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Blood Came from Their Mouths: Tongva and Chumash Responses to the Pandemic of 1801

EDWARD D. CASTILLO

The arrival of Spanish invaders on the shores of Alta California in 1769 spawned a biological holocaust among Southern California Indians.¹ The epidemics that swept across the coast, mountains, valleys, and deserts of California were catastrophic, causing Native Californians to attempt to comprehend the sickness and death stalking their various communities. European diseases significantly affected the lives of many Indians of California, including the Tongva of the Los Angeles basin and the Chumash north of them along the Santa Barbara coast. Tongva and Chumash people responded to epidemics brought to their homelands by the Spanish in a manner consistent with their spiritual and practical worldview. In one sense they internalized the diseases, attempting to comprehend the massive suffering and death in a way that made sense to them. Traditional Native views of death and sicknesses shaped their response to them. This was clearly the case of the Tongva people living near Mission San Gabriel.

The Tongva of the Los Angeles basin spoke a dialect of the Takic family of languages derived from the larger Uto-Aztecan linguistic stock. The mainland Tongva were divided into two groups, one associated with the San Fernando Valley, and the Tongva proper, whose territory embraced the watershed of the Los Angeles and Santa Ana river basin. Ninety percent of their territory was within the rich Sonoran life zone whose ecological resources included vast quantities of acorn, pine nut, small game, and deer. On the coast, shellfish, sea mammals, and fish were taken. They followed an economy of hunting, collecting, and fishing that supported a population of approximately five thousand just prior to the Spanish invasion. The religious beliefs, practices, and mores of the Tongva centered on the cosmological belief that

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humankind was not the apex of creation but simply a strand in the web of life. Humans, like plants, animals, and even the landscape, shared reciprocal obligations to one another. According to creation stories, each provided something for the other and required a display of mutual respect and care. Careful stewardship of food resources and sacred places was proscribed.²

Indian doctors or shamans, called *Ta.xkw.a*, provided curing services, distributed foods from communal hunts, and sometimes practiced witchcraft. The diagnosis of illness was broadly divided into two categories, "loss of soul" and the intrusion of foreign objects in the patient's body due to taboo violations or sorcery. The *Ta.xkw.a* were important members of the elite class of citizens and leaders in the Toloache ritual complex,³ which was based on the ingestion of the highly narcotic properties of datura, or jimsonweed, as it is commonly known. This dangerous and sometimes toxic substance was used both ritually as well as pharmacologically in male puberty ceremonies and medicinal contexts. In coastal California, two major religious subsystems developed out of the Toloache movement of Southern California. Among the Tongva there emerged the Chingichnigish religion, and among the Chumash the ?Antap practices developed.⁴

Modern demographic studies have shown that American Indian populations in California were perhaps the highest in America (north of the valley of Mexico) and that just prior to the arrival of permanent colonization the "birth and death rates were substantially equal, and the total number of persons was more or less constant. With the arrival of the Spaniards the equilibrium in the coastal areas was profoundly disturbed."⁵ According to the beliefs of these people, they enjoyed an abundance of food and good health, due in large measure to a careful observation of their religious mandates and faith in the Indian doctors. That faith would be seriously challenged by events that followed the arrival of Spanish colonial forces.

The Tongva were first reported by explorer Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo in 1542. However, permanent colonization forces did not arrive in Tongva territory until the late summer of 1771. Near the Los Angeles River, two Franciscan missionaries accompanied by ten soldiers staked their claim to the territory of the people of Porciuncula village by founding a mission called San Gabriel on September 8, 1771. Sporadic Tongva resistance ensued until October 2 when the *Tumia.r* (principal chief) of Porciuncula organized a large force of warriors to attack the Spanish compound in an attempt to kill a soldier who had raped his wife. The *Tumia.r* was killed by the soldiers, and two of his followers were wounded. The soldiers promptly decapitated the chief and displayed his severed head on a stake at the entrance to the mission.⁶ There followed an ugly pattern of sexual assaults by the soldiers that did not spare even young children. A Scotsman married to a Tongva woman of high lineage reported on the typical soldier's sexual assault upon Tongva women:

a large party [of soldiers], who commenced tying the hands of the adult males behind their backs; and making signs of their wish to procure women—these having fled again to the thicket, at the first appearance of their coming. Harsh measures obtained for them what

they sought, but the women were considered contaminated, and put through a long course of sweating and drinking herbs, etc. They necessarily become accustomed to these things, but their disgust and abhorrence never left them till many years after. In fact every white child born among them for a long period was secretly strangled and buried!⁷

Such depraved behavior by the colonists did little to enamor the Spanish to the bewildered Tongva.

