of the bow and arrow with small points and the introduction of the practice of cremation. Small, mobile groups of people lived in dispersed settlements, using the resources of both the desert and the higher elevations of the Peninsular Ranges. Late Prehistoric peoples made use of an extensive trail system for resource exploitation and trade. Today these trails are marked by scattered potsherds as well as by trailside rock art and shrines.

Dozens of prehistoric and historic archaeological sites are located in San Felipe Valley. Habitation and milling sites are concentrated near the two semi-permanent waterways, Banner Creek and San Felipe Creek. According to Rae Schwaderer, aboriginal settlements around Sentenac Cienega were seasonal, “most likely occupied in the spring through early fall.” Archaeological evidence shows that the inhabitants may have taken advantage of such local resources as agave, mesquite, oaks, saltbush, catclaw, cholla, wild plum, native grasses, tule roots, pollen, and yerba mansa. They probably also hunted bighorn sheep, deer, antelope, rabbits, rodents, lizards, snakes, and caterpillars.

**Ethnography**

From the difficulty of communication with the Indians through a third, and sometimes a fourth language, much of the information about their mannerisms and customs is so vague or contradictory, I have deemed it better to withhold it, and wait for prolonged intercourse and more favorable circumstances. They cannot comprehend the object of such inquiries, and their character like that of all ignorant people, being suspicious, they give vague or contradictory answers.

---*Samuel P. Heintzelmann, 1857.*

Having witnessed the eviction of the kupa people, the inhabitants of wilalkal have no trust in the white man. They believe that by finding out the history of kupa the white people were able to take their land and they have no desire to be treated in the same way.

*William Duncan Strong, 1929.*
As these two quotations indicate, inquiry into the culture of an ethnic group is not a simple matter, and particularly among the Indians of San Diego County. The vague, contradictory information given to Heintzelmann is no surprise; as a U.S. Army officer he led several campaigns against local Indians, so they no doubt viewed his "inquiries" more as interrogations. Seven decades later, the Berkeley anthropologist Strong encountered similar evasions and resistance among the people of Wilalkal or San Ysidro, a village located not far from San Felipe on Los Coyotes Indian Reservation. Natives know all too well the uses to which history can be put.

Due in part to the indigenous suspicion of ethnography and in part to the inherent mixing of peoples in this land of confused relief, the ethnicity of the indigenous inhabitants of San Felipe is not clear. Various observers have designated San Felipe residents as Northern Diegueño or Ipai, Southern Diegueño or Tipai (Kumeyaay), and Kamia (Eastern Diegueño or Desert Kumeyaay). Complicating matters further, intermarriage was frequent among San Felipe and neighboring tribes, including the Cupeños and Cahuillas who lived immediately to the north.\textsuperscript{12}

Apparently a multicultural mix of Indian peoples occupied San Felipe Valley seasonally, hunting ducks and geese in the ciénega, gathering mesquite beans from the bosques near the stream, and trading for goods in a well-developed network of trails among coastal, desert, and mountain peoples.\textsuperscript{13} There appear to have been several village sites in the valley. The Kwaaymii elder Tom Lucas identified the nearby desert area of Harper Flat as a spring meeting ground for wide-ranging tribes, including those who sometimes occupied San Felipe.\textsuperscript{14}
Since the 1950's the anthropologist Florence Shipek has conducted archival research and hundreds of interviews with southern California Indians regarding former land management practices and historic environmental change. Shipek estimates the precontact San Diego County Indian population at 6 to 7 people per square mile. This is the same population density at which the Near East, Mexico, and Peru switched to irrigation agriculture. It is also the point at which modern American agriculture switches from subsistence to commercial agriculture.¹⁵

The ability of regional indigenes to maintain such high population densities testifies to a sophisticated human relationship with a xeric environment. Shipek’s Kumeyaay sources told her of piling boulders in creekbeds to create ponds and increase absorption of water into the soil. They also recalled aligning rocks on slopes in order to slow water flow. Wide-mouth ollas were used to collect dew from the dripline of trees. Meanwhile, land was burned regularly – some spots were burned yearly – to reduce the chance of catastrophic wildfire and to encourage the growth of desirable plants.¹⁶ Ipai basketweaver Justin F. Farmer, for instance, explains that after collecting a year’s supply of shoots from the plant *pellychaa* (*sumac, Rhus trilobata*), traditional basketmakers would burn the older growth. “This assured that next year, the first year growth would be long and first quality.”¹⁷

**History**

San Felipe is something of a “Bermuda Triangle” for historical evidence from the first half of the nineteenth century. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the botanist Thomas Coulter visited in 1832. He collected plant specimens and took field notes on the area,
but his manuscripts were lost in transit between London and Dublin. \( ^{18} \) John Mix Stanley was General Kearny’s staff artist in 1846, but almost all of his work was later lost in a series of fires: one at the Smithsonian Institution in 1865, a later fire at P.T. Barnum’s American Museum in New York, and finally a studio fire in Detroit that destroyed most of his field sketches. \( ^{19} \) Another artist, John Woodhouse Audubon – son of the famous naturalist – passed through in 1849, and though his journal and one sketch of San Felipe survive today, 200 of his sketches went down with the ship *Central America*, on its way back to the east coast. \( ^{20} \) Our understanding of San Felipe’s environmental history would no doubt be much greater had we all of the work of these three men at hand.

Still, a great deal of record remains, and from it a story of heavy impacts from migration and grazing emerges. San Felipe Valley forms part of a major historical transportation corridor. Indians migrated along the trail that ran the length of the valley for centuries, and prior to the construction of the Southern Pacific Railroad the valley lay along the principal route into southern California from Sonora or the southern United States. The thousands of people who traveled through the valley almost always brought along livestock of some sort; the number of cattle, mules, horses, sheep and goats – and we can add even camels – driven through San Felipe during the 1800s may well have totaled in the millions. As the historian of San Felipe Ben Dixon wrote,

> California horses and mules were herded over this trail to Sonora and Arizona. Herds of sheep numbering into thousands were driven in the opposite direction to feed the hungry miners of the Mother Lode. Herds of longhorn cattle from Texas, New and Old Mexico were brought into California via San Felipe. \( ^{21} \)

**Forage and Water: The Spanish and Mexican Periods**

The first Spanish encounter with the San Felipe area came in 1795, when an exploratory party including Fray Juan Mariner entered Valle de San Jose, known today as
Warner Ranch, just to the west of San Felipe. Shortly thereafter, both Mission San Diego and Mission San Luis Rey placed cattle in Valle de San Jose. Wind-borne seeds of European and African grasses may actually have preceded the Spanish as they moved into San Felipe, but the replacement of native grasses by exotics was greatly accelerated by the arrival of the missionaries and their cattle. An assistencia of Mission San Diego was established at Santa Ysabel in 1818, and Mission records show converts from San Felipe in the same year.

For years the Spanish tried to establish an overland route between California and Sonora, but had been stymied by the belligerence of the Quechans at the Yuma Crossing of the Colorado River. In 1781, Quechans destroyed Missions Concepción and San Pedro y San Pablo, both located near the present site of the city of Yuma. The road through the Yuma area fell into disuse for over forty years. In the mid 1820’s a series of events facilitated the opening of what was to become known as the Sonora Road, or Southern Emigrant Trail, through San Felipe Valley. Santiago Arguello pursued Quechan horse thieves through San Felipe Valley in 1824 and reported the route to Mexican authorities. The next year, surprisingly, the Quechans sought peace with the Mexicans and made the Colorado River crossing available again.

By 1831, American mountain men were traversing the valley regularly. In that year David Jackson led a mule-buying expedition through San Felipe. This expedition included a young Connecticut Yankee, Jonathan Trumbull Warner, who several years later would receive the Mexican land grant for the neighboring Valle de San Jose.

