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Brigid Eckhart

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"Evil-looking, suspicious, [and] treacherous" or "Affable, liberal and friendly"?:
How Franciscan Missionaries and Spanish Seculars Described California Indians, 1769-1792.

Brigid Eckhart

Few topics have recently fascinated historians more than the interactions between native peoples and Europeans. Spain spearheaded many of the earliest and most sustained advancements into the Americas. Although the Spanish had made their so-called discovery of Alta California during the sixteenth century, it was not until the government in Madrid perceived a threat of Russian or British intervention in California in the eighteenth century that the crown decided to defend that territory by colonizing the land and pacifying the Indians.¹ Missionization provided an effective and low-cost system to make firm Spain's claim to dominion over California. The Franciscans, already present in Mexico, Baja California, and other outposts of the northern frontier, were chosen to found self-sustaining missions where the native Californians would be simultaneously Christianized, civilized, and pacified. The first expeditions to San Diego and Monterey, and subsequent trips by land and sea, involved the combined effort of *padres*, soldiers, officers, Christian Indians, non-military government

¹ I will subsequently use California to signify this upper region, that is, what is now the state of California. References to Baja California will always be explicit.

officials, and, on occasion, Spanish settlers. Although nearly all these individuals had experience with the indigenous peoples of New Spain, their impressions of the California Indians were different. For example, the men were, as one Franciscan said, usually “as naked as Adam in Paradise before he sinned.”²

The first colonizing expeditions were documented extensively. An enormous number of these texts have been translated into English, providing an invaluable resource to the study of Spanish California. In the early twentieth century, the historian Herbert Eugene Bolton published numerous volumes of translated diaries and correspondence. His work has been augmented by many others. Consequently, in addition to the primary accounts, a wealth of secondary sources exists that illustrates many aspects of Spanish involvement in California. Bolton, in addition to his translations, authored many articles and books on the subject of the Spanish borderlands. However, he undertook no comparison of the documents produced by the soldiers and the Franciscans. Indeed, there has been little comparative analysis between the secular and religious accounts of the natives.

Through letters, diaries, reports, and narratives, many members of these first expeditions left behind detailed accounts of the Californians.³ These documents are revealing in their choice of words and in the specific facets of Indian life they contained. They

² Juan Crespi, *Fray Juan Crespi: Missionary Explorer on the Pacific Coast, 1769-1774*, trans. and ed. by Herbert Eugene Bolton, (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1927), 130.

³ I will use “Californians” to describe the indigenous peoples in California.

expose, at some points, disgust with the behavior of the aborigines and, at other times, they acknowledge pleasant appearance. There are striking similarities between the descriptions given by religious observers, the *padres*, and secular observers, the soldiers, officers, and officials.⁴

Where these descriptions differ reflects the reasons the Spaniards were in California. The officers paid extra attention to the details of Indian life in order to make a more useful official report to the Councilor of the Indies and to assess the overall threat of the Californians to the soon-to-be constructed missions and presidios.⁵ The *padres* were more interested in their own personal safety, the immorality of native practices, and the likelihood of converting the *indios*. These differing motives appear to mold the contrasting descriptions, while the similarities in the accounts reflect a cultural and social background shared by the Spaniards. The ultimate goal of the Franciscans and the soldiers was the same: to pacify the Indians through colonization, civilization, and Christianization. All three of these factors motivated both the religious and the seculars on these excursions.

There were three significant, early campaigns to California. The first one, in 1769, was called the Sacred Expedition and included four prongs, two sea-bound explorations and two campaigns. Among those who left detailed accounts were Fathers Junípero Serra and Juan Crespí; Gaspar de Portolá, governor of Baja

⁴ The contrast being drawn throughout this paper is between the religious and the seculars, toward this purpose I will use "officers," "soldiers," and "officials" interchangeably.

⁵ A *presidio* is basically a Spanish fort.