As a result of the military violence and wholesale sexual assaults reported by early chroniclers of Mission San Gabriel, recruitment into mission society was slow. However, the Franciscan missionaries were well trained in methods of recruitment, gained from more than two centuries of missionary activities among Indians of New Spain.⁸ Perhaps the greatest ally aiding in the recruitment process was the sudden appearance of a glut of horrible new diseases, virtually unknown to the Tongva and indeed all Native peoples of North America. Children's diseases such as measles, mumps, and chicken pox killed thousands of Tongva while smallpox, diphtheria, typhoid, and other unidentified "fevers" killed more. Syphilis introduced by the Spanish, while not fatal by itself, often accompanied other ailments, adding to the suffering and pain of a population that lacked immunities to these maladies.⁹ Through a careful study of mission baptismal, marriage, and death registers, historian Robert Jackson has analyzed the Tongva population at San Gabriel and reported the rate of decline of the population to be a staggering 78 percent. Forced separation of female children from their parents, beginning at about the age of six and witnessing them locked up in filthy and disease-ridden female barracks called *monjerios*, occurred at all missions. According to Jackson's study, "gross imbalance in the age structure developed with children under the age of ten making up a small percentage of the total population, and a growing gender imbalance, with few women surviving." Children's life expectancy averaged 6.4 years.¹⁰ Worse still, everything Tongva shamans tried could not stem the tide of death and misery that overwhelmed their people. Experienced missionaries knew, and others soon learned, that the appearance of such deadly diseases would provide an opportunity for evangelization. Baptismal records at San Gabriel reveal that the earliest baptisms occurred among dying children and elders (those most vulnerable to epidemic diseases).¹¹ Under church law and Franciscan policy such baptisms can occur without the permission of the dying individual. Consequently, when children occasionally survived, the grateful parents believed they owed it to the missionaries' efforts and in gratitude often allowed themselves to be baptized. It is likely that they believed the spiritual power of the padres to be a good insurance policy against the periodic and terrifying waves of epidemic diseases that washed over the Tongva peoples.¹²

Colonists' medical efforts on behalf of the growing flood of sick and dying mission Indian laborers were uncoordinated and haphazard at best. Spanish and, later, Mexican medical doctors were stationed in the Monterey Royal Presidio and seldom were available to the neophyte population. During the great diphtheria epidemic of 1801 in Southern California, the official sur-

geon was Juan de Dios Morelos. Apparently there was some doubt as to the professional credentials of Morelos, and he did not receive full pay as such. Nevertheless, there is no evidence that Morelos or any visiting naval surgeon was present to assist the Indian victims of that epidemic. During a study of Spanish surgeons in Alta California, physiologist Sherburne F. Cook of the University of California's medical school concluded that "these physicians actually accomplished relatively little, aside from local practice in the region of Monterey and San Francisco."

Consequently, most western medicine available to sick Indians was through the padres themselves. It is known that some of the possible remedies offered by the attending Franciscans were raw potatoes; their leaves were applied to the head to stop pain. Fever was treated with verbena leaves boiled in water and swallowed. In an attempt to stop the bleeding, Yerba de Pollo (*Commelina tuberosa*) was applied internally and externally. After a study of Spanish medical practices in Alta California, one medical historian concluded, "The Franciscan Padres came to Alta California with the avowed purpose of proselytizing; to cure the souls of the Indians not their bodies."¹³

Alarming accounts of the decimation of California Mission Indians by disease eventually prompted the viceroy of New Spain to order a medical survey of both *gente de razon* (the empire's Christian citizens) and Indian populations to determine their cause. In response Jose Benites, the surgeon general at Monterey, undertook a journey as far south as Mission San Luis Obispo in the winter of 1804–1805. His report found dangerous public health practices in general and a general poor health especially among the Indians. This report further confirmed earlier official reports that the filthy and disease-ridden missions were the principal cause for the decline of the Indian population, especially among females. Tragically, little effective reform was undertaken, which took a steady toll on Indian lives.¹⁴

Serious disruption of the native wildlife and flora and fauna resulted from the introduction of non-native domesticated animals; horses, cattle, hogs, and sheep began to gobble up native food supplies. Within a few years, these grazing animals, allowed to wander unfenced, soon overran surrounding village territories. Serious disruption in neighboring village food supplies resulted. If local Tongva killed offending animals, the soldiers would launch punitive expeditions, whip and humiliate suspected village chiefs, and take hostages back to the mission. It is clear that many neighboring villages soon succumbed to mission recruitment activities as they faced the real possibility of hunger and starvation because of the depletion of native foods caused by introduced animals.¹⁵

The mission's goal was to transform the hunting and collecting California Indians into a well-disciplined and docile medieval-style labor force, ruled by a small class of Spanish male elites. The missions would train them in ranching and farming skills and convert them to Spanish Catholicism. Native peoples were expected to surrender their lands, resources, independence, and culture for the dubious status of inferior peons of the empire.¹⁶ The advantage for the Franciscans was the opportunity to convert "pagans" to Christianity and demonstrate to their critics that God's empire on earth could

be accomplished by the padres (with a little help from the army). The missionaries were supposed to complete this task in ten years, a goal never achieved; in fact, the Franciscans clung to their vast California empire for nearly seven decades. They blamed their failure to meet that deadline on the “stupidity” of the Indians. The imperial crown, on the other hand, would gain the advantage of an unpaid labor force that could be expected to support the colonial forces economically and secure Spanish territorial claims to this part of the New World.¹⁷

