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Expanding mission archaeology: A landscape approach to indigenous autonomy in colonial California



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ABSTRACT

Rather than simply an arena for Euroamerican domination, recent archaeological research on Spanish missionization along the North American Borderlands points to opportunities for indigenous autonomy under missionary colonialism. We build from these discussions to foreground autonomy as it was expressed in multiple spatial contexts during the colonial period (ca. 1770s–1850s) in central California. Our goals are to evaluate freedom of action within the situational constraints imposed by Spanish missions in California and also to challenge archaeologists to move beyond prevailing narratives of decline to critically assess how native people negotiated colonialism across the landscape. Drawing on three archaeological examples from central California—including Mission Santa Clara de Asís, the marshlands of the San Joaquin Valley, and persistent Coast Miwok villages in the northern San Francisco Bay region—we outline a conceptual model comprised of three spatial zones: colonial settlements as native places; native homelands/colonial hinterlands; and interior worlds and interspaces. The model offers a way in which to expand mission archaeology by illuminating the opportunities for indigenous autonomy in social, political, and economic relationships that intersected colonial modes in various ways across time and space.

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1. Introduction

In California, as elsewhere, the Spanish mission system had far-reaching effects for indigenous autonomy as broadly reflected in the use of space at different points on the landscape. More than 70 years ago, Sherburne Cook (1943:73) underscored this important dimension of the Spanish missionary program, writing, “The initial act of contact between the mission organization and the Indian was one involving spatial relationships.” We contend that the crucial role of spatial relationships in structuring colonial encounters extended far beyond the missions themselves and the initial act of contact. Instead, the colonial entanglements that missionization set in motion unfolded in distinct ways across the landscape and over the course of the colonial period and its aftermath. This paper examines the relationship between indigenous autonomy and spatial organization within the context of Spanish colonialism in central California (Fig. 1). We suggest that by broadening the scope of mission archaeology to include not just mission settlements but also more distant areas where the colonial

presence was impermanent, archaeologists can provide new insight into native autonomy under colonialism. Given the wide geographic range of Spanish missionization in the Americas—and the use of missions as part of colonial strategies worldwide—our findings point to avenues of future research that may be applied to other missionized regions.

Through three brief case studies, we examine how indigenous people organized and used space at mission establishments, along the shifting frontiers between native homelands and colonial hinterlands, and in areas outside of direct colonial control. Traditional scholarship positions the Spanish colonial missions of California as tightly controlled social spaces to which native people were inextricably bound. Yet recent archaeological and ethnohistorical research indicates that Spanish spatial hegemony was far from complete, nor was it negotiated in a uniform manner by the region’s inhabitants. Based on our research in central California, we argue that native people living in the Spanish mission era exercised a considerable, if differential, degree of control over their organization and use of space at different locales on the landscape. These practices complicate traditional understandings of the spatial relationships of missionization, and further demonstrate the importance of empirically grounded archaeological research to counter the seeming disappearance of indigenous people in colonial California.

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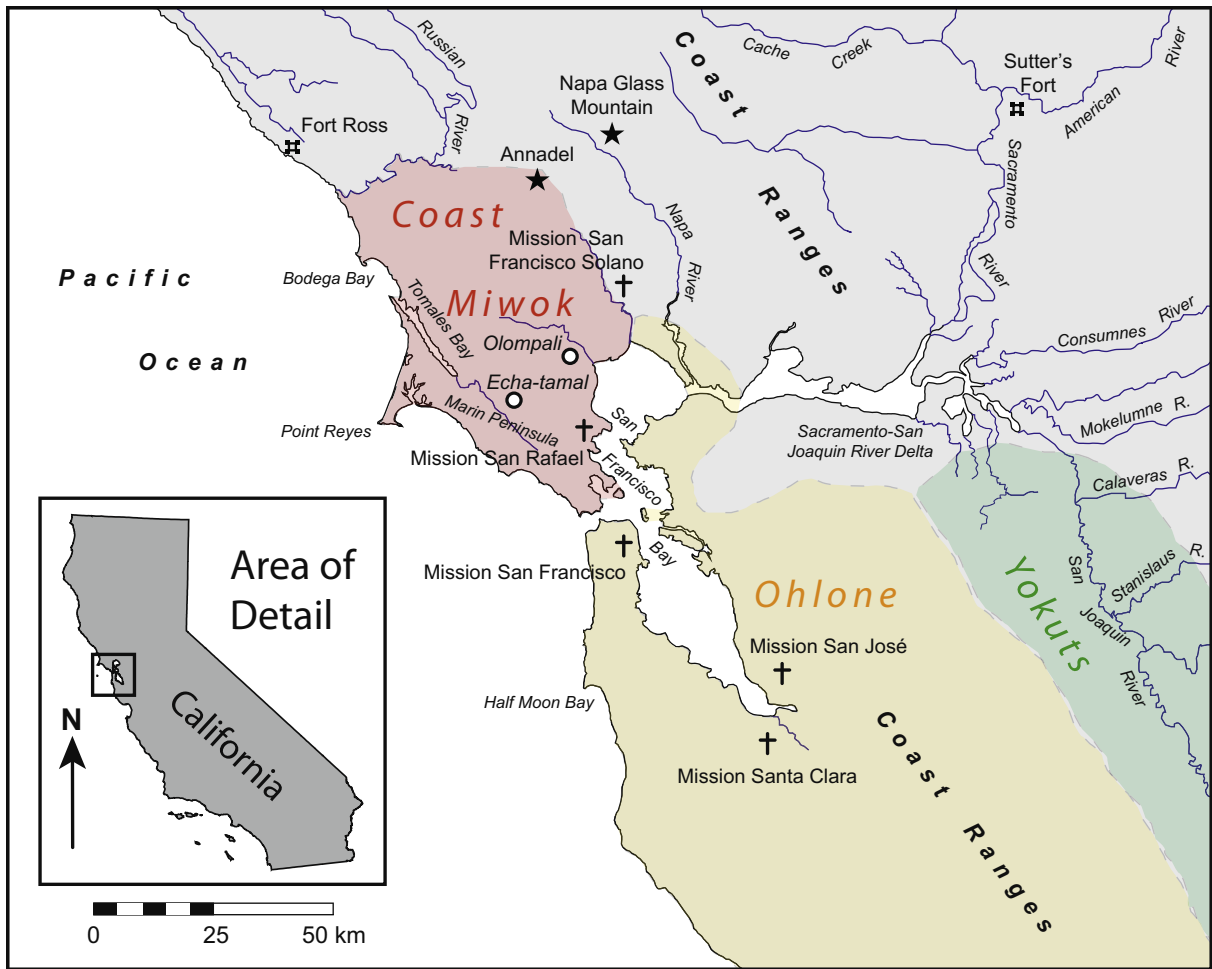