California; Ensign Miguel Costansó, an engineer; and Lieutenant Pedro Fages.⁶ Later in 1774, Juan Bautista de Anza left from Sonora with the intent of establishing an overland route to California; among his party were Fathers Juan Díaz and Francisco Garcés.⁷ Then in 1775, a second Anza group left Sonora for California, and Fathers Pedro Font and Garcés accompanied Anza.⁸ The accounts from these expeditions were extensive and, not surprisingly, they devoted much space to the Indians they encountered. The diaries of these men were later augmented by more official reports of California, for example those written by Pedro Fages in 1775 and José Longinos Martínez, a naturalist and explorer, in 1792. These more extensive documents provide a wealth of detailed information about nearly every aspect of native life. Additionally, Father Francisco Palóu, in Mexico, wrote narratives about the Sacred Expedition and about Serra's life based upon second-hand knowledge and personal correspondence. Eventually, Palóu himself traveled to California where he kept his own diary. Together these accounts create a broad spectrum of depictions of the indigenous people who populated California. These descriptions of the natives by both secular and non-secular Spaniards can be grouped into several catego-

⁶ Iris Wilson Engstrand, "The Occupation of the Port of San Diego de Acalá, 1769," *Journal of San Diego History* 24, no. 1 (1978): 91, 94.

⁷ Herbert Eugene Bolton, trans. and ed., *Anza's California Expeditions*, vol. 2, (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1930), 1.

⁸ Herbert Eugene Bolton, trans. and ed., *Anza's California Expeditions*, vol. 3, (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1930), 1.

ries: general characteristics, physical features, appearance, armament, customs, food, and language.

Both the padres and the soldiers made pithy sketches of the Indians they encountered. These were, very frequently, the only statements made about particular groups of aborigines, and they served to highlight what the Spanish found most essential in their initial contacts. These most basic images often focused on personality or character traits. Although there was a myriad of different *tribelet*s, the delineations of these attributes were remarkably similar, whether penned by Franciscans or Spanish officers.⁹ On the whole, the initial depictions of the *indios* were complimentary, and contain promise for successful relations between the colonizers and the Californians.¹⁰ The diary of Fray Crespi, who embarked on the overland route to San Diego and then proceeded with Portolá north along the coast in search of Monterey, stands as an example. Containing the words "friendly," "affable," "docile," "kindly," and "mild," his renderings reflect a tendency to depict the aborigines in complimentary terms—unless something happened to alter this position.¹¹ Thus, he portrayed some indigenous people in simultaneously positive and negative terms. "They are very intelligent Indians, noisy, bold, great traders, covetous, and thievish," he

⁹ *Tribelet* is frequently used by anthropologists and historians today to describe the political structure of the California Indians, implying less sophisticated political structures than would constitute a *tribe* as was encountered elsewhere.

¹⁰ "*Indios*" refers to the Spanish word for Indians, from which the English word was derived.

¹¹ Crespi, *Missionary Explorer*, 12, 30, 46, 162.

said of one tribelet.¹² Although there is no explanation why he perceived these natives to be thievish, one might presume that some incident occurred that made them stand out from the multitude of others that he recounted with apparent affection.

Font was less likely than Crespi to describe the *indios* in genial terms. Indeed, Font frequently commented on “the inclination which every Indian has to steal,” and on many occasions he denounced indigenous people as “malevolent, bad-hearted, and evil intentioned.”¹³ This appears to be a motif in Font’s diary, though there are some exceptions in which he presents the natives as “gentle and good natured.”¹⁴ The personalities of these two men seem to account for their differing perceptions despite their similar positions as Franciscans.

The padres’ narratives were not wholly dissimilar than those made by the officers of the crown in that they were both positive and negative. Pedro Fages, a Spanish officer who went to San Diego with the first expedition and later made a survey of California, noted specifically that the Californians were “remarkably affable and peaceable.”¹⁵ Positive accounts were given by Fages as well as by people with even less interaction

¹² Crespi, *Missionary Explorer*, 117-8.

¹³ Pedro Font, *Font’s Complete Diary: A Chronicle of the Founding of San Francisco*, trans. and ed. by Herbert Eugene Bolton, (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1931), 263, 147.

¹⁴ Font, *Complete Diary*, 345.

