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Chumash Conversions: The Historical Dynamics of Religious Change in Native California

Ella Paldam

elp@cas.au.dk

Abstract

The historical dynamics of religious change among the Chumash constitute a compelling case for the academic study of conversion. Within 250 years the community has experienced two major cultural transitions: First, European colonization after 1772, and second, indigenous revitalization since 1968. Although both events implicate changes in religiosity, ethnohistorians and anthropologists tend to regard religious conversion as a byproduct of other cultural forces. This paper takes a different approach because conversion is understood as a force that in itself contributes to cultural transition. The relative distribution of the four most significant religious traditions since colonization is traced using a model that synthesizes prevailing insights from conversion research into an analytical matrix which may be applied to historical and contemporary qualitative data. Approaching cultural change among indigenous peoples as conversion brings a renewed focus on religiosity as a cultural strategy at the same time as contributing a cross-cultural perspective on conversion.

Keywords: Chumash Indians, religious conversion, indigenous revitalization, Roman Catholicism, Native American religion, New Age spirituality.

The history of religion among the Chumash of Southern California resembles an intricate braid of Indigenous and Western traditions. Since European colonization the population has experienced extensive acculturation followed by considerable cultural revitalization, all within 250 years. This paper argues that these two major cultural transitions should be regarded as collective conversions because changes in religious beliefs and practices stand at the center of the turbulent history. First, European colonization was accomplished in 1772–1821 through a Roman Catholic mission system, and second, contemporary cultural revitalization revolves around the reinvention of indigenous beliefs and practices.

Several ethnohistorical studies use words such as conversion, missionization, and Christianization to refer to the colonization process (e.g. Coombs and Plog 1977; Larson, Johnson, and Michaelsen 1994; Sandos 1991; 2004), and studies of contemporary Chumash point to the significance of indigenous beliefs and practices in revitalization (e.g. Flynn and Laderman 1994; Haley and Wilcoxon 1997; Ranch 2012). Although research on conversion constitutes a rich subfield within the study of religion, insights from this field have not previously been applied to Chumash conversions.

This lack of integration with conversion research is not unique to Chumash ethnohistory. As a general category, indigenous peoples have only rarely been used as cases for conversion researchers despite the fact that their histories often include dramatic cultural events in which changes in religiosity are significant (see Gooren 2014; Siems 1998). Post-colonization history among North American peoples generally involves a period of cultural decline caused by Euro-American expansion followed by a period of traditional reemergence generated by the indigenous revitalization movement that has

been strong throughout the country since the 1960s (Nagel 1996). Anthropologists, historians, and sociologists have employed and developed concepts such as acculturation, adhesion, syncretism, and revitalization to analyze cultural change among indigenous peoples (Baer 2014; Goren 2014; Wallace 1956). Nevertheless, insights and typologies from conversion literature have not been employed systematically to study these processes among North American Indians.

The purpose of this paper is to integrate conversion research with the study of indigenous peoples' religions, specifically, religiosity among the Chumash. Employing a well-established concept such as conversion may contribute to a deeper understanding of the mechanisms and processes that shaped Chumash acculturation and subsequent revitalization. The paper develops an analytical strategy through which conversion insights may be applied to historical and contemporary qualitative data. The analysis understands religiosity as a cultural strategy which the individual may change and adapt according to sociopolitical context and psychological demands.

Summary of Chumash History

The earliest historical records about the Chumash stem from the first Spanish expedition into the area in 1542. Sporadic contact with Europeans continued until 1772, when the Spanish colonization of Chumash territory was initiated with the establishment of the first mission in the area. Missionization proved devastating for the Indians, because European infectious and venereal diseases caused high death rates and low fertility (Walker and Johnson 1992). After Mexican independence in 1821 acculturation continued, especially after the missions were secularized in 1834–1836.

When California was annexed by the United States, conditions deteriorated further for California Indians because of political discrimination and Euro-American immigration. Although some extended families throughout the territory continued to assert Mission Indian identity during the 19th and 20th centuries, many gradually shifted away from the community and assimilated into the general Californio population (Johnson 2003; Haley and Wilcoxon 2005). Around the turn of the 20th century, ethnographers and linguists began to document what remained of indigenous cultures. Among the Chumash one scholar stands out, namely John Peabody Harrington (1884–1961), who arrived in the area in 1912. Although he collected data in the area periodically throughout his life, he only published one short report based on his vast amounts of data (Harrington 1942). Despite Harrington's ethnographic interest, acculturation was extensive in this period and indigenous traditions were gradually given up. The last native speaker of a Chumashan language, Mary Yee, passed away in 1965.

Only a few years later, however, the wave of indigenous revitalization that swept North America during the 1960s reached Chumash territory, and the Quabajai Chumash Indian Organization (QCIO) was established (O'Connor 1989). The immediate cause for the formation of QCIO was the reopening of the Bureau of Indian Affairs' census rolls following the conclusion of a decades-long court case in which California Indians sought compensation for the loss of their ancestral lands (Stewart 1978; O'Connor 1989), but several further cultural and political factors contributed to revitalization. Chumash revitalizers came together to protect sites believed to be sacred during the 1970s (O'Connor 1989; Flynn and Laderman 1994; Haley and Wilcoxon 1997), employing a political land occupation strategy that had become widespread in the Red Power

movement with the occupations of Alcatraz Island in 1969 (Johnson, Nagel, and Champagne 1997; Nagel 1996).

An additional local factor that contributed to cultural revitalization was a new scholarly interest in Chumash culture ignited by Harrington's data, which became accessible after his death. Annotated and edited versions of his notes were published (e.g. Blackburn 1975; Hudson et al. 1977; Hudson et al. 1978; Hudson 1979), and they became instant successes in the community. In 1973 the anthropological research department at Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History was reopened, and curators began working with the blossoming Indian community (Timbrook 1985).