Fig. 1. Central California, with reconstructed Coast Miwok, Ohlone, and Yokuts ethnolinguistic boundaries (after Milliken, 1995), colonial settlements, and other places discussed in text.

2. Colonialism, landscapes, and autonomy

The fundamental questions of many archaeological approaches to colonialism center on the dichotomy of continuity and change within native societies. Recently, the pendulum has swung from archaeological concerns with demographic decline and acculturation to approaches that seek to understand indigenous persistence in spite of far-reaching changes wrought by colonialism (Jordan, 2008; Mitchell and Scheiber, 2010; Panich, 2013; Silliman, 2009). Within these latter studies, many recognize the intertwined nature of continuity and change, which is perhaps better modeled as “changing continuities” (Ferris, 2009). Indeed, careful reading of the archaeological and ethnohistorical records shows that even seeming discontinuities in categories such as settlement patterns or resource exploitation were structured by the internal dynamics of native societies. Archaeologists are thus poised to move beyond decades-old questions about continuity and change to consider indigenous agency and autonomy in the colonial period. As used here, autonomy refers to freedom of action within situational constraints (Jordan, 2013; Schwartz and Green, 2013). When applied to the archaeology of colonialism, an examination of autonomy de-centers static, trait-based approaches to native cultures and the concomitant scholarly focus on externally-imposed change. By countering the myth of the vanishing Indian, such studies also offer opportunities for collaboration between archaeologists and indigenous communities (Cipolla, 2013; Mrozowski et al., 2009).

A landscape approach intersects these debates by providing a venue for exploring not only the intended spatial structures of colonialism but also how native people actually experienced and used space in different contexts (Lightfoot and Martinez, 1995; Mann, 2012). Within such approaches, it is largely taken as a given that the landscape is both reflective and constitutive of environmental adaptations, social relationships, and individual and collective agency. The various ways that people construct, organize, and inhabit space thus offer multiple perspectives on lived experience in colonial settings, including the (re)production of cultural values and social identities, as well as the negotiation of colonial power structures, enculturation programs, and labor regimes (Lightfoot et al., 1998; Panich and Schneider, 2014; Wernke, 2013).

Spatially, native autonomy ranged from intra-site organization to regional settlement patterns and economic connections, to the maintenance of sites of cultural importance and commemoration (Rodning, 2009; Rubertone, 2000). At these different places in the landscape, however, agents may have pursued different strategies based on their age, gender, ethnolinguistic affiliation, or relative social status (Rodríguez-Alegría, 2010). Archaeologists therefore must be attentive to how native people exercised autonomy differentially even within one ethnolinguistic or political group. Such an approach articulates with broad developments in the archaeology of colonialism in the Americas (Cobb and De Pratter, 2012; Funari and Senatore, 2015; Hauser and Armstrong, 2012; Van Buren, 2010), and counters the traditional view of colonialism as

a “static and monolithic” imposition on indigenous societies (Gosden, 2000).

2.1. Mission archaeology in North America

Where employed by European powers, missions were typically designed to be the central institution through which indigenous people would enter civilized society. Accordingly, much scholarship on the social aspects of missionization in the Spanish Borderlands of North America winds around a common interpretive thread: the notion that mission communities were “carceral” institutions. In this viewpoint, native people subject to missionization were inevitably caught up in a European colonial program designed to efficiently strip them of their cultural practices (Lydon, 2009:248). Missions, then, outwardly resemble other institutions in their attempted regulation of behavior and movement through the design and control of space (De Cunzo, 2006; Voss, 2008:148; Wade, 2008:142). Scholarly focus on the California missions, for example, often invokes the use of corporal punishment, control of native social practices, and restrictions on use of space within and beyond the mission walls. Decades of archaeological research on native acculturation at mission sites in California and elsewhere (e.g., Cheek, 1974; Deetz, 1963; Hoover, 1992) has buttressed this understanding of missions as anchoring normative landscapes where strict social controls dominated all aspects of the lives of indigenous people.

While missions and other colonial sites may have constrained native use of particular places, a careful reading of mission archaeology and ethnohistory reveals patterns of landscape use that may inform a new approach to native autonomy under missionization (Panich and Schneider, 2014). Across the North American Borderlands, important differences existed between how Spanish missionaries dealt with mobile hunter-gatherers versus sedentary agriculturalists, suggesting that native political economies were a key structuring principle in the process of missionization (Lightfoot et al., 2013; Thomas, 2014; and see Spicer, 1962:287–288). These dynamic missionary strategies can be seen in regional differences in mission spatial organization and variation in the degree of control missionaries held over particular establishments (Graham, 1998).

Among agriculturalists, such as in the Spanish colony of La Florida, missions were incorporated into existing indigenous communities. This process resulted in a relative balance of power in which mission churches were often placed opposite native council houses in town plazas and native people retained control over the organization of their domestic space (McEwan, 1991; Saunders, 1998; Scarry and McEwan, 1995). Similarly, missions to the Pueblo communities of New Mexico were constructed within existing native settlements (Lycett, 2014). In contrast, missionaries working in regions where native people were seasonally mobile, such as California or Texas, typically attempted to concentrate dispersed indigenous communities at newly built mission establishments (Lightfoot, 2005; Wade, 2008). As noted by Spicer (1962:288–298), however, the fundamental “blueprint” for Spanish missions revolved around the interrelated policies of *reducción* (relocation) and *congregación* (congregation). Native communities, regardless of existing settlement patterns, were to be centered on a mission church.

