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Joe Payne graduated from Cal Poly's History program with top honors in 2023, submitting the following piece on the Chumash War for his senior project. An award-winning journalist and former newspaper editor from Santa Maria, California, Payne is passionate about local history, communicating complex stories, and studying rebellions and counter-revolutions. A first-generation college graduate, he will continue his studies at Cal Poly in the History Department's Masters' program in Fall of 2023.

The Chumash War: Contested Memories of Forced Labor, Rebellion, and Counter-Revolution in the California Missions

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Introduction:

The grounds at La Purisima Mission State Historic Park stand almost a world apart from modernity, ensconced by hedgerows and trees that block out all sight and sound of the parking lot, visitor center, and a nearby highway. The bleat of goats and burros punctuate the pastoral stillness, while the mission's salmon-hued bell tower looms silently over visitors. The sprawling buildings and grounds present an idyllic recreation of Mission La Purisima de Concepción, a feat accomplished thanks to the New Deal fervor for historic preservation that brought the Civilian Conservation Corps there in the 1930s to transform a rubble heap into the largest historic preservation site in state history.¹ Generations of California grade school students visit each year as part of the state curriculum's focus on California history.² Until very recently, fourth grade students in the state,

¹ "La Purisima Mission: CCC Historical Restoration and Reconstruction," California Department of Parks and Recreation. Retrieved March 24, 2022: https://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=24893

² California Department of Education, "Chapter 7: Grade Four—California: A Changing State," 2016 *History-Social Science Framework*, 67-94 (Sacramento; California Department of Education, 2017).

this author included, were tasked with studying and reproducing in model form a specific California mission, the ubiquitous “mission project.” Other outmoded events at the mission included “Mission Life Days,” which saw reenactors perform various tasks present in early 19th century frontier life, like loom weaving or candlestick making, often performing “in character” as the Indigenous Chumash who were forced to live and labor at La Purísima. The site offers no mention or visible clue that the Mission La Purísima was at one time the battleground in the largest Indigenous uprising during the mission era. While the visitor center provides important information and interpretation regarding the Chumash and their pre-contact lifeways including acknowledgement of the system of forced labor that existed in the California missions, possibly the most significant event that occurred there is largely ignored; The Chumash War of 1824 ended at La Purísima, where hundreds of Chumash exchanged musket fire with a battalion of Mexican soldiers, firing bullets and arrows from the mission building they fortified during a month-long occupation.³ Any sign or visual clue of this battle has been figuratively and literally painted over.

In February 1824, the Chumash at Missions Santa Inés, Santa Barbara, and La Purísima de Concepción overthrew their captors and absconded from the former two missions while holding the latter for weeks. Referred to as the “Chumash Revolt,”⁴ the “Chumash Rebellion,”⁵ and most recently the “Chumash War”⁶ by scholars, the conflict was the largest insurrection organized

3 James A. Sandos, “LEVANTAMIENTO!: The 1824 Chumash Uprising Reconsidered,” *Southern California Quarterly* 67, no. 2 (1985): 109-33.

4 Thomas Blackburn, “The Chumash Revolt of 1824: A Native Account,” *The Journal of California Anthropology* 2, no. 2 (1975): 223-27; Hubert H. Bancroft, *History of California II*, (San Francisco: A.L. Bancroft and Co., 1885); Rose Marie Beebe and Robert M. Senkewicz, “The End of the 1824 Chumash Revolt in Alta California: Father Vicente Sarria’s Account,” *The Americas* 53, no. 2 (1996): 273-83; Gary B. Coombs, “With What God Will Provide: A Reexamination of the Chumash Revolt of 1824,” *Noticias* 126, no. 2 (1989): 21-29; Maynard Geiger, “Fray Antonio Ripoll’s Description of the Chumash Revolt at Santa Barbara in 1824,” *Southern California Quarterly* 52, no. 4 (December, 1970): 345-364; Travis Hudson, “The Chumash Revolt of 1824: Another Native Account From the Notes of John P. Harrington,” *Journal of California and Great Basin Anthropology* 2, no. 1 (1980): 123-126; Dee Travis Hudson, “Chumash Canoes of Mission Santa Barbara: The Revolt of 1824,” *The Journal of California Anthropology* 3, no. 2 (Winter, 1976): 4-15; John R. Johnson, “Indian History in the Santa Barbara Back Country,” *Los Padres Notes* vol. 3 (1984): 1-24; Gary E. Stickel and Adrienne E. Cooper, “The Chumash Revolt of 1824: a case for the archeological application of feedback theory,” *Archaeological Survey and Annual Report*, University of California at Los Angeles, 5-21.

5 S.F. Cook, “Expeditions to the Interior of California: Central Valley, 1820-1840,” *Anthropological Records* 20, no. 5 (1962): 152-157; Sandos, “LEVANTAMIENTO!: The 1824 Chumash Uprising Reconsidered,” 1985.

6 Lisbeth Haas, *Saints and Citizens: Indigenous Histories of Colonial Missions and Mexican California* (University of California Press, 2014), 116-139.

against the mission system and its colonial pattern of forced labor, incarceration, and religious conversion. The events before, during, and after the Chumash War illustrate the complicated dynamics between different groups of Indigenous Chumash and nearby tribal groups, the Spanish padres and their complex of colonial institutions along the coast, and the newly formed government of Mexico that struggled to maintain control of Alta California in an age of explosive political upheaval.⁷ La Purísima Mission State Historic Park serves as a standing example of the erasure of the Chumash, the Indigenous Californians, and those who lived at the Missions, both in their mortal lives but also in the collective memory of Californians and the historical literature itself. This silencing of the Chumash began long before the rebellion, but was active during and just after the conflict, continuing in seeming perpetuity in the historic record and retelling of those bloody weeks in 1824.

In this paper I argue that the Chumash War was a revolutionary assertion of autonomy and human rights by the Indigenous Chumash of these missions, and, furthermore, that Spanish colonialism and institutional Catholicism not only worked to subjugate and erase Chumash peoples and their culture as a *modus operandi*, but also sought to control the narrative surrounding the historic conflict in the immediate aftermath and in perpetuity. Despite the blame that the Spanish mission leaders cast on the new Mexican government and its soldiers in instigating the conflict, the Franciscan missionaries worked in coordination with the Mexican military in the violent quelling of the rebellion at La Purísima and the eventual return of hundreds of Chumash back to all three missions, an effective counter-revolution that preserved the status quo of forced labor in Alta California less than a decade before Mexico would secularize and end the Mission system. The deemphasis of the motivations and demands of the Chumash during the Chumash War in early accounts, scholarship, and interpretation along with the broad silencing of Chumash voices and the favorable portrayal of Mission leadership all converge in the preservation of the cultural hegemony of religious colonial institutions in California and the United States more broadly.

