

**LIVING DURING A DIFFICULT TIME:
A COMPARISON OF ETHNOHISTORIC, BIOARCHAEOLOGICAL, AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL DATA
DURING THE MISSION PERIOD, SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA**

JOHN G. DOUGLASS AND PATRICK B. STANTON
STATISTICAL RESEARCH, INC.

During the Mission period in southern California, information on everyday activities, interaction with other groups, health, births, and deaths can be collected from three primary sources: archaeological, bioarchaeological, and ethnohistoric data. In this paper, we explore what types of data are complementary, exclusive, or competing with one another. In addition, using ethnohistoric data available through the Huntington's Early California Population Project, we will broadly compare and contrast Mission-period trends in health, habitation, and interaction between Native groups and Hispanic populations.

The Mission period in the greater Los Angeles Basin was a difficult time for Native Californians as well as the newly arrived Hispanic colonists. Native Californians had lived relatively similar lives for thousands of years, focused on a hunting and gathering subsistence strategy. Within a short time of the arrival of Hispanic colonists from what is now northern Mexico, the missions, pueblos, and presidios began to erode these traditional patterns. The establishment of rancho economies, including horse, sheep, and cow herding, on traditional aboriginal lands relatively quickly began to destroy the traditional plants and native animal habitat. As several scholars (Hackel 2005; Larson et al. 1994; Milliken 1995) have recently argued, this destruction of native habitat related to traditional aboriginal subsistence patterns likely was one major push for Franciscan recruitment of Native Californians into the missions.

The focus of this paper is to discuss different types of data available during the Mission period to help delineate what types of data are complementary, which offer exclusive insight into patterns, and which appear to conflict with each other. The Mission period in southern California allows for multiple lines of evidence – archaeological, bioarchaeological, and historical and ethnohistorical – to detail insight into past patterns of behavior which are not able to be studied in such detail during earlier periods of aboriginal occupation. Mission records – including baptismal, godparent, and death – offer unique data which generally are not available in the archaeological record. Much of the ethnohistoric data used in this paper come from the use of the Early California Population Project (ECP) database, housed at the Huntington Library and available on-line.

THE CHUMASH SITE OF *HUMALIWO*

For this paper, we will focus on the archaeological, bioarchaeological, and ethnohistoric data available for the Chumash site of *Humaliwo* (CA-LAN-264), located along the northern edge of Santa Monica Bay within the modern town of Malibu, which uses and carries on the Chumash site name (Figure 1). The native village, located along Malibu Lagoon within what is now Malibu State Park, was likely part of a large, complex settlement system, including both Chumash and Gabrielino villages, along this portion of Santa Monica Bay (King 2004). The site has a time depth of at least 2,500 years, from the Middle period through Hispanic contact. Much of what we know about the site of *Humaliwo* is through analysis of midden and burials excavated by UCLA field school students in the 1960s and 1970s. Several detailed reports and articles on the site have been published (Bickford 1982; Gamble et al. 1995, 1996, 2001; Gibson 1975, 1987; Glassow 1965; King 1996; Martz 1984; Walker et al. 1996), with articles and reports by Gamble (Gamble et al. 1996, 2001; Gamble 2008), King (1996), Walker (Walker et al. 1996) and their colleagues being the most current examples.



Figure 1. Map showing the hypothesized location of selected Chumash and Gabrielino native villages during the Mission period. Note the location of Humaliwo in the northwest corner of the map, along the northern edge of Santa Monica Bay. Cultural boundaries are approximate. Hypothesized locations of native villages are redrawn from King (2004:Figure 2).

