

Timoloqinash: Incorporating Chumash Cultural Self-History into the History of California

By Michael K. Ward, MA

The interpretation of non-western history is the subject of considerable debate and as such, it can involve conflicts between fundamental Western and non-Western cultural perspectives. By focusing on the culture and history of the Chumash Indians, the goal of this paper is to make an argument for the inclusion of California Indian histories into mainstream historical accounts of California. In doing so, a sub-theme centers on the interpretation of many important cultural issues as part of an effort to assemble a rough chronology of historical events from Chumash/ Native American points of view. By drawing upon indigenous sources that are not normally accepted as real history by academic authorities, such a concept is naturally opposed to traditional Western historical and ideological outlooks that reflect prevailing European and Euro-American worldviews. As a historical construction this idea is an attempt to provide for Native American participation, actively or otherwise, in the ongoing historical interpretive dialogue in American¹ and California history that has for several decades attempted to incorporate multiple cultural voices.² The importance of beginning an account of Native Americans at times prior to the time of European contact and colonization has been noted,³ but the inclusion of Indian self-history presents a few problems that are not often recognized. Of particular relevance in integrating such accounts is the negotiation of basic differences between traditional indigenous approaches to Native American history and modern Western or European-based perspectives through which California history is most often presented. The problem inherent in such a proposal relates to basic linguistic and cultural differences between Native American and European/ European American interpretations of history itself and its meaning.

To best illustrate this problem it is useful to relate a simple hypothetical story. Imagine living in an intellectual and psychological environment where time does not move from a past into a future, but instead is measured only for the purposes of communal events such as hunts or harvests, or for community ceremonies and special events. In one such ritual event at the end of each year, time itself (as it is understood in the Western mind) is abolished completely. In such a world, the events of the past coexist simultaneously with the present, where they are not measured by the passage of time but instead are measured by their proximity to or from an

¹ Michel-Rolph Trouillot in his book, Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995) points out (p. 2) that “Human beings participate in history both as actors and narrators. The inherent ambivalence of the word ‘history’ in many modern languages, including English, suggests this dual participation.” This paper attempts to show how one Native American word for history, *timoloqinash*, has meanings far outside that of Indo-European languages, and that its exclusion, or at least the exclusion of its interpretive meaning effectively limits the participation of at least one group American Indians from participation (both as actors and narrators) in the ongoing academic discourse that affects them to the present day.

² Colin G. Calloway, First Peoples: A Documentary Survey of American Indian History, (New York: Bedford/ St. Martin’s 1999), pp. v, 2–5; Ramón Gutiérrez and Richard J. Orsi, Contested Eden: California Before the Gold Rush (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), pp. 3–4; Douglas Monroy, Thrown Among Strangers: The Making of Mexican Culture in Frontier California (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), p. xv; George J. Sanchez, Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900 – 1945 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 5. Particularly is the role of Indians as agents in the production of American history.

³ Gutiérrez and Orsi, 1997: p. 6.

individual observer in a complex and multilayered universe. This world is a place where the characters and events outside of the sphere of the (Western perceived) present can be reached through culturally prescribed rituals and dreams. Accordingly, a dream-like "other world" is considered to be just as real as the predictable, everyday world. In such a setting, the universe is never constant; as a living entity itself, it becomes manifested through natural forces, and its form remains in a state of restless transformation and alteration with regard to its physical appearance.

In such a world as described above, human history would be recounted through stories in which the actors are often imbued with super-real qualities; characteristics that tend to diminish in their intensity the closer they are to the observer, or, from a Western perspective, the more recent they appear to have occurred. In other words, fantastic events that happened long ago involved people who had abilities to perform extraordinary feats. Simply put, they were heroes in a classical sense. As described, the more recent in time that these people and events occurred, the less fantastic and the more ordinary they would appear in such an account. Moreover, in such a world as that described above, there would be no concept of time in a past and future sense. The exceptional happenings of a few extraordinary individuals occur outside of time, at a greater distance from the observer who forever remains in a timeless present.

