

# THE OHLONE

## PAST AND PRESENT

Native Americans of the San Francisco Bay Region

Compiled and edited by

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# THE OHLONE BACK FROM EXTINCTION

**Alan Leventhal, Les Field, Hank Alvarez and Rosemary Cambra**

The quincennial year, 1992, was commemorated by many peoples throughout the world, for whom the five hundred years had diverse meanings. For the indigenous peoples of the Americas, this year symbolized and highlighted their ongoing struggles for cultural, political, and economic empowerment within the nation-states in which their homelands are now located. In California, the quincennial commemoration coincided with the historical opening of opportunities for indigenous peoples both to empower themselves politically and to revise the historical and anthropological record that has provided the ideological backbone of their oppressed status.

Among the culturally and linguistically diverse native peoples who inhabited what is now the state of California before the arrival of Europeans, the Ohlone peoples comprised a complex series of cultures that spoke related languages and occupied a large area bounded by the Carquinez Strait and the Golden Gate to the north, and Big Sur and Soledad to the south. Within this region, the Ohlone-speaking societies traded with, allied themselves with, and sometimes battled against one another; they were similarly tied to neighboring societies where very different languages were spoken. Like many other California native peoples, the Ohlone-speakers were subjected to the disastrous experience of missionization under the Spanish Empire and, following the admission of California to the United States, were dispossessed of their remaining lands and denied legal status by the state and federal governments (Hoopes 1975; Rawls 1986; Hurtado 1988; Shipek 1989; Monroy 1990; and others). Early in this century, the Ohlone peoples were declared "extinct" by an influential anthropologist, a powerful figure within the discipline's history (particularly in California), Alfred Kroeber. The

dissenting voices of other anthropologists, such as John P. Harrington and C. Hart Merriam, provided ample documentation that the Ohlone peoples had survived into the twentieth century, albeit transformed by the experience of the missions, and California's annexation to the United States (Merriam 1967; Harrington 1921-1939); nevertheless, it was Kroeber's pronouncement that shaped the politics of powerlessness for the Ohlones for many decades. That situation has only recently begun to change.

In the early 1980s, the descendants of the *Chochenyo* Ohlone-speakers of the southern and eastern San Francisco Bay Area re-grouped and constituted themselves as the *Muwekma* Ohlone Tribe, a process that may be called "a contemporary revitalization" (see Field, Leventhal, Sanchez and Cambra 1992a, 1992b). A similar revitalization process has taken place among the families of the Ohlone peoples in the San Juan Bautista-Gilroy area, who have formally re-grouped as the *Amah-Mutsun* Tribal Band; and also among the neighboring Esselen people to the south, who were also declared extinct by Kroeber and other anthropologists, and by some historians (Kroeber 1925:544; Underhill 1953; Hester 1978; Cutter 1990; and others). Documenting and publicizing their cultural and historical continuity with their pre-contact, Mission and post-statehood ancestors has been a key strategy in the *Muwekma*, *Amah-Mutsun* and Esselen Nations' revitalization processes. By laying claim to their history in both academic and popular media (Field, Leventhal, Sanchez and Cambra 1992a), by establishing collaborative relationships with federal, state, county, and city agencies, and by creating their own archaeological consulting firm, the *Muwekma* have undertaken to counteract the ideological legacies that justified and maintained their political, economic, and cultural disenfranchisement. This strategy is aimed at reestablishing federal acknowledgment of the tribal status for the *Muwekma*, the *Amah-Mutsun*, and the Esselens, which was terminated in all three cases in 1927. It was in that year that Superintendent L. A. Dorrington of the Indian Field Service, assigned to evaluate the land needs of homeless California Indians, asserted that the native communities of Alameda, San Benito, and Monterey counties were not in need of any land, and failed even to mention Indians in other Bay Area counties (1927). Thus the federal government dismissed the needs of these respective communities as distinctive cultural entities with rights to a land base as defined under the appropriation acts of 1906 and 1908 (34 Stat. 325, June 24, 1906 and 35 Stat. 70, April 30, 1908; see also Senate Document 131, 58th Congress, 2nd Session, 1904, pp. 1-16 [reprinted in Heizer 1979]; Kelsey 1913; Hauke 1916; Terrell 1916; and Dorrington 1927). Our task here is to initiate an assessment of the political, economic, and academic forces that over the last two centuries have undermined and attempted to

erase the existence of Ohlone civilization in Central California. We do so by tracing the history of the Ohlone peoples through three thematic eras we have called Domination, Fragmentation and "Extinction."

### THEORETICAL CONCERNS

It is difficult to undertake our critical review of Ohlone history and disenfranchisement in a completely linear fashion because all such projects are entangled in the historical legacy of anthropological and ethnohistorical representations of the Ohlone peoples. The first anthropologists arrived in California long after Spanish conquest and missionization had transformed Ohlone and other Central California societies, but anthropologists like Kroeber and others undertook to describe and partially reconstruct pre-Hispanic native culture and society (cf. Goldschmidt 1951). We therefore confront the shaping influence of anthropology upon the disenfranchisement of Central California peoples both *before* and *after* anthropologists themselves were physically present in the area, since their descriptions, pervaded by their own theoretical agenda, have constituted our "knowledge" about both pre-and post-contact California native peoples. Understanding how this knowledge has been shaped allows us to trace the relationship between anthropological work and the past and present disempowerment of the Ohlones in concrete ways that show how such a process has been maintained and how it can be challenged.

There are several ways that anthropologists have classified and analyzed native Californians that are immediately relevant to a critical reassessment of Ohlone histories. Alfred Kroeber arrived in California in 1901, concerned to describe "native primitive culture before it went all to pieces" (Kroeber 1948:427), which he believed could be accomplished by treating the surviving descendants of the catastrophes Californian natives had endured as specimens of "timeless, ahistorical cultural type[s]" (Buckley 1989:439). From the point of view of many present-day anthropologists Kroeber did not take sufficient note of the genocidal ventures Europeans and Euro-Americans had conducted against California natives (Buckley 1989). For this reason he persistently confused fragmented societies and cultures he described with the pre-contact condition of those same societies and cultures.