Chumash Life Before Colonial Rule:

Marketed today as “California’s Riviera” and home to some of the most affluent and powerful human beings alive, the Santa Barbara coastline and channel is a landscape remarkable for its beauty, friendly climate, and abun-

7 Haas, *Saints and Citizens*, 116-139.

dant wildlife. Dozens of Chumash villages lined the Central Coast of California from present-day Ventura through Santa Barbara, the Channel Islands, and areas as far north as San Luis Obispo. The Santa Barbara Channel and its islands were the locus for a complex maritime culture that thrived for thousands of years.⁸ The earliest dated remains from the Channel Islands date as far back as 11,000 to 13,000 years ago, among the earliest known fossilized evidence of human beings in the Americas. Despite the region's regular cycles of drought and heavy El Niño rain seasons, the Chumash created a stable living environment for themselves based on material cultural practices that proved effective across millennia.⁹

Chumash villages and camps were most often situated near sources of fresh water, rivers and streams, that emptied into the ocean. The Santa Barbara Channel provided an ample supply of seafood, the primary means of survival for generations of Chumash across thousands of years. With the aid of oak plank canoes,¹⁰ the Chumash would catch and transport massive fish and marine mammals for food and other uses. Even without embarking to sea, they could easily collect mollusks and crustaceans along the shore in tide pools and other inlets. The surrounding oak woodlands constantly littered the forest floor with another Chumash staple, acorns, which they used stone tools to mash and prepare.¹¹ The environment also provided the necessary reeds and grasses to help roof their dwelling huts, sweat lodges, and intricate basketry. The thick asphaltum that would bubble up along the coast of the channel proved useful as well for lining baskets and plank canoes, preventing leaks and aiding in the movement of people and goods from village to village. Plenty of the scholarship regarding the Chumash relies on physical archeological evidence, offering a forensics-based insight into their lifeways. Works by Anderson and Olson—*The Chumash Indians of Southern California* and *Chumash Prehistory*, respectively—are early examples of this academic mode, focused on the material realities presented by various forms of physical evidence. Cataloging the materials and tools left behind by thousands

8 Eugene Newton Anderson, *The Chumash Indians of Southern California* (Banning California: Malki Museum Press, 1968); Lynn H. Gamble, *The Chumash World at European Contact: Power, Trade, and Feasting Among Complex Hunter-Gatherers* (University of California Press, 2008); Johnson, "Indian History in the Santa Barbara Back Country"; Douglas J. Kennett, *The Island Chumash: Behavioral Ecology of a Maritime Society* (University of California Press, 2005); Ronald L. Olson, *Chumash Prehistory* (New York: Kraus, 1965).

9 Deana Dartt-Newton and Jon M. Erlandson, "Little Choice for the Chumash: Colonialism, Cattle, and Coercion in Mission Period California," *American Indian Quarterly* 30, no. 3/4 (2006): 416–30.

10 Hudson, "Chumash Canoes of Mission Santa Bárbara," 4–15.

11 Ronald L. Olson, *Chumash Prehistory* (New York: Kraus, 1965).

of years of habitation gives scholars a more objective insight into the Chumash that is thankfully less biased than later colonial accounts of their lifeways.

This mass of physical evidence shows that, before European contact, the Chumash enjoyed an abundant environment along the coast, among the Channel Islands, and across the foothills and inland valleys wreathed by oak-lined mountain ranges. They created a variety of tools made of stone, shells, and bone. Archeologists helped discover and document mortars and pestles, flint points, fishhooks, bead ornaments, metates, and mullers.¹² Even the Chumash villages found farther inland show evidence of seafood consumption and use of shell tools, proving regular travel and exchange between different villages throughout the Central Coast. There also exists evidence of games and musical instruments, revealing shared experiences of gambling, singing, dancing, and other merriments.¹³ The buried remains of Chumash found on the islands and along the mainland show a culture that interred their people with care, adorning them with finery and goods such as the shell beads used as currency. Some gravesites show evidence of the movement and management of remains by the Chumash themselves, making room for new graves or consolidating others. Leaders of villages could even be buried inside their plank canoes, a remarkable practice considering how important these boats were for Chumash economies, but illustrative of the veneration the Chumash practiced for their leaders.¹⁴

In *The Chumash World at European Contact: Power, Trade, and Feasting Among Complex Hunter-Gatherers*, Lynn H. Gamble relies on this depth of archeological evidence, largely the heaping middens of shellfish and other maritime goods, to illustrate the culture of abundance that characterized the Chumash.¹⁵ Gamble explores the ecology and geography that allowed the Chumash to establish and maintain dense village networks, but also the ingenuity and wisdom of fire-and-stick cultivation and other methods of land management that made those population numbers manageable.¹⁶ And of course, the maritime expertise of the Chumash and their plank canoes looms large in the literature, exploring how the Chumash maintained linguistic and cultural connections across hundreds of miles of land and sea. Adding ethnography and biological anthropology along with early accounts of the Chumash, Gamble fleshes out the complex material culture and social stratigraphy of the Chumash. The accounts of early Spanish explorers, whose

12 Olson, *Chumash Prehistory*, 7.

13 Gamble, *Chumash World at European Contact*, 56.

14 Gamble, *Chumash World at European Contact*, 2.

15 Gamble, *Chumash World at European Contact*, 6–9.

16 Gamble, *Chumash World at European Contact*, 32–33.

journeys predate the Mission period by more than a century, tell of a sophisticated culture that thrived with an ample food supply, trade networks, and power structure.¹⁷ Villages often had more than one leader, though one man would serve as chief among them, and they even enjoyed power sharing and decision-making with other nearby Chumash villages.¹⁸

While they are necessarily biased, the accounts of Chumash social and cultural practices from Spanish explorers and missionaries should be brought into the conversation, but carefully. Important information about Chumash culture comes to us only through the point of view of Christian settler-colonial missionaries and their reactions to common Indigenous lifeways, as Dartt-Newton and Erlandson detail in the article titled “Little Choice for the Chumash,” where they tease out the religious, European, and colonial sensibilities at work in these accounts.¹⁹ The familial configurations of the Chumash at contact mortified the missionaries, as monogamy and marriage were nonexistent between Chumash men and women and childrearing was a collective endeavor rather than a paternalistic ownership over the young, a fact that would continue to bother the padres in the aftermath of the Chumash War.²⁰ The fact that the Chumash wore very little clothing in response to the temperate climate was an uncomfortable truth as well for Catholic missionaries, who were quick to characterize the Chumash as “savages” and “heathens” in need of the faith and propriety.²¹

One of the great repositories of information regarding Chumash culture comes from the Chumash themselves, that is, those who remained in the early 20th Century to be interviewed by ethnographer John P. Harrington, whose notes provide several oral history narratives vital to scholarship regarding the Chumash. In *December's Child: A Book of Chumash Oral Narratives*, editor and considerable scholar of Chumash culture Thomas C. Blackburn offers an analysis of the Chumash worldview and mythology, but also a look at the material culture that is present within these oral history narratives. Through these oral histories we learn some of what the Chumash knew and felt for themselves, within their context. Blackburn explained that, for the Chumash, “Daily life is normally village life, and the villages—with their gaming fields, cemeteries, shrines, work areas, houses, and temescals—are those familiar to the story-

17 Gamble, *Chumash World at European Contact*, 1-3.

18 Gamble, *Chumash World at European Contact*, 9-11.

19 Dartt-Newton and Erlandson, “Little Choice for the Chumash,” 416-30.

20 Cook, “Expeditions to the Interior of California,” 153.

21 Engelhardt, *Mission Santa Barbara* (San Francisco, CA: James H. Barry Company, 1923).

teller and his audience.”²² Furthermore, Blackburn argues that the oral history accounts provide much more than just the archeological record could supply, writing that “data on containers, foods and food preparation, structures, dress, ritual gear, and games, for example, would probably fall under the heading of significant additions to present knowledge of Chumash culture.”²³ These interviews from Harrington’s notes will also prove invaluable in contextualizing the Chumash War as well, as they show attitudes toward conflict and power passed down through generations of Chumash ancestors.

