

I. DIGGING THROUGH THE OLD AND UNEARTHING THE NEW:

The Native American Peoples of
California during the Mission Era
in the *Southern California Quarterly*

By *Corey D. Blanchard*

ABSTRACT: Corey D. Blanchard's essay on Native Americans during the mission period (1769–1833) finds early articles focused on Euro-American pioneers to the near exclusion of the Indigenous population of Southern California. When they do appear in early articles they are treated more as obstacles than as sentient beings. Racial bias or condescension is evident in articles published as late as 1953 and research was limited to Euro-American sources. Articles reflecting the New Social History turn of the late 1950s–1960s; they analyzed quantifiable evidence to reconstruct the daily life of Mission Indians. The cultural history turn of the 1990s brought analyses of material culture into the pages of the *SCQ*. New levels of analysis and computerized data emerged in the current decade, uncovering individual lives and Native American agency into a complex understanding of California's Indigenous history, while early articles continue to serve as data sources and indicators of Euro-American/Native American relationships.

Keywords: New Social history turn; Cultural History; Native American history; mission era

The first seventy years of the publication of the *Southern California Quarterly* provide us with scant critical analysis of the Native American peoples of California. Indeed, those looking for the presence of Native Americans in the early years of the *Quarterly* will be struck by the nearly complete absence of the history of California's indigenous peoples. The descriptions and stories of California's Anglo-American "pioneers" take center stage during these years. From an article on the earliest Kentucky pioneers of Los Angeles to the multiple articles on the trials and tribulations of Jedediah Smith, it was the Anglo-American pioneer to California who grabbed the imagination and curiosity of the *Quarterly* reader before 1955.¹ Area studies also abound in these years. Articles on California's rivers, valleys, canyons, mountains, and towns, and their Euro-American exploration, settlement, and economic fecundity fill the pages of the *Quarterly* in the years preceding World War II, making little reference to the Native American peoples who had inhabited these areas for generations. It is only after World War II that *Southern California Quarterly* articles begin to present Native Americans exercising agency in their own affairs, reflecting developments in the fields of borderlands, American West, and California history.

Yet among these narratives of Anglo-American pioneers and environmental fertility, which were both influenced by and were influential in the growth of the California Dream, articles mentioning the Native Americans of California during the mission era do exist. In addition to their scarcity, articles on the California Indigenous population in these years tend to discuss them only as peoples acted upon by the Spanish explorers and missionaries of the mission era, rather than as actors in their own right.

Many of these early works are conciliatory to the endeavor of the Franciscan friars. In the January 1886 issue of the *Quarterly*, José Adam's article "California in the Eighteenth Century" uses Father Juan Crespi's journal as a means to retrace Gaspár de Portolá's expedition in search of a harbor at Monterey. Adam notes the presence of

1. Stephen C. Foster, "A Sketch of Some of the Earliest Kentucky Pioneers of Los Angeles," *Southern California Quarterly* 1, no. 3 (1887): 30-35; J. M. Guinn, "Captain Jedediah S. Smith: The Pathfinder of the Sierras," *Southern California Quarterly* 3, no. 4 (1896): 45-78; Robert G. Cleland, "The First Expedition of Jedediah S. Smith to California," *Southern California Quarterly* 9, no. 3 (1914): 200-03; John C. Parish, "Jedediah Strong Smith—Pathfinder," *Southern California Quarterly* 13, no. 3 (1926): 267-69.

fifteen Christian Indians in the expedition party and faithfully recounts Father Crespí's description of the party's encounters with Native American villages, many of which were populated by 300 to 500 and at times up to 1000 Native American inhabitants.²

In 1890, Adam followed this article with another, titled "History of the Catholic Church in Los Angeles County." In this article, Adam relates the narrative of the founding of the missions in what is now Los Angeles County and the struggles between Native Americans and the mission founders. After noting that "Governor Portolá with Father Crespí, and some soldiers were seen again by the Indians that inhabited these plains and mountains," Adam swiftly moves on to the founding of San Gabriel Mission, the building of which was aided by "the Indians having cut the lumber and made themselves generally useful."³ He then recounts a violent encounter between Native Americans and Spanish soldiers that frustrated the foundation of Mission San Buenaventura, followed by stories of the violent resistance mounted by Native Americans to the planned missions on the Colorado River, and the history of the missions until their secularization, throughout all of which Adam treats Native Americans as obstacles to missionization rather than as sentient, strategic beings.