¹⁵ Pedro Fages, *A Historical, Political, and Natural Description of California by Pedro Fages, Soldier of Spain*, trans. by Herbert Ingram Priestly, (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1937), 16.

with the natives. The sentiment of Francisco Antonio Mourelle, a sailor, perfectly illustrated the differences in the reactions to the aborigines: "The distrust indeed which we naturally entertained of these barbarians, made us endeavor to get as great an insight into all these as possible, yet we never observed anything contrary to the most perfect friendship."¹⁶ This statement revealed the Spaniards' predisposition to perceive the *indios* negatively, but in his case, Mourelle observed the opposite to be true. Nevertheless, many favorable portrayals were counterbalanced with sentiments similar to those recorded by Fray Font. José Longinos Martínez, for example, described some Indians as "given to thievery."¹⁷ Anza expressed a similar perception. Accounts of soldiers and missionaries contained such a wide assortment of impressions that any generalization about their perceptions of indigenous character is very difficult. Moreover, the fact that this variety was universal to both soldiers and missionaries suggests a similar way of perceiving the natives that reflected the similar cultural backgrounds and experiences with Indians in New Spain.

In addition to describing the character of the Californians, explorers sometimes included verbal illustrations of physical features. These depictions varied widely, but many mentioned with some frequency skin color, health, and physical build of the Indians. As with the previous category, often only a

¹⁶ Francisco Antonio Mourelle, *Voyage of the Sonora in the Second Bucareli Expedition*, trans. by Daines Barrington, (San Francisco: Thomas C. Russell, 1920), 24.

¹⁷ José Longinos Martínez, *California in 1792: The Expedition of José Longinos Martínez*, trans. by Lesley Byrd Simpson, (San Marino, Calif.: Huntington Library Publications, 1938), 46.

short sketch of these aspects was included in their accounts. Notable exceptions are found in the detailed reports of Fages and Martínez. However, Fages's account is difficult to generalize about due to its wide contrasts as evidenced in this delineation: "The natives throughout . . . are, generally speaking, rather dark, dirty, of bad figure, short of stature, and slovenly, like the preceding ones, except those who live near the Río de los Temblores . . . these Indians are fair, have light hair, and are good looking."¹⁸ Within this short passage he described one group in very negative and disapproving terms, while acknowledging the opposite could also be true. Moreover, this distinction might reflect cultural bias. In contrast, most accounts by the Franciscans contained barely a notice of physical features.

Fages provided the most information about aboriginal skin color. The hues varied from a "dark" color to "light brown" to fair skin.¹⁹ The inclusion of the color of skin points toward the purpose for which a report was written. As its title clearly states, *A Historical, Political, and Natural Description of California*, Fages's work was meant to present a full and accurate explication of all aspects of the region, including native life.²⁰

The other Spanish accounts, both by laymen and padres, contained little note of skin color. If this aspect garnered any attention at all, it consisted of a brief note that the complexion of one tribelet was the same as another's.²¹ Moreover, the fact that pigmenta-

¹⁸ Fages, *Description*, 21.

¹⁹ Fages, *Description*, 11.

²⁰ This type of work fits into the "ethnographic" tradition created in sixteenth century texts, studied by A. Pasdeu.

²¹ Mourelle, *Voyage*, 55.

tion was usually *not* included in these compilations is as significant as if it had been explicitly cited. The exclusion indicates that native coloration was a *given*, implying that it was almost a non-descriptor, and not essential. While skin color was not generally or universally described, it would be worthy of mention if it deviated from the accepted norm. For example, Father Crespi provides an oddity with his description of one aborigine group as "of a fair complexion, bearded, and white."²² Certainly *white* natives qualified as a significant variation from the dominant theme.²³

Physical health and stature were more frequently referred to than coloration. Although these inclusions seem to be more objective, reflecting the reality of indigenous life, they still involved subjective judgments. Through the eyes of the Spaniards, what exactly would qualify as *robust*, or conversely as *degenerate*? Both terms were used frequently. Some Indians were "so lean, and emaciated," Anza related, "that they looked more like skeletons from the grave

²² Crespi, *Missionary*, 283.