Missionization, Displacement, and Population Loss:

Much as it did for all Native Americans, European contact changed everything for the Chumash. Early contacts with explorers provide a brief snapshot of the Chumash living in abundance, literally sharing more food with Father Juan Crespí and his expedition than they could manage.²⁴ But once the Spanish arrived to colonize, both with often-militarized settlers and the Franciscan missionaries led by Junípero Serra, the Chumash faced an ongoing, slow-rolling crisis. Populations perished dramatically from diseases, whole villages were destroyed or displaced by colonists, and forced resettlement and labor fueled the mission system in Alta ²⁵

The most acute and deadly factor were diseases brought by Spanish explorers and settlers, which decimated the Chumash population across decades. More Spanish settlers arrived with cattle, ready to set up homesteads as Chumash villages collapsed, displacing Chumash settlements further by compromising subsistence foods and water supplies. Once the missions were founded in the late 1700s and early 1800s, Spanish missionaries were actively recruiting or forcibly removing the Chumash from their villages to live and labor on the missions.

One point of contention within the pre-rebellion scholarly literature focuses on the question: Why did the Chumash villages collapse and significant numbers of Chumash arrive to the missions in the late 1700s and early 1800s? Population loss from disease was the most obvious causal factor even in the earliest literature, though scholars had to rely on broad estimates of pre-contact and post-contact population numbers. Some researchers argued that, based off climatological influences and lack of available food because of drought, the Chumash pragmatically abandoned their

22 Thomas C. Blackburn, *December's Child: A Book of Chumash Oral Narratives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 48.

23 Blackburn, *December's Child*, 48.

24 Gamble, *Chumash World at European Contact*, 1.

25 Dartt-Newton and Erlandson, “Little Choice for the Chumash,” 416-30.

homes for the missions. Others argued that these outside pressures were eclipsed by the more direct outcome of forced relocation to the missions by colonists.

In 1994, Larson, Johnson, and Michaelsen published “Missionization among the Coastal Chumash of Central California: A Study of Risk Minimization Strategies,” which made a climatological argument as a material basis to spur this migration to the missions. The authors argued that the Chumash moved to the missions “based on a desire to minimize risk” and that the missions were viewed as “an acceptable alternative” because of years of drought and irregular climate. The impetus of this work seems influenced by the larger trend in the 1990s of the newer form of macrohistory based on scientific data. One of the sources for the study was “high-resolution dendrochronological and marine sedimentary records.”²⁶ There’s an obvious danger here in attempting to naturalize the forced migration of Chumash into a plantation system or ignoring the massive disruption that diseases brought by Europeans wrought on their populations, and appropriately, this article did see some pushback. In a refutation of Larson, Johnson, and Michaelsen’s article, Dartt-Newton and Erlandson cast doubts on the argument that environmental conditions such as drought or an El Niño year would lead to a “pragmatic” decision by Chumash to leave their villages for the missions. Essentially, the Chumash had lived through periods of drought for thousands of years and had adopted several sophisticated coping and subsistence strategies to mitigate the climatological pressures. Dartt-Newton and Erlandson explored the conditions that more likely led the Chumash to arrive at the missions in the numbers they did, arguing that ranching practices of the Spanish, disease, and a declaration by the Mission authorities that all natives must live on Mission grounds were more acute causal factors.²⁷

One limitation to understanding how many Chumash perished from communicable diseases introduced by Europeans is the lack of accurate population numbers before Missionization. Archeologists can confirm from the middens and burial grounds that tens of thousands of Chumash lived in numerous villages that house up to 200 or more at a time, but these are rough estimates.²⁸ The ledgers of the Missions themselves, presented by Engelhardt in his books, show that hundreds of Chumash were born each year and hundreds perished as well. From the book on La Purísima, we see that during the earliest years during which the mission

26 Daniel O. Larson, John R. Johnson, and Joel C. Michaelsen, “Missionization Among the Coastal Chumash of Central California: A Study of Risk Minimization Strategies,” *American Anthropologist* 96, no. 2 (1994), 263-64.

27 Dartt-Newton and Erlandson, “Little Choice for the Chumash,” 416-30

28 Gamble, *Chumash World at European Contact*, 65-112.

officials began recording the number of Chumash who lived on the mission, hundreds of Chumash were recorded as dying each year.²⁹ As the number of baptisms began to rise and more Chumash lived at the mission, more died there as well. For example, in 1800 there were 420 documented deaths of “Indians.” In 1805 that number was 800. The very next year saw 1,020 deaths of Indigenous mission residents.³⁰ Clearly, those who stayed away from the missions while it was still their choice to do so, were avoiding loci of disease and death.³¹

The overemphasis of material conditions in a land of abundance tends to ignore the cultural and epistemological character of the Chumash, their system of cosmological belief, spiritualism, family, hierarchy, village organization, commerce, shell-based currency, and maritime tradition—all patronizingly dismissed as “sophisticated” in early scholarship—and the resiliency of this congruence.³² An exploration of the Chumash culture in crisis from disease and displacement shows both pragmatism but also a shrinking number of options for a decimated population. At the missions, the Chumash would labor at agricultural cultivation and cattle ranching while a dynamic fission of Chumash spirituality with Catholic belief systems would take place.³³ This helps explain why the Chumash exhibited a familiarity with the Franciscans, according to scholars like Dartt-Newton and Erlandson,³⁴ in contrast to their outright hostility toward Mexican authorities throughout the conflict. There is also a dominating sense that Catholic beliefs had already permeated most areas of Chumash life and, while this did have important influence in the outcomes of the conflict, Indigenous Chumash lifeways and belief systems were never eradicated, even from those who lived on the missions.³⁵

Approaching Rebellion:

The Chumash War has been likened to a Rashomon situation,³⁶ with differing accounts of the conflict from each party involved: the Spanish priests, the

29 Engelhardt, *Mission La Purísima*, 129.

30 Engelhardt, *Mission La Purísima*, 129.

31 Larson, Johnson, and Michaelsen, “Missionization Among the Coastal Chumash,” 278.

32 Gamble, *Chumash World at European Contact*, 1-9.

33 Haas, *Saints and Citizens*, 13-49.

34 Dartt-Newton and Erlandson, “Little Choice for the Chumash,” (2006), 416-30.

35 Kaitlin M. Brown, Mirirose Meyer, Elena Hancock, Nicolasa Sandoval, and Glenn J. Farris, “Status and Social Stratification at Mission La Purísima Concepción: An Intra-Site Investigation of Residential Spaces Within the Chumash Rancheria’ Amuwi,” *International Journal of Historical Archeology* (2022).

36 Joe Payne, “Hidden history: The Chumash rebellion of 1824 illustrates the changing conversation surrounding life at California’s missions,” in *Santa Maria Sun* 19, no. 2 (March 16, 2016).