Due to the paucity of articles concerning Native Americans in the mission era, we must now jump ahead to George William Beattie's 1929 article, "Spanish Plans for an Inland Chain of Missions in California." Beattie argues that the proposed inland mission chain arose as a plan formulated by the Spanish authorities to prevent and thwart Mission Indians from running away to join Native Americans out of reach of the influence of the missions. Runaways, according to Beattie, instigated the cattle and horse raids on the missions, inspiring the Spanish authorities to formulate their plan.⁴ This plan, Beattie states, was effectively ended by Mexico's independence in 1821 and the unenthusiastic feelings toward missions and missionaries held by the new Mexican government. But Beattie failed to either investigate or to understand Indigenous reasons for fleeing the missions, stating only that neophytes sometimes became "restive under mission

2. J. Adam, "California in the Eighteenth Century," *Southern California Quarterly* 1, no. 2 (1886): 15.

3. José Adam, "History of the Catholic Church in Los Angeles County," *Southern California Quarterly* 1, no. 5 (1890): 22–23.

4. George William Beattie, "Spanish Plans for an Inland Chain of Missions in California," *Southern California Quarterly* 14, no. 2 (1929): 243–64.



Painting of the San Gabriel Mission in 1832 by Ferdinand Deppes. In this idyllic scene the artist depicts a crowd outside the elaborate mission church. On the left a priest converses with someone in white trousers, perhaps a ship captain, while a soldier chats with a relaxed family of neophyte Indians on the right, and Indian men work diligently with livestock with no need of supervision. The Native American women wear modest European-style attire, while the men wear only breech cloths.

discipline.” According to Beattie, these restive runaways “were naturally the independent, unsubmitive and lawless characters” who “inevitably imparted their taste for mission live stock to the wild men with whom they associated.”⁵

In 1955, Marvin W. Mikesell’s article, “Franciscan Colonization at Santa Barbara,” attempted to narrate the founding and formation of the Santa Barbara Mission. While much of his article is dedicated to describing the physical layout of the presidio and the mission, and to the tensions between the military and religious personnel of the settlement, Mikesell does discuss relations between the Spanish and their Native American neighbors. He reports that the Chumash peoples of Santa Barbara were peaceful and welcoming toward the missionaries, which led to a rapid increase in converts and a lively interaction between those neophytes living at the mission, those who commuted from their villages, and those Native Americans who, though not converted, engaged in commerce with the mission and could count neighbors and family members among the neophytes.⁶ Mikesell thus stereotyped the Chumash peoples of Santa Barbara into a homogenous mass of local Native Americans who harbored a “submissive attitude” toward the Spanish interlopers.⁷

While all of these early articles treat the Native American peoples of California as secondary characters in Spanish colonization, the first seventy years of the *Quarterly* do contain articles in which Native Americans play the primary role. However, these articles again fail to investigate Native Americans as individuals who affected their own lives, persisting instead in a portrayal of Native Americans as obstacles standing in the way of colonization.

The first article to appear in the *Quarterly* that takes Native Americans of the mission era as the focus is Frank J. Polley’s “The Renegade Indians of San Gabriel.” Published in 1896, Polley’s article asks a simple but important question: if renegade Indians existed, does their existence not presuppose their mistreatment by the mission fathers? Polley uses the writings of Benjamin Davis Wilson, a man hired by the Mexican authorities to track and capture renegade neophytes in the

5. Beattie, 244.

6. Marvin W. Mikesell, “Franciscan Colonization at Santa Barbara,” *Southern California Quarterly* 37, no. 3 (1955): 211–22.