The results of these practices, however, varied across space and through time. In La Florida, Franciscan padres usually ignored outlying hamlets and instead channeled their energy into erecting missions within principal towns. Out of this practice formed “a reservoir of villages outside of Spanish control to which the disaffected could flee” (Saunders, 1998:405). In Texas, native groups such as the Aranama and Karankawa incorporated Spanish mission outposts into their seasonal schedules, at least during the initial

decades of the colonial period (Ricklis, 1996; Walter and Hester, 2014). Missions established in the American Southwest were usually attached to the most densely populated Pueblos, but the Franciscan project was frustrated by seasonal patterns of dispersal, as well as broad demographic changes. The status of these joint colonial-indigenous projects often shifted from *cabecera* (head mission) to *visita* and back again, with implications for how native people engaged with the broader landscape over time (Lycett, 2004, 2014). The Pueblo Revolt of 1680 and ensuing decades ushered in further spatial transformations in the region (Liebmann, 2012; Liebmann et al., 2005). Along the far western margins of New Spain, Jesuit missionaries in the arid deserts of Baja California could not support large populations at the *cabeceras* and instead allowed hunting and gathering groups to remain in their ancestral villages (Crosby, 1994:197–199).

In sum, the intended spatial re-organization of native communities around particular Spanish mission sites had far-reaching but variable consequences for native autonomy. To be sure, many native people moved to mission establishments, but once there, domestic spaces and work areas were structured in part by their own dynamic cultural practices. The effects of missionization also rippled outward to regions where the colonial presence was impermanent, represented by *visitas* or occasional visits by traveling missionaries. Across the landscape, native people adapted their settlement patterns and economic activities to accommodate, coopt, or resist efforts at missionization. Each of these processes was the result not simply of Euroamerican domination, but rather the interested action—the agency—of native individuals and groups. To account for this relative degree of autonomy, however, archaeologists must look anew at the relationships between mission sites, outlying areas, and regions beyond the control of any one colonial power.

3. Developing a spatial model

To address the landscape-level dimensions of indigenous autonomy under missionization, we build on the model developed by Lightfoot et al. (2009) to describe the range of spatial relationships between native people and colonists in the northern San Francisco Bay region. This model conceptualizes native engagement with colonial institutions across four broad spatial categories: colonial settlements, proximal zones, hinterlands, and the interspaces of colonial regimes. Such categories are useful for understanding the spatial dimension of colonial entanglements, but they pose two problems when applied to the contextual examination of native autonomy. First, these zones could be read as being mutually exclusive or applicable to all colonial contexts. They are not. Diachronic changes in the scale and intensity of native engagement with colonial institutions, in particular, preclude a static application of these categories, which shifted along with the ebb and flow of colonial entanglements. Second, the zones demarcated by Lightfoot et al. (2009) are conceptualized in reference to their proximity to colonial establishments. While an expedient way of demarcating space, this view of colonial-era landscapes could serve to subtly perpetuate outdated core-periphery models of European expansion. Instead, archaeological approaches to colonialism should examine the structuring qualities of the indigenous landscape as well as the multisited nature of colonial encounters (Lightfoot, 2006).

To augment these spatial zones for our examination of indigenous autonomy in the colonial era, we recast them in the following way: (1) colonial settlements as native places, a category that collapses colonial settlements and proximal zones, (2) native homelands/colonial hinterlands, and (3) interior worlds and interspaces. This approach explicitly underscores the complex

nature of space as experienced by different actors (Robinson, 2013). Indeed, we envision these spatial zones not simply as representing immutable and dichotomous categories of native or colonizer, but rather as porous and often fleeting social spaces in which people of diverse backgrounds actively engaged in processes of accommodation and negotiation.

Within these zones, native people lived and worked at multiple sites across the landscape, some of which are characterized by high archaeological visibility while others may require more systematic approaches to discovery and artifact identification (Sayers, 2014:109; Seymour, 2014:99–104). We see the value of defining the range of spatial zones as expanding the purview of “mission archaeology.” This broader approach includes the examination of materials and people that flowed back and forth across colonial frontiers, between native villages, and within and beyond the walls of particular mission establishments.

3.1. Colonial settlements as native places

Missions were, at a fundamental demographic level, as much native places as they were colonial settlements. Mission sites are a common focus of research throughout the Americas, and this immense dataset offers diverse perspectives on native autonomy under missionization. The empirical evidence amply demonstrates wide variation in intrasite spatial patterning both within specific mission provinces and across the Borderlands (Allen, 2010; Costello, 1989; Saunders, 1996). We argue that such variation is not simply the result of Euroamerican institutional protocols or personal preferences, but rather an expression of the complex negotiations that unfolded between missionaries, secular colonists, and native people. As we discuss elsewhere (Panich, 2010; Schneider and Panich, 2014), the archaeological and ethnohistorical records for mission sites can also hold clues to how native neophytes interacted with people and places beyond the mission walls. For example, archaeological remains such as lithics, marine shell, animal bone, and botanical remains can often be effectively linked to particular places on the landscape. Properly contextualized, these materials offer insights into native mobility and economic connections under missionization. We also note that colonial settlements need not be missions at all to be included in an examination of native autonomy under missionization. Secular and military interests offered a distinct alternative to life under the bell, and laboring (as opposed to converting) thus can be examined as yet another angle for understanding native autonomy (Van Buren, 2010). For this reason, we combine the original categories of colonial settlements and proximal zones, as proposed by Lightfoot et al. (2009), to include a broader array of native involvement in colonial institutions.