One of the most important legacies of Kroeber's confusion is his description of native California societies as composed of "tribelets" (Kroeber 1955, 1962). This term defined a political and geographical unit comprising several villages, usually including a principal and most

powerful central village, tied by relations of kinship, and internally homogeneous with respect to the organization of land ownership, ceremonies, warfare, and resource allocations. Kroeber's emphasis on the small scale of indigenous California social organization led him to attach the diminutive "-let" to the anthropologically normative term "tribe." By his count, over five hundred tribelets existed in California at the time of contact.

This term, almost universally accepted by anthropologists, historians, educators, and cultural resource management (CRM) archaeologists, is considered demeaning by Ohlone, Esselen and other California Indian people, but that is not the only reason to evaluate it critically. In contemporary anthropology, both old and new ethnographies are read to determine their theoretical content, the audiences towards which they are aimed, and the debates they address. Current discourse in anthropology highlights the ethnographer's functions as author and editor, and draws attention to the inclusions and exclusions of data to support certain conclusions. In this light, it is undeniable that Kroeber, his colleagues, and his students collected hundreds of names of indigenous social groups identifiable with particular geographical areas. Clearly, he had found one kind of important social grouping, or, perhaps, a social grouping that was important to California natives in the context of their recent experience of genocide.

It is also clear that Kroeber's interests in small, neatly defined groups, with small scale ethnic diffusion and differentiation, and with salvaging the traits of each small bounded group stemmed from the trajectory of American anthropology and the enduring influence of Franz Boas in the first decades of the twentieth century. The listing of traits of Indian societies and cultures under pre-conceived headings such as material culture, ceremonial systems, social organization and the like, all of which have little to do with the cultural categories and perspectives of the indigenous people "under study," is an enduring problem in anthropology in general and in California ethnography in particular (concerning the latter, see Blackburn 1976). "Tribelet" has been employed by many influential anthropologists and authors who followed Kroeber (Heizer 1974b, 1978a; Levy 1978; Margolin 1978; Milliken 1983, 1990; and many others), maintaining an impression of pre-contact native California as a region of extremely small-scale, provincial cultures that lacked forms of large-scale integration. As we discuss later, the deployment of "tribelet" and other Kroeberian frames of reference has all too frequently blocked a more sophisticated appraisal of the societies and cultures that existed in California and the San Francisco Bay Area before missionization.

In the same vein, the linguistic classificatory systems created by

anthropologists (e.g., Latham 1856; Powers 1877; Powell 1877; Dixon and Kroeber 1913, 1919; Merriam 1967; Levy 1978; and others) have also distorted pre-contact realities, and this distortion is well reflected in the case of the Ohlone peoples. The Spaniards called the diverse peoples living on or near the coastline from Monterey to the Golden Gate a generic term: *costehos*, or coast-dwellers, a term later Anglicized to "*costafios*." Anthropologists and linguists (Latham 1856 [who first classified this language group as Costanoan]; Powell 1877; Kroeber 1925; Levy 1978; and others) classified these peoples as "Costanoans," having discovered that their languages could be shown to be closely related, and incorrectly implied that these peoples could be glossed as a single ethnic group (see Underhill 1953; Kehoe 1992, discussed later). Merriam (1967) called these same peoples and their languages "Ohlonean," derived from "Ohlone," a term that the descendants of the varied peoples of this San Francisco Bay Area have used to identify themselves since the early part of this century. In this muddled situation, in which pre-contact identity has been obscured by successive layers of outsiders' labeling, we use "Ohlone" in recognition of and with respect for its usage by the present-day tribes. At the same time, our use of the term Ohlone does not imply that language similarities determined the political and cultural identities of the culturally diverse pre-contact ancestors of the contemporary Ohlone tribal peoples.

There are deeper issues still that have shaped the past and present relationship between anthropology and history on the one hand, and the Ohlone and other native Californian peoples on the other. These groups have been described as "foragers" because they did not herd domesticated animals or cultivate domesticated plants (Salzman 1967; Hunter 1985; Crapo 1987; and others). The textbooks that anthropologists use in their undergraduate courses continue to teach university students their traditional view of world history, a stage theory of human evolution that ranks "foragers" (or "hunter-gatherers") as the earliest, and therefore most primitive, stage in the evolution of society and culture (see Peoples and Bailey 1994 for an excellent example in a recently revised textbook). Foraging peoples inhabiting the most ecologically marginal regions on this planet, such as the !Kung of the Kalahari, are inevitably portrayed as representative of this stage in human history.<sup>1</sup> Mainstream

<sup>1</sup>Our critique must leave aside the persistent (and outrageous) depiction of the !Kung and others as timeless relics of the Paleolithic, despite both their brutal transformation by colonialism and, even more important, increasingly convincing evidence that the !Kung were never isolated, but have participated for centuries in a thriving trading system with their pastoral and cultivating neighbors (see Gordon 1992).

anthropology's evolutionary stage theory is not congruent with the dense populations, permanent settlements, ranked social systems, partially monetized economies, regional integration, and cultural sophistication among "foragers" who lived in the ecologically rich habitats of California and the Pacific Northwest. If such peoples are considered at all by textbooks, they are usually treated as "exceptions that prove the [evolutionary] rule" (again, see Peoples and Bailey 1994).

Kroeber's descriptions of native Californian societies as, in effect, "primitive" permits anthropologists and historians to comfortably fit the pre-contact Californians into the "foraging stage" of history. Many contemporary anthropologists and archaeologists, as we show later, have been content to deploy Kroeber's descriptions of Californian native peoples uncritically and not to consider newer descriptions of these peoples. This suggests the profound nature of these anthropologists' internalization of the stage theory view of history, a view that renders reconsideration of the Californian peoples irrelevant, even irritating, in the larger picture. This use of Kroeber as an authority about native Californian societies, duplicated as we shall see in the uncritical acceptance by many latter-day anthropologists of Kroeber's "extinction sentence" over the Ohlone, cannot, we contend, be separated from the physical conquest and subordination of California by European and Euro-American colonialisms. Under colonial regimes, native Californians were called "primitives," often in much coarser and overtly racist terms (e.g., Hittell 1879). Anthropology's legitimation of the "primitive" (not to mention "extinct") status of native Californians thus plays a role in theoretically mediating the historical powers that have disenfranchised the Ohlones and other native Californians.