The site of *Humaliwo* is large and complex, with midden deposits in places 5 m thick (Glassow 1965). While midden deposits have been a minor focus of work, the primary research at the site has related to two burial areas, each containing numerous individuals; one burial area dates to the Middle period, the other to the Mission period. Shell and glass beads excavated from this Mission-period burial area indicate that it was in use for a relatively short period of time, between A.D. 1775 and 1805 (Gibson 1975; King 1996). The focus of this paper is on the results from the Mission-period burial area.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND BIOARCHAEOLOGICAL DATA FROM *HUMALIWO*

Archaeological data from the Mission-period burial area at *Humaliwo* offer a great deal of information on status, social organization, and activities likely performed by the inhabitants buried there. Gamble and colleagues (1996; 2001; Gamble 2008) have made clear that there was social differentiation present at *Humaliwo*, as indicated by Mission-period burial treatment. For example, a large proportion of the burials had few or no shell or glass beads, whereas a small number of burials had an extremely high number and were concentrated in the southern portion of the burial area (Gamble et al. 2001).

Furthermore, the burials with large numbers of glass and shell beads were people of all ages and sexes, suggesting ascribed status. Gamble et al. (2001) also note that there is a high correlation between the status or wealth of an individual and the depth of the burial. Ethnographic accounts suggest that grave diggers were paid for their work in baskets which held burial soil; the more baskets a family was able to pay the grave digger, the deeper the burial (Gamble et al. 2001). Particular types of traditional grave goods, such as portions of redwood canoes, effigies, and deer bone whistles, were also buried with particular individuals, further suggesting status or ritual aspects to the lives of those buried with these items.

Also of interest was the relatively high number of artifacts of Hispanic origin in the burial area (Bickford 1982; Gamble 2008; Gamble et al. 2001). These included approximately 15,000 glass beads, a number of items related to horses and possible work on nearby ranchos (saddle bells, conchos, an iron spur, part of a bridle), to clothing (copper beads, metal buttons, and several buckles), to everyday life (metal adzes, metal knives and spikes, a metal cup), and to Christian worship (a St. Francis de Sales medal). In addition, there were several highly unusual items, including a Spanish sword and portions of several firearms. One of these, a pistol, has been altered with asphaltum and apparently used as a receptacle (Bickford 1982).

Bioarchaeological data from the Mission-period burial area also offer important information that complements the archaeology (Martz 1984; Walker et al. 1996). Overall preservation of the human burials dating to the Mission period was poor (Walker et al. 1996:34). Of the 134 Mission-period burials, 69 percent were considered primary burials and the remainder were reburials, with no cremations present (Martz 1984:398, 452). The overall demography of the population included 40 individuals identified as adults, 17 adolescents, 44 children, and 33 infants (Walker et al. 1996:14) (note that these numbers are dissimilar to those reported in Martz 1984:436). Walker and colleagues (1996:13) note that while there may be a high frequency of infants and children in the historical-period burial area, this may be the result of taphonomic factors and not the demographic structure.

Overall, the early historical-period burial population suggested changes in diet, activity, and health, compared to the Middle-period burial population. A relatively low rate of molar wear in the early historical period suggests that the diet changed through time, with less grit in the diet, which may suggest a change from traditional aboriginal diets to less abrasive introduced foods (Walker et al. 1996:39). A higher proportion of anterior tooth wear in women may suggest that the early historical-period women were manufacturing baskets at a higher rate than during the Middle period. There are few trauma injuries in the Mission-period burial population, suggesting few instances of interpersonal violence. Changes in long-bone diameter are difficult to determine, but Walker and colleagues (1996:39) argue that the lack of comparable muscle development in the early historical-period population compared with the Middle period may reflect a change from an economy based on fishing to one of farming and agriculture. Finally, inflammatory bone lesions suggest that systemic infections may have been more prevalent during the Middle period, although different forms appear in the Middle- and Mission-period populations. Walker and colleagues (1996:38) have suggested that different pathogens may have caused these differences in lesions during the two time periods. One possibility to explain this is that endemic syphilis caused the lesions during the Mission period, with other pathogens present during the Middle period.