The community was challenged during the 1980's when different groups were applying for federal recognition. According to official guidelines, documentation for lineal descent from the indigenous population is required, but when some of the more influential families began researching their backgrounds, it was discovered that they lacked local indigenous ancestry (Haley and Wilcoxon 2005). Since then, tension and disagreement about ethnic authenticity have been vivid among the Chumash (e.g. Haley and Wilcoxon 1997; Erlandson 1998; Haley 2002; Johnson 2003).

To summarize, post-colonization Chumash history may be divided into three main periods: the mission period (1772–1836), the post secularization period (1837–1967), and the revitalization period (after 1968). Within 250 years the Chumash community has gone through two major cultural transitions, namely Euro-American colonization and indigenous revitalization. Since both events revolve around religious change, I propose that they should be analyzed as collective conversions.

Operationalizing Conversion Theory

Religious conversion is a conspicuous phenomenon which has occupied countless scholars throughout the history of the academic study of religion (Paloutzian 2014; Rambo and Farhadian 2014). Although conversion is a widespread phenomenon, most people remain within the same religion throughout their life. Among indigenous peoples, however, colonization, globalization, and cultural revitalization have resulted in a relatively high frequency of conversion. Nevertheless, insights from the study of religion have not been employed systematically to analyze these processes as conversions proper. In the following, I give a brief overview of conversion research and propose a synthesis of prevailing insights into a coherent model that may be applied to the two Chumash conversions.

Contemporary conversion research was initiated by the influx of members to new religious movements (NRMs) in the 1960s (e.g. Lofland and Stark 1965; Richardson 1980; Barker 1984). A new understanding of conversion developed that broke with the classic conceptualization in which the convert was viewed as a passive recipient of an epiphanic event (Richardson 1985). New analyses made it clear that conversion should be regarded as a gradual process contingent on the convert's strategic maneuvering their life situation (e.g. Rambo 1993; Paloutzian 2005). Other parallel concepts such as religious intensification, reorientation within the same religion, and deconversion were introduced to the field, which made conversion into a subcategory within the larger category of spiritual transformation processes (Park 2013; Paloutzian et al. 2013).

Several conversion typologies have been developed that bring out different aspects of the process (e.g. Lofland and Skonovd 1981; Rambo 1993; Gooren 2007). Other scholars

have worked on identifying sociological factors and psychological mechanisms in conversions such as social networks (Lofland and Stark 1965; Barker 1984), attachment style (Kirkpatrick and Shaver 1990; Granqvist 2003), individual meaning system construction (Park 2013; Paloutzian 2005), uncertain social identity (Hogg, Adelman, and Blagg 2010), globalization and macro-level context (Yang 2005), life stages (Gooren 2007), increased competition in the religious marketplace (Stark and Finke 2000; Gooren 2006), and fit between individual personality and religion (Paloutzian et al. 2013).

Different approaches stress different aspects of the process, but there appears to be a general consensus that conversion is preceded by a state of crisis or dissatisfaction. Although crisis may be a necessary condition, it does not explain sufficiently why, how, or when conversion occurs (see Gooren 2007). Most people experience different kinds of crises in their lives, but only some lead to conversion. Ultimately, the decision to convert, however prolonged it may be, hinges on a more or less conscious evaluation of pros and cons in both the old and the new religion. Therefore, I suggest partitioning the process into factors that push the convert away from the old religion and factors that pull the convert towards the new religion (see Blasi 2009). As such, an overall model emerges that incorporates both internal and external factors into a dynamic process as illustrated in figure 1.

Figure 1: Illustration that synthesizes the prevailing social scientific understanding of conversion.

The model for conversion in figure 1 draws on insights which mostly focus on individual life courses. Even though both internal and external aspects of conversion are integrated, the focus on individual lives makes the model difficult to apply at the collective level. Figure 2 puts forward a two by two analytical matrix that operationalizes psychological mechanisms and sociological structures as well as additional internal and external implications that may be observed in the two Chumash conversions. The analytical matrix is not an exclusive list of all potential factors, nor is it a predictive model. The matrix should be understood as a tool that enhances transparency in the analysis of historical events by explicating and systematizing possible factors at different levels. Fleshing out potential push and pull factors supports the general understanding of conversion as a highly varied and situationally contingent phenomenon because it becomes clear that not all factors are

relevant in a given situation. Some conversions may be dominated by few factors, whereas others more evenly combine several.

	PUSH FACTORS	PULL FACTORS
EXTERNAL (CONTEXTUAL)	Crises - Economic - Political - Cultural - Ecological	Increased - Economic capital - Social capital: Social networks - Cultural capital Competition in religious market
INTERNAL (INDIVIDUAL)	Crises - Medical: Mental and physical - Life stage related - Uncertain social identity - Meaning related Insecure attachment style	Improved - Meaning appraisal - Coping strategy - Personality-religion fit

Figure 2: Analytical matrix that summarizes potential external and internal factors in a conversion process, which push converts away from the old religion and pull them towards the new religion.

Conversion researchers call for an expansion of the field beyond contemporary Western cultures in which most of the theoretical insights have been generated (Paloutzian et al. 2013; Rambo and Farhadian 2014). This paper attempts to meet this call by applying conversion insights to the two collective conversions among the Chumash. This is done by tracing the development of the four most significant traditions from colonization until today into an overall process which clarifies the historical dynamics of cultural change

among the Chumash. The analytical matrix presented above is applied to examine the influence of various internal and external factors within the three historical periods mentioned in the previous section.

Analytical Strategy and Data

The analysis in this paper approaches the last 250 years of Chumash history as one overall process. The historical development of the four most significant traditions is traced based on ethnohistorical analyses, independent historical data points, newspaper articles, and information gathered during field research among contemporary Chumash in 2010 and 2014. The process that emerges from the analysis constitutes the main hypothesis of the paper, and it is substantiated through the systematic evaluation of available evidence. As such, the analytical strategy combines historical analysis with the systematic evaluation of data points to hypothesize that demonstrable push and pull factors caused genuine religious conversions among the Chumash in both instances of cultural transition.