### **SPANISH DOMINATION OF PRE-CONTACT CALIFORNIAN CULTURE AND SOCIETY**

Our brief analysis of pre-contact civilization in the Bay Area owes much to the work of Lowell Bean and others (Bean and Blackburn 1976) who have worked to create frameworks that for the most part revise the Kroeberian-derived view that we contend has played a role in the subordination of the Ohlone peoples and other native Californians.

The territory now occupied by the state of California possessed the densest aboriginal population of any region of comparable size north of the Valley of Mexico, and a non-agricultural population that numbered between three hundred thousand and one million people (Dobyns 1966; Cook 1976a, 1978:91). The extraordinary concentration of linguistic diversity in the state indicates that beginning fifteen thousand years ago

or perhaps even earlier, California received wave after wave of indigenous peoples, each of which developed its own productive system to utilize the ecological niches that are concentrated on the Pacific littoral (cf. Chertkoff and Chertkoff 1984; Moratto 1984). The ecological bounty of this region facilitated periods of demographic expansion and socioeconomic intensification that featured neither agricultural food production nor the urbanization of population. By the late pre-contact period (AD 900-1500), archaeological data strongly suggest that social stratification, ceremonial intensification, and technological development were accompanied by the expansion of settlement in and around the Bay Area (T. King 1970; Bean and King 1974; Wiberg 1984; Luby 1991; Leventhal 1993; and others).

From the Kroeberian perspective, California Indians including the Ohlone produced their subsistence simply by gathering and hunting in rich ecosystems that offered them easy subsistence. While California natives did harvest readily available wild foods, particularly fish, sea mammals and shellfish from marine and freshwater habitats, newer perspectives have identified complex interactions with, and managing of, the natural environment through which native Californians produced sustained and sustainable food surpluses (Bean and Lawton 1976; Blackburn and Anderson 1993). These quasi-agricultural practices depended largely upon burning as a means of clearing and fertilizing land (Lewis 1973, 1993; cf. Cronon 1983). Native Californians gathered the seeds of useful wild grasses and sowed these seeds in burned areas to produce food for themselves, as well as fodder that attracted herds of herbivorous game. The Ohlones and other Central California natives seasonally relied upon the harvest of acorns from a number of different oak species that thrived in such managed landscapes. The management (through burning) and reliance upon diverse plant communities producing high yields of seeds, nuts and acorns conditioned the development of processing, milling, and cooking technologies that strongly resemble or are identical to technologies other peoples developed for utilizing cultivated grains (Fowler 1971; cf. Struever 1971; Lewis 1973; and others).

In short, the production systems of native Californians provided reliable food surpluses for large populations located in the myriad micro-ecosystems distributed around the Bay Area. These surpluses, in turn, were the basis for trading systems that integrated the diverse ecological regions managed by native peoples (Fages 1937; Goldschmidt 1951; Vayda 1967; Chagnon 1970; Bean 1976; Blackburn 1976; Heizer 1978b; and others). The various Ohlone peoples lived in regions that provided resources for manufacturing what Bean has called "treasure goods,"

resources such as abalone, Olivella shell, and cinnabar from which ornaments (social badges or markers of distinction) of political and ceremonial significance were crafted (1976:120). The production of food surpluses and of treasure goods gave many Ohlone villages that had access to certain resources an advantageous position in regional trade networks (Davis 1961; Heizer 1978b; Bean 1978; Leventhal 1993; and others).

Based upon such information, our reconstruction of Ohlone societies at the time of contact emphasizes both micro and macro organizational forms, in contrast with Kroeber's tribelet model. Kroeber (1962) defined a tribelet as composed of a central village inhabited by inter-related extended families encircled by smaller, outlying villages also inhabited by inter-related families, which together constituted a territorial perimeter under the exclusive control of each tribelet's hereditary and elected political elites. Each tribelet territory, according to Kroeber, constituted an ethnically and linguistically homogeneous unit. Anthropologists working with both Kroeber's concept of tribelet and the idea that language similarities can be used to describe Active ethnicities have drawn patchwork maps of the "Native ethnic groups" of pre-contact California (see Heizer 1974a, 1978a; Levy 1978; Margolin 1978; and others).

We do not identify the area composed of a central village and surrounding outlying villages as necessarily an autonomous or discreet socio-cultural unit, and it is unclear whether the village unit functioned cognitively as the most important source of cultural identity for the people who lived in each village. Regional linkages along lines of trade, kinship, and the performance of shared rituals (e.g., *Kuksu*, trade feasts, funerals and mourning anniversaries) likely shaped differently sized and constituted identities for social groups and individuals in native California (Blackburn 1976). Among village elites, for example, the political world clearly did not stop at the boundaries of their own village's territory. Elites from villages all over the territory of Ohlone-speaking peoples depended upon marrying into elite families from other villages, villages in which Ohlone languages may or may not have been spoken. Inter-marriage gave rise to extended networks of multi-lingual elite families or communities, whose wealth and status represented the accumulation of economic surpluses from territories much larger than the village (Bean 1978; cf. Milliken 1990, 1991). Through elite intermarriage, larger regions were integrated which overlapped and crossed linguistic boundaries (Bean and Lawton 1976; Bean 1992).

