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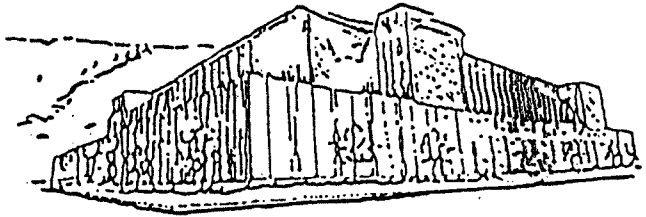
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**CAHUILLA CULTURAL PRACTICE IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY:  
THE REFORMULATION OF ETHNICITY**

by

David G. Jenkins

B.A., Hampden-Sydney College, 1993

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements

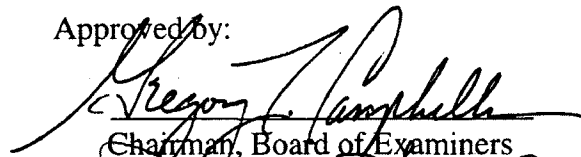
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CAHUILLA CULTURAL PRACTICE IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY: THE REFORMULATION OF ETHNICITY (129 pp.)

Director: Gregory R. Campbell



The history of California tribes has been one of forced cultural change and territorial displacement. While many have lost their traditions, ceremonies, and languages, the Cahuilla of southern California have been able to retain these institutions. Though these cultural components gradually have become modified or “Americanized” over the course of two hundred years, many Cahuilla still practice what remains of the traditional culture. Furthermore, a new generation of Cahuilla are becoming familiar with the language and culture, in the process developing their individual and collective identities.

This research explores two theoretical constructs-- cultural persistence and ethnic reformulation-- and how they have aided in the endurance of Cahuilla culture. The three major European contact periods-- Spanish, Mexican, and Euro-American-- are concentrated on concerning the degrees of influence these two constructs had on cultural transmission among Cahuilla generations. Through informant interviews and participant observation the author was able to measure the effects of cultural persistence and ethnic reformulation on contemporary Cahuilla identity and cultural practice.

Ethnic reformulation is shown to have occurred whenever the present conditions of Cahuilla cultural practice and transmission are in danger of disappearing. The culture thus persists as a result of its need to change.

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

The period from 1800-1850 was a time of dynamic change for most California tribes. Spanish missionization was at its peak during the first two decades of the nineteenth century, epidemic diseases were taking their toll on both indigenous neophytes and the unconverted, and many elements of aboriginal culture were being replaced quite rapidly by elements of the encroaching Spanish and Anglo cultures. For example, among the River Yuman tribes-- the Mohave, Quechan, Maricopa, Halchidhoma, Kohuana, Kamia, Kohima, Halikwami, and Cocopa of the lower Colorado River-- the reliance on agricultural production as a means of subsistence gave way to transportation wage labor with the creation of U.S. military posts along the Colorado River (Gorman 1981: 46). A significant number of individuals from the above tribes became riverboat pilots, crewmen, and woodcutters, thus exemplifying the transition from an aboriginal subsistence economy to a cash economy (ibid., 45, 46).

Among the mission Indian population, diseases had devastating and enduring effects. According to Sherburne F. Cook (1978) and Stephen Powers (1976), the aboriginal California population in 1770 was between 310,000 and 705,000. Cook (1976) estimated the population to be 88,000 in 1848, fourteen years after Mexican secularization of the missions. The California population continued to decline throughout the nineteenth century, as evidenced by Albert L. Hurtado's (1989) estimate of 31,000 in 1860 and Russell Thornton's (1986) estimate of 18,800 in 1890. A large percentage of these deaths

can be attributed to epidemic diseases, introduced by Spanish soldiers and missionaries in the eighteenth century. During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, diseases were transmitted rapidly between the mission and non-mission populations.

Several factors account for this acceleration. First, the number of natives placed in each mission was conducive to the spread of disease. Cook explains:

In the missions several hundred or even one or two thousand were congregated in a single set of buildings. They ate together, worked together, and even slept together, in close quarters. Once a microorganism was introduced, the chances for infection were vastly greater than under the gentile system (1976: 30-31).

A second factor was mobility. Natives escaping a mission or moving to another one undoubtedly would transmit diseases to the indigenous groups with which they came into contact. A third factor was extremely low levels of acquired immunity. Since many had no previous exposure to European diseases, neophytes and gentiles alike were decimated. A fourth, and perhaps the most damaging, factor was sexual contact between populations within a mission. Continued Spaniard-native and native-native sexual contact ensured the persistence of syphilis, the most widespread and dangerous disease in the missions. According to Cook, "After reviewing the evidence, one is impelled to the conclusion that venereal disease constituted one of the prime factors not only in the actual decline, but also in the moral and social disintegration of the population" (*ibid.*, 23). Other diseases such as malaria, measles, and cholera also contributed to the enormous loss of life.

Loss of life equates to loss of traditional knowledge. The high death toll and the conversion of natives to Catholicism negatively affected transmission of cultural heritage from generation to generation (Walker, Lambert, and DeNiro 1989: 355). The period

from 1850 to the present has been even more devastating on the majority of California tribes' respective cultural heritages. The relocation of tribes to reservations and the consequent loss of aboriginal lands, begun in the latter half of the nineteenth century by the United States government, has resulted in widespread poverty and further cultural disenfranchisement. Increasing forced assimilation and/or Americanization over the course of 150 years effectively sought to eradicate indigenous knowledge and practice of California aboriginal societies. As a result, many contemporary tribes have periods in their respective cultural histories characterized by a forced loss of traditional knowledge and general apathy towards tribal identity.

The Cahuilla of the southern California interior are an anomaly, historically and culturally, among California tribes. First, none of the Mountain, Desert or Pass branches of the Cahuilla experienced any significant population losses due to missionization (Harvey 1967: 187). Missionaries from San Luis Rey and San Gabriel, the missions closest to Cahuilla territory, did not journey into the interior seeking potential converts until 1816. Mission activity among the Cahuilla was effectively over by 1826, lasting for only a decade. With the Mexican government's decree of secularization of the missions in 1834, there were thus only a few years when the Cahuilla could have come under direct mission influence (*ibid.*, 187).

Second, from 1800 to 1850, the period when most California tribes were being decimated by Spanish-introduced epidemic diseases, the Cahuilla did not experience severe population losses. The Cahuilla experienced their first severe epidemic, smallpox, in 1863. Lowell John Bean (1972) has suggested that the distance between villages

helped to control the spread of this disease.

Third, relatively little relocation of the Cahuilla has taken place. The Cahuilla live on reservations today that were established by the United States government in the 1870's, but these reservations are on aboriginal lands, the same lands that the Cahuilla have inhabited for thousands of years (Rawls 1984: 215). Bean states:

...when a culture remains in the same locality for long periods of time remembrances of the past are very persistent because of the close association of belief and history to specific geographic phenomena...The Cahuilla have never had to leave the territorial base within which their culture existed, contributing importantly to the retention of information (1972: 16).

Although poverty is characteristic of Cahuilla reservation life, the retention of aboriginal lands has remained a source of pride for many Cahuilla. Retention of these lands contributed to their ethnic reformulation and cultural persistence in the latter half of the twentieth century.

Fourth, while forced cultural changes took place to some degree in the early to mid-twentieth century, enough cultural traditions have been retained to facilitate the persistence of Cahuilla ethnicity into the late twentieth century, albeit in a different form.

In this regard Bean states:

...many cultures, such as the Cahuilla, never consciously or deliberately assimilated themselves into another system. On the contrary, they have consciously preserved their own model of cultural reality, preferring it to the Hispanic or Anglo-American systems which have been available to them. When this condition occurs we should anticipate positive results to cultural reconstruction (ibid., 15).

Cahuilla language use, for example, is on the rise among the younger generation,

demonstrating that the youth have a renewed interest in their heritage (Rawls 1984: 215).

The consecutive degrees of Cahuilla ethnicity and cultural practice obviously have changed throughout the twentieth century. Ethnic reformulation and cultural persistence, however, have been relatively effective approaches in the stabilization of these two arenas. The theoretical orientation will provide a model with which to judge the chronological configurations of identity and cultural practice.

### **Theoretical Orientation**

In this paper the reformulation of Cahuilla culture is examined in order to assess what historical and social factors are associated with the retention of Cahuilla identity. Along with identity and cultural practice, the Cahuilla have also been able to retain their sense of independence from the United States government. Rawls observes: "Through the centuries the tribe has employed different strategies to deal with Anglo-Americans and has maintained a degree of political and economic autonomy" (ibid.). It is the author's proposition that this politico-economic autonomy is the basis of Cahuilla ethnic and cultural persistence-- that is, they have had the power and freedom to practice their cultural traditions continually, using ethnic reformulation whenever the prior configuration of cultural adherence became too distant from the perceived current tribal notions of "ethnicity" and "identity". With this hypothesis, by necessity, the author explores the dimensions of pre-reservation "aboriginal" culture as well. By doing so, the author attempts to link the various phases of Cahuilla reformulation over the past century, emphasizing the last twenty to thirty years of Cahuilla history. Also, particular cultural

traditions practiced today, including language usage and ceremonies, will be assessed as to their degree of practice by the Cahuilla, especially among the older and younger generations.

The younger generation (individuals under the age of twenty-nine) is of particular interest, in that the importance of traditions in contemporary Cahuilla culture can be accurately measured by the degree of young Cahuilla participation. The knowledge of and interest in cultural heritage displayed by members of this age group directly relates to the future success of ethnic reformulation and cultural persistence. Younger Cahuilla cultural practices, such as *peon*, bird singing, and basketweaving, symbolize the successful transmission of heritage and identity from one generation to another.

Transmission of traditional knowledge among generations is a hallmark of persistence.

The contemporary occurrence of these cultural practices by Cahuilla across generations will be examined in the context of everyday life. The degree of regular cultural practice and ethnic identification will give an indication of the affects of ethnic reformulation and cultural persistence on contemporary Cahuilla culture. The antecedent degrees of cultural practice and ethnic identity will also be examined in the same manner.

For ethnic reformulation and cultural persistence to occur, the counter processes of culture change and assimilation must first take place. Culture change and the forces of assimilation must be discussed to gain an understanding of their effects on Cahuilla social, economic, and religious structures.

### *Culture Change and Assimilation*

Every California tribe underwent dramatic cultural changes as a result of European



contact. Joane Nagel states: “In varying degrees, most Indian tribes confronted the threat of extinction from disease, slavery, war, and forced removal. And virtually all Indian communities faced major assaults on traditional social and cultural organization by the religious proselytizing of various missionary groups and the ‘civilizing’ educational and assimilation programs of the federal government” (1996: 4).

Assimilation, the process of “extensive cultural borrowing in the context of superordinate-subordinate relations between societies”, may “sometimes be a two-way process, but generally it is the subordinate or less powerful society that borrows the most” (Ember and Ember 1988: 458). Assimilation may be part of colonialization or conquest, or it can be a gradual, non-violent process with no fixed duration. Edward H. Spicer states:

The Romanization of western European tribes, which was never completed, took place over periods of four to five hundred years. The spread of Arab civilization attendant on conquests beginning in the 700's went for five hundred years in the vast area from Spain to the Philippines; and Moslemization like Romanization left a great variety of independent and unevenly influenced groups in its wake. The Hinduization of tribes in southern Asia has been going on for two thousand years...These processes of cultural assimilation based on conquest and rarely resulting in the complete assimilation of any people have gone on at markedly different rates. How fast they have proceeded has depended on the kinds of conditions set up by the conquerors, the political institutions through which they have maintained dominance, the kinds of organizations permitted or stimulated by the invaders among the native peoples, the compatibility of the cultures thrown into contact, and a host of other circumstances (1962: 569).

Many native cultures never become fully incorporated into the social systems of the invading cultures. The Mohave, for example, were “never actually incorporated into

either the Spanish Empire or 19th-century Mexico” (Gorman 1981: 44). Thus, the Mohave have resisted total Euro-American cultural assimilation by developing “reasonably well defined symbols of identity-- funereal cremation, warrior and shaman statuses, and clan naming and affiliation-- that differentiated the tribe from the Anglo-Americans who sponsored or endorsed the reservation programs that the Mohave opposed” (ibid., 51). This “oppositional process”-- a continuous dissension between the oppressors and the oppressed-- remains a source of pride for the ethnic minority group, an exemplification of cultural survival in the face of adversity (Spicer 1971: 797). Enduring societies thus have developed successful methods of resisting total incorporation through the oppositional process (Castile 1981: xix).

Forced assimilation as a social process, under conditions of cultural change, is thus difficult to determine as to a “beginning” and an “end”. Do native cultures ever become totally incorporated into invading cultures? Do economic, political, social, and religious incorporations occur at the same rate? These questions will be explored in the following pages.

Cahuilla forced cultural change has been an ever-shifting process during the twentieth century. Given their geographic isolation from initial Spanish advancement, direct change came late. Once the Cahuilla began changing because of European contact, however, social change apparently occurred at an amazingly slow rate. David Prescott Barrows, one of the first anthropologists to publish an ethnography of the Cahuilla, wrote of their material culture: “After so many years of contact with white men, and so general an appropriation of modern implements and utensils on the part of many, it is surprising

how much Indian ethnographic material remains in use. This would naturally be the case with objects of a ceremonial and religious character, but it is true also that in many Indian homes, especially those of the old people, there is almost nothing, if we except clothing, that is not of native manufacture” (1900: 45).

Material culture and other aspects of their cultural heritage, however, are two different matters. Although the Cahuilla were able to retain virtually all of their material culture as of 1900, what of their social organization and religious and ceremonial practices?

Wendell H. Oswalt writes, “Social life moved in new directions as the present century began. The rule of moiety exogamy fell into decline, and money was substituted for the gifts formerly presented to a bride’s family” (1988: 169). As for ceremonies, he adds:

The major shift was toward combining unrelated ceremonies with the Mourning Ceremony into a fiesta week. For example, among the Pass Cahuilla in the late 1880s, the Eagle-Killing Ceremony was joined with the Mourning Ceremony...In aboriginal times the people had cremated their dead; under Spanish, Mexican, and Anglo-American influence, they began to bury the dead (ibid., 170).

Such instances of cultural disenfranchisement would grow more numerous and severe with the progression of the twentieth century.

The effects of forced assimilation on a native culture vary depending on the reaction of a particular people to their oppressors. Native peoples can submit and become incorporated into the culture of their oppressors, or they can use the oppositional process and control the persistence and reformulation of their ethnic identity and cultural practices. Ethnic reformulation and cultural persistence thus act as deterrents against the assimilation process. I now turn to a discussion of these two concepts, concentrating on

their interrelatedness.

### *Ethnic Reformulation*

Ethnic reformulation is: "...the process whereby new ethnic identities, communities, and cultures are built or rebuilt out of historical, social, and symbolic systems. In some instances...the social construction and reconstruction of ethnicity draws on the structural and symbolic resources of indigenous cultures" (Nagel 1996: 10). Ethnic reformulation usually occurs as a reaction to forced cultural change. Members of an ethnic minority group, employing the oppositional process, reconstruct particular cultural traditions in a new form, thereby maintaining their unique ethnic identity while reviving an important part of their heritage. Ethnic reformulation has another function. According to Nagel: "Whatever the design or content, it is through such processes of renewal that ethnic groups strengthen and reconstitute themselves. Through common identification, group formation and reformation, and cultural production and reproduction, ethnicity is revitalized and constantly renewed" (ibid.).

Unity and autonomy are two outcomes when ethnic reformulation is conducted successfully. Bean writes of the Cahuilla at Morongo Reservation: "When Indian problems are discussed today, outsiders are less welcome than in times past; there is explicit acknowledgment that Indians should think out and determine their own direction. This attitude is not new at Morongo, but it is more directly stated than formerly, and outsiders are now more quickly put 'in their places' when they overstep the bounds that are recognized as 'their positions'" (1978b: 487). The Cahuilla at Morongo are taking problems into their own hands and excluding non-inhabitants. In the process they have

reformulated their identity and ideology. A gradual change in the way they view themselves and “others” thus has occurred. This independence from outside influence is reminiscent of the aboriginal time period when the Cahuilla were autonomous.

### *Cultural Persistence*

When one talks of ethnic reformulation, the concept of cultural and ethnic persistence is not far behind. For reformulation to occur, senses of culture and ethnicity have to be permanent fixtures in the minds of the members of an ethnic group. Bean elaborates, stating:

My first assumption is that a model of a culture can persist through time in the minds of the people, and that it is accurate in a broad sense. This is so because an ideal model exists at an implicit level in the minds of the members of a culture, owing to the subtle manner in which enculturation occurs in any society. Many aspects of a cultural model, then, will be retained for a long period of time, often after the functional context of that model no longer exists...Cultural models of behavior have sometimes persisted for several generations... (1972: 15).

Persistence contributes directly to the success of reformulation. If certain cultural components are retained by enough members of an ethnic group, they have a much better chance for renewal and reformulation than if they were not present. By the same token, if cultural characteristics are still practiced, then much less effort is required to reformulate them when needed. According to Nagel: “In some tribal communities the task of cultural renewal is eased by the presence of ongoing cultural traditions, the continued use of the native language, and the continued practice of traditional religious and ceremonial activities” (1996: 192).

During the early to mid-twentieth century many California tribes underwent extreme changes in culture and ideology, rapidly assimilating into Euro-American economy and society. Many native Californians no longer identified themselves as Native American, stopped practicing their cultural traditions, and adopted Euro-American characteristics. Children grew up without learning their native language, songs, and dances. This “gap” in many tribes’ histories occurred at varying times, but succeeded in causing widespread indifference and disinterest among tribal members in their own cultures.

The Cahuilla, however, due to their unique history of political, social, and ethnic autonomy, fared better than the majority of California tribes. Bean writes:

At the time I first visited the Cahuilla, in 1958, approximately 25 percent of the population spoke Cahuilla, and many more understood the language although they did not speak it. This linguistic persistence served as a historical-cultural reservoir of immense consequence to the preservation of the Cahuilla culture. The traditional oral literature of the culture was preserved, and was still being told to younger people at that date (1972: 15-16).

Language classes are held on Cahuilla reservations today. Although the number of speakers has decreased since the 1950's (ibid.), there is still significant interest in the native tongue. This interest in cultural traditions is the cornerstone of persistence.

By placing reformulation and persistence of Cahuilla culture and ethnicity into a historical context, the interplay of these two concepts among the Cahuilla can be more accurately analyzed. The present state of Cahuilla ethnic reformulation will be examined in relation to the antecedent configurations, and inferences drawn as to the future guise of Cahuilla ethnic reformulation. Having discussed the theoretical orientation of this study,

the methodological procedures employed will now be explained.

### **Methodological Procedures**

The methods employed in this research consisted of numerous interviews with members of the Cahuilla and Luiseno tribes, and other pertinent individuals. Observations at the Torres-Martinez Reservation in Thermal, Soboba Reservation in San Jacinto, Morongo Reservation in Banning, Cahuilla Reservation in Aguanga, and Palm Springs Reservation in Palm Springs were also conducted. Interviews and observations were conducted during June and July of 1996. Interview results comprised a large portion of the research. Personal (*peon* games, bird singing) and participant (language classes, basketweaving classes) observations of reservation activities were also instrumental in analyzing the contemporary state of ethnic persistence and reformulation. Historical analysis of archival material was the third and final method employed. Background research was conducted at the Pacific Southwest Region of the National Archives, Laguna Niguel, California; Malki Museum at Morongo Reservation, Banning, California; University of California at Riverside Library; San Jacinto Public Library, California; and the Mansfield Library at the University of Montana, Missoula.

### *Ethnographic Methods*

Elders (individuals over the age of fifty) were interviewed to better understand the changes in Cahuilla identity and cultural practice during the twentieth century. Four elders-- two male and two female-- were interviewed. It was the author's feeling that elders would be the most informative age group due to their accumulated knowledge of

Cahuilla culture and traditions. The degree to which elders had adapted to changes on the reservations was a focal point of the fieldwork process. How did elders feel about people of other ethnic backgrounds living on the reservations? Did they agree with development of reservation lands? The author was interested in examining the persistence of identity among the elders. Were they proud to be Cahuilla, or did they view themselves simply as American citizens? How had their identities changed over the years? Did they change at all?

The author also concentrated on the elders' thoughts regarding the contemporary state of Cahuilla culture, with particular emphasis on the younger generation's role. Were the elders optimistic about the degree of cultural practice and ethnic identity displayed by Cahuilla youth? Did they have a significant role in the transmission of cultural information to their children and grandchildren? Elders were interviewed to gain insight into the variations of cultural practice and identity.

Middle-aged tribal members (ages thirty to forty-nine) were interviewed, but were asked different questions than the elders. Two middle-aged tribal members-- a husband and wife-- were interviewed. Many middle-aged tribal members were affected by the "gap" in Cahuilla history during the 1960's and 1970's, in which little if any cultural knowledge was transmitted. The author felt that interviews with middle-aged tribal members would be important in observing firsthand the results of this discontinuity. Were different traditions passed down to middle-aged tribal members and elders at young ages? Did middle-aged tribal members have the same regard for traditions as did the elders? Were they resentful of the elders' cultural knowledge? These questions were



asked in the hope of understanding the origins and outcomes of the “gap” in Cahuilla cultural practice. Since many middle-aged tribal members grew up learning very few cultural traditions, they have been learning the language and traditional songs and dances along with the younger tribal members. The middle-aged tribal members also are displaying interest in their culture and identity, a generation late but still eager to learn.