Many other trappers must have traveled through San Felipe in the 1830’s, for Kit Carson guided General Stephen Kearny’s Army of the West in 1846, and Antoine Leroux,
Pauline Weaver, and Jean Baptiste Charbonneau guided the Mormon Battalion several weeks later, showing that mountain men were quite familiar with the San Felipe route.

In 1834 Rafael Amador impressed government officials when he made a mail trip using the San Felipe route in the record time of 40 days from Mexico City to Monterey, despite the loss of his horse, equipment and clothing to the Quechans. After Amador’s trip efforts redoubled to keep the Sonora Road open. Perhaps it was in an effort to slow the trade in stolen stock that the Mexican government granted San Felipe Rancho to Luis Areñás, a Los Angeles merchant, in 1834, but it is doubtful that Areñás ever resided on the ranch. As Phil Brigandi writes, “Arenas seems to have been more of an investor than a ranchero; he had claims on more than half a dozen ranchos up and down the state, including the Pauba Ranch at Temecula.”

Felipe Castillo became Areñás’s mayordomo at San Felipe. Santiago Arguello testified that he visited San Felipe Rancho in 1844, where Felipe Castillo had a house: “He had a wooden house there, a corral and some small pieces of land enclosed and cultivated. There were horses and cattle on the place belonging to Castillo.” In 1845, Areñás wrote that he had been granted the land “some time ago, but cannot maintain it...” He recommended that title be transferred to Castillo, expressly in order to reduce the flow of stolen stock to Sonora:

For the reasons aforesaid and bearing in mind that this location, in being occupied by some honest, and for his stock, careful person may be of some utility to a party of the country because the robberies of horses that habitually take place, being carried to the department of Sonora will be avoided.

Areñás added, “... [Castillo is] a person who will populate it and keep vigilance on that part of the frontier.”
In granting the rancho to Castillo, Governor Pio Pico stipulated, “He shall enjoy it freely and exclusively, devoting it to the breeding of cattle and cultivation of the soil.” The conditions of the land grant show that Castillo was expected to do more than keep Indians from transporting stolen stock: “…[Castillo] shall take care that the ‘Indios gentiles’ of San Felipe shall always live in peace and observe good conduct, for which purpose the government recommends that principles of strictest morality be inculcated and disseminated among them.” On May 30th 1846, Pico granted the land to Castillo, “enjoining him always to maintain peaceable relations with the heathen Indians of San Felipe and to impart them moral ideas, and to look upon them with compassion and not to be remiss in watching over their conduct; for if it be bad, he may set about correcting them.”

Betty Rivers states, “Southern California gold deposits, discovered near Newhall in 1841, were worked chiefly by miners from Sonora,” and these miners no doubt traveled the Sonora Road through San Felipe. Ben Dixon, citing “miscellaneous files in the Serra Museum,” found numerous allusions to travel in the 1840s between Sonora and California. As the Californios were growing steadily more uneasy about the possibility of an American invasion, they increased their focus on the Sonoran Road as their principal connection to central Mexico, an avenue for both economic and military security. Dixon notes, “Don Antonio Coronel led a caballa of 100 animals across the desert via San Felipe in November 1846.” Felipe Castillo accompanied Coronel toward Sonora, but the trip was never completed, for the Californios’ fears were soon confirmed. Quechans informed Coronel, pausing at Algodones, that a large party of Americans was encamped on the opposite bank of the Colorado. The invaders – Stephen W. Kearny’s
U.S. Army of the West—captured Castillo with his dispatches intended for Sonora, but
Coronel doubled back with the remainder of the party and spied on the Americans during
their march west.\textsuperscript{34}

\textit{Forage and Water: The Americans Arrive}

When Kearny’s dragoons reached San Felipe, the expedition’s scientific officer,
William H. Emory, made notes on the local vegetation. Californio stock had apparently
not exhausted the grass, but timber was none too abundant in the vicinity.

Our camp was in a long field of grass, three or four miles in extent, through which a warm
stream flowed, and drained through a canyon to the north, abreast of the village. We went
to the barren hills and collected dry sage and scrub mesquite, with which we made a feeble
fire. The larrea Mexicana grew here also, but it is unfit for fuel.\textsuperscript{35}

Captain Johnston, meantime, complained about the quality of San Felipe’s forage:

We ... camped on the vegus San Philippe, near the deserted Indian village; ... the water of
the vegus is apparently fresh, but the adjacent swamp is salty and the grass bad for animals,
especially at this season. The grass, the long salty grass of the Del Norte, and the soda
glass.\textsuperscript{36}

In his journal entry for the following day, Johnston blamed San Felipe’s grass for the loss
of most of the company’s remaining horses, a loss that would handicap the Americans a
few days later at the Battle of San Pasqual (in which Johnston would lose his life as he led
the charge astride a newly acquired horse): “Dec. 2: ...the few remaining horses except
one, gave out today, having been purged by the salt grass, and very much weakened.”\textsuperscript{37}

John S. Griffin, Kearny’s company surgeon, also kept a journal of the Army of
the West’s journey. “About sun down we came to an Indian village [San Felipe]—
deserted . . .,” Griffin wrote on December 1, 1846. Then he indicated how the army dealt
with the dearth of fuel-wood: “The country is in great measure destitute of timber and we
were obliged to destroy their lodges for fire wood.” Griffin mentioned that associated
with the Indian village were the “remains of cornfields and pea patches.” \(^{38}\) In addition to practicing mission-style agriculture, local Indians were still harvesting—and undoubtedly maintaining through burning—traditional materials such as grasses. Just before arriving at San Felipe, Griffin noted at Vallecito:

...there are several old cornfields about, cultivated by the Indians—and the advanced guard found a bale of grass from which the Indians make rope laying by the side of the stream—some of it twisted into strings on sticks—this no doubt had just been left by the owners, who fled when they discovered us—the grass is of a fine beautiful fiber—white—and I would think—as good ropes might be made from it as the Manila rope. They seem also to use the grass for sewing—as we found with the bale of grass—several of their needles made of hard sticks painted and with an eye drilled through them. \(^{39}\)

Note that Griffin guessed that Vallecito residents “fled when they discovered” the approaching army. San Felipe may have been deserted for the same reason.

Several weeks after Kearny passed through, Philip St. George Cooke led the march of the Mormon Battalion through San Felipe Valley. The 400 men and their teams had suffered extreme deprivations on their passage through the desert; San Felipe offered the first glimpse of the fertile country of California. Robert Bliss of Company B stated, “For the last week we have been among the mountains but we have come today where grass is growing two or three inches in some places. The country looks better as we approach the sea.” \(^{40}\) According to Priscilla Lyons, “…George Washington Hancock, Company C, stated that because enemies had spread false rumors of the Mormon Battalion to the villagers, the people had fled taking their food and cattle, and left only a few old or sick Indians…” \(^{41}\) Sergeant Daniel Tyler concurred, writing, “…we had an exceeding rough, rocky road to San Phillippi a deserted Indian village, the inhabitants, probably, leaving at our approach.” \(^{42}\)

Cooke’s first orders were to turn loose the teams: “I arrive at about eleven o’clock, turned the mules out to graze, and killed two small, poor beeves for
The starving mules and soldiers must have exerted heavy pressure on the local ecosystem. James Brown wrote that the men went so far as to eat unprocessed live oak acorns above San Felipe, though they found them “bitter as wormwood.” Lyons states that on the way to San Felipe, “Many of the soldiers tried to supplement their rations with mesquite pods which they ground and cooked.” Unfortunately for these men, their digestive systems were not ready for the dietary change, and the mesquite took a measure of revenge: “They regretted this addition to their diet when they became extremely constipated from eating the mesquite.”