Prior to 1776, there developed a messianic movement known as Chingichnigish among the Tongva that soon spread to nearby tribes. The highly secretive sect is reported to have first appeared at the village of Puvugna in the person of an evangelizing messiah-shaman who introduced a new body of beliefs that became syncretized with the older beliefs and practices of the Toloache complex.¹⁸ Revealing its connection with cosmotheism, the name Chingichnigish itself means “all dangerous, all seeing and present in all places.”¹⁹ New rules of behavior and numerous moral injunctions and taboos were required of followers. To enforce this strict new class of rules, avenger spirits (rattlesnakes, spiders, tarantulas, bears, stingrays, and ravens) would enforce compliance. Violations of the rules resulted in the admonition, “To him, I will send black bears to bite him, Pacific rattlesnakes to bite him, bad luck, sickness and *sicknesses that he will die of.*”²⁰ The early-nineteenth-century Franciscan Padre Geronimo Boscana reported that the Tongva prophet explained, “the laws and establishing the ceremonies necessary to the *preservation of life.*”²¹ Because the prophet and his doctrines emphasized survival, the movement has been characterized as a crisis religion that developed in response to the biological holocaust enveloping the Tongva people.²²

An extremely rare Native American account of how one group of Tongva at Mission San Gabriel perceived a mysterious sickness that was destroying them was collected from Native consultant Jose de los Santos Juncos by the Smithsonian Institution’s linguist John P. Harrington. About 1801, a serious “contagious fever” ravaged the Indians at San Gabriel. According to Juncos,

the people at San Gabriel were dying. They had headaches, and blood came out of the mouth, and so on. The priests at San Gabriel were concerned. At first only single graves were dug, but they could not keep up, so they later made big pits and would throw the bodies of dead people in. When these were full they would cover it with earth and dig another pit.²³

Just prior to these events, according to Juncos, a local *Tumia.r* (or captain) had paid two Catalina Island *Ta.xkw.a* brothers to kill his enemies with sorcery. The captain warned the shaman that none of his family was to be injured. They pursued their witchcraft in a remote canyon on the island, by use of a sand painting. However, this description of its use in sorcery illustrates the role that sickness and avenger spirits played in providing a culturally relevant explanation for the unhappy events they could not otherwise understand. Juncos reported, “When they were finished painting the world,

they began to paint infirmities and blood, all over the world, as well as such dangerous animals that cause pain by biting, clawing and so on, to occupy places in the world—all of these things for *sickness*.”²⁴

The fever that erupted in 1801 caused considerable fear, as all the Indians sought to comprehend the source of the sickness. According to this Native account, “Only the Captain knew who was doing it—no one else knew.”²⁵ Unfortunately, the captain’s daughter grew sick and died along with the others. Believing himself betrayed, the captain journeyed to the coast and hired some *ti’ats* (ocean-going plank canoes) to take him and his followers to Catalina Island for revenge. Upon arrival they approached the local captain and explained the nature of their expedition. It would appear that the local captain also feared the *Ta.xkw.a* and agreed to help kill them. Without hesitation the two war parties located the isolated canyon where the sorcerers lived and surrounded their house. The Tongva captain challenged the brothers to come out and fight. As each emerged, they met a swift death. A young male apprentice was discovered within the house and showed the San Gabriel party the sand painting used to cause the sickness and death on the mainland. The boy was compelled to destroy the painting. Fearing that he too might be able to replicate the epidemic for revenge on the mainland people, the apprentice was likewise shot with arrows and killed. The house and bodies of all three were burned to prevent their resurrection. Juncos concludes his account by declaring, “The plague was over at San Gabriel”²⁶

Just north of the Tongva lived the Chumash peoples. They spoke six dialects of the Hokan language stock. Their territory started from above Malibu and extended along the coast and adjacent to San Luis Obispo. About 3,200 Chumash populated the northern Channel Islands: Anacapa, Santa Cruz, Santa Rosa, and San Miguel. The hunting, fishing, and collecting economy was based on the intensive exploitation of sea mammals and fish and other marine foods. Females collected acorn, tubers, and grass seeds, while males hunted deer, small game, and waterfowl. The rich natural resources of the mainland coast supported an extraordinarily large population, which reached 12,000 or more before contact.²⁷

The Chumash shared many cosmological aspects of their hunting and collecting neighbors, the Tongva. Nevertheless, their Toloache traditions were somewhat different. The precontact datura-based ?Antap religion was restricted to the elite classes and focused its ritual and cosmological attention on the sun, the earth, and her three aspects: wind, rain, and fire. ?Antap also functioned to control professions, displaying characteristics of craft or guild associations by restricting access to some trades and rights to certain property.²⁸ Following missionization, a significant messianic revitalization movement evolved from ?Antap traditions.

As among the Tongva, the arrival of permanent Spanish colonists set in motion a deadly vortex of invasion by a foreign army, relocation, forced labor, physical coercion, sexual assaults, destruction of the natural habitat through ranching and agricultural practices, and terrifying plagues that brought these robust peoples to the very edge of extinction.²⁹ Northern Chumash territory was occupied by the Spanish beginning in 1772 with the establishment of Mission

San Luis Obispo. Santa Barbara followed in 1786 and La Purisima Concepcion the next year. San Buenaventura was founded in 1782, and finally Santa Ynez in 1804.³⁰ Although no epidemics were reported between 1772 and 1788, a thorough study of mission registers demonstrates a significant underrepresentation of children surviving in the early contact period. A pronounced gender imbalance rapidly became apparent.³¹ As many as seven epidemics swept over the Chumash mission populations in their forty-nine years of occupation by Spanish and Mexican authorities. An overall average Chumash mission Indian mortality rate was sixty-six deaths per 1,000 people. According to anthropologists Phillip Walker and John Johnson, "This is extremely high; for instance, the average death rate in Sweden for the period 1751—1800 was 27.4 per 1000. In the United States, the age-adjusted mortality rate is now 5.4 per 1000."³² For nearly half a century typhoid, pneumonia, consumption (tuberculosis), measles, influenza, and smallpox epidemics cut a murderous swath through the Chumash population. Like elsewhere, the population rapidly became saturated with syphilis, weakening the already staggering population and creating an alarming number of sterility cases.³³ Chumash religious leaders' failure to control these epidemics worked further to disillusion loyalty to a system that seemed to have lost its authority and power.