3.2. Native homelands/colonial hinterlands

Colonial hinterlands are often imagined as the vanguard of European influence, but may be better understood in reference to the native societies who already lived there. In these areas, native people maintained connections to ancestral sites while often simultaneously rearticulating group structure and economic relationships. The Chumash world of south-central California provides contrasting examples of how hunter-gatherers dealt with colonial intrusions. Some Emigdiano Chumash sought refuge in relatively inaccessible interior regions where they may have been joined by members of neighboring groups (Bernard et al., 2014). Others, such as those living at the autonomous coastal Chumash village of *Humaliwo*, labored at secular *ranchos* giving some individuals new pathways to status and an alternative to mission life (Gamble, 2008:202–206). Further south in the Los Angeles Basin, Gabrieliño/Tongva living at one coastal village continued many

ceremonial traditions into the colonial period even as they incorporated domesticated plants into feasts and their everyday diet (Reddy, 2015). These examples attest to how native people drew on their home territories to forge different strategies of persistence. Indeed, the overlapping fringes between native homelands and colonial frontiers provided native people with a familiar home ground from which to negotiate Euroamerican colonialism.

3.3. Interior worlds and interspaces

The third zone comprises the “interior worlds” described by Zappia (2014) in his study of indigenous autonomy in the Colorado River Basin, or what Lightfoot et al. (2009:6) referred to as the interspaces between colonial regimes. These zones, which were situated between two or more colonial powers, were much more than simply places of evasion and resistance—they were in many cases transformative (Hämäläinen, 2008). Indeed, the very autonomy of the often multiethnic indigenous groups living in interior worlds subverted colonial cultural hegemony and ultimately “shaped the larger designs of state power” (Zappia, 2012:194). We see these interspaces as fluid regions continually remade by competing interests, not just those of colonists. Within interior worlds, native people were free to pursue diverse social, economic, and political options. In this sense, individuals and groups within these zones acted back upon Euroamerican institutions, as seen in colonial policies (e.g., military expeditions or the administration of *paseos*) implemented to define and control unknown areas beyond the walls of missions and other colonial establishments.

4. Contested landscapes in central California

In the late precontact period, California was home to hundreds of small, hunter-gatherer-fisher societies who spoke a variety of languages, employed intensive landscape management practices, and participated in far-flung exchange relationships (Lightfoot and Parrish, 2009). The first sustained encounters between Native Californians and Euroamerican colonists came in the late eighteenth century. Between 1769 and the 1830s, Franciscan missionaries founded a chain of 21 missions along the coast from San Diego to Sonoma. The Franciscans who entered the colonial province of Alta (Upper) California in 1769 were part of a long lineage of Spanish missionaries from Franciscan, Dominican, and Jesuit orders with a 200-year record of establishing missions within the borderland provinces of Florida, Texas, Arizona, New Mexico, Northern Mexico, and Baja California (Thomas, 2014; Wade, 2008).

The core of the regional plan for California was the relocation, or *reducción*, of the region’s indigenous peoples from their home villages to the head mission establishments. There, native peoples could be closely monitored during their conversion to Catholicism and Euroamerican lifeways, without interference from Indians living outside of colonial control or neighboring *gente de razón* (Lightfoot, 2005:63). The experience of missionization for native peoples in California was thus closely tied to the organization and use of space: as neophytes, native people were bound to the mission and expected to reside within its confines unless explicitly granted leave by the Franciscans.

Yet the social worlds of native people in Spanish California extended beyond the mission walls. As part of the widespread economic and social connections linking the missions and autonomous communities, native people manipulated a system of temporary leaves, called *paseo*, to achieve a degree of autonomy and flexibility in the face of *reducción* (Arkush, 2011; Newell, 2009; Schneider, 2010, in press-a). These permitted furloughs—in addition to rampant fugitivism—created opportunities for some

native people to return to home villages for short durations, to give birth, to die, or to disappear entirely. As reflected by the policy of *paseo*, places within indigenous homelands also retained importance throughout the mission period. Many Native Californians lived along the colonial frontier and evaded missionization, while others selectively engaged with different Euroamerican institutions in regions where missionaries competed with other colonial powers for native labor and allegiance. Below, we examine the evidence for native autonomy across each of the three spatial zones.

4.1. Colonial settlements as native places: Mission Santa Clara de Asís

Mission Santa Clara, near the southern extent of San Francisco Bay, operated from 1777 until the 1840s. The mission drew native people from throughout central California, including local Ohlone (Costanoan) groups as well as Yokuts speakers from the San Joaquin Valley (Milliken, 2002). At the local level, Mission Santa Clara incorporated most of the basic spatial attributes of the Franciscan missions of California, although it is unique in that the mission itself had five different locations during the colonial period (Skowronek and Wizorek, 1997). Archaeological investigations on and around the modern Santa Clara University (SCU) campus have revealed the spatial organization of the mission, reflecting the Franciscans' power to dictate the use of space, but also how native people exercised a degree of autonomy within those parameters (Fig. 2).

Neophyte housing offers a clear picture of the intended process of spatial control. As at other California mission sites, three discrete residential areas were established: separate dormitories for unmarried men and women, as well as a larger neighborhood for neophyte families and married couples. Although the *monjerio* and separate quarters for young men have not been studied archaeologically at Santa Clara, such practices no doubt fractured families and likely complicated traditional courtship practices (Voss, 2000). Despite the multiple shifts in the location of the

mission church, the *ranchería* for married neophytes appears to have remained in the same place—within earshot of the bell—from the early 1780s to the 1840s. Within these residential spaces, the native population was decidedly diverse, and there is no indication that missionaries paid any particular attention to the linguistic barriers or animosities that existed among neophytes at Santa Clara. Instead, the segregation of the indigenous *ranchería* reflects the racialized caste system that reified native identity in colonial New Spain (Voss, 2008).