The above-described theoretical world is essentially the indigenous or pre-Colombian cultural setting for Native America. Though this paper seeks to make a case for the inclusion of past representations of indigenous California cultures, such societies and their corresponding worldviews are alive in many remote parts of the world where they have escaped centuries of intense European cultural colonization. Recently, for example, the "acutely different sense of time and reality" as such a "cosmogony" is indicative of, has been described by Native American advocates in the state of Chiapas in Mexico that has a majority Indian population.⁴ In such a cultural milieu emerged the history of American Indians including aboriginal southern and central Californians, who all participated in a world defined in terms very different than those understood by their European colonizers during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Such terms often appear quite abstract to us today and continue to defy adequate description and interpretation. As noted above, similar concepts are still well-established and practiced in places where Indian languages are in common use today, but for most Native Americans in the United States, they are now preserved primarily in the form of linguistic and cultural data collected by anthropologists, historians, and other persons during the last century and a half.

In such a world as defined above, history can incorporate mythic personages and events, which are reflected in the very features of the physical universe. History in the simple, traditional, Western interpretation of the term as meaning a "chronological record" often emphasizes individual people, groups, and events.⁵ Such an idea was simply not important or

⁴ Alma Guillermo Prieto, Looking for History: Dispatches from Latin America, (New York: Pantheon Books, 2001), p. 194.

⁵ American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Third Edition, (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1992), p. 857. Of course history is not simply a "narrative of events," or a "chronological record of events," or a "branch of knowledge that records and analyzes past events" based in theoretical constructs and models. I highlight one simple, widely accepted non-professional notion of history as a measure for the comparison of the term as it relates to Native Americans.

needed in traditional Native American societies where people and events of the past were remembered only for heroic deeds that affected or benefited society as a whole. This concept does not indicate that the American Indians were (or are) without history; on the contrary, they saw themselves as the product of forces and events, which they deemed to be real, and very much historical.

Retelling Native American versions of their own history remains a difficult task for a number of reasons, but mainly because of the inability of western scholars to accept mythology and cultural self-history on their face values as genuine histories. Several published works deal comprehensively with abstract and obscure aspects of American Indian history and worldview, but with few exceptions, a clear delineation is typically made between what is real and what is not, according to Western cultural perceptions. Moreover, by treating aboriginal cultures as specimens, the various academic disciplines not only invalidate indigenous history but they perpetuate the separation of peoples that began when the first Europeans met Native Americans as well. Almost always, American Indian self-histories are treated separately from non-Indian history.

Approaching the subject from this angle, the history of much of southern California would begin with the world of the First People, or the *Molmoloq'iku* as southern California's Chumash Indians called them. Such accounts need not conflict with standard explanations about the origins of Indians from the archaeological and historical records. Both Indian and non-Indian people are heirs to the legacy that aboriginal American history offers, just as both groups are successors to later, non-Indian historical accounts. All such histories relate to a sense of place and help to define how we as a whole people came to be part of a diverse community.

The aim of this essay is to put forth an argument for the integration of Native American self-histories into the accepted historiography of the Americas and the world in general. First, some estimation of the scope of the material must be made. To this end, it might be helpful to first create linear, Western-style accounts of American Indian cultural history based on what they have had to say about it themselves, while understanding at the same time the contrariness of such a task to Native American worldviews. The very act of placing the stories of an indigenous culture into the confines of a Western-style historical record would likely seem silly to them at best. Surely, they would deem it a profane work, far removed from what was to them a sacred, impersonal, and collective ancestral and cultural memory.⁶ Moreover, this idea is opposed as well to recent scholarship that emphasizes the “interrelatedness” of historical actors and interpretations and the importance of incorporating “nonlinear images and metaphors” into a holistic world narrative, but nevertheless criticizes suggestions such as those made in this paper. For this line of thought, the idea of “substituting new linear metaphors for old ones,” such as those that follow (related to time and space), do not adequately meet the needs of the subject peoples in non-Western historic narratives, yet are important in that they offer another contribution to a dialogue of “plural perspectives.”⁷ Such an approach as suggested here would

⁶ Though not referring directly to Native Americans, Mircea Eliade in his *The Myth of the Eternal Return, or Cosmos and History*, (New York: Princeton University Press, 1954), deals with material from other traditional societies which applies to an interpretation of the American Indian cultural worldviews. See pp. 46-47.

