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Nunis: *The Drawings of Ignacio Tirsch, a Jesuit Missionary in Baja California*

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may seem surprising to some, it is not at all unlikely, particularly in view of the recent work of Higgs, Flannery, Halbaek and others on the process of seed plant domestication in similar environments in Southwest Asia. The evidence presented for California is quite circumstantial, but nonetheless theoretically sound and sufficiently intriguing to encourage further work by local archaeologists and botanists in the near future.

In spite of its provocative appeal, however, the paper falls short in two important respects. First, the suggestion that Mesoamerican plants failed to spread to California because of the existence of an established system of plant cultivation begs the question. Most middle and low latitude hunter-gatherers throughout the world practice plant cultivation to some degree, certainly to the extent that they are all, in Rhys Jones' (1969) useful phrase, "fire stick farmers." I see no reason to think that this situation has been different since the end of the Pleistocene, the implication being that many hunter-gatherers have adopted exotic domesticates in spite of pre-existing cultivation practices. The most dramatic North American example is the Hopewell-Mississippian transition, in which complex societies with subsistence based on abundant natural resources, as well as independently developed cultigens (probably including species of *Chenopodium*, *Iva*, and *Helianthus* among others), subsequently changed their economic system to incorporate a preponderance of Mesoamerican crops. The real issue here is not cultivation practices or economic complexity per se, but the relative carrying capacity of native and exotic resources at a given level of labor input. In the California case, one can propose that native cultigens supported a denser population than could the Mesoamerican domesticates—with a comparable labor input—which were therefore rejected. In the Hopewell area, the situation was perhaps just the reverse. Further development

of the Bean and Lawton argument along this line might prove enlightening.

Second, while Bean and Lawton are probably quite correct in the idea that native California societies were politically and economically more complex than previously recognized, and in their argument that such complexity was somehow related to the productivity of the natural environment, their paper tells us little about the processual relationship between these phenomena. Perhaps it is premature to look for comprehensive analysis in a preliminary statement of this kind, but having proposed a causal connection, it would be useful if the authors could support it in more detail in future work.

Overall, the volume is a good effort. The papers are worth reading, and the book itself is pleasing in format. The editorial and copy reading work needs improvement (there are at least eight typographical errors in the text), but this is a minor problem which is bound to accompany the birth of a new publication series.

REFERENCES

- Jones, R.
1969 Fire-Stick Farming. Australian Natural History, September, p. 224-228.



The Drawings of Ignacio Tirsch, a Jesuit Missionary in Baja California. Narrative by Doyce B. Nunis, Jr. Translated by Elsbeth Schulz-Bischof. Los Angeles: Dawson's Book Shop, 1972. 121 pp., glossary, 46 plates. \$15.00 (cloth).

Reviewed by HOMER ASCHMANN
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First-hand records of the Jesuit mission to Baja California are of singular interest because the missionaries sustained intimate contact



How two California Indians killed a deer with arrows, how they skinned it in the field, and [prepared it for roasting], etc. Plate XXXI of Nunis' "The Drawings of Ignacio Tirsch."

with one of the most isolated human societies in the world, a society which could not long survive this encounter, becoming extinct in the southern part of the peninsula less than a century after the missionaries arrived. Before that time, in 1768, all Jesuits were expelled from Spain's New World domains. Shortly thereafter their order was suppressed, and they concluded their lives in asylums in Italy or the Hapsburg lands.

The Baja California mission and the Indians it served must have exercised a persisting fascination on the forcibly retired missionaries, many of whom wrote brief or extended accounts. Baegert's was published directly, and Clavigero, a Jesuit historian who never reached the peninsula, collected data from other exiles to compile his *Storia della California*. Other manuscript materials have been

discovered, notably in the Vatican archives. The preservation and recent appearance of annotated watercolored drawings by one of the missionary exiles, however, constitutes an unusual event. They had gone to the Clementinum Library in Prague which was later absorbed by the State Library housed at the University of Prague, and some of them, evidently chosen for the bright colors and drawing which were both exotic and primitive, were used to illustrate the 1970 Prago Press Calendar, *Editio Cimelia Bohemica*. A copy of the calendar came into the hands of Glen Dawson who recognized its potential for his Baja California Travel series. He found an annotator and translator, made a trip to Prague to obtain copies of the rest of the drawings, and has published all 46 plates in a notable example of fine printing.

Although the drawings are unsigned, their attribution by Dr. Nunis to Father Ignacio Tirsch seems certain. In contrast to Nunis' belief that the drawings were made in Baja California, enough altered detail, such as the reversal of the orientation of Cabo San Lucas (Plate 10), exists to convince me that they were made from memory after Tirsch's retirement to Bohemia. The accuracy of the depiction of plants and animals as well as the detailed view of San José del Cabo with its adjacent huerta make it equally clear that he was reproducing what he had actually seen. Tirsch was neither a great artist nor draftsman, though his use of color is bold and striking. Natural history attracted his attention and recognizable drawings of plants and animals, especially birds but including mammals and shellfish, show a sharply observant eye. Though he was in the peninsula less than six years and stationed in the far south at Santiago where the native culture had been most completely destroyed, his drawing of a cirio (*Idria columnaris*) which only occurs north of Latitude 28° N., indicates that he had visited the central part of the peninsula and encountered Indians, unfortunately Cochimís rather than the Pericú or Cora of his own mission, living in a near aboriginal condition.

It would be foolish to claim that these drawings make a major contribution to our ethnographic knowledge of the Indians of the peninsula. They do offer confirmation on some details reported in the literature. Females in aboriginal settings are shown with the split skirt with deer hide behind and strings of carrizo joints in front. Males tend to have loin cloths, which may well result from the artist's prudery. When depicting Indians around his own mission the dress and activities make it clear that by the time of Jesuit expulsion, fifty years after the first mission contact in the cape region, acculturation had been overwhelming. Without captions, the

individuals shown could not be recognized as Indians.



Archaeological Survey Annual Report, Volume 13. N. Nelson Leonard, III, Nancy Farrell, Judith A. Rasson, and Dean A. Decker, Eds. Department of Anthropology, University of California, Los Angeles, 1971. 201 pp. \$4.00 (paper).

Reviewed by MAKOTO KOWTA
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In addition to the report of the activities of the Archaeological Survey in 1971, this volume contains five interrelated papers originating in a symposium on "Man and Environment in the Late Prehistory of Southeast California" and six other contributions of disparate nature. In discussing these papers I will depart from their original sequence, following instead an order that proceeds roughly from the more theoretical to the more substantive.

In "World Views and Archaeological Investigation in Interior Southern California" Robert L. Bettinger describes the nature and implications of the current transition from the view of archaeology emphasizing chronological sequences of discrete cultural units based on "type fossils" to a newer view which stresses the concept of culture as "a complex network of human and natural systems" and which seeks to explain culture change in terms of recurrent systemic processes. Within the present systemic framework, Bettinger also points out, subsistence and environment play especially important roles. Although originally prepared as an introduction to the southeastern California symposium papers, his comments apply as well to most of the other contributions, which to some degree reflect a concern with cultures in environmental contexts.