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A SUGGESTED CHRONOLOGY FOR SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA COASTAL ARCHAEOLOGY

WILLIAM J. WALLACE

INTRODUCTION

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIAN PREHISTORY has never occupied a prominent place in North American archaeological researches, and there is not a very imposing literature on the subject. This is despite the fact that much archaeological work has been done by local educational institutions, museums, and interested amateurs. Many localities have been searched for evidences of human occupation and a fair number of sites have been dug, some with a degree of completeness, but publication has lagged far behind survey and excavation. As a consequence, the characteristics of the prehistoric cultures and their sequence in time are but vaguely known. Enough information exists, however, to provide a basis for a few tentative statements concerning cultural development.

Southern California, which includes approximately one-third of the state, can be separated into a western or coastal province and an eastern or desert zone. These subareas are distinct geographically and, in the light of present archaeological knowledge, culturally, though there is some overlapping. Only the coastal region, including Santa Barbara, Ventura, Orange, and the non-desert portions of Los Angeles and San Diego counties, will be discussed here.

THE COASTAL PROVINCE

Stretching from Point Conception southward to the Mexican border, the coastal province comprises a broad strip of broken land along the sea and inland for some miles. A complex network of mountain ranges, 5000 to 7000 feet high with peaks much higher, separates it from the deserts of the interior. The year-round climate is mild with small daily and annual ranges because sea breezes and fogs tend to stabilize the temperatures, without extremes. Year averages are from 65° in January to 70° in July, with a greater range in the intermediate and interior valleys. The year divides in general into two seasons—wet and dry—with nearly all the rains falling in the months from October to May. Annual precipitation varies from eighteen inches at Santa Barbara to about ten inches at San Diego. Summer is a period of drought.

The streams and rivers of Southern California carry little or no water during most of the year. Large flows come only during heavy winter rains and taper off

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