⁷ Marilyn Robinson Waldman, “The Meandering Mainstream: Reimagining World History,” in *The New World History: A Teacher's Companion*, Ross E. Dunn, editor, (Boston and New York: Bedford/ St. Martin's, 2000), p. 91, 93.

necessarily incorporate American Indian mythologies and self-histories on their face values as bona-fide histories without qualifying them according to western empirical standards. Finally, once such accounts are assembled, they can be incorporated into aspects of accepted California history as an alternative *American perspective* of equal value to other views. The assertion here is that aboriginal narratives can be brought into conjunction with Western-style historical accounts as one continuous body of information.⁸

Timoloqinash: Chumash Worldview and the Interpretation of California Indian History.

The Chumash Indians of southern California are a case in point in the discussion about indigenous history versus Western renditions of the same account. Beginning with an examination of Western interpretations of indigenous California, a brief history of the study of southern California's Chumash Indians follows.

The Chumash Indians originally occupied the northern portion of the California Bight and northward considerably beyond this prominent geographical feature. The greatest concentration of Chumashan speakers ranged from western Los Angeles County to the southern half of San Luis Obispo County, and inland to southwestern Kern County.⁹ As is the case with many if not most Native Americans, much of the recorded information about their culture comes from archaeological investigations, the records of early European explorers, and ethnographic data, interpretations of which are often far removed from the subject people themselves.¹⁰ With regard to ethnographic data, a source that is most often the most accurate, its focus on language, often misses meanings and interpretations that appear abstruse to Western minds, thereby invalidating many crucial assertions that might otherwise be made. Mythologies and indigenous self-histories are often the best examples of such misread material.

Examining the case of the Chumash Indians, most of what is known today about their culture comes from sources contained within the studies of both branches of anthropology mentioned above. Ethnographic data was primarily obtained from the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of those Chumash who experienced the initial colonization of their culture by European-Americans at the end of the eighteenth century through the beginning of the nineteenth century.¹¹ Like much of Native American ethnographic data, many different people both

⁸ At Cañon de Chelly National Monument on the Navajo Reservation in northeastern Arizona for example, the Navajo origin story is strikingly told in a tribal museum. This traditional American Indian account is displayed in the same building as were non-Indian academic interpretations based in the anthropological disciplines of ethnography and archaeology. Both versions are given equal status, and one interpretation was not presented as being more or less valid than the other.

⁹ Alan K. Brown, *The Aboriginal Population of the Santa Barbara Channel*, (Berkeley: University of California Archaeological Survey Number 69, 1967), p. 18; Travis Hudson, Thomas Blackburn, Rosario Curletti, and Janice Timbrook, *The Eye of the Flute: Chumash Ritual As Told by Fernando Librado Kitepawit to John P. Harrington*, (Santa Barbara: Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History, 1977), p. 111.

¹⁰ Gutiérrez and Orsi, 1997: p. 3, observe that "Indian prehistory was found mainly in archaeology and anthropology books, but rarely in history books."

¹¹ Hudson, et al., 1977: pp. 2-6; Thomas C. Blackburn, *December's Child: A Book of Chumash Oral Narratives*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), pp. 17-20. This book deals extensively with elements from Chumash self-history as a means to understand Chumash socio-political and ritual organization and practices. Jack D. Forbes in "The Native American Experience in California History," *California Historical Quarterly*, (San Marino:

academically trained and otherwise, recorded this information during the late 1800s through the early 1900s. In its analysis, this assembly of raw data has been most successfully interpreted in recent decades by the marriage of the two divisions of anthropology described above, archaeology and ethnology, as scholars within each of these disciplines uses data from the other to substantiate cultural evidence for its own arguments.¹²

Archeologists in California have been well documented and have assembled an important record of their work after the first quarter of the twentieth century. Though the first investigations into the cultures of aboriginal southern Californians in the late nineteenth century were simple artifact-collecting expeditions, they were followed by more sophisticated archaeological methods. Through these explorations it became apparent that there were three cultural periods, where separate and distinct peoples inhabited the region, as evidenced by material remains spanning at least 7,000 years before the present, and probably longer.¹³ The most recent of these cultural periods was that of the Canaliño along the coast that was reflected by a similar cultural development in California's inland regions.¹⁴

As historic Canaliño the Chumash were named by John Wesley Powell in his *Indian Linguistic Families of America North of Mexico* for the Bureau of American Ethnology in 1891.¹⁵ Chumash, meaning "islander" in the languages of the coastal-dwelling Indians of the

