islands. Many of these, and probably the upper layers of nearly all, must accordingly be ascribed to the Costanoans. Whether their possession of the district goes back as far as the earliest period represented by the lower levels of the largest shell mounds, a time estimated at 3,000 or more years ago, is entirely problematical. There is nothing to show that the Costanoan tribes were or were not then in their more recent seats.

CULTURAL STATUS.

A number of early voyagers visited the Costanoan missions, especially those at San Francisco and Monterey. Their accounts contain much of value, but are tantalizing to the ethnologist in that they describe the modified life at the missions rather than aboriginal customs. The universal testimony, however, is that the Costanoan Indians made an unfavorable impression. They were dark, dirty, squalid, and apathetic; and travelers coming from the north as well as those arriving from the south were struck by the obvious paucity and rudeness of the native culture in the Costanoan area as compared with other regions. Choris paints their temperament in two phrases: "I have never seen one laugh. I have never seen one look one in the face." The mission atmosphere at San Francisco may have accentuated these traits; but they are typical for much of central California.

CLOTHING.

The men were accustomed to go naked when the weather permitted. The women wore the usual two short skirts, one before and one behind, made either of deerskin, tule, or bark fiber. The rabbit-skin blanket served both as mantle and as bedding. A common custom of the men was to coat themselves thickly with mud in the morning until the sun shone warm. Whether the women wore basketry hats is very uncertain. Face tattooing was customary for women. It ran to lines or rows of dots as among all the central Californians. (Fig. 45, *b*, *c*.)

FOOD.

Mussels, whose shells constitute so large a proportion of the mounds of San Francisco Bay and the coast, are specifically mentioned as an important food of the Costanoans. Sea lions were hunted, though the precise manner is not known. The tule raft must have been an unsatisfactory conveyance, and in most weathers a dangerous one, for reaching the surf-surrounded rocks on which the animals sun themselves. When a whale came ashore food was plentiful, but as there was no way of hunting these monsters the supply which they furnished must have been most irregular and undependable. Salmon begin to be numerous in the streams that enter the ocean in Costanoan territory, or at least were so in former times, though never reaching the numbers which they attained in more northern rivers. South of the Costanoans the salmon ceases as an important food. The taking of this fish, with which that of lampreys was associated, must, however, have been restricted to the winter months of high water. Seaweed replaced salt.

The plant foods were the usual ones. On the immediate coast, where acorns were few or lacking, seeds seemed to have replaced them. Acorn meal was leached both in the southern way through an openwork basket and in the northern style by means of a hollow in the sand in which the flour was spread. The usual California practice was followed of burning the country over in order to clear out the underbrush for facilitating acorn gathering and to foster the growth of seed-bearing annuals. A rabbit stick is mentioned as used in rabbit drives. This suggests a southern Californian influence; but the sticks are specified as straight. Every hunter held one in each hand.

BASKETRY.

Costanoan basketry has perished. One or two older specimens that have been preserved are of little historic value, because shaped according to European ideas. Other pieces, not quite so old, that

are attributed to Indians at Costanoan missions, are Yokuts or Miwok in style, and were probably made by members of these stocks that had been taken to the religious establishments. A very few other specimens remain, but the ethnic provenience of even these is clouded. It is not even known whether Costanoan basketry stood in specific affinities with that of the Pomo, or showed any of the distinct traits of Yokuts work; nor in fact how far it was similar to the simpler ware of the Miwok. Baskets ornamented with feathers, shell pendants, and beads are mentioned; but unfortunately we can not be sure that these were truly of Costanoan origin, nor, if so, how prevalent a type they were.

The carrying net for loads and baskets was used by the Costanoans. It may be suspected that this was of the southern or Shoshonean rather than the northern or Pomo type.

HOUSES AND BOATS.

The house in which the Indians lived at the missions appears to have been mainly a native construction on a more or less European plan. The aboriginal house was primarily a structure of poles covered with brush or tule matting. There is no reference to the earth-covered lodges of the interior valley, but it can hardly be imagined that they were entirely unknown. There is some evidence of the existence of a high conical house of thatch. Slender poles and withes held the thatch together from the outside against the interior framework. A few individuals who survived until recently near Monterey recollect a house of redwood planks. Slabs of bark of this tree are much more likely to have been the aboriginal form, since there is no authentic report of any true wooden house south of northernmost California. The sweat house was an institution in daily use, but no details of its size or construction have been preserved.

The tule raft was the only boat known to the Costanoans; and on this they crossed San Francisco Bay, which is normally a sheet of far from calm surface and of strong currents. The balsa was propelled by double-bladed paddles, such as recur in the Santa Barbara Island region, but there in connection with well-made canoes of planks.

SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS.

Chieftainship is stated to have passed by descent, which may be taken as meaning a succession from father to son. The influence of the chief is said to have been limited, but several accounts mention that he took a leading part in war. This, if true, would be rather exceptional for California. Prisoners were not taken, or, if so, dispatched as soon as possible. The slain foe was mutilated or dismem-

bered. His scalp was carried about in triumph. It seems that the "scalp" was of the usual Californian kind: the head, or its entire skin. Some parts of the enemy were eaten, it is said, by the parents of the slayer. Songs of insult or vengeance were common, both as an aftermath and as a new cause of fighting. Here again there are southern Californian reminiscences; as well as Miwok ones.

Marriage was loose and divorce ready. Shell money was tendered for the bride, but the transaction must have been commercially informal or separations could not have taken place as readily as is stated. The fact that the mother retained the children is evidence in the same direction. Among the south Costanoans it is said monogamy was the rule except for chieftains; much as among the Salinans, Chumash, and Juanefio. In the north different practices prevailed, a man espousing his wife's sisters, daughters, or other relatives. A bit of etiquette reported also from the Wintun was for a bride to resist the approach of her husband with her nails. He was expected to appear with his face scratched: if he did not, the young woman seems to have been thought immodest.

Customs of birth and adolescence are undescribed, except that a woman after childbirth lay for a number of days with her child on fresh foliage that covered a pit lined with baked stones. In this custom again there is a suggestion of southern California, although in that region the practice applied primarily to adolescent girls.

Tobacco was smoked. The eating of it with lime is not mentioned.

DEATH.

Accounts of the native method of disposing of the dead are somewhat in conflict, but cremation appears to have been the rule. From San Francisco it is reported that poor people, or those with few or lazy relatives, were buried, but that if the kin or friends would gather wood, the corpse was burned. This is likely to have been the custom throughout the Costanoan area. The funeral took place soon after death. There is no mention in any of the sources of anniversary mourning ceremonies. This omission proves little, but, on the other hand, it is not inconceivable that the Costanoans followed the customs of the Pomo and other tribes of the coast north of San Francisco Bay, among none of whom such rites prevailed. The property of the dead was thoroughly destroyed, the reason alleged being that the deceased would then be no longer remembered. All that we know of other Californian Indians indicates this as a genuine motive; but the coexistence of other reasons is not necessarily excluded.

The universal custom of avoidance of the name of the dead was rigorously adhered to. Even a reference to the deceased was the pro-