This method of grounding a hypothesized process empirically by evaluating individual data points is inspired by process tracing, which is becoming widespread within qualitative political science. Process tracing revolves around identifying and evaluating static observable implications of a hypothesized historical process in a case (George and Bennett 2005). Each relevant data point is used to challenge and develop the overall hypothesized process in an iterative process between data and theory that is characteristic for qualitative strategies. The analyst should strive to keep counterfactual scenarios and competing hypotheses in the analysis to stay critical of the overall hypothesized process (Collier 2011).

In order to ensure the transparency of the analysis, the hypothesized process is summarized graphically in a figure that displays its links to the main data points. Moreover, the analytical matrix presented above is applied and completed for the three main periods in Chumash history. Since the research strategy is qualitative, the theoretical position and the empirical analysis have emerged through an iterative process. This means that the analysis does not test the conversion model in figure 1; rather, the analysis grounds the model in the data and expounds on it through the application of the analytical matrix.

A methodological challenge when researching contemporary Chumash culture is to define the Chumash community. First, I use the term community even though Chumash groups and families are distributed throughout (and in some cases beyond) the indigenous territory. It seems that social ties, traditional orientation, and cultural goals bring the different groups and families together into a social unit that resembles a community. Second, struggles over ethnic authenticity are vivid among the Chumash. Throughout the community, Chumash ethnicity is asserted and negotiated with reference to genealogy, participation in traditional culture, historical continuity of ethnic assertion, and religious experience (see Haley and Wilcoxon 1997; Johnson 2003; Paldam, in review).

For the purpose of defining Chumash ethnicity in this paper, I take the Barthian standpoint that ethnic groups may be identified by their struggles over boundaries (Barth 1969). Thus, I include all those who self-identify as Chumash as part of the community. At the same time I argue for a fundamental distinction between those Chumash who have continually asserted Indian ethnicity since mission times and those Chumash who asserted Indian identity after revitalization began (see Paldam 2013). These two groups are referred to as Historical Chumash and Newfound Chumash, respectively. The historical

summary above noted that not all Newfound Chumash descend biologically from the area's indigenous population. In order to keep both ethnic self-determination and a significant analytical distinction, this third group is referred to as Neo-Chumash (see Haley and Wilcoxon 2005; Johnson 2003).

The typology of Historical Chumash, Newfound Chumash, and Neo-Chumash refers to the social history that lies behind contemporary ethnic self-determination, which is significant in questions relating to the intergenerational transmission of tradition. However, the typology may not be transferred to questions relating more directly to contemporary religiosity. Contemporary Chumash religiosity revolves around the revitalization of indigenous tradition on the basis of scarce and incomplete sources (see Haley and Wilcoxon 1999). As a natural consequence Chumash from all three groups employ traditionalist strategies which means that beliefs and practices are necessarily “neo” compared with pre-colonial tradition (see Geertz 1992). All cultures evolve and adapt to remain relevant in the face of contextual change, and few areas changed more than coastal California over the last 250 years. Contemporary Chumash religiosity is anchored in ancient indigenous traditions, but at the same time new interpretations and reinventions are inevitable.

Analysis: Four Traditions and Two Conversions

In this section I analyze of the history of religions in the Chumash community since 1750 by tracing the four most significant traditions, namely Chumash tradition, other Indian traditions, Roman Catholicism, and New Age spirituality. The hypothesized relative distribution of the four traditions over time is illustrated in figure 3. The four areas

estimate the proportion taken up by each of the four traditions in the total amount of religion as lived in the community. Although the exact delineation of the areas remains uncertain, this method of displaying changes in lived religion over time provides a new perspective that explicates the conversion dynamics among the Chumash.

In the following sections the hypothesized process in figure 3 is analyzed period by period. Furthermore, the analytical matrix in figure 2 is applied to flesh out potential push and pull factors for different periods. Note that even though this analysis focuses on four specific traditions, other religions are represented in the community as well, e.g. charismatically oriented Christian denominations and Buddhist traditions.

Before 1772: Precolonial Chumash Culture

At the time of European contact, the indigenous population was a complex hunter-gatherer culture organized in politically autonomous villages (Gamble 2008). Villages were governed by an elite made up of political and religious specialists (Blackburn 1975). The Santa Barbara Channel was the center of a large trade network based on a shell bead economy (King 1990). Villages were linked in political networks maintained through ceremonial fiestas and marriage (Johnson 1988). Although there appears to have been considerable cultural variation throughout the territory, a distinctly Chumash religious tradition that was different from neighboring peoples existed (Kroeber 1942; Bean and Vane 1978).

Figure 3: Graphical representation of the historical development of the four most significant religious traditions among the Chumash.

Along the borders of the territory some cultural exchange with neighboring groups occurred, which is reflected by the area for other Indian traditions in figure 3. This cultural exchange occurred through interaction such as trade and in some instances marriage. One famous example is Maria Solares, one of Harrington's most significant Chumash consultants, whose mother was Yokuts. Several examples of Yokuts tradition have been identified in the information that she gave to Harrington (e.g. Johnson 1996; Haley and Wilcoxon 1999).

Ethnohistorians and archaeologists discuss whether epidemics spread through trade routes and made an impact on the Chumash population before colonization occurred (e.g. Erlandson and Bartoy 1995; Walker and Hudson 1993). Similarly, it is possible that Christian ideas could have reached the area before the first mission was established. Although sporadic contact with European trade galleons and trade route interactions means that the Chumash population had some knowledge about Spanish culture, there is no evidence that Christianity was practiced among the Chumash before 1772.