7. Mikesell, 213.

1840s and who, in the American period, was made Indian Commissioner, to describe the violent encounters between the mission runaways and the authorities.⁸ Yet Polley also portrays Native Americans as depersonalized obstacles, as renegades who ran away from the mission only to be run down, and often gunned down, by men like Wilson.

The Native Americans of 1830 to 1850 Los Angeles became the focus for W. W. Robinson's 1938 article, "The Indians of Los Angeles as Revealed by the Los Angeles City Archives." Robinson uses the archival pages of the minutes of the Council, or *Ayuntamiento*, of the pueblo of Los Angeles to narrate the forced movement of the "domesticated Indians" of Los Angeles over this twenty-year span. The result of the council's chronology of decisions was the removal of the Los Angeles Native American population from approved plot to approved plot within the city until they were finally scattered to the suburbs by the time of American occupation.⁹ Again, individual men, women, and children were not of interest to Robinson, who instead focused on the Los Angeles Native American population as a whole as they were moved around by city officials.

Helen Pruitt Beattie's 1953 article, "Indians of San Bernardino Valley and Vicinity," charts the history of the Serrano and Cahuilla peoples of the San Bernardino area from Spanish colonization to the 1880s. Beattie charts the development of the area from one that was dominated by Native American peoples, to an irrigated *ranchería* due to the construction of the Mill Street *zanja*, to the planting of orchards and vineyards by Americans after 1851. The article argues for a long history of ill treatment and dispossession of the valley's Native inhabitants by Euro-Americans while asserting that improved schools, healthcare, and jobs built and provided by their dispossessors partially offset the deprivation of lands from the Serrano and Cahuilla peoples.¹⁰

Every one of these articles comes to us with glaring problems of racial bias and flawed methodology. As for methodology, all of these articles, though containing information *about* California's Native

8. Frank J. Polley, "The Renegade Indians of San Gabriel," *Southern California Quarterly* 3, no. 4 (1896): 22-27.

9. W. W. Robinson, "The Indians of Los Angeles as Revealed by the Los Angeles City Archives," *Southern California Quarterly* 20, no. 4 (1938): 156-72.

10. Helen Pruitt Beattie, "Indians of San Bernardino Valley and Vicinity," *Southern California Quarterly* 35, no. 3 (1953): 239-64.

American peoples, are based on European sources and perspectives. The exclusive use of European sources and perspectives in these articles leaves us with little or no evidence of the Native American experience of this era apart from that evidence filtered through European eyes, ears, hearts, and minds. Furthermore, those European sources, whether journals, minutes of a council, or memoirs, are taken at face value. The authors of these articles do not investigate their sources with the rigor and critical eye that today's historians expect of themselves and each other. This may have seemed appropriate at the time in which they were written, but given our own political and cultural climate, it seems alarming.

The weight given to the use of and confidence in European sources is in and of itself a reflection of the racial biases of the authors and readers of these pieces. But we need not look hard in the body of the texts for those biases to make themselves evident. Polley's article makes reference to "a half savage Indian";¹¹ George Beattie writes of Mission Indians running away to join the "wild Indians of the valleys, deserts, and mountains";¹² while Robinson encourages the stereotype of the "Drunken Indian" with his description of Los Angeles Native Americans leaving their plot on Commercial and Alameda Streets to "get drunk and to become a nuisance to the whites." Indeed, the first section of Robinson's article following his introduction is titled "Indians Get Drunk."¹³ These are but a few of the many examples of racial biases that made their way onto the page.