In 1848 the Gold Rush was in full force, and Sonorans beat Americans to the mines. Cave J. Couts wrote,

The whole state of Sonora is on the move, are passing us in gangs daily, and say they have not yet started. Naked and shirt tailed Indians and Mexicans or Californians, go and return in 15 or 20 days with over a pound of pure gold each, per day, and say ‘they had bad luck and left.’

Lt. Couts was traveling with Graham’s Battalion, another military expedition that must have taxed the ecosystem along the trail. The census at the Yuma Crossing shows that the battalion included 277 men, 200 teamsters, two quartermaster’s men, 92 wagons, and over 1000 horses and mules.

The total number of Sonorans, American Argonauts, and other emigrants who passed through San Felipe can only be conjectured. Rivers puts the estimate at over 200,000 between 1845 and the mid-1870’s, with over half this number occurring in the Gold Rush years, between 1848 and 1853. Some indication of these numbers are provided by customs house records at San Pedro, which state that over 10,000 Sonorans passed through Los Angeles each spring, many returning to Mexico in the fall. On
March 24, 1849, the Sonoran Don Jose Elias recorded that he crossed the Colorado River and that a thousand other persons crossed at the same time.50

The human torrent, with its animals, devastated the resources of the desert and overwhelmed its indigenous inhabitants. George W.B. Evans wrote at Vallecito in September 1849, “At this water we found over five hundred mules and horses belonging to emigrants now resting after fatigues of the journey across the *jornada*. There are also three Indian families living here.”51 Many of the emigrants didn’t hesitate to resort to thievery, as described by Charles Pancoast at Yuma:

> These Yuma Indians had a bad feeling toward the White People, and their hostility had lately been increased in consequence of the act of a party of Texas Emigrants, who, being too indolent to gather the Mesquite beans from the trees, had broken open the Indian Caches where they stored their winter supply and loaded their Wagons with the best beans. We did not do this, but picked up 200 bushels or more from under the Trees, our Cattle eating as much more, which did not please the Indians, as it helped to diminish their supply.52

Perhaps, if some of these emigrants consumed some of these beans themselves, they later suffered the same punishment for their crime that had earlier afflicted the members of the Mormon Battalion who ate mesquite.

Officials in San Diego became aware of the devastation of resources and the sufferings of the emigrants. If they showed little concern for the land and indigenous inhabitants, they demonstrated much concern for the emigrants. Benjamin Hayes arrived at San Felipe on January 12, 1850, and found Col. Agoston Harazthy and Dr. W. R. Kerr established there in a rescue operation for struggling 49-ers.53

Large herds of cattle and sheep were driven along the trail during the Gold Rush, in order to satisfy the huge demand for meat at the mines. John R. Bartlett gave an indication of the stresses that these animals placed on the land, and that the land placed on them, in 1852.
...we saw along the banks of Carrizo Creek, near our camp, an innumerable quantity of the bones and dried carcasses of sheep.... Here were the bodies of many thousands of sheep lying in place within the space of a hundred yards. This wholesale mortality is said to have been caused by their eating of a poisonous plant; but as we could find no specimens of such a plant, we believed that the poor creatures, after traversing the desert and being probably three or four days without water, had drunk themselves to death. Most of the bodies were in the immediate vicinity of the stream. 54

Throughout the Gold Rush, though it must have experienced heavy impacts, emigrants continued to express appreciation for San Felipe’s grass and water. Couts wrote in 1848, “On 24th reached San Felippe, a miserable dirty little Indian ranche in the mountains, but found good water and grazing and passed Christmas Day.” He adds somewhat cryptically, “I thought ducks and snipes were in great abundance on the little branch, but have since found that there were none at all.” 55

William R. Goulding stopped in San Felipe in August 1849. Other travelers had claimed a lack of timber at San Felipe, but Goulding presents a picture, the most detailed one that we have to this point, of a culturally and ecologically vital place.

We gradually descended into the valley of the deserted village of San Fellippi and our eyes were gladdened with the Evergreen oak and Ceder with the Willow bank tree, and now the beautiful velvet leaf Shrub Sage impregnating the air with its fragrant smell as we rode along. Occasionally the behive and Bayonet Cactus presented itself to our view, and some the “Agave Americana” or Centennial Plant, some of which were in full bloom. About 4 P.M. we came up to this ruins of San Fellippi. Here some 30 small rude constructed huts occupied by Puebla Indians and Mexicans. Several enclosed gardens with melons beans onions, &c. These people seemed much better informed than any we had heretofore seen since entering the South Mountains of California.

There were many women amongst them and all were busily employed in drying and cleaning their maize and acorns and ground nuts and berries of various sorts, particularly a species of Elder, both red and white, which they had spread on sheets of muslin in the Sun. Also some had large vessels full of figs from the Cactus of which they make a sort of sugar. All these women wore frocks or Peddicoats, and caps as before described as made from the fibers of the Muscal Plant.

Our camp was pitched in a field like of grass three or four miles in extent through which flowed a small stream towards north, abreast of the village which at this time was all in ruins, on the base of the high mountains which still range all sides of us, from 3 to 5,000 feet high, and to the north was close to our Camp. We collected sufficient dry sage and scrub mesquite roots and bushes with which we made fires to cook our supper. 56

The same here as all over the Indian or Mexican settlements, the woman is the worker, and slave to the man. Two of these woman passed my mess fire with large
hamper like baskets on their backs like a mule with acorns and berrys which they had been collecting in the hills during the day and now returning to their wigwams as happy and jovial as any young maidens and felt proud in telling us they were “now Americanos” and “no more Mexicanos.” Numbers of their women and children fetched us milk “Latha”—and Tortillas, a sort of griddle cake mixed with flour and fat and molasses, the latter only saw used at this place. I shot some black-birds (crows) and one meadow lark (the first I have seen since leaving Arkansas) and with abundance of Cactus figs we had a very fine supper. 57

John Woodhouse Audubon came through San Felipe on his way west in October of 1849. “Three days of sunny road, and three nights of freezing cold, have brought us to San Felipe,” he wrote, “and a pretty valley it is, but no water, and no wood of any consequence, still there is enough for travellers’ purposes, and sight of the trees gave us great pleasure, after the dearth of vegetation through which we have been passing…” 58

Thus Audubon provides a solution of sorts to the question of whether San Felipe had a great number of trees or not; the answer is that it depended on one’s perspective. There may not have been enough to encourage thoughts of settlement, but there were enough trees and enough fuel for “travellers’ purposes.”

William Chamberlin also visited in 1849. His party’s nighttime arrival created quite a stir, and offers another example of the kinds of impacts the emigrants had on the landscape: “The first thing we knew, our mules were into the unfenced corn patches, helping themselves, and the Indians hallowing and dogs barking, endeavoring to drive them out…” Chamberlin provided a description of the village, noting the inevitable signs of acculturation:

The village of San Felipe consists of a few miserable looking huts, built of reeds. The inhabitants cultivate a little corn, a few melons, etc.; altogether not more than one American, his wife, two children and a pig could subsist on. They also live upon mesquite beans, prickly pears, etc. … During the day we saw them butcher a poor mule, which had been left behind by some travelers… In the evening we purchased a small quantity of coarse, sandy flour, brought to camp by the Indians at $1.000 per quart; also some black, dirty molasses, made out of reeds, at 75¢ per pint…. 
A final comment of Chamberlin’s gives yet another hint of the volume of migration along the trail: “A large number of Sonorians passed to-day, on their way home.”