Younger tribal members (under the age of twenty-nine) were interviewed in order to judge the future of Cahuilla cultural practice and identity. Two younger tribal members, both female, were interviewed. The author felt that discrepancies would exist between elders’ and young tribal members’ thoughts on their culture. The aim of these interviews was to find out the spectrum of young tribal members’ beliefs in and practice of their culture.

It was the author’s intent to interview as many tribal members of varying ages as possible in order to receive the widest range of viewpoints. If similar feelings about culture and identity could be observed in Cahuilla of different ages, then obviously cultural persistence and ethnic reformulation were successful mechanisms for the survival of Cahuilla culture.

Interviews with outsiders, including members of other closely-related tribes and Euro-Americans, were conducted in order to better comprehend the relationship between Cahuilla and non-Cahuilla, and how the Cahuilla fit into the southern California “community”. Two middle-aged male Luiseno tribal members were interviewed and asked the same questions as middle-aged Cahuilla tribal members. The dean of D-Q Soboba University, a two-year accredited college for Native Americans located on

Soboba Reservation in San Jacinto, was interviewed about educational opportunities available to the Cahuilla, and the degree of interest in education present on the reservations.

Eleven individuals-- six male, five female-- were interviewed during the course of the author's fieldwork. All the interviews were conducted in English. A tape recorder was used to interview the younger and middle-aged tribal members, and the outsiders. A tape recorder was not used to interview the elders due to the unwillingness they expressed when asked.

Two forms of interviews were used: single and group. The majority of the interviews were single. Interviews were conducted in both formal and informal manners; formal meaning that a date and time were set, and informal meaning that the author approached various individuals and interviewed them. Three interviews were formal, while eight were informal. The author felt that informal group interviews (between three and five individuals) were the most productive and informative due to the greater number of viewpoints offered simultaneously. The lack of preparation and forethought characteristic of informal interviews contributed to fairly candid conversations on culture and ethnicity. Unfortunately, only two informal group interviews were conducted. Single interviews, both formal and informal, were used with elders since it was difficult to set up times for them to meet together. Single interviews helped greatly in learning oral traditions and the history of the tribe. Through these interviews information was collected, compared, and affirmed.

Personal and participant observations included participation in language classes at

Morongo Reservation; observation of *peon* games and bird singing at Morongo; participation in basketweaving classes at Soboba Reservation; observation of childrens' crafts classes at Torres-Martinez Reservation; and general observations of the degree of ethnic pride, identity, and cultural practice among many Cahuilla of all ages. These observations were crucial to gain a better understanding of the workings of contemporary Cahuilla everyday life.

### *Historical Methods*

The documents used consisted of primary and secondary sources. Primary sources are letters and documents written by government officials and Cahuilla tribal members. Secondary sources are books, journals, and articles written by anthropologists and historians which describe the components of Cahuilla culture, and how these components have persisted, adapted, or evolved over time. Several theories about aboriginal Cahuilla cultural preservation have been published by Harvey (1967), Bean (1972), and others, but none have dealt with the concepts of cultural persistence and ethnic reformulation.

Though the aboriginal and historic Cahuilla cultures have been documented by several anthropologists and historians, much less information is available on contemporary Cahuilla culture. The overall body of Cahuilla literature is exceedingly small. The author used most of the available articles, texts, and documents in this research. Any chronological lapses in the cultural history are due to a lack of information. Though these sources were invaluable in discussing the cultural and contact histories, the author mainly relied on interviews and observations for the analysis of contemporary culture.

## **Conclusion**

Through informant interviews, personal and participant observations, and archival research, information was collected and analyzed. The methodological procedures fully support and correlate with the theoretical orientation discussed above.

A brief history of aboriginal Cahuilla culture will be offered in the following chapter. The initial configurations of social, political, economic, and religious life must be discussed to have a model with which to gauge the progression of the successive forms of reformulation.

This research addresses Cahuilla cultural practice and ethnic identity in the twenty-first century. By testing the aforementioned hypothesis, the author intends to establish how and why Cahuilla culture and ethnic identity have been able to persist during Spanish, Mexican, and Euro-American contact.

## CHAPTER II

### CAHUILLA CULTURAL HISTORY

#### Aboriginal Culture

Before the history of Cahuilla culture can be discussed, aboriginal culture must be defined and examined.

Many native cultures, including the Cahuilla, had no first-hand written records of their traditions prior to European contact. Cahuilla knowledge was passed orally to succeeding generations. This knowledge was not chronicled until David Prescott Barrows' fieldwork among the tribe in the 1890's. Therefore, in the Cahuilla's situation and the broader ethnographic realm, aboriginal culture can be defined as the reconstruction by an ethnographer of a people's culture before outside (European) interference, as told to him by those people.

A major problem in the study of aboriginal cultures is determining when a society's culture is pre- or post-contact. Kent G. Lightfoot explains:

We now recognize that Native American societies were undergoing cultural transformations before their first face-to-face contact with Europeans. Prior to any written observations, many native societies were already responding to the widespread exchange of European goods, the rapid spread of alien plants and animals, and the assault of virulent epidemics (1995: 200).

Many societies thus had indirect contact with Europeans for years before actual physical contact.

For the purposes of this paper, then, aboriginal culture will constitute the years prior to direct contact, the time period in which the Cahuilla lived without direct intervention

from Europeans. The history of the Cahuilla stretches back thousands of years; they were a firmly and successfully established people upon initial Spanish contact in 1774 (Bean and Bourgeault 1989: 14).

This chapter serves as a description of the varying, yet interrelated, aspects of aboriginal Cahuilla culture: language, group differentiation, geography and physical environment, settlement patterns, population distribution, subsistence, social and political organization, marriage, kinship, and ritual. In short, the everyday functions of aboriginal Cahuilla life will be examined.

### **Language**

The term *Cahuilla* may be derived from their word *kawiya*, meaning “master or boss” (Kroeber 1925: 693). The Cahuilla language belongs to the Cupan subgroup of the Takic family of the Uto-Aztecan stock. Similar to the Gabrieliño, Serrano, and Luisiño languages, Cahuilla is closest to Cupeño. According to Kenneth Hale (1958), Cahuilla, part of the Aztec-Tanoan linguistic phylum, became a separate language about 1000 B.C., though this estimate is somewhat controversial.

Variations existed between the Desert, Pass, and Mountain Cahuilla dialects. William Duncan Strong described these differences: “...the dialect of the Mountain Cahuilla differs to a slight extent from that of the Desert and Pass Cahuilla, and it is probable that an intensive linguistic study of the Mountain Cahuilla themselves would show differences between the more widely separated groups” (1929: 144-45). The linguistic differentiation undoubtedly complemented the political and territorial autonomy of the three Cahuilla

divisions.

A brief description of the three Cahuilla subgroups-- Desert, Pass, and Mountain-- follows to examine the basis for the political and social autonomy that was characteristic of Cahuilla village life. The author feels that this clan and village autonomy made Spanish, Mexican, and Euro-American incorporation attempts difficult and, ultimately, unsuccessful.

### **The Desert Cahuilla**

Desert Cahuilla villages were located on the outskirts of the Colorado Desert and westward into the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto mountain ranges. The entire territory stretched from the Salton Sea in the south to Indio in the north, and from the Little San Bernardino mountains in the east to the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto mountains in the west.

Villages were established near water sources, such as humanly-constructed wells and water holes. Lineage autonomy prevailed, the only notable exception being the collective use of a water hole or well. Strong noted:

Frequent favorable places were occupied by only one clan, and this would seem to have been the earlier condition. At other places where food and water were more abundant several groups might live close together and utilize the same water supply. The relation of such groups to one another varied, and any exact definition of their organization would be subject to exceptions. Often they were related lineages of one clan, who had acquired new names because their immediate relationship had become obscure, and they had moved slightly apart from each other (ibid., 43).

Strong (1929) estimated twenty Desert Cahuilla clans, nine belonging to the Wildcat

moiety and eleven to the Coyote moiety. Oswalt (1988) put the numbers at eight and ten, respectively. In the case of a village composed of two or more distinct lineages, a corresponding number of *nets* regulated village activities (Strong 1929: 43). In such instances each *net* presided over his own lineage. A peaceful coexistence prevailed among lineages living in close quarters.

### **The Pass Cahuilla**

The Pass Cahuilla territory extended from Banning in the west to Indian Wells in the east, and from Whitewater Canyon in the north to Andreas and Murray Canyons in the south. The Pass Cahuilla may represent a conglomeration of two separate groups. According to Strong, "The inclusion of the group at Indian Wells and the two clans near Palm Springs is more or less arbitrary, for these three groups seem at an earlier time to have really represented a ceremonial unit which might well entitle them to the designation of the Palm Springs Cahuilla" (ibid., 88).

Strong (1929) estimated there were fifteen Pass Cahuilla clans-- ten in aboriginal times, with five Mountain clans moving down to San Bernardino and Riverside in 1846 as part of a Mexican plan to protect them against raiding tribes. These five clans were not true Pass clans and were more closely associated with the Mountain peoples.

Like the Desert Cahuilla, the Pass clans were politically autonomous and lacked any real sense of tribal organization. Unlike the Desert Cahuilla, the Pass Cahuilla lived in close proximity to several Serrano clans. The two populations thus intermarried and came to display similar cultural characteristics. Strong noted, "...even in pre-Caucasian



times their ceremonial affiliations were based more on propinquity than on language, and as a result the data in regard to such intermingled groupings are usually far from clear” (ibid.).

### **The Mountain Cahuilla**

The Mountain Cahuilla territory was the largest of the three groups. Extending from Mts. Cahuilla and Thomas in the north to former Cupẽño and Luisẽño lands in the south, and from Tule Peak in the west to Rockhouse Canyon in the east, Mountain Cahuilla territory was seemingly rough and inhospitable. The Cahuilla who settled in this region, however, amazed Euro-Americans upon contact with their ability to successfully exploit the land through agriculture and hunting and gathering (Lawton and Bean 1968: 19).

The Mountain Cahuilla were composed of ten clans, with five subclans under the *wiwaiistam*, or coyote-people, clan. Like the Desert and Pass groups, Mountain Cahuilla clans were politically independent and isolated in aboriginal times. As a result of accelerated Euro-American acculturation in the mid-nineteenth century, Mountain Cahuilla clans became centralized and amalgamated into a few super-clans which functioned only during ceremonies (Strong 1929: 152).

The three Cahuilla groups were similar in composition and degree of organization, yet highly independent of each other in the pre-contact era. Upon contact, however, it was necessary for the groups to unite in order to resist the successive guises of incorporation. This aboriginal clan and village autonomy represents the initial stage of Cahuilla ethnicity, the first configuration of social and political organization, world view, and

ethnic identity. With the arrival of the Spanish in the late eighteenth century came the initial stage of ethnic reformulation, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

A discussion of the Cahuilla geography and environment, and the methods used to adapt to and exploit their environment, follows. Settlement patterns, social environment, and population distribution also will be examined in order to give a comprehensive portrayal of the physical environment.

### **Geography and Environment**

The exact boundaries of aboriginal Cahuilla territory are unknown. As for the contemporary Cahuilla borders, the summits of the San Bernardino and Chocolate mountain ranges form the northern border; the Borrego Springs area makes up the southern border; the Colorado River serves as the eastern border; and the eastern slopes of the Palomar Mountains make up the western border. Numerous valleys and passes surround and connect the mountain ranges, allowing access from the desert regions to the mountain areas (Bean 1972: 24).

Cahuilla territory covered about 2400 square miles and was extremely diverse, including tall mountains, deep valleys, passes, canyons, and arid deserts. Differences in altitude ranged from 273 feet below sea level at the Salton Sink to 11,000 feet above sea level in the San Bernardino mountain range.

This geographic diversity was observed by A.L. Kroeber in the early twentieth century, who, upon visiting reservations in Highland, Banning, and Indio, remarked:

The three groups of reservations, while within a stretch of less than a hundred miles, are in totally different natural environments.

Highland is in the cultivated and thickly populated orange-growing district of Southern California. Banning is near the summit of the pass connecting this region with the desert to the east. Indio is in the heart of this desert, below the level of the sea (1908: 29-30).

This geographic variation resulted in a wide subsistence base for the Cahuilla, who did not have to travel far in order to enjoy diverse foods such as acorns, mesquite, antelope, and mountain sheep (Bean and Bourgeault 1989: 105).

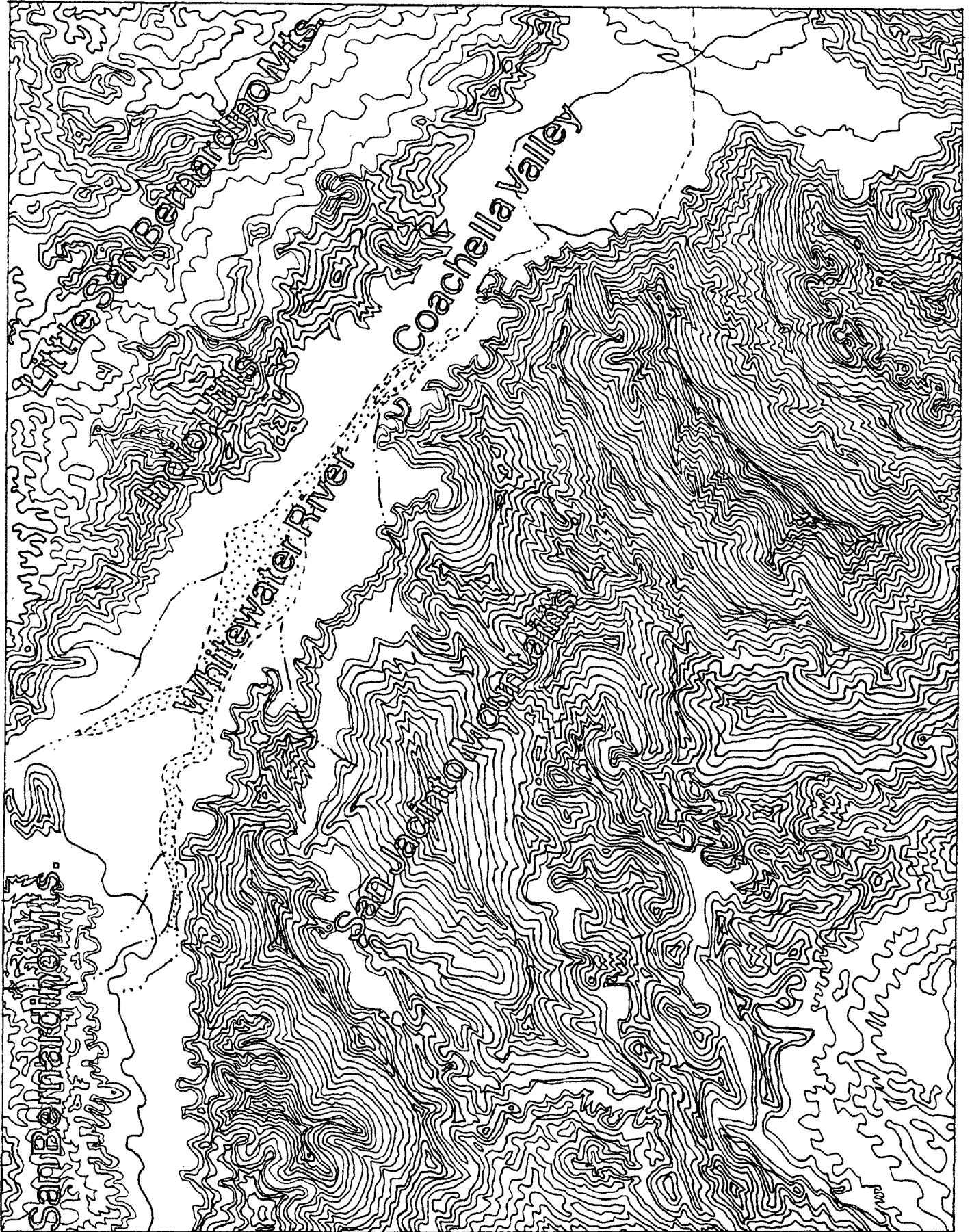
Some Cahuilla lived on Lake Cahuilla, a freshwater lake about 100 miles long that dried up approximately 500 years ago. The present-day Salton Sea occupies a portion of the locale of Lake Cahuilla (ibid., 14). Lowell John Bean, Sylvia Brakke Vane, and Jackson Young explain:

Some of the Cahuilla developed a lacustrine economy and lived especially along the western and northern shores of the lake. The Colorado River, which fed into it at the time, changed its course about 500 years ago and no longer brought in water. The lake began to fall when the water lost by evaporation was no longer being replenished (1991: 7).

Lake Cahuilla provided inhabitants with foodstuffs particular only to that environment, including fish, shellfish, and water birds and plants (Bean and Bourgeault 1989: 14).

Four major life zones, or ecological regions, have been named in relation to the Cahuilla environment. These areas “are viewed as distinct habitats which are distributed vertically throughout the area” (Bean 1972: 25). Each life zone was at a different level and contained its own respective flora and fauna. Due to the even distribution of mountains, canyons, and valleys throughout their land, Cahuilla could hunt game and collect plants in all four life zones without traveling very far (Bean and Bourgeault 1989: 15).

Fig.1



The Lower Sonoran life zone was an arid desert region which extended from the lowest land level to approximately 3500 feet above sea level. Temperatures could reach as high as 125 degrees Fahrenheit in the summer, and some regions received only between three and four inches of precipitation per year. Making up about sixty percent of the total Cahuilla territory, the Lower Sonoran life zone was a source of diverse flora and fauna (Bean 1972: 26). Cacti, mesquite, agave, yucca, antelope, deer, rabbit, duck, and geese all inhabited this area, contributing to the largest distribution of flora and fauna among the four life zones (Bean and Bourgeault 1989: 15-16; Bean 1972: 26).

The Upper Sonoran life zone was high desert country, ranging from 3500 to 6000 feet above sea level. Cooler temperatures contributed to the proliferation of piñon and oak trees, as well as elderberries, which were the food staples for the months between harvests (Bean 1972: 27). Making up approximately thirty percent of the total Cahuilla land mass, the Upper Sonoran life zone supplied almost two-thirds of the subsistence base (Bean and Bourgeault 1989: 17; Bean 1972: 27). Many of the same flora and fauna of the Lower Sonoran were abundant throughout this area.

The next life zone was the Transition, which extended up to 9000 feet. Characterized by cool summers and snowy winters, the Transition life zone received approximately twenty-five inches of precipitation per year (Bean and Bourgeault 1989: 17; Bean 1972: 28). Oak, elderberry, and wild cherry were the most important plants in this zone, while deer, mountain sheep, and squirrel were the most abundant game. The Transition zone covered seven percent of Cahuilla territory and yielded fifteen percent of the total plant species used. Bear and mountain lion were present at these heights and were competitors

for food (Bean 1972: 28).

The Canadian-Hudsonian or Boreal life zone was found above 9000 feet. With the heaviest precipitation and coldest climate, this zone yielded very few plant species and was only used during the summer months by hunters in search of big game. About five percent of Cahuilla territory comprised this life zone (ibid.).

The four life zones provided the Cahuilla with an ample variety of food sources. Insufficient rainfall, earthquakes, and fires resulted in unstable amounts of available foodstuffs in each zone from year to year. Cahuilla hunters and gatherers consequently had four different eco-zones to exploit; if the Lower Sonoran did not yield enough food, they had the option of utilizing the other three zones. In this manner the Cahuilla were virtually assured an adequate year-round diet (Bean and Bourgeault 1989: 17).

The success of Cahuilla settlements was dependent on the natural environment. A host of factors played into the choosing of a village site-- adequate water supply, abundant floral and faunal species, and natural protection against weather and enemies, among others. The nature of Cahuilla settlement patterns, along with the social environment and population distribution, now will be discussed.

### **Settlement Patterns**

Access to basic resources such as water, food, and materials determined where a village was set. According to Bean, Vane, and Young, "Cahuilla villages were generally located in or near the mouth of a canyon or in a valley. They were set up from the floors of canyons and valleys on one side or the other in order to avoid the significant water run-

off coming down the canyons during certain periods” (1991: 7). Flash floods periodically destroyed whole villages according to oral tradition. Canyon locations also served as natural barriers against hostile aggression.

The majority of Cahuilla villages were located in the Upper Sonoran life zone or on the alluvial fans in the Lower Sonoran. The average distance between villages was two to three miles. Villages were grouped into twelve socio-geographic areas called clans, which were occupied by different lineages. Bean explains:

Once established, these villages were considered as permanent by the Cahuilla, the sites being the exclusive property of the specific lineages occupying them. Once a space was occupied it belonged to an identifiable sib (clan) and ranged from seventy square miles to over six hundred square miles in area... Further, each of these sibs was divided into smaller corporate groups or lineages, each occupying its own village site (1972: 74).

Bean (1972) estimates there were between forty-eight and eighty of these villages.

A Cahuilla village was an independent political body with an apparent disinterest in the workings of other villages. Strong explains:

There is no evidence that the Cahuilla ever were a tribe in the sense of being a united political body, until under the Mexican regime certain groups were amalgamated by the whites to serve as military units. Prior to Caucasian interference they appear to have been isolated in small, autonomous local groups with no pretense of controlling any other than their local territories (1929: 36).

This village autonomy may have served as an effective deterrent against assimilation.

Since each village had its own unique socio-political organization and degree of culture practice, the invading Spanish, Mexican, and Euro-Americans thus found it harder to

incorporate more than one into their respective cultures.