Despite the control that the Franciscans sought to implement over the daily activities of neophytes at Mission Santa Clara, recent research demonstrates that native people did maintain some autonomy over domestic space within the mission. Archaeological mitigation associated with several major SCU construction projects has revealed large portions of the native *ranchería*, including numerous pit features as well as the remnants of adobe barracks and a native-style thatched house (Allen, 2010). One of the most significant findings is that native people adapted the *ranchería* to their own needs. Dozens of pit features of different forms—including storage pits, hearths, and possible wells—dotted the open spaces (Allen et al., 2010; Garlinghouse et al., 2015; Panich et al., 2014). Some large pits may have served ceremonial purposes, and three in particular appear to have been filled with materials that were ritually destroyed in accordance with well-documented Native Californian mourning practices (Panich, 2014, in press). With regard to domestic architecture, the presence of native-style dwellings offers the opportunity to see how native people organized domestic space in different areas of their neighborhood. Indeed, the comparison of materials associated with different domestic structures and related features within the mission *ranchería* indicates differential access to certain materials or exchange networks (Panich et al., 2014; Panich, 2014).

Importantly, many of the archaeological finds point to enduring connections between neophytes and people and places beyond the mission walls. Thousands of shell beads, for example, have been

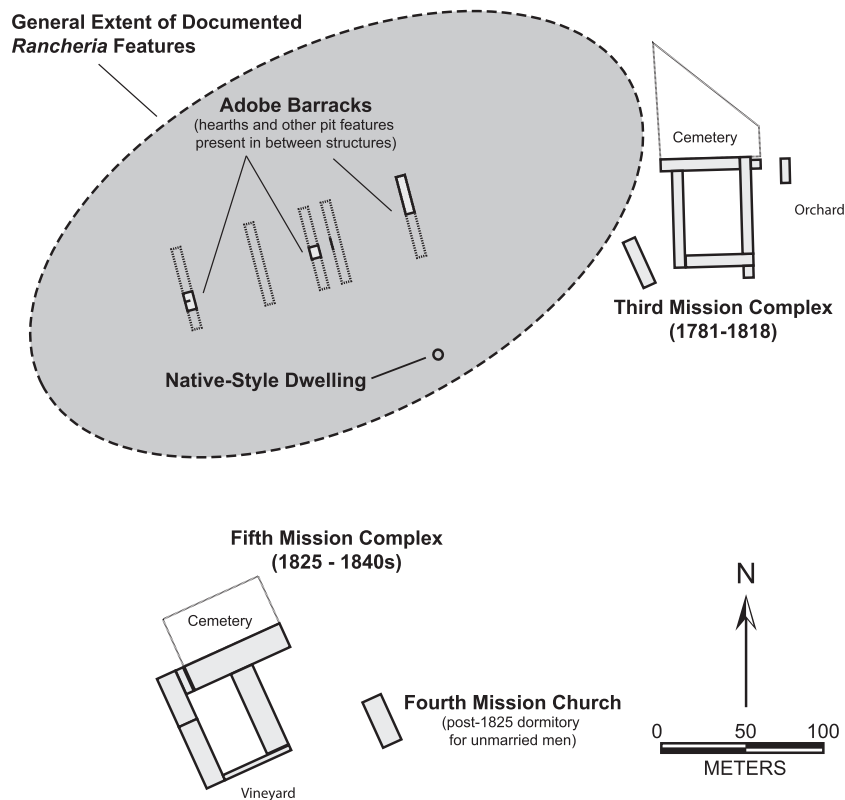


Fig. 2. Mission Santa Clara, with areas discussed in text.

recovered from multiple spatial contexts (Panich, 2014). These shell beads include types manufactured in two distinct regions within coastal California: clamshell disk beads produced north of San Francisco Bay and small disk beads made from the shells of olive snails (*Olivella* sp.) and red abalones (*Haliotis rufescens*), likely created in workshops along the Santa Barbara Channel (Fig. 3). Hundreds of obsidian artifacts have also been recovered in excavations. Of 136 samples recently analyzed, the majority were from sources north of San Francisco Bay, including 105 from Napa Glass Mountain and 18 from the Annadel source. Smaller quantities of artifacts were manufactured from obsidian obtained further north in the Coast Ranges and in the eastern Sierra Nevada (Garlinghouse et al., 2015; Panich et al., 2014, 2015). In aggregate, it appears that most of the shell beads and all of the raw obsidian material originated in regions outside the ancestral homelands of the Ohlone and Yokuts neophytes who joined Mission Santa Clara, offering insight into the broader regional networks in which mission neophytes were enmeshed. A systematic review of available data is underway, but the evidence from Santa Clara suggests that neophytes also continued to practice some hunting of wild animals and gathering of wild plants (Allen et al., 2010).

The documentary record offers additional glimpses into the varied possibilities for autonomy under missionization. For example, missionaries at Santa Clara, writing in 1814, stated that neophytes maintained their own garden plots, and that native people also persisted in many so-called vices, such as gambling, dances, and abortions (Geiger and Meighan, 1976:106, 111). Analysis of the death records contained in Santa Clara's sacramental registers suggests that a significant portion of neophyte deaths occurred outside of the mission (Panich, in press). Of the approximately 7670 deaths of native individuals recorded for Santa Clara, roughly nine percent took place beyond the mission walls. This tally contains individuals who died at other missions or nearby colonial establishments, but it also includes more than 430 neophytes who died and were buried in their ancestral homelands. Several individuals in this latter group were listed as being fugitives or on *paseo*, suggesting that, as Newell (2009) shows for Mission San Francisco, native neophytes in the San Francisco Bay region actively manipulated the missionaries' intended control of space. The wealth of documentary information regarding fugitivism and *paseo*, combined with the quantity of non-local materials found at missions like Santa Clara, points toward possible mechanisms by which introduced goods such as phoenix buttons and glass beads were conveyed outward to distant native villages (Figs. 3 and 4).