²³ At this point, the accuracy of this depiction must be brought into question. A few years after Crespi's diary was written, one of the Anza expeditions traveled through the same area where these supposedly white Californians lived. Father Font in his *Diary* gave an account of this second journey to the area: "We went hoping to see such Indians [the ones described as "white"], but although . . . we saw the same ones as Father Crespi and passed through the same villages, we saw no such white Indians, but only black ones like all the rest" (345). Due to this second report, it is unlikely that Crespi's account can be trusted. Nonetheless, it illustrates the point.

than human beings.”²⁴ Another description, this one by Fages, focused on a lack of food as the reason for poor health.²⁵ Both Anza and Font used the term *degenerate* with some frequency.²⁶ Yet, Font’s delineations demonstrate his tendency to describe the aborigines in less than favorable terms. The most vehement expressions were Font’s, while Crespí rarely comments on this subject. On the secular side, Mourelle, a sailor, mentioned that the Californians he encountered were “tall and stout.”²⁷ This reference to healthy natives is rare among more frequent citations of the unhealthy condition of indigenous life. However, because few accounts mention the health of the natives drawing general conclusions is difficult.

Facial features and attractiveness were also mentioned. Font criticized many of those he encountered. “The men are of medium stature, the women being somewhat smaller, round-faced, flat-faced, and rather ugly.”²⁸ Pedro Fages met some natives whom he did not judge to be ugly. His most explicit reference to “good looking” Indians was coupled with a clause that also described them as “fair, [and] hav[ing] light hair.”²⁹ A few lines earlier, he mentioned another group of aborigines, though not explicitly termed *ugly*,

²⁴ Herbert Eugene Bolton, trans. and ed., *Anza’s California Expeditions*, vol. 3, (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1930), 67.

²⁵ Fages, *Description*, 30.

²⁶ See both Font’s *Diary*, pages 195 and 279, and Bolton’s *Anza*, vol. 2, page 87. This probably refers to poor build as opposed to lacking moral sensibilities, as may be implied in a modern context.

²⁷ Mourelle, *Voyage*, 36.

²⁸ Font, *Diary*, 195.

²⁹ Fages, *Description*, 21.

their lack of attractiveness can be inferred. They were "dark, dirty, [and] of bad figure."³⁰ This coupling of adjectives presents a possible link between *shades* of skin and concepts of beauty.

The category of native appearance consists of those attributes conditioned by indigenous culture, namely: clothing, hair, and body ornamentation. Although the appearance of the *indios* might vary depending on the tribelet, there were many similarities in the way that this reality was perceived by the invaders. Font and Crespí provided the most numerous and detailed records of the Indian clothing—or its lack. They frequently commented on male nakedness, which was almost universal. But, the reporters failed to express shock at this fact, perhaps due to their previous exposure to other tribelets in California. Sometimes these portrayals incorporated value judgments about immodesty. A few accounts contained images of body coverings of some sort, noting that these did not conform to Spanish standards of decency. For instance, Mourelle related one native custom in which the Indians "bind their loins and legs quite down to their ancles [sic]."³¹ While a few lines earlier, Mourelle stated that "the men however do not wear any covering."³² Although difficult to imagine exactly what the binding of loins consisted of, this fashion apparently failed to qualify as clothing at all in Spanish eyes.

Although the men described were almost universally naked, the clothing of the women received extensive attention from Fathers Font and Crespí. What

³⁰ Fages, *Description*, 21.

³¹ Mourelle, *Voyage*, 25.

³² Mourelle, *Voyage*, 25.

concerned these padres was the *modesty* of the women's attire. According to Crespi, "the women go modestly covered in front with strings which they wear tied at the waist and behind with skins of deer or seal: they also cover the breasts and the rest of the body with a sort of cape made of hare and rabbit skins."³³ Martínez, the naturalist and explorer, offered a different perspective. "The dress and adornment of the women is graceful. From the waist down they customarily wear two very soft pieces of buckskin, the edges of which are cut into fringes and ornamented with strings of beads . . . which give a very pretty effect They arrange it very gracefully, all their flesh being covered."³⁴ Thus, while Martínez did refer to *modesty* directly, he centered more on the *gracefulness* and *beauty* of the clothing. The divergence between what the religious man and the secular man chose to make the focus of his description reveals one of the few differences that existed between these Spaniards. An officer was much more likely to make judgments about the appeal of the native women. In contrast, a Franciscan was more concerned with modesty, and by extension, the morality or sinfulness of the covering. Likewise, a padre was not inclined to comment on the allure of the females.

While mentioning the clothing seems expected, the inclusion of native hair in these accounts appears more curious. The length, style, and even the manner of trimming, were described to varying degrees. Although both seculars and religious depicted the aborigine's locks, the majority of comments come from

³³ Crespi, *Missionary*, 17.

