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Davis, ed.: *The Ancient Californians: Rancholabrean Hunters of the Mojave Lakes Country*

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the Myoma Dunes sites, but the coprolites there produced no pollen of domestic plants. Therefore, the squash probably were not grown locally. Wilke notes, however, that agriculture has some antiquity among the Cahuilla; it figures prominently in myth and ritual and there are Cahuilla terms for crop plants and planting methods. The crops themselves derive from the Lower Colorado agricultural complex.

From this Wilke concludes that agriculture is best viewed as but one aspect of Cahuilla Indian subsistence that had arisen by early historic times.

Late Prehistoric Human Ecology at Lake Cahuilla is of major importance to scholars of California Desert prehistory. It provides the first clear picture of the changing lake stands in the Salton Basin and the probable cultural changes and population movements that followed. The catastrophic changes in Lake Cahuilla must have had far-reaching influence over a wide area of southern California. The significance of these changes for the late prehistory of adjacent areas should be apparent to the reader.

Wilke is to be commended for providing a carefully constructed and well-executed model of the late prehistory of Coachella Valley. Not only is it relevant to current research in the California deserts, but it is so constructed as to stimulate hypotheses that will test its validity. Those who wish to disagree with Wilke will find that he has cleared the way for easy debate—provided the dissenter is in command of appropriate data.

REFERENCE

- Hubbs, C. L., and R. R. Miller
1948 The Zoological Evidence: Correlation Between Fish Distribution and Hydrographic History of the Desert Basins of Western United States. *In: The Great Basin, with Emphasis on Glacial and Postglacial Times.* Salt Lake City:

University of Utah Bulletin, Biological Series 10(7):17-166.



The Ancient Californians: Rancholabrean Hunters of the Mojave Lakes Country.

Emma Lou Davis, ed. Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County, *Science Series* 29, 1978. \$10.00 (paper).

Reviewed by DAVID L. WEIDE
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

“The Mojave Desert is among all things contradictory” are the opening lines of an archaeological report that, like its subject matter—the reconstruction of prehistoric lifeways in the lacustrine basins of the north-west Mojave Desert—is both controversial and contradictory, speculative yet factual, tangible but agonizingly illusive. The author clearly states that this book is “experimental” and those of us who know her agree—the book is experimental—life is experimental—and she is to be commended for saying what she believes and believing in what she says.

The book (site report? monograph?) may be divided into three parts. First, an introduction by Davis and her co-author Carol Panlaqui of the Maturango Museum, Ridgecrest, California, to the locale—the basin of ancient Lake China which at 12 thousand years ago and from two to six thousand years ago formed one of the lakes comprising the runoff system along the eastern edge of the Sierran escarpment. Second, a detailed archaeological study of approximately fifteen “sites” or, more precisely, concentrations of archaeological material spatially associated with a series of long transects and exhaustively mapped quadrats coinciding with the east shore of the now vanished lake. Third, a trilogy of supportive papers dealing with Holocene palynological history (P. J. Mehringer, Jr.),

the Rancholabrean fauna discovered during the course of the archaeological survey (D. E. Fortsch), and a description and chronology of the soil stratigraphy related to the broader and better understood chronology of neighboring Searles Lake (G. I. Smith).

The recurring theme of *The Ancient Californians* focuses on the speculation that Man (and Woman!) as hunter, gatherer, butcher, and pragmatic domestic occupied the shores of Lake China at least 45,000 years ago, a suggestion based on lithic technology, "style," and degree of artifact weathering, but unsubstantiated by either relative or absolute chronology. The "Early Man" emphasis, in my opinion, neither adds to nor detracts from the content but assuredly will raise archaeological hackles within the ranks of those who demand testable hypotheses and substantive analogous models. These are not particularly the point of Davis' monograph. Somewhere, someone should be allowed the freedom of uninhibited speculation.

In reviewing this work, I am tempted to develop a plus, minus, and questionable column much as one "grades" the examination of a precocious but unconventional student. Listed among the assets surely must be the attention to detail in archaeological recording and site mapping that stands as a model of recent field methodology. The 74 detailed site maps represent hundreds of hours of dedicated labor and reflect thousands of hours of intensive field work. In addition, the verbal descriptions of "tool kits" are good for they allow one to "see" the material, shape, and wear patterns. On the questionable scale lies the prose, which, highly uneven and in places redundant, ranges from the determinedly scientific to the almost embarrassingly personal and which suffers from lack of a strong external editorial hand. On the negative side, however, the chief drawback of *The Ancient Californians* is the fact that it is neither consistently simple and exciting enough to capture

the archaeological layman who wishes to identify with the early mammoth hunters of the desert lake basins nor particularly organized in a manner that makes it of reference quality to the serious archaeologist in search of correlative data.