The racial biases running through these articles point to the belief held by most of these authors that Spanish colonization and missionizing were ultimately good for California's Native Americans. In "History of the Catholic Church in Los Angeles County," Adam writes that "under the paternal tutelage of the fathers, the Indians felt happy and prosperous."¹⁴ Mikesell takes "the submissive attitude of the local Indians" as evidence that they embraced the Santa Barbara Mission.¹⁵ And as mentioned, Helen Pruitt Beattie argues that while the Serrano and Cahuilla peoples of San Bernardino had

11. Polley, 26.

12. George Beattie, 244.

13. Robinson, 157.

14. Adam, "History of the Catholic Church in Los Angeles County," 25.

15. Mikesell, 214.

their lands wrested from them, it was to their benefit in that “Indian men no longer have to hunt and trap small game . . . but find ample . . . employment in the orange groves,” while child mortality dropped through instruction in hygiene and sanitation given in the schools and medical clinics.¹⁶ Given our present-day historiographical understanding of the Native peoples of California, these are statements that would hopefully raise the eyebrows of the undergraduates in our departments today.

Yet these articles are not without value to today’s scholars. Many of the sources used provide material for further inquiry, while some of the articles raise important questions that, though they are neither fully analyzed nor properly answered by the authors, may deserve deeper scholarly attention. For example, the diary of Father Crespí used by Adam and Wood could be fertile ground for a scholar of contact between Native Americans and European colonizers. Crespí’s diary provides evidence of both informal and ceremonial gift exchanges. It also mentions evidence that some of the Native Americans the expedition encountered had previous experience with Europeans after some members of a village indicated that they had previously seen sailboats and men wearing armor and sporting beards. The Native Americans may have traded with these men, as Crespí states that “we found among them pieces of knives and swords, which they used for cutting meat and dressing fish.”¹⁷ While Adam fails to read-between-the-lines of his source, today’s scholars of intercultural contact could find a worse place to start when researching contact between the Spanish and Native Americans in California and the West.

The Los Angeles Council minutes used by Robinson could also provide insights into the changing urban landscape and living conditions of Los Angeles’s Native American population from 1830 to 1850. While Robinson does not do much by way of analysis, today’s historians could find ample information on the legal processes of dispossession, on Native American attempts to use Euro-American legal systems to challenge plans designed to force Indigenous removal

16. Helen Pruitt Beattie, 263.

17. For gift exchanges see, Adam, “California in the Eighteenth Century,” 15 and 16. For prior contact with Europeans see *Ibid.*, 17 and 18.

from Los Angeles, and on pieces of everyday life for Native Americans living in early Los Angeles.

As for questions raised, George Beattie and Frank J. Polley could well spark inquiries into the “renegade,” or runaway, Indians who left their lives at the various missions to rejoin Native communities they hoped would be outside of the reach of Spanish and Mexican authorities. This population of California Native Americans lived a unique life. On the run from authorities who would attempt to bring them back to the missions, or kill them if need be, they also needed to integrate themselves back into Native American communities that may have held suspicions toward one-time neophytes. Were these renegades, so familiar with the rhythms of mission life, as involved in cattle and horse thieving as George Beattie argues? Or was that only the logic used by the bruised egos of mission fathers who did not want to lose converts? More work can be done to uncover the lives of these men, women, and children who lived a life in constant flux. These are but a few examples of the directions one might take if they were to look back on these articles from the 1880s to the 1950s.

The end of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s heralded a turn in the historiography of the mission era in the *Quarterly* that reflected the turn in the historiography of the United States as a whole. The beginnings of the New Social History that was taking hold can be seen in two articles, the first published in 1958 and the second just two years later in 1960. Both reflect the New Social History’s drive for quantifiable evidence and insistence on critical analysis in support of overall arguments that the merely descriptive articles that appeared previously in the *Quarterly* did not.

J. N. Bowman’s 1958 article “The Resident Neophytes (Existentes) of the California Missions, 1769–1834,” uses the mission fathers’ annual reports to their superiors in Mexico and to the government in Monterey to tabulate the number of resident Native Americans, or *existentes*, who lived at each mission on December 31 of each year from 1769 to 1834. These reports contain information on the number of baptisms, marriages, deaths, the *existentes* in residence, building operations, stock and agriculture statistics, and other information of interest as pertained to the progress of the missions.¹⁸ Bowman

18. J. N. Bowman, “The Resident Neophytes (Existentes) of the California Missions, 1769–1834,” *Southern California Quarterly* 40, no. 2 (1958): 138–48.

followed his 1958 article with another in 1960 titled "The Number of California Indians Baptized during the Mission Period, 1770–1834." Bowman again uses the annual reports of the fathers, and adds the Books of Baptisms in which the fathers recorded all baptisms with marginal cumulative serial numbers, to tabulate the number of Native Americans baptized in the missions from 1770 to 1834.