These diverse lines of evidence shed new light on the autonomy of native people in the heart of the mission system. On the whole, the analysis of materials from the Santa Clara *ranchería* confirms earlier indications that native people maintained and rearticulated several important cultural traditions within their own neighborhood, away from the watchful eyes of the Franciscans and colonial soldiers (Lightfoot, 2005). At Mission Santa Clara, these included intra-settlement organization of domestic space, the perpetuation of certain mourning ceremonies, technological practices such as

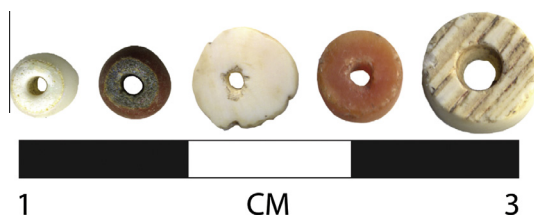


Fig. 3. Beads collected from Mission Santa Clara, including (left to right) glass beads, *Olivella* disk bead, *Haliotis rufescens* disk bead, and clamshell disk bead. Similar beads have been noted in assemblages from throughout central California.



Fig. 4. Phoenix button collected from Mission Santa Clara. Similar buttons have been recovered from sites in the San Joaquin Valley and the Marin Peninsula.

flint-knapping, and the hunting and gathering of wild species. These findings also demonstrate that native people were not totally confined to mission establishments or nearby proximal zones. Instead, neophytes at Santa Clara created a native space within the mission while simultaneously keeping ties to neophyte communities at other missions, to far-flung indigenous economic networks, and to their ancestral homelands and other areas outside of direct colonial control.

4.2. Native homelands/colonial hinterlands: The San Joaquin Valley

As evidenced by the materials recovered from Mission Santa Clara and other colonial sites, native people continued to participate in far-reaching social and economic relationships under missionization. In central California, however, the complexities of native landscape use outside of the Spanish missions and other colonial establishments are not fully understood. This situation is due in part to assumed Spanish hegemony during the colonial period but also to prevailing research frameworks within mission archaeology, which tend to focus on mission sites themselves rather than on native homelands (Lightfoot et al., 2009; Schneider and Panich, 2014; Schneider, in press-b). Here, we focus on the once-extensive *tulares* (tule marshes) of the San Joaquin Valley, a region which included the traditional homelands of multiple Yokuts-speaking groups and their neighbors.

To the Franciscans and other Spanish authorities, the San Joaquin Valley was seen simultaneously as a source of new mission converts and a troubling hotbed of indigenous independence. Neophytes fleeing or on leave from missions brought knowledge of horse handling to native people who already had well developed economic relationships linking the Pacific Coast to the Sierra Nevada and beyond. These groups integrated the horse into their economic repertoire (Fig. 5), which quickly expanded to include frequent raiding of coastal missions and other colonial establishments (Arkush, 1993; Phillips, 1993). Fearing that the region would become another "Apachería" where mounted native raiders could flourish outside of colonial control, many Franciscans advocated for the founding of additional missions in San Joaquin Valley (Cutter, 1995:171; Hackel, 2005:338–339). Although the valley missions were never constructed, many native people from the *tulares* did join missions closer to the coast, prompting Milliken (2002:59) to state that nearly "all of the San Joaquin River people were at the missions by the end of 1820."

Several lines of evidence complicate this picture of a vast valley entirely drained of its indigenous inhabitants. Ethnohistorical research, for example, provides insight into the native people



Fig. 5. “Plain between the San Joaquin and Kings Rivers [California].” Image by Charles Koppel, ca. 1854. Courtesy of the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

who created dynamic communities in the tule marshlands. Some were Yokuts speakers who refused to join the missions, while others were mission neophytes who returned to their homelands either on leave or as fugitives (Cook, 1960, 1962; Phillips, 1993:32–64). Many of the death records from Mission Santa Clara, for instance, indicate that neophytes of Yokuts ancestry returned often to the *tulares*, where no small number of them perished and were laid to rest (Panich, in press). In this milieu, the native groups of the San Joaquin Valley enjoyed a period of relative autonomy—even using their intimate knowledge of their surroundings to successfully repel punitive expeditions seeking fugitive neophytes—during which they rearticulated social and economic practices within their own ancestral homelands.

One of the best examples of the complexity of the spatial and social relationships that structured life in the *tulares* comes from an account written by Father Narciso Durán, of Mission San José, detailing a 14-day expedition in 1817. Traveling by boat down the San Joaquin River, Durán (in Cook, 1960:275) reported:

“We went all night, except for a while during which we stopped in the boat itself, and at eight o’clock [in the morning] we arrived near the village of the Passasimas. During the night we passed on our right the village of the Nototemnes, who are already Christians in San José and who were living almost in the middle of the tule swamps. . . some of the Passasimas came out to greet us in peace. This is not strange because they have been many times in the mission [San José] and several of them have been baptized.”

Fifty miles from the closest mission, this eye-witness account details the complicated social settings that unfolded within California’s interior. In thinking beyond impermeable missions and distant hinterlands, the account of Father Durán and others like it point to the complex and shifting spatial relationships of colonialism and their concomitant implications for native autonomy.

To date, the archaeological evidence for these relationships is most visible in large-scale excavations of villages and associated cemeteries. In the northern San Joaquin Valley, for example, archaeologists focused on glass beads that could be used to essentially ground-truth the place names in Durán’s diary (Schenck, 1926; Schenck and Dawson, 1929). Glass bead assemblages from particular sites ranged in number from 15,000 to 85—the latter of which was found in association with *Olivella* shell beads “with edges chipped instead of ground” (Schenck and Dawson, 1929:357). These *Olivella* beads are indicative of the late mission period, and are found at mission sites and native villages

throughout southern and central California (Bennyhoff and Hughes, 1987). In his work in the nearby Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta, Bennyhoff (1977) outlined several historic-era “bead complexes” developed through the seriation of glass and shell beads from hundreds of grave lots and which point toward temporally distinct regional interaction spheres. Viewed together with more recent archaeological studies in the broader region (e.g., Wiberg, 2005), two noteworthy patterns emerge. First, glass beads were spread far afield from the coastal missions, into areas only intermittently visited by Euroamericans prior to the mid-nineteenth century. Second, different types of shell beads produced in distant coastal regions also circulated throughout California’s vast interior during the mission period. The large quantity of historic-era beads (both glass and shell) in the Central Valley suggests that Yokuts raiders and traders served to convey diverse materials along the length of their valley homelands and back and forth across the colonial frontier (Arkush, 1993).