Although villages within a clan's area were generally occupied year-round, population movements within the territory occurred. Hunting and gathering necessitated the progression of small groups of tribal members across the territory for several days at a time. Bean states: "The most extensive leave-taking was associated with harvesting or collecting of basic food staples such as acorn, mesquite, or pinyon. At these times perhaps one-half or two-thirds of the population moved to the collecting area and camped from one to several weeks" (1972: 71). Several times a year individual families visited their affinal kin in other villages within the clan's area. Cahuilla village life was thus usually stable and sedentary.

### **Social Environment**

The Cahuilla lived in the heart of southern California. Bisecting their territory was the Coco-Maricopa Trail, a major trade route that gave them access to resources particular to coastal and eastern California tribes.

Cahuilla neighbors included the Chemehuevi to the north; the Mohave to the northeast; the Halchidoma to the east; the Yuma or Quechan to the southeast; the Kamia and Diegueño to the south; the Luiseno to the southwest; the Gabrieliño to the west; and the Serrano to the northwest. The Cahuilla were separated from most of these tribes by geography: the Colorado Desert separated them from the Halchidoma, Yuma and Kamia, while numerous hills and mountains separated them from the Serrano, Chemehuevi, Diegueño, and Luiseno. The Coco-Maricopa Trail, however, served as an effective



means of communication and trade. No geographic features separated the Cahuilla from the Gabrieliño. Despite these barriers, the Cahuilla had varying degrees of contact with all their neighbors via intermarriage, trade, and warfare.

Bean (1972) believes that the Serrano, Luiseno, and Diegueño had the most extensive interaction with the Cahuilla, sharing similar social and political structures, belief systems, and subsistence systems. Kroeber (1908) also noted the similarities between the Cahuilla and the Serrano, Luiseno, and Diegueño. However, of the relationship between the Cahuilla and the Mohave and Yuma, he wrote:

After all the differences between the Cahuilla and the Mohave or Yuma are greater than the correspondences. The Mohave are farmers and fishermen. The Cahuilla follow neither pursuit. The Mohave are practically without basketry, except for such few pieces as they may trade from their Shoshonean neighbors. The Cahuilla use baskets as abundantly as all their Shoshonean kinsmen...The Mohave were warlike and had a developed tribal sense. The Cahuilla resembled the other Indians of California in lacking these qualities...What is known of their ceremonies, and of the character of the shaman among them, further points to practically complete identity with the other Mission Indians (ibid., 41).

Although experiencing alternating periods of hostility and alliance with the Mohave and Yuma, the Cahuilla generally did not interact intensively with these two tribes (Bean 1972: 70).

Kroeber (1925) and Bean (1972) both believed the coastal Gabrieliño were the most influential in terms of ideology. Through intermarriage and trade, ideas and customs particular to the Gabrieliño gradually became part of the Cahuilla way of life. The lack of any geographic barriers aided in the diffusion process. The military prowess of the

Gabrielino succeeded in limiting Cahuilla territorial augmentation. The Cahuilla consequently formed an economic military alliance with the Gabrielino, which resulted in the exploitation of a more extensive cultural and ecological zone (Bean 1972: 70).

### *Population Distribution*

Estimates of the aboriginal Cahuilla population are varying and numerous. Kroeber (1925) supplied a conservative estimate of 2500, which is most likely too low. Frederick Hicks (1961) proposed a population of 3600 based on an estimation of forty-eight lineages consisting of seventy-five people per lineage. If there were as many as eighty lineages, then according to Hicks' estimation there could have been 6000 Cahuilla prior to European contact. According to Harvey (1967), many Cahuilla villages numbered 150 to 300 people, giving evidence of a higher total population. Bean (1972) believes a population of 5000 to 6000 is reasonable, with the possibility of 10,000.

Population estimates are difficult to ascertain due to the lack of dependable records in existence. Mission records of births, baptisms, and deaths are shoddy at best (Bean 1972: 75-76). However, Bean, Vane, and Young feel that when referring to population distribution and settlement patterns, mission records can be beneficial. They explain:

It is necessary to rely on Mission Records and on ethnographic data collected in earlier years in order to establish in any detail what Cahuilla settlement patterns were before contact. Even when William Duncan Strong worked with them in the 1920s, Cahuilla had moved around a great deal and it was difficult to establish where some of their homes had been at any great distance into the past. Fortunately, Cahuilla oral literature recounts some of the movement of individual lineages in the various clans so that a general pattern over time can be discerned. Cahuillas moved about in response to climatic changes, because of pressures and opportunities derived from

Euroamericans, and because of the effects of epidemic diseases introduced by European populations (1991: 7).

Disease may have had substantial effects on the aboriginal Cahuilla population. Due to the lack of evidence, effects of diseases can only be surmised. Kroeber's (1925) low population estimate suggests disease may have had an impact. Bean found that "bronchial infections, gastrointestinal disorders, tuberculosis, hepatitis, infections in wounds and sores, blood poisoning, rheumatism, and arthritis" were common, yet insignificant in terms of considerable population loss (1972: 78).

A discussion of subsistence tactics now follows. Although living in a seemingly inhospitable region, Cahuilla villages found innovative ways to procure food.

### **Subsistence**

All Cahuilla groups exploited the diverse fauna and flora in the surrounding environment. Hunting was conducted by men year-round. Mule deer, mountain sheep, antelope, rabbits, mice, rats, and chipmunks were the main meat staples. Bow and arrow, throwing sticks, nets, and bush clumps were used to stun or kill the prey (ibid., 64).

Large game hunting was a dangerous venture that required strength and precision. Mountain sheep and antelope were hunted by groups of men; deer were hunted by a single man. Large game was particularly esteemed due to the quantity of meat and the taste. Small game, while not as highly valued, was more commonly found. Bean states, "These animals probably provided the bulk of the meat protein in the Cahuilla diet because of their great numbers and the ease of capture" (ibid., 58). Rabbits in particular were hunted by individuals of all ages-- old men, women, boys, and young men-- as well

as groups.

Hunting and skinning of large and small game was handled by men, cooking by women. Meat was either boiled, roasted, or cut into strips and sun-dried. Marrow was extracted from the bones, which then were crushed and added to soups (*ibid.*, 59-60).

The Cahuilla floral environment was extremely diverse. Knowledge and usage of a tremendous variety of plants characterized every village. Bean and Katherine Siva Saubel remark, "Cahuilla plant knowledge-- even in the fragmentary lore that survives-- is so broad and intimate that one wonders how the Cahuilla discovered so many diverse uses for plants. There must have been thousands of experiments over centuries to arrive at so many plant uses" (1972: 17).

Bean and Saubel (1972) identified more than 250 species of plants and their corresponding culinary, medicinal, and technological uses. Concerning food, the most notable were: acorns, pinon nuts, mesquite and screw beans, and cacti bulbs. Seeds, fruits and berries, tubers, and roots were used to supplement the above staples. Other plants were used in the construction of houses, while more than 200 kinds of plants were used for medicinal purposes (Bean 1978a: 578).

Plant food usually was processed by women. The most common method was grinding. Stone mortars and pestles were used to grind acorns and dried berries; stone manos and metates were used to grind pinon nuts; and wooden mortars were used to grind honey mesquite. The flourlike residue then was sifted in baskets to expose the larger particles, which then were reground. A woman was "proper" if she was an efficient grinder. Some vegetables, such as yucca, agave, and tule potatoes, were cut into

pieces and cooked in stone-lined pits (Bean 1972: 52).

Lawton and Bean (1968, 1976) have suggested the existence of proto-agriculture among some Cahuilla groups. Corns, beans, squash, and melons similar to those raised by the Colorado River tribes were cultivated. Though agriculture certainly was a part of several Cahuilla groups' subsistence strategies, it does not appear to have been a primary one (Bean 1972: 48).

Cahuilla subsistence techniques were as diverse as the items on which they depended for survival. With so many options, Cahuilla groups virtually were guaranteed food year-round.

Aspects of Cahuilla social and political organization will now be discussed. An analysis of social and political structure and organization provides the parameters within which Cahuilla behavior can be judged.

### **Social and Political Organization**

The lineage was the basic corporate unit of social organization. Bean states:

Each lineage had its own food-gathering areas, lineage chief, ceremonial house, and ceremonial bundle. Descent was traced carefully for five generations and the lineage was exogamous. The ceremonial bundle was held in great esteem and handled only by specific persons. It was 'owned' by the lineage leader, who could use it to enforce his judgments through supernatural means. The bundle was passed down from father to son in a direct line of descent (1972: 83-84).

Several lineages made up a clan, which had a specific territory and was characterized by political stability and unity. Bean further explains:

Economic cooperation, in the sense of sharing hunting and gathering lands, ceremonial reciprocity, and linguistic unity further characterized its internal structure. The sib (clan) was composed, however, of separate, independent, localized lineage units, each with its leader, ceremonial house, ceremonial bundle, and specific locality after which the lineage was usually named (ibid., 84).

The clan was thus the highest political and economic grouping in Cahuilla society, while the lineage was the basic unit of organization.

The *?ivi?lyu?atum*, a linguistically and culturally defined group, was the maximal level of Cahuilla social identification. *?ivi?lyu?atum* refers to the Cahuilla language speakers in general and emphasizes their shared cultural background. The *?ivi?lyu?atum* provided a sense of cultural nationality and distinctiveness from other tribes (ibid., 85).

A more specific kind of social identity were the two moieties *tuktum* (Wildcats) and *?istam* (Coyotes). The moiety was a kin group in which common descent was accorded through genealogical relationship and obligation. Membership was patrilineal and all-inclusive: every Cahuilla was either a Wildcat or Coyote. Although no territorial boundaries existed, the moiety was an actual social entity that regulated marriage and ritual reciprocity (ibid.). Moiety exogamy was the norm, and marriage rules were extremely strict. Moieties were territorially situated so that clans of one moiety bordered clans of the opposite moiety. Each moiety was therefore a source of wives for the other one due to their close proximity. Through ritual and marriage, subsistence items of these numerous areas were dispersed throughout the entire territory. Ritual reciprocity was thus a food distribution mechanism that guarded against shortages among various groups.

The *net* was the lineage leader. The office was usually inherited from father to eldest

son and kept within a direct line of descent. Obligations included maintenance of rituals, care of the ceremonial bundle and ceremonial house, settling disputes, and directing subsistence activities. The *net*'s opinion in disputes and conflicts was highly respected. Although he had no tangible enforcement power, his authority was legitimized by the *maiswat* or *maswut*, the ceremonial bundle.

The *maiswat* was the "symbolic representation of the lineage and the link between the sacred past and the present" (Bean 1978a: 580). The *maiswat* was made from reeds and was approximately four to five feet wide and fifteen to twenty feet long. Enclosed were ceremonial objects such as feathers, shell beads, tobacco, a bone whistle, and other ritual items. Within the bundle was also *?amna?a*, a supernatural power representing the creators *Mukat* and *Temayawut*. The *net* spoke to *?amna?a* about all village activities and ceremonies. The bundle was usually kept in a special hiding place in the *kis?amna?a*, or ceremonial house. The *maiswat* was also the symbol of Cahuilla values.

Bean explains:

Those who were allowed to see the *maiswat* were men who had reached old age, those who had acquired an important position such as the *net* or *paxaa?* [second-in-command], or those who through their personal worth had achieved high status and recognition by their use of supernatural power. The *maiswat* was used to control the behavior of those in high status positions...If the *net* or *paxaa?* did not perform their proper function, they or their family were punished by *?amna?a* (1972: 89).

The *paxaa?* or *paha* was second in command to the *net*. This position was also hereditary, and required a man "of forceful personality who can maintain order at all ceremonial functions" (Strong 1929: 63). The *paxaa?* arranged the details of ritual

performance and punished by death anyone who violated ritual rules. He was also a leader of hunting parties and a representative of the *net*. Only existing in certain villages, the *paxaa?* was an authoritative figure.

The *puvalam*, or shamans, were also respected and feared members of the village. Always male, *puvalam* cured illnesses, regulated the weather, foretold events, guarded against evil spirits during ceremonies, and, along with the *net* and *paxaa?*, controlled the village. A shaman's position was secure only through continual reassertion of his powers in the form of demonstrations (Bean 1978a: 581).

Another duty of the *puvalam* was to enforce laws. Incorporated into oral tradition, laws served to regulate Cahuilla society and protect economic relationships. Recited in the form of musical stories, laws were originated by the Creator and augmented periodically. Bean explains, "The force of traditional wisdom was continually reinforced through ritual, story, anecdote, and action. The intensity and frequency of rituals were, therefore, effective reinforcing agents for social control" (1972: 121).

The *puvalam* acted as societal regulators, personally punishing individuals for specific transgressions. Punishment included "banishment, whipping, public stoning, death by being buried alive, or assassination" (ibid.). The *puvalam* thus had the power of the Creator concerning punishment. Crimes against one's lineage were dealt with by the *puvalam*, *net*, *paxaa?*, and other male elders. These crimes were usually met with the harshest of penalties. Almost every crime had economic implications. Bean explains:

Clearly theft and poaching were invasions of economic privilege. Murder obviously had economic implications by destroying the family unit, and witchcraft caused individuals to be removed from



subsistence or other activities either through accidents, sickness, or death...Marital conflicts also had economic implications in that the amount of a bride price which had to be returned in the instance of a divorce was a frequent additional dispute to be arbitrated. In other instances the possibility of divorce broke the economic alliance established between two families by the institution of marriage (ibid., 122).

Laws thus functioned to maintain order and acted as economic leveling mechanisms in every Cahuilla village. Enforced by village leaders, laws were the stitches that held together the Cahuilla social fabric.

Marriage and kinship will now be discussed in order to provide a clear picture of Cahuilla social relations and descent. These two arenas were quite important in determining social status, position, and wealth.

### **Marriage**

Individuals who wished to marry followed two rules: moiety exogamy had to be obeyed, and nobody could marry anyone in the opposite moiety with whom a genealogical relationship could be indicated within five generations. The five-generation rule thus prohibited two or three lineages from keeping their women to themselves.

Strong explained the rule as follows:

A man would never marry a girl from his father's clan, primarily because of the nominal relationship and the fact that their moiety would be the same. He could however marry a girl from his mother's clan provided she was not a close relative of his mother. This at first glance seems to cast doubt on the actual relationship of all the clan members for these marriages were not uncommon. On second consideration however it is obvious that in a clan including all collateral branches for five generations back, there would be a considerable number of individuals who would be fourth or

fifth cousins and therefore according to a strict blood-family interpretation, not actual relatives. It was with these individuals that marriage was possible (1929: 74).

These rules strengthened marriage alliances among lineages of all the ecological zones, thereby allowing for the distribution of natural resources particular to each clan (Bean 1972: 90-91).

Marriages were arranged by the parents, who weighed carefully the qualifications of the potential spouse for their son or daughter. The food-producing ability of the potential spouse was the paramount qualification taken into account by the parents. An ideal male spouse was a skilled hunter, physically strong, and respectful of elders. Were he in line to inherit a ceremonial or political position, his value was raised. Young women were chosen and remained wives if they were diligent workers, efficient food-preparers, could get along well with their potential in-laws, and bore male children. Bearing a female child was not frowned upon, but a wife was considered inept if she bore "too many" female children. The reputation of the family was also a significant factor in choosing a spouse. Individuals rarely married down in social rank. If families were not on good terms with one another due to a past dispute, marriage was doubtful (ibid., 91).

When a marriage was arranged, the male's family gave a considerable amount of food and goods to the female's family as bridewealth. If the female was not old enough to become a wife, she was raised and taught by her future husband's mother. Upon reaching adulthood, she married the young man and lived at his parents' home until a child was born, at which time the couple settled into their own residence. Strong explained: "Patrilocal residence was the general rule, but cases of matrilocal residence did occur,

especially where the immediate family of the man was dead” (1929: 74). The marriage was not deemed official until a child was born (Bean 1972: 91-92).

Marriage secured a long-range reciprocal relationship between two families. Reciprocal exchange of items was constantly taking place between the families, establishing a firm socio-economic alliance. Every important event in an individual’s life-- rites of passage, marriage, the birth of a child-- was accompanied by the generous distribution of food and goods between families. This long-term flow of items was halted only in extreme instances. Divorce was thus rare. Marriage was viewed as an economic pact between two families, and any attempt to break this pact was not well-received. Bean explains: “Divorce, then, was not an easy thing for a girl to obtain; numerous instances of runaway brides are documented, after which the brides were returned again and again before a divorce was acceptable. This interfamily alliance established by marriage was cemented by the bride price and continued exchanges of food and goods” (ibid., 92). If the bride did not produce children or was exceedingly lazy, however, a divorce could be granted. If a spouse died, the marriage continued under levirate or sororate rules: a widow(er) would marry a sibling or close relative of the deceased.

Marriage between the Cahuilla and neighboring tribes was not uncommon. The Yuma, Diegueño, Luiseño, Serrano, Chemehuevi, and Gabrieliño are all recorded as marrying in or receiving wives from the Cahuilla. Bean states: “Although these were probably atypical arrangements, they further extended the sociopolitical and economic alliances, and perhaps explained in part the generally amicable relationships existing between these cultural groups” (ibid., 93). These instances of tribal exogamy

undoubtedly enriched Cahuilla culture, adding many components which the Cahuilla did not already possess.

It is the author's opinion that tribal exogamy strengthened Cahuilla and neighboring tribes' resistance to Spanish, Mexican, and Euro-American incorporation. Tribal exogamy promoted a sense of solidarity and affinity (Phillips 1975: 19). Tribes with strong kinship ties would be inclined to aid one another in periods of unrest, such as Spanish missionization and Euro-American forced wage labor. Kinship, both consanguineal and affinal, thus had tremendous effects on all aspects of Cahuilla culture and resistance to intruding cultures, as will be demonstrated in the following discussion.

### **Kinship**

According to Ember and Ember, "...anthropologists often speak of the web of kinship as providing the main structure of social action in noncommercial societies" (1988: 340). Cahuilla kinship was no different. Bean states: "Almost all social interaction was with people related to one another. The lack of a kin connection could make interaction exceedingly awkward" (1972: 93).

The Cahuilla kinship system was, and is, very exact and complex. Anthropologists classify the system as Dakota with Iroquois cousin terminology. Relationships were established by age, sex, affinity, lineality, and possibly locale. Extensive kin relations were very important to the Cahuilla, providing them with wealth, pride, and power. Due to the system of ritual reciprocity, kinship symbolized and reflected prosperity: the more extensive one's relations, the better off one was materially. Economic obligation was

interwoven throughout the Cahuilla kinship fabric. Every kin relationship was characterized by obligations of specific behavior and economic exchange, making for an extremely complex system (ibid., 92-94).

The Cahuilla practiced patrilineal descent. In the consanguineal kinship terminology, a male individual made the same distinctions between his older and younger male and female siblings as for his father's brothers and mother's sisters. He used other terms for his father's sisters and mother's brothers. Age was not taken into account for these classifications. He used the same term for his father's older brother's and his mother's older sister's son and daughter as for his older brothers and sisters. He also employed the same classification for the son and daughter of his father's younger brother and mother's younger sister as for his own younger brothers and sisters. Parallel cousins were thus essentially termed the same as siblings. For cross-cousins, sex of speaker determined the differentiation between male and female. Bean explains: "...cross-cousins lived outside the social context of an individual's daily life, and so the important criteria of age and sex were not attached to them because decisions regarding disposition of property and the like rarely occurred" (ibid., 96).

The terms used for addressing grandparents were complex. The two distinguishing criteria were generation and sex: only generation was emphasized on the paternal side, while sex was important on the maternal side. The same term was used to refer to both paternal grandparents. In order to distinguish between the male and female grandparent, a suffix was added by the speaker. On the maternal side, the grandfather was addressed as *qwa?* and the grandmother as *su?*. Siblings of grandparents were sometimes also

addressed by these same terms (*ibid.*, 94).

Concerning affinal kinship, age and sex were likewise important in addressing individuals marrying into a Cahuilla family. The sex of the connecting relative dictated what terms were used. Parents-in-law were referred to by different terms contingent on whether or not their sons or daughters had children. Bean states:

Before his children were born a man called both parents-in-law *mikiwa*. After his wife had a child, the parents-in-law were separated by sex, the father being called *qwalhena?*, and the mother *sulhena?*. A woman, before she had a child, called both her parents-in-law *misik*, and after she had a child, she called them both *kalahiyek* (*ibid.*, 96-97).

The Cahuilla kinship system placed significant emphasis on the production of children in the marriage, as is reflected in the difference of address.

The Cahuilla kinship system is more detailed and expansive. An examination of the entire classification would be a thesis in itself. This brief description is meant to give the reader an indication of how the system operated. Much more than a collection of relatives, Cahuilla kin relationships resulted in a system of economic reciprocity that provided for everyone in the lineage. Individualism was sacrificed for the sake of the corporate group's welfare. Though relatives in the male line were more highly regarded than those in the female line, no one in the village lacked anything.

The religious and ceremonial aspects of Cahuilla village life will now be described. A consistent and integral part of Cahuilla social structure, ritual shaped and defined world view and ethnicity. Ritual was embedded strongly enough in the collective mentality to aid in the incorporation resistance struggles of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

## Ritual

According to Bean, "Ritual served as a basic articulating mechanism for all institutions in Cahuilla society" (ibid., 135). Every event in an individual's life-- birth, death, misfortune, prosperity-- had a corresponding religious explanation. Ritual was performed to recognize each significant occasion in one's life cycle. The most important Cahuilla rituals were the Eagle-Killing Ceremony, the Ritual for the Dead, and rites of passage.