These two articles were but the first in what became a veritable boom of interest in California's Native American population during the mission period in the *Quarterly* after the New Social History turn. Articles on the subject, which had been few and far between for the first seventy years of the *Quarterly*, became a mainstay of the publication. From 1960 to 1990, the *Quarterly* featured many articles on the lives of mission-era Native Americans, including, but not limited to, subjects such as the building of missions and mission space over time, the politics and corruption of the missions, the economics and economic contributions of the missions and Native Americans, religious life in the missions, and cultural perspectives on Native American life in the missions.¹⁹ The oft overlooked mission era was finally getting its due.

The September 1971 issue of the *Quarterly* provides an example of the New Social History's influence on the journal. Two articles in this issue highlight the growing interest in the study of the Native American peoples of California during the mission period and the effort to complicate previous arguments and understandings of California Native American pasts. Raymund F. Wood's article "Juan Crespi, The Man Who Named Los Angeles," and Maynard Geiger's "Mission San Gabriel in 1814" display a renewed interest in

19. For the building of missions and mission space over time see, Maynard Geiger, "The Building of Mission San Gabriel: 1771–1828," *Southern California Quarterly* 50, no. 1 (1968): 33–42. For the politics and corruption in the missions see, Daniel Garr, "Planning, Politics and Plunder: The Missions and Indian Pueblos of Hispanic California," *Southern California Quarterly* 54, no. 4 (1972): 291–312, and Francis F. Guest, "An Examination of the Thesis of S. F. Cook on the Forced Conversion of Indians in the California Missions," *Southern California Quarterly* 61, no. 1 (1979): 1–77. For economics and economic contributions of the missions and Native Americans see Robert Archibald, "The Economy of the Alta California Mission, 1803–1821," *Southern California Quarterly* 69, no. 3 (1976): 227–40 and W. Michael Mathes, "Baja California Indians in the Spanish Maritime Service, 1720–1821," *Southern California Quarterly* 62, no. 2 (1980): 113–26. For religious life in the missions see Francis F. Guest, "An Inquiry into the Role of the Discipline in California Mission Life," *Southern California Quarterly* 71, no. 1 (1989): 1–68. For cultural perspectives of Native American life in the missions see Francis F. Guest, "Cultural Perspectives on California Mission Life," *Southern California Quarterly* 65, no. 1 (1983): 1–65 and Clement W. Meighan, "Indians and California Missions," *Southern California Quarterly* 69, no. 3 (1987): 187–201.

Crespi, the San Gabriel Mission, and their views of and relationships with Native Americans.²⁰

Wood presents translations of Spanish diaries, including Crespi's, which detail the travels of Crespi and his companions through Baja and Alta California, while Geiger provides a translated and edited version of San Gabriel Mission's 1814 response to a questionnaire that was sent to the Spanish colonies from Cadiz in 1812 by the secretary of the Department of Overseas Colonies, Don Ciriaco Gonzales Carvajal. Wood reveals Crespi's habit of describing Indians in the same way he described rivers and soil.²¹ In Geiger's translation of the 1814 report, its authors, Fray Luís Gil y Taboada and Fray José María Zalvidea, describe their Native American neighbors and converts as childlike inferiors.²² While neither Wood nor Geiger provide any analysis of these primary sources, the placement of these articles in the *Quarterly* in 1971 indicates an interest in understanding the original Spanish-Native American relationship by looking back to the original sources.