One of the most devastating epidemics occurred between 1800 and 1802. It has been identified as diphtheria (*cerramiento de garganta*) and is believed to have originated at San Gabriel and spread to the Chumash. Hit especially hard were the Chumash at Mission Santa Barbara, where they suffered a rate of 14.68 deaths per 100; in other words, it resulted in the death of 15 percent of the population.³⁴

In a letter written March 1, 1805 to Governor Jose Joaquin Arrillaga, Padre Estevan Tapis reported what he characterized as a "revelation" of a "deception" by a female neophyte that led the padre to distrust his flock and fear for his life.³⁵ According to Tapis, amidst the chaos, suffering, and death of the epidemic an unnamed female neophyte entered a trance state at midnight and awoke to report that the Chumash deity *Chupu* (Earth Mother Deity)³⁶ had appeared to her with the threat that death would befall the non-Christian Chumash who became baptized and that the only hope for survival of the neophytes was to make offerings to *Chupu* and undo their baptisms by washing their hair with a special water called "tears of the sun." The deity further threatened to kill immediately any who would inform the missionaries. Word of the vision spread quickly throughout the neophyte housing at the mission. Desperate Chumash, including trusted *alcaldes*, anxiously made offerings of seeds and beads and performed the symbolic act of renouncing their Christianity. Tapis lamented that the movement had gone unchecked for three days and was sweeping distant Chumash communities on the coast as well as the interior. Finally, an unnamed male informant revealed the movement to the astounded missionaries. Tapis' letter ends with the speculation that had the visionary prescribed a revolt against the Spanish,

Who would have escaped death, and who would have warned the presidio, although it is only half a league away? This did not happen

thanks to god, but it is enough that such a thing might have happened, and that the neophytes know how to scheme their plots at night with such secrecy and reserve so that the custody of the missions with a thousand neophytes altogether should not be entrusted to two, three, or a few more soldiers who might compose their guard.³⁷

Unfortunately the nature of the Spanish response is not revealed in this letter, and further related documentation has yet to materialize. However, we do know that the good padre was correct in assuming that Indians would secretly continue to worship *Chupu*, for the movement resurfaced again in 1810 among the Chumash neophytes at La Purisima Concepcion.³⁸ Fourteen years later the Chumash revolt erupted, and among the most militant were the La Purisima rebels.

The extent to which the Chumash continued to adhere to traditional belief patterns is dramatically evident in the great Chumash uprising of 1824. A series of events pitting aboriginal beliefs against pressures to conform to missionary and military authority led to widespread Chumash participation in the revolt. About the time of the winter solstice (December 1823), a twin-tailed comet appeared and was visible until March 1824. According to Chumash cosmology, such an astronomical anomaly foretold a sudden change and new beginning.³⁹ Furthermore, the annual pre-Easter confessions cajoled from the neophytes were increasingly becoming a sophisticated device with which to probe the extent of the neophyte population's abandonment of ?Antap beliefs.⁴⁰ Tensions mounted and finally exploded into violent resistance when the routine beating of a La Purisima neophyte at Mission Santa Ynez occurred February 21, 1824. Chumash informant Maria Solares provided linguist John P. Harrington with a rare Native account of the decidedly non-Christian perceptions of participants:

The Indians began to prepare themselves and they did not go to bed that night. Some of the Indians said, "The priests can not hurt me—I am a medicine man. . . . If they shoot at me water will come out of the cannon; if they shoot at me, the bullet will not enter my flesh."⁴¹

Other supernatural elements are reported in Maria's account including an Indian who could not be killed because he wore an amulet of woven human hair, a Chumash vaquero who mounted a horse in front of the soldiers and disappeared to a nearby hilltop, and finally a man who entered a prison cell through a keyhole.⁴²

Colonial records report that the Santa Ynez mission guards were attacked and a building was torched. Two Indians from that mission were killed in this initial skirmish. Trapped soldiers and padres barricaded themselves in a building until the rebels fled to nearby La Purisima the next day.

At La Purisima neophytes under the leadership of Pacoimo revolted simultaneously with their Santa Ynez neighbors. Four colonists were killed, while the soldiers and padre were driven into a storeroom. Seven neophytes died in this brief but violent action. The soldiers fled to Santa Ynez and the bewildered padre observed the La Purisima rebels' astounding display of mil-

itary preparation to defend their newly acquired fortress. The rebels erected palisade fortifications, cut weapon slits in the mission buildings, and positioned two small cannons in anticipation of a punitive military response.