In sum, then, the archaeological evidence suggests that the social organization of the village of *Humaliwo* was ranked, with status and wealth apparently based on ascribed status. A small percentage of individuals in the burial area appear to have been much wealthier or of a higher status than others and were almost all buried in one location within the burial area. Some members of the village also appear to have had unique skills, such as ritual performance. Clearly the villagers of *Humaliwo* interacted with both the mission and rancho systems, based on numerous items of Hispanic origin, including 15,000 glass trade beads and Hispanic items associated with horse riding, everyday life, defense, and Christianity. The bioarchaeological data suggest that health was an issue for the historical-period villagers, including the possibility of syphilis. Analysis of skeletal remains also suggests that there were changes in the diet and

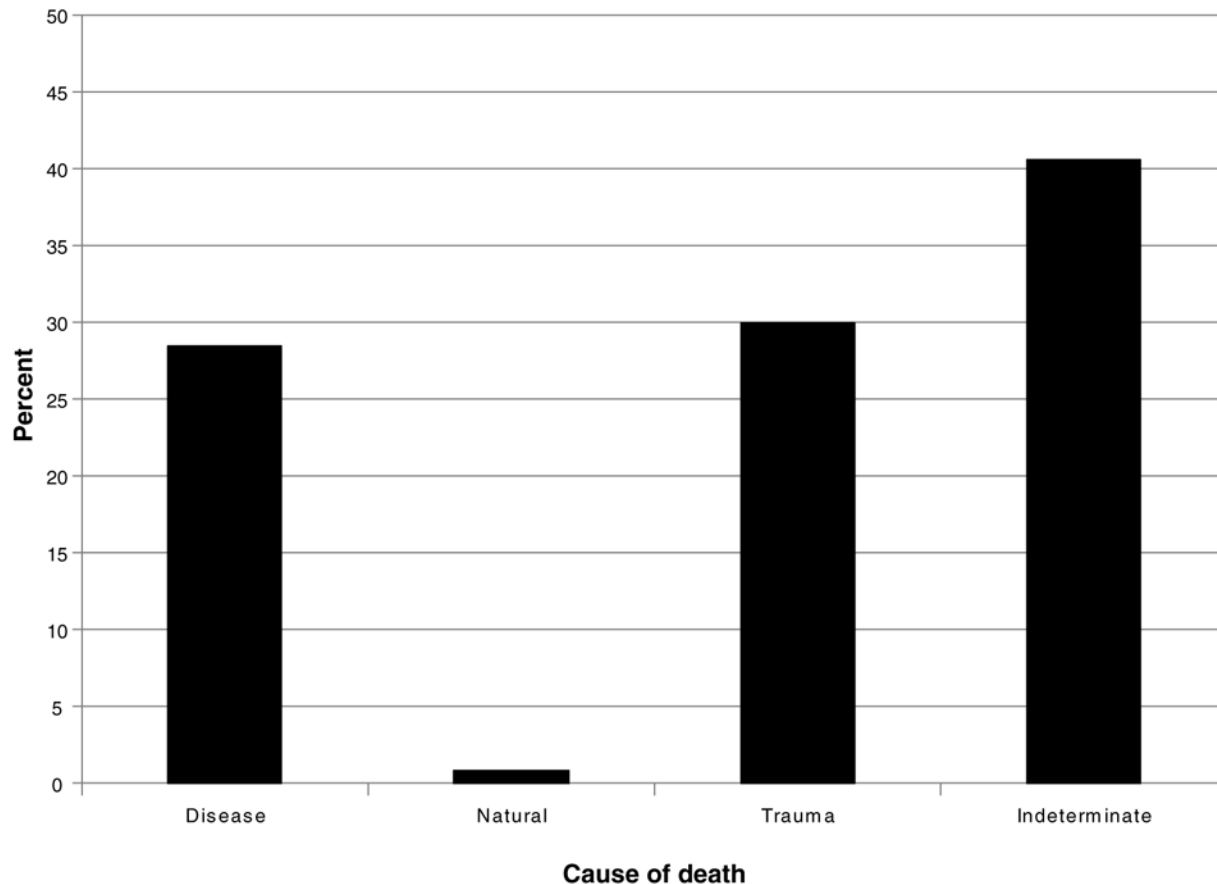


Figure 2. Summary results of studying cause of death in southern California mission records available through the Early California Population Project.

overall activities of the Mission-period burial population compared to the Middle-period burial population, possibly related to a transition from a traditional aboriginal economy based on fishing, hunting, and gathering, to an Hispanized one based on agriculture and imported cultigens.