1772–1836: The Mission Period and the First Conversion

Figure 3 clearly reflects the dramatic changes brought on by Spanish colonization. Chumash populations were incorporated into seven missions, five of which were located within the region where Chumashan languages were spoken. As soon as a mission was established, the Franciscans began missionizing among the Indians. Baptism usually occurred after a relatively short catechizing period, which means that missionization proceeded quickly. Mission Santa Barbara was founded in 1786 in one of the most densely populated areas, and by 1803 all Indians within a fifteen mile radius had been baptized

(Coombs and Plog 1977). The Island population was the last to be brought to the missions, mostly around 1814–1816 (Johnson 1988), which means that the entire Chumash population had been missionized within the relatively short period of 50 years (Johnson 1999; Walker and Johnson 1992).

In conversion literature, initiation rites such as baptism are often regarded as a turning point that lies late in the conversion process (e.g. Rambo 1993). Among the Chumash, however, baptism appears to have played a different role. From a Catholic point of view, baptism initiates the neophyte into the Church and the dogma of exclusive worship. To the great frustration of the Franciscans, the neophytes did not keep this dogma; instead, they continued to practice indigenous traditions at the missions (e.g. Hudson 1979; Sandos 1985). Ethnohistorians have suggested that the neophytes did not see baptism as an initiation, but rather as a religious ritual that established a political alliance with the Europeans paralleling the political function of ceremonial fiestas in indigenous tradition (Sandos 1991; Haas 2014). As such, baptism appears to have been an access point to the new religion rather than a consolidating turning point.

After baptism the Franciscans were responsible for the neophytes' well-being, which meant that they provided food and clothes. At the same time, neophytes were no longer free to leave the missions, and transgressions of the Catholic lifestyle were sanctioned with physical coercion (Sandos 1991; Haas 2014). Although language barriers (see Johnson 1982; Siems 1998) meant that the Franciscans were not able to convey the full consequences of accepting baptism to the neophytes, interaction between villages and mission communities (see Coombs and Plog 1977) meant that non-baptized Indians were able to learn about mission life from their missionized friends and families. There does not

appear to have been forced baptisms, which raises the question why Indians were willing to trade their freedom for corn and cloth. Applying the analytical matrix sheds light on push and pull factors in the first conversion (see fig. 4).

	PUSH FACTORS	PULL FACTORS
EXTERNAL (CONTEXTUAL)	<p>(4a) Demographic crisis <i>European diseases caused high death rates and low fertility.</i></p> <p>(4c) Economic crises <i>Traditional subsistence strategies broke down.</i></p> <p>(4d) Ecological crisis <i>Climatic instability, frequent droughts.</i></p> <p>(4e) Sociopolitical crises <i>Political structure and social organization destabilized.</i></p> <p>(4f) Cultural crisis <i>Traditional cultural systems are disrupted and loose relevance.</i></p>	<p>(4h) Increased economic capital <i>Access to secure subsistence.</i></p> <p>(4j) Increased cultural capital <i>Access to European technologies.</i></p> <p>(4l) Increased social capital <i>Social network links between villages and mission communities.</i></p>
INTERNAL (INDIVIDUAL)	<p>(4a) Medical crisis <i>Introduced infectious and venereal diseases.</i></p> <p>(4b) Meaning related crisis <i>Loss of faith in traditional healing strategies.</i></p> <p>(4g) Psychological crisis <i>Psychological stress and trauma over illness and social destabilization.</i></p>	<p>(4i) Catholic medical practices <i>European medical knowledge and therapy.</i></p> <p><i>Beliefs and practices designated for coping with disease and crisis.</i></p> <p>(4k) Introduction of religious alternative <i>Catholicism may have provided a better person-religion fit for some.</i></p>

Figure 4: Analytical matrix completed for the mission period in which the first conversion from Chumash religion to Roman Catholicism began.

Pushes and Pulls

The first push factor (4a) is the extensive demographic crisis which colonization brought to indigenous society through the introduction of European diseases and the ensuing demographic instability. Infectious and venereal diseases spread rapidly in villages as well as in mission communities and caused high death rates and low fertility. Population pyramids reconstructed from mission records reflect the considerable speed with which this demographic breakdown occurred (Walker and Johnson 1992; Hackel 2005). At the individual level, high frequencies of disease may have caused some Indians to lose faith in traditional healing methods (4b) (Walker and Hudson 1993).

A second push factor (4c) pertains to the disruption of the hunter-gatherer subsistence system. As the mission populations grew, more land was needed for agriculture and livestock. This affected traditional subsistence strategies because seed giving plants and game were replaced by crops and grazing areas (Coombs and Plog 1977; Hackel 2005; Farris 2014; Larson, Johnson, and Michaelsen 1994). Moreover, dendrochronological and sea surface temperature analyses suggest that the mission period encompassed several droughts (4d). The negative effect of ecological crises on traditional subsistence strategies most likely contributed to the missionization process because agricultural life at the missions appeared less uncertain (Larson, Johnson, and Michelson 1994).

Further push factors (4e and 4f) lie in the gradual political destabilization and cultural disruption caused by continued immigration of Hispanics throughout the mission period (Haas 2014). As the presence of the colonial power solidified, indigenous political institutions weakened and traditional social organization faded. In this new demographic

context, Chumash culture gradually lost its relevance. At the psychological level, it is likely that observing frequent fatal diseases and rapid social disintegration may have been disconcerting and even traumatizing to the individual (see Wesley-Esquimaux and Smolewski 2004). As such, I propose to include psychological trauma as a push factor at the individual level (4g), even though no data on individual psychological states exist.

After surveying the push factors, it is clear that indigenous society was in a state of extensive crisis in demographic, economic, sociopolitical, cultural, medical, and perhaps psychological domains. The push factors alone most likely explain a great deal of the missionization process among the Chumash; however, factors that pulled the Indians towards the missions should also be considered. The first two pull factors (4h and 4i) are connected to the push factors. First, life at the missions may have appeared to be the less risky alternative, as the traditional lifestyle was increasingly challenged by colonization, as discussed above (Larson, Johnson, and Michaelsen 1994). Second, medical crises may have caused some Indians to turn towards health-related Catholic practices in their fight against epidemics (Walker and Hudson 1993).