At Warner’s Pass in September, Lt. A. W. Whipple noted another sign of acculturation, a well-established vineyard at the Indian village. “In a ravine of superb oaks we stopped to gather grapes, for here is an Indian village, a mountain-stream, and a vineyard.” The grapes may have been used by the Indians for wine-making, for the Diegueño word list that Whipple compiled at San Felipe included entries for “Brandy” (“Quarqunc”) and “To be drunk” (“Asér-meraye”). Well before 1849, then, mission grapes and wines had colonized both the physical and the spiritual landscapes of San Felipe.

This colonization had its origins with the missions, but the full force of the destructive social effects of alcohol was not felt until the 1830’s. In a series of letters in the 1850’s to a Los Angeles newspaper, the Scottish immigrant Hugo Reid described the social changes that had come about in that city due to the secularization of the missions—changes that surely also had repercussions in San Felipe. Reid described secularization during the 1830’s as “a period of demoralization.” “Nearly all of the Gabrieleños went north,” he wrote, “while those [neophytes] of San Diego, San Luis and San Juan overran this country, filling the Angeles and surrounding ranchos with more servants than were required.” Unemployment and its attendant problems of drinking, gambling, and crime became rampant in the Indian community. Some of the new arrivals were probably from San Felipe and the desert villages.

These villages must also have been affected by the wave of immigration from Sonora that eventually exacerbated the changes in Los Angeles, for as Reid states,
People from Sonora came flocking in to assist in the general destruction... These Sonoreños overran this country. They invaded the rancheria, gambled with the men and taught them to steal; they taught the women to be worse than they were, and men and women both to drink.\textsuperscript{62}

As immigration and the attendant acculturation of Indians increased, the indigenous environmental management regime deteriorated throughout southern California. The landscape encountered by American 49ers was a different one than that seen by the Spanish eighty years previously.

The social and environmental changes they experienced contributed to the discontent of Indians along the Southern Emigrant Trail, and perhaps were leading causes of the Garra Revolt of 1850-1851. Antonio Garra was a Cupeño leader who tried to unite all Indians from Yuma to the San Joaquin Valley to oust the Americans from southern California. The revolt was put down, and Garra executed, in 1851.\textsuperscript{63} In the aftermath, environmental and social pressures on San Felipe Valley may actually have increased. Ben Dixon states, "Within two years seven military expeditions, plus supporting supply trains, passed through San Felipe. Six of the seven camped at least one night at this spot."\textsuperscript{64}

The route remained heavily used for years. The U.S. - Mexican Boundary Commission camped in San Felipe in June 1852 with six wagons, 25 pack mules and fifty mounted men.\textsuperscript{65} In 1853 came the Pacific Railroad Survey, with William Blake commenting that the area still had a bustling Indian village and excellent grass and water:

At San Felipe there are several Indian rancherias and small fields along the borders of the creek. The squaws were gathering mezquit beans, and some were seen carrying jars of water on their heads in true oriental style. At the sources of the small creek, a little higher up the valley and beyond the Indians, there is an abundance of grass and several springs of excellent water.\textsuperscript{66}
In 1857 Henry Crabbe led his ill-fated filibustering expedition through San Felipe, with 100 men.\textsuperscript{67} Also in 1857 a stage station was established in San Felipe; seven staff members were based there along with necessary livestock.\textsuperscript{68} A stage passenger commented on the look of the place in 1858: “In the valley of San Felipe we saw a number of prosperous Indian ranches, where they raise corn and melons and live much like white folks...”\textsuperscript{69}

The Civil War period saw many military marches and counter-marches through San Felipe, including that of the California Column on its advance into Arizona and New Mexico. Pack mule trains, wagon trains, and even camel trains passed through. Colonel West, leading a march through San Felipe in 1861, made the following assessment: “San Felipe is an old Overland Mail station; forage left by the line exists there and the pasturage is good. Wood has to be hauled four miles; water neither over abundant nor good; camp ground rather inferior...”\textsuperscript{70} Phineas Banning had the contract to supply Yuma from 1859 on. In 1864, records show that he sent a freight train of eighteen wagons to Yuma, each with a 10-mule team.\textsuperscript{71} In 1863 the U.S. Army used camels – remnants of the dispersed Fort Tejon “Camel Corps” – to freight materials from Los Angeles to Yuma.\textsuperscript{72}

In 1869 Stephen Powers visited San Felipe, complaining, “Californian-like, there was a flowing bar in the station, but of things to eat, not so much as a cracker, for the soldiers had eaten out everything. ...” Fortunately for Powers the soldiers had not cleaned the Indian village of food, for there he found “pancakes” as well as “[h]eaps of red and yellow maize, melons, peaches, prickly pears, catclaw and mesquite pods, and pumpkins with their fat necks ridged with whelks.”\textsuperscript{73}
San Felipe Rancho went under several changes of ownership after Felipe Castillo’s son Loreto sold the land to John Forster in 1850 for $1500—“one half in cows, and the other half in cash...”\textsuperscript{74} The Gold Rush created a huge demand for beef and mutton in California, and San Felipe was stocked at or over its carrying capacity during that period and for years afterward. In 1889, for instance, the French immigrant Fred Grand had 4,000 sheep and 600 cattle in addition to some horses grazing at San Felipe. Meanwhile, fragmentary historical evidence indicates that the number of stock driven from Texas and New Mexico during the last half of the nineteenth century was certainly in the hundreds of thousands, and possibly higher. On September 10, 1853, for instance, the \textit{San Diego Herald} reported, \textit{“One hundred and three thousand sheep were within a few days march of the [Yuma] Ferry.”}\textsuperscript{75} This may have been the very peak of the livestock boom, but Phil Brigandi has compiled a list of livestock drives that also shows, for example, 40,000 sheep driven into California from New Mexico in 1852, over 60,000 cattle ferried in 1854, 200,000 sheep driven in 1856, 130,000 in 1857, and over 100,000 in 1858.\textsuperscript{76} Though there were alternate routes, most of this livestock likely traveled through and grazed San Felipe.

At one point the San Felipe and Desert Land and Water Company, a business with big plans, owned the rancho. In 1888, the company published a pamphlet, \textit{“A Grand Scheme to Develop the Eastern Half of San Diego County,”} proposing to build a dam in “San Felipe [now called Sentenac] Canyon,” creating \textit{“a reservoir of the immense area of 12 miles in length and 2-1/2 miles in width.”} These promoters’ hyperbolic plans were
typical of real estate boosters during the boom of the eighties — they assured potential investors, "These gentle mountain slopes, naturally charming to the eye, when covered with vineyards and orchards, will excel the far-famed vine-clad hills of France and Italy."77 — and the scheme collapsed along with the boom in 1889, leaving the ranch to its ranchers, and for at least a few years more, its Indians.

In 1883 Paul Sentenac filed for a homestead on 80 acres near the cienega. Three years later he claimed an adjoining 160 acres.78 Helen Hunt Jackson reported in 1886 in A Century of Dishonor that Sentenac displaced Indians from the Scissors crossing area, took water from their village, and told "the captain that the whole village belongs to him, and that if anybody so much as hunts a rabbit on the place he will put him in prison."79 In 1889, Paul's brother Pierre filed for a homestead on 145 adjacent acres. Three years later a visitor reported the brothers were raising goats.80 In 1891, the Land and Water Company brought suit against the Sentenacs and others who had apparently been cultivating land on the south end of the rancho.81 On May 13, 1897, a judge ruled in favor of the plaintiff and transferred 57 acres to the Land and Water Company.