ETHNOHISTORICAL DATA ON *HUMALIWO*

The question we would like to pose next is “How can ethnohistoric data related to *Humaliwo* offer additional insight?” For example, what do Mission records say about health of these aboriginal populations? How do the burial populations at *Humaliwo* compare with the populations at Mission San Fernando? What insights can be obtained about the relationships between Hispanics and the residents of *Humaliwo*?

Using the ECPP database, available on-line through the Huntington Library, we examined the health of aboriginal populations across southern California (using data from Mission San Luis Obispo south to Mission San Juan Capistrano). We examined 850 death records collected by missions identifying the cause of death of neophytes. These causes of death were split into four major categories: disease, trauma, natural, and indeterminate (Figure 2). Twenty-eight percent of the sample fell under the category of disease. Although slightly more than half suffered unspecified illness, four diseases – cholera, rabies, smallpox, and stroke – were specifically identified by the missions. In addition, other causes of death included gastrointestinal upset, food poisoning, infections with skin lesions, and respiratory illness.

Another 30 percent of the mission sample died from trauma, with homicide and animal-related deaths the most common forms. Accidents and drowning were other common maladies. Horses and bears were responsible for the majority of animal-related deaths. There were a surprisingly relatively large number of entries describing cause of death as the individual having been killed by bears. Finally, other forms of trauma, including giving birth, burning, and heat exhaustion, were infrequently reported. Only approximately 1 percent of the individuals in the sample were recorded as specifically dying naturally from old age. Such an observation may indicate that there were relatively few older individuals in the sample, although it may also indicate that this was underreported by the missions. Finally, 41 percent of the individuals in the sample had inadequate descriptions to place them within a specific causal category. Such individuals were usually described as merely dying suddenly or unexpectedly. While cause of death in many instances could not be determined in the *Humaliwo* burial population, it is clear that some of their reported health issues were similar to those described by the southern California missions, especially disease.

We also used the ECPP database to examine overall trends for both neophytes from Mission San Fernando as a whole, as well as specifically neophytes from *Humaliwo* at that mission. The overall population of neophytes from Mission San Fernando was very young, with nearly 50 percent of combined males and females dead before age 5. The number of individuals dying during adulthood is fairly constant for both males and females, with apparently exceedingly old people actually likely being errors in mission recording. The pattern at Mission San Fernando is similar to modern third-world populations with a high infant mortality rate, which is what one would expect in contact-period populations with little resistance to new diseases (see Hull 2009) and poor sanitation conditions at the missions.

The data associated with *Humaliwo* neophytes baptized primarily at missions San Fernando Rey and San Buenaventura exhibit a very different pattern from neophytes at Mission San Fernando as a whole. With the exception of large gaps in the younger and older age ranges, there is a fairly even population distribution for both sexes. What is striking is that although the overall population of Mission San Fernando suggests that a high number of children present, the overall pattern from *Humaliwo* baptismal data suggests just the opposite, with this subpopulation having a very small number of infants and small children (Figures 3 and 4). The population of *Humaliwo* neophytes is very small compared to the overall Mission San Fernando Rey population, however, which may lead to sampling error. It is possible, though, that the explanation for the relative absence of *Humaliwo* infants and young children in the Mission San Fernando Mission population is that they had already died prior to their parents becoming neophytes. This result conflicts with Walker et al.'s (1996:13) argument that the perceived high number of infants and small children in the *Humaliwo* burial ground is the result of taphonomic factors and not the actual demographic profile of the burial area (see above). That said, the mission recruitment data from Mission San Fernando Rey do suggest few infants and children being recruited, suggesting that they were not part of the families entering the mission.

