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#### **Title**

True, Meighan, and Crew: *Archaeological Investigations at Molpa, San Diego County, California*

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interest for those following the annals of private collections made in the late 1900's in the United States and Europe.

Obviously this assemblage of articles will have value to those students of California Indians who do not have specialized libraries available to them.



**Archaeological Investigations at Molpa, San Diego County, California.** *D. L. True, C. W. Meighan, and Harvey Crew*, with an appendix by *Smiley Karst*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, University of California Publications in Anthropology Vol. 11, 1974. vi + 163 pp., maps, tables, appendices, bibliography, 13 plates, 9 figures.

*Reviewed by* KEN HEDGES  
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Molpa is an ethnographically defined Luiseño village site in the San Luis Rey River drainage in the northern San Diego County. The site is presented in this volume as the type site for San Luis Rey II, the latest of two phases of the San Luis Rey Complex first defined by C. W. Meighan in 1954. *Archaeological Investigations at Molpa* presents the results of field investigations conducted by classes from the University of California, Los Angeles, from 1955 through 1957 under the direction of C. W. Meighan. While the authors recognize the shortcomings involved in presenting field class data so many years after excavation, they prepared this report in order to make the data available. We are fortunate that they elected to do so, for this volume contains a body of important information for the San Luis Rey drainage and adjacent Palomar Mountain. Whether the data presented in this report are adequate for the proper interpretation of the

site or for the definition of San Luis Rey II is open to question.

Two trenches comprising 17 five-foot by five-foot units for a total volume of 45.8 cubic yards of midden were excavated at Molpa. In the report, the authors estimate this as 3 to 5 per cent of the midden. However, by their own estimate, the midden area covers most 40,000 square yards with depths from 12 to 60 inches, and with a minimum depth of 6 inches adjacent to bedrock outcrops. Taking the minimum depth of 6 inches, the minimal estimate for total site volume is 6666.7 cubic yards, and the excavated sample represents less than 7 tenths of one per cent of the midden. A 3 to 5 per cent sample is minimal; less than one per cent is very small indeed. In addition, the locations of the excavated trenches and the lack of test units in many areas of the site preclude the gathering of any data on in-site variation, or on artifact types associated with specific site features. For example, two pictograph panels, one petroglyph feature, and one "rain rock" occur on the site, but units were not excavated in their vicinity. It appears that a great amount of potential data remains to be examined, and that the definition of San Luis Rey II based on this sample may be incomplete. Users of the report should be aware of these limitations; this is a very valuable presentation of available data, and contains supplementary survey data and interpretive material which render the book a valuable contribution to southern California archaeology.

The book makes an admirable contribution to interpretation of archaeological data through ethnographic information. Luiseño informants worked closely with the archaeologists, and it was possible to relate the archaeological sites specifically to known villages and to provide valuable data on the reconstruction of the cultural geography of the Luiseño. The appendices provide our first real archaeological information on Palomar Mountain, and delineate village territories to which

various districts and sites on the mountain belong. There is a list of plants and their aboriginal uses which is tantalizingly brief—one wishes for more detail on plant uses, but such data are seldom found in archaeological reports, and the list alone is a significant contribution to Luiseño ethnobotany. It is in the plant list, however, that one of the editorial problems of the book is most evident: numerous plant names are misspelled, a common problem in any publication dealing with botanical terminology, which always should be closely checked. There are other typographical errors scattered throughout the text.

Luiseño informants were able to offer specific interpretations of artifacts and features within the site, such as a ceremonial wand insert chipped from basalt, or rock paintings on one boulder face. There is a curious discrepancy in the use of ethnographic interpretation. The ceremonial wand insert, to outward appearances a knife or point, is unhesitatingly identified on the basis of informant statements. A unique tripod-support ceramic pot, identified as a shaman's vessel, is discussed with the comment that the interpretation cannot be verified at this time. Raymond White (1963:132-134) has published a detailed discussion of this ceramic vessel and its reported shamanistic function, yet his paper is not cited, while a personal communication obtained from him in 1956 is referenced. In this instance, we have the unique possibility of ethnographic interpretation of a specific artifact, and hence of the site in which it was found, yet the major source was overlooked in discussion of the artifact. As it turns out, the informant for the tripod pot was the same informant who provided the interpretation of the wand insert.

*Archaeological Investigations at Molpa* is the only published report on a major archaeological site in the San Luis Rey drainage. The archaeological data, in light of the circumstances under which they were gathered, and

the time which has passed since the excavation, are adequately presented, but the sample is entirely too small to allow any comprehensive interpretation of the site. The correlation of survey data with ethnographic information both in the river valley and on Palomar Mountain to provide new insights into Luiseño cultural geography is the most exciting aspect of the book, and it is hoped that this volume will encourage others to do the same. The fact that so much can be gained from so little archaeological data should encourage all of us to apply the technique in other areas. The book has already proved its usefulness in the archaeological studies in San Diego County. Its shortcomings should not cause us to overlook the valuable store of archaeological and ethnographic data which it contains.

#### REFERENCES

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1954 A Late Complex in Southern California Prehistory. *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 10:215-227.
- White, Raymond  
1963 Luiseño Social Organization. *University of California Publications in American Archaeology and Ethnology* 48(2): 91-194.



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For the past several years, both in this series and in publications of the Berkeley