Messages of warning to the trusted Santa Barbara alcalde Andres Sagiomomatsse resulted in his demand that the soldiers withdraw from Mission Santa Barbara. Breaking into the weapons locker, the neophytes armed themselves, wounded and disarmed several soldiers, and eventually fought a pitched battle against presidio troops within the mission compound. The rebels drove Mexican soldiers from the mission, wounding an additional four. Indian casualties were three dead and two wounded. Andres and his followers soon fled across the San Marcos Mountains, seeking refuge in the lower San Joaquin Valley. Presidio troops promptly looted both the neophyte's and the padres' quarters, killing five helpless Chumash neophytes either too old or sick to join their kinsmen.

During the next few weeks, Andres and his Santa Barbara followers could not be persuaded to return, nor would Pacomio's La Purisima rebels surrender the mission at La Purisima. In mid-March Mexican cavalry, infantry, and artillery troops surrounded La Purisima and began an attack. As the soldiers came into range, they were met with a volley of musket shot, the blast of the neophyte's cannon, and a shower of arrows. Eventually the more experienced Mexican artillery crews shattered the rebels' defenses. Following a failed attempt to break out of the siege, a surrender was negotiated with the aid of a padre.⁴³

It is worth noting that Andres and the Santa Barbara Chumash were celebrating their newfound freedom. Captured rebels reported baptized and non-Christians marrying and divorcing each other, gambling, and failing to pray to the Christian god. The defiant rebels issued this message to the authorities attempting to recoup their unpaid laborers, "We shall maintain ourselves with what god will provide us in the open country. Moreover we are soldiers, stonemasons, carpenters, etc. and we will provide for ourselves by our work."⁴⁴ Several subsequent expeditions eventually persuaded a significant number of rebels to return to Santa Barbara. A decision to remain outside of one's aboriginal territory was not an easy decision to make. After all, individuals had to choose between a life among Yokut peoples far away from all the sacred places and the graves of one's Chumash ancestors or a return to the totalitarian labor regime of the Franciscans. Nevertheless, several hundred Chumash choose freedom and a decade later were reported living prosperously in northeast Kern County raising corn, pumpkins, melons, and other crops and engaged in a lively horse trade. It is a tragic irony that these defiant and exiled Chumash were virtually wiped out in the great Central Valley malaria epidemic of 1833.⁴⁵

About 1940 demographer Sherburne F. Cook began the first scientific investigation into the question of what caused the California Indian population to suffer a gut-wrenching dive that reduced the once healthy population of over 310,000 prior to contact to a shattered 17,000 survivors by the year 1900.⁴⁶ In 1976, historian William H. McNeill wrote in *Plagues and Peoples*,

It is worth considering the psychological implications of a disease that killed only Indians and left the Spaniards unharmed. Such partiality could only be explained supernaturally and there could be no doubt about which side of the struggle enjoyed divine favor. The religions, the priesthoods, and way of life built around the old Indian gods could not survive such a demonstration of the superior power of the god the Spaniards worshipped. Little wonder then the Indians accepted Christianity and submitted to Spanish control so meekly. God had shown himself on their side, and each new outbreak of infectious disease imported from Europe renewed the lesson.⁴⁷

With the development of more recent ethnohistoric methodologies utilizing historical, ethnographic, archeological, and linguistic data, a fuller and more balanced understanding of these events can be achieved that moves beyond McNeill's simplistic supposition. Perhaps of equal importance is this new approach's focus on comprehending events as they were understood by non-literate groups undergoing the stress of colonization and dispossession while enduring a series of frightening plagues.

This paper provides an examination of the religious, demographic, and cultural response of two Southern California Indian tribes to introduced Spanish diseases and colonization. I have attempted to describe the aboriginal precontact religious cosmology of both groups and to show how subsequent diseases and colonial policies triggered profound changes in the aboriginal belief system. In the first case, some Tongva blamed the plague on Native sorcery and destroyed the two shamans they deemed responsible. This reaction illuminates the growing suspicion aimed at aboriginal Native religious leaders whose failure to control the diseases undermined their authority. The reactions of the Chumash appears to be consistent with classic messianic movements among Native Americans, the best known of which was the 1870 wave of the Ghost Dance.⁴⁸ And like the second wave of the Ghost Dance of 1889, its suppression ultimately resulted in violent resistance.⁴⁹

Tongva and Chumash are simply two examples among hundreds in which Native people turned inward to explain, interpret, and contend with foreign invaders who introduced deadly diseases, ill health, and social anomie. Native California Indians did not simply abandon their ancient belief systems and become Christians. They held strongly to their Native religious beliefs, as illustrated in the examples provided here. The coercive Christianization that so characterized Spanish colonial policy resulted in new forms of religious beliefs built upon ancient dogma that offered Native explanations and responses to the new frightening diseases. In this way, Indians maintained some control of their world. To be sure, some mission Indians adopted Christianity and synchronized compatible elements of the old and new religions. But some Tongva and Chumash responded to Spanish colonization and European-borne pathogens in a Native manner, offering responses understood only through an examination of California Indian cultures and religions as well as the voices of Native people.⁵⁰