Finally, we would like to discuss the relationship between Hispanics and the residents of *Humaliwo*. It is clear from artifacts recovered from the *Humaliwo* burial area that it is likely some villagers worked as employees of local ranchos and likely were paid in glass beads or other goods. Manuel Nieto, a local rancho owner, has been argued to have paid Native Californians for their work on his rancho with "knives, strings of beads, clothing, and whatever else struck an individual Indian's fancy" (Mason 1993:180-181). Of course, there were other sources for items of Hispanic origin available to Native Californians outside the confines of ranchos and the missions. For example, black-market ships traded directly with Native Americans, as well as Hispanics, and had documented encounters along the southern California coast during this time period (Miller 2001). The village of *Humaliwo* is located within the boundaries of Rancho Topanga Malibu Sequit, granted to José Bartolomé Tapia in 1801. Many scholars (Bickford 1982; Gamble 2008; Martz 1984) have suggested that the residents of *Humaliwo* worked for this local rancho. We investigated this possibility, as well as searching for alternatives, using

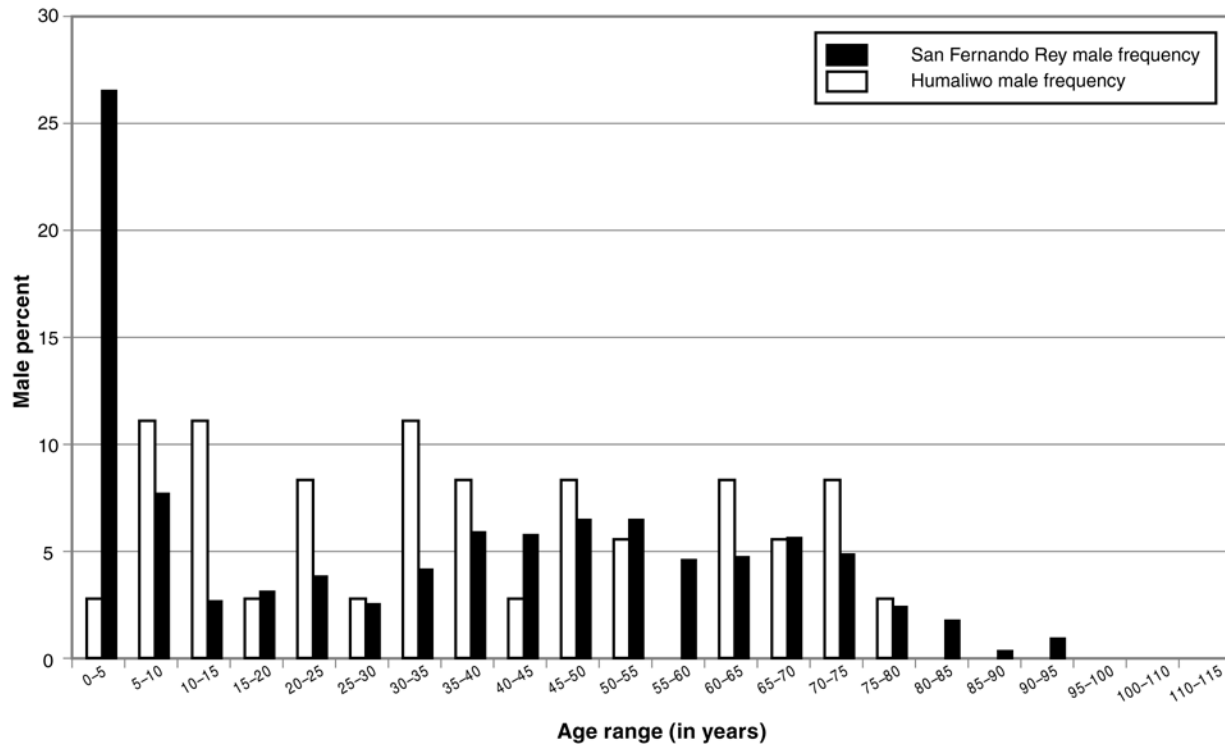


Figure 3. Summary of male demographic profile for age at baptism at Mission San Fernando Rey, comparing overall demographic profile to those with origin of Humaliwo. Data collected from the Early California Population Project database.

baptismal and godparent mission records from missions San Buenaventura, Santa Barbara, and San Fernando.