Only a few years after winning its suit, the company went bankrupt and Tomás L. Duque, a Cuban-born Los Angeles banker, gained ownership. Duque alternately ran his own cattle and leased the ranch. Eventually, in 1945, his renter George Sawday obtained the ranch from Duque's heirs. After Sawday's death in 1949, the ranch was split between the Starr-Rutherford and C & E cattle companies. In recent years, a new era has dawned on the rancho. Though cattle still graze portions of it, the ranching operations have sold significant acreage to the California Department of Fish and Game and to State Parks.
Several oral histories on file at the San Diego Historical Society contain clues as to the look of the land during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Former rancher William D. Hunt, interviewed in 1962, related:

We came to San Diego County in December 1888. We lived in Julian a few months, then went to San Felipe and took a little ranch there... Fifty-four years ago tomorrow I moved [back] to San Felipe. That year seemed to be somehow similar to this. Because the grass in San Felipe at that time was knee high. To me. Never been that high since.82

In another interview, Emily Sawday, who owned San Felipe Rancho along with her husband George, discussed the state of grass on her ranch in the early 1900's, and also said that the grass had decreased over time. “In those days we didn’t feed our cattle at all,” she remarked. “The cattle just had range grass. That’s a thing of the past now. We feed all our cattle now...”83

In 1903 the final blow was dealt to the San Felipe Indian village, as all of its residents were forcibly removed and relocated to Pala. Edward H. Davis, who called the village “Cienega,” described its physical setting at the time:

The last named village, consisting of ten or a dozen adobe and grass huts with a little white-washed chapel, is picturesquely situated on a small bench or mesa at the foot of Volcan Mountain and commands a fine view of the half-desert ranch of San Felipe, and the hot, barren mountains to the East. Immediately below the houses is a large willow thicket, and swamp from which the rancheria takes its name Cienega. In this swamp grow the carriso reeds from which arrow shafts are made, and also Indian hemp or rada material. The people are very poor, and as the small fields cultivated are not nearly sufficient to afford a livelihood, most of the men secure work outside.84

In 1906 George Wharton James “tramped” through the San Felipe / Vallecito area and noted signs of erosion: “The road is cut across by many barrancas, deep gullies washed out by the heavy rains, and they compel us to take many extra steps to go around them.”85 Erosion and depletion of grass may have been the results of year upon year of grazing by emigrants and ranchers. In 1919, J. Smeaton Chase visited the valley and felt compelled to deliver a brief warning about overgrazing.
Before us opened the San Felipe Valley, midway between mountains and desert and showing the characteristic features of both. The moving specks on the gray expanses were cattle, for it was still stockman's country, though rainfall here is unreliable, and disaster often points the moral of the cattleman's besetting temptation, overstocking the range.  

Carl Sauer made his studies of San Felipe in the mid-to-late 1920's. In his 1929 publication he included a photograph, reproduced here as Figure 4a (page 73), taken from the old bridge above San Felipe Creek. Of the deep gullying shown in the photo, Sauer remarked, "The entire feature apparently is induced by man."  

Roscoe and Margaret Conkling looked for the old stage station in the 1940's, but could not find it.  

The building or buildings were destroyed many years ago by flood waters of the creek which have cut a broad and deep gash in the alluvial flat on which the station originally stood. A large section of the old road likewise suffered destruction. The stream now flows in a somewhat lowered and altered channel, and trees that have gained considerable size are now growing in the eroded bed.  

As Figures 4 and 5 (pages 73 and 74) show, the changes noticed by the Conklings have progressed further in the intervening sixty years. The lowered channel of the stream is now the site of a dense riparian gallery of trees.  

The flood of 1926 undoubtedly scoured the ravine, which explains the clean stream channel seen in Sauer's photograph. But the prolific growth of riparian vegetation in the three-quarters of a century since may be due to the fire suppression. Palynologist Owen K. Davis writes of the southwestern United States, "Historic photographs... have documented the transformation of wetland vegetation during the historic period. Cienegas... that were previously open and herb dominated now are covered with dense canopies of willow, ash, walnut, and other woody plants."  

Palynological studies of wetland sediment in various locales have supported this view of historic wetland change. Older sediments contain many charred seeds, while decay fungus (associated with the
accumulated vegetation) and dung fungus (associated with grazing) dominate newer deposits. Davis concludes that in precontact times, “The cienegas appear to have been burned seasonally as a management tool to harvest cienega animals and foster agriculture.”

Tamarisk, or salt cedar, has invaded a significant portion of San Felipe’s riparian zone. Native to the Mediterranean and Far East, this species was first brought to the United States around 1823 and was available as an ornamental from California nurseries by 1856. It quickly escaped from cultivation and now covers over a million acres in the American west. Tamarisk does extremely well in riparian areas, especially those that have been grazed or otherwise disturbed. With no natural enemies in the U.S., such as insects or disease, tamarisk spreads rapidly and has displaced large areas of willows and cottonwoods in San Felipe.

Changes in grass and mesquite distribution were indicated by the reaction of Ed Mason in 1934 upon visiting his family’s former homestead in Mason Valley, not far from San Felipe. Bill Wright, a San Diego Union reporter who accompanied Mason, wrote:

Decidedly, Mason says, the old timers were not crazy... Warner’s ranch, the San Felipe grant, Paul Sentenac, Blair and Mason valleys and Vallecito all were passably green and fertile lands when the old-timers came.

...The valleys, that were open grazing country, are overgrown with mesquite and sparse sage. The country has changed entirely.

“No sir!” insists Ed Mason. “The old-timers weren’t crazy at all! That country was good to live in!”

Summary

That country was good to live in for thousands of years, but it changed within the span of a century from a landscape determined by an indigenous fire regime to one
dictated by interaction with livestock. From the first modifications of San Felipe’s land
management regime that resulted from assimilation of the inhabitants into the Spanish
Catholic religious complex, through the impacts of a flood of immigrants, to the
continued ranching of the twentieth century, the ecological community was transformed.
The next chapter considers the broad, deep view of local mythology and its implications
for the restoration of membership in this community.
Figure 4a. Carl Sauer took this photograph from the old bridge over San Felipe Creek at Scissors Crossing in 1927. His explanation reads, in part: "Active ravine cutting into floor of San Felipe Valley at site of old Indian village... Recent careless cultivation of the floor of the fill is said to have originated the ravine which has destroyed much of the old field and is now cutting headward rapidly in the valley. The entire feature apparently is induced by man." (Reprinted, by permission of the publisher, from Sauer, "Land Forms," Plate 37b.)

Figure 4b. The author took this photograph in April 2002 from the base of the old bridge on which Sauer stood to take his photo in 1927. Note the thick riparian vegetation that has grown in the floor of the ravine. The profile of the San Felipe Hills, visible in the distance in the 1927 photo, is barely visible through the trees in the 2002 photo.
Figure 5a: Carl Sauer took this photograph of a tufa-lined pool from beneath a highway bridge in the central part of Senenac Canyon in 1927. (Reprinted, by permission of the publisher, from Sauer, “Land Forms,” Plate 41a.)

Figure 5b. The author took this photograph in April 2002 from approximately the same position as Sauer’s. The tufa-lined pool is located in the middle of the frame, within the dense riparian thicket. Note the road cut in the upper portion of both photos, and the portion of the bridge abutment in the upper right.


5 Schwaderer, "Cultural Resources Inventory," 92.

6 Ibid., 9.


8 Schwaderer, "Cultural Resources Inventory," 92.

9 Ibid., 92-93.


12 Schwaderer, "Cultural Resources Inventory," 10-11.


15 Florence Shipek, personal communication.


27 Ibid., 8.

28 Ibid., 5.


30 United States District Court (California: Southern District), Land Case No. 329, The Bancroft Library, Berkeley, California.