³⁴ Martínez, *Journal*, 43.

the former. According to Martínez, Indians dressed it: "with great taste . . . [and] in the following fashion: the bangs cut very short and smoothed forward . . . which they trim daily by means of a piece of burning pine bark."³⁵ Mourelle commented that some of the natives' hair was "disheveled."³⁶ Anza likewise took note of the Indians' tresses, describing their length, how they were worn—in two instances, "on top of their heads."³⁷ Fray Font also commented on the length of the hair and its style.³⁸

Many accounts referred to male facial hair. Anza provided a description of the Channel Indians: "These here have sparser beards than those on the other side."³⁹ Both Font and Crespí also mentioned beards. However, no explicit references were made to any clean-shaven *indios*. Why this feature was deemed important enough to be included in some descriptions is difficult to speculate on. One reason could have been that the hirsute Spaniards would have found the majority of the beard-less Californians an oddity. Indeed, if most of them were clean-faced, those with beards would have seemed singular.

A third feature of appearance was ornamentation. Frequently in along with the references to native dress and hair, the *indios* were described as painted or in some other way decorated. "Their arms," wrote Mourelle, "are covered with circles of small points in the same manner that common people in Spain often

³⁵ Martínez, *Journal*, 43.

³⁶ Mourelle, *Voyage*, 25.

³⁷ Bolton, *Anza*, vol.3, 136, 139.

³⁸ Font, *Diary*, 279, 329.

³⁹ Bolton, *Anza*, vol.3, 138. The *Channel Indians* were the natives of the Santa Barbara Channel.

paint ships and anchors.”⁴⁰ Font also noted that some of the Californians were painted with “their faces striped and marked.”⁴¹ Both missionaries and explorers included this aspect in their portrayals of the *indios* because it sparked their curiosity and notice.

Some natives exhibited other types of body ornamentation. For instance, Font related that “all these Indians whom we saw today [have] ears and noses pierced and little sticks thrust through them.”⁴² Piercing received Mourelle’s attention also. Among the aborigines who lived near the coast, or traded with the tribelets of the coast, shells were depicted as being used as decorations on their clothing and often as jewelry. Crespí noted both that “the women wear . . . bracelets of shells” and that “hanging from their hair they had snails and seashells.”⁴³ Other accounts observed that “sweet-smelling herbs” were worn either around the head, neck, or waist.⁴⁴ These types of decoration received less frequent notice than body painting. The lack of portrayals in some reports may indicate an absence of ornamentation among some tribelets. Or it may mean that the practice was of little consequence or interest to the Spaniards.

Most accounts included at least a word or two about Indian weaponry. Franciscans and government officials alike noticed when the Californians were armed and the quality of weapon construction. Both made assessments of how warlike the natives were. Most frequently bows and arrows armed the *indios*,

⁴⁰ Mourelle, *Voyage*, 25.

⁴¹ Font, *Diary*, 279.

⁴² Font, *Diary*, 329.

⁴³ Crespí, *Missionary*, 37, 81.

⁴⁴ Mourelle, *Voyage*, 25.

but the Spaniards mentioned clubs and other weapons as well. These delineations varied from simple statements, such as Crespi's portrayal that "they are well armed with bows and quivers of arrows," to more detailed ones.⁴⁵ For instance, Fray Font gave an elaborate account: "some of them . . . [were] carrying bows and arrows, for all had very good ones and well made, the bow of good wood, small and wound with tendons . . . and the arrows of little reeds, very smooth, well made, and with flints, transparent and very sharp."⁴⁶ Anza, Fages, and Costansó all mentioned whether or not the Indians bore weapons.⁴⁷

These officials, concerned with the pacification of the Californians and the security of the Spaniards, would have needed to be aware of armament. The missionaries were equally conscious of the presence of weapons. They had reason to be concerned for their personal well-being, especially after a native uprising in San Diego in which one padre was killed.⁴⁸ In a letter to Palóu, Serra related the personal danger he felt. "Here on three different occasions I have been in danger of death at the hands of these wretched heathen."⁴⁹ Nevertheless, there was disparity in the level of fear expressed by the padres. This might be indica-

⁴⁵ Crespi, *Missionary*, 4-5.

⁴⁶ Font, *Diary*, 376-7.