Using the ECPP database, we identified three recorded baptisms by lay people at *Humaliwo*, rather than the normal pattern of baptism being performed at one of the missions by a priest. All of these baptisms were for people in danger of death, one of the few instances under Catholic doctrine in which lay people are allowed to perform baptisms. Two of these baptisms at *Humaliwo* was performed by José Bartolomé Tapia, which would be expected as he was the owner of the rancho on which the native village was located. The other baptism were performed by Bartolomé Miguel Ortega, the owner of the nearby Rancho las Vírgenes, also known as Rancho Talepop in mission records. This baptism was performed in 1803 for the dying infant daughter of the chief (Capitan) of *Humaliwo*, Saplay, which suggests a strong relationship between Ortega and the residents of *Humaliwo* (SBV, Bap. 1869), including its leader. It is possible that this infant child is buried at *Humaliwo*, as there is no recorded burial record at Mission San Buenaventura for this child. Over the years, Ortega baptized a total of five Chumash individuals, all likely at their home rancheria and in danger of death. (In some cases, mission records did not state the baptismal place, although if it was officiated by a lay person, it is assumed to have been performed in the countryside, away from the confines of the missions.) Ortega’s first wife was María Rosa, a neophyte from San Buenaventura, and jointly they were godparents to a number of Chumash from *Humaliwo* and surrounding native villages, including *Sumo*, *Simi*, *Encino*, *Comicrabit*, and *Talepop*. The marriage of María Rosa, a Chumash neophyte, and Ortega would have created stronger ties with Chumash villagers because of this ethnic connection. Newell (2009:144) has recently argued that godparent relationships, while spiritual in nature, also created and reinforced social, political, and economic networks between native people and their Hispanic neighbors as they created fictive or actual kinship relationships.