If relative and absolute chronology are the heart of this report, stratigraphy is the soul; and the stratigraphic problems associated with unraveling the geographic and environmental history of a pluvial lake as ephemeral as Lake China during the last 12 to 15 thousand years are enough to tax any Sherlock of shorelines. The basic problem faced by Davis and her co-workers was one of stratigraphic units kilometers in width and length and only centimeters in thickness. The archaeology consists basically of a column (or more correctly a film) characterized by pedologic and topographic factors influenced or created by scores of different microenvironments that fluctuated markedly both in space and through time. In this environment, artifact assemblages, though bound together spatially and, perhaps, stylistically, must float in a stratigraphic sea with only the vaguest of correlative chronologic reference points.

To summarize the key points of these chronologic controls, first, Davis presents powerful evidence to link human activity with a fauna, including mammoth and, to a lesser extent, horse, camel, and sabertooth; in other words, a Late Pleistocene/Early Holocene megafauna that one might expect to inhabit the xeric woodland and cold steppe Mojave at 22 to 12 thousand years ago. Second, G. I. Smith, basing his argument on both a series of ^{14}C dates and on correlation with a well-documented chronology from Searles Lake, places what Davis terms the artifacts of "PaleoSiberian Origin" (p. 96) in the context of an absolute chronology ranging backwards to a maximum of 10,275 years ago. The occurrence of such well-documented strata are, however, dishearteningly few considering the

vast extent of the Lake China shoreline.

Reviewing the chronological arguments for antiquity, given that stone tools of respectable age were found in conjunction with an extinct fauna, both the palynological data of Mehringer and the ^{14}C and stratigraphic data of Smith combine to place a reasonable time bracket of 7 to 14 thousand years on the Lake China activity. Arguments for greater antiquity, no matter how enticing they may be, are, in my opinion, purely speculative. This is acceptable. The recurring theme, however, reflects the author's desires rather than the facts and, combined with her esteem for the very human characteristics of her "People of the Lakes" that gives *The Ancient Californians* a distinct charm, allows (perhaps forces) her to infer more from the data than the data warrant.



Indians of the Oaks. Millicent Lee. Ramona, California: Acoma Books, 1978 (new edition), 256 pp., illus., \$6.95 (paper).

Reviewed by VERA-MAE FREDRICKSON
Berkeley, California

These two stories of Kumeyaay (Southern Diegueño) life in the foothills of southern California were originally published in 1937. The author, the Founder-Director of the Indian Arts League of San Diego, had spent many years with the Kumeyaay as they moved from one seasonal site to another practicing the remnants of their traditional life.

The main fictional characters in the two stories are, respectively, a ten-year-old White boy who lives with the Indians and the young daughter of a Kumeyaay herbwoman. Accounts of their day-to-day adventures in the San Diego County of a hundred years ago comprise an entertaining adventure book for young readers. An engrossing focus of the book for students of Indian culture, however,

is the wealth of detail on technology, food gathering and preparation, journeys, and other aspects of Kumeyaay life.

Perceptions by the author of Kumeyaay values and philosophy are presented in the context of daily activities and interaction between people as well as in recountings of the traditional myths.

An introduction by the Education Coordinator of the San Diego Museum of Man provides information on the author and the context in which the book was originally written. The book includes "A Note on the Pronunciation of the Indian Names." Each new Indian word is also pronounced in a footnote on the page in which it first occurs. A brief list of herbs used by the Kumeyaay for food and medicine and the way they are prepared is illustrated with a page of plant drawings. Other illustrations are also scattered throughout the book: drawings of objects and scenes mentioned in the stories. The work concludes with a "Little Dictionary" of Indian words.

The writing style is very readable, with short sentences and clear language, marred only by occasional coyness. This book is highly recommended as supplementary reading for any course concerned with California Indians in elementary and high schools.



A Southern California Indigenous Ceramic Typology: A Contribution to Malcolm J. Rogers' Research. Ronald V. May. Archaeological Survey Association of Southern California, *A.S.A. Journal* 2(2), Fall-Winter 1978, 54 pp., 9 figs., \$2.00 (paper).

Reviewed by CHRISTOPHER E. DROVER
University of California, Riverside

The title of this work leads the reader to expect the long awaited publication of