⁴⁷ See Bolton, *Anza*, vol. 2, 87-88, and 90, Costansó, Miguel, *The Costansó Narrative of the Portolá Expedition: First Chronicle of the Spanish Conquest of Alta California*, trans. Ray Brandes (Newhall, Calif.: Hogarth Press, 1970), 85, and Fages, *Description*, 17.

⁴⁸ Palóu, *Founding*, 87. For a detailed account of the rebellion see Font's *Diary*, 186-243.

⁴⁹ Palóu, *Founding*, 94.

tive of personality differences; the level of fear of each individual influenced how important it was to pay attention to the armament of the Indians.

Two assessments, one secular and one religious, of the native propensity for war complement each other. Font, with his familiar fearfulness and sensitivity, made several such mentions in his diary. However, in the three separate examples where he addressed this subject, he always concluded that “they do not give signs of being warlike or evil intentioned.”⁵⁰ Conversely, Fages described some Californians as warlike and others as not. Perhaps, the term *docile* might translate into *unwarlike*, and thus would be important for this category. Taking into account these additional expressions, there were many more references to docility than were first apparent. Yet, this passage from Palóu reveals underlying Spanish attitudes: “In proof of this kindly disposition which is found among that vast and most docile number of heathen . . . Don Gaspar de Portolá assures us . . . that our Spaniards remain in Monte-Rey as secure as if they were in this very capital [in Mexico]. But nevertheless the new Presidio has been left sufficiently garrisoned with troops and artillery and abundant munitions of war.”⁵¹ This assessment underscores the ultimate and baseline insecurity of the Spaniards and their inability to trust their experiences of the *indios*, instead relying on predetermined perceptions.

Many accounts are too brief to provide a solid understanding of the Spanish perceptions of Californians’ customs and behavior. The two exceptions are

⁵⁰ Font, *Diary*, 333.

⁵¹ Palóu, *Founding*, 116.

the documents written by Fages and Martínez, where the level of detail is unequalled. One behavior solely described by the padres was the native reaction to religious overtures. Commonalities are evident in their statements. "I made the sign of a cross on each of them," related Palóu, "and they were very attentive to the ceremony although they did not understand it nor the purpose to which it was directed."⁵² Father Crespi's narration mirrors Palóu's: "I have made them say the acts of Faith, Hope, and Charity, and, without knowing what they did, they repeated it with devotion and tenderness, or at least their voices caused tenderness in my heart."⁵³ While both Palóu and Crespi acknowledged that the Indians did not understand the padres' behavior, the latter admitted to a strong desire to discover an innate reverence for God among the *indios*.

Marriage and sexual practices constituted another category of description by priests and laymen alike. Fages related the practice of chiefs taking more than one wife and how marriages were consummated. "When a single man and a single woman are seen together at dawn savagely scratched, it is a sign that they have contracted matrimony during the night . . . [and] they are considered publicly and notoriously as man and wife by the entire village."⁵⁴ Crespi mentioned the number of wives as well, but he did not make any value judgments about this practice. However, the other padres and seculars often did not

⁵² Bolton, *Anza*, vol. 2, 412-3.

⁵³ Crespi, *Missionary*, 138.

⁵⁴ Fages, *Description*, 21, 58.

depict these aspects of native life in any detailed way.⁵⁵ To the priests especially, these customs would likely have been considered sinful, although they were rarely mentioned.

The missionaries' silence on these topics makes sense when seen in the context of their reports. The effort and time required to ascertain the essential features of aboriginal life was not available to the priests on their first trips into California.⁵⁶ This can be seen by comparing one padre's report with the more detailed report of Fages. During his trip to Monterey in 1769, Fray Crespí related a curiosity. "In this village, as well as others in the channel, we have seen heathen men wearing the dress of women We have not been able to understand what it means, nor what the purpose is; time, and an understanding of the language, when it is learned, will make it clear."⁵⁷ This clarity was achieved with Fages's illumination in 1775: "I have substantial evidence that those Indian men who, both here and farther inland, are observed in the dress, clothing, and character of women . . . pass as sodomites by profession . . . and permit the heathen to practice the execrable, unnatural abuse of their bodies. They are called *joyas* and are held in great esteem."⁵⁸ Fages explained in more detail what Crespí did not have time to figure out.