31 Rivers, “Historic Accounts,” 34.

32 Dixon, “Saga,” 34.

33 Ibid., 6.

34 Ibid.


36 Ibid.

37 Ibid.


39 Ibid.


41 Ibid.

43 Ibid., 8.


45 Priscilla Lyons, “Mormon Battalion,” 3.

46 Rivers, “Historic Accounts,” 34.


49 Ibid., 34.


52 Ibid.


55 Dixon, “Saga,” 9. Coutseems to have had something of a talent for the cryptic comment to tantalize environmental historians. George Ellis, among other authors, quotes a line from Coutse’s 1849 journal of a trip east on the emigrant trail as, “Left Sta. Isabel with sixteen bears, which, if we can keep, will be of great service on the Colorado” [Gold Rush Desert Trails to San Diego and Los Angeles in 1849 (San Diego, Calif.: Brand Book Number Nine, San Diego Corral of the Westerners, 1995), 68]. Some have interpreted this statement to mean soldiers killed sixteen grizzly bears on Volcan Mountain and took the meat for food, but Ben Dixon takes “bears” to be a transcriptional error for “bearers,” i.e. Indian laborers (“Saga,” 20). Three manuscript versions of Coutse’s diary exist, so this statement could surely bear further investigation and cross-comparison.

56 Note that in spite of the presence of streamside trees, the only firewood available was “dry sage and scrub mesquite.” Note also that this paragraph is lifted nearly verbatim from Emory’s journal, which Goulding was surely using as a guide.

57 Ellis, Gold Rush Desert Trails, 27.

58 Ibid., 89.

59 Ibid., 50-51.


61 Ibid., 35.

62 Susanna Bryant Dakin, A Scotch Paisano: Hugo Reid’s Life in California, 1832-1852, Derived from His Correspondence (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1939), 276.


Ibid, 34.

Ibid, 37.


Ibid, 37.

Ibid, 53.

Ibid, 56.

Ibid.


United States Land Grant Case No. 329.


Ibid, 35-40.

San Felipe and Desert Land & Water Co., “A Grand Scheme to Develop the Eastern Half of San Diego County,” 1888, Pamphlet in the Rare Book Collection of the Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

Lindsay, *Anza-Borrego*, 315.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Schwaderer, “Cultural Resources Inventory,” 30.


Oral history interview with Emily Sawday conducted by Edgar F. Hastings, November 21, 1957; in the archives of the San Diego Historical Society.


88 Dixon, “Saga,” 40


90 Ibid., 251.


Chapter 4

All the Bushes about Here Are People:
Myth, Oral Tradition, and Language in the San Felipe Area

By her brother Sky the Earth conceived and became the Mother of all things. Her first-born children were, in the order of their birth, See-vat and Pá-ve-ut, Ush-la and Pik-la, Ná-nachael and Patch’-ha-yel, Tópal and Tam’yush.

Then came forth all other things, people, animals, trees, rocks, and rivers, but not as we see them now. All things then were people.

-- from “Mythology of the Mission Indians,” by Constance Goddard Du Bois

San Felipe Mythology

Myths are constructed on the longest time scale of human history – Braudel’s longue durée. By interpreting myths one can gain insight into the deepest, most consistent values of a people and a place. In San Felipe-area myths all things are deeply related. Animals converse and plants wield power in the community. These myths show that the vicinal non-humans – animals, trees, rocks, rivers – though varying in the power they hold, were long considered members of society.

Anthropologist Lowell John Bean has synthesized information from stories, myths and rituals of the southern California region. While the stories of San Felipe had their local variants, it’s safe to assume that they were similar to those from nearby villages. As Bean points out, an underlying theme in most of the stories – and a basis for the southern California indigenous worldview – is the concept of power.

Any community member, human or not, may hold power. “A rock, for example, may be a source of residual power or the location of a spiritual being; so may animals, birds, trees, grass, flowers, wind, or water,” writes Bean. “The Shaman may know the
Another anthropologist, Michael Kearney, compares indigenous California power to the forces identified by Western physics – they are pervasive and must be respected, but can be controlled.

Power is essentially an inherent aspect of creation; it is a vital force, an energy that pervades the world and is responsible for virtually everything that happens. It is like electricity in that it too is ubiquitous, occurring in some degree in all things, but unevenly. And like electricity, power is inherently amoral, something that may be put to any number of uses, either good or bad. Also like electricity, it is inherently dangerous if not properly handled.

Bean points out that in this scheme of things beings are not equally powerful, and “man is the central figure.” Still, Kearney emphasizes, “…the Self – the force that animates the individual – is but one local transitory form of power.”

One path to power went through the psychoactive plant Datura meteloides, or toloache. “Toloache was drunk by shamans as part of most of the religious ceremonies in the southern California tribes,” according to Bean and Sylvia Brakke Vane; “it gave access to sources of power needed for healing, diving, diagnosing, dancing, and singing for long periods; for long hunts; for sharper vision; and for sorcery.” Use of toloache was also associated with the ritual transformation of shamans into animals such as deer and antelope.

The Diegueño origin myth told by Jim McCarty and recorded by Leslie Spier in 1920 grants insight into the idea of power. These hills were always high, but in those days there was salt water on both the west and east sides. A man emerged from the sea, and opened his eyes so that he could see the sun. Then another man emerged, but he could not see the sun, for he was blind. There were two foxes, a silver fox and a common fox, which belonged to these men. The blind man felt about for his property, the silver fox, but failed to locate it; instead he felt the common fox. He asked the other, “Is this my fox?” to which the latter replied, “Yes, that is yours.” Then the blind man knew that the one he felt was not his own. So he made many animals, the coyote, the long-legged birds, and he also made the moon …
Thus a “power struggle” lies at the basis of the world. Two creators emerge, the sighted tries to deceive the blind, and as a result many animals and things were made.\textsuperscript{10} This myth may describe a prototype for the game of gambling and deception, peon, still played today.\textsuperscript{11}

Later in the origin myth, after Teikumat (one of the first clay men) dies, Coyote steals his heart. Wild Cat gathers all of the people together and announces that they will burn the rest of Teikumat’s belongings. They build an enclosure, and then send Sand Hill Crane to summon Mattiawi’t, the mythical snake. Next, spectacularly, from Mattiawi’t and fire come the songs that define all peoples.

When Mattiawi’t arrived, he coiled his length around the interior of the enclosure... Then Wild Cat told them to set fire to the enclosure. Mattiawi’t was burnt asunder; part flew back to the place he had come from, the rest burst into fragments. Each piece that flew off to the people was a song.... From this time they have been separate peoples.\textsuperscript{12}

Separate peoples, but not all of them human, for in a remarkable next line, Spier’s narrator McCarty declares, “All the bushes about here are people.”

McCarty then finishes with an explanation for the distribution of the diverse cultural and natural communities across the confused relief of the Peninsular Ranges. “Lizard [one of the oldest, most respected people] said that they could not all live together. ‘If all the gentes [groups] live here together, they will die off one by one.’ That is the end (yE’ a’mE).”\textsuperscript{13}

Another story collected by Spier, “Origin of Death,” tells of the need for people to die in order to make room for others. Wild Cat and Lizard convince the people of the need for death, and the story concludes with the statement, “As the people grew, all the brush and rocks about here grew with them.”\textsuperscript{14} Tied to mortality, then, is the idea of
growth, of change and history – a history shared by the plants and rocks of the home place.

In the following story, a willow demonstrates its power – an emasculating power that may make some readers (especially male readers) uneasy.