A third pull factor (4j) was European technology. As colonization occurred through the mission system, Catholicism was the access point to advanced European technology. Neophytes were taught material technologies such as adobe building, blacksmithing, firearms, glass-ceramics, weaving, and chandlery as well as new subsistence technologies in the form of agriculture and livestock keeping (Newell 2009). Furthermore, books and writing as well as European artwork and musical instruments were important parts of the Franciscan missionization strategy (Sandos 2004; Newell 2009).

Indigenous religion continued in the mission communities, and most neophytes seem to have added Catholic beliefs and practices to their existing religion. Nevertheless, reports about neophytes that took the new religion to heart and became devout Catholics also exist (Sandos 1985; Newell 2009). This points to a fourth potential pull factor (4k) that relates to the fact that the mission system introduced a religious alternative where previously only one religion existed. It is possible that some Indians simply preferred Catholicism over indigenous religion for socio-political or personal reasons (see Laugrand and Oosten 2007; Paloutzian et al. 2013). A fifth pull factor (4l) draws on the finding that recruitment to NRMs went through preexisting networks (Lofland and Stark 1965; Barker 1984). In the same way it is likely that neophytes pulled their social networks into the mission communities where Indians from different villages lived together. This means that a new cultural constellation emerged as distinct pan-village communities developed at the different missions (see the area for other Indian traditions in fig.3).

Although the analysis points to significant pull factors, it appears that the push factors were particularly strong in the first conversion because colonization caused indigenous society to break down at all levels. Some neophytes may have converted fully; however, records of continued indigenous religious activity at the missions suggest that most neophytes added Catholicism onto their existing tradition. Thus it seems that at the collective level, the first conversion proceeded slowly as a gradual replacement of indigenous tradition with Catholicism, perhaps even over the span of several generations, as illustrated in figure 3.

Towards the end of the mission period in 1824 groups of Indians at three missions rebelled. Although the rebellion was quickly suppressed by Mexican soldiers at two

missions, Indians held La Purisima Mission for a month. After the Mexican authorities took back the mission, a number of rebels were tried and punished, and most of the broken rebels returned to the mission communities (Sandos 1985). The 1824 rebellion reflects that political tension between Mission Indians and Mexicans was considerable, and that the Indians still understood themselves as a culturally and ethnically distinct group. Even so, only a minority of the Indians actually participated in the rebellion.

1836–1964: The Post-Secularization Period and Continued Acculturation

The beginning of this period is marked by the secularization of the missions. After thirteen years of gradual disestablishment following Mexican independence, the missions were secularized in 1834–1836. The Indians' reaction to their emancipation may be regarded as a natural experiment of the status of religious traditions among them. If they had converted to Catholicism, they should be expected to remain in mission communities, practicing their new religion and continuing agricultural life. If the Indians had only accepted baptism superficially to avoid sanctions, they should be expected to reestablish a traditional hunter-gatherer lifestyle. As it happened, secularization triggered both reactions. In Ventura County, for example, several traditional communities were established by the most recently missionized Indians (Johnson 1993). These communities, however, did not survive beyond the 1870s. The majority of the Mission Indians remained in mission communities such as La Cieneguita in Santa Barbara. In 1851 a Catholic chapel was established and deeded to the Bishop of California by the Mission Indians at La Cieneguita (Johnson 1993). The fact that the economically challenged Indians built a chapel suggests that Catholicism was widespread in the community at this point.

Although the information that Harrington gathered should be used with caution as sources to pre-Catholic religion (see Johnson 1982; Haley and Wilcoxon 1999), it contains remarkable information about the status of indigenous tradition around the turn of the 20th century. Several of Harrington's consultants had witnessed indigenous fiestas during the 1850–1870s in the Mission Indian communities (Hudson et al. 1977; Hudson 1979). Indigenous leaders, such as Rafael Solares in Santa Ynez, still performed traditional dances occasionally, although they were practicing Catholics (Hudson 1979). There is no evidence, however, that indigenous fiestas survived into the 20th century. Harrington's data reflects that oral traditions existed about leading figures in the Mission Indian communities who hosted their last fiestas during the 1860–1870s (Hudson et al. 1977; Hudson 1979). These fiestas were usually held in connection with the celebration of Catholic holidays.

Harrington's most significant consultant when it comes to information about indigenous religion was Fernando Librado. Although he was a practicing Catholic, he seems to have had a personal interest in pre-Catholic tradition. He tried to learn about beliefs and practices from his elders, but he recounts how older generations on several occasions refused to share their knowledge with him (Hudson 1979). This suggests that a general acknowledgement that the old traditions should not be continued existed in the community at Librado's time. Correspondingly, interviews with 20th century residents of the Santa Ynez reservation (Gardener 1965; Nabokov 1980) and contemporary Chumash consultants reflect that traditions and language were consciously given up by previous generations. Some remember, for example, how children were sent away deliberately when older generations conversed in their native languages.

Pushes and Pulls

Figure 3 illustrates that the conversion process continued throughout this period, but as the sociopolitical context changed when California came under Mexican and later American rule, new push and pull factors emerged (see fig. 5). The first push factor (5a) is poverty and social problems which were widespread among Mission Indians, partly induced by the introduction of alcohol (Johnson 1993). A second push factor (5b) is the political discrimination against Indians that became extensive when California was annexed into America around 1850 (Heizer and Almquist 1971). These two factors in themselves seem to have pushed many Indians towards acculturation and even assimilation because social marginalization was less extensive among other ethnic groups (see Haas 1995). A further push factor (5c) is that European infectious diseases still spread as epidemics that made substantial impacts on the Mission Indian population (Johnson 1993).