Elite intermarriage facilitated and underscored other regional integrating forces such as trade. People from different villages, often distantly related, struck up personal trading relationships, called "special

friendships," which often lasted whole lifetimes (Bean 1976). Through networks of "special friends," food, tools, and treasure goods were traded from village to village over long distances. Networks of ritual and ceremonial obligation called together large numbers of diverse peoples for particular occasions, such as the funerals of significant inter-village elite personages (Blackburn 1976). On such occasions, trade fairs also occurred, and elites likely arranged the future marriages of their children. Taken all together, the trading of subsistence and treasure goods, the exchanges of marriage partners, and the cycles of ritual and ceremony tied together constellations of kin-based village communities into integrated political, economic and cultural fields led by a small inter-village elite strata (see Bean 1992). We might describe these elite-ruled realms as quasi-chiefdoms or ranked chiefdoms (Service 1962, 1975; Fried 1967; for an archaeological perspective on evidence of social ranking within the San Francisco Bay see T. King 1970, 1974; Wiberg 1984; Luby 1991; and Leventhal 1993).

The paradox of a bountiful environment, large population, and lack of recognizable cultivation confounded the Spaniards, the first Europeans determined to control what is now the state of California. Elsewhere in Latin America, particularly in the Andes and Meso-America (see Salomon 1981; Rappaport 1990; Smith 1990; and many others), indigenous political structures and processes for manufacturing commodities were more familiar to European eyes; therefore, at least for a time following the initial conquest of indigenous civilizations, the Spaniards harnessed indigenous political and economic organizations for their own purposes. Because the Spaniards could not understand a civilization whose productive base, economic surplus, and sources of wealth were fundamentally alien, their domination of Californian natives hinged upon completely re-molding their cultures and societies into forms that were comprehensible to European sensibilities.

The Franciscan missions, by means of which the Spanish Empire lay claim to California, implanted European political and economic systems. The process of implantation required, first, that Native American religions and cultural practices be restricted and eventually forbidden, and, later, that the economic and environmental foundations of native life be destroyed (Cook 1976b; Castillo 1978, 1989; Brady, Crome and Reese 1984)." The missionized peoples of the Bay Area and elsewhere in coastal California became a labor force for an emergent agricultural economy that obliged natives to leave aside most indigenous ritual and ceremonial practices, as well as the manufacture of many aspects of aboriginal material culture. As agricultural laborers, missionized Indians were largely separated from the seasonal rhythms of

their own food production practices, while the growth of mission farms and rangeland for cattle initiated an environmental transformation of the Bay Area and the entire coast that destroyed much of the resource base of the indigenous economy.

The demographic collapse of the Ohlone populations held captive at Mission Dolores at the tip of the San Francisco peninsula, Missions Santa Clara and San Jose in the South and East Bay respectively, the *Amah-Mutsun* at San Juan Bautista to the south, and the Esselens at Mission San Carlos on the Monterey peninsula occurred because of the horrendous effects of European-introduced diseases, exacerbated by the unhealthy diet and over-crowded living conditions at the missions. Birth rates plummeted from disease, mistreatment of women, and from a psychological phenomenon now recognized as post-traumatic stress (Cook 1976b; Rawls 1986; Hurtado 1988; Jackson 1992; and others). As the populations of Ohlones both inside and outside of the missions decreased, survivors tended to congregate around the missions, seeking solutions to their seemingly unsolvable problems from the missionaries who were causing those same problems. Under the circumstance of socio-cultural holocaust, many Bay Area Ohlones identified with their oppressors, who seemed to have overthrown and taken control of all of the old systems of spiritual and earthly power (see Milliken 1991 for a different interpretation that partly exonerates the missions).

In response to the diminution of their labor force, the Franciscan fathers directed Spanish soldiers to bring in new converts from further afield. The Miwok, Yokuts, Patwin, and Esselen speaking peoples from villages located east, north and south of the Bay Area missions made up the new cohort of neophytes, and they intermarried with the surviving Ohlone-speaking peoples (Milliken 1978, 1982, 1983, 1990, 1991). Such intermarriage was, as we have emphasized, already typical of the intermarriage between Yokuts, Miwok, Patwin and Ohlone speaking elites in the pre-contact era. At the missions, intermarriage apparently continued subtly to reinforce sociopolitical hierarchies and elite families. Even under the triple assault of religious conversion, ecological transformation, and demographic collapse, indigenous political leadership and resistance did not disappear. The missions struggled against frequent desertions by neophytes, and armed rebellions occurred at Missions Dolores and San Jose. Led by Pomponio at Mission Dolores (early 1820s), and by the famous Estanislao at Mission San Jose and Cipriano at Mission Santa Clara, indigenous guerrilla armies combined the forces of both runaway neophytes and natives from villages the Spanish had not yet dominated (see Holterman 1970; Brown 1975; Rawls 1986; Castillo 1989). Yet the Spaniards, for the most part, succeeded in destroying the ecological bases for the indigenous economy, and in transforming the Bay

Area peoples and their close neighbors into an exploited, impoverished working class. It was as a peon working class that the natives of the Bay Area and elsewhere in Hispanic California confronted the next stage of European domination, with the admission of California into the United States.

### POST-COLONIAL FRAGMENTATION OF OHLONE SOCIETY AND CULTURE

Elsewhere we have recounted in detail the historical circumstances regarding East Bay Ohlone survival from the middle of the nineteenth century into the early years of this century (Field, Leventhal, Sanchez, and Cambra 1992a). Some of those circumstances played a role in the economic disenfranchisement that conditioned the political fragmentation of the Ohlone people during this period.

Recent historical work stresses the importance of Indian labor in Hispanic and early American California (Rawls 1986; Hurtado 1988; Castillo 1989; Monroy 1990). In California, as everywhere in the Spanish Empire, the conquerors made use of Indians as laborers. This commonality stands in contrast to English and Euro-American colonization regimes extant in the rest of North America, which maintained almost impermeable boundaries between white settlements and native populations, or simply removed native peoples from areas reserved for white settlement. The differences between colonial regimes shaped important changes for Indian labor and laborers, as California passed from Spanish to Mexican to American control.