Mexican Military and government officials, and the Chumash. The Indigenous Mission residents were caught in the middle of a massive political conflict between the Spanish colonial establishment and the burgeoning secular state of Mexico that would end the mission system by 1834. The Franciscan mission leaders cast blame on the Mexican soldiers who relied on the missions for food and housing while exacting corporal punishment on the Chumash. The Mexican authorities would blame mission leaders and the Chumash for the perceived mismanagement of resources. The voices of the Spanish and Mexicans are over-represented in the scholarship, whereas the Chumash are under-represented. As any post-colonial student knows, our historic understanding of Indigenous history is forever distorted and influenced by ethnocentrism and the colonial ideologies that sought to oppress them. So much of our understanding of the Chumash before and after the conflict in 1824 is filtered through the accounts of Spanish missionaries, settlers, and government officials of Spain and later Mexico,³⁷ if not completely erased by disease, displacement, and the genocide that followed the mission period.

Early scholars were less cognizant of these biases, and happily present accounts of the Chumash almost entirely from the point of view of Spanish missionaries. Others were smattering in their praise for missionaries, framing the conflict as one between the Chumash and the Mexican military rather than the Chumash and the larger mission system as it was, essentially taking Spanish sources such as Fray Ripoll at their word, ignoring the larger political conflict between the Chumash, the Missions, and a burgeoning nation of Mexico. The Mexican War for Independence and the bill of rights, or Plan de Iguala of 1821, represented new attempts to write constitutions that gave suffrage and citizenship to the Indigenous.³⁸ The secularization that accompanied radical liberal republicanism freed Indigenous and Black laborers from indentured servitude and other forms of bondage or coerced labor across formerly Spanish colonial territories like Alta California with the exception, however, of those held at the missions. The Chumash were not ignorant of the new rights afforded to Indigenous peoples in Mexico who were outside the Mission system. Toiling to feed both the mission leaders and the new Mexican military with the bitter knowing that that other Indigenous peoples were cultivating their own lands was a major motivator for the Chumash to attempt an insurrection, according to the examination by Haas.

37 Haas, *Saints and Citizens*, 116-139.

38 Haas, *Saints and Citizens*, 116-139.

The disagreements and politics surrounding the antecedent factors to the conflict, how it proceeded, and what was done in the aftermath play out not just in the translations of primary sources, but in the very historiography itself. The noted lack of historians who frame the Chumash War as a revolution against the Mission system and its combination of Christianization, forced labor, and incarceration only until recently illustrate this bias. Another scholarly account by Gary Coombs sought to naturalize the Chumash War, much like their forced resettlement on the missions, by pointing to years of drought in the lead up to the conflict.³⁹ The Chumash were tasked with growing and harvesting the food that the missions produced, which fed the padres, Mexican military, and settlers before the Indigenous peoples who cultivated the goods.⁴⁰ Coombs' exploration of the drought conditions before the war skates over the new political realities churning all around the Chumash, namely the new language of revolution and emancipation. While the effects of drought and population loss should be considered as material realities that affected the Chumash, the social realities of the Missions and the new hope glimpsed by the new Plan de Iguala should be considered in the forefront as well.

It must also be acknowledged that many early to mid-20th century historians of the Missions were themselves ecclesiastical scholars. This helps us understand a major division in much of the early scholarship of the Chumash War characterized by who is centered in the recounting of the 1824 uprising: the Spanish missionaries, the Mexican Military, or the Chumash? Most of the scholarship begins with the Missions, both in the accounts of its priestly class but also records held by the institution that span years or decades. Every post-war scholar makes references to the books of Zephyrin Engelhardt, the historian and Catholic Church archivist who penned books on Franciscan colonization, missionization, and the missions from an undoubtedly biased, pro-church perspective. Engelhardt's language and descriptions lack the cultural awareness and public relations savvy of post-War scholars, referring to the Chumash as loyal children at best and savage animals at worst. Engelhardt also places the blame for the conflict on the Mexican Military quite loudly and without any finesse, ham-handedly attempting to absolve the priestly class of responsibility while ignoring the obvious pressures the Chumash faced at the hands of priests themselves and the Mission system.⁴¹

39 Coombs, "With What God Will Provide."

40 Zephyrin Engelhardt, *Mission Santa Inés Virgen Y Martir and its Ecclesiastical Seminary*, (Santa Barbara: Santa Barbara Mission, 1932), 30-35.

41 Manuel P. Servin, "The Secularization of the California Missions: A Reappraisal," *Southern California Quarterly* 47, no. 2 (1965), 133-49.

Even despite these clear biases, much can be learned from Engelhardt's stark accounts along with what is left to be seen between the lines, helping tell the story of the world that surrounded the Chumash before they rose up and took arms against their captors.

For example, the chapter from Engelhardt's book on Mission La Purísima that precedes the chapter about the war explains the catastrophic earthquake and climactic event that destroyed the original mission in 1812. The massive earthquake toppled most of the adobe buildings which were even further marred by massive rains and flooding. The entire mission, its grounds and sanctuary, were decimated. This leveling would have been traumatic for anyone who had a sense of home at the Missions, like the Franciscans, but greater suffering would come with the work that followed the devastation. Within the next few years, the Chumash would build an entirely new mission at the current State Historic Park site, including the main sanctuary, living quarters, and workshop that shared a thick adobe wall hundreds of feet long along with other buildings. In each year following the earthquake, more than a thousand Chumash were recorded as dying in the mission ledger.⁴² In this section of his book, Engelhardt's bias comes through clearly as he takes much more time and space explaining the new buildings and their respective accoutrement in these years than the names or actions of the Chumash who constructed the new mission complex.

The tone-deaf paternalism from Engelhardt is on full display in a passage relating this time, in which just paragraphs later he would go on to blame the "Hidalgo Revolt" and the "Mexican turmoil" for hardships at the new Mission:⁴³

To begin with, the terrified neophytes had to be gathered together at the new site. It speaks volumes for the kindly and paternal management of the missionaries that they seem to have experienced no difficulties whatever in returning the neophytes to their care. Like so many confiding children, the neophytes seem to have reappeared at the bare call of the Fathers, as they felt that their spiritual and temporal wellbeing was secure in the hands of the two priests, and that the Mission was their real and only home. At all events, there is no evidence that the aid of the soldiers

42 Engelhardt, *Mission La Purísima*, 129.

43 Engelhardt, *Mission La Purísima*, 38.

was required. The Indians assisted in erecting the necessary buildings, and then with their happy families occupied their new quarters as though nothing had happened.

Engelhardt's description of these events represents an astounding attempt to smooth over the years of hard labor the Chumash endured in reconstructing Mission La Purísima. Furthermore, this paternalistic bias should be understood across Engelhardt's work, which has been foundational to mission scholarship.