[from “A Bungling Host”]

Once Rabbit was Coyote’s wife. The red-wing blackbirds wanted this woman, too, so they married her. When Coyote saw this, he set off on a long journey. He found a broken willow lying across the trail. This swung back and forth in the wind, squeaking “eh, eh,” but Coyote said, “You shan’t have anything to do with me.” He thought the willow he heard was Rabbit. He came to a house. Then he thought, “How am I to recover that good woman (i.e. Rabbit)?” He carried a brand into the thick brush where he sat down and said, “Now I am going to find out why that woman likes that fellow with his yellow shoulders. I will try to make mine better yellow shoulders than his; perhaps she will then prefer me.” He burned his shoulders with the brand to make them red so that Rabbit should say, “Well, this man looks better than the other.”

When Coyote arrived at Red Wing Blackbird’s house, he found him absent, but Rabbit, who was sitting there, looked at the newcomer. Coyote walked up; Rabbit turned her side to him. “Do you like me or not?” he asked. She said to him, “I will not have you at all: go back.” When Blackbird returned, he asked, “Who was that man who wanted to have red shoulders such as mine?”

Coyote went off by the trail on which he had previously traveled. He reached the willow; again it squeaked. As it dragged back and forth, it caught him by the penis and held him fast. He cried as loud as he could. He extricated himself by breaking his penis off, saying, “I won’t go near you anymore; I thought you were a good man” ...

Thus Coyote – portrayed here as the consummate failure – makes the mistake of not treating a plant, willow, as a full member of the community... and he pays for this mistake with his own member.

Coyote continues his ineptitude throughout the story, proving that he does not have the power to control fire.

...Coyote continually visited Wild Cat. Wild Cat said, “I think that you had better come to another feast.” Wild Cat told Coyote and his people to find a spot provided with thick brush. When they found the thicket, Wild Cat invited Coyote and his family. Wild Cat stood in the center of the patch and told them to set it afire on all sides. The fire was burning from every direction; when it had nearly reached him, he sang:
He sank into the ground. When the fire had died down he came out by the same place and went home. He asked them, "Why don’t you eat the rabbits and other animals which were roasted in the fire?" Coyote and his family ate all they could and carried the remainder home.

Next day Coyote went to Wild Cat’s house and invited him to come with his people to surround a thicket. They searched for a large thicket. Wild Cat began to understand Coyote: that the latter could not do the things he could. So he warned Coyote that he had better not fire the brush, else he would be consumed. But Coyote said, "Yes, I will come to watch you, but I will see you burned instead of seeing things cooked for me to eat." Coyote circled around to look at the thicket. He said, "All watch me closely when I am in the center; you will see what I can do." Then he stood right in the middle. "All right," he said, "now set fire to it all around." Wild Cat stood close to the fire watching Coyote. Coyote sang just as Wild Cat had done on the preceding day. After he sang, he only bounced up and down; he did not sink into the ground as Wild Cat had done. His feet were burned off, and he was consumed with the rabbits.16

Fire also figures into the story of the Chaup, or Chauk, versions of which are told throughout southern California and parts of Arizona. Several versions of the story exist in the anthropological literature compiled in the early twentieth century, and the story continues to be told today. The Chaup is identified as a meteor or fireball in the sky. In an interview recently conducted by the author and several students from Warner Unified School District, Nancy Nagle and Dee Guacheño (Santa Ysabel Ipai) explained that Chauk is a multicolored bird "shaped like a peacock," seen with red and blue smoke trailing from its tail. The Chauk scours the earth for souls to take back to his grandmother on Tahquitz Peak (San Jacinto Mountain), and sight of him is taken to be an omen of death. Children are instructed to shout loudly upon seeing a fireball in the sky, to make Chauk drop one of the souls he has taken back to earth.17
The central figures in the versions of “Chaup” collected by Constance Goddard Du Bois in the early 1900’s are twin brothers (both are Chaups), their mother, and the son of one of the brothers. As infants the brothers are precocious enough to leave their home to hunt quail while their mother is away. When the mother returns and sees the birds hanging about her home, she is at first mystified but then begins to suspect that her boys are the hunters. In order to watch her babies, the mother changes herself into the stump of a tree. In the Mesa Grande version of the story recorded by Du Bois in 1904, when the brothers point their arrows at the stump, she calls out to them:

Wicked boys, is that the way you treat the mother who worked and cared for you when you were small and helpless? Just as soon as you grow large you wish to kill me. The people who come after us will tell the story of the bad boys who killed their mother.\(^\text{18}\)

Once again a plant—or, here, a tree stump—is portrayed as a person. One must be careful what one uses for target practice. “Instead of mother they called her Sin-yo-hauch—the woman who had been turned into a stump.”\(^\text{19}\) Du Bois remarked that the name *Sin-yo-hauch* referred also to the sacred Earth-Mother, and, “Those who have been under Spanish influence identify her with the Virgin Mary.”\(^\text{20}\)

Sin-yo-hauch instructs her children carefully in the proper uses of power. She tutors them in hunting, and brings a deer back to life that they had killed because they failed to follow her directions precisely. When the boys protest, she tells them that this is the way things will work for all people in the future: “If they hunt a deer and do not kill him as they should, they must go after him again.”\(^\text{21}\) She then shows her sons how to hunt the deer properly, by singing appropriate songs all night before the hunt, then setting fire to a mountain in order to bring the deer out.
Sin-yo-hauch's grandson, Cuy-a-ho-marr, was also a Chaup. In the Campo-Manzanita-area versions of the story, Cuy-a-ho-marr uses power expertly, seeking and gaining the assistance of Fire to destroy his enemies.

"Who are you?" asked Fire. "I eat up any one who comes here."
"It is I, my uncle. They are going to kill me, and I come to you for help."
"All right. I will help you. Go back home and keep a careful watch day and night..."

Eventually Fire arrives in the boy's village, burning the brush where his enemies live, "burning everything it touched. Great balls of it fell here and there and everywhere and burned everything up." With allies like fire, it is no surprise that Cuy-a-ho-marr proves himself more powerful even than the grizzly bear. Near the end of the Campo-Manzanita version,

...he came to the track of a bear that led to the water, and he stood and looked at it.
The bear knew that some one was on his track, and he said, "If you pass by me, I will get you and tear you to pieces." He was watching the boy, who stood looking at him. "I don't know which of us will get the best of it," said the boy. But he had some tobacco in a piece of cane, which he took from his ear and smoked, and blew the smoke at the bear and put him to sleep so that he passed on.
The bear woke up and saw the track of the boy farther along. "He has got the best of me," he said, "In his dream he has overcome me. He has more power than I."
The boy mocked him and went on. When he came to his grandmother's house [San Jacinto], he found it full of people of all sorts, such as are now all the animals and plants and everything that lives in the world.

Cuy-a-ho-marr chases these people off, hitting them with a spear (one can still see the red mark on the roadrunner's head).

More than merely etiological, the story of the Chaup illuminates a worldview encompassing plants, animals, humans, and the power-relationships among them.

The Oral Tradition of Bird Songs

Recall from the creation myth presented earlier in this chapter that song began with the explosive destruction of the mythical snake Mattiawi't. The peoples are
dispersed, and each group has its own songs, but all have a common origin. Today the traditional southern California songs that have survived are not sacred songs controlled by an elite, but bird songs, which function as a kind of collective memory, and that can be sung by any members of the tribes. According to one singer, “Other than Bird Songs there used to be other styles like Lightening, Tipi, Bobcat or Salt. There are many other styles that have passed in recent history. Some of these rare styles are being re-learned and are spreading again.”

In a 1989 interview American Indian scholar Paul Apodaca stated that southern California bird songs are multicultural, and while they are similar to creation stories, the two kinds of narrative are not identical.

The idea of the songs being depictions of creation, is absolutely accurate. But they should not be confused with the tribal creation myths, because those are different. ... So, the Cahuilla have their own creation story... and that creation story is very different from the Mojave creation story. And yet the Cahuilla and the Mojave both sing bird songs, which contain elements of the creation myth in them. What is fascinating, though, is that the creation story that is being told in the bird song cycles seems to be a different creation story from the ones that the particular tribes who are singing the songs may use within their own religious complexes.