The influx of Europeans and Euro-Americans into California coincided with the waning years of the Spanish Empire and the independence of Mexico in 1821. Between 1834 and 1836, the Mexican government secularized the missions with the stated intention of dividing mission properties among the neophytes and their descendants. Instead, the *Californios*, the Hispanic families of the Bay Area and elsewhere, established large estates (mostly cattle ranches) on the old mission lands, and many of the former neophytes were hired on as *vaqueros* (ranch hands or cowboys) and as domestic servants. Some non-Hispanic settlers initially followed the Hispanic custom of employing Indians as agricultural, ranch, and household workers, both in the missionized coastal areas and in the newly colonized regions of the interior, the latter exemplified by Sutter's estate in the Sacramento valley (Hurtado 1988).

Not all of the formerly missionized Indians of the Bay Area exchanged a Franciscan father for a *Californio* or Euro-American master.

Some former neophytes abandoned the Bay Area altogether for regions outside of Hispanic settlement, although some of them were soon drawn into the orbit of newer, Euro-American enterprises such as Sutter's. Wherever they went, Indian *vaqueros* and other laborers may have drawn wages from their non-Indian employers, but they seldom stopped making use of whatever native resource bases remained. Often, hunting and gathering wild foods, even in the transformed landscape of post-mission California, enabled native peoples to survive. Some former neophytes and their children attempted to survive by reconstructing indigenous communities in the most remote areas of the Bay Area, relying on the Euro-American economy as little as possible (Brady, Crome and Reese 1984). Indians from Missions San Jose and Santa Clara retreated to the hinterlands of the East Bay, in the Diablo range and Livermore Valley, where they organized new communities, sometimes on or near the sites of old pre-contact villages. Such a reconstitution of indigenous community and identity also occurred near San Juan Bautista in the mid and late nineteenth century.

The expansion of American settlement and political power dovetailed with this indigenous revitalization. With statehood and the decline of Hispanic social and cultural practices, and especially during and after the Gold Rush, the now dominant Euro-Americans reasserted patterns of interaction with native peoples established elsewhere in North America. The politics of Manifest Destiny (see Hoopes 1975; Rawls 1986; and others) justified genocidal policies towards California Indians aimed at removing Indian populations from land that whites coveted. Virulent racism pervaded the attitudes of Euro-American settlers towards California Indians, who were given the derogatory epithet "digger Indian"; such a view was legitimized by the Social Darwinist theory typical of early scholarly authors such as Hubert Bancroft (1874), Lorenzo Yates (1875), John Hittell (1879) and others. In the new state of California, Indians lost their legal rights to bear witness or to defend themselves in court. Indian labor became increasingly marginalized. This occurred most notably in the gold mining areas and the new agricultural heartlands of the Sacramento and San Joaquin valleys, where initially indigenous peoples had adapted themselves to the new conditions and some native miners achieved a degree of financial success (Hurtado 1988; Monroy 1990).

In the Bay Area of the 1860s, the estates of the *Californios* had mostly passed into American hands, both because American laws required that the validity of the *Californios'* land titles be proved in a lengthy and costly process, and because a crippling drought had destroyed production on the estates, obliging the *Californios* to sell out (Pitt 1968; Bean and Rawls 1988). New American landowners tended to discontinue the use

of native labor in favor of the large numbers of recently arrived young men of European descent, who seldom had families to support as Indian men did. Under such circumstances, an Indian strategy of withdrawal into hinterlands seemed to make the most sense—for a while. The creation of a large, culturally revitalized Ohlone community in the East Bay, the *Alisal rancheria*, occurred at the same time as the economic degradation of native peoples throughout the state and the steady strangulation of economic opportunities for Indian people (Field, Leventhal, Sanchez and Cambra 1992a).

*Alisal* extended over a large acreage just south of the town of Pleasanton, land ceded to the Indians by a *Californio* family, the Bernal, who had kept their estate when California became part of the United States, and who undoubtedly employed many Ohlones as seasonal workers and *vaqueros*. Individuals in the Bernal family intermarried with

and served as *compadres*, or ritual godparents, to some of the late 19th century Ohlone children whose descendants are now prominent in the contemporary

*Muwekma* Ohlone Tribe. For example, Petrus A. Bernal was the *compadre* for Raymonda (Ramona) Marine, born in *Alisal* in 1893. Ramona was the grandmother of *Muwekma* chairwoman Rosemary Cambra (Book III, Mission San Jose Baptismal Records 1892-1925:17).

When the Hearst family acquired this property in the 1880s, the *Alisal* community's



Fig. 11.1. *Muwekma* elders Henry "Hank" Alvarez and his older brother John "Pop" Alvarez in the 1930s



claim to the land was recognized and respected. Successive landowners' relatively liberal attitudes toward the community, in addition to the relative geographical remoteness of the *rancheria*, made *Alisal* economically possible. Under such circumstances, the cultural and political richness of the intertwined and intermarried families living at *Alisal*, among whom Ohlone, Yokuts, and Miwok languages were spoken, produced a ritually and ceremonially syncretic cultural revival. Fortunately, the linguistic and cultural richness at *Alisal* was recorded by several ethnographers, including J. Curtin in 1884 (Beeler 1961), C. Hart Merriam in 1905 (1967), A.L. Kroeber (1904, 1910), E.W. Gifford (1914), J.A. Mason (1916), and John P. Harrington (1921-1934). The breadth of cultural revitalization was nowhere more evident than in the central role *Alisal* Ohlones played in combining the Ghost Dance religion of the late nineteenth century with indigenous Californian rituals, such as the *Kuksu* Dance and the World Renewal Ceremony, and then in diffusing this religion to other native peoples in Central California (Gifford 1926, 1927; Kelly 1932, 1978, 1991; DuBois 1939).

Although the cultural achievements of the Ohlone people at *Alisal* were inestimable, the *rancheria* eventually waned as the slender economic base supporting the community dwindled, and the surrounding white population enveloped the region. During the early twentieth century, the Ohlone claim to *Alisal* was lost in a paper shuffle in Washington D.C. (Dorrington 1927<sup>2</sup>; Heizer 1978c). Native political leadership faltered without an economic base for the community, use of indigenous (particularly Ohlone) languages disappeared by the third decade of this century, and the family became the only economically viable unit.

