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Milliken: *A Time of Little Choice: The Disintegration of Tribal Culture in the San Francisco Bay Area, 1769-1810*

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A Time of Little Choice: The Disintegration of Tribal Culture in the San Francisco Bay Area, 1769-1810. Randall Milliken. Ballena Press Anthropological Papers No. 43, 1995, xvi + 364 pp., 17 figs., 5 maps, 12 tables, and 4 appendices, \$32.95 (hard cover), \$24.95 (paper).

Reviewed by:

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For those of us who have been immersed in the ethnohistory of the California Spanish Mission-California Indian interaction, this book version of the dissertation by Randy Milliken has been long awaited. If anything, it is better than I had hoped. Building on pioneering work by one of his mentors, the late James Bennyhoff, Milliken has taken the multitude of written exploration accounts, as well as military and mission records kept by the Spanish (principally in the San Francisco Bay area), and developed from them an invaluable ethnogeography of the Indian villages found in the present-day counties of Marin, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Alameda, and Contra Costa, along with portions of neighboring counties. The maps he provides will be utilized by archaeologists and historians from now on.

Milliken then draws from his painstaking work of reconstituting the Indian families taken into the missions to create a comprehensible Indian history of their side of the first contacts with explorers and clerics like Pedro Fages, Juan Crespi, Junipero Serra, Pedro Font, Vicente de Santamaria, Miguel Costansó, Fernando Rivera y Moncada, and many more. Though the accounts of many of these Spaniards have long been available to scholars, they portrayed only their impressions of the interaction. Milliken's study goes a long way to providing us the other side of the story, or at least putting these obser-



vations into perspective. In doing so, he adds greatly to a more credible and eminently readable history of the Bay Area in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

The book is divided into 10 chapters. Chapter 1 is a comprehensive introduction to the study, laying out the scene of the Bay Area in about 1770 and explaining to the reader the various factors, including differing world views, that created a confrontation of cultures bound to lead to disaster. Milliken's approach is remarkably objective and allows the reader to absorb the varying attitudes and prejudices of the protagonists that led to what must be seen as an inevitable and horrific outcome.

Chapter 2, *The Tribal World*, seeks to paint an image of the cultural landscape of the Bay Area prior to the intervention of the Spanish explorers. Succeeding chapters fill in the history of action and reaction, starting with initial contact with the Portolá expedition in 1769 and other exploratory contacts (1769 to 1776) through the initiation of the Indians into the Christian religion (1776 to 1784). Next came a time of "mutual accommodation" (1785 to 1792) which shifted to a period of social transformation (1793 to 1795) among the Indian people, which in turn spawned an era of reconsideration (1795 to 1799), during which the cumulative impacts of epidemic disease prompted flight from the missions and countermeasures by the Spanish to bring back those who had been baptized.

Chapter 8 details the effects of regional disintegration (1800 to 1805) in which the decimation of the native cultural geography in the immediate proximity of the missions created large areas of abandoned lands where many villages had once resonated with life. This led to a period of "recapitulation" (1806 to 1810), during which the missionaries and military moved out to more distant areas adjacent to the villages that were already subjected under the policy of *reducción*, and through a combination of epidemic disease

and military intervention the earlier process was repeated.

Finally, there is the conclusion to the story, derived from Milliken's painstaking exegesis in which he expounds the thesis evinced in the book's title, that the Indian people were at a point of very limited choice. In this state, resistance faltered, with numerous people entering the mission more or less voluntarily when this had become the only rational choice left to them.

Although I find Milliken's thesis of limited choice very compelling, I wonder at the merit of the term "choice." This seems to be a western notion tied to free will. In the sense of people finding themselves between a rock and a hard place, I suppose that a choice was still available. At the same time, I wonder if this choice was simply a fatalistic bowing to a nearly incomprehensible set of events that had overtaken them. The analogy of indigenous people of Southeast Asia having had their lives and landscape massively impacted by a western power, then flocking as refugees to take a place in the lowest rungs of our nation's social structure came to mind. In much the same way, Indian peoples were drawn to the missions by offerings of various trinkets and clothing, and above all food. Once baptized, the Indians found themselves unable to return home except as proselytizers to draw more of their fellow villagers to the newly created rancherías near the missions. Intervillage feuds and the newfound Christian viewpoint toward gentiles (read infidels) were manipulated to further break down levels of what resistance could be mustered by people living a subsistence existence in which their collected foodstuffs were so easily subject to intervention and destruction. I would agree that in the time subsequent to the period covered here (1769 to 1810), as generations grew up within the missions and better understood the strengths and weaknesses of the *gente de razón*, there did come a time of choice, but the early experience was simply overwhelming.

I was a bit disappointed that Milliken did not consider more extensively aspects of the ritual spectacles offered by the Roman Catholic priestly community, including magnificent robes, dramatic statuary, and pictorial representations, and the inevitable efforts of the church to co-opt various local traditional beliefs to pave the transition from non-Christian to Christian. I do not think the story of this *conquista* can be limited to military prowess and offers of food to starving peoples. To borrow a phrase from the Vietnam war, the priests were seeking to control the hearts and minds of the native Californians. That they succeeded to some degree is indicated by the number of former mission Indians who have remained Catholic or at least stayed within the Christian fold.

To anyone who really is intrigued with the history of the Bay Area and its transition from an Indian to a Spanish cultural landscape in a few short decades, this book is a must. For those who are fascinated with what can be done with painstaking analyses of the records left behind (mainly by the colonizers) in order to bring to life the often ignored and belittled native inhabitants of California, this fine book is and will long continue to be a model.



The Archaeology of CA-MNO-2122, A Study of Pre-Contact and Post-Contact Lifeways Among the Mono Basin Paiute. Brooke S. Arkush.

University of California Anthropological Records, Vol. 31, 1995, x + 199 pp., 75 figs., 41 tables, 4 appendices, \$40.00 (paper).

Reviewed by:

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This recent contribution to the University of California Anthropological Records series details the results of Brooke Arkush's mid-1980s field investigations at CA-MNO-2122, a remarkable prehistoric, protohistoric, and historic site complex located on the eastern shore of Mono Lake, California. Documented within the approximately 3,000,000 m.² confines of CA-MNO-2122 were three prehistoric pronghorn traps, one historic mustang trap, and 31 feature/artifact concentrations of various functions and ages. The latter include a number of base camps—some represented by the remains of wickiups, windbreaks, and other features—as well as temporary field camps, and one historic corral. Given the size and complexity of the site, field procedures focused mainly on mapping, recording, and feature documentation, with a more judicious and targeted approach to collection and excavation.

Such a welter of temporally and functionally distinct loci pose certain organizational challenges with respect to research approach and report format to which Arkush responds with distinction. Most of the background information, data, and inferences presented in this volume revolve around two major research themes: (1) patterns of aboriginal pronghorn procurement, particularly those employing large game drive traps and other facilities; and (2) Native American culture continuity and change in response to Anglo colonization of the Mono Basin.