⁵⁵ This statement is limited to the accounts I have been referencing.

⁵⁶ Alternatively, the priests might have been worried about their superiors' reaction to reports of sodomy among the *indios*. In other words, this could have been an attempt to hide a less-than-satisfactory feature of Indian life.

⁵⁷ Crespí, *Missionary*, 171.

⁵⁸ Fages, *Description*, 33.

The subject of food concerned both the Franciscans and the government officials. The vitals eaten, the method of obtaining them, the availability of and implements used to get and store food were all delineated by the Spaniards. Because the missions required substantial efforts to feed the native population, it is not surprising that this information was provided abundantly in the accounts of all the Spaniards. Since the first expeditions to California arrived at San Diego, food had become a significant object of concern. In the beginning, the colonizers tended to rely upon provisions shipped by sea, but this proved difficult at first due to the irregularity of the shipments.⁵⁹ Once the basic rations were provided for missionaries and soldiers, a new problem arose: to entice the aborigines to enter the missions. Frequently, they were offered food.⁶⁰ Once the natives stayed, it was the responsibility of the padres to ensure a constant supply of nourishment. The difficulty in securing this varied by mission; some were able to sustain the *neophyte* populations through farming, while others were forced to allow the *indios* to live primarily in their villages and obtain food in the traditional way.⁶¹ Consequently, providing information about the food of the indigenous people was vital to the beginnings—and success—of the missionization process.

⁵⁹ Engstrand, "The Occupation," 95-6.

⁶⁰ Edward Castillo, "The Other Side of the 'Christian Curtain:' California Indians and the Missionaries," *The Californians* 10, no. 2 (1992): 10. See also: R. Douglas Hurt, *The Indian Frontier, 1763-1846*, (Albuquerque, N. Mex.: University of New Mexico Press, 2002), 58.

⁶¹ *Neophyte* was the word used to describe the Indians who converted to Christianity.

The many distinct languages in California provided another challenge to converting and pacifying the *indios*. As one historian noted, “California proved [to be] one of the most linguistically diverse regions in the world.”⁶² Father Font’s *Diary* contains many descriptions of the language of the aborigines, which he termed as “ugly” or worse. “There are no letters to express such barbarous and ridiculous cracking and whistling and guttural sounds.”⁶³ Martínez expressed the sense of confusion felt at the variety of tongues, many of which were entirely distinct from the others.⁶⁴ With such a vast array of languages, the process of conversion was difficult. It would not have been practical for the Franciscans to learn all these native speeches, so instead they relied on the neophytes to learn Spanish and then to teach the other Indians the catechism in their native tongues.⁶⁵ In short, the priests’ initial reactions to the languages eventually impacted and anticipated proselytization methods.

If there was one underlying feature that informed Spanish perceptions of the Indian world—whether of language, culture, or physical appearance—it was utility. Throughout the accounts of the secular and religious explorers of eighteenth-century California, a threefold purpose is evident: to convert the *indios* to Catholic Christianity; to acculturate and civilize the indigenous people as Spaniards; and to pacify the Californians in order to facilitate the preceding goals.

⁶² James A Sandos, *Converting California: Indians and the Franciscans in the Missions*, (New Haven: Conn.: Yale University Press, 2004), 15.

⁶³ Font, *Diary*, 149, 279.

⁶⁴ Martínez, *Journal*, 48.

⁶⁵ Hurt, *Indian Frontier*, 58-9.

These objectives affected the ways in which the Spaniards described the aborigines, yet there are still other aspects that informed them. Although some differences existed, similarities between accounts given by the missionaries and the officials are striking. These commonalities reflected not only a shared purpose, but also a common cultural and social conditioning that produced values and norms that exerted enormous influence. Their perceptions of Indian life were conditioned by these societal norms and values, which were shaped by nearly three centuries of experience with the indigenous peoples of North and South America. Many variations between the accounts occurred not between Franciscan and soldier, but between differing personalities. These men came to California with certain expectations and also with specific concerns and goals. Their observations were also affected by their apprehensions. Security of person and of settlements was a paramount concern for both the padres and those responsible for protecting all the Spaniards, the soldiers and commanders. This multitude of factors helps to explain how and why the Spaniards depicted the people they encountered throughout California in the manner that they did.