The will to survive as Indian people made even this extreme fragmentation a possible cultural survival strategy, as families drifted away from *Alisal* to other parts of the Bay Area. With their sense of community fragmented after *Alisal* was abandoned, the persistence of intermarriage and ritual godparenthood kept the Ohlone families intertwined and in touch with the informal leadership of charismatic individuals (a process that was revitalized during the 1928-1933 enrollment under the California Jurisdictional Act). The contemporary *Muwekma* Ohlone are the direct descendants of the families who lived at *Alisal*. In the same fashion, the *Amah-Mutsun* members descend directly from the Ohlone peoples who were indigenous to the region around

<sup>2</sup>In L.A. Dorrington's letter written to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, dated June 23, 1927 regarding the status of the purchase of land for homeless California Indians, are included statements dismissing the needs of the Verona Band (*Muwekma*) of Alameda County, the San Juan Bautista Band (*Amah-Mutsun*) of San Benito County, and remnants of the Pleyto, Jolon and Milpitas Bands (Esselen Nation and Salinan Nation).

Mission San Juan Bautista and later took refuge in that region again after statehood. The contemporary Esselens descend from the Mission San Carlos neophytes who returned to their old territories following the secularization of the missions.

### THE RE-EMERGENCE OF OHLONE PEOPLES IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

While Kroeber, like many of the other ethnographers listed previously, witnessed the linguistic and cultural richness extant at the *Alisal rancheria* (as well as at other Ohlone and Esselen communities), the fragmentation that occurred for the *Muwekma* after *Alisal*'s demise led him to write that they were "extinct." In his *Handbook* article (1925), he wrote:

The Costanoan group is extinct so far as all practical purposes are concerned. A few scattered individuals survive, whose ancestors were once attached to the missions San Jose, San Juan Bautista, and San Carlos, but they are of mixed-tribal ancestry and live lost among other Indians or obscure Mexicans.

In comments made some thirty years later, Kroeber somewhat mitigated the finality of his pronouncement. He served as an expert witness speaking on behalf of native Californians during the California Claims hearings held by the federal government in Berkeley and San Francisco in 1955 (Kroeber and Heizer 1970; Shippek 1989). While the hearings were intended to redress the injustices against California Indians that the federal government had perpetrated, instead they legitimized the native peoples' loss of huge acreage and of federal acknowledgment itself, a loss for which they were paid only a paltry amount (Stewart 1978; see Field, Leventhal, Sanchez, and Cambra 1992a for how the East Bay Ohlones experienced this "settlement."). In defense of the Indians and of peoples pronounced "extinct," Kroeber wrote:

. . . there is a widespread belief that many Indian groups, especially the smaller ones, have now become extinct . . . Anthropologists sometimes have gone a step farther, and when they can no longer learn from living informants the speech and modes of life of the ancestors of these informants, they talk of that tribe or group as being extinct—when they mean merely that **knowledge** of the aboriginal language and culture has



. . . there are few Indians left in the Bay Area who have some vague Native American heritage, but until [a recent book on the subject] came out, they didn't know who the East Bay Indians were. We don't know who the East Bay Indians were, and the few Indians that happened to survive were swallowed up and exterminated by civilization by the latter part of the last century. That's not to say that there aren't people around here who are of Indian heritage, but I'd be willing to bet they couldn't give you even the semblance of a [lineage] account that was aboriginal (Norick interview in Express Newspaper 9/21/89:15-16).

The opinions of "experts" are received by those who write popular histories as authoritative sources. Such popular authors probably did not read Kroeber, and their notions are far more crude and pejorative than the worst ethnographic misrepresentations; nevertheless, anthropological concepts of both primitiveness and extinction play into popular, journalistic sensationalism concerning "dying Indian tribes," and individuals who are "the last of their kind." One example of these popular history tendencies recalled by the *Mutsun* Ohlone descendants occurred at the death of Ascencion Solorsano de Cervantes, a *Mutsun* woman who was an accomplished healer and social worker, and who also was the last fluent speaker of the *Mutsun* language, *Hoomontwash*. When she died, newspaper journalists romanticized her as "the last full-blooded San Juan Indian," even though her large extended family continued to live on in the area (see Field, Leventhal and Mondragon 1994).

More disturbing still is the recent re-issue of a popular history of the New Almaden Mines area of the Santa Clara Valley entitled *Cinnabar Hills*, written by Lanyon and Bulmore (1967), the latter a graduate of Stanford University and a longtime educator at San Jose State. Harking back to the most invidious racism hurled at California native peoples, the authors expand upon the notion of the "primitive" California Indian, writing:

As compared to the other tribes to the South, [the Ohlones] were inoffensive, mild-mannered, inferior in intelligence, and existed on a low level of primitive culture. The native did little hunting and lacked the understanding to till the soil. . . . Their survival was wholly dependent upon the most accessible items of food that were available in nature's garden. . . . The Ohlone [sic] were not of a creative nature, and produced little except some basketry, stone utensils and items of bone. . . . For lack of any substantial evidence, it is assumed they were completely satisfied with their meager existence and

completely satisfied with their meager existence and lacked the intelligence to improve their standard of living (1967:1).

Malcolm Margolin's *The Ohlone Way* (1978), is an example of a well intentioned popular history that ends up subtly reinforcing popular cultural and historical stereotypes and anthropological racism. This book is perhaps the most widely read pseudo-ethnohistorical depiction of pre- and post-contact Ohlone culture and society. Despite the author's sympathetic treatment of the limited sources available to him, the book reproduces the popular notion that the Ohlones lived in small-scale, simple, and provincial social and cultural arrangements. While *The Ohlone Way* presents only a historical reconstruction of the pre-contact world which has been strongly shaped by Kroeberian frameworks, the book has been treated in the Bay Area and elsewhere as definitive—"the last word," so to speak, concerning the Ohlones. In this way, the book has buttressed the conceptual barriers between the general public and the contemporary revitalization and regrouping of the *Muwekma* Ohlones.