Further evidence for the dynamic social worlds of the mission-era comes from the valley’s southern reaches. At one site in Kern County (CA-KER-64), early archaeological work documented a cemetery that appears to have been used from precontact times into the 1860s (Walker, 1947). Out of 99 burials, 46 contained goods of Euroamerican origin, including thousands of glass beads as well as phoenix buttons, crucifixes, and ceramic artifacts. Many of the historic-era burials also contained *Olivella* and/or clamshell beads, stone beads, stone bowls, or basketry remnants (Walker, 1947:13). The site may represent the village of Tulamniu, which was known for harboring large numbers of neophytes fleeing Mission La Purísima in the early nineteenth century (Bernard et al., 2014:157; Honig, 2003:56; Phillips, 1993:59–60). Another site in the area, CA-KER-74, yielded similar materials from nine burials from the same general time range (Riddell, 1951). There, religious medallions from the missions were found not just with glass beads, but also *Olivella* and clamshell beads as well as numerous *Haliotis* pendants. While the Catholic religious objects from these sites no doubt reflect direct or indirect contact with missionaries, the burial of such objects in independent villages speaks to how native people contextualized such objects within familiar frames of reference. Viewed this way, such practices indicate native autonomy rather than acculturation. Indeed, Father President Mariano Payeras likely expressed the thoughts of many Franciscans when he characterized the region’s mixture of free Indians and fugitive neophytes as “a republic of Hell and a diabolical union” (Cutter, 1995:149).

In his seminal essay on the direct historical approach in California archaeology, Heizer (1941:120) noted that the colonial-era *tulares* were home to dynamic native communities “led by former neophytes who had renounced Christianity and returned to their old homes, consolidated with other similar remnants and withdrew beyond the reach of the Spanish military to defensible, inaccessible retreats.” In this region, ethnohistorical records indicate fugitive neophytes found safe harbor in their natal villages, while others manipulated mission furloughs to die and be mourned in culturally appropriate ways. Still others visited with family and friends before returning to the lives they had created anew at the missions. Archaeologically, the importance of these native homelands is seen most readily in the persistence of particular village sites well into the nineteenth century, although data from smaller, more ephemeral sites would likely further illuminate how Yokuts groups drew on familiar places to retain autonomy under missionization (cf. Schneider, in press-b). Together, the existing ethnohistorical and archaeological data point toward the importance of landscapes beyond the missions, as well as the frequent passing of people and things across the porous frontiers between indigenous homelands and Euroamerican colonies.

4.3. Interior worlds and interspaces: Native Refugia on the Marin Peninsula

Often missions bordered regions where no one colonial system dominated or where multiple powers sought to extract labor, tribute, or resources from local native people. Such was the case north of San Francisco Bay, along the Marin Peninsula where local Coast Miwok groups found themselves along the frontier between the far northern reaches of New Spain and the eastern expansion of imperial Russia (Lightfoot, 2005). This coastal region was also plied by American and British trading vessels, and was home to several Mexican ranching establishments after the 1820s. The complex mix of colonial interests in this region created an interspace that paradoxically allowed native people to participate in Euroamerican colonialism largely on their own terms.

We are currently working with the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria (FIGR) to understand the range of strategies employed by native people to create and maintain interior worlds away from the multiple colonial incursions that cross-cut coastal California. While evolving ties to Euroamerican colonial enterprises upended traditional political economies based on hunting and gathering, the spatial organization of such relationships may have nonetheless offered opportunities for differential autonomy across the region. In the Coast Miwok world, our research suggests that broad changes in political organization, economic production, and landscape use were internally structured during the colonial period at different points across the landscape. We note two complementary processes as evidenced by the archaeological and ethnohistorical records. First, particular sites and familiar landscapes beyond colonial control held lasting significance as sites of refuge and relief from the colonial presence in the neighboring regions. Second, the Marin Peninsula and nearby areas on the Pacific Coast provided opportunities for Coast Miwok villages to openly endure throughout the mission period and beyond.

The first pattern involves landscapes of refuge, which are by their very nature difficult to see archaeologically or in the documentary record. Nevertheless, new approaches are illuminating continuities of seasonally structured landscapes as well as the continued use of particular sites over time. In the Marin Peninsula, the examination of long-term seasonality trends through stable isotope analysis of archaeological mussel shell corresponds to documented seasonal shifts in Coast Miwok participation in the Spanish mission system (Schneider, in press-a). Similarly, a reappraisal of regional archaeology suggests that many sites thought to have been abandoned at the onset of Euroamerican colonialism may have in fact remained important places on the landscape, perhaps as clandestine sites of refuge (Schneider, in press-b).

One such site in our study area is known as Cotomko'tca (CA-MRN-138), a prominent Coast Miwok village on the eastern side of the Marin Peninsula (Barrett, 1908; Kroeber, 1925). Forty-two people from the village were baptized at Mission San Francisco in 1808, and one joined Mission San Rafael in 1821 (Milliken, 2009). Archaeological excavations at the site produced few materials that speak directly to the use of the site in the colonial era, but the assemblage did include a phoenix button as well as a chipped obsidian cross (Slaymaker, 1977). Together, the archaeological and ethnohistoric evidence place native people at sites like Cotomko'tca into the 1820s. While past researchers largely considered such sites "prehistoric" in nature, an expanded approach to mission archaeology encourages the interrogation of such temporal placements and may therefore better capture the way native people used ancestral landscapes as they regrouped beyond shifting colonial frontiers.