September 1971), p. 235, points out that it was not until the years between 1900 and 1920 that "scientific ethnology really appeared in California." Forbes also shows that there were problems with the cultural integrity of much of the information collected by these anthropologists. The ethnographers' Indian consultants (commonly referred to as "informants" until the late twentieth century) were often culturally removed (yet no less Indian, as Forbes points out) from the dominantly Indian world of their immediate ancestors. They also suffered terribly from abuses wrought by generations of colonization and cultural changes. Overall, according to Forbes, they were "deeply shocked, distrustful individuals," who may not really have understood fully what a truly aboriginal Californian world was like for their grandparents and great grandparents; for California Indian consultants (including Chumash people at this time); "it was exceedingly difficult to know exactly how the people thought and lived a century or a century and a half earlier" (ibid.). I bring this topic up only to show that ethnographic information, like history, is subject to interpretation, and is highly relative to given perspectives. Western interpretations are also subject to such apparent human imperfections; though they "have discredited the mythologies of the past," the sciences themselves have been shown to be another form of mythology on par with any others, including those of American Indian cultures (Charles I. Glicksberg, "The Dynamics of Myth-Making," *Arizona Quarterly*, (Tucson: University of Arizona, Spring 1951; pp. 50-62).

¹² Travis Hudson and Thomas C. Blackburn, *The Material Culture of the Chumash Interaction Sphere; Volume I*, (Los Altos, California: Ballena Press/ Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History, 1979), pp. 17-24. Forbes (1971: p. 235) questions the value of archaeology in understanding California Indians, claiming that though it is a "very useful science, [it] can provide no more than a grasp of the residue of material culture . . . left behind by ancient California [remaining ignorant of indigenous] socio-political-philosophical systems." This is an argument also shared by many Native Americans in the 1990s, who have insisted that further archaeological excavations of their remains are not needed, and only serve to further harm their cultural heritage.

¹³ Albert B. Elsasser, "Development of Regional Prehistoric Cultures," in *Handbook of North American Indians, Volume 8, California*, (Washington, D. C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1978), pp. 55-57; Phil C. Orr, *A Prehistory of Santa Rosa Island*, (Santa Barbara: Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History, 1968).

¹⁴ David Banks Rogers, *Prehistoric Man of the Santa Barbara Coast*, (Santa Barbara: Santa Barbara: Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History, 1929).

¹⁵ Campbell Grant, "Chumash Introduction," in *Handbook of North American Indians, Volume 8, California*, (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1978), p. 507.

Santa Barbara Channel, was specifically the name for the indigenous residents of Santa Cruz Island.¹⁶ Chumash has since been a term used to describe speakers of a common language family, which in turn is a part of the Hokan linguistic "stock" and refers to the Canaliño since October 1542, the time of their first direct contact with Europeans led by Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo, one of Hernán Cortes' cross-bow men in the Conquest of Mexico roughly ten decades earlier.¹⁷

Between Cabrillo's visit in the mid-sixteenth century and the late eighteenth century, the Chumash experienced limited contact with the crews of various ocean expeditions that intermittently sailed through their area. Of these, perhaps the most notable are the companies of three ships led by Sebastián Viscaíño, who passed through and named the Santa Barbara Channel during the years of 1602 and 1603. The numerous Spanish place names that Viscaíño assigned to coastal California survive, remaining in widespread use to the present day.¹⁸ The process of substituting foreign names for American Indian place names that began in southern California at the opening of the seventeenth century prefaced the later hegemony that European newcomers would eventually establish over indigenous California.

As far as information about the Chumash and other southern California Indians are concerned, however, the Viscaíño expedition and many later excursions into southern California are relatively insignificant. The period between Cabrillo's voyage in 1542 and the Gaspar de Portolá expedition into Alta California in 1769, signifying the start of the colonization of Chumash culture, are used by historians and anthropologists as historical markers, while the two-and-one-quarter-centuries that lapsed between these events is called the "protohistoric" period.¹⁹

Most scholars treat events occurring among the Chumash during those 227 years with circumspection today, due to the difficulty in fitting them into a Western, linear historical time line. Prior to 1542, occurrences that make up the Chumash story cannot be verified at all in relation to European-based history; thus they are included with most of the protohistory in the body of Chumash folkloric narratives. Folklore has been defined as traditional beliefs, myths,

¹⁶ Travis Hudson, et al., 1977, p. 111.