### *Eagle-Killing Ceremony*

The Eagle-Killing Ceremony, or *aswitipememiktum*, represented the perpetuity of a lineage. Highly revered by the Cahuilla, the eagle was one of the original divine beings conceived by *Mukat*, the Creator. Oswalt explains: "It was said that the eagle lived forever and by permitting itself to be 'killed' by people it assured them of life after death. Thus, although lineage members died, the lineage would continue as had the eagle as a species" (1988: 162). The ritual thus symbolized the endurance of the lineage and its ability to transcend the death of its members.

Eagle nests in a lineage's territory were watched closely by guards, who notified the lineage head when the eggs were laid, when they hatched, when the eaglets' down became visible, and when the eaglets started to eat live animals. All of these stages were met with specific rituals by the lineage. When the eaglets became feathered, the *net*- the "owner" of his lineage's eagles- sent men to recover them. An eaglet was caged in the *net*'s house and fed by his family. Upon reaching full plumage, a ceremony was planned

and neighboring lineages invited. Songs were sung by a guest lineage about the death of eagles. The eagle was then taken from its cage and rolled into the ceremonial mat, in which it was held as the *net*'s family members danced. Upon death by asphyxiation, the body was skinned. The feathered skin was kept by the *net*, who placed it in the ceremonial bundle (Bean 1972: 139-40; Oswalt 1988: 162).

The function of the Eagle-Killing Ceremony was twofold. First, it reinforced economic reciprocity with other lineages. The host lineage was given gifts and supplies by the attending lineages and assured an invitation to other rituals in the future. Second, the ritual strengthened village alliances. Acceptance of an invitation was an indication of good faith. Refusal was construed as cause for war (Bean 1972: 140).

#### *Ritual for the Dead*

The Ritual for the Dead, or *nukil*, was performed annually or biannually. Lasting a week, it was held to honor all the members of a lineage who had died since the preceding *nukil*. The frequency of the ceremony was decided by the amount of deaths since the previous *nukil*, and if there were enough resources to provide for the several hundred participants from both moieties and other tribes (ibid., 135-36).

Upon a lineage member's death, a succession of ceremonies began. Cremation, a mourning period, and the burning of the deceased's home and possessions were each accompanied by ritual. The *net* and other lineage leaders met when enough time had elapsed to plan for the *nukil*. Everyone in the village began preparing for the event. Women made baskets to trade or distribute. Men made shell beads and other material goods for ritual use or trade. Families began storing surplus food. Decisions were made



concerning what songs to perform, who should perform them, and which lineages to invite. These preparations lasted for several months (ibid., 136).

The *nukil* began with a sequence of dances by the *puvalam*, which served to ward off evil spirits. The *paxaa?* then led a rabbit and deer hunt to provide food for all the guests. These two ceremonies lasted the first three days, with the last four days devoted to intense cosmological song cycles. Bean explains: “This epiclike series of songs described the Cahuilla universe and established the role of the Cahuilla people in it. The songs recapitulated the saga of the death of *Mukat* and the institution of the first funeral ceremonies of the first *nukil* which was administered by *?isily* (coyote)” (ibid., 137). On the last day of the *nukil*, life-size human images into which the dead’s souls had penetrated earlier in the ceremony were burned. This last stage of the week-long ceremony gave the souls enough energy to make the journey to the land of the dead. The week thus ended with distribution of goods to the guests.

The *nukil*, the most complicated and elaborate of the Cahuilla ceremonies, secured long-term alliances between villages, lineages, moieties, and tribes. Like the Eagle-Killing Ceremony, an invitation to the *nukil* was a symbol of good intentions and friendliness. Ritual reciprocity was also a main catalyst for invitation of neighboring groups. A *net* thus could increase the wealth and social status of his lineage by inviting many neighboring lineages.

#### *Rites of Passage*

Unlike the *aswitipememiktum* and the *nukil*, rites of passage concentrated on the individual or family rather than the lineage. The most important rites were: birth, naming

ceremonies (*tculuni'l*), boys' initiation ceremonies (*hemwek'luwil*), girls' initiation ceremonies (*?ewlutni'ily*), and marriage.

When a child was born, a ritual was sponsored by the husband and his family, the *net*, *paxaa?*, *puvalam*, and the relatives of the wife's family. The mother and child were placed in a pit warmed with hot stones. The child and mother were then bathed and given herbal potions. Gifts were exchanged between lineage members and the child's family.

When the child reached the age of four or five a naming ceremony was held. If the child's family did not have sufficient supplies at that time for a feast, the child waited until age nine or ten to be named. Names of living persons could not be used. Once the *net* had decided on a name, gifts (usually food, clothing, or utensils) were exchanged between the family and guests. Names were often indicative of the Cahuilla's close association with their environment. Girls usually were given floral names, while boys' names often were related to game animals (Strong 1929: 78; Bean 1972: 142).

The boys' initiation ceremony was extensive. When enough food had been accumulated by the boys' families, the boys were taken to a private place and schooled for several weeks in lineage history and their future social duties. Fasting, strenuous physical activities, resistance to pain, singing and dancing, tattooing, and ear and nasal septum piercing accompanied this instruction. Some lineages included consumption of the hallucinatory plant *Datura meteloides*, which was primarily used to indicate any shamanic potential (*ibid.*, 174; *ibid.*, 142-43).

The girls' initiation ceremony occurred upon first menstruation. They were put in pits, fed a special diet, and instructed by their grandmother and lineage ceremonialists on their

future roles in the village. Invitations were sent out by the *net* to other lineages in both the boys' and girls' ceremonies, and food and goods were exchanged. A girl could marry upon completion of the ceremony.

The *aswitipememiktum*, the *nukil*, and the various rites of passage are by no means all-inclusive of Cahuilla ritual. Description of these three rituals is meant to show their importance in Cahuilla life. Ritual was a constant reinforcer of Cahuilla world view, ethnicity, alliance, and reciprocity.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter is an overview of several important aspects of aboriginal Cahuilla culture. Although uncomprehensive, the author feels this account is a fitting prelude to Cahuilla contact history, which follows in the next chapter.

The Cahuilla pre-contact era was the initial normative stage of culture practice and ethnic identity, a period in which there was little ethnic reformulation. Intruders had yet to interrupt the Cahuilla's rather peaceful existence, though both parties were aware of one another's existence. The numerous Cahuilla villages and lineages were left alone to practice their daily rituals, ceremonies, and subsistence activities for thousands of years. This intimate relationship between humans and nature, however, would soon change. In 1774 Spanish *conquistador* Juan Bautista de Anza and his men passed through Los Coyotes Canyon, home of the *wiastam* Cahuilla. Although unaffected by this initial encounter, Cahuilla villages would soon experience much more acute collisions with the Spanish government in the form of missionization.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **CONTACT HISTORY**

Cahuilla contact with Europeans is divided into three periods: the Spanish period, formally lasting from 1774 until 1834; the Mexican period, lasting from 1834 until 1848; and the Euro-American period, lasting from 1848 until the present. During the Spanish period, Cahuilla-Mexican contact was also common.

These three contact periods will be described and examined concerning their degrees of effect on Cahuilla cultural persistence and ethnic reformulation. The author believes that each contact period had significant consequences for the survival of Cahuilla identity and ideology.

#### **Spanish Contact Period**

The first recorded contact with Spanish culture was in 1774, when Juan Bautista de Anza traveled through Los Coyotes Canyon in an unsuccessful attempt to find an overland route from Mexico to Alta California. The Cahuilla most likely had contact with Europeans prior to 1774, but their culture was not significantly affected (Bean 1978a: 583). They then were left relatively alone until the early nineteenth century, when in 1809 baptisms in Mission San Gabriel began to be recorded. These conversions, however, had little effect on the overall Cahuilla population. Harvey explains: "While the Cahuilla did not completely escape mission influence, they were on the periphery of the orbits of San Luis Rey and San Gabriel missions, and the vast majority of them still had not become Christians by the 1850's. Until the census books of San Luis Rey

Mission are located, if indeed they ever are, it is impossible to ascertain exactly how many Cahuilla were eventually included in the population of that mission” (1967: 187).

The establishment of the Pala *asistencia*, or outpost, in 1816 marked the first instance of missionary penetration into the southern California interior. Located near Cahuilla territory, Pala did not draw many potential converts. Two more *asistencias*, San Bernardino and Santa Ysabel, were established near Cahuilla territory in the next few years. A few Cahuillas lived at San Bernardino, where they were taught Spanish cattle- and crop-raising techniques (Bean 1972: 17). The majority of Cahuilla, however, continued to practice their aboriginal lifeways.

In 1823, Jose Romero led an expedition through northern Cahuilla territory in another effort to find an overland route to the Colorado River. Romero’s description of this area was the first made by an outsider. Oswalt states: “An expedition member’s diary makes apparent that the Desert Cahuilla, at least those as far south and west as Palm Springs, were in close contact with the San Bernardino mission rancho. Some of the people in the Coachella Valley were raising maize and pumpkins, crops that they probably acquired from Colorado River area Indians, and the Cahuilla of the desert were growing watermelon, an Old World domestic plant introduced by Europeans to the New World” (1988: 151). When and how the Desert Cahuilla acquired watermelon is unclear, but they also were growing pumpkins, corn, and melons (Bean and Mason 1962: 46; Bean and Lawton 1976: 285).

Termination of the missions, formerly under the control of the Franciscans, occurred in 1834. In 1821, after a drawn-out eleven year campaign, Mexico won its independence

from Spain. Mexicans living in California demanded mission secularization in the hopes of gaining valuable land (Ward 1967: 113). Plagued by economic problems, the Mexican Congress reluctantly passed the decree of secularization on August 17, 1833. The secularization process was not implemented until a year later when the governor of California issued his own decree. The Spanish period of southern California tribal control was effectively over.

The Spanish contact period had little impact on traditional Cahuilla culture. Aside from the acquisition of the Spanish language by a limited number of Cahuilla and the procurement of a few European crops, the Cahuilla were not influenced heavily by Spanish interference. Bean asserts, "The Cahuillas further in the desert and in the mountains do not seem to have been involved in the Spanish-Mexican culture at that time. Thus, only a few Cahuillas were influenced by this foreign culture" (1972: 17). The rough topography of much of the Cahuilla landscape discouraged governmental exploration and missionary penetration.

An enduring legacy of the Spanish contact period, however, is the name given to the Cahuilla as well as several other southern California tribes-- Mission Indians. Many Cahuilla live on reservations such as the Morongo Band of Mission Indians or Soboba Band of Mission Indians. Helen Hunt Jackson explained this designation as follows:

The term 'Mission Indians' dates back over one hundred years, to the time of the Franciscan missions in California. It then included all Indians who lived in the mission establishments, or were under the care of the Franciscan fathers. Very naturally the term has continued to be applied to the descendants of those Indians. In the classification of the Indian Bureau, however, it is now used in a somewhat restricted sense, embracing only

those Indians living in the three southernmost counties of California, and known as Serranos, Cahuillas, San Luiseños, and Dieguiños... (1883: 3).

Many present-day Cahuilla do not care for this title, referring to it as their “slave name”.

They feel the term “Mission Indians” is a negative reminder of the victimization characteristic of the mission era.

The Cahuilla had little need for ethnic reformulation and cultural persistence during the Spanish contact period. They were influenced by Spanish contact in such a limited fashion that no facets of aboriginal culture were in danger of replacement or extinction. Indeed, not until the early twentieth century would the Cahuilla face this problem. The next phase of Cahuilla contact history will now be discussed as to its effect on the endurance of Cahuilla culture.

### **Mexican Contact Period**

Upon secularization of the missions and the shift from Spain to Mexico in governmental control of California, a large number of indigenous neophytes returned to their villages in the interior. With this mass exodus came changes in many tribes' lifeways. Ward explains:

Most of the Indians who returned to the interior remained at least partly Catholic and retained their Spanish names. They planted a few fruit orchards and small grain fields, and, to a significant measure, partly Hispanicized most of the interior Indians who had not been under the influence of the missions. At the beginning of the United States period a large number of the interior Indians, including the Mountain Cahuilla, possessed Spanish names, understood a crude Spanish dialect and professed Catholicism, which, because of the lack of priests, had become colored with Indian religious traditions and practices (1967: 116).

In less than two years following secularization, local Mexicans had seized all the livestock and were requesting the rights to mission land (ibid., 115). Natives thus had the choice of either becoming prostitutes or veritable slaves, or returning to their homes.

Phillips adds:

...with secularization thousands left the missions. Many trekked east to join interior groups, while others drifted into the towns, especially Los Angeles, to work intermittently and to drink and gamble. Still others found work on the old mission ranchos... (1975: 40).

The majority of Cahuilla clans and villages were affected positively by secularization of the missions. Of the few Cahuilla who went to live at San Luis Rey, San Gabriel, San Bernardino, and Pala, some returned home and passed on their hybrid Christianity and European agricultural and livestock techniques to their kin. The Cahuilla selected the foreign qualities that they deemed useful and accordingly incorporated them into their own culture. Many Cahuilla learned Spanish in order to conduct business with Mexicans and find work in neighboring towns. Cahuilla settlements located in more remote parts of the desert and the mountains, however, do not appear to have added these attributes to their ways of life (Bean 1972: 17).

The ease with which the Cahuilla blended Spanish/European cultural characteristics and language into their culture reflects the considerable amount of control the people had over their future direction. The author believes the Cahuilla-- or those Cahuilla villages closest to foreign intrusion-- realized at an early date that they would soon be competing with the Spaniards and Mexicans for territorial and economic privileges. Rather than act



aggressively, the Cahuilla decided to incorporate the foreign societies' more useful cultural features into their own culture. Thus, using their knowledge of the "other" cultures, the Cahuilla became more successful in their later efforts to resist assimilation.

A major consequence of Mexican contact was the change in Cahuilla political organization. Prior to mission secularization, Cahuilla villages were small, autonomous political bodies separated by miles of desert and mountainous landscape. Upon mission secularization and the local Mexicans' land interests, however, many tribes (including some Cahuilla) began raiding Mexican ranchos and outposts in retaliation. In Cahuilla territory, Juan Antonio and his followers were asked by the Lugo family to guard Rancho San Bernardino in 1842.

#### *The Rise of "Chiefs"*

Juan Antonio, a Mountain Cahuilla, was almost sixty years old when he was requested to guard Rancho San Bernardino. Controlling the *Kostakiktum*, *Pauatiauitcem*, *Tepamokiktum*, *Natcutakiktum*, and *Temexwanic* lineages as well as ex-neophytes, Juan Antonio was the first true Cahuilla "chief" (Strong 1900: 150; Phillips 1975: 48). Uniting previously incompatible lineages and villages, Antonio succeeded in originating a new type of leadership system while preserving the traditional culture (Bean 1972: 17). As a result of his triumphant defense of San Bernardino, Antonio was highly respected by Mexicans and Cahuilla alike.

Cabazon, a Desert Cahuilla, came to be leader of the *Kauwicpameauitcem* clan and several other desert villages in the mid-1840's. Although chief of the Desert Cahuilla, Cabazon "acknowledged the supreme position of Antonio" (Phillips 1975: 51). Backed

by the Californian government, Cabezon was given legal papers of a questionable nature to authorize his power (Strong 1900: 53-54).

Juan Antonio and Cabezon represented the new type of Cahuilla leader, chiefs sufficiently charismatic and effective in bringing together large groups of previously autonomous people for a common goal. Phillips states:

...clusters of lineages were coming under the personal control of powerful, self-made leaders. It seems that most of these leaders, even those who were ex-neophytes, had traditional political positions from which to expand their power. That is, they were either headmen or at least were members of important lineages. The core of their followers, therefore, were probably lineage or clan kinsmen; but they also attracted to their banners ex-neophytes and nonkinsmen from shattered lineages. Thus, they developed personal followings that were not necessarily based on kinship considerations. And although they could not command the allegiance of every member of their language division, some came to control widely scattered settlements (1975: 45).

These new leaders accordingly had different duties than did their predecessors. Phillips continues:

No longer governing as traditional headmen, these leaders ruled as powerful territorial chiefs. While the religious, judicial, political, and economic duties of the headman were largely undifferentiated, limited, and localized, the functions of the chief consisted in regulating all the society's public affairs. These included negotiating with the whites and neighboring Indian groups, convening council meetings, appointing and dismissing subordinate officials, adjudicating disputes between individuals and villages, and issuing summary punishment that included death. In short, the change from headmanship to chieftainship can be seen as a shift from the *right* to govern based on consensus to the *ability* to rule based on power (ibid.).

As the chiefs' power grew among their followers and word spread among the non-

Cahuilla tribes and Europeans, the change from governing to ruling became more noticeable. Juan Antonio's power was so absolute that, according to Phillips, "...he could summon to his village all his followers, excluding the old and the sick, at any one time" (ibid., 51). The enthusiasm and respect which the chiefs could arouse in their followers rivaled, if not exceeded, that which was exhibited by Euro-Americans towards the President of the United States (ibid.).

Not all Cahuilla, however, were allied with Juan Antonio or Cabezon. Among those who were, total devotion to and accordance with the chiefs' resolutions was a rarity. Bean explains, "Nor was their leadership of sufficient strength so that they could command overall obedience to decisions which they made" (1972: 17). Like their aboriginal preference for village political autonomy, many Cahuilla chose to pursue different paths. Some ended up in neighboring towns and cities, living off of the street or working menial labor jobs. Others stayed on at the missions and ranchos, where they farmed and tended livestock. Still others allied themselves with neighboring groups, thus causing intertribal hostilities.

A notable instance of tribal violence was the event at Aguanga in 1847. Manuelito Cota, leader of a combined group of former Cahuilla and Luisiño converts of Mission San Luis Rey, killed eleven of Andres Pico's soldiers at Pauma Ranch. Juan Antonio and his men were asked by the Mexican government via Jose del Carmen Lugo to capture and punish the offenders. Antonio and his men ambushed the guilty party near Temecula, killed one hundred of them, and later brutally slaughtered twenty more (Beattie and Beattie 1939: 74-75; Ward 1967: 121-22). Antonio's power thus appears to have been

enforced by violent means.

Despite the violence and tribal conflict associated with these chiefs' tenures, they succeeded in initiating a new political system. Previously unfamiliar clans and lineages allied together. Cahuilla social and political structures became more centralized.

Variations among clans in ceremonies and language became more minute. Juan Antonio and Cabezon's followers obtained knowledge of Mexican and European ways. These chiefs and others realized the importance of joining their people together in order to retain their heritage and resist assimilation. Bean asserts, "...they protected and maintained the traditional Cahuilla system; they were not innovators attempting to impose radical change upon their people" (1972: 17).

Juan Antonio and Cabezon's many experiences with Europeans provided future generations of Cahuilla with an invaluable knowledge of their oppressors. Phillips alleges, "...the rise of territorial chiefs profoundly affected inter-Indian and Indian-white relations in southern California. The Spaniards had to deal with relatively powerless headmen who were usually inexperienced in white ways; the Californios and later the Americans had to interact with powerful chiefs who often had years of experience in dealing with white men" (1975: 45-46).

### *Wage Labor Economy*

During this period an influx of Mexican and Euro-American settlers arrived in the San Bernardino Valley. Though California was not owned by the United States, some Americans renounced their United States citizenship and pledged allegiance to the Mexican government. Looking for land on which to grow crops and raise livestock, they

invariably settled in Cahuilla territory. Cahuilla villages accordingly experienced more intense contact with European societies than in the Spanish contact period (Brumgardt and Bowles 1981: 92). Though the Cahuilla were rightful owners of the San Bernardino Valley, many elected to retreat farther and let these men take the land. Some Cahuilla ended up working for the settlers on land that was once their own. Ward states:

“Jonathan J. Warner of Connecticut was given a vast land grant in 1843, created from lands under the jurisdiction of the San Luis Rey Mission, which included part of the Mountain Cahuilla territory, as well as territory of the Cupeño, Luiseño, and Diegueño Indians. He established on it a large open cattle range and used the local Indians as ranch hands” (1967: 120).

Participation in the Mexican/Euro-American wage labor system was a necessary evil for many Cahuilla. While some Cahuilla worked only as much as they could drink, others provided for their families with the menial wages they received. Ward further avows, “By the close of the Mexican period Cahuilla Indians lived and worked in the San Bernardino Valley from the vicinity of Cucamonga eastward, and the whole of San Gorgonio Pass, in addition to their original areas...Inasmuch as the cheap supply of Indian labor had been eliminated through neglect and abuse, the Cahuilla were encouraged to come into the San Bernardino Valley, and were exploited in turn as had been the extinct Indians who formerly lived there” (ibid., 122-23).

In 1848 the United States acquired California from Mexico. With this transaction came an influx of Americans into Cahuilla territory. Though Cahuilla social and political life was not immediately affected by this change in ownership, over the next few decades

many aspects of the traditional culture would begin to disintegrate. Land dispossession would be the most dreadful of the many injustices inflicted on the Cahuilla.

The Mexican contact period brought many changes to Cahuilla culture. Along with the rise of powerful chiefs and political restructuring, an important outcome of this era was the conscious selection by many Cahuilla of advantageous Mexican cultural attributes, and their subsequent incorporation into Cahuilla culture. Items such as language, clothing, and food were added to the traditional culture by families and villages as deemed necessary for the good of the group. By joining foreign qualities with their own, Cahuilla were thus able to ensure the survival of their culture into the next generation.

