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**The Chumash World at European Contact: Power, Trade, and Feasting among Complex Hunter-Gatherers.** By Lynn H. Gamble. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008. 376 pages. \$49.95 cloth.

The past one hundred years have witnessed a multitude of publications about the Chumash of California. Part of this stems from strong interest in the complexity of their boats, economy, and politics, which is grounded in a rich body of archaeological, ethnographic, and historic literature. Researchers working in other cultural contexts in Southern California commonly discuss the Chumash as an important example of comparison or difference. On the contrary, scholars of the Chumash oftentimes compare them to complex hunter-gatherer societies in other regions of North America but less often to other Californian societies with similar economies. Despite the significant attention given to the Chumash and their ancestors, however, there are major temporal and regional gaps in the current state of knowledge.

*The Chumash World at European Contact: Power, Trade, and Feasting among Complex Hunter-Gatherers* stands apart from other recent publications in how it fills in some of these gaps. Citing diverse data sets, including five hundred years of written observations, Gamble focuses on the Chumash at the height of their sociopolitical complexity. Most of the discussions pertaining to complexity have tended to underscore the roles of islanders and island-mainland interactions in the regional economy. In contrast, Gamble emphasizes the mainland of the Santa Barbara Channel, arguing that large coastal villages were at the center of trade and major cultural developments. At the same time, she considers the mainland coast in relation to other regions of Chumash occupation, including the Santa Monica Mountains, Channel Islands, and mainland interior, as well as other Californian societies. She accomplishes these goals by alternating between different scales of analysis ranging from intrasite to interregional.

Gamble's book is an elegant, well-organized, and comprehensive synthesis of diverse lines of evidence including lesser-known and/or less accessible information sources such as Spanish diaries and unpublished technical reports. Her detailed discussion illustrates the kinds of subsistence and demographic data that can be derived from the written accounts of Spanish explorers and priests in spite of their biases. For example, they provide unique insights into the seasonal availability of different resources in different communities, and specifically into how surpluses were stored and redistributed. Collectively they offer diachronic perspectives on initial European contact and colonization. By interweaving these descriptions, she effectively strings together singular events of observation at specific places into a dynamic narrative of changes and continuity in Chumash society from the mid-1500s into the mid-1800s.

In the process of summarizing these data sets, she provides an accessible history of anthropological inquiry into the Santa Barbara mainland, which is highly relevant to students and researchers of the Chumash. Incorporating habitation and burial data from archaeological investigations conducted throughout the twentieth century, Gamble anchors her book with systematic descriptions of individual villages from Point Conception to Malibu. The major features of

villages are discussed from ethnohistoric and archaeological perspectives and are accompanied by an abundance of relevant figures and tables. Emphasis is placed on evidence of houses and sweat lodges; at some villages it is even possible to differentiate between activity areas within individual households. Gamble demonstrates how it is possible to evaluate intracommunity dynamics and chiefly power within mainland villages including the roles of stored surpluses, craft specialization, and ceremonial activities. She is also one of the few researchers other than Sandra Hollimon (PhD diss., "Division of Labor and Gender Roles in Santa Barbara Channel Area Prehistory," 1990) to address gender among the Chumash explicitly, such as the significance of female chiefs.

Against this backdrop of village descriptions and population estimates, Gamble appropriately concentrates on what appear to have been some of the major economic and political centers on the mainland. In particular, she cites evidence from the Goleta Slough, or Hel'ó, where she has been involved with extensive excavations. By all accounts, Hel'ó was one of the most densely populated and influential communities on the mainland, where people participated in a variety of economic and ceremonial activities, including boat making. By contrasting Hel'ó with other historic villages, Gamble is able to demonstrate variability in how different Chumash communities were incorporated into Spanish lifeways. For example, the material culture at Hel'ó is reflective of cultural continuity. European goods such as iron, which was incorporated into traditional boat-making practices, dominate evidence of interaction with the Spanish. Further to the south, at Malibu, many Chumash worked on nearby ranches and thus adopted aspects of vaquero traditions. This is just one instance of how she effectively discusses specific individuals, communities, and events as examples of broader cultural patterns as well as differences at the village and regional levels.