The telling in Hubert Bancroft's *History of California* is more skeptical of the church. An academic historian outside the Catholic Church, Bancroft utilized many more sources from Mexican government officials to soldiers and even explorers. Just the inclusion of sourcing outside the church offers a more expansive view of the conditions surrounding the Chumash War. Bancroft acknowledges a Russian voyager named Kotzebue who condemned the Spaniards and the Mission system who believed that "the padres had no good quality but hospitality. The neophytes were simply slaves, captured in their homes by the lasso."⁴⁴ This scholarship was met with outright hostility by Engelhardt, who viewed the acknowledgement of such views as tantamount to anti-Catholic prejudice according to Manuel P. Servín in "California Missions: A Reappraisal." Servín posited in 1965 that historians avoided criticism of the Franciscans and the Mission system, fearful of the label "bigot," and "content to present a sketchy, pro-Franciscan view" when relating the secularization of the Missions.⁴⁵ In this way, it can be argued that early Franciscan scholars were essentially continuing a spin campaign that began in 1824, maintaining the narrative that the problem was never truly between the Chumash and the padres and the mission system, but the new secular government of Mexico.

Later accounts from the Spanish church leaders, such as Maynard Geiger's 1970 article "Fray Antonio Ripoll's Description of the Chumash Revolt at Santa Barbara in 1824," show some of the slanted bias on the part of the scholars who provided translations of personal accounts from Spanish sources.⁴⁶ Geiger was not shy to frame the actions of Father Ripoll as those of a "devoted missionary with a tender love for his Indians," before his lengthy translation.⁴⁷ Geiger was another parochial scholar whose work was necessarily shaped by the biases of his parent institution. The translation of Ripoll's account is filled with the pater-

44 Bancroft, *History of California*, 524.

45 Servín, "The Secularization of the California Missions: A Reappraisal," 133.

46 Geiger, "Fray Antonio Ripoll's Description of the Chumash Revolt," 346.

47 Geiger, "Fray Antonio Ripoll's Description of the Chumash Revolt," 346.

nalism and dominance of the Catholic mode of thought regarding Indigenous peoples, though not as openly bigoted as pre-War historians such as Engelhardt.

The only contemporary Chumash accounts come filtered through the interrogations that occurred after the rebellion was put down, which are shared in S.F. Cook's "Expeditions to the Interior of California Central Valley, 1820-1840." These only tell of how the runaway Chumash behaved while away from the missions with allied Yokut at Buena Vista Lake near modern-day Bakersfield before they were returned to the Missions. These short interrogations show that the Chumash immediately returned to their traditional lifeways once out from under the supervision of the padres, enjoying long stretches of the day in sweat lodges, gambling sessions, and non-monogamous sexual liaisons, no longer observing the interpersonal restrictions that come with Catholicism.⁴⁸ Other scholarship shows how quickly the Chumash returned to their pre-colonial lifeways during the Chumash War, whether it was taking to the wilderness, defying Christian marriages, or utilizing their plank canoes to escape to the old Chumash home of the Channel Islands.⁴⁹

Of the few Chumash accounts of the insurrection that do exist, they are essentially passed down, or once removed, by those who grew up hearing the story from those who lived it and then retold their recollections to ethnographer John Harrington. Harrington's recordings are invaluable oral history narratives from the early 20th century, including numerous recorded hours of some of the last native speakers of Chumash languages. From the oral history accounts of Harrington, Thomas Blackburn provided a scant yet much-needed translation in 1975, "The Chumash Revolt of 1824: A Native Account." Blackburn thankfully expresses the stifling layers of bias at work against even understanding the lives of the Chumash from a historical perspective, saying the documentation and evidence available "are limited, sparse," and "systematically biased." Even the source of the account that Blackburn was able to uncover from the notes of John P. Harrington, he admits, "did not personally participate in the 1824 revolt, but she had numerous opportunities as a girl to hear about it from those who did."⁵⁰ The only other oral history narrative so far recovered that tells of the rebellion was found by Travis Hudson and shared in the article, "The Chumash Revolt of 1824: Another Native Account from the Notes of John P. Harrington." While these oral history narratives certainly

⁴⁸ Cook, "Expeditions to the Interior of California," 153.

⁴⁹ Hudson, "Chumash Canoes," 4-15.

⁵⁰ Blackburn, "Chumash Revolt of 1824: A Native Account," 223.

exist within the paradigms of oppressive colonial power structures—the history was not the primary motivator for Harrington, an ethnographer most interested in documenting languages—the fact that there are only two known accounts by Chumash people from nearly a century after the war speaks to the outcome of Spain and later the United States' colonial project; that's all there is left, a couple of short explanations that focus on various types of minutia and motivations, hardly the detailed firsthand accounts of the war available from the Spanish and Mexican primary source material. That kind of widespread silencing of generations of Indigenous peoples, whether perishing under the mission system or from widespread epidemics or genocide itself, stands in bleak contrast to the reams of history that centers the Spanish and the missionaries or even Mexican settlers and officials all pointing fingers at one another.

A much more sensitive study of a Spanish-centered account comes from Beebe and Senkewicz in 1996 with the article and translation, "The End of the 1824 Chumash Revolt in Alta California Father Vicente Sarria's Account." This article shows the progress made in the two decades since Geiger, sitting with and exploring how colonial power dynamics meant a silencing and dehumanizing of the Chumash. They explore the hegemonic influence of Catholicism and Christian mysticism in Chumash life and their relationships with the Spanish church fathers. Beebe and Senkewicz even give the Chumash credit for "an impressive mixture of organizational precision and operational flexibility" during the uprising, a welcome understatement considering some of the other more paternalistic accounts.⁵¹

Accounts of Conflict:

Much of the formative scholarship on the Chumash uprising presents the timeline of the conflict, with some limited accounts added to the record along the way. While considering the bias inherent in relying mostly on the accounts of Spanish missionaries, a picture of the antecedent factors and procession of the conflict are available in detail through available sources. There is a wealth of information about the procession of the conflict from Spanish sources, but Chumash accounts tend to relate the story through geography, tales of supernatural abilities, and remembrances of loss and suffering. The padres tend to valorize and sterilize their own actions, careful to pass blame onto the Mexican Revolution

⁵¹ Rose Marie Beebe and Robert M. Senkewicz, "The End of the 1824 Chumash Revolt in Alta California: Father Vicente Sarria's Account," *The Americas*, vol. 53, no. 2 (October, 1996): 273-283.

and state authorities whereas Mexican accounts will celebrate military victories, depict the padres indifferently, and offer cold accounts of executions in the aftermath of the war.

Sandos offers a comprehensive account, for the time, in the 1985 journal article “LEVANTAMIENTO!: The 1824 Chumash Uprising Reconsidered,” which attempts to marry the limited Indigenous accounts with Spanish accounts supplemented by mission records, such as confessions and other question and answer forms employed by the missionaries.⁵² Sandos’ 1985 article should serve as a serious benchmark in the scholarship in its effort to aggregate and synthesize information about the Chumash’s culture, how it threatened Catholic rules and sentiments, and how decisions by colonial authorities exacerbated conflicts between the Chumash and their rulers. Sandos also sat with the complexity and messiness of the conflict. The Chumash targeted secular and religious authorities, being both friendly and negotiating with missionaries while also lashing out violently at passersby out of paranoia. Mexican authorities responded in kind, needlessly killing innocent Chumash impulsively as well during the conflict.⁵³ Padres like Ripoll would lament the violence of the Mexican Military in those cases, though not in the quashing of the rebellion at La Purísima or the military-backed expedition to return the Chumash to the Missions.