¹⁷ *ibid.*, and William F. Shipley, "Native Languages of California", in Handbook of North American Indians, Volume 8, California, (Washington, D. C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1978), p. 81; Walker and Hudson, 1993: p. 18. Sailing under the flag of Spain in "two small, poorly-built caravels, the *San Salvador* and the *La Victoria*, [italics mine] manned by convicts and riffraff" (Rogers, 1929: p. 1), Spanish explorer Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo "and his lieutenant, Bartolomé Ferrello" (Warren A. Beck and Ynez D. Haase, Historical Atlas of the American West, (University of Oklahoma Press: Norman and London, 1989, no. 15) first encountered Chumash Indians "near the . . . rancheria of shisholop (present site of the city of Ventura)" on October 12, 1542 (Grant, 1978: p. 518). Some two weeks after having been injured during a landing at the Chumash land of *Tuqan* (San Miguel Island), Cabrillo died of gangrene and is presumably buried there. For additional discussion and details of the Cabrillo expedition through Chumash territory, as well as apparent mistakes in log entries, see Rogers (1929), pp. 1-3.

¹⁸ Richard B. Rice, William A. Bullough, and Richard J. Orsi, The Elusive Eden: A New History of California, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1988), pp. 70-72; Beck and Haase, 1989, no. 16; Rogers, 1929, p. 4. One well-known Western account recalls how on their northward pass, an Island Chumash *paqwot* or headman boarded the lead ship. Noting the lack of women to accompany the crew, he offered ten Indian women for each Spanish crewman if they would land at the island and stay at the villages for a time.

¹⁹ Walker and Hudson, 1993, p. 3.

and tales which, though they are widely accepted, their historical legitimacy is typically regarded as "specious" and "unfounded."²⁰ The problem is both cultural and academic as European-derived empirical methodologies which seek to describe a culture simultaneously invalidate the descriptions which that culture makes of itself.²¹

Generally accepted as folkloric accounts, Chumash protohistory is included with mythology as part of an important body of cultural information that sheds light on cultural practices and beliefs, but not for any real value as a history. As historian Richard White asserts (for reasons not limited to the subject of this essay): "Ethnohistorians have increasingly come to distrust the tribe as a meaningful historical unit . . ."²² From a Western perspective, tribal mythology and cultural self-history do not typically fall into the category of history. Usually they are viewed instead in contrast to the subject of history itself, its legal definitions relative to Native Americans, and to traditional western historiographical methods. Although myths are regularly considered to contain elements of historical information, they are nevertheless most often regarded by folklorists, anthropologists, psychologists, and students of religious studies in relation to their work. For this group of scholars, myths are recognized for their importance in illuminating details of a given culture relating to that society's rules and values, formation of rituals, and lastly for the ability of such tales to entertain.²³ In contrast to such views, many traditional societies like the Chumash and other Native Americans often include material that is mythological in nature in depictions of the history of their societies. To ignore such accounts when telling their histories invalidates much of what such peoples have and have had to say

²⁰ American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Third Edition, (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1992), p. 705.

²¹ Eliade, 1954: pp. ix-xiv, 48, and 141. Traditional Western approaches to the interpretation of American Indian self-history most often reduce the cultural potency of the indigenous perspectives, as historians and anthropologists attempt to mitigate starkly conflicting worldviews from their own.

²² Richard White, The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. xiv.

²³ The Columbia Encyclopedia, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), p. 1870. For additional discussion of the importance of myth to the Indians of the Southwest cultural area, and the imposition of western values and concepts of time and history on these same indigenous peoples, (subjects which certainly have much application to the aboriginal societies of the Americas), see Ramón A. Gutiérrez, When Jesus Came, the Corn Mothers Went Away: Marriage, Sexuality, and Power in New Mexico, 1500-1846, (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1991), pp. xxviii and 7-8. In contrast to Native American mythology and self-history the U.S. legal definition of things historical as they relate to Indian cultures reflects standard academic interpretations. In a legal sense, ". . . [h]istorical" or "history" means dating back to the earliest documented [European] contact between the aboriginal tribe . . ." (Code of Federal Regulations, Indians, Volume 25, Revised, April 1, 1989, Sec. 83.1 (l): p. 236). In contrast to this legal definition, the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA: 1990) treats cultural items in an a-historical manner, highlighting instead the cultural significance of all American Indian material remains for modern Native Americans; see Mending the Circle: A Native American Repatriation Guide, Understanding and Implementing NAGPRA [Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990] and the Official Smithsonian and Other Repatriation Policies, (New York: American Indian Ritual Object Repatriation Foundation, 1995), pp. 1-3, 10, 18, and 31.