NOTES

1. Sherburne F. Cook, *Population Trends among the California Mission Indians* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1940), 23–28. For an analysis of Cook's contribution to historiography, see, Albert L. Hurtado, "California Indian Demography, Sherburne F. Cook, and the Revision of American History," *Pacific Historical Review* LVII:3 (August 1989): 323–343.
2. Lowell J. Bean and Charles R. Smith, "Gabrielino," and Robert F. Heizer, "Natural Forces and Native World View," in *Handbook of North American Indians, Vol. 8, California*, ed. Robert F. Heizer (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1978), 649–653 and 538–549. See also Alfred L. Kroeber's "The Nature of Landholding Groups in Aboriginal California," in *Two Papers on Aboriginal Ethnography of California*, eds. Hynes and Heizer, *University of California Archaeological Survey Reports* 56 (1962): 19–58.
3. Bean and Smith, "Gabrielino," 544. The aboriginal people of Los Angeles called themselves Tongva and I have followed suit. Few Indians want to be known only on the basis of a colonial experience. The term *Gabrielino* was used by colonists to describe Tongva peoples associated with Mission San Gabriel.
4. Lowell J. Bean and Sylvia Brakke Vane, "Cults and Their Transformations," in *Handbook of North American Indians. Vol. 8, California*, 662–672.
5. Sherburne F. Cook, *The Population of the California Indians 1769–1970* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 24.
6. Zephyrin Engelhardt, *San Gabriel Mission and the Beginnings of Los Angeles* (San Gabriel: Mission San Gabriel Press, 1927), 12–14; Maynard Geiger, *The Life and Times of Fray Junipero Serra O.F.M. or the Man Who Never Turned Back*, Vol. 1 (Washington, DC: Academy of Franciscan History, 1959), 304–308; Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of California Vol. I 1542–1800* (Santa Barbara: Wallace Heberd, 1963), 180–181.
7. Robert F. Heizer, ed., *The Indians of Los Angeles County, Hugo Reid's Letters of 1852* (Los Angeles: Southwest Museum, 1968), 70. For detailed analysis of Tongva females in Mission San Gabriel see Edward D. Castillo's "Gender Status Decline, Resistance and Accommodation in the Missions of California: A San Gabriel Case Study," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 18:1 (1994): 67–93. See also, Albert Hurtado, "Sexuality in California's Franciscan Missions: Cultural Perceptions and Sad Realities," *California History* 71:3 (Fall 1992): 371–385.
8. Daniel McGarry, "Educational Methods of the Franciscans in Spanish California," *The Americas* Vol. 6 (Washington, DC, 1950), 335–358; Daniel Matson and Bernard Fontana, eds., *Friar Bringas Reports to the King: Methods of Indoctrination on the Frontier of New Spain 1796–1797* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1977); for a critical analysis of recruitment techniques, see, Edward D. Castillo's "Neophyte Resistance and Accommodation in the Missions of California," in *The Spanish Missionary Heritage of the United States, Selected Papers and Commentaries from the November 1990 Quincentenary Symposium*, ed. Howard Benoist (San Antonio, TX: United States National Park Service, 1992), 62–64.
9. Sherburne F. Cook, *The Conflict between the California Indian and White Civilization* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1976), 13–55. Syphilis generally weakened neophyte populations and made them more susceptible to other diseases. Among females, it caused sterility.

10. Robert Jackson, "The Economy and Demography of San Gabriel Mission 1771–1834: A Structural Analysis," Paper presented at an international symposium, *The Spanish Beginnings in California 1542–1822* (University of California, Santa Barbara, July 15–19, 1991), 13–18. Paper is in author's possession.

11. *Ibid.*, 16.

12. Castillo, "Neophyte Resistance and Accommodation," 62. There is no evidence to suggest that baptized individuals understood the relocation, family dismemberment, and unpaid labor obligations of their new status. Florence Shipek, "California Indian Reaction to the Franciscans," *The Americas* XLI:4 (April 1985): 480–491. Shipek's oral histories of San Diego Mission Indians concluded that the Kumeyaay viewed the padres as the most dangerous thieving witches they ever encountered!

13. William Shuman, "Historical Medicine, California Medicine Part II Spanish Medicine," *Medical Journal and Record* 131 (1930): 374.

14. Sherburne F. Cook, "Monterey Surgeons During the Spanish Period in California," *Bulletin of the Institute of the History of Medicine* 5 (1937): 67–8; and Cook, "California's First Medical Survey: Report of Surgeon General Jose Benites," *California and Western Medicine* 145 (1936): 352–354. See also Shuman, "Historical Medicine," 373–377.

15. G. James West, "Early Historic Vegetation Change in Alta California: The Fossil Evidence," in *Columbian Consequences, Archaeological and Historical Perspectives on the Spanish Borderlands West*, Vol. 1, ed. David H. Thomas (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1989), 333–348; see also, Thomas Blackburn and Kat Anderson, eds., *Before the Wilderness, Environmental Management by Native Californians* (Menlo Park, CA: Ballena Press, 1993); for a thoughtful analysis of the coercive nature of Spanish colonial policy, see, Cook, *The Conflict Between the California Indians*, 113–134. See also Robert F. Heizer's "Impact of Colonization on the Native California Societies," *The Journal of San Diego History* 24:1 (1978): 121–139. The classic Franciscan defense of such policies can be read in Francis F. Guest's, "An Inquiry into the Role of the Discipline in California Mission Life," *Southern California Quarterly* LXXI (Spring 1989): 1–68. Guest argues that flogged, incarcerated, and chained Indians were criminals who deserved punishment under Spanish/Mexican and church laws. Cook, on the other hand, analyzed a sample of disciplinary actions by Franciscan and army authorities from 1775 to 1831 and concluded that punishment for political crimes against the colonial authorities constituted a whopping 90 percent of the cases. See Cook, *The Conflict Between the California Indian*, 122. A Catholic French explorer visiting Alta California in 1786, shocked by the harsh punishments he witnessed, wrote, "Corporal punishment is inflicted on the Indians of both sexes who neglect the exercises of piety, and many sins, which in Europe are left to Divine justice are here punished by irons and stocks." Malcolm Margolin, ed., *Monterey in 1786: The Journals of Jean Francois de La Perouse* (Berkeley, CA: Heyday Books, 1989), 82.