The influence of the Kroeberian legacy that characterizes native Californian societies and cultures as simple, small-scale, and ultimately primitive, and that declares particular groups "extinct" has been particularly prominent among many of the cultural resource management archaeologists working in the San Francisco Bay Area during the last quarter of a century (this despite the fact that for a quarter of a century other views—views of complexity in cultural sophistication—have been noted in the anthropological literature by several scholars, including Bean, Blackburn, Tom King, Chester King, etc.) The work of this group of professionals has had the most direct influence upon the lives and cultural identity of the Ohlone descendants because of the former's control over Ohlone ancestral skeletal remains, associated grave regalia, and other sites of the Ohlone past. It is therefore in the conflict between certain CRM archaeologists and the Ohlone Tribes that the mediation and maintenance of the power of the extinction sentence is most evident, and, conversely, it is within the context of this conflict that the Ohlone people have regrouped and recovered their sense of collective identity (Leventhal et al. 1992).

The explosion of urban expansion and rural development in the Bay Area since 1970 onto lands previously utilized for agriculture, grazing, or simply as open space has been the forum in which this conflict took shape. During this period, national, state and local legislation in the United States created frameworks that mandated the mitigation of adverse impacts on archaeological sites, human remains and artifacts as non-renewable resources. Archaeologists themselves

recognized that controls were necessary, and supported the creation of a process for both completing archaeological/environmental-impact reports and for planning the mitigation of adverse impacts on discovered sites. This process, which also accommodated the participation of Native Americans in the monitoring of their ancestors, has directed substantial amounts of money toward contract archaeology firms in the Bay Area. Unfortunately, for many years, both in the Bay Area and elsewhere in the United States, the attempted legal protection of archaeological sites has seldom initiated anything more than token accommodation between the archaeologists excavating ancient Indian sites, and individual descendants of the indigenous peoples hand-picked to collaborate as passive monitors with many of the CRM firms. Such firms often evade, if not subvert, the hard work of responding to the concerns and sensitivities of formally organized Ohlone tribal governments through the manipulation of individual descendants. This process is further exacerbated by the Native American Heritage Commission, which, like the Bureau of Indian Affairs, has lumped all "Most Likely Descendants" in the Bay Area into the generalized tribal classification: Costanoan. When confronted by the need to arbitrate on the question of tribal boundaries all over the state, the Native American Heritage Commission selects individuals it thinks are "most likely descended" from prehistoric occupants of sites where human remains are discovered. This selection process often disregards the existence of formal tribal governments and areas that were aboriginal to their respective tribes. The end result of this process is further disenfranchisement and state sponsored factionalism.

This has been the case even in states where modern Indian tribes are federally recognized and live on reservations. For the Ohlone descendants, the absence of federal acknowledgment has been exacerbated by CRM archaeologists' citation of Kroeber's sentence of extinction as a statement of fact. Most of the interpretive studies that CRM archaeologists publish about their excavations include a small section called "ethnohistory," in which the authors typically discount the existence and/or legitimacy of the Ohlone descendants. For example, in an evaluative report that Garaventa et al. (1991) wrote for Basin Research about their excavations at the Guadalupe River in San Jose, the authors wrote:

The Costanoan aboriginal lifeway apparently disappeared by 1810 . . . Thus multi-ethnic communities grew up in and around Costanoan territory, and it was these people who provided ethnological data in the period from 1878 to 1933 (Garaventa et al. 1991:9).

The last sentence discounts both the contemporary descendants and the rich sources of data gathered by J.P. Harrington and others early in this century because they are concerned with "multi-ethnic communities," and not with "real" Ohlones. Similar kinds of pseudo-science, often quoting Kroeber as well, can be found in studies published by Munoz (1983); Pastron and Walsh (1988); Cartier (1990); and Basin Research (1984, 1985, 1990) among others. Admirable mission era ethnohistorical studies can be found in Winter (1978a, 1978b); C. King (1974, 1977, 1978a, 1978b); and Milliken (1978, 1981, 1988, 1993). While the former group of studies erases the relationship between the contemporary tribes and their ancestors, and thus reproduces the extinction sentence over and over, we note that these same contract archaeologists, many of whom are paid with public funds, have produced very little published work that sheds light on the complexity of pre-contact Ohlone society and culture.

The implications of this kind of CRM interpretive work for the Ohlone tribes have therefore been threefold. First, if no culturally significant tribal people of the pre-contact Bay Area natives survive, then the ethnographer's tools—oral history, intensive interviewing, participant observation—are no longer relevant and no anthropological research need



Figure 11.2. *Muwekma* Chairwoman Rosemary Cambra, her mother Dolores Sanchez and her uncle Robert Sanchez, *Muwekma* elders

be done. Second, archaeological excavation of pre- and post-contact native civilization in the Bay Area can proceed without regard for the cultural sensitivities and research priorities of Ohlone descendants since, again, none exist. Last, the authority of Kroeberian and pseudo-Kroeberian pronouncements of extinction suggests that isolated individuals may possess enough Ohlone ancestry to act as consultants for CRM firms, but firmly discounts revitalized tribal governments among the Ohlone people (Leventhal et al. 1992). Since, as Kroeber's statement in 1955 (about clarifying what anthropologists mean when they say something is extinct) attests, modern descendants do not possess the knowledge about language and other cultural traits that pedigrees them as "proper" Indians in the eyes of some anthropological authorities. A number of academic based anthropologists, CRM archaeologists, university museum curators, and historians have, until very recently, alleged that contemporary tribal organizations have little or no legitimacy, especially as it relates to each tribe's ancestral and present-day heritage (e.g., PL 101-601, Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act).