Ethnic reformulation was employed by the Cahuilla during this period. The once-foreign institutions that Cahuilla families incorporated into the traditional culture were creating a new Cahuilla/Mexican culture. Intermarriage between the two cultures was producing new social identities, in the process causing Cahuilla culture at large to reformulate itself. Though the culture was gradually changing and foreign elements creeping in, Cahuilla still had control over their collective future.

Political realignment was the most important development during the Mexican contact period. Prior to Mexican contact, villages and lineages were organized according to kinship. Chiefs brought about the combination of these lineages into super-lineages, based on locale rather than kinship. Though tensions between these formerly unconnected families were present, the unity remained for generations. Chiefs such as Juan Antonio and Cabezon instilled in their followers senses of pride and determination,

feelings which were familiar to all Cahuilla but never had been demanded so explicitly. These two qualities would be of extreme importance in the following decades, when the United States government would begin its assimilation attempts.

The Cahuilla have employed ethnic reformulation over time as a reaction to the introduction of identity-threatening alien elements into the culture. "Employing" ethnic reformulation means the conscious or unconscious change, however slight, in an individual or group's way of viewing themselves. For ethnic reformulation to be most effective, the identity of a group must be changed. The collective identity changes when a new cultural feature is incorporated into the "host" culture. When ethnic reformulation occurs and the collective identity is maintained, the culture persists.

The Euro-American contact period now will be discussed. Due to the enduring nature of this contact period, Cahuilla accordingly have undergone many changes. Ethnic reformulation came into existence during this period as an answer to these changes.

### **Euro-American Contact Period**

In 1848 the United States acquired California from Mexico in the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo, thus ending the Mexican-American War. The Cahuilla were now under the jurisdiction of the United States government. Oswalt states:

In 1850 the U.S. Congress sent a special commission to California to negotiate treaties with Indians and assign lands to them. A Cahuilla treaty arranged in 1852 set aside land from San Geronio to Warner's Ranch, an area about forty miles long and thirty miles wide. The U.S. Senate, however, refused to ratify any of the eighteen treaties with California Indians. Congressional resistance stemmed from a number of facts: the commissioners had

committed the government to spend a great deal of money, white citizens of California were vigorously opposed to the treaties, and it was thought that some of these lands might contain gold (1988: 151).

Though many Cahuilla were being forced off their lands, there were still areas where they could move. Ward explains, "Many of the Cahuilla kept up a steady retreat to back country and desert lands where they were able to survive..." (1967: 157).

In 1852 Edward F. Beale was named Superintendent of Indian Affairs in California. He chose Benjamin D. Wilson, a former mayor of Los Angeles who was sympathetic to the Indians' troubles, to be the subagent for southern California. Wilson issued a report that year describing the Cahuilla, stating:

The Cahuilla chiefs, and many of the people, speak Spanish. Many still claim to be 'Christians'; the majority of them are not...Their entire number now scarcely exceeds 3000 souls (1952: 8).

He went on to describe their economic situation thusly:

That they are corrupt, and becoming more so every day, no candid man can dispute. They do not always find better examples to imitate now than they saw in the past generation of whites; for the latter have not improved in the social virtues as fast as the Indians have declined. What marvel that eighteen years of neglect, misrule, oppression, slavery, and injustice, and every opportunity and temptation to gratify their natural vices withal, should have given them a fatal tendency downward to the very lowest degradation! (ibid., 20).

In the 1840's and 1850's came a steady progression of Euro-American settlers into southern California. These settlers tried to evict, often by violent means, Cahuilla and other tribes from the land. Lands not granted under Spanish or Mexican title were made



available for purchase by settlers, and for homesteading after 1862 (Ward 1967: 156-57).

The ruthlessness of the American settlers forced even more Cahuilla to move to Los Angeles, where they fell victim to drunkenness, gambling, prostitution, and disease.

Despite these degradations, many Cahuilla remained on their land and dealt with the problems produced by the land-hungry American settlers. For many, cultural practice remained a source of strength in the face of adversity. Bean elaborates:

By 1851 Cahuilla traditional political organization was still intact. This is evidenced by the treaty of Temecula in 1851, signed by various traditional leaders of the Cahuilla groups. As late as 1860 the historical records do not indicate any readily observable changes in Cahuilla institutions... (1972: 17).

#### *The Smallpox Epidemic of 1863*

In 1863 smallpox struck the Cahuilla. Disease had spread among villages to a limited degree in the past, but nothing compared in intensity to the smallpox epidemic of 1863. Spreading from Los Angeles, the epidemic wiped out a substantial percentage of the population. Oswalt states, "...although the number of people who perished was not recorded, the epidemic probably was a significant factor in eroding the people and their way of life" (1988: 152).

Cahuillas had been exposed to European diseases for many decades. Due to the distance between villages, however, diseases were usually confined to one area and did not spread to surrounding regions (Bean 1972: 82). Bean speculates also, "The deliberate burning of houses and personal property after the death of an individual, as well as the healthy diet, may have tempered the effects of contagion" (ibid., 78).

By 1863 the Cahuilla population was dissimilar from that of the aboriginal era.

Villages had become more unified and centralized, and the overall population had been reduced due to minor epidemics, clashes with other tribes and the European cultures, and movement to surrounding towns and ranchos. When the epidemic struck, these conditions worked to the Cahuilla's disadvantage. Though many Cahuilla were spared, enough died so that the transmission of traditional knowledge to the next generation was severely reduced (Oswalt 1988: 152).

The smallpox epidemic of 1863 had significant effects on the transmission of Cahuilla cultural practice. Hungry and dispirited, some Cahuilla saw assimilation as their only option. According to Oswalt:

Throughout the latter part of the nineteenth century, some Cahuilla worked on the ranches of whites, the men as laborers and the women as domestics. The men also tended orchards and vineyards, cut mesquite wood, and labored at salt works. When the Southern Pacific railroad was being built through the area in the 1870's, they were employed as laborers (ibid.).

Making matters worse were the paltry wages they received. According to Phillips, "The town servant earned a maximum of a dollar per day, but most received less. For attending to most of the household duties, an Indian and his wife received fifty cents a day from their Anglo-American employer" (1980: 188).

Incorporation into the Euro-American wage labor economy consequently affected cultural practice. Many middle-aged and young Cahuilla left their homes for days or weeks at a time to work, therefore leaving the elders and small children at home. The origins of many tribal members' disinterest in and ignorance of cultural practice and knowledge, characteristic of the latter half of the twentieth century, can be traced back to

this period.

In spite of this restructuring of priorities, cultural practice still survived. Bean states, “The reaction of Cahuillas up to this time had been to retreat from the circumstances imposed by European culture rather than to seek assimilation...The Cahuilla participated with Anglo-American culture only as it was necessary for survival, and preserved their traditional ways in the privacy of their...homes” (1972: 18). This private domestic cultural practice came to be characteristic of much of Cahuilla society throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

#### *The Reservation Era*

In the late 1860's, many California Indians began demanding land rights. Over fifty years of displacement and dispossession by Europeans had caused enough misery and anger. In 1875, President Ulysses S. Grant approved the founding of the Agua Caliente (Palm Springs) and Cahuilla reservations. Small reservations had been established by the Superintendent of Indian Affairs in San Diego County in 1870, but the two reservations in 1875 were the first actual attempts by the United States government to do something about the land disputes (Oswalt 1988: 170-71).

The origins of reservation establishment in California go back to 1852 with the Wilson Report. Wilson had drawn up a blueprint of sorts for the division of aboriginal lands in the area. He stated:

These six nations (Tulareños, Cahuillas, San Luisenos, Diegueños, Yumas, and Mojaves)...inhabit a territory... with an area of about 45,000 square miles...Beyond that limit-- with the southern line of the State, the rivers Colorado and Mohave, and a line drawn from the last-

mentioned river to the Four Creeks (in Tulare county) for its southern, eastern, and northern boundaries-- the Government might provide all these Indians with a permanent home. In such a location under a just system, there is no reason to apprehend an undue pressure of white population upon them, either from the east or the west... (1952: 2).

Though Wilson did not take into account the population increase or extreme development of the area, he nevertheless offered a possible solution, however simplistic and uncalculated, to the growing land issues.

By the 1880's, reservations were common throughout southern California. Morongo (originally named Potrero, then Malki), Agua Caliente, Augustine, Cabazon, Torres-Martinez, Los Coyotes, Santa Rosa, Cahuilla, Ramona, and the now-defunct Mission Creek Reservations all were established by 1891 (Bean 1978a: 585). Though the California government initially was not involved in reservation affairs, by the first decade of the twentieth century the Cahuilla were beginning to feel the effects of governmental interference (Bean, Vane, and Young 1991: 6).

While many tribes lost their aboriginal lands and were moved from locale to locale, Cahuilla reservations were established on Cahuilla territory. No Cahuilla were moved hundreds of miles away to live with other tribes on newly-created reservation lands. Rather, the Cahuilla continued to live on the same land, thus contributing to the retention of cultural knowledge and ethnic identity.

To some degree, the initiation of the reservation system worked in the Cahuilla's favor. Now living on federally-recognized and -protected lands, Cahuilla had the backing of the federal government if settlers tried to steal their lands. Cultural practice also

continued due to this decline in everyday European contact. Bean alleges, “They (reservations), too, functioned to preserve the Cahuilla in relative isolation from Anglo-American culture” (1972: 18). This segregation served as a reinforcer of Cahuilla cultural practice. Bean, Vane, and Young state: “...traditional leadership patterns persisted, and much of the traditional religious and political system was intact. Cahuilla were still using many of their traditional hunting and gathering areas” (1991: 6).

Despite this cultural survival, certain practices became modified. Ward explains:

Social customs were gradually being altered through contact with Caucasians. By the 1880's Cahuillas no longer asked the consent of the father of the girl to marry her. The young people just went to live with each other without parental consent or civil ceremony. A good-will gift of twenty or thirty dollars in cash was usually given to the girl's father after the marriage had already been consummated (1967: 185).

Modification of cultural practices characterized Cahuilla social life during the latter half of the nineteenth century. Although territorially isolated from Euro-American culture, many Cahuillas were actively participating in the Euro-American wage labor economy. Naturally, outside elements filtered in and became part of Cahuilla customs. The younger Cahuilla were becoming disinterested in their culture and heritage. Bean attributes a portion of this apathy towards the government schools, stating: “Government schools were opened in which young Cahuillas were trained in rather menial roles, Protestant missionaries became influential, and much traditional Cahuilla life was altered. Cahuilla cultural institutions were generally suppressed, particularly religious and political ones” (1978a: 584). Cultural institutions continued to be practiced, albeit by a declining percentage of the population. According to Ward, between 1885 and 1889,

“...the people lived in adobe houses and...the young people were quickly learning the customs of the whites. Only the old people still participated in the ancient ceremonial customs and rites, whereas the young Indians remained bored...” (1967: 185).

From 1875 until 1891, Cahuillas on the reservations lived independent of Euro-Americans. With Congress’ passing of the Act for the Relief of Mission Indians in 1891, however, this peaceful existence changed. The act formally established reservations for the southern California Indians. Bean and Bourgeault explain:

The reservation boundaries were based on the recommendations of the Smiley Commission. While setting up reservations and defining boundaries, this congressional act actually took land away from several reservations. Reservation lands were held in trust by the U.S. government for the Indians, and no property taxes ever had to be paid on these lands. After the reservation act went into effect, the Cahuillas were left with only two-thirds of the land they had controlled prior to 1891 (1989: 93).

Losing their lands and culture, Cahuillas entered the twentieth century on a grim note. Traditional subsistence techniques gave way to agriculture, livestock raising, and wage labor (Bean, Vane, and Young 1991: 6). Cahuillas were successful in the first two areas until the allotment programs, begun in 1887, divided lands into tracts so small that cultivation became impossible (Bean 1978a: 584). Bean and Bourgeault state, “...many had been upset because they had not received the individual allotments of land promised them by the federal government. However, most of these allotments would have been too small for efficient farming” (1989: 94).

Children became the next object of the federal government. Indian agents believed the most effective way to “Americanize” Cahuilla culture would be to start with the children

who had not yet learned all their cultural traditions. Children were sent to government-run elementary schools, where they learned English and were punished for speaking Cahuilla. Only a few schools beyond the elementary level existed across the country, so children had to leave their families to attend school (ibid., 93). With the children away at school, a huge hole thus was created in cultural transmission. The elders continued to practice the traditional customs, but with the children at school and the adults at work, little cultural information was conveyed.

Many young Cahuilla were converted to Catholicism and Protestantism during this time, thus effectively putting an end to a large percentage of the population's ceremonial practices. Ward states:

The old taboo of living in a house in which someone had died was still in exercise. But instead of the burning which was required in earlier times, the houses were merely abandoned and new ones built nearby. However, those Cahuilla who thoroughly embraced the Catholic religion completely abandoned the old practices. They built adobe brick houses that were successively occupied after recurrent deaths, and the dead were no longer cremated but buried in cemeteries (1967: 215).

Other injustices were carried out by the United States government. Traditional religious practices were banned, and persecution ensued. Cahuillas were forbidden from attending their ceremonies. Christianization of Cahuillas was taking place again (Bean and Bourgeault 1989: 93).

As the early twentieth century progressed, reservations increasingly became more independent of the federal government and acquired their own unique characteristics. In this regard, each reservation was not unlike a pre-reservation era village. Bean, Vane,

and Young assert:

At this time most Cahuillas were resident members of various reservations. These reservations had established their own quite separate socio-cultural system. This system was not unlike that of the older ritual congregation. Various reservations cooperated regularly in socioeconomic and religious activities which provided substantial economic and political benefits to all the Indian groups in the area (1991: 6).

This group cooperation is reminiscent of the ritual reciprocity that took place between families and lineages in the pre-contact era. Though cultural institutions were losing popularity among the younger generation, most Cahuilla still believed in helping and providing for one another.

Despite this seemingly advantageous situation, problems still existed. The Indian Service representatives regulated reservation political life, appointing captains, judges, and police. The Mission Indian Federation was formed by Cahuillas and members of neighboring tribes in protest of this governmental exploitation. Though the MIF was not effective in curbing the agents' domination, the unity and organization displayed by the group was proof of the members' commitment to political, social, and economic independence (Bean and Bourgeault 1989: 94).

In 1934 Congress passed the Indian Reorganization Act, which gave reservation inhabitants more control over their lives. Political and economic autonomy increased. Cahuillas now had control over the election of their own leaders, and the development of their lands. They also could borrow money from banks and government agencies to start their own businesses, buy back their lands, or build homes. The IRA gave back to the



Cahuilla many of the freedoms they enjoyed in the aboriginal and early historic periods (ibid.).

In the 1930's, the Great Depression affected the Cahuilla along with the rest of the United States. Many Cahuillas who were living off the reservations returned in order to lessen expenses (ibid.). Bean, Vane, and Young state: "Many Cahuillas who still remembered traditional hunting and gathering practices put them to good use to alleviate economic stresses. The resurgence of such traditional practices during the Depression seems to have been an important factor in the maintenance of Cahuilla knowledge of their original territory and the use of its resources for human subsistence" (1991: 6). Contrary to the hopes of the federal government, cultural knowledge was still being put to use.

World War II severely affected Cahuilla cultural practice and transmission. With many men away overseas, agriculture and wage labor accordingly suffered. Bean, Vane, and Young explain:

World War II and changing economic conditions for small farmers, a drought, and many other factors acted in the other direction, contributing to a decrease of Cahuilla interest in traditional ways as well as a decrease in the exposure of non-Indians to these ways. Many young men served in the military forces. Others left the reservation for war-related jobs. Many elders who had maintained traditions died without passing on significant information about their culture (ibid.).

After World War II, federal supervision of the California Indians was partially terminated. As a result, Cahuillas became more involved in education, welfare, health, and economic issues. Reservation governments depended less on the Bureau of Indian Affairs' help. This shift in management accorded the Cahuilla more control over their

future (Bean 1978a: 584; Bean and Bourgeault 1989: 95).

### **Conclusion**

Contact with the Spanish, Mexican, and Euro-American cultures had severe implications for the persistence of Cahuilla cultural characteristics over time. The degree of change progressed with each encroaching culture: Spanish contact appeared to have no deleterious effects on the traditional culture; Mexican contact had both positive and negative effects on Cahuilla culture and ethnicity; and Euro-American contact had the most devastating consequences for Cahuilla people. At the same time, however, extended Euro-American contact forced the Cahuilla to return to traditional cultural practice for survival.

The early twentieth century marked a gap in the transmission of cultural knowledge from one generation to the next. With the children away at school and being taught to forget their heritage, several generations of children grew up without learning any traditions. Children were whipped and/or spanked at school for speaking Cahuilla. The period from 1890 to 1950-- where this chapter ends-- included three generations of culturally-handicapped Cahuilla. As the twentieth century advanced, the young Cahuillas who did practice the traditional culture did so in the privacy of their families' homes.

The reservation organization system of the 1920's and the use of traditional subsistence techniques during the Great Depression are examples of ethnic reformulation. Concerning the former, village reciprocal reciprocity and economic activity gave way to the reservation era initiated in 1875. However, enough traditional cultural practices

remained in the collective ideology to re-employ these customs on the reservations. Concerning the latter, traditional subsistence techniques were never forgotten, only considered outdated. When the Great Depression hit, Cahuillas had the option of reverting to aboriginal subsistence techniques for survival. In both instances, Cahuilla ethnicity was reformulated and renewed by the utilization of aboriginal cultural customs. As a result, the culture was able to persist.

With the absence of young and middle-aged men during World War II, traditional knowledge consequently suffered. Some men never returned, others returned to the reservation bitter and apathetic, while others moved to the surrounding cities. The elders and women thus became the agents of cultural persistence. This second “gap” was harmful to the future of Cahuilla cultural practice due to the lack of active cultural practitioners.

The period from 1950 until the present will be discussed in the next chapter. The focus of this study is contemporary Cahuilla cultural practice and ethnic identity. Therefore, the author feels this time period should constitute a chapter unto itself. Interviews with Cahuilla and non-Cahuilla informants will be analyzed in order to interpret the contemporary state of cultural practice and ethnic identity.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE CONTEMPORARY CAHUILLA: UNITED OR DISTINCT?

The state of Cahuilla cultural practices prior to 1950 has been described. Ethnic reformulation was found to have occurred primarily in the 1930's and 1940's as a response to the widespread decline in traditional cultural practices and ethnic identity among the Cahuilla. The combined effects of government schools, Christianization, land allotment programs, Euro-American wage labor economy, and World War II caused many Cahuilla to become disinterested in their heritage. By the 1940's cultural unfamiliarity was prevalent on many Cahuilla reservations.

Ethnic reformulation was not consciously or deliberately employed by the Cahuilla in response to loss of cultural knowledge. Rather, as new elements infiltrated and became part of Cahuilla culture-- such as electricity, running water, clothing styles-- enough Cahuilla remembered and used traditional cultural characteristics to offset total incorporation into Euro-American culture. The entrance of every foreign cultural feature into Cahuilla culture had significant effects on the traditional lifestyle, which by the mid-twentieth century was eroding rapidly. The Cahuilla thus learned to consolidate the essential Euro-American elements with the changing traditional culture. This combination of selected features from the traditional and European cultures-- features which proved to be valuable to the tribe's vitality-- has come to characterize contemporary Cahuilla culture. As a result of these changes, additions, and deletions, the culture has been able to persist.

### **Agua Caliente Land Rights**

Located in and around the city of Palm Springs, the Agua Caliente Indian Reservation is home to the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians. The total area of the reservation is 31,610 acres, while 6700 of those acres lie within city limits. Tribal lands are composed of Tahquitz, Andreas, Murry, and Palm canyons (known collectively as Indian Canyons), two cemeteries, and the Hot Springs area (including the Spa Hotel and tribal offices). As of 1994, tribal enrollment was 296. The Tribal Council is made up of five members, who serve staggered one- and two-year terms (Tiller 1996: 234).

One of the most important tribal issues from the 1950's to the present has been land rights, particularly Agua Caliente land rights. The Agua Caliente (Palm Springs) Band of Cahuilla Indians, a Desert group, have been involved in extremely complex legal procedures concerning land allotments since 1891.

John R.T. Reeves, Chief Counsel of the Office of Indian Affairs, explained in the April 7, 1937 House of Representatives hearing before the Committee on Indian Affairs:

...as early as 1891, Congress created a commission to go out in California and set apart reservations for each of these bands, or villages, of Mission Indians, with authority in the Secretary of the Interior to issue a tribal patent to each band for the reservation set apart for them, which patent would declare that the lands would be held in trust for a period of 25 years. Another provision in the same statute further authorized the Secretary of the Interior, in his discretion, to make allotments to the Mission Indians in areas of considerable size, but not to exceed 640 acres, or less than 160 acres of grazing land to each Indian, and in addition to that not to

exceed 20 acres of arable land to each single person over 21 years of age (1937: 2).

A 1917 bill changed the extent of the allotted area, and also allowed an extension of the trust period. Reeves explained:

Some doubt or confusion evidently arose regarding the provisions of this 1917 act, as to whether it was mandatory to the extent of directing, or requiring, the Secretary of the Interior to make allotments severally to the Mission Indians, regardless of local conditions, regardless of the suitability of the land for allotment, and regardless of whether the Indians desired allotments in several. Now an allotting agent was placed in the field and allotments were made on a number of those reservations for which patents were issued. In other reservations allotments were not made (*ibid.*, 3).

Concerning the Agua Caliente, their reservations were characterized as a “checkerboard” pattern. The tribe owned the even-numbered sections, while Euro-Americans owned the odd-numbered sections. The reservation is adjacent to the city of Palm Springs, which developed on one of the odd-numbered parcels owned by Euro-Americans. Palm Springs subsequently became a fashionable winter resort.