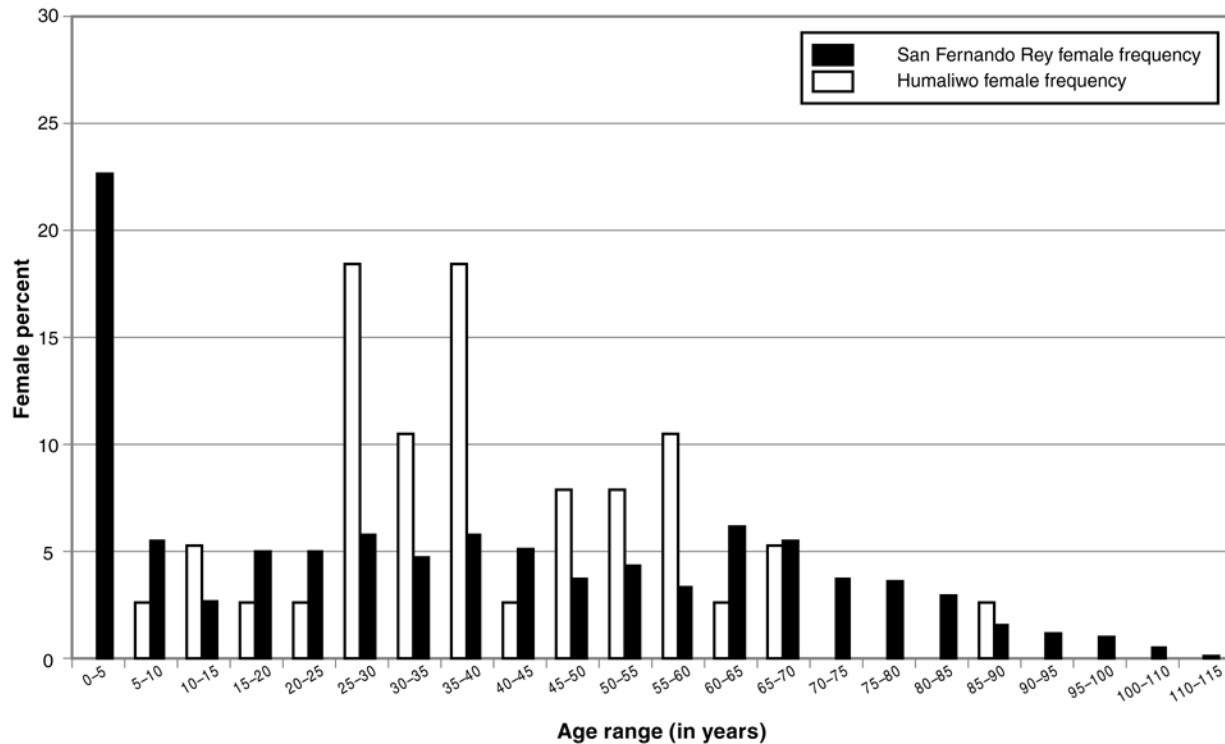


Figure 4. Summary of female demographic profile for age at baptism at Mission San Fernando Rey, comparing overall demographic profile to those with origin of Humaliwo. Data collected from the Early California Population Project database.

María Rosa died in June 1805, but Ortega soon afterwards married a recent neophyte from *Humaliwo* named Ana Antonia, further creating ties between Ortega and the village of *Humaliwo*. Given this history, it is reasonable to argue that there was a strong connection between *Humaliwo* and Ortega, and, by connection, his nearby Rancho Las Vírgenes. Based on this, it appears quite possible that residents of *Humaliwo* were working at both Rancho Las Vírgenes and Rancho Topanga Malibu Sequit in the first years of 1800 and were receiving as payment for labor the types of items of Hispanic origin that were identified in *Humaliwo*'s Mission-period burial area.

While we say that this marriage furthered ties between Ortega and the village of *Humaliwo*, it is likely that the village of *Humaliwo* had disintegrated by the time of their marriage in 1805, only a few years after Tapia was given a land grant that surrounded *Humaliwo*. On February 23, 1805, 41 members of *Humaliwo* were baptized at Mission San Fernando Rey. Although there were several more members of this community baptized after this date, it is telling that the first of the 41 members baptized on that day in 1805 was none other than the Capitan of *Humaliwo*, noted in different mission records as Saplay or Chapray (SFR, Bap. 1379). The baptism of 41 individuals from *Humaliwo*, being led to conversion to Catholicism by their chief, likely indicates that the village of *Humaliwo* had become depopulated by that time, and these individuals were likely not to return often, if at all.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, Mission-period archaeology has the fortunate ability to use multiple lines of data to better understand past behaviors. As was seen here, each type of data told part of the history and prehistory of *Humaliwo*. Some data, such as Mission-period health data, offer a very different type of

information than that collected from skeletal remains. Ethnohistoric data in many ways offer personal information that complements broad statements about behavior that can be surmised from archaeology and bioarchaeology. In the case of *Humaliwo*, we are able to understand personal interactions between the village's residents and newly arrived Hispanics in ways that we can only assume with archaeology alone.

REFERENCES CITED

Bickford, Virginia Fay Gilmore

- 1982 European Artifacts from a Chumash Cemetery, CA-LAN-264. Unpublished Master's thesis, Department of Anthropology, California State University, Long Beach.

Gamble, Lynn H.

- 2008 *The Chumash World at European Contact: Power, Trade, and Feasting among Complex Hunter-Gatherers*. University of California Press, Berkeley.

Gamble, Lynn H., Glenn Russell, and Jean Hudson

- 1995 *Archaeological Site Mapping and Collections Assessment of Humaliwo (CA-LAN-264) and Muwu (CA-VEN-11)*. Submitted to California Department of Parks and Recreation, Sacramento, California. American Indian Studies Center and Institute of Archaeology, University of California, Los Angeles. Manuscript on file at the South Central Coastal Information Center, Department of Anthropology, California State University, Fullerton.