Sandos gives a necessary agency to the Chumash, genuinely gleaned from contemporary accounts, that agree the Chumash planned an uprising for months. The war was kickstarted early, however, since the rebellion began after an act of violence against a Chumash man, a visitor to the prison of Mission Santa Inés to see a family member held there according to accounts by Ripoll and others. The visitor was denied visitation of the prisoner, and after arguing to see their relative, was subsequently beaten by a Mexican soldier and prison guard who would later serve as a scapegoat for the padres.⁵⁴ According to the oral history accounts from the two Chumash interviewed by Harrington, the Chumash had planned and prepared for the uprising for some time, possibly months, after rumors circulated that the Mexican soldiers and perhaps even the Franciscans were conspiring to commit mass murder against the neophytes. The catalyst for the powder-keg situation—the beating by the prison guard—speaks to the carceral nature of the Missions.⁵⁵ Even if the

⁵² Sandos, “LEVANTAMIENTO!,” 109–33.

⁵³ Geiger, “Fray Antonio Ripoll’s Description of the Chumash Revolt.”

⁵⁴ Sandos, “LEVANTAMIENTO!,” 123.

⁵⁵ Benjamin Madley, “California’s First Mass Incarceration System: Franciscan Missions, California Indians, and Penal Servitude, 1769–1836,” *Pacific Historical Review* 88, no. 1 (2019), 14–47.

Chumash were preparing for a perceived genocidal plot against them, that understanding was punctuated by the very real and continual violence and restrictions that characterized the Mission system.⁵⁶ The fact that the Chumash were prepared for revolution and war, not just at Mission Santa Inés, but also at Santa Barbara and La Purísima, speaks to the lie that their conflict was with Mexican authorities alone, but also the overarching colonial superstructure of the Missions.

In retaliation for the beating, the sources agree, the mission’s Chumash ambushed the Mexican authorities with bows and arrows. The soldiers responded with gunfire as the priest of Santa Inés fled the grounds while the Chumash set fire to the mission. A handful of Chumash would perish just in this skirmish. Simultaneously, word went out to both Mission Santa Barbara and Mission La Purísima Concepción, where organized overthrows commenced. The Santa Barbara Chumash overtook the mission quickly and were successful in a skirmish against the Mexican soldiers from the presidio in Santa Barbara. Missionaries and Mexican military men would return to recover the mission by the next day, but the Chumash had already left. Most fled Santa Barbara up and over the mountains, no doubt with a smoldering Santa Inés in sight. Many hundreds from Santa Barbara headed Northwest out toward Buena Vista Lake, in Yokuts territory, far away from the violence and instability in the constellation of the three overthrown missions, though the journey was fraught with its own perils for the old and sick who died during the journey. The rest were bound for La Purísima, to join in the effort to claim and hold the Mission constructed just more than a decade before by Chumash hands. This depiction certainly displays an early example of revisionism that celebrates the rebellion of the Chumash, even if it is through a largely Spanish lens. Also, the sense of place that the Chumash exhibited, both in fleeing into the wilderness to return to their remembered ways of life, and the insistence on holding La Purísima, the only full mission complex that most could remember taking part in building, speaks to the agency of the radicalized Chumash.

The Chumash Rebellion gets its own chapter in the book *Saints and Citizens: Indigenous Histories of Colonial Missions and Mexican California* by Lisbeth Haas, titled “‘All of the Horses Are in the Possession of the Indians’: The Chumash War.” In that chapter, Haas also makes the argument that the Chumash were emboldened to rebel in hopes for liberal rights, citing the Spanish Constitution of 1812, the Plan de Igual of 1821, and the promise of legal citizenship for the Indige-

⁵⁶ Servin, “The Secularization of the California Mission: A Reappraisal.”

nous alongside Spaniards and natural-born Mexicans.⁵⁷ Haas also does a thorough job in depicting the two parties of Chumash post-revolt: those who journeyed far to Yokut territory and those who stayed to fight at La Purísima, framing the coming battle at the mission not as one of just defiance, but also of desperation, in that many Chumash at La Purísima would not leave behind elders or children who could not survive the long trek.⁵⁸ Considering the hardships faced by those who did flee, their worries were not unjustified. Either way, that desperation doesn't downplay this interpretation of the Chumash War as a revolutionary moment in the Mission era, which itself was part of a larger century-wide movement for emancipatory revolutionary liberalism.⁵⁹

Hass's telling, like others, can't help but wax heroic about the hundreds of La Purísima inhabitants who overtook the Mexican soldiers and the Spanish missionaries, gaining control of the arms supply, which included rifles and other weapons. The Mission Santa Inés Chumash arrived at Purísima with more weapons, including small cannons, sometimes referred to as "swivel guns," which served as symbols of hope and later harbingers of defeat.⁶⁰ Hundreds of Chumash occupied Mission La Purísima for several weeks on end, holding a missionary and several soldiers and their families for days before releasing some. The sight would have been truly radical, with Chumash preparing the grounds for a battle, cutting slits for rifles and archers in the walls of the mission itself.⁶¹ The battle exceeded two hours but ended after significant losses for the Chumash, including the fatal backfiring of the swivel guns and the wounding of many others from the military response, which included "109 soldiers with artillery, infantry, cavalry, and a cannon" against the "four hundred men who fought within the mission."⁶²

As many as nine of the Chumash insurrectionists received death sentences that were carried out just days after the battle. Some of these executions were for the killings of the travelers near Purísima during the early days of the uprising, but the performance of executions following an uprising can not be misunderstood as a potent counter-revolutionary tactic. More still were sentenced to hard labor and sent to missions elsewhere in Alta California, removing the leaders of the war from their communities and families. Later accounts by contemporaries that were ver-

57 Haas, *Saints and Citizens*, 117-121.

58 Haas, *Saints and Citizens*, 121.

59 Paul Ortiz, *An African American and Latinx History of the United States* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2018), 42-55.

60 Haas, *Saints and Citizens*, 117-121.

61 Bancroft, *History of California*.

62 Haas, *Saints and Citizens*, 122.

ified by scholars tell of one leader of the Chumash uprising named Pacomio who was sentenced to hard labor for his role in the uprising and was later known in the Monterey area for his craftsmanship, songs, and political activities, including his participation as a member of town council.⁶³ Thankfully, Hass connects this radical militancy to the slave revolts and rebellions of the Age of Revolution typified by the Haitian Revolution and other conflicts by modern scholars.⁶⁴ This is the framing that should inform future work on the Chumash War, as the political nature of the conflict is undeniable.

While the Chumash at La Purísima were put down, the matter of the hundreds of Chumash that had fled to Yokuts territory was still unacceptable to mission authorities whose counter-revolution was still incomplete and, consequently, the Mexican military, which relied on food and other goods produced at the missions. So much of the early ecclesiastic blame passed onto the Mexican authorities for the uprising is cast in a new light when considering their collaboration with the new nation's military to violently put down or return the Chumash back to the mission. They needed the aid of the military just to locate the runaway Chumash, let alone return them to the missions. Mexican state authorities and Spanish mission authorities visited several tribes in the surrounding areas, interrogating natives across a few months.⁶⁵ Eventually, Chumash from all three missions were found near Buena Vista Lake and confronted in June, months after the battle at La Purísima in March. The Spanish padres were obsessed with the specter of a widespread overthrow of the mission system to the point of rampant paranoia, believing that Mission Buenaventura may have been the next target.⁶⁶ In this way, many of the Spanish-centered narratives do themselves at least one justification in giving a highly detailed account of the aftermath and reconciliation with the Chumash who were returned to the missions and the deep-seated fear of widespread rebellion from their "neophytes" across Alta California.