	PUSH FACTORS	PULL FACTORS
EXTERNAL (CONTEXTUAL)	(5a) Economic crises <i>Poverty and social problems.</i> <i>Alcohol related problems.</i> (5b) Political crises <i>Discrimination against Indians.</i>	(5d) Increased economic capital <i>Church charity programs.</i> (5e) Increased cultural and social capital <i>Catholicism provides a strong,</i> <i>ethnically non-determined tradition.</i>
INTERNAL (INDIVIDUAL)	(5c) Medical crisis <i>Continued epidemics.</i>	(5f) Improved health care <i>Church sponsored health care</i> <i>programs.</i>

Figure 5: Analytical matrix completed for the post secularization period in which conversion to Roman Catholicism continued.

Pull factors include charity programs and education provided by the Catholic Church (5d).

A contemporary consultant explained that charity and education were the main reasons that earlier generations in her family had remained within the Catholic Church.

Correspondingly, health care programs (5f) may also have been significant. Furthermore, Catholic communities provided well-established social networks and a strong cultural tradition that was not determined by ethnicity (5e). A survey carried out in the early 1960s among residents on the Santa Ynez reservation reflects that Catholicism was the dominant tradition that structured Mission Indian religious life (Gardener 1965). Nevertheless, the study also describes the persistence of some pre-Catholic traditions, especially in connection with mourning practices, folklore relating to the territory, and traditional healing strategies.

In 1949, local radio station KTMS recorded an interview with Tomás Ygnacio for the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History to document the vanishing indigenous languages and report pieces of oral tradition that lingered in the Mission Indian community (KTMS 1949). His niece Mary Yee, who was the last native speaker of Barbareño Chumash, interpreted from Chumash and Spanish into English during the interview. This interview clearly reflects that the two Ygnacios regarded themselves as Catholic, and that they conceived of indigenous religion as something that belonged to the past. The Ygnacio family was one of the few Barbareño families who had continually asserted Mission Indian ethnicity, and the fact that they felt so distanced from pre-Catholic religion indicates its marginalized position in the community.

After 1968: Revitalization and the Second Conversion

Since the late 1960s, remarkable changes once again occurred in the Chumash religious landscape. As figure 3 illustrates, the acculturation process that characterizes the preceding 150 years broke and indigenous tradition regained ground in the community. Although revitalization consists of several political, social, and cultural factors, it is often described as beginning in 1968 with the formation of QCIO (see “Summary of Chumash history”) (O’Connor 1989; Haley and Wilcoxon 1997). The QCIO provided a context in which a number of individuals belonging to several extended families began asserting Chumash identity openly and actively.

As the area for local traditions in figure 3 illustrates, hardly anything was known about pre-Catholic religion when revitalization began (Grant 1965; Landberg 1965). Nevertheless, indigenous beliefs and practices played an important role in the revitalization movement from the beginning (O’Connor 1989; Flynn and Laderman 1994; Gordon 2013). Practicing indigenous religion became a case of “building the boat as it sailed along,” because beliefs and ceremonies arose according to demand. Moreover, boatbuilding became a founding event in the most literal sense of the word when the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History invited revitalizers to contribute to the replication of a traditional plank canoe, a *tomol*, in the early 1970s (Hudson, Timbrook, and Rempe 1978). Crewed by revitalizers, this *tomol* made a journey along the Channel Islands in 1976. Remarkably, this journey was described as a religious experience by members of the crew (Downey 1976), and it appears to have been the launching pad for a loosely institutionalized religious revitalization network centered around *tomol*-related activities and Lakota-style sweat lodging (see Nabokov 1980).

During the mid-1970s publications based on Harrington's data began to appear (e.g. Blackburn 1975; Hudson et al. 1977; Hudson 1979), and gradually information on traditional religion was incorporated into indigenous beliefs and practices (see Haley and Wilcoxon 1997; Nabokov 1980). These publications are read and reread with dedication by revitalizers. Several consultants referred to worn and note-inscribed copies during interviews, and some have personally researched microfilms of Harrington's original notes. As mentioned above, the source-critical value of the information in Harrington's data when it comes to pre-Catholic religion is somewhat dubious; nevertheless, his data is treated with esteem and even reverence in most parts of the contemporary community.

The vacuum that occurred in 1968 was mostly filled with religious traditions from other North American peoples and pan-Indian culture (see fig. 3). Influence from peoples such as the Hopi, the Lakota, and the Apache came to the community through visits to and from other territories (e.g. Matthiesen 1979; Haley and Wilcoxon 1997; Gordon 2013). One consultant related that early revitalizers used to joke with each other about "trying out" attires from other tribes until a more distinct Chumash style emerged. Pan-Indian culture came through the activist occupations of Hammond's Meadow and Point Conception as well as through the pow-wow movement (see Howard 1955). Furthermore, a pan-California bear dance movement originating among the Tachi Yokuts has been significant among the Chumash over the last decades. Pan-tribal groups of bear dancers tour the area and tribal groups take turns at hosting bear ceremonies in four-year cycles. Although other Indian traditions and pan-Indian culture are still important among the Chumash, it seems that they are giving way to local traditions as these have become still more distinct.

When revitalization began the majority of the Chumash were practicing Catholics, but renewed interest in indigenous religion meant that Catholicism became considerably weakened in the community (see fig. 3). Some Chumash have remained devout Catholics and only practice indigenous beliefs separate from and secondary to Catholicism. One consultant likened the difference between the Catholic saints and bear spirits to the difference between her children and her (beloved) cat. A few examples of ceremonial integration of Catholicism and indigenous beliefs exist, such as Masses with indigenous imagery, prayers, and offerings. Other Chumash have rejected Catholicism to varying degrees. Some actively dissociate themselves from the Church, as became evident in their opposition to the beatification of Father Junipero Serra, the first mission president in California (Pinsky 1986).