The second pattern, that of enduring village settlements, is best characterized by Echa-tamal (CA-MRN-402). Located in the western portion of the Marin Peninsula, Echa-tamal was occupied more

or less continuously from precontact times through the late nineteenth century. Some Coast Miwok people from around Echa-tamal were baptized at Mission San Francisco in 1808–1809, while others joined Mission San Rafael a decade later (Milliken, 2009). The use of the site during the height of missionary activity in the Marin Peninsula (ca. 1817–1833) is not well understood, but the village and roughly 22,600 hectares of surrounding lands were granted to the "Christianized Indians" of Mission San Rafael in 1835 at the petition of five Coast Miwok men. Significant portions of the site were excavated in the 1970s, revealing materials that date from the waning years of the mission era into American period (ca. 1830s–1880s) (Dietz, 1976). Of particular interest are large quantities of clamshell disk beads, glass beads, phoenix buttons, and other items of personal adornment. Some materials reflect connections to other native communities, while many objects—such as vaquero gear and mass-produced consumer goods—speak to Coast Miwok engagement with the changing regional economy.

Similar processes unfolded at Olompali, another large Coast Miwok village that existed from precontact times into the mid-nineteenth century (Barrett, 1908; Kroeber, 1925). Coast Miwok from Olompali appear on baptismal registers for Mission San Francisco (1814–1817), Mission San José (1816–1817), and Mission San Rafael (1817–1822) (Milliken, 2009). However, the site remained in use throughout the Spanish period, inhabited by a community of baptized and unbaptized native people who likely provisioned local missions (Carlson and Parkman, 1986). Archaeological excavation at the site (CA-MRN-193/H) has documented numerous cultural features, including house pits and the floor of a possible dance structure, although temporal placement and associations are not well documented (Slaymaker, 1972). After the missions were secularized in the 1830s, Camillo Ynitia, a Native Californian, gained title to the 3560-hectare Rancho Olompali where he constructed an adobe structure. Excavations of the floor of Ynitia's home revealed quantities of ground and flaked stone tools, bone and shell implements, and glass beads (Wegars, 1974).

Together, places like Cotomko'tca, Echa-tamal, and Olompali suggest that the interior world of the Marin Peninsula was not simply a landscape of isolation, but rather a venue of ingenuity and autonomy. People from many native villages joined mission communities, but they did not all join the same mission at the same time. Instead, some individuals and families stayed in and around their ancestral villages even during the peak years of missionization. To date, the archaeological investigation of many of these sites has focused on their precontact components, overlooking or not fully examining the potential use of materials such as shell beads and obsidian during colonial times. As discussed above, both categories of material continued to be conveyed along indigenous networks throughout the colonial period, providing insight into adjustments to inter-community relationships. Further, ethnohistoric evidence demonstrates that Native Californians actively engaged with different colonial systems to retain control of salient places in the landscape. For both Olompali and Echa-tamal, native people used the courts to petition colonial governments for title to lands occupied for generations. As these examples demonstrate, the archaeology and ethnohistory of interspaces can illuminate native autonomy in multiple ways, ranging from clandestine sites of refuge, to tenaciously defended villages, to regional interaction that crosscut indigenous and colonial boundaries.

5. Conclusion

Through the policies of *reducción* and *congregación*, spatial organization provided the foundation of the Spanish missionary

program across the North American Borderlands. In California, the intended spatial relationships of missionization amounted to an imposed and radical reorganization of space to control social relationships and to thwart hunter–gatherer mobility. While the efficacy of the missionary program is often assumed in scholarly research and popular understandings of colonial California, a reexamination of the evidence suggests subtle and overt ways that Native Californians exercised autonomy at multiple places on the landscape. To understand better the situational agency of native people in mission contexts, we outlined three zones that reflect dynamic spatial relationships throughout the colonial period.

First, we examined colonial settlements as native places, focusing on indigenous life at Mission Santa Clara. Within the Native American *ranchería*, neophytes appear to have organized exterior space largely as they saw fit. In these areas, they were also relatively free to maintain aspects of traditional technologies and cultural practices, although these may have differed along the lines of status and ethnolinguistic affiliation. The second zone is comprised of native homelands on the colonial margins. In California, the vast marshlands of the San Joaquin Valley were home to Yokuts speaking people who formed new kinds of social groups and economic practices through the integration of horses and fugitive neophytes. The third zone includes interior worlds, or interspaces where no one colonial power was dominant and where native people enjoyed diverse forms of autonomy. In central California, this kind of zone developed on the Marin Peninsula and adjacent areas of the Pacific Coast. There, Coast Miwok people lived between the Spanish/Mexican, Russian, and American frontiers, enabling them to interact with colonial institutions—and other native groups—on a differential basis.

In contrast to the unidirectional movement from homeland to mission that characterizes much early acculturation-based research, our case studies demonstrate that native people and the materials they used often crossed back and forth from one zone to another. Through the policy of *paseo*, for example, mission neophytes in central California moved from the missions to their ancestral homelands and back again on a regular basis. Further, the spatial relationships of colonialism often changed even within a particular geographic area. While the Franciscans never extended the mission chain to the San Joaquin Valley, they did eventually establish two missions north of San Francisco Bay, simultaneously reacting to and changing the social and physical shape of the Coast Miwok refugium.

We propose these spatial zones not as universal categories that apply in all colonial contexts but as a conceptual model from which to expand mission archaeology. These zones do not represent bounded social fields nor are they mutually exclusive. Rather, this broader view of native autonomy in missionized regions draws upon recent methodological and theoretical advances to reveal persistent and, at times, unobtrusive social, economic, and political linkages that crosscut the physical and metaphorical walls of colonial institutions. These complex connections were not limited to colonial California, and can be explored in a range of mission settings, as demonstrated by numerous studies that include a landscape approach to colonialism across the North American Borderlands and beyond. By examining the possibilities for native autonomy at different points across the colonial-era landscape, archaeologists may better view indigenous action against the formidable interpretive backdrop of colonial domination.

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