Sharp divisions occurred in the 1920's among the Agua Caliente regarding these allotments. While some were willing to accept them, others rejected the proposed allotment plans. The independence from European interference characteristic of the aboriginal era was still very much alive, though now was being counterbalanced increasingly by compliance.

The allotment debate continued throughout the 1930's and 1940's. After a 1946 Supreme Court decision declared the 160-acre parcels valid, another ruling in 1950

resulted in all allotted lands being considered equal in value for each family head. In 1957 a bill, H.R. 2396, was proposed and met with great opposition from the Agua Caliente. Two important sections of H.R. 2396 stipulated: "That the Secretary of the Interior...is authorized and directed to equalize the values of all allotments of land on the Agua Caliente (Palm Springs) Reservation in California in accordance with the provisions of this Act" (U.S. House 1958: 1). The second notable section stated: "Title to all unallotted lands and improvements thereon and to all funds and personal property that are held by the United States in trust for the band shall be conveyed by the Secretary to an Agua Caliente tribal corporation...that shall be organized under the laws of California, one of the other States, or the District of Columbia, in a manner that is satisfactory to the Secretary and that is consistent with the provisions of this act. In consideration of such conveyance to it by the United States, the tribal corporation shall issue equalization stock, membership stock, and executive stock as provided in this Act" (ibid.).

Most Agua Caliente were against the creation of a tribal corporation, viewing it as still more governmental interference. Later that year the bill was defeated, leaving all unallotted lands in tribal hands. A major financial victory was won for the Agua Caliente.

In 1954 an all-woman tribal council was elected. In the years immediately following World War II, a general shortage of men on the reservations was common. Death, disillusion, and migration to the surrounding cities were the main factors for this large-scale absence. Faced with depending on the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) or choosing an all-woman council to take care of tribal business, the Agua Caliente chose the latter

option. Despite the unconventionality of the situation, the women were effective in temporarily solving the land disputes (Oswalt 1988: 175).

In 1959, Public Laws 86-339 and 86-326 were created. The former established allotments for all Agua Caliente who did not have them, excluding future-born members. Equalizations also were to be made according to the 1957-58 land value appraisals. These appraisals varied from \$75,000 to \$630,000. The latter bill's purpose "is to permit leases on Indian lands on the Agua Caliente (Palm Springs) Reservation in California for public, religious, educational, residential, and business purposes to be made for a primary term of 99 years or less instead of the present 25 years" (U.S. House 1959: 1). Financial security for much of the tribe was achieved.

These lands continued to increase in value. Oswalt states, "Even with the passage of the first bill, it was impossible to equalize the allotments fully. Some eighty percent of the band obtained allotments valued at not less than \$335,000; the remaining twenty percent of the allotments had values in excess of \$335,000" (1988: 173). In 1960, the Palm Springs Spa complex was completed at a cost of \$1.8 million. In 1963, an adjacent hotel was completed, comprising the first major Agua Caliente leasing enterprise.

During the 1950's and 1960's, Agua Caliente business affairs were managed illegally by representatives of the local, state, and federal governments. Millions of tribal dollars went to conservators and guardians of the allottees. As a result, in 1968 a bill was passed which stated: "If the Secretary concludes that a guardian or conservator is not acting in the best interests of an allottee, or that the estate of the allottee is endangered by actions of the guardian or conservator, he shall petition the court for the removal of the guardian



or conservator and for such further relief as may be appropriate” (U.S. House 1968: 5). Even after the passing of this bill, Agua Caliente still were being exploited by the California and United States governments.

The extreme land value of Palm Springs has been both a blessing and a curse for the Cahuilla who live there. In 1975 the entire assets of the Agua Caliente were estimated at \$200 million, making them the wealthiest Native Americans on a per capita basis. However, this distinction is misleading. Less than half of the enrolled members had allotments, and income from the allotments varied from \$10,000 to \$200,000 per person. Individuals without allotments are generally poor, but receive money and assistance from well-off relatives and friends.

Agua Caliente land issues of the 1970's and 1980's were centered mainly around zoning ordinances and further development. Concerning the former, in 1965 the city of Palm Springs passed a zoning ordinance which claimed control over tribal lands within the city (U.S. House 1967: 3). The Agua Caliente then prepared their own zoning ordinances, which did not correspond with those made by the city. In the early 1970's, the city and tribal council fought over this issue in the courts. In 1977, the Agua Caliente were victorious as a result of a similar court decision concerning the Santa Rosa Rancheria in central California, which maintained that Native Americans control the zoning of their lands within city limits.

In 1977, the Agua Caliente and the city of Palm Springs initiated a land use contract, the first of its kind in the country. In this agreement the city recognized the tribe's exclusive authority to regulate the allotted lands. For the first time, the two parties

worked together for their mutual benefit. In 1984, the Agua Caliente and Cathedral City administered a similar contract. In both instances the tribe accepted each city's land use regulations as its own, and appointed both cities to act as tribal agents in law enforcement on native lands within city limits.

Since the late 1980's, the Agua Caliente have put considerable effort into revitalizing their heritage and cultural traditions. Oswalt theorizes that this renewed interest is largely due to their economic stability, stating, "Now that the Agua Caliente Band has a more equitable relationship with the City of Palm Springs and their joint efforts for the sound economic development of city land are going smoothly, the Indians have turned increasingly toward an emphasis on their heritage" (1988: 176). Such a statement implies a connection between money and cultural practice. Oswalt suggests that recent Agua Caliente ethnic reformulation is due to the money and assets they have accumulated as a result of their land holdings.

It is the author's feeling that any source of cultural resurgence, as long as it promotes cultural interest and ethnic identification, is beneficial. Money can cause sharp divisions among a tribe, but it also can produce culturally-enhancing mechanisms. The Agua Caliente Cultural Museum has been in operation since the early 1990's, serving as a repository of traditional knowledge and current events. The Agua Caliente Cultural Museum and the city are in the process of creating the Agua Caliente Interpretive Center, an interactive complex that will include: a cleaning, restoration, and storage facility for tribal artifacts; a children's "hands-on" room; a lecture and traditional performance area; a re-creation of a traditional Cahuilla village; a cultural library; natural botanical gardens;

and hiking/equestrian trails and picnic areas. The formation of these two heritage centers was made possible by the tribe's tremendous land assets, and their prominent role in the city's operation.

The Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians' situation is not indicative of the Cahuilla people as a whole. While less than half of enrolled Agua Caliente tribal members are actually "rich", many live in much the same way as the other Cahuilla reservation inhabitants. Though the collective Agua Caliente have had, and still have, more financial advantages than the other Cahuilla bands, the author believes the interest in their heritage and culture is genuine. While money certainly can create opportunities for cultural advancement and improvement, a people's desire for such change first has to be present. Contemporary Agua Caliente cultural practices and pride have not happened merely as a result of tribal wealth. The many court battles the tribe has been involved in undoubtedly have influenced its degree of cultural persistence and practices. Consequently, contemporary Agua Caliente ethnic reformulation has occurred as a result of the mutually beneficial relationship with the City of Palm Springs. The Agua Caliente have had the necessary time and convenience to pursue projects that will aid in the endurance and transmission of the traditional culture.

Other bands and reservations now will be focused on, with concentration on the major changes and issues affecting each respective group. Interviews and observations on Morongo, Soboba, Torres-Martinez, and Cahuilla reservations will be presented and discussed so as to gain insight into various tribal members' thoughts on the contemporary state of cultural practice and ethnicity.

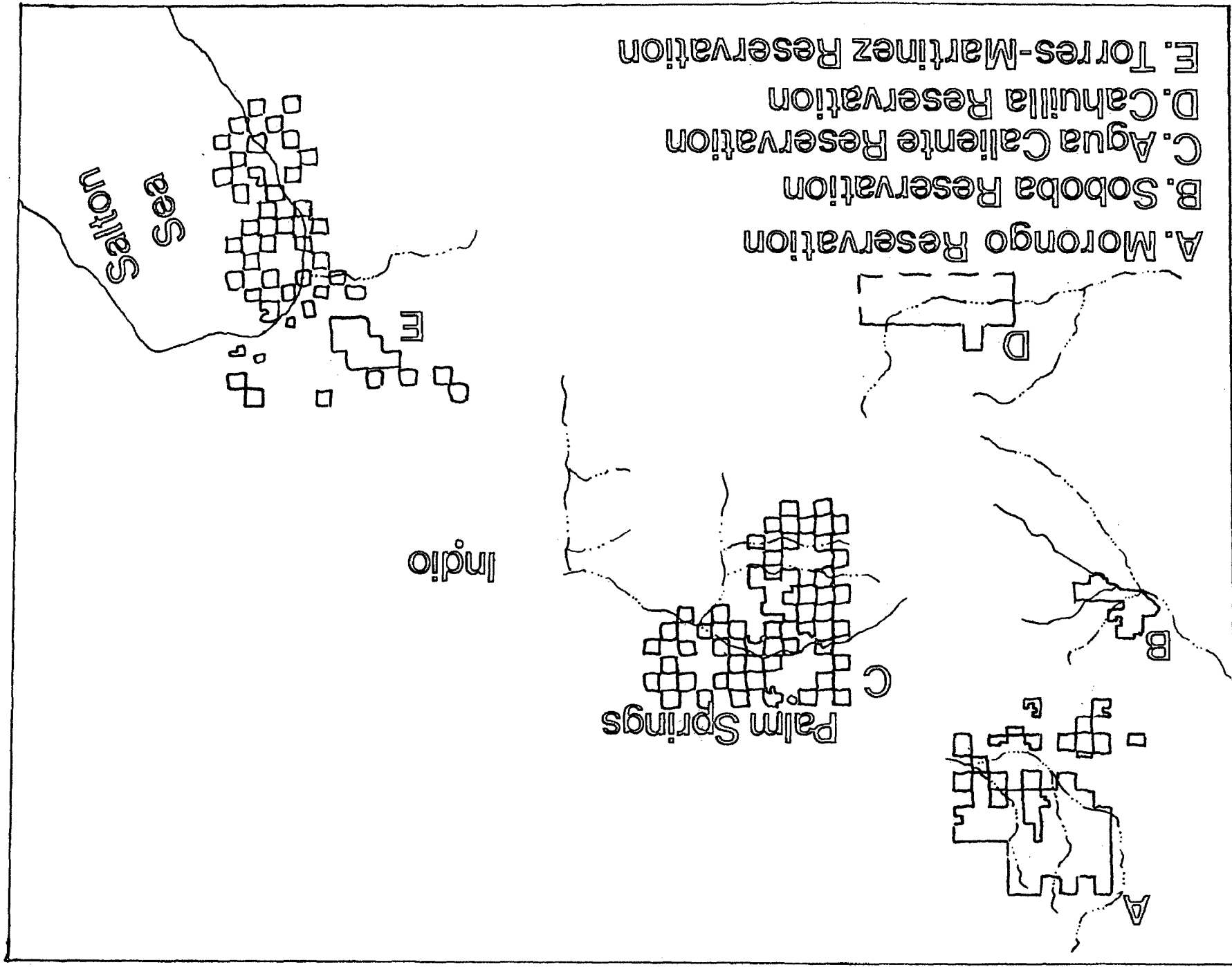


Fig. 2

### **Morongó Reservation**

Morongó Reservation, located a few miles east of Banning, makes up 32,362 acres. With a population of 1109, Morongó is one of the larger Cahuilla reservations. Morongó is home to the Morongó Indian Health Clinic, which serves reservations in the area and has a contract with the San Geronio Memorial Hospital in Banning. Tribal affairs are managed by the Tribal Council, which is made up of seven members who serve two-year staggered terms (Tiller 1996: 274).

Morongó was home to the Wanakik Cahuilla in aboriginal times. Though Morongans and the Agua Caliente share some characteristics, they both have adapted uniquely to their situations and surroundings. One difference is the higher degree of tribal and ethnic diversity on Morongó. Full- and partial-blooded members of a number of Cahuilla groups live side-by-side with members of the Serrano, Cupeno, Diegueno, and Luiseno tribes, as well as individuals of mixed Native, Hispanic-, Euro-, and African-American ancestry. Hispanic-, Euro-, and African-American individuals who have married into the various tribes also live on the reservation.

In historic times, Morongó was home to a remarkable degree of tribal diversification and alliance. Bean comments:

The first reservation population, drawn from several heterogeneous tribes and many clans, was in effect related everywhere in southern California. All of the southern California tribes were represented at Morongó. From the first Indian protest movements, during the 1860's, BIA personnel noted that leaders at Morongó had very wide networks of political support, which cut across various reservations and tribes (1978b: 486).

Such tribal and ethnic variegation is prevalent today. Morongo includes a small but noticeable percentage of Hispanic-, African-, and Euro-American inhabitants, who are both tribal members and non-members alike. Individuals with a miniscule amount of Cahuilla (or a closely-related tribe) blood in them are eligible to live at the reservation. Whether or not the closer proximity to Los Angeles and the surrounding metropolitan area is a reason for this diversity, Morongo clearly has the greatest degree of ethnic variation.

This diversity has been the cause of continuous debates at Morongo for years. While the individuals of mixed ancestry have Native American blood in them, many of the full-bloods-- most of whom are elders-- think these mixed-bloods harm the re-interest in cultural traditions and language. This hostility on the part of the majority-blood Cahuillas certainly has created tensions among all ethnic and tribal groups at Morongo, yet this same tension has come to characterize Morongan population relations and identity over time. Despite the ethnic turmoil, Morongans have a unique history of combining many distinct cultural backgrounds into a mutually beneficial coalition. The present tensions contribute to the collective Morongan identity.

A second difference is Morongo's resistance to outside-influenced change. While the establishment of the Agua Caliente Cultural Museum and the Agua Caliente Interpretive Center were, and are being, met with approval from the Agua Caliente, Malki Museum was greeted with primarily negative reactions by Morongans at its opening in 1964. According to Bean, "The Morongans' desire for ethnic independence explains in part

their basic reluctance to enter into any significant long-range economic planning, as well as their negative attitudes toward seemingly valuable projects, such as county roads and the concept of Malki Museum” (ibid., 491). Today, however, Malki Museum is regarded highly by most reservation residents. Bean explains, “In time, the institution began to receive support from all reservation factions, through its publication of material about the reservation’s major ethnic groups and its providing of scholarships for children without regard to reservation politics” (ibid., 479). Indians and non-Indians alike on Morongo viewed the inception of Malki Museum as a threat to their respective identities: Indians did not agree with the involvement of non-reservation individuals on the project, while non-Indian residents felt they had no voice in the decision-making process (ibid., 479, 487). With the success of Malki have come widespread acclaim and economic benefits for Morongo, gradually generating support and interest among the reservation population.

Katherine Siva Saubel-- respected and distinguished elder, director of Malki Museum, and resident of Morongo-- was interviewed in June 1996 by the author. One-half Mountain and one-half Desert Cahuilla, Ms. Saubel is one of the few full-blooded Cahuilla. She is an authority on the traditional culture and language. When asked about her thoughts on Palm Springs reservation, she replied:

They are living better than I will ever live because of the revenue. One of their tribal leaders said that the Palm Springs Cahuilla do not think of the past, they are only concerned with the present and the future. This is neither good nor bad-- they’re doing what they need to do to survive (interview 6/20/96).

Ms. Saubel clearly defends her people’s right to adapt to their situation however they see

fit.

In spite of these dissimilarities, inhabitants of both reservations share a desire to preserve the traditional ways and adapt to the changing economic, political, and social environments. Both reservations have experienced periods when little or no cultural traditions were practiced. During the 1950's and 1960's, the Agua Caliente were involved in ongoing disputes with all branches of the United States government. Cultural practice accordingly suffered due to the concentration of land issues and involvement in the wage labor economy. At Morongo, cultural practice has become modified over the decades. Although Morongans are of different tribal and ethnic ancestries, Cahuilla traditions are usually practiced by those concerned with the culture's survival. Ceremonies have changed in that traditional songs and dances that were performed exclusively by and for the Cahuilla in the aboriginal and historic eras have become modified and shortened, and are performed primarily for the non-Indian community, most notably tourists.

The duality of reservation/city utilization is characteristic of Morongo and Palm Springs to varying degrees. Bean states, "One of the basic stratagems in maintaining economic and political autonomy at Morongo has been to develop sources of wage earning or off-reservation income, while keeping the reservation intact for subsistence and social use" (1978b: 491). In Palm Springs' case, the reservation is located within city limits, which has created a host of advantages and problems for the Agua Caliente.

Malki Museum will now be discussed as to its effect(s) on the reformulation of Morongan identity and cultural practice. Much more than a museum, Malki symbolizes the Morongans' desire for individualism and unity.



### *Malki Museum*

A major contributing factor to the reformulation of Morongan identity has been Malki Museum. Before Malki's founding in 1964, Morongo was plagued with heated factional disputes and a lack of reservation activities. Factions always have existed at Morongo.

Bean states:

At Morongo, factions have served the people very well. Although generally considered impediments to progress and community action, it is clear that, during the past century, factions have been developed to replace the institutions that formerly served as integrative mechanisms for the community. At the very least, they have created a balance of power (1978b: 496-97).

New leadership and increased federal funding led to the creation of Malki Museum, at which point factionalism gradually began to diminish in importance. Though Malki initially was perceived by many Morongans to favor (a) particular kin group(s), eventually most residents came to support the museum. Malki equipped Morongans with an alternative to factionalism, in the process bringing together these groups in the interests of cultural enhancement. According to Nagel, "The museum project provided a unifying institution for the reservation's political and religious factions and established an annual fiesta at which the tribe presented itself to and participated in the larger non-Indian community" (1996: 200). Formerly dissimilar groups thus blended together and began displaying "cooperative behavior" (Bean 1978b: 498).

The inauguration of Malki Museum also marked the beginning of Morongan re-interest in the traditional culture. The annual fiesta has grown steadily in participation

and attendance, becoming a source of pride for Indian and non-Indian alike. Held every summer, the fiesta is a showcase for traditional dances, songs, games, and foods. As Malki became more and more approved of, tribal participation in the fiesta grew. Malki has provided the opportunity for these traditions to be enjoyed by all members of the community, and in the process has increased Morongans' pride in their heritage. The 1996 fiesta was the most successful to date, attracting several thousand people from the surrounding area.

Malki is evidence of Morongo's dedication to preserving the cultural past and ensuring its persistence into the twenty-first century. Created by the tribal council and outside interests, Malki "has served as a model and a catalyst for other reservations throughout the state of California" (Bean 1978b: 479). The conception and successful implementation of the museum is the latest stage in Cahuilla/Euro-American relations. Bean explains, "The basic strategy of involving off-reservation experts to integrate internal reservation groups about a single activity-- with a goal of bringing services and funds to the reservation-- is as old as Cahuilla society itself" (ibid.). Morongo thus has maintained its cooperative relationship with the outside community in the form of Malki Museum, a culture- and ethnicity-enhancing mechanism that undoubtedly has strengthened Morongan and Cahuilla identity.

#### *Interviews and Observations*

The degree of cultural practice and ethnicity among Morongan individuals from different age groups will now be examined. Three individuals were interviewed-- Katherine Siva Saubel, approximately seventy-five years old; Feather Martin, twenty-two

years old; and Wishkobaykikijeebowigut (Kiki) Silver, twenty years old-- about their thoughts on their own and others' extent of cultural practice and ethnic identity.

Although no middle-aged individuals were interviewed, enough personal observations were conducted to provide an adequate portrayal of this age group's overall degree of cultural practice and ethnic identity.

Katherine Siva Saubel is one-half Mountain and one-half Desert Cahuilla. Born on Los Coyotes Reservation, she moved to Morongo with her husband in 1938. She is one of the founders of Malki Museum, and has been president since 1966. Ms. Saubel has lectured on her people's culture and traditions around the world. She has recorded the language onto cassette as an aid to those individuals, Cahuilla and non-Cahuilla, interested in learning it. She is currently working on her fourth book, which will be published through Malki's Ballena Press. In short, Ms. Saubel is an authority on all aspects of native Cahuilla culture.

Ms. Saubel's main concern was the future of Morongo. She expressed disappointment over what she perceived to be the young generation's apathy towards their heritage, saying:

Kids on the reservation don't care about their culture or heritage. When I was young, almost everyone spoke the language. The ones who didn't didn't have many friends. But then, there were only Indians living there. Since there are blacks, whites, and Mexicans living here, there are too many distractions for the Indian kids today. They don't have respect for others, the environment, or themselves. The ones who want to learn the language go about it like it's a foreign language, not a language that belongs to them (interview 6/20/96).

When she was asked about the similarities and differences between the youth of her era and today, she emphatically responded:

There is no comparison-- two different worlds. The kids' interest in the culture isn't there now. The elders don't want to teach the kids anything because the kids don't care. Families are more broken up today-- hardly any extended families live together. Families don't see each other like they used to. The teaching just doesn't happen anymore. It's really sad (ibid.).

Ms. Saubel speaks for most Morongan elders when she says that non-Native Americans should not be allowed to live on the reservation. She feels they bring too many negative influences to Morongo. She attributes the reservation's problems with violence and drug abuse to the non-Native American Morongans. She thinks some people marry into the tribe(s) so they can receive government benefits, declaring:

Nowadays everybody wants to be Indian. In the '60s and '70s 'the only good Indian was a dead Indian'. Now people with no or almost no Indian blood in them want to live on the reservation and take part in the activities (ibid.).

