

FIELD-WORK AMONG THE MISSION INDIANS OF CALIFORNIA

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Just as the holy of holies at the center of the Mission Indian temple was surrounded by an enclosure and outside this by a still larger enclosure to keep the Indian throngs of the fiesta from penetrating too closely to the sacred secrets of religion, so the dwindling core of language, custom, and ceremony of these Indians has become hidden by a double barricade of acquired American and Spanish culture, making access to it difficult. But our recent field-work has succeeded in penetrating to the very core, resulting in one success after another in the obtaining of rare information. This information was obtained using the native languages as the vehicle of record, thus securing ethnological and linguistic material at the same time.

At Rincon Indian Reservation an Indian temple similar to that described by Fr. Antonio de la Ascension as having been discovered by the men of the Viscaíno expedition on Santa Catalina Island was visited and studied. This temple ground, just northeast of the house of Chief Juan Sotelo Calac (see fig. 87), measures 38 feet from north to south, and 58 feet from east to west. The fire pit, 4 feet in diameter, has three stone potrests and is at the exact center of the ground. When mantled for ceremony a brush fence is built about the northern half of this temple only, a steep rise in the ground forming the southern boundary. The temple was always elliptical, with its long axis extending east and west. Photographs of this temple, taken in dismantled condition, and again when a fiesta was in progress, are reproduced as Figures 87 and 88.

The last old Indian house still standing in all the coast region of southern California was found above the rancheria of Kuuki in a little-known part of Palomar Mountain. It is of the type built of poles and slabs of the bark of tovót, *Libocedrus decurrens* Torr., incense cedar, and according to the informants presents the same appearance that it did some 30 years ago. The house is shown in Figure 90.

Rare information was obtained as to how these Indians used to brand themselves with various designs and also cauterize sores by

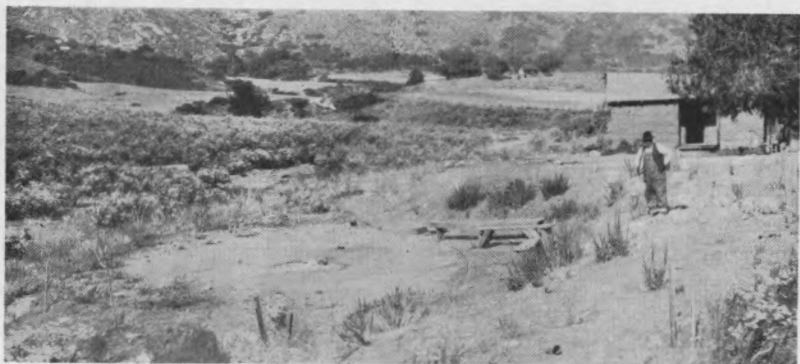


FIG. 87.—Wamkic, Indian temple, at the house of Chief Juan Sotelo Calac, Rincon Indian Reservation, Calif., in dismantled condition. Photograph by J. P. Harrington.



FIG. 88.—Wamkic, Indian temple, at the house of Chief Juan Sotelo Calac, Rincon Indian Reservation, Calif., fixed up and consecrated for religious fiesta. Photograph by J. P. Harrington.



FIG. 89.—Chief Juan Sotelo Calac, Rincon Indian Reservation, Calif., and his wife, Mrs. Carnaciona Calac. Photograph by J. P. Harrington.



FIG. 90.—The last Indian house in the coast region of southern California, on top of Palomar Mountain above Kuuki rancheria. Photograph by J. P. Harrington.

using the dried and pounded up leaves of *Artemisia vulgaris* L. var. *heterophylla* Jepson, California mugwort (Spanish, estafiate). The leaves, silvery underneath, become dry and shriveled in the early summer, and were pounded on the anvil stone to make a spongy fuzzlike material, which was laid on the bare skin of the Indian to form the desired pattern, and was lighted. The pain was intense, as the burning reached the skin, but it was borne without a wince or murmur. The brand resembled a cattle brand and adorned the person for life.

New data were also obtained on the similar custom of tattooing. The pattern was pricked with a cactus or other thorn, or a sharp flint fragment, and the green leaves of either one of two species of *Solanum*, *S. douglasii* Dunal, a perennial, or *S. nigrum* L., an annual, both called black nightshade in English and chichiquelite in Spanish, were pounded up to a salvelike mass and rubbed in the bleeding wound. A permanent bluish black tattoo was the result.

The chief diety of the Mission Indians of the coast region was the God Chingichngich, a strange Indian prophet and religious leader who was born at the village of Puvú', which with its old spring lay just downslope from the tennis court at the Fred. H. Bixby ranch in the southwest corner of Los Angeles County, on the northern bank of the New San Gabriel River and only a little over 2 miles inland from Seal Beach. He was of lowly birth and his real name, by which he was called in childhood, was *Wiyaamot. After he became a religious leader, he taught the people that they should call and invoke him by the name Chingichngich. He has three epithets: (1) Sza' uura, meaning lowly person, applied to him to bring out his lowly birth. (2) Toovit, *Sylvilagus bachmani cinerascens* (Allen), California brush rabbit. This tiny rabbit was the first man who ever sang in the world, and this epithet was applied to the prophet when he had already become a religious teacher and was no longer a common person. (3) Kwá' owar, a very sacred name applied after Chingichngich had ascended to heaven, whence he watches our deeds and punishes the one that does not obey his commands by having poisonous and fierce animals or plants or minerals do injury to him.

The Mission Indian calendar was determined to have only six double months, of two moons each, and not eight as has been stated in the books. The seventh and eighth double months were renamings by the dying Woyóot of months which he had already named the year previous. The key to this solution lay in printed documents, and also in the memory of the oldest Indians.