about themselves and their universe, and contributes to the “erasure” of the indigenous peoples of California from the public memory.²⁴

Such an attempt to assemble what Native Americans in California have said about themselves and their world in a historical time line would necessarily discard traditional Western biases against their cultural self-histories and mythologies. Interestingly, such accounts eventually merge with Western empirically-validated recorded history, offering a remarkable historical supplement.²⁵ With traditional Western conflicts between folklore and history set aside, the Native American narratives should be considered as equally valid as non-Indian history if they are to be integrated into mainstream historical interpretations. The significance of doing so is not without precedent; many indigenous societies worldwide as well as those of American Indians, myths and history are both referred to in the same manner²⁶ and sometimes, as was the case with the Chumash, by the same term. Southern California’s Chumash Indians ascribed the same word *timoloqinash*, equally to history and mythology. Translated into English, *timoloqinash* simply means a true story or history.²⁷

The process of integrating Native American mythology with modern history into one shared story necessarily involves cultural and linguistic interpretation. Such explanations usually expose differences between modern interpretations of given cultural groups and what such indigenous peoples have to say about themselves. Such distinctions, however, run much deeper than linguistic explication. The difference between American Indian languages and those of Indo-European origins reflect vast and fundamental differences in the worldviews of these respective groups. Cultural world views are fostered by the languages that carry them, since

²⁴ Just as it is important not to objectify Native American cultures by treating them as “specimens,” it is also crucial for writers of Native American culture and history not to perpetuate an historical view of Indians as “the other,” which is what happens when their self histories and mythologies are not given equal currency to western histories and world views. See Richard White, 1991: p. xiv, paragraph 4; Doyce B. Nunis, Jr., “Alta California’s Trojan Horse: Foreign Immigration,” in Contested Eden: California Before the Gold Rush (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), see pp. 348–49 regarding the “erasure” of culturally subordinate peoples in California history.

²⁵ Michael K. Ward, “Timoloqinash: Another Approach to Interpreting Chumash History,” OCB Tracker, (Glendora, California: six issues, Fall 1998 through Summer 1999); forming the basis for an on-going interest that is reflected in this paper, this series of articles assembled for the first time, Chumash mythology, self history, and Western recorded history into one single account. The advantages of performing such a task include (in addition to the benefits argued here) the ability to take in the entire record without content bias and make connections between people and events in the Chumash story that are otherwise difficult to grasp.

²⁶ Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism, (New York: Verso, 1983, 1991); Anderson notes on pp. 12–13, that cultural understandings related to these subjects are perpetuated and replicated through “signs” that include the use of “sacred languages.” The Chumash, like all Native American groups, effectively used sacred languages in this way. Jane F. Gardner, “Roman Myths,” <http://www.utexas.edu/utpress/books/garrmp.html>; Gardner notes that in ancient Rome, scholars and historians “treated myths as history.” Alexander F. Christensen, “History, Myth, and Migration in Mesoamerica,” <http://www.ku.edu/~hoopes/aztlan/History.htm>.

²⁷ Blackburn, 1975: pp. 21 and 343. According to Kenneth W. Whistler, An Interim Barbareño Chumash Dictionary, (Washington, D.C.: National Anthropological Archives, 1980), the word *timoloqinash* is translated from Barbareño Chumash as “old-time story;” pp. 32 and 83.

language represents culture, and culture manifests language; the two cannot be separated.²⁸ For individual speakers of Native American languages in aboriginal America there was a complete understanding of the world and his or her place in that world according to culturally accepted beliefs which were acutely different from similar concepts in the Western mind. These differences are almost beyond comprehension to native European-language speakers, including speakers of English, for reasons described below. In addition to describing their world according to mythological precepts, California Indians like the Yokuts of the San Joaquin Valley also “interpreted Europeans and other foreigners within the categories of their own indigenous mythology.”²⁹ Such fundamental differences in cultural thought form the crux of differing cultural perceptions regarding history as well as the differences between American Indian and European-American worldviews.