She feels the "blue-eyes, redheads, and lightskins" on the reservation have taken away from the younger Cahuilla community's ethnic identity (ibid.).

Ms. Saubel is an opinionated and passionate advocate of Cahuilla cultural practice. She is one of the few who knows and can perform bird singing, a dramatic song cycle recounting important historic environmental events and responses to them by anthropomorphized birds (Bean 1972: 149). Her work with Malki Museum has received national attention and acclaim, generating much respect for and interest in Morongo.

While Ms. Saubel does not appear to have much faith in Morongan Cahuilla youth,

she is making sure that the means to increase their cultural practice and ethnic identification is available. Her language tapes are available to any and all Cahuilla, she is one of the principal organizers of the annual fiesta, and she has worked extensively with Bean (1961, 1963, 1972) in chronicling her floral knowledge. She is clearly intent on keeping alive her heritage.

Feather Martin is one-half Mountain Cahuilla, one-quarter Modoc, and one-quarter Euro-American. She works in the Morongo Library and actively participates in bird singing, *peon*, and funeral ceremonies. She is proud of her heritage and culture. Her aunt, Mary Ann Andreas, is the Morongan tribal chairperson, and spoke at the California Democratic Party Convention about the importance of gaming for Morongo as well as all the California reservations.

Ms. Martin believes Morongan and Cahuilla youth are interested in their heritage.

When told Ms. Saubel's feelings, Ms. Martin replied:

Katherine's motives and ideas are political. We've asked her to come teach a language class, and she said she would but hasn't yet. She generalizes too much. I know lots of younger people who are into the culture. Some don't care, but most do, especially Torres-Martinez (interview 6/19/96).

Ms. Martin attended language classes held at Morongo Library during the summer of 1996. The author attended and participated in several class sessions in June 1996, and observed Ms. Martin's obvious interest and enjoyment in learning her native tongue. The author also observed her participating in a *peon* tournament held on Morongo on July 4, 1996. She and several friends were involved in a game, a centuries-old trickery contest in

which two teams of four try to guess the number of bones each has. Songs are sung to throw off the person guessing. In the aboriginal and historic periods a game could last for days, but now usually lasts a few hours.

Wishkobaykikijeebowigut (Kiki) Silver is one-quarter Cahuilla and three-quarters Onondaga. She attends Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, and lives at Morongo for only a month during the summer. The other summer months, and when not in school, she lives at Onondaga Reservation in New York. Although she admitted to a lack of knowledge about her Cahuilla heritage and cultural activities, she also attended the language classes and was very eager to learn. She said that Onondaga reservation residents are much poorer and are not as familiar with their culture as are Morongans. She enjoys living on Morongo during the summer, and hopes to become more knowledgeable about this part of her ancestry after college (interview 6/19/96).

On July 4, 1996 the author attended a combination softball/*peon* tournament on Morongo. Although softball was the main attraction, the *peon* games drew a considerable crowd. All reservations in the area have softball teams divided by age and sex. Likewise, most reservations in the southern California area-- especially those on which Cahuilla, Luisẽño, Cupeño, and Serrano predominate-- have male and female *peon* teams grouped according to age.

Many Native American adolescents and teenagers at the tournament were wearing reservation t-shirts and baseball caps. The Morongo softball team, ages seven to twelve, included children of mixed African-American, Mexican-American, Euro-American, and Native American ancestries. The *peon* participants all appeared to be Native American.

The difference in ethnic makeup of the two activities is a telling example of the current state of Morongo's separatism. Though African-, Mexican-, and Euro-Americans are considered to be Morongans if they live on the reservation, usually they are not included in Native American Morongan activities. They are still considered outsiders to an extent, even though they know everything that is happening on the reservation. By observing their behavior and involvement in the *peon* games, the author believes most of these adolescents and teenagers were genuinely interested in the contests. Though they had obviously incorporated elements from the "outside" cultures into their own culture and identity-- rap music, baggy shorts, styled hair-- they demonstrated enough knowledge of and interest in their culture to cause the author to feel confident about Cahuilla cultural persistence in the twenty-first century.

Although no middle-aged Morongans were interviewed, observations were made at the language classes and softball/*peon* tournament. Generally, most of the middle-aged individuals had a hard time pronouncing the Cahuilla words, whereas most of the younger tribal members had little trouble. The middle-aged people also appeared not to take the classes as seriously as the younger individuals. (One elder was in the class, and he was arguably the best student in terms of pronunciation and dedication). The middle-aged students tended to joke around more, and needed more help from the instructor than the other students.

At the *peon* tournament, several middle-aged tribal members helped out with the singing and score-keeping. According to William Madrigal, one-half Mexican and one-half Desert Cahuilla and a resident of Cahuilla Reservation, "You don't really have to

know the language to sing the songs, but it helps. I know what I'm saying when I sing bird songs or at *peon*, but my speaking ability isn't that great when I'm not singing" (interview 6/18/96). He and several other men his age (mid to late 30's) backed up two teenage boys' teams in their singing.

Based on the observation of and participation in these two separate activities, middle-aged Morongans appeared to be less interested in their culture than the elders and young tribal members. Among young and middle-aged Native Americans in the 1960's and 1970's, cultural practice and ethnic identity were characterized by disfavor and embarrassment. Morongo was no different. Morongans in their thirties and forties today would have grown up during this era, and thus would have been exposed to the negative sentiments concerning cultural practice and heritage.

Although many middle-aged Morongans at the present are making an effort to learn more about their culture, an equal-- if not greater-- number of these Morongans exhibit a lackadaisical attitude towards their cultural and ethnic development. Obviously, the cultural and ethnic transmission "gap" of the 1960's and 1970's was effective enough to be observable in 1996. Hopefully, no more "gaps" will occur and more middle-aged Morongans will become interested in their culture and language.

One of the main sources of conflict among age groups is Casino Morongo. A recent addition to the reservation, Casino Morongo generally is regarded as evil by the elders and beneficial by the non-elders. Ms. Saubel explained:

The Indians who work there spend all their time there and don't care about the traditions. Other Indians (ones who do not work there) spend all their money there and



stay drunk. Yes, the casino brings in money and gives jobs, but it's just another way for the white man to make us think we're doing something positive (interview 6/20/96).

On the other hand, most non-elders felt the casino was detrimental to the reservation economy. Ms. Martin declared: "As long as it's bringing in money I'll support it" (interview 6/19/96). Though Casino Morongo is by no means the only source of conflict among age groups at Morongo, it does appear to be the most divisive. Conflicts among age groups are common at Morongo, and usually the sides are "elders vs. non-elders". This difference in opinion and outlook according to age also was observable on the other reservations.

The contemporary state of Morongan cultural practice and ethnic identity was observed to be strong enough to carry well into the twenty-first century. Numerous observations of cultural practice by Morongans of all ages support the author's thesis statement. Morongans have successfully utilized their relationship with the neighboring Euro-American community. In the process they have reformulated their identity and maintained their social and political autonomy.

### **Soboba Reservation**

Predominantly Luiseno, Soboba (or Soboba Band of Mission Indians) Reservation also contains a few Cahuilla. Due to the similarity of aboriginal Luiseno and Cahuilla language, ceremonial practices, and overall culture, Soboba was included for the purposes of this research. Frequent intermarriage between the two tribes also has caused a gradual blending of cultural characteristics.

Established in 1883, Soboba is one of the smallest Cahuilla reservations in terms of total acreage-- 5915.68. With a population of 442, Soboba contains a casino and the Noli School, an elementary school run by the tribal government. The Tribal Council includes a chairperson, vice-chairperson, secretary, and treasurer. The Tribal Council directs the Tribal Administration, Administration for Native Americans (ANA), and Adult Education Committees, among others (Tiller 1996: 297-98).

Like Morongo, many Sobobans live off the reservation, in the nearby towns of San Jacinto, Hemet, and Idyllwild. On account of the relatively cheap living expenses on the reservation, however, there has been a steady return of tribal members over the last decade. The semi-isolation of Soboba from nearby towns and cities also attracts tribal members.

D-Q University Soboba, a community college located on Soboba Reservation, will now be discussed and examined in regards to its effect(s) on Soboba ethnic reformulation and cultural persistence. An invaluable attribute of Soboba, D-Q University Soboba is an excellent option for many Native Americans in the area.

#### *D-Q University Soboba*

Founded in the early 1980's, D-Q University Soboba is one of seven D-Q campuses in California, all of which are controlled by D-Q Davis. The D-Q University system is the only Native American-run community college in the United States. Due to an extremely low budget, D-Q University Soboba operates on a semester-to-semester basis: the administration never knows until very late if classes will be offered the following semester. D-Q Soboba operates on grants presented by D-Q Davis. Since there are seven

campuses, sometimes enough money is not available for all to simultaneously hold classes.

Native Americans can go to D-Q Soboba for free as long as they can prove they are members of a federally-recognized tribe. People of other ethnic backgrounds also can attend, but have to pay. Dr. Ray Gillaspy, dean of D-Q Soboba, was interviewed regarding the extent of Native American enrollment and participation. He explained:

This school is a great opportunity for Native Americans in the area-- they can get their Associate's degree for free. Unfortunately, not that many take advantage of it. They either don't want to drive that far or just aren't interested (interview 6/26/96).

Although the college is small-- five or six classrooms housed in two trailers-- a wide variety of classes is offered. Courses such as "Indigenous Studies Seminars", "Self Identity", "Native American Philosophy", and "Indian Interpretation of Early United States History" concentrate on Native American issues normally not covered in the "typical" community college. History classes are taught from the Native American viewpoint, incorporating many important Native American events that usually are excluded from most United States History textbooks.

D-Q University Soboba is a step in the right direction for the Luiseno and Cahuilla and, in a broader sense, tribal southern California. Those tribal members taking advantage of this opportunity are becoming more aware of their heritage, and identifying more closely not only with their neighbors, but with Native Americans around the country as well. Contemporary Native American rights and issues are emphasized in many classes, resulting in the students' awareness of the need for educated Native Americans in

the United States. Dr. Gillaspay pointed out that the small student enrollment has been growing slowly over the last decade. Hopefully, more tribal members in the area will utilize this unique resource.

### *Interviews and Observations*

No elders at Soboba were interviewed. The author attempted to talk to several elders, but all refused to discuss their traditional culture. Two elders seemed angry at my inquiries, while the others claimed they knew nothing of the culture. Therefore, observations and statements from middle-aged tribal members served to judge the elders' degrees of ethnic identity and cultural practice.

The author talked to Carl Lopez, Soboba tribal chairman, about the current state of cultural practice on Soboba. In his late thirties, Mr. Lopez, like other Sobobans and Morongans his age, was affected by the cultural transmission gap of the 1960's and 1970's. He admitted being unfamiliar with much of the traditional culture, such as the language, songs, and *peon*, but nevertheless is proud of his heritage. When asked the reasons for his own lack of cultural knowledge, he simply replied, "The dollar will change anything" (interview 6/26/96). A negative statement if applied to cultural practice, but it accurately describes much of contemporary tribal southern California.

Like most reservations in southern California, Soboba has a casino. Setting aside much of its profits for youth programs, educational scholarships, and reservation development, Casino Soboba is slowly gaining support among many Sobobans and tribal members in the area. A wealth of jobs have been made available to the surrounding community, though many elders believe job discrimination takes place due to the lack of

Native Americans receiving the better-paying positions. As at Morongo, Soboban elders generally have negative feelings towards Casino Soboba, citing younger tribal members' growing reliance on money as problem solvers and gambling addiction as their main concerns.

Based on interviews and observations, many middle-aged and younger tribal members think the casino is a positive addition to the reservation. It is the author's belief that the utilization of any instrument by the tribe which betters the economic and educational status of its members can also contribute to reformulation of identity and renewed interest in the culture. Mr. Lopez appeared to support the casino and the revenue it procures. His interests are in the tribe's future, and bettering its position in the southern California community.

Maurice "Buster" Mojado, a tribal council member, also lacks extensive knowledge of his traditions and language. Close in age to Mr. Lopez, Mr. Mojado learned some of the culture from his mother. As for a good portion of his heritage, however, he explained, "I've kind of shined it on" (interview 6/26/96). When asked the specifics of his knowledge, he, like Mr. Lopez, said to talk to the elders because "they know more than we do" (ibid.). Such a statement is true, but both men apparently felt they could not supply the information the author wanted.

A native basketweaving class was started in the summer of 1996 on Soboba Reservation. Coordinated by Mary Basquez of Soboba and Monica and Bill Madrigal of Cahuilla Reservation, the class is aimed primarily at young females. Traditional basketweaving was usually a woman's duty, with instruction for the younger women

being provided by the older. A laborious and time-consuming process, basketweaving demands patience.

Made from juncus reed (*jucus textiles*), deer grass (*muhlenbergia rigens*), and sumac (*rhus trilobata*), Cahuilla/Luiseno baskets are extremely sturdy. All three materials are found in the surrounding desert area, though with housing developments moving closer to the wildlife areas they are becoming harder to find. Part of the artistry of basketweaving is knowing when and where to pick the best specimens. It is therefore important that the weavers protect the plants and maintain them for future weavers.

Monica and William Madrigal's five daughters, aged between three and ten, were part of the summer weaving groups. Mrs. Madrigal, also in her mid-thirties and a proficient weaver, believes the classes ultimately will be rewarding for her daughters, explaining:

I feel it's my duty to teach my daughters. They're not as interested in it as I would like them to be, but they're young. Some of the girls start out interested, then lose interest as their patience wears out. Some of these baskets take years to finish, and most kids don't have that much patience (interview 6/18/96).

The summer basketweaving groups are an excellent example of the positive effects of cultural persistence. The Madrigal's daughters and the other participants are learning at an early age one of the most esteemed Cahuilla/Luiseno traditions. If the young students come to have half the amount of love for basketweaving as Mrs. Madrigal does, the endurance of this venerated art is certain.

### **Torres-Martinez Reservation**

Located near Thermal, Torres-Martinez Reservation comprises 24,024 acres and is

home to 1628 inhabitants. A five-member Tribal Council governs reservation affairs. One of the largest Cahuilla reservations, Torres-Martinez is in a very rural area (Tiller 1996: 302).

Torres-Martinez is the furthest inland of all the Cahuilla reservations. For this reason, virtually none of the Desert Cahuilla in the area were recruited by Spanish missionaries during the early historic period. The high degree of cultural knowledge and practice by tribal members of all ages is due in large part to geographic isolation.

#### *Interviews and Observations*

Saturnino Torres, eighty-three years old and a “spiritual leader” of the Cahuilla, was questioned about his impressions of cultural practice among the younger tribal members. A full-blooded Desert Cahuilla, Mr. Torres visits area schools and encourages the youth--non-Native American as well as Native American-- to stay in school and stay away from drugs and alcohol. He believes the main problem facing youngsters on the reservations today is the temptation of these substances. He does not know how this problem can be solved; he has asked the spirits to help, but he does not feel confident about any of the Cahuilla reservations’ futures. He explained:

The Indian kids today are smarter than I was growing up, but they’re also more tempted to do wrong. The old religion isn’t there for them to practice. I went to a Catholic church for awhile when I was young, then stopped going so I could practice ‘the Indian way’. These kids today don’t even want to go to the Catholic church, much less learn ‘the Indian way’. My friends and I always had something positive to keep us occupied, like *peon* or learning from our elders. Kids today would rather get drunk and do drugs than talk to their grandparents (interview 7/3/96).

Somewhat of a *puvalam*, Mr. Torres is one of the last Cahuilla who practices “the Indian way”-- divining, conversing with spirits, and healing. His father and grandfather were also *puvalam*. He rejects the teachings of the Catholic church, even though his wife is a practicing Catholic. Mr. Torres does not agree with reading from a book (the Bible) to find one’s spirituality. He believes in the power of nature, and the spirits which reside in nature. The sky, animals, water, mountains, everything in nature has its own spirit. Mr. Torres can sense these spirits, and claims they guide him when making decisions. He explained:

I get a feeling in my heart, and I know something’s going to happen before it does. I can sometimes tell when something bad is going to happen a day or two beforehand. I don’t know where it comes from (ibid.).

Mr. Torres also acts as the unofficial Cahuilla genealogist. Many Cahuilla and non-Cahuilla seek him out to learn more about their tribal and family histories. Many times he has settled disputes over who the real parents are of a particular child, who are its grandparents, and so forth. His knowledge of family history reaches at least as far back as the mid-nineteenth century. Clearly, the past is alive and well in Mr. Torres’ mind.

Alec Dominguez, approximately sixty-five years old and a Desert Cahuilla also, was the instructor of the summer language classes held at Morongo. Referring to English as his “second language”, Mr. Dominguez grew up speaking only Cahuilla. He was forced to go to an Indian boarding school as a teenager, where he was punished for speaking Cahuilla. He learned English, but did not forget his native language. He still has trouble



pronouncing certain words in English, and obviously feels more comfortable speaking Cahuilla (interview 6/19/96).

Unlike Mr. Torres, Mr. Dominguez believes the younger Cahuilla do care about their heritage and culture. He also teaches a children's language class, and said the children are more eager to learn than the students in the adult class. He is aware of the negative views many elders have regarding the youth's cultural practice, but he does not understand his peers' reasoning, stating:

These kids today *are* interested in the language and culture. Of course they don't know as much as I did when I was their age, but that's because there are less elders around to teach them. When I was young, there were twice as many elders around. All kids grew up with some knowledge of their culture, even the ones who were sent away to school, like me. The teachers at the boarding school tried to make us forget who we were, but that just made us remember even more. Nothing like that is going on anymore, but these kids are still doing alright, considering all the pressures they face everyday (ibid.).

Mr. Dominguez firmly believes that at Torres-Martinez and the other Cahuilla reservations, an emphasis on cultural practice and language use is growing). His role of language instructor is playing a large part in this cultural resurgence.

Both Mr. Torres and Mr. Dominguez are aiding in the persistence of Cahuilla culture. As two culturally knowledgeable men who have not forsaken their identity, their roles in relation to the younger Cahuilla community are of teachers. The two men are the link between Torres-Martinez's past and future.

No middle-aged or younger tribal members were interviewed. The author made

several attempts to set up times and places for interviews, but, because of the author and tribal members' different schedules, none took place. Observations thus were used to assess the degree of these tribal members' cultural practices.

At Morongo's *peon* tournament on July 4, 1996, several middle-aged Torres-Martinez tribal members were observed singing behind the game's participants. Virtually all of the singers and members of the *peon* teams were wearing t-shirts of their respective reservations, making it easy for the author to distinguish among them. The boys' *peon* team from Torres-Martinez was the most vocal and enthusiastic in their singing, and they consequently won the tournament. The boys' team was obviously the most prepared. They, and the middle-aged tribal members who sang backup, are contributing actively to the persistence of this cultural feature.

The author also observed several teenage and young adult tribal members teaching several children basketweaving (in English) and *peon* songs (in Cahuilla) at the tribal hall. No older tribal members were present. The younger tribal members obviously knew enough about the traditional culture to instruct the children. In this manner, cultural knowledge was transmitted from one age group (teens to early twenties) to another group close in age (pre-teen). This sort of cultural transmission was the only one of its kind observed.

Conflict between age groups at Torres-Martinez was not observed to be as severe as at the other reservations. The lack of a casino could be the reason for this diminished dissension. Elders did feel that non-elder cultural practice was not as it should be, but their tones of voice reflected the pride and love they felt for the non-elders. Torres-

Martinez clearly was the most united of the reservations.

All the tribal members interviewed and observed appeared to possess a high degree of cultural knowledge. While not all actively spoke the Cahuilla language, virtually every child, teenager, young adult, middle-aged adult, and elder displayed an appreciation of and attachment to their culture and heritage. The geographic isolation from European interference in the early historic period, coupled with a like isolation from urban areas at the present, has had positive effects on the persistence of cultural practice and ethnic identity.

### **Cahuilla Reservation**

Located near Aguanga, Cahuilla Reservation makes up 18,884.26 acres, 2611 of which are tribally-owned. The remaining land is allotted to individual tribal members. Population is sparse for such a large area of land, with only 107 individuals living on the reservation as of 1994. A Tribal Council, which includes a chairperson, vice-chairperson, tribal administrator, and two council members, is elected every two years. The Tribal Council directs several committees, including the Cahuilla Economic Ad Hoc Committee (CEA), the All Mission Indian Housing Authority (AMIHA), and Riverside-San Bernardino County Indian Health (Tiller 1996: 246).

Cahuilla Reservation, like Torres-Martinez, is extremely rural. Electricity and paved roads were introduced between twenty and twenty-five years ago. Prior to these additions, most tribal members did not have telephones or televisions, and rarely left the reservation.

Like Soboba and Morongo, Cahuilla Reservation is home to the Cahuilla Creek Casino. Due to its opening at the same time of the author's fieldwork, the effects of the casino on the reservation economy could not be gauged. However, like Morongo and Soboba, tribal members were divided in their feelings about Cahuilla Creek Casino--most elders opposed it, while most non-elders supported it. Opinions were fresh due to the casino's newness. The one elder interviewed, although glad for the money it will bring in, did not care for the increased traffic and people (mostly Euro-American) that the casino would attract. Non-elders pointed to more jobs and opportunities as positive attributes of the casino.

#### *Interviews and Observations*

Only one tribal member was interviewed, due to an altercation with the woman's daughter. William and Monica Madrigal were also interviewed, but primarily were asked questions about basketweaving, language, and cultural practice in general.

Catherine Kitchen, seventy-two years old and a full-blooded Desert Cahuilla, was adopted by the Mountain Cahuilla when she was six weeks old. She learned much of her cultural knowledge from her grandmother, who was an expert basketweaver and singer.