Gamble, Lynn H., Glenn Russell, Chester King, and Jean Hudson

- 1996 *Distribution of Wealth and Other Items at the Malibu Site, CA-LAN-264*. Submitted to California Department of Parks and Recreation, Sacramento, California. American Indian Studies Center and Institute of Archaeology, University of California, Los Angeles. Manuscript on file at the South Central Coastal Information Center, Department of Anthropology, California State University, Fullerton.

Gamble, Lynn H., Phillip Walker, and Glenn S. Russell

- 2001 An Integrative Approach to Mortuary Analysis: Social and Symbolic Dimensions of Chumash Burial Practices. *American Antiquity* 66:185-212.

Gibson, Robert O.

- 1975 The Beads of Humaliwo. *Journal of California Anthropology* 1:110-119.
1987 *A Preliminary Study of Beads from Humaliwo, 4-LAN-264 at Malibu State Park, Los Angeles County, California*. Submitted to California Department of Parks and Recreation, San Diego. Manuscript on file at the South Central Coastal Information Center, Department of Anthropology, California State University, Fullerton.

Glassow, Michael

- 1965 *An Analysis of Faunal Remains from the Site of Malibu (LAN-264), Los Angeles County, California*. Manuscript on file, Statistical Research, Tucson, Arizona.

Hackel, Steven W.

- 2005 *Children of Coyote, Missionaries of Saint Francis: Indian-Spanish Relations in Colonial California 1769-1850*. University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill.

Hull Kathleen L.

- 2009 *Pestilence and Persistence: Yosemite Indian Demography and Culture in Colonial California*. University of California Press, Berkeley.

King, Chester

- 1996 Beads and Ornaments from Cemetery Excavations at Humaliwo (CA-LAN-264). In *Distribution of Wealth and Other Items at the Malibu Site, CA-LAN-264*, by Lynn H. Gamble, Glenn Russell, and Jean Hudson, Appendix I. Submitted to California Department of Parks and Recreation, Sacramento, California. American Indian Studies Center and

- Institute of Archaeology, University of California, Los Angeles. Manuscript on file at the South Central Coastal Information Center, Department of Anthropology, California State University, Fullerton.
- 2004 *Ethnographic Overview of the Angeles National Forest: Tataviam and San Gabriel Mountain Serrano Ethnohistory*. Prepared for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Southern California Province, Angeles National Forest, Arcadia, California. Topanga Anthropological Consultants, Topanga, California.
- Larson, Daniel O., John R. Johnson, and Joel C. Michaelsen
 1994 Missionization among the Coastal Chumash of Central California: A Study of Risk Minimization Strategies. *American Anthropologist* 96:263-299.
- Martz, Patricia C.
 1984 Social Dimensions of Chumash Mortuary Populations in the Santa Monica Mountains Region. Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Anthropology, University of California, Riverside.
- Mason, William M.
 1993 Alta California's Colonial and Early Mexican Era Population, 1769-1846. In *Regions of La Raza: Changing Interpretations of Mexican American Regional History and Culture*, edited by Antonio Rios-Bustamante, pp. 169-187. Floricanto Press, Encino, California.
- Miller, Robert Ryal
 2001 *A Yankee Smuggler on the Spanish California Coast: George Washington Eays and the Ship "Mercury"*. Santa Barbara Trust for Historic Preservation, Santa Barbara, California.
- Milliken, Randall
 1995 *A Time of Little Choice: The Disintegration of Tribal Culture in the San Francisco Bay Area, 1769-1810*. Ballena Press, Menlo Park, California.
- Newell, Quincy
 2009 *Constructing Lives at Mission San Francisco: Native Californians and Hispanic Colonists, 1776-1821*. University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque.
- Walker, Phillip L., Francine J. Drayer and Susan Keer Siefkin
 1996 *Malibu Human Skeletal Remains: A Bioarchaeological Analysis*. Submitted to California Parks and Recreation, Sacramento. Manuscript on file at the South Central Coastal Information Center, Department of Anthropology, California State University, Fullerton.