16. Alan Hutchinson, *Frontier Settlements in Mexican California: The Hajar-Padres Colony and its Origins, 1769–1835* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1971).

17. Robert H. Jackson and Edward D. Castillo, *Indians, Franciscans, and Spanish Colonization: The Impact of the Mission System on California Indians* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995).

18. Bean and Vane, "Cults and Their Transformations," 669. The only undisturbed section of Puvugna that remains today is located on the California State University,

Long Beach campus. Despite the fact that it is a protected historic site and registered as such with the State Office of Historic Preservation, the university's administration is attempting to disturb the site to build a mini-mall. A lawsuit is currently pending.

19. Geronimo Boscana, *Chinigchinich, A Revised and Annotated Version of Alfred Robinson's Translation of Father Geronimo Boscana's Historical Account of the Beliefs, Usages, Customs and Extravagancies of the Indians of Mission San Juan Capistrano Called the Acagchemem Tribe*, annotations by John P. Harrington (Morongo Indian Reservation: Malki Museum Press, 1978), 138–9.

20. *Ibid.*, 129. Underlined section, author's emphasis.

21. *Ibid.*, 33.

22. Bean and Vane, "Cults and Their Transformations," 669.

23. Travis Hudson, ed. and trans., "A Rare Account of Gabrielino Shamanism From the Notes of John P. Harrington," *Journal of California and Great Basin Anthropology* 1:2 (1979): 357.

24. *Ibid.* Such sand paintings were also used by the Tongva sorcerers to cause earthquakes; see Alfred L. Kroeber's, "A Southern California Ceremony," *Journal of American Folklore* 21:80 (1908): 40.

25. Hudson, "A Rare Account of Gabrielino," 357.

26. *Ibid.*, 359.

27. Cambell Grant, "Chumash: Introduction," "Eastern Coastal Chumash," and "Interior Chumash," *Handbook of North American Indians, Vol. 8, California*, 505–519, 530–534. Reliable population figures can be found in Alan K. Brown's "The Aboriginal Population of the Santa Barbara Channel," *University of California Los Angeles, Archaeological Survey, Annual Report*, Vol. 69 (1967), 79.

28. Lowell Bean and Thomas King, eds., *?Antap: California Indian Political and Economic Organization* (Ramona, CA: Ballena Press, 1974), 93–110; and Bean and Vane, "Cults and their Transformations," 669. See also, Richard Applegate, "The Dantura Cult Among the Chumash," *Journal of California Anthropology* II (Summer 1975): 7–17.

29. Edward D. Castillo, *Native American Perspectives on the Hispanic Colonization of Alta California* (New York: Garland Press, 1991). Spanish colonization practices are analyzed in the introduction, xvii–xxxvi. For a Chumash view of missionization see Travis Hudson, ed., *Breath of the Sun, Life in Early California as Told by a Chumash Indian, Fernando Librado to John P. Harrington* (Morongo Indian Reservation: Malki Museum Press, 1979); Daniel Larson, John Johnson, and Joel Michaelson, "Missionization Among the Coastal Chumash of Central California: A Study of Risk Minimization Strategies," *American Anthropologists* 96:2 (June 1994): 263–299. These authors have built a convincing argument that a combination of droughts and a warming of the coastal waters for half a century during missionization may have caused starvation among the Chumash, thus making the acceptance of missionization a lesser of two evils. The authors use both baptismal records and high-resolution dendrochronological and marine sedimentary records to reconstruct paleoenvironmental conditions. Anthropologist John Johnson nevertheless reported "only a remnant population had survived when the Mission period came to a close"; see John Johnson, "The Chumash and the Missions," in *Columbian Consequences*, 373.

30. *Ibid.*, 365.

31. Phillip L. Walker and John Johnson, "Effects of Contact on the Chumash Indians," in *Disease and Demography in the Americas*, eds. John Verano and Douglas Ubelaker (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992), 129–132.

32. Ibid., 133.

33. Ibid., and 136. A padre at Mission Santa Barbara made this report on the extent of syphilis among the Chumash there: "All are infected with it for they see no objection to marrying another infected with it. As a result, births are few and deaths many so that their number of deaths exceed births by three to one." In Maynard Geiger and Clement Meighan, eds., *As the Padres Saw Them* (Santa Barbara: Santa Barbara Mission Archive Library, 1976), 74. For a general discussion of the effect of venereal diseases on mission Indian birthrates and survivability, see Cook, *The Conflict Between the California Indian*, 23–30. Cook writes, "Perhaps there were some [Mission Indians] who were able to avoid the infection, but this must have been rare," 27.