She stated:

My grandmother gathered basket weed, food, cactus, greens... She knew when to pick certain things. She cooked everything-- quail eggs, rabbits, rats...She never told us what she was cooking, just told us to eat it. It was always good. Even after she couldn't walk, she would still go out and gather food for the meals, singing the whole time (interview 7/3/96).

Ms. Kitchen attended St. Boniface School in Banning, a Catholic school for Native

Americans in the area. While at St. Boniface she was forced to learn English, and forgot much of her traditional knowledge. She gradually stopped speaking Cahuilla, and today does not speak it but still understands it.

Like most of the elders interviewed, Ms. Kitchen does not believe Cahuilla culture has a good chance of surviving, stating:

Cahuilla will never work as one. There is too much feuding going on. Besides that, the kids don't want to learn anything. I'm not saying all the kids are that way, but alot are. A big deal is made out of the violence that goes on here, but what about all the violence in the cities and towns around here? The whites point their fingers at us for the violence, but their violence is alot worse than ours (ibid.).

Due to the availability of drugs and alcohol on the reservation, interest among the youth in the culture and language has declined. Feuding, particularly over the casino, has taken away from the importance normally placed on cultural practice. Many elders such as Ms. Kitchen, although they take part in the feuding, feel that such widespread disagreement ultimately will result in cultural disinterest.

Ms. Kitchen taught a language class several years ago, but she stopped because of general apathy. Her feelings towards language usage were summed up: "Who's going to speak it?" (ibid.). Like many Cahuilla elders, Ms. Kitchen believes no one, especially the youth, is interested in the language. Her fifteen grandchildren do not speak Cahuilla; she feels they and their parents have lost touch with the traditional culture.

No middle-aged or young Cahuilla were interviewed. As the author was leaving Ms. Kitchen's house, he was confronted by one of her daughters and told not to talk to any

more tribal members. The reason for this hostility was unclear, though the author suspects the woman was trying to protect her mother from any and all intrusions. The author obeyed the woman's order and left the reservation. As a result, no assessments regarding cultural practice and ethnic identity among the middle-aged and younger tribal members were made.

### **Conclusion**

The observations and interviews conducted on the five reservations were invaluable in ascertaining the degrees of cultural practice and ethnic identity among the various Cahuilla age groups. The author found that several commonalities were shared by the members of the reservations. The most notable one-- with one exception-- was the marked difference between the elders' views of the young Cahuilla's cultural practice, and the middle-aged and young Cahuilla's opinions of each other's degree of cultural practice. Almost every elder interviewed felt that the teenage and young adult tribal members were apathetic towards their heritage, and uninterested in "Cahuilla-ness". Conversely, all the middle-aged and young tribal members interviewed thought that the young Cahuilla were interested in their heritage, and were regular practitioners of the traditional culture.

The author agrees with the middle-aged and young tribal members. Numerous instances of language use, basketweaving, *peon* participation, and other cultural activities were observed among many teenage and young adult Cahuilla. Though most young tribal members obviously had incorporated African-, Mexican-, and Euro-American elements,

such as clothing and music, into their culture, a strong sense of ethnic identification still was noticeable. The author could sense pride in their ethnicity, which was conveyed by their enthusiasm in language class and *peon*, tone of speech when talking to said individuals, and the high regard they held for the elders.

Reservation conflict was observed to be among age groups, most notably elders and non-elders. The “generation gap” contributed to this difference in interpretation. According to Loretta Fowler, “The young people at times understand the world and behave differently from their elders, and these differences sometimes make for tension and conflict...Many ritual and political symbols are emotionally compelling and meaningful to both elders and youths, though the generations may not interpret them in the same way” (1987: 141). Elders are products of a time period (early twentieth century) not too far removed from the historic period, when traditional cultural practices and language usage were common. Because many elders today had to practice their culture privately as adolescents and young adults due to the vigorous assimilation attempts by the United States government in the early twentieth century, the clandestine nature of their cultural practices during that time period caused them, in their eyes, to value their heritage more highly than the non-elders today. Elders today feel that non-elders have it “easier” than they did, “easier” meaning the non-elders do not experience explicit Euro-American assimilation attempts in the way that the elders did sixty or seventy years ago. Elders accordingly feel that the non-elders are not as compelled to learn their culture and language because no one is telling them they cannot.

It is the author’s feeling that while the elders undoubtedly identify more closely with

the traditional culture, the non-elders identify with the contemporary Cahuilla culture. This contemporary culture is different from reservation to reservation, but is the same in that it blends aspects of the Cahuilla, Mexican-, African-, and Euro-American cultures into one identifiable composite. The differences in opinions characteristic of the elders and non-elders are a result of this difference in identification with and interpretation of the culture.

The information gathered from interviews and observations contributes to the author's belief that the Cahuilla, as a tribe, are not united. They *are* united in the fact that all reservation tribal members share a common ancestry, but this point is where the unity ends. The one hundred-plus years of each reservation's history have given rise to ethnically-distinct groupings. Cahuilla today identify themselves as Morongan Cahuilla or Torres-Martinez Cahuilla.

Based on the data collected, most reservations are not united, either. Besides Torres-Martinez (where feuding was not as pronounced or acknowledged), the other four reservations are marred by constant feuding, usually between elders and non-elders. The differences in interpretation and identification according to age have alienated some elders from their younger kin, and vice-versa. Despite these conflicts, the author feels the culture and ethnic identification will persist. In fact, conflict has helped these ideals to persist. If all reservation tribal members agreed on every issue, cultural practice would become stagnant. New interpretations of symbols would not arise, and ethnic reformulation would not occur as frequently due to constant stability. Conflict thus is considered a healthy aid to cultural persistence and change.



As the twentieth century becomes the twenty-first, the honor and respect customarily given to elders is still present, but many young and middle-aged Cahuilla feel the elders are out of touch with the “modern” world. Many tribal chairpersons and council members are middle-aged adults, a trend indicative of the youthful and now conventional approach to self-government that most Cahuilla reservations have taken. Naturally, younger tribal members do not have the first-hand knowledge of traditions and ceremonies that the elders possess. While the elders are more knowledgeable of tribal information, the young and middle-aged adult Cahuilla are skilled in working and interacting with Euro-Americans. Many elders no longer work or travel off the reservation, and are not involved in daily contact with Euro-Americans like their younger kin.

Young and middle-aged adult Cahuilla interact daily with Euro-Americans in the towns, schools, and on the reservations. The average contemporary adult Cahuilla thus is capable of slipping into a different identity when interacting with Euro-Americans, and reverting to his normal Cahuilla identity when among his kin and friends. The identity used when among Euro-Americans is a major contributor to the initiation of ethnic reformulation (Nagel 1996: 21).

Torres-Martinez tribal members appeared to possess the highest rate of cultural knowledge and practice. The author believes that the inaccessibility of their territory to Europeans in the early historic period had positive consequences for the continuance of cultural practice and ethnic identity through the twentieth century. Today many tribal members of all ages regularly practice aspects of the traditional culture, and closely

identify with their ancestors.

The period from 1950 to the present has been characterized by numerous economic, political, and social problems for the Cahuilla, yet they are overcoming these obstacles and appear to be heading in a positive and productive direction. Tribal members of all ages are interested in and learning their respective dialects, cultural practice remains alive, and a new generation of Cahuilla are discovering their heritages. The author believes, despite most of the elders' feelings to the contrary, that the modified traditional culture and language have excellent chances of persisting for many more generations. Based on interviews with and observations of younger tribal members and their interest in the culture, ethnic reformulation has had a positive impact on Cahuilla cultural persistence.

As is the case with many tribes across the United States, it is economically advantageous to be Cahuilla. Though most Cahuilla are not rich by any means, they-- the enrolled tribal members, that is-- enjoy health, housing, and educational benefits that most United States citizens do not. It remains up to the youth and their parents to take advantage of these opportunities. If the adaptability and perseverance of these people are any indications, they will achieve greater economic and political prosperity while maintaining and reformulating their traditional culture.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

#### Discussion

This study has concentrated on contemporary cultural practices and ethnic identification among the Cahuilla, and the effects cultural persistence and ethnic reformulation have had on all's endurance. Cahuilla were found to have employed ethnic reformulation as a result of previously inadequate cultural and/or political configurations. Cultural persistence has served to keep alive several ceremonies, rituals, and games. Though these institutions were unpopular with most of the tribe throughout the twentieth century until only recently (within the last twenty years), small but dedicated groups of tribal members have continued to practice these traditions. Together, these cultural components form the core of identity. Whenever, for any reason, a significant number of tribal members comes to be unfamiliar with or apathetic towards these institutions, the group (or reservation) must alter its identity to facilitate cultural persistence.

In the case of the Cahuilla, altering a group identity means adding or introducing non-native traditions into the culture. By utilizing their relationships with the European cultures, Cahuilla have been quite successful at selecting and incorporating foreign cultural elements into their own culture. The central thesis of this study is the persistence of Cahuilla cultural practices and identity through ethnic reformulation. As stated in Chapter I, ethnic reformulation contributes directly to the persistence of a culture's traditions. Though many cultural practices disappear over time due to disuse or

disinterest, in the Cahuilla's case numerous traditions have endured for the current generation of young adults and adolescents to have "proof" of their heritage. When the elders and adults speak the native tongue, dance, and sing, cultural transmission from one generation to another takes place. In this manner, identity is transmitted, strengthened, and retained.

Ethnic reformulation occurs in societies in which an outside threat to the existing cultural practices is present. According to Nagel, "The adaptation or revision of existing cultural forms and practices and innovation through the invention of new cultural patterns are common responses of communities confronted with external pressures for assimilation or engaged in competition with other ethnic groups for dominance or survival" (1996: 201). The Cahuilla, like their neighbors, were under constant pressure to assimilate during the historic period. What makes them unique as a case study, however, is their skill in successfully maintaining and adapting their culture and identity, while simultaneously developing mutually beneficial ties with each encroaching culture. Cahuilla villages, bands, and today reservations, selected useful attributes from the Spanish, Mexican, and Euro-American cultures while retaining a large degree of autonomy from one another and the intruders. Each contemporary Cahuilla reservation resembles a sovereign nation.

The Cahuilla were selected as the subject of this study because of: a) their unique relationship(s) with the encroaching cultures in the historic period, and b) the emphasis on cultural practices and ethnic identification they have retained until the present. While many Native American groups have had beneficial relationships with the European

cultures, the Cahuilla, unlike most tribes, have not been forced to forsake their traditions and identity in exchange for economic advantages. The Cahuilla's tenacity and remarkable ability to adapt have ensured cultural survival.

A brief rechronicling of cultural and contact history now follows, with an emphasis on the period from 1950 until the present.

The first recorded contact with Europeans came in 1774 with the Anza expedition. The next contact came in 1809 with the Mission San Gabriel baptisms, though they, like the Anza expedition, had relatively no effect on the Cahuilla population at large. The Spanish contact period officially ended in 1834 with Mexican secularization of the missions in Alta California. The Cahuilla appear to have been unaffected by Spanish contact and missionization, aside from the acquisition of language and crops in limited amounts.

The Mexican period, though not as long-lasting, had greater effects on Cahuilla culture. The most important change was the alteration of village and political life. The rise and importance of "chiefs", a result of the Mexican government's growing land interests, would soon become the norm of Cahuilla politics. Several villages were united under the leadership of Juan Antonio, a Mountain Cahuilla who was the first real Cahuilla chief. Leading several violent raids on Mexican garrisons and rival tribal groups, Antonio came to be a highly feared and respected leader by allies and enemies alike.

The change in political organization as a result of chiefs would characterize Cahuilla village life in the years to come. Super-villages, composed of formerly distinct lineages, became the archetypes of reservations. These new villages were a mixture of Cahuilla

and Mexican cultural traditions.

During this time period, towns began spreading around southern California as a result of the arrival of Mexican and Euro-American settlers looking for arable land. Many settled in the San Bernardino Valley, pushing the Cahuilla from their traditional territory. As a result, many Cahuilla were forced to find work in these towns for exceedingly low wages. The wage labor system continued when the Cahuilla came under the administration of the United States government in 1848.

The Euro-American contact period continues until the present day. Formally beginning in 1848 with the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo, the United States' acquisition of California brought even more drastic changes for the tribe. More settlers came into the area, causing large numbers of natives to move to Los Angeles and other nearby towns. The smallpox epidemic of 1863 significantly reduced the village population. In spite of these adverse conditions, cultural practice continued in a more limited and secretive fashion.

The first reservations in southern California were established in 1870. Within ten years virtually every tribe in the area either had been moved to a reservation location, or had a reservation created from existing tribal lands. The Cahuilla fell under the latter category. While many southern California tribes were forced to travel great distances to live on reservations with members of other tribes, the Cahuilla remained stationary. Identification with the land thus continued, as did cultural practice and language usage.

The reservation system, and increasing contact with Euro-Americans, altered Cahuilla cultural practice. Though many adult Cahuilla continued to adhere to the traditional

lifeways, a growing number of young tribal members were becoming disinterested in the culture. Eager to make a living for themselves or leave the confines of the reservations, many young Cahuilla moved to the nearby cities. Conflict among age groups over reservation issues came to the forefront during this period. The majority of a generation thus was unfamiliar with its traditions, which had significant effects for successive generations.

Despite this extensive loss of cultural knowledge, Cahuilla traditions survived. Small groups of devoted traditionalists continued the aboriginal lifeway as best they could. Desert clans, although part of the reservation system like their Pass and Mountain kin, practiced less-modified traditions with a greater degree of adherence. During the twentieth century, however, even the harsh arid environment that once had served as an effective barrier was not enough to stop the progression of European intrusion.

As Euro-Americans advanced farther into Cahuilla territory, land rights accordingly became an issue. The Agua Caliente Cahuilla of Palm Springs were involved in intricate legal procedures regarding land allotments for much of the twentieth century. As more non-Native American residents and tourists learned of the hot springs, and resort potential of the area, the land value increased. Today the Agua Caliente and the city of Palm Springs are engaged in a symbiotic relationship which has proved to be beneficial for both parties.

Morongó Reservation is home to a great degree of tribal and ethnic admixture. Morongó prides itself on its ethnic diversity (Hispanic, Euro-American and African-American), yet also is connected strongly to Cahuilla culture and traditions. The

numerous tribal and ethnic groups' presence on the reservation has brought about a gradual modification of cultural practice over the years, resulting in a sort of hybrid Cahuilla cultural practice which only can be called "Morongan". This mutant form of Cahuilla culture is a source of conflict among the Cahuilla and non-Cahuilla (or non-Native Americans) who live on the reservation, yet is also what makes Morongo unique among Cahuilla reservations. Malki Museum also has stimulated a resurgence in ethnic identification with its dedication to the preservation of aboriginal and early historic culture.

Soboba Reservation, although predominantly Luiseno, was (and is) similar to most Cahuilla reservations' traditions and practices. Intermarriage between the two tribes throughout the early historic period resulted in this semblance. D-Q University Soboba, located on the reservation, is a two-year accredited college intended for Native Americans in the area. Though many do not take advantage of this unique offer, those who do can expect to increase their chances of finding nice-paying jobs. D-Q Soboba also makes its students more aware of the issues concerning Native Americans in California as well as the United States. A small basketweaving class was started in the summer of 1996 to provide young girls the chance to learn an integral part of the traditional culture.

Utilizing these two mechanisms, Soboba Reservation is providing its members and others the necessary opportunities to discover their heritage.

Torres-Martinez Reservation had the highest degree of cultural practitioners of the five reservations. Due to the isolation from other bands in the aboriginal era, and then from Spanish missionaries in the early historic period, the Desert Cahuilla of this area were



able to continue their aboriginal lifeways for much longer than their kin.

Contemporaneously, the great distance of Torres-Martinez from any city or town has contributed to the retention of cultural practice and language usage, in that the degree of non-Cahuilla elements at the reservation is significantly lower than at the other reservations. Torres-Martinez is also much less ethnically and tribally diverse than the other reservations, which also has served to keep alive traditions. Though a number of individuals on the reservation are of mixed Cahuilla and Mexican ancestry, Cahuilla is the principal form of ethnic identification.

Like Soboba and Morongo, Cahuilla Reservation has a tribal casino. Though many elders feel the popularity of casinos is lessening the importance of traditions and identity, much of the money generated goes back to the tribe in the form of scholarships and reservation development funds. The casino also provides jobs for dozens of tribal members. Like Torres-Martinez, Cahuilla Reservation is exceedingly rural. Most of the residents are poor, so any form of revenue strengthens the local economy. These casinos, like Malki Museum, one day may sponsor fiestas or pow-wows, and produce cultural and ethnic interest as well as monetary resources.

The fieldwork conducted on Agua Caliente, Morongo, Soboba, Torres-Martinez, and Cahuilla Reservations resulted in differing Cahuilla views on cultural practice and ethnic identification, most of which could be differentiated by age. Generally, most elders had negative opinions on the future of their respective reservations and the Cahuilla people, on the extent of cultural, linguistic, and ethnic affiliation of the younger generation, and on the role of casinos as the main sources of reservation revenue. Contrarily, most young

and middle-aged adults had positive feelings and ideas about the direction their reservations and people were heading, were proud of their generations' degree of cultural practice and ethnic identification and interest, and supported the casinos. The "generation gap", a source of disdain and misunderstanding between the young and old in many societies, clearly had an impact on these people's ideas.

The discrepancy in views according to age is representative of the nature of cultural persistence and ethnic reformulation. As a theoretical construct, cultural persistence functions to keep alive traditions, language, and ethnic identification. In the Cahuilla's case, the elders were the main purveyors of cultural persistence throughout most of the twentieth century, teaching their children and grandchildren their cultural knowledge. Ethnic reformulation appears to have been employed mainly by young and middle-aged adult Cahuilla to counteract the cultural features that did not persist, or were in danger of dying out. In the early historic period, the elders essentially used ethnic reformulation as a means of incorporating Spanish and Mexican agricultural and livestock practices, clothing, and language into their respective clans. The prominence of chiefs and lineage heads during this era is reflective of the high regard held for members of this age group. Elders had more exposure to and interaction with Europeans than did young and middle-aged adult tribal members.

Cultural persistence and ethnic reformulation strengthen and transform cultural institutions. In order for ethnic identification to be reformulated, a particular cultural tradition must be present for a prolonged period of time. This tradition becomes part of the collective tribal or reservation identity. During periods of cultural disinterest,

economic instability, and political restructuring, certain traditions and practices may be discarded, resurrected, or altered. In each instance, collective and individual identity changes to meet the situation. When tribal/reservation stability returns, ethnicity has become altered as a result of these changes. The change in cultural practices and traditions becomes a permanent fixture of Cahuilla ethnicity, at least until the next period of crisis.

What makes the Cahuilla so interesting as a case study is their remarkable ability, and even readiness, to change. Given the drastic transformation of Cahuilla culture in the last forty years alone, it would appear that the tribe is not adverse to change. The difference lies in the kind of change that has affected the Cahuilla-- involuntary or voluntary. The primary example of involuntary change affecting the tribe is the reservation system. Though the Cahuilla have been quite successful in adapting to reservation life, the change in living conditions was, and is, an unwelcome one. Voluntary changes in Cahuilla culture include the acquisition of the Mexican language in the nineteenth century, and the election of the first all-female tribal council by the Agua Caliente in 1954. Voluntary changes usually occur as a means of adapting to a particular situation. The Cahuilla were chosen for this study because of their ability to retain much of their culture in the face of enormous changes. Though contemporary Cahuilla cultural practice hardly can be compared to aboriginal and historic cultural practice in terms of authenticity, the surviving traditions and ceremonies are a testament to the Cahuilla's commitment to keeping alive and transmitting their culture and heritage.

## Conclusion

Contemporary Cahuilla cultural practice and ethnic identification are results of the successful application of cultural persistence and ethnic reformulation. The alteration and extinction of traditions and ceremonies over many decades have created a Cahuilla people simultaneously eager to learn more about their past and heritage, and to financially provide for their families in the primarily Euro-American economy.

Culture is a learned process. All children, regardless of ethnicity, grow up learning their respective languages, observing their parents' and relatives' cultural behavior, and participating in religious ceremonies. These processes define a child's ethnic identification. If a child is surrounded by adults who are regular practitioners of their culture, chances are good that the child will copy their behavior.

Cahuilla society has operated in this manner for centuries. During the early to mid-twentieth century, relocation to cities and greater participation in the Euro-American economy significantly reduced cultural transmission. Since the 1970's, however, a renewed interest in traditional culture has flourished on the reservations. More children and adults are learning their language, more young adults are electing to stay on the reservations rather than move to the nearby cities, and cultural preservation mechanisms such as Malki Museum and the Agua Caliente Cultural Museum are gaining widespread support. Contemporary Cahuilla cultural practice and ethnic identification never will compare to that of the historic period in its traditionally concentrated sense. However, as long as a fixed number of Cahuilla keep alive the language and traditions, the culture will persist.

Cahuilla culture is durable. Spanish, Mexican, and Euro-American attempts at religious conversion, assimilation, and wage labor were unsuccessful in halting the transmission of cultural values and traditions. Adaptability and tenacity, the two defining Cahuilla qualities, have proven to be effective despite their usual dissonance. Cultural practice and language use maintain a strong presence on the reservations today. Despite the injustices inflicted upon them, the Cahuilla remain a proud and determined people. It is the author's hope that their traditions, ceremonies, and language persist as long as there are tribal members to practice them.

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