

***Narratives of Persistence: Indigenous Negotiations
of Colonialism in Alta and Baja California***
by Lee M. Panich

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Archaeological research of colonialism is difficult. Challenging research and cultural acceptance is also difficult. *Narratives of Persistence* by Associate Professor Lee M. Panich of Santa Clara University is a compelling and dynamic publication for First Nations activism through archaeology. Panich is biased in this publication and presents all analysis with a progressive Native Californian agenda in mind. He makes the audacious priority of positioning descendant Native Californians as the authorities on their inherited colonial history, decolonization perseverance and material culture interpretation. This publication decidedly advocates for the Ohlone tribe of San Francisco and the Paipai tribe of Baja California for their legitimacy and their persistence through terminal narratives (Wilcox 2009: 13) settler-imposed stereotypes and erasure. The methods utilised for this research are not revolutionary, but the interdisciplinary data created a depth of indigenous experience for the reader to confront.

Terminal narratives of Native Californians pervade contemporary American culture as fact due to perpetuated academic functionalist and reductionist approaches to historic texts and material culture (Colwell-Chanthaphonh et al. 2010). This book offers nuanced interpretations of historic, archaeological, and ethnographic material by maintaining the First Nation perspective as the authority of colonial events on their landscape. This point of view offers the reader the opportunity to juxtapose the terminal narratives with the persis-

tence narrative. This juxtaposition has the potential to appeal to a wide public audience. However, I recommend creating a small serial for public audiences instead of one volume so the ‘cultural fact’ of Native Californian extinction can be challenged effectively.

The Ohlone and Paipai tribes encountered, experienced, and interacted with colonial systems and pressures differently. They share the same recent history of newcomers into their environment, but do not share a homogeneous historicity of response or consequence with the Spanish Mission system, Mexican and American settler colonisations. The Ohlone chose to explore and participate in the various colonisation systems that entered their landscape, like the Paeso and Ranchero systems. Meanwhile, the Paipai actively confronted and attempted to remove the various colonisation systems from their homelands. This difference of colonial experience is a fantastic addition to colonial and decolonisation research through archaeology. This expands the possibilities for interpretation and empowers heterogeneous voices in the material culture (Schneider and Hayes 2020). One colonial experience is not universal for all colonial experiences.

This publication is bringing awareness to the mainstream and untrue stereotype of Native Californians being extinct (Panich 2020: 2). The Ohlone tribe is not recognised by the United States (US) Federal Government as an indigenous tribe of California. However, the Paipai are recognised by the US Federal and Mexican governments as indigenous to Baja California and Mexico. These official government outcomes are the result of persistence strategies adopted by the tribes and the colonial expectations placed on Native Californians to live up to indigenous stereotypes. “Indeed, a guiding principle of this book is that both the Ohlone and Paipai constitute equally valid forms of being Indigenous—in other words, to be Native does not require one to live (or speak or eat or work or pray) exactly as one’s ancestors did at the onset of colonisation (Raibmon 2005)” (Panich 2020: 5). It is not the role of colonising governments to identify and reward only the indigenous people who look and live according to the colonising expectation. Because the Paipai choose to produce traditional wares and live in traditional structures does not make them more indigenous than the urban living Ohlone. As an American scholar, I admit to believing the erasure of Native Californians being true before reading this book (both archaeologically and culturally). I cannot express how impor-

tant and needed this archaeological spotlight on First Nation decolonisation is for contemporary American culture and how hopeful I am for this work to inspire continued research and activism of not only First Nations of the US, but other peoples as well. There is potential for persistence narrative research as activism to be far-reaching, like the work of Sallum and Noelli (2020).

Panich's argument of identity and culture persistence in the face of colonial terminal narrative control is discussed through contextualising colonialism. "Countering terminal narratives then requires a careful sifting of the evidence, both to reveal silences and ethnocentric biases in the archive and to make the connections that bind Native communities past and present" (Panich 2020: 13). By utilizing historical anthropology, archaeology, ethnology, and historical data from the indigenous perspective on the missionisation and settler colonisations of California, the dynamism of the Ohlone and Paipai societies and their cultural changes over time do not signify a loss of authenticity. In my opinion, Interdisciplinary data is crucial for archaeological research and especially when advocating for a different perspective on known research. Challenging accepted academic and cultural knowledge through indigenous experience, in this case, will need the additional evidence that comes from related fields. For example, Panich interprets changes in material culture as an indication of authenticity and argues against the notion of indigenous authenticity being lost or spoiled once non-traditional materials are incorporated into indigenous behaviors (see Chapters 2 and 3). This notion of authenticity continuing after colonial contact is not popular for indigenous archaeology in the US. The prevailing attitude is that authentic First Nations culture ceased at the time of contact and incorporation of European materials into their society (Van Dyke 2020).

Another strategy to combat the widespread notion of Native Californian erasure, Panich calls on previous archaeological research done on California's prehistory, approximately 15,000 years ago, to connect the idea of continuity over long periods in the same landscape by the same people. This approach may not be new, but his inclusion of maritime archaeological evidence-prehistoric expansion of people following the 'kelp highway' from Alaska into Baja (Erlandson et al. 2007)-added nuance to the characteristics of an active landscape and people. Beginning with archaeological and ethnographic origin evidence not only gives context for the Ohlone and Paipai background, but also

reminds the reader that the Native Californian perspective and evidence is the driving force for this book and not the colonial observation. For example, the Native Californian landscape was more cosmopolitan and progressive than previous research acknowledged. This is due to the highly defined territories of tribelets with the local and regional socio-political relationships and beliefs.

Yet, social relationships were broader than “extraordinary localism” applied to Native Californians by previous researchers. In the Bay Area [San Francisco], the Kuksu religion connected people far and wide...Native people frequently left their lineage territories to visit coasts, harvest piñon, or attend mourning ceremonies. In both regions [San Francisco and Baja] moreover, widespread economic networks enabled the flow of materials... across ethnolinguistic and community boundaries...It was this dynamic context into which the first European explorers arrived in the sixteenth century. (Panich 2020: 42)

“We are still here” (Panich 2020: 6), is the final argument of this publication. Panich describes a panel discussion that took place at Santa Clara University that hosted Ohlone leaders. It is not common for archaeological research to have the opportunity of asking questions to a living person about material culture. Yet, archaeologists in California have that opportunity in their research of First Nations. If academic and public knowledge is to change with the aid of archaeology, then every opportunity for data corroboration must be taken. As a maritime archaeologist researching pre-contact Yup’ik seascape in Alaska, I have found the descendants of my research area to be invaluable. Vice Chairwoman Arellano said it best, “We’re strong, we’re resilient, and we’re still here” (Panich 2020: 175).

I recommend this book to both academic and public audiences. Panich does a wonderful job at leading an assumed novice reader through the necessary background of colonial research, Native Californian origins, first European encounters, the Spanish Mission system, and subsequent colonial consequences in Alta and Baja California. This publication would be a great addition to reading lists for students to interact with progressive archaeological research or as a standalone material for a seminar on archaeological

activism. If contemporary culture and stereotypes are to be challenged and changed, I suggest a public access serial. This publication's conversation about colonialism, decolonisation, and interpretation offers the first steps toward advocating archaeologically and could not have come at a better time.

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