The cultural history turn of the 1990s brought with it one of the richest veins of scholarship on the Native Americans of mission-era California as scholars of California, the American West, and borderlands history began attempts to reconstruct the history of California Native Americans while avoiding narratives of American exceptionalism and triumphant pioneers, and to place the history of Native Americans, Euro-Americans, and other historical actors, in dialogue with one another. Articles on the material culture of the missions and of California's Native American peoples have been among the most fruitful investigations into this period in the *Quarterly*. Topics range from a request for needles to the method of human waste disposal at the missions.

In 1997, Norman Neuerburg published "The Indian Via Crucis from Mission San Fernando: An Historical Exposition," in which he investigates the participation and skill of Native American artists,

20. Raymund F. Wood, "Juan Crespi, the Man Who Named Los Angeles," *Southern California Quarterly* 53, no. 3 (1971): 199–234, and Maynard Geiger, O.F.M., "Mission San Gabriel in 1814," *Southern California Quarterly* 53, no. 3 (1971): 235–50. It may be important to note that author-translator Geiger was himself a Franciscan priest at the time of his research and publication of "Mission San Gabriel in 1814."

21. Wood, 209–22.

22. Geiger, 237–48.

and their relationship with their art and with Spanish missionaries. Neuerburg takes as his subject the series of fourteen paintings of the Via Crucis, or Stations of the Cross, painted by Native American converts to Christianity, which were displayed at Mission San Fernando after their completion. The article seeks to understand not just the “how” of the creation of the art, but more importantly “why” the art was created. After explaining the provenance of the paintings and why Via Crucis became popular in Christian, and particularly Spanish, art, Neuerburg provides colored pictures of the San Fernando Via Crucis and an explanation that all of the California missions attempted to obtain renderings of the Stations in either print or painted form. What follows is a detailed analysis of the physical makeup of the paintings, including the size of the paintings, the type of canvas used, and the method of hanging. Neuerburg then analyzes the number of painters involved (certainly more than one) and how they were painted (surely by copying a print), and provides a detailed study of each of the fourteen paintings. He concludes that “there is no doubt that the devotion of the Via Crucis was very dear to the hearts of the Franciscans,” and “for a neophyte to be asked to paint these sacred scenes would be a sign of great honor and respect.”²³

Two articles on the physical space of the mission followed Neuerburg’s investigation of artistic pieces. Francis J. Weber begins his article “Toiletry at the California Missions,” with a simple question: “how . . . could 1,800 native Americans have resided at Santa Barbara Mission without an intricate system for the safe and efficient disposal of human excrement?”²⁴ Weber seeks to uncover a part of the lived experience of Native American mission life that had gone unquestioned in the *Quarterly* for decades. To answer this question, Weber studies the documentary and physical evidence of toiletry and sewage practices in Europe, especially Spain and Spanish monasteries, and North and Central American indigenous communities. Because the physical evidence at the missions themselves is so lacking, Weber admits that one must rely on conjecture. He concludes that the likeliest method of waste removal, given the lack of adequately running water sources near the missions, was a system used in military camps

23. Norman Neuerburg, “The Indian Via Crucis from Mission San Fernando: An Historical Exposition,” *Southern California Quarterly* 79, no. 3 (1997): 329–82; for quote see page 378.

24. Francis J. Weber, “Toiletry at the California Missions,” *Southern California Quarterly* 81, no. 3 (1999): 295.

by which a trench was dug, lined with lime or wood ash, finished by placing enclosed wooden benches over the ditch. Monthly or quarterly a new ditch would be dug and the process would start anew, after filling in the prior ditch with earth.²⁵

Moving from the specifics of toiletry to the mission space as a whole, Catherine R. Ettinger's 2003 article "Architecture as Order in the California Missions" looks beyond mission architecture as simply fulfilling the basic needs of shelter for mission fathers and neophytes, insisting instead that "architecture in a broad sense responds to a great variety of human needs including the need for security and for symbols."²⁶ Ettinger looks at the mission complex and its spatial order as a whole. She concludes that the architecture of the missions promoted social change while providing an environment familiar to the mission fathers. Mission church architecture exhibited the establishment of new hierarchies and religious symbolism. Meanwhile, Native American housing at the missions "imposed order . . . an order that reflected Enlightenment ideas emphasizing the role of the built environment on behavior."²⁷ These two articles shed light on the everyday lived experience of mission-era Native Americans, from the necessities of toiletry to the deeper meaning of how and why missions were built the way they were, and what that might have meant for both the fathers and the Native American neophytes.