Binding all of these data together are her hypotheses regarding the timing and nature of Chumash complexity, which differ from other researchers in several important ways. Drawing from the broader literature on chiefdoms, Gamble distinguishes between network and corporate models of power. The Chumash exemplify network-based power through different forms of economic interaction including ceremonial redistribution, commerce controlled by chiefs, and market exchange. Like other researchers, she emphasizes the production, distribution, and consumption of resources, particularly the role of boats in facilitating island-mainland transportation and the acquisition of items to support feasting and other ceremonial activities. In addition to prestige goods, such as the shell beads that served as a form of currency, Gamble also considers more perishable items such as baskets and food surpluses that were critical to enacting successful political and ritual events. She strengthens her argument by citing evidence of network power among comparable groups in California, including the Patwin, Pomo, and Yokuts. However, it seems as though these comparisons could have been more in depth, and that she could have included other money-oriented societies such as the Yurok.

Whereas other researchers tend to focus on the people of the Channel Islands because of their well-documented involvement in all stages of shell bead manufacture, Gamble argues that large villages on the mainland coast were at

the center of the Chumash economy because of their geographic positioning. Places such as Hel'o served as economic centers that connected island and mainland groups including those in the interior and, therefore, were where major events and transactions transpired. That shell bead currency maintained its value decades after European contact among societies throughout Southern California reflects its importance in performing ceremonial activities, such as feasts, burials, and mourning rites, as well as market exchange. The demand for prestige goods, such as shell beads, on the mainland was very high, whereas subsistence items (for example, plant, bone, and stone materials used for food and tools) were among the most common imports to the islands. Rather than targeting resource production on the islands, Gamble suggests that large population centers on the mainland were the largest consumers of prestige goods and therefore the major drivers in the regional economy.

In addition to locating major cultural developments on the mainland, Gamble differs in her hypotheses regarding the origins and chronology of complexity. Most researchers working in the Santa Barbara Channel agree that political complexity arose relatively recently during circumstances of pronounced resource stress (for example, drought and/or El Niño-Southern Oscillation events). Gamble challenges these interpretations by emphasizing limitations in the chronological resolution of existing paleoenvironmental and archaeological data. She also stresses that the Chumash already had mechanisms in place to compensate for resource variability and stress, thereby diminishing the role of the climatic fluctuations in influencing cultural change. Instead, like Chester King (*Evolution of Chumash Society*, 1990), she argues that complexity developed earlier in time during a period of resource abundance. Accordingly, Gamble advocates a gradualist model of cultural development that stands in sharp contrast to the emphasis that other researchers place on punctuated episodes of change.

Although Gamble convincingly makes the case for the significance of mainland centers and network-based power, less clear is the evidence that supports her hypotheses regarding gradualism and circumstances of resource abundance. To assess these aspects of her argument fully, comparably detailed information from the middle period, or between about 2,500 and 1,500 years ago, is required, including a more refined chronology of the shell bead industry. Despite these limitations, her alternative hypotheses of complexity nevertheless suggest fruitful lines of inquiry for future scholars. The corresponding images, tables, and bibliographic references offer an excellent starting point with respect to delving into the relevant literature and history of inquiry. Furthermore, her meticulous and integrative approach to evaluating diverse data sets at multiple scales of analysis should serve as a model of solid anthropological research on complex hunter-gatherer societies. In sum, as one of the most comprehensive and synthetic pieces of contemporary literature on the historic Chumash, *The Chumash World at European Contact: Power, Trade, and Feasting among Complex Hunter-Gatherers* should serve as a primary reference on changes and continuity in Chumash society for generations to come.