The return of the Chumash was an essential re-establishment of order and preservation of the exploitative labor system of the missions, a saving face for the flaunted power structures of the Spanish and Mexican authorities as well as a counter-revolutionary act to discipline the Indigenous subjects of the mission system. The Spanish friars and the Mexican Military were both beneficiaries of

63 "Pacomio's Chumash Dancing Songs," *Bulletin of the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History* 134 (December 1989), 1.

64 Ortiz, *An African American and Latinx History of the United States*, 42-55.

65 Cook, "Expeditions to the Interior of California," 152-53.

66 Sandos, "LEVANTAMIENTO!"

this counter-revolution, as one mission leader reported to another that, “if the Indians flee to the pagans, all will perish, troops and settlers, because if the soldier must eat, he must have it from the labor of the Indian.”⁶⁷ The account we have of this period from Father Sarria and Father Ripoll show the personal and spiritual connection the missionaries still managed to cultivate with the Chumash, weaving in mercy and atonement into their justification for a resettlement back into the Mission system. This is where the Spanish-dominated outlook is useful to scholars, helping to illustrate how language, tradition, and beliefs have justified oppressive systems across time and in acute moments of crisis, and specifically how the preeminence of Catholic ideology reinforced and maintained those hierarchical relationships.

Hegemonic Colonialism, Christianity in the Chumash Context:

The Italian Communist and post-Marx theorist Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) left an indelible mark on historiography with his framing and argument surrounding “cultural hegemony,” that the capital class and the state work in harmony to fashion the consent of the proletarian class through myriad cultural and state institutions.⁶⁸ This framework is important in conceptualizing the dynamics between the missionized Chumash and their captors. According to Gramsci, an institution like the church, for example, may exalt certain “virtues” such as military service to the nation, hard work, and the “traditional” monogamous family. That outlook, which institutions like the church inculcate proletarian subjects into, services not just the immediate interests of the bourgeoisie directly in pliable laborers, but ultimately saps revolutionary energy and input from the laboring class by preempting their discontent with theories of obedience and servitude.⁶⁹ Gramsci relates that these institutions are part of an overall societal structure, that the outcome of these institutional entrenchments is an ideological “superstructure,” or an overlording outlook that dominates all societal and cultural discourse—cultural hegemony.⁷⁰

Gramsci, like Marx before him, is engaging in the methodology of dialectical materialism: attempting to explain history and political machinations consid-

67 Zephyrin Engelhardt, *Mission Santa Inés Virgen Y Martir and its Ecclesiastical Seminary* (Santa Barbara: Santa Barbara Mission, 1932), 30-35.

68 David Forgacs, ed., *The Antonio Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings 1916-1935* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 189-192.

69 Forgacs, *Gramsci Reader*, 191.

70 Forgacs, *Gramsci Reader*, 190-191.

ering the material means and environment that influence economic systems and the ideas that are the outcome of that material reality. This is why the theory of cultural hegemony was such a breakthrough among Marxist thinking—it brought idealism and ideological superstructure into historical materialism. Cultural hegemony explains why workers adopt the ideology of the capital class, but it also points out that workers are existing in a paradigm that is created and enforced not just by capitalists, but the petit bourgeoisie, and proletarians themselves. Therefore, the imagination of the proletariat is limited or encased by the ideological superstructure that permeates institutions, which in turn help reinforce hegemony.⁷¹ Gramsci detailed this further in his idea of “false consciousness,” or how workers adopt the ideological beliefs of the capitalist class, taking on a consciousness not of their own or in their own interests.

The idea of false consciousness, paired with cultural hegemony, revolutionized the way historians, scholars, and Marxists viewed the world. It could also help in the way we view the power dynamics present in the intersectional colonial relationship of the Chumash to the Catholic mission system and its leadership along with the militarized state government of Mexico. How did the Chumash’s lifetimes within the Missions and their inculcation into Catholicism as “neophytes” color their reactions to the worsening conditions at the Missions before the rebellion? The cultural hegemony of the Franciscans did not work to prevent a violent uprising, but it did serve as a tool in completing a successful counter-revolution against those who fought and fled the missions, though that hegemony would eventually fade with secularization.⁷² Could it be that the Franciscan ideology that enforced labor and obedience was dispelled, even if only temporarily, by the specter of liberal republicanism that characterized revolution and new government of Mexico? The realities of the new Mexican government’s interest in preserving the Mission system, at least for the time being, in concert with the Franciscans would be clearly communicated to the Chumash down the barrels of rifles, dispelling any revolutionary hopes for the Chumash and their way of life.

Some of Gramsci’s first subjects in his exploration of the idea of cultural hegemony were the church and ecclesiastical leadership. As an Italian, Gramsci was operating intimately within a society steeped in the culture and traditions of the Catholic Church, an expert institution at implanting “false consciousness” into the

71 Forgacs, *Gramsci Reader*, 190-194.

72 Edward D. Castillo, “An Indian Account of the Decline and Collapse of Mexico’s Hegemony over the Missionized Indians of California,” *American Indian Quarterly* 13, no. 4 (1988): 391-408.

minds of its targeted subjects and bending their wills to the constricts of the church. It must be remembered that, in the context of the 1824 Chumash War, the missions were characterized by a large majority of Chumash dominated both physically and ideologically by a minority of Spanish padres, but also abused more outright and physically by Mexican Military forces preceding the war. Spanish missionaries such as Father Ripoll placed the responsibility for inciting the uprising on the Mexican soldiers, clearly displacing any blame that could focus on the Mission's oppressive system of plantation labor, and instead placing it at the feet of a few unruly actors. The self-preservation on display by the Mission fathers shows not just a willingness to defend their personal actions, but also the Missions and Catholic Church as institutions. Further scholarship, however, has argued that the Missions across Alta California functioned increasingly as carceral institutions, limiting the movements and social lives of Indigenous laborers, using jailing and corporal punishment in conjunction with Catholic ideas of atonement, purity, and chastity to enforce these brutal and restrictive methods.⁷³ Though Mexico would secularize the Missions within a decade of the Chumash War, many if not most of the Mexican military authorities were Spaniards by birth or descent and practicing Catholics.