Quantifiable history of the 1950s came into its own in the computer age. Steven W. Hackel shows in his article, "Digging Up the Remains of Early Los Angeles: The Plaza Church Cemetery," how computerized burial records and burial grounds can shed light on the diversity and vibrancy of early Los Angeles while giving faces and names to the Native Americans who spent their lives there. Referencing the Huntington Library's publicly accessible and cross-referenced Early California Population Project database, Hackel displays how burial records enable researchers to retrace the lives of early Angelenos. He provides vignettes of people such as Rafaela, an Indian woman from the Yuma region who was baptized at the plaza church. The article demonstrates that we can learn a lot about population

25. Weber, 295–304.

26. Catherine R. Ettinger, "Architecture as Order in the California Missions," *Southern California Quarterly* 85, no. 1 (2003): 1.

27. Ettinger, 9.

change over time from these sources. For example, Hackel shows that “through the Spanish era and the early Mexican period . . . the pueblo population gradually became more and more Indian” while at the same time “it became more diverse, shifting from a largely Gabrielino-Tongva population to one composed of Indians from across southern California” and beyond.²⁸ We can even tell who among the buried worked as laborers. Hackel ably demonstrates how burial practices can enlighten our understanding of lives lived and lost.

Moving outside of the missions themselves, Mary F. Casey explores the uses and meanings behind a 1781 requisition from the Santa Barbara Presidio for 10,000 needles in her 2017 article “Ten Thousand Needles: Material Culture, Native Power, and Adaptation along the Santa Barbara Channel, 1769–1824.” Casey is quick to point out that this requisition is not an anomaly. Year after year, Spanish officials continued to order enormous amounts of iron needles. Casey asks, “for a treasury pinching every penny, what could justify the expense” of ordering so many needles on the Spanish periphery?²⁹ The answer, for Casey, lies within the power dynamics and material culture of the Chumash people. The Chumash used these needles to drill holes for stringing the shell beads they produced and traded, replacing the stone microdrills the Chumash had traditionally used. The Spanish had to adjust to Chumash practices and trade needs, thus forcing the requisition of so many needles. Casey convincingly argues that “through both their utilitarian and symbolic use the large volume of needles ordered and shipped by Spanish officials came to represent Chumash people’s creative adaptation to forced encounter with Europeans, who themselves were forced to adapt their way of life to accommodate elements of Native American culture.” She expertly explores how one line on a requisition form can inform our understanding of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century material culture in the California borderlands while complicating our understanding of the power structures of mission-era California.

28. Steven W. Hackel, “Digging Up the Remains of Early Los Angeles: The Plaza Church Cemetery,” *Southern California Quarterly* 94, no. 1 (2012), 10.

29. Mary F. Casey, “Ten Thousand Needles: Material Culture, Native Power, and Adaptation along the Santa Barbara Channel, 1769–1824,” *Southern California Quarterly* 99, no. 2 (2017): 121.

In conclusion, until about 1955 the *Quarterly*'s volumes are full of articles on the Native American peoples of the mission period that call for both revisiting and reimagining, while the past thirty years have resulted in a burgeoning collection of studies on material culture that has enriched our understanding of the lives of Native Americans in early California. Looking back at the articles written in the 1930s, 1910s, and, yes, even the 1880s, can spark ideas and avenues for our own work today. For that purpose, the *Quarterly*, with its digital presence, is a veritable gold mine. At the same time, the work being done on the material culture of the mission era is inspiring. Through the articles of the *Quarterly* we can see how needles are more than just needles and buildings are more than just a roof and four walls. Investigations into the material culture of the mission period provide one of the best avenues to learn what we can about the lived experiences of the Native American peoples of the mission era.