To illustrate this idea, Penutian and Uto-Aztecan linguistic models are presented below to describe how mythology relates to an American Indian understanding of time and space in order to help interpret specific Native American concepts. Though linguistically different from the Chumash, the worldviews of these groups with regard to issues of time and space have direct application to the Chumash. The first such model is drawn from the Hopi, a Uto-Aztecan language from northern Arizona, with whom early twentieth-century ethnographer John Peabody Harrington made many cultural comparisons to southern California Indians including the Chumash.³⁰ The second illustration comes from Wintu, a Penutian language from the northern Sacramento Valley. According to many ethnologists, Wintu, and a few other California Indian groups, shared the "greatest similarities" to the Chumash and other southern California Indians in their worldviews.³¹ Both the Hopi and Wintu examples and the great similarities of such precepts outside of their respective cultural regions indicate the universality of the concepts addressed in this essay and their application to a general interpretation of Native American worldviews in California relating to their self-history. Though their individual languages differ, there are enough similarities in their worldviews, mythologies, and cultural self-histories, to assume the Hopi/Uto-Aztecan model of time and space, and the Wintu/Penutian interpretation of mythological themes, for the purpose of interpreting Chumash and other California Indian attitudes toward what we commonly refer to as history. Furthermore, an application can be made of this linguistic model to the rest of the Americas as an argument for the validity of an alternative indigenous American historiography.

The Model

²⁸ The subject of cultural expression and its connection to language is addressed by Victoria Fromkin and Robert Rodman, in An Introduction to Language, fifth edition, (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers, 1993), pp. 26-28 and 312-13.

²⁹ William S. Simmons, “Indian Peoples of California,” Contested Eden: California Before the Gold Rush, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), p. 71.

³⁰ John Peabody Harrington, Studies on the Kiowa, Tewa, and California Indians, (Washington, D. C.: Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections, 1918), pp. 118-120. Harrington likens the Chumash sweathouse *apayik* to the Pueblo *kiva*, and the Chumash spirit-impersonating "devil" dancers to Pueblo *katsinam*.

³¹ Blackburn, 1975, p. 65.

Unlike English, Hopi and other Uto-Aztecan languages, like most (if not all) Native American tongues, have no innate method to verbalize an equivalent of the Western concept of time as expressed in terms of a past, present, or future. Within American Indian societies there was not a need for such concepts. What results from this fact is a cultural interpretation of time and space that differs starkly from that of the speakers of English and other European languages. For example, "In th[e] Hopi view, time disappears and space is altered,"³² so that events as they occur, and forever afterwards, exist on a continuous plane of subjective understanding, both for each individual person and collectively within the entire community of language speakers. From this perspective, time is static or fixed; it does not flow from a past into a present and a future. The world on the other hand, is constantly and interminably changing in its physical form.

In contrast, the European sense of "flowing time and static space" is difficult to comprehend for the Hopi and speakers of other Native American languages. European languages in turn lack adequate terms to translate abstract Hopi descriptions of "the universe without reference to such time or space." Approximations at such translations thus appear psychological and mystical in character. For example, the Hopi interpretation of the universe "imposes . . . two grand forms, . . . manifested and manifesting." Things that are manifested are those which are "objective" and "accessible to the senses," and have "come true, having been hoped for." In other words, they have always existed. What European languages call "future," translates in Hopi as "hope," "hoping," and "purposeful desire," always moving toward a manifestation from the hearts and minds of the people. What European-language speakers call the past, present, and future, exist simultaneously with one another in the Hopi understanding of the world.³³

Penutian-speaking Wintu think in a like manner to Uto-Aztecan speakers like the Hopi, when they account for the presence of humans and other living things, stating that they and the world have "always existed" throughout all time:

. . .people do not come into being, . . .they have always existed . . .being formed out of the materials which are already present . . .form is shifting and relatively unimportant . . . [For the Wintu,] form is imposed by man, through act of will . . .deer stands out as an individual only at the moment of man's speech; as soon as he ceases speaking, the deer merges into deerness.³⁴

Similarly, southern California's Chumash Indians refer to "the other world" in "mythic time" that co-exists parallel to our own everyday world of the present. Using

³² Benjamin Lee Whorf, "An American Indian Model of the Universe," in Language, Thought and Reality: Selected Writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1956), reprinted in Teachings from the American Earth: Indian Religion and Philosophy, Dennis and Barbara Tedlock, editors, (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 1975): pp. 121-22.