Future scholarship should consider the hegemonic influence of the Catholic doctrine of original sin, confession, and other traditions that had become enculturated among the Chumash, and how the very reconciliation and return of Chumash to the Missions post-war shows the incredible potency of a hegemonic ideology like the Catholic doctrine, which includes ideas like forgiveness, mercy, and absolution. An exploration of the cultural hegemony present in the lives of the Chumash, and present in their decision-making both during and after the rebellion, is a blind spot that exists in the literature that deserves more exploration. Discussions of the Chumash's quest for liberal rights in an Age of Revolution should be weighed with an honest portrayal of the Chumash's fusion of traditional folk beliefs with Catholic dogma and mysticism,⁷⁴ which necessarily colored the close and familiar relationships that had developed with Mission fathers. Furthermore, the construction of these three missions embedded Catholicism and Catholic hierarchy into the very landscape of the Chumash, ensnaring the sense of place and home that had sustained the Chumash for millennia with the Missions and Catholicism itself. When mission leaders such as Fray Ripoll and Sarria

appealed to the Chumash to return to the missions across a few meetings in June of 1824 near Buena Vista Lake, they appealed to the Chumash peoples' sense of home and belonging on the Central Coast, but also their very real religious affinities. According to one of the Mexican military men along for this journey, Fray Sarria said to the Chumash, "Come along, come along, for we have to sing the Corpus tomorrow,"⁷⁵ appealing to the religious rituals to which the Chumash had become accustomed.

One of the clear outcomes of the focus on the Spanish padres such as Ripoll and Sarria is either a near or blatant acceptance of their framing of Mexican military members as aggressors towards the Chumash and themselves as merciful, loving, and giving lords over the freedom and futures of their beloved "neophytes." Because of this rhetorical tool employed to explain away their responsibility in fomenting the conflict, the priests get to depict themselves as merciful peacemakers when, in reality, they traveled hundreds of miles to relocate the Chumash back to the missions and the system of forced labor, all while backed by military force. These mission fathers, according to their own accounts, were able to convince most of the Chumash to return of their own will in appealing to their religious convictions and their sense of loss over their known home. Yet, according to an account by the soldier Gonzales, those negotiations were punctuated by moments like when Captain Portilla approached the conference of mission and Chumash leaders with impatience, declaring "Carrajos! For three days I have been standing here in the heat and the cold—if they don't surrender today, before dawn tomorrow I will start shooting them."⁷⁶ In his translations of the reports regarding the return of the Chumash, Cook also notes how, despite the rosy accounts from Fray Ripoll and other Franciscans, that not all the Chumash who fled missions Santa Barbara, Inés, and La Purísima were returned, with potentially hundreds remaining unaccounted for.

This ability of Christianity to act as a bridge between colonizer and colonized, even amidst a militarized effort to compel these peoples to return to an oppressive system after successfully fleeing and overthrowing it, illustrates the potent cultural hegemony exerted on the Chumash by the colonial superstructure. Self-reinforcing ideological frameworks like monotheistic religion, specifically Catholicism, rely on influential iconography, the sense of the sacred within the church itself, and all the rituals repeated and intertwined with different stages of life. Franciscan leaders also appealed to the sense of place the Chumash held

⁷³ Madley, "California's First Mass Incarceration System," 14-16.

⁷⁴ Robert F. Heizer, "A California Messianic Movement of 1801 among the Chumash," *American Anthropologist* 43 (1941): 128-29.

⁷⁵ Cook, "Expeditions to the Interior of California," 155-57.

⁷⁶ Cook, "Expeditions to the Interior of California," 157.

for their coastal home alongside the liturgical rites and rituals of mission life. These are undeniably powerful influences that help shape an entire worldview and an individual's sense of self within it. This may, in some way, explain why many Chumash were inspired to hold Mission La Purísima, identifying with the sanctuary and its hallowed grounds because of, beyond personal connections and sense of ownership, spiritual ones as well. According to some accounts by Franciscans, so still dubious in their focus, there were Chumash at Mission Santa Inés who rescued vestments and other iconography from the sanctuary as the mission buildings burned. Though even scholars who have explored Christianization of the Chumash, such as Sandos, but also Robert F. Heizer in "A California Messianic Movement of 1801 among the Chumash," argue that the Chumash's Christian beliefs were an adaptation to their own forms of mysticism, they also provided important narratives of hope for escaping bondage.⁷⁷

Furthermore, there is also present in the scholarship an overriding influence of the Catholic paradigm, a kind of cultural hegemony that is exerted on the academic process itself. It's present in the centering of Ripoll and Sarria in the accounts and in so much of the scholarship. It's also present in the example from Geiger depicting the padres as "loving" and their motivations pure, living in and reinforcing the paternalistic cultural hegemony emanating from the Catholic Church. Those examples and others show how the historiography itself is colored by this hegemonic influence. The mass silencing of the Chumash and their stories at the hands of Spanish colonizers is one aspect of a deep oppression measured in silence. Another means of oppression is the spotlight on the narratives of the padres over the Chumash, a second silencing at the hands of a generation of historians influenced by the centuries-old institution that touts so much hegemonic power. This hegemony is also present in the physical location of so much of the documentation relating to this time, at Mission Santa Barbara's archives, which is under the control of the church and ecclesiastic archivists. In fact, the Santa Barbara Mission archive was unavailable during the time of this research project due to a vacancy in the archivist position.

The insidiousness of cultural hegemony under colonization shows how a colonizing power can nearly eradicate entire cultures of people and, under that massive sense of shock and displacement within the colonized population, fill the vacuum with their own hegemonic narrative, in this case monotheistic Catholicism, which preached obedience and hard labor as virtues. This both entrenched

the oppression of the Indigenous populations by inculcating them into an ideology of service and obedience while providing the colonizing power, the Spanish padres, a narrative that paints them as soul-saving heroes of evangelism, not the leaders of plantations formed by stolen Indigenous labor on stolen land. Much in the same way that the proletarian laborer might celebrate a billionaire capitalist as a "job creator," the Chumash very well may have viewed the Spanish Padres as the powerful spiritual emissaries they claimed to be, and that the "mercy" they would receive in returning to the missions might save their souls. Perhaps, the cultural hegemony of Catholicism colored the internal deliberations of every Chumash who faced return after raising arms against their colonial captors, and though they fought, fled, and bled for their freedom, were willing to acquiesce and compromise that freedom for the familiar and the promise of other-worldly salvation.

Conclusion:

The Chumash War remains an underexplored flashpoint in California history and the history of the Mission system of Alta California for myriad reasons, which include a lack of contemporary documentation relating the motivations of the Chumash as well as a broader silencing of Indigenous voices in state and colonial Spanish and U.S. history. For the hegemonic centers of power present at the time, the Catholic Missionaries and the Mexican Government, the impetus to ignore the grievances of Chumash and enact a counter-revolution couldn't be clearer—both institutions depended directly on the forced labor and production of the Chumash at Missions Santa Barbara, Inés, and La Purísima. In the broader historiographic literature, however, the need to downplay the Chumash desire for freedom from the yolk of European colonialism and focus instead on natural phenomena, inter-personal conflicts, and narratives from biased primary sources such as Franciscan missionaries belies the larger cultural hegemony of a settler-colonial project. Ignoring the political realities of the Chumash War in the scholarship has served as detriment to the collective memory of the Mission era, which has only begun to be remedied by the most recent scholarship. A new study of the Chumash War that centers the Chumash and places their actions within the context of a century of emancipatory revolution and anti-colonial struggle is a necessary and forthcoming step in the scholarship, especially considering the prominence of the Mission era in California state history, from the elementary school curriculum and beyond.

⁷⁷ Heizer, "A California Messianic Movement of 1801 Among the Chumash," 128.

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