Elsewhere, we have detailed the precise sequence of events, starting in the mid-1970s, during which Ohlones throughout the Bay Area responded to the specific kind of disempowerment posed by some CRM archaeologists (see Field, Leventhal, Sanchez and Cambra 1992a). At first, acting as individuals and often in a spontaneous manner, the *Muwekma* Ohlone families began taking direct action to protect ancestral sites which feature elaborate mortuary complexes replete with aesthetically sophisticated material culture. In the case of the East and South Bay *Muwekma* Ohlone Tribe in particular, the ever-increasing threat to their ancestral dead created the impetus that obliged them to reach beyond their family-based survival strategies, and motivated them to initiate new inter-family community organizations. The *Muwebna* Tribe established its own archaeological consulting firm, Ohlone Families Consulting Services (OFCS), in order to transform the archaeological management of their ancestral sites by taking control of its past. Recognized by the Department of the Interior under the Buy Indian Act as a Native American owned firm, OFCS has carried out excavations and written interpretive reports of a professional caliber in collaborative relationships with federal, state, county and city agencies. By taking control of their history, they have established control over their tribal identity and their collective future.

Nevertheless, much of the archaeological community in the Bay Area has been slow to break with the anthropological ideas of Kroeber and Heizer. Ohlone demands for both repatriation of already excavated remains and control over new excavations have led many local CRM

archaeologists to align with political action groups organized by anthropologists and other "concerned" scientists who are attempting to blockade repatriation. One such group, called ACPAC (American Committee for Preservation of Archaeological Collections) is presently supported by Constance Cameron (Museum of Anthropology, California State University) and Clement W. Meighan (Emeritus Professor of Anthropology, UCLA) and a number of others. This group publishes a politically charged informational newsletter that has made the Ohlones something of a *bete noire*. In 1993, E.J. Neiburger's article "Profiting From Reburial" declaimed:

Public money for reburials is the latest growth industry for numerous activists: \$135,000 of taxpayers' money was used to pay off land-owners, lawyers, archaeologists and activists in an effort to bury 146 poorly understood skeletons in Saline, Kansas. Religious and historic traditions, accurate identifications and the desires of the next-of-kin have little influence on many activists who demand reburial of all remains under a variety of self-styled "traditional" religions. Thus, Stanford University has released 550 Ohlone skeletons to individuals who had identified with this tribe (the last recognized member of which died in the early 1800s) (Originally published in Nature 1990, 344:297; republished in ACPAC Newsletter, March 1993:3).

OFCS has thus gone to battle with a professional community among which many resist rethinking the legacy of Kroeber's extinction sentence and insist upon retaining exclusive control over archaeology in the Bay Area.

## CONCLUSION

By working collectively to obtain control of archaeological excavation of ancestral sites, which embodies their claim to their own past, the East and South Bay *Muwekma* Ohlone Tribe rejected extinction. The professional collaborative relationships they established in their archaeological work have built a foundation for public acceptance of both their continued existence and their important role in the contemporary Bay Area.

The establishment of OFCS aided in the process of self-empowerment and formal regrouping of the East and South Bay Ohlone

families as the *Muwekma* Ohlone Tribe. Through their excavation work and the writing of interpretive reports that, like this chapter, challenge the conceptual framework that has supported the erasure of Ohlone identity, the *Muwekma* have documented their historical and cultural continuity. This documentation is also the precondition for federal acknowledgment of their tribal status, for which they filed in 1989. Federal acknowledgment, a crucial emblem of political empowerment for Native Americans, will enable the *Muwekma* Ohlone to re-establish their land base, initiate economic development, and create the basis for a new and revitalized Native American community.

The leadership of both the *Amah-Mutsun* Band and the Esselen Nation has worked closely with the *Muwekma* to coordinate the tasks of historical revision and reconstruction that lays the basis for empowering all these descendants of "extinct" peoples. This process thus entails a reversal of each step of the historical disenfranchisement of the native peoples of the Bay Area. Coming "back from extinction" has put these peoples on the road toward a new cultural, political and economic revitalization.

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## ***NOSO-N "IN BREATH SO IT IS IN SPIRIT" THE STORY OF INDIAN CANYON***

Ann Marie Savers<sup>1</sup>

I was born and raised here in Indian Canyon as was my brother Christopher Savers. Indian Canyon is a very peaceful place. Dreams have come true and have been fulfilled here, I believe, because of the Canyon and its natural elements. The waterfall is a sacred area. We still carry on our traditions and ceremonies. As I did when I was a child at age three or four, my daughter Kanyon Savers-Roods goes to the waterfall quite frequently, sometimes with guests and sometimes alone, and offers prayers and blessings using sage and other traditional herbs.

My people are of the *Mutsun* language group of Costanoan people. In the late 1700s Spanish missionaries recorded the first interactions with the *Mutsuns* at Mission San Juan Bautista. In the early 1800s, Rev. Fr. Felipe Arroyo de la Cuesta recorded more extensive information on the *Mutsurts*. In an Index he compiled 2,284 phrases of the *Mutsun* language as spoken at Mission San Juan Bautista, together with his Spanish translations. For this I am particularly grateful because we are now reviving our language. In 1814, de la Cuesta responded to the *interrogatorio* issued by the Spanish Government requesting information on the customs and beliefs of the native people (Arroyo de la Cuesta 1821). I found some of his statements to contain some factual information, but they show the priest's profound lack of understanding and sensitivity towards the cultures at the mission. I should like to quote a few sentences from the answers to the *interrogatorio*:

<sup>1</sup>Transcribed and edited with the help of Ismana Crater.

1994, Leventhal et. al., "Back from Extinction", *ibid.*, page 299-300: Tribelet [! ] defined a political and geographical unit comprising several units, usually including a principal and most powerful central village, tied by relations of kinship. Usage notes[edit]. Tribelet may be considered pejorative by Californian natives. Leventhal, Field, Alvarez, Cambra, "Back from Extinction", published by Bean, Lowell John, editor, "The Ohlone: Past and Present Native Americans of the San Francisco Bay Region." Menlo Park, CA: Ballena Press Publication, 1994, page 299-300. ISBN. Usage notes The Ohlone, formerly known as Costanoans (from Spanish *costano* meaning "coast dweller"), are a Native American people of the Northern California coast. When Spanish explorers and missionaries arrived in the late 18th century, the Ohlone inhabited the area along the coast from San Francisco Bay through Monterey Bay to the lower Salinas Valley. At that time they spoke a variety of related languages. The Ohlone languages belonged to the Costanoan sub-family of the Utian language family, which itself