When it comes to Catholicism, data from my field research reveals a clear distinction between generations. Generally, the generation that was adult when revitalization began remained Catholic (see Nabokov 1980), whereas subsequent generations seem to be losing an attachment to their parents' religion. Many have been baptized and perhaps confirmed in local Catholic churches, but most do not attend Mass, and the baptism of children no longer occurs as a matter of course. Some consultants from the younger generations explained that Catholicism was secondary to indigenous religion in their lives. Although Catholicism is still the single most important tradition in the community, this is likely to change over the next generations (see fig. 3).

The relationship between the New Age movement and Native Americans is notoriously ambivalent. At least in a Californian context, New Age may be understood as the spiritual offspring of the countercultural movement that regarded Native American

philosophy as an important source of wisdom. As such, New Age facilitated the change towards a more positive conception of Indians in America. In this process, however, many Indians feel that New Agers misrepresented their religious traditions and appropriated their culture (Geertz 2004). Ironically, all Native Americans must relate to these misrepresentations, because New Age primitivist stereotypes have become widespread in the general society (Geertz 2004). This ambivalent relationship exists among the Chumash as well. Some Chumash distance themselves from New Age groups, whereas others work with them and draw on New Age beliefs in their revitalization of Chumash tradition.

Since New Age is influenced by pan-Indian philosophy, the traditions overlap in several aspects. First, both New Age and pan-Indian tradition regard nature as sacred, and environmentalism is widespread within both traditions. Second, various astrological beliefs exist within New Age and pan-Indian tradition. Scholars have argued that ethnoastronomy and even astrological ideas were an important part of pre-Catholic Chumash religion (Hudson and Underhay 1979). Most contemporary consultants reported beliefs related to astronomical objects, but some also reported more specifically New Age-inspired beliefs such as cosmological alignments, extraterrestrial spirits, and astrologically based calendars. Moreover, some consultants employed New Age astrology in their interpretation of Harrington's data.

Pushes and Pulls

Approaching cultural revitalization as collective conversion highlights the religious side of the movement, although political, economic, and identity-related aspects have often been brought forth as the main constituting factors (e.g. O'Connor 1989; Flynn and Laderman

1994; Haley and Wilcoxon 1997; Ranch 2012). Applying the analytical matrix to the revitalization movement, socio-economic, political, and environmental factors constitute significant pushes (6a-6c) and pulls (6d-6f) in the process (see fig. 6). Several consultants report that they felt that more active assertion of Chumash ethnicity increased their social and cultural capital because it established new social networks that draw on a cultural tradition that is increasingly respected in the general population.

Most consultants related internal push and pull factors that are typical to spiritual transformation processes (6g-6l) such as medical crises (6g), cultural dissatisfaction (6h), and life-stage related crises (6i). Revitalizing indigenous religion gives new opportunities for seeking alternative and complementary treatments (6j), finding a traditional strategy to cope with specific problems (6k), and feeling more religiously fulfilled in accordance with the personality-religion fit approach (6l). Although Chumash beliefs and practices are mainly non-institutionalized and highly individualized, working with their indigeneity seems to hold psychological significance in itself for many consultants. Research on indigenous healing systems indicates that traditional therapies are more efficient to indigenous patients because they draw on culturally relevant categories and schemas for action (Calabrese 2008; Prussing 2008). In the same way, traditional religiosity may provide more efficient frameworks for coping with life's challenges in a culturally relevant way among the Chumash.

	PUSH FACTORS	PULL FACTORS
EXTERNAL (CONTEXTUAL)	<p>(6a) Socio-economic crises <i>Poverty, social problems.</i></p> <p>(6b) Political crises <i>Experiences of ethnic discrimination.</i></p> <p>(6c) Ecological crisis <i>1969 oil spill, water shortage, and droughts. Global warming.</i></p> <p>(6m) Cultural trauma related crisis <i>Insufficient cultural resources to establish collective memory.</i></p> <p>(6q) Ethnic authenticity crisis <i>Authenticity debate prompts religious commitment.</i></p>	<p>(6d) Increased cultural capital <i>Chumash culture is increasingly respected.</i></p> <p>(6e) Increased economic capital <i>Indian ethnicity provides job opportunities.</i></p> <p>(6f) Increased social capital <i>Social networks based in ethnicity through Indian organizations.</i></p> <p>(6n) Collective cultural events <i>Participation in ceremonies and cultural events.</i></p>
INTERNAL (INDIVIDUAL)	<p>(6g) Medical crises <i>Specific illness or more general health related dissatisfaction.</i></p> <p>(6h) Psychological crises <i>Specific mental crisis or more general dissatisfaction with Western lifestyle.</i></p> <p>(6i) Life stage related crisis <i>Issues with coping with a life stage, e.g. adulthood or parenthood.</i></p> <p>(6o) Cultural trauma related crisis <i>Feelings of loss and anger when confronted with history.</i></p>	<p>(6j) Chumash healing strategies <i>Alternative and complementary treatments.</i></p> <p>(6k) Improved coping strategy <i>Traditional framework for coping with life and problems.</i></p> <p>(6l) Improved person-religion fit <i>Personality fits better with Chumash religiosity.</i></p> <p>(6p) Ethnic-existential meaning making <i>Conservation of family tradition.</i></p>

Figure 6: Analytical matrix completed for the revitalization period in which the second conversion from Roman Catholicism to indigenous religiosity occurred.

A significant factor that emerges at both external and internal levels is the cultural trauma caused by colonization (6m-6o). Cultural trauma arises when members of a group fail sufficiently to express and conceptualize traumatizing historical events into a collective

memory (Alexander 2004). Although indigenous self-determination and political activism is widespread among American Indians in the form of civil rights movements and postcolonial voices, many Chumash still seem to be struggling with the impact of Spanish colonization. At the collective level several consultants lamented the lack of community cohesiveness in dealing with Chumash cultural matters (6m), and at the individual level many expressed difficulties in reconciling with history (6o). On the pull-side, it appears that indigenous practices contribute to bringing the community together (6n) in spite of substantial tension when it comes to determining what these practices should be.