34. Walker and Johnson, "The Effects of Contact on The Chumash," 135.

35. Robert F. Heizer, "A Californian Messianic Movement of 1801 Among the Chumash," *American Anthropologists* 43 (1941): 128–9. Heizer's article provides a translated version of the Tapis letter.

36. Richard Applegate, "Ineseno Chumash Dictionary," Manuscript on file at Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History, nd.

37. The Tapis letter can be found in *Archivo de la Mision de Santa Babara, Papeles Miscelaneos VI*, 33–34, the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley. Travis Hudson and Ernest Underhay, *Crystals in the Sky: An Intellectual Odyssey Involving Chumash Astronomy, Cosmology and Rock Art*, in Ballena Press Anthropological Papers Number 10 (Socorro, NM, and Santa Barbara, CA: Ballena Press/Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History, 1978) 21–2, 72. This groundbreaking study identified the visionary as an 'Alchuklash or a Chumash astrologer and member of the elite ?Antap society.

38. Alfred L. Kroeber, *Handbook of the Indians of California* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin 78, 1925), 567.

39. James D. Sandos, "Levantamiento!: The 1824 Chumash Uprising Reconsidered," *Southern California Quarterly* (Summer 1985): 128. This article provides the best account of that much-reported rebellion. It utilizes interdisciplinary data and is a good example of the balance that can be achieved by ethnohistoric methodologies. See also James Sandos, "Christianization Among the Chumash: An Ethnohistoric Perspective," *American Indian Quarterly* 21:4 (1991).

40. Ibid., 115–119. See also Madison Beeler, ed., "The Ventureno Confesionario of Jose Senan, OFM," in *University of California Publications in Linguistics* 47 (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967); and Harry Kelsey, ed., *The Doctrina and Confesionario of Juan Cortes* (Altadena, CA: Howling Coyote Press, 1979).

41. Thomas Blackburn, ed., "The Chumash Revolt of 1824: A Native Account," *Journal of California Anthropology* 2:2 (1975): 224. This account is taken from the field notes of linguist John P. Harrington's interview with Ineseno Chumash consultant Maria Solares. For an additional Chumash account, see Travis Hudson, ed. and trans., "The Chumash Revolt of 1824: Another Native Account from the Notes of John P. Harrington," *Journal of California and Great Basin Anthropology* 2:1 (1980): 123–126.

42. Ibid., 224–5.

43. Scholarly published accounts of the Chumash revolt can be found among the following: Maynard Geiger, OFM, ed. and trans., "Fray Antonio Ripoll's Description of the Chumash Revolt at Santa Barbara in 1824," *Southern California Quarterly* 52 (1970): 345–364; Hubert H. Bancroft, *History of California*, Vol. II, 527–537; Gary B. Coombs,

"With What God Will Provide: A Reexamination of the Chumash Revolt of 1824," *Noticias Santa Barbara Historical Society* XXVI:2 (Summer 1980): 21–29; and Gary Stickel and Adrienne Cooper, "The Chumash Revolt of 1824: A Case for an Archaeological Application of Feedback Theory," *Annual Report Archaeological Survey, University of California Los Angeles* (1969): 5–21. For a comparison and analysis of the Chumash revolt with other mission Indian resistance movements in California, see, Edward D. Castillo, "The Native Response to the Colonization of Alta California," *Columbian Consequences*, 377–394. Mexican authorities tried and executed seven Chumash rebels; four leaders of the revolt got ten years of presidio labor and perpetual exile. Eight others received eight years of presidio labor.

44. Unnamed Chumash rebel to Padre Ripoll, quoted in Maynard Geiger, "Fray Antonio Ripoll's Description of The Chumash Revolt," 352.

45. Sherburne F. Cook, "Expeditions to the Interior of California, Central Valley, 1820–1840," *Anthropological Records* 20:5 (1962); see section, "The Purisima Rebellion," 152–157. For a report on the Chumash exiles in Kern County, see, John C. Ewers, ed., *Adventures of Zaenas Leonard Fur Trader* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1959), xi, 121–123. For an account of the epidemic, see, Sherburne F. Cook, "The Epidemic of 1830–1833 in California and Oregon," *University of California Publications in American Archaeology and Ethnology* 43:3 (1955): 303–326.

46. Cook, *The Conflict Between the California Indian*; and Hurtado, "California Indian Demography, Sherburne F. Cook."

47. William H. McNeill, *Plagues and Peoples* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press), 2.

48. Anna Gayton, "The Ghost Dance of 1870 In South Central California," *University of California Publications in American Archaeology and Ethnology* 28:3 (1930): 57–82; and Cora DuBois, "The 1870 Ghost Dance," *Anthropological Records* 3:1 (1939): 1–151.

49. Alice B. Kehoe, *The Ghost Dance, Ethnohistory and Revitalization* (Fort Worth: Holt Rinehart and Winston, 1989).

50. For a comparison, see the fascinating essay by Helen Jaskoski, "Andrew Blackbird's Smallpox Story," *Genre* XXV (Spring 1992): 1–11, which analyzes a nineteenth-century Ottawa Indian writer, Andrew Blackbird, and his Native account of a smallpox plague that ravaged his people in 1763.