³³ ibid.: pp. 123-125.

³⁴ Dorothy Demetracopoulou Lee, "Linguistic Reflection of Wintu Thought," in International Journal of American Linguistics 10, (1944), and reprinted in Teachings from the American Earth: Indian Religion and Philosophy, edited by Dennis and Barbara Tedlock, (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 1975), p. 133. Applying the work of Eliade (1954, see pp. ix, 35, and 141) to this concept, impersonality is characteristic of the sacred, archetypal realm where "deerness" prevails. An individual deer in the moment, like the individual human and human speech, is personal and profane, a condition that is contrary to sacredness and timelessness.

Chumashan languages as an example, inhabitants of that "other world," were identified with the noun for a particular animal such as deer, but with the prefix attached making it a proper name. Thus, in this world the old Chumash would say, there are deer, but Deer resides in the "other world."³⁵

Such is the setting in which we find Native American mythologies and self-histories. It has been said that the worldviews of California Indians, though discordant with that of Americans of European-decent, has "points of similarity with the modern physicist."³⁶ The two interpretations described above help to understand seemingly complex cultural descriptions of time and space, and convey the depth of perceptual differences between Indians and non-Indians. Such portrayals are nevertheless quite in line with descriptions of cultural perceptions of the world by other indigenous Californian and Native American societies. For example, in describing the "Great Mystery" as it relates to aboriginal Californian worldviews, Forbes states that:

The mystical level [of California Indian understanding] is one typified by an absence of physical boundaries and an absence of linear space-time relationships. It is this realm, as it were, of ideal forms, a realm in which all creatures can and do participate both consciously and unconsciously. It is the realm where, by means of dreams and visions, Indians can enter and secure direct contact with the sources of "power" (ability and knowledge) and with the endless, cyclical creative process of the universe.³⁷

In this world, where each and "every act had religious and moral relevance," humans were active participants in a living, holistic world system that did not have barriers of time.³⁸ It is important to note, however, that for Native American groups that were (or still are) intact linguistically, history and the events in history were perpetual in nature; they existed all at once with the present and the future, and had a cultural purpose which was greater than a simple remembrance and recounting of their details. Chronological interpretations were not necessary for traditional Native American cultures, but they nevertheless have purpose in the culturally hegemonic, Western-oriented society of present-day North America.³⁹ The reinterpretation of indigenous

³⁵ Richard B. Applegate, Atishwin: The Dream Helper in South-Central California, (Socorro, New Mexico: Ballena Press, 1978), p. 17. For example, in Ventureño Chumash, *kashlo'w* is the same as saying "the eagle," and *kishlo'w* would be used to say "Eagle" as a proper name.

³⁶ Lowell J. Bean, "Indians of California: Diverse and Complex Peoples," California History, (San Francisco: California Historical Society, Fall, 1992; p. 305).

³⁷ Forbes, 1971: pp. 236-37. Such a definition is precisely that which I have attempted to describe in greater detail with application to Native American societies generally and the Chumash and aboriginal southern California in particular. Its understanding is essential to interpreting their histories on their terms, for the incorporation into the history of world systems.

³⁸ ibid., p. 237.

³⁹ Eric R. Wolf, in Europe and the People Without History (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982, 1997), discusses (p. 390) the "economic and political side to the formation of idea systems," and the fact that upon their formation, they "become weapons in the clash of social interests." As indicated at the beginning of this essay, telling Native American history on its own terms would not have meaning in a Euro-American world. Thus, the next best thing is to argue for the acceptance of indigenous American myths and self-histories into the historical

American culture and history along lines that incorporate elements of their own worldviews, whether these involve mythology, protohistory, or contrary historical perspectives to the accepted regime, is overdue.

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account, delineating the historiographical landscape along lines that meet the needs of Western academic interpretation. It is this line of logic that is the crux of my argument, while acknowledging at the same time, the paradox of its inevitable failure to meet any cultural needs of Native Americans themselves.

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