Although most factors are remarkably similar among Historical and Newfound Chumash, some seem to figure more strongly among Historical Chumash. First, the Historical Chumash community was generally more socio-politically marginalized, which means that the socio-economic and political push factors were stronger for this group than for the Newfound Chumash. Cultural trauma related factors (6m-6o) are also stronger among Historical Chumash because many have personal recollections of previous generations and their ethnicity related struggles.

Another pull factor that is mainly relevant among Historical Chumash has to do with the intergenerational transmission of tradition (6p). A strong desire to conserve and reactivate family traditions exists that seems to be connected with generational transitions, such as the upbringing of children and the passing of elders. One last relevant push factor is related to the debates over ethnic authenticity in the community. It seems that the tension and disagreement in itself constitutes a push (6q) because religiosity and ritual performance is a strong social signal of ethnic commitment.

Discussion

The analysis presented in the previous section demonstrates that religious change among the Chumash provides a valuable opportunity to bring two research fields together, namely the study of Chumash culture and the academic study of conversion. Figure 3 illustrated the hypothesized development in the distribution of the four most significant traditions in the community. The longitudinal scope of the analysis provided a new perspective on conversion dynamics among the Chumash. At the same time, however, including 250 years made the analysis insensitive to ethnohistorical details. For example, more detailed studies of the missionization process at individual missions reveal yearly and seasonal fluctuation (see Coombs and Plog 1976; Johnson 1988). Similarly, some revitalization years saw more progress than others, e.g., during the occupation of Point Conception, which was a catalyst for indigenous ideas and practices (Haley and Wilcoxon 1997). Due to the longitudinal scope of the present analysis, the curves in figure 3 have been smoothed; however, a finer level of detail could be achieved in the delineation of the traditions if the temporal scope were reduced.

The analysis reveals both similarities and differences between the two collective conversions. In both cases, individuals and families went through processes of religious change that improved their sociopolitical standing in meeting the contextual transitions brought on by (1) Euro-American colonization and (2) the countercultural movement and Native American reemergence. Comparing external push and pull factors in the two situations suggests that conversion may be strategically employed by groups to cope with contextual challenges (see Yang 2005; Shepherd 1996). Although the matrix separates push and pull factors for heuristic reasons, the analysis reflects that conversion processes

consist of dynamic interactions between them. For example, the incentive to enter the mission system to secure subsistence became stronger as indigenous culture in the villages became still weaker.

A significant difference that stands out clearly in figure 3 is the temporal dimension in the two conversions. The first conversion proceeded gradually over the course of several generations. Although some neophytes converted completely at the missions, most seem to have added elements of the new religion to their religious life to varying degrees. Over the course of generations Catholic elements gradually came to replace indigenous religion to the extent that the community became Catholic. In the second conversion, on the other hand, the temporal scope is much shorter. Revitalization provided a context in which individuals began to assert Indian ethnicity openly and actively. For Historical Chumash revitalization meant a reorientation towards Indian culture, whereas Newfound Chumash changed their ethnic identity entirely.

Some of the explanation for the temporal variation between the two conversions may lie in the relative balance between push and pull factors. In the first conversion push factors appear to be stronger than pull factors, because colonization caused indigenous society to break down at all levels. Catholicism was the gateway to European culture, which outmatched indigenous society within remarkably few decades. In the second conversion, however, it appears that pull factors were stronger, because revitalizers had more to gain from conversion than they had to lose. As such, this analysis raises a new hypothesis, namely, that pull-factor dominated conversions proceed more quickly than ones dominated by push factors. This hypothesis emerges because of the comparative, historical scope of this analysis. Whether it would be supported in other datasets remains an open question,

but it does suggest that it may be useful to place more emphasis on the identification of pull factors.

A further significant difference between the two conversions lies in the religious repertoire available in the surrounding society. In the first conversion Catholicism was the only alternative to indigenous religion. In the second conversion, however, indigenous religiosity represents one option in the diverse religious marketplace of contemporary California. According to the person-religion fit approach, this would suggest that certain features of the Chumash religious profile (e.g., environmentally conscious spirituality, animistic beliefs, or civil rights activism) function as strong attractors. Perhaps the process of seeking out aspects of indigenous Chumash culture to revitalize and the low degree of institutionalization in itself constitute pulls, because it allows spiritual seekers to continue their seekership within a fixed traditional framework (see Sutcliffe 2004).

Finally, the analysis illustrates some of the problems inherent to defining historical continuity when it comes to California Indian culture. The U.S. federal criteria for obtaining recognition as an Indian Tribe include objective documentation for the historical continuity of culture and political unity. Although these criteria may be applicable among peoples whose history follows a different course, the historical dynamics of religious change among the Chumash reflect that defining cultural continuity is not necessarily straightforward. Whereas conversion to Catholicism meant that Mission Indians were able to blend into the new dominant culture, conversion to indigenous religion today provides a possibility for contemporary Chumash to assert Native ethnicity openly and actively (see Paldam, in review). The speed and strength with which the two conversions occurred reflect that

cultural constructs such as religion are contingent on a host of sociological, psychological, and political factors that interact to produce complex historical processes.

Conclusion

The post-contact history of the Chumash encompasses two major cultural transitions, namely, European colonization and indigenous revitalization. By approaching these 250 years as one overall process that revolves around two collective conversions, the analysis presented in this paper brought a new perspective on the dynamics of religious change. Prevailing social scientific research on conversion was synthesized into a coherent model which could be applied to historical and contemporary qualitative data in the form of an analytical matrix that fleshed out potential push and pull factors in a conversion process. A comparison of the two conversions suggests that the balance between push and pull factors is significant for the course of a given conversion process. Applying the analytical strategy presented in this paper to other cultural contexts may provide a better understanding of potential push and pull factors and their significance in collective conversions.

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