Perhaps the absence of a perceived religious connection was a major factor allowing the bird song cycle to survive the onslaught of Spanish missionization.

Apodaca specifies the bird songs’ descriptions of the emergence of people one of the differences between the songs and various creation stories. The songs are reflective of the region’s topographical confused relief. The people “seem to ooze right out of the ground,” says Apodaca.

They talk about crawling on their stomachs and moving over hills and down valleys on their stomachs, almost like people on sleds, sliding down snow-covered hills. Almost like
that, undulating and sliding, all up and down hills and down through valleys. This movement of the people, and the way they describe their movement, is very different from anything you hear elsewhere.27

Traditional Ipai bird songs contain numerous references to non-humans as full-fledged members of the community. In an analysis posted in 2001 on the web page, “Traditional Origins of Bird Songs,” San Diego writer Roy Cook states,

The bird songs are an example of one of the most important statements in Native American oral history. It is a clue that philosophically people did exist in a different form, other than the one that we see here, and that at some point there was a great transformation wherein people took on different forms in order to accomplish different works or fulfill different responsibilities. Therefore we can realize deer and men and coyotes and birds are all related to each other because they are all people.

Singing is an act of restoration. These songs are an affirmation of a great community, and a reminder of the importance of paying attention to the scale of *longue durée*. Through the songs, Cook writes, bird singers and their audiences are “propelled” into mythic time, when the mutual responsibilities of all community members are paramount – non-human responsibilities to humans, and vice versa.

Those who hear the song have a chance to return to the original form that they were in before we became human, animal, deer.... Therefore, one of the purposes of the singing is to remind the animal that he had once been a person, and that the reason why they had transformed into these different forms was to fulfill the responsibility of keeping life going on the earth. It is therefore the responsibility of the deer to present himself now to be used as food, so that the human body will be able to function, and it is the responsibility of the human body to properly use the deer body in its furtherance of life. It was assumed when the song was sung that the deer would literally present themselves to be killed. It was therefore also assumed that if one did not follow these proper prescriptions, one would never be able to hunt deer successfully.

Furthermore, according to Paul Apodaca, the transformation of humans into deer, birds, and other animals, “while alluded to in other myths, ... is openly stated in these bird songs.”
For instance, one of the songs says,

'My hands are growing hard, and make a rat-a-tat sound when I walk.
My hands are growing hard, and make a rat-a-tat sound when I walk.
I have a tail, but it will not hide me.
I have a tail, but it will not hide me,'
As it describes the transformation into a deer.

And the people's exclamations as they're changing into these forms are remarkable: they are done in the first person, and they sound surprised as they describe what's happening to them. They very graphically describe this physical transformation.28

Santa Ysabel singer Ron Christman explains that the allegories of bird songs are a unifying force among Indian peoples.

These songs were given to us because in an earlier time people were running around willy-nilly and not really paying attention to each other. They were not respecting each other. They were treating each other with a lot of indifference and creating a lot of problems for themselves and everybody around them. The creator took notice of this behavior and saw a need for a process to change the situation. He created a series of variation and sets of songs. These are allegorical in nature. Telling us, by example, different stories about different animals and different beings that are on this earth with us. Telling us how to interact with each other in a way that is beneficial to ourselves as human beings but also telling us how to be beneficial to all living things. Our brothers the four legged and the winged and all the different beings. The plant life, the rocks and the very earth we walk upon.29

According to Christman the Creator sent the first songs with a colorful, beautiful bird. This bird wanted to keep the songs and their creative, healing powers for himself, however. The Creator instructed the bird to give the songs freely to all, and when the bird refused, the Creator took the songs away from him along with all his beautiful colors.

This is the bird we know now as the crow. Christman continues:

We now come to another little bird. This little bird is humble, unassuming and very, very beautiful to this day. We call him Tu cuk in my language. Ashaw tu cuk. The Creator said to Tu cuk "You bring these songs to the people. I'll see that you will always be remembered." So, that bird immediately went to see the people and brought us these songs.30
Christman explains that the “lack of superficial ‘flash’ in the performance of bird songs is a conscious form choice.”  

Perhaps it was because of this low-key presentation as well as the songs’ lack of overt religious content that they have survived the Spanish and American assaults on native culture. Bird songs are an evolving, dynamic oral tradition. To learn the songs is a long, multi-step process. Jon Meza Cuero, a Northern Baja California Tipai singer, says, “First the song, then the words, and then what the words mean.”  

Still, any tribal members may learn the songs, and singers across the southern California region vary the length and content of the 300-song cycle in their performances.

Language, Land, and Time

Learning the language indigenous to a place— the words and what the words mean—is a way of restoring that place’s great community. By speaking a language fluently, correctly reproducing a vocabulary and syntax that evolved over thousands of years, one brings oneself into a relationship that arose from an intensive, long-term interaction with the land. For Matt Vera, a northern California Yowlumni language activist, participating in sweathouse ceremonies led to an understanding of the significance of learning his language.

While in one of these ceremonies I realized all things in our natural world still understood the Yowlumni language... When we practice our native language, there is less occurrence of natural disasters, more peace in our communities, and a renewal of respect among all creation.
Language restoration, where it is possible, can be an integral part of ecological restoration – community revitalization in the broadest sense. Even telling and listening to the stories of a place in English can begin to approximate an original relationship to the land. A faded worldview begins to reform, if we use the stories to refocus our vision.

Mythic time and its lessons are not things of the past, for the characters of the stories and the truths they personify are still present. “Coyote is embodied in all the particular coyotes, but Coyote himself still exists in mythic time,” writes Michael Kearney. Archetypes such as Coyote and the other people of southern Californian myth exist in a time parallel to the present. As Carl Jung understood, there are many ways to gain access to mythic time and to witness fundamental truths – the creation of the world – ways such as the telling of stories, the singing of songs, and the winding paths of dreams.

Kearney argues that in the indigenous Californian mythic worldview, “…there is a value on the past, epitomized in the time of creation, and a concern to annul history and insure the continuation of the present, or to actually reverse time and, as whites would say, regain the past.” The Euroamerican view, compartmentalized into academic disciplines and specialized occupations, breaks the world into components visible only through filters that separate the sacred and the secular. Kearney writes that the Native California worldview may have been “more consistent and more viable than our own,” and Lowell Bean points out that those who integrate religion into other spheres of daily life enjoy the advantage of full membership in their surroundings: “Those whose world is not fragmented in such a way retain the magical past (and a philosophically systemic world) that so beautifully connected man with the parts of him that are above, below and
beyond, in the past, present, and future. These connections of humans with all of their parts were beautiful, yes, and this philosophical view resulted in a world that was beautiful and is worthy of restoration.

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2 Florence Shlpek, in a personal communication, confirms this. Also, Lowell John Bean writes, “Beliefs about power varied from group to group, but for the most part the ideas presented here were widely shared.” [“Power and Its Applications in Native California,” in Bean, ed., *California Indian Shamanism*, 21.]


5 Bean, “Power and Its Applications,” 22.


10 Note also the interesting opening reference to water on the east side of the mountains. Does this imply knowledge of an ancient inland sea? Immediately after this passage comes another reference to geology:

    He showed the other man their reflection in the moon, but the appearance was fleeting. After the latter had gazed at this, he turned to look for the blind man. But he failed to see him, for the ground had opened and swallowed him. The other then went to the sky. Now we hear the blind man down below; he causes the earthquakes. If he were to roll over quickly, the earth would turn over, but he rolls only a little which causes the tremors.


13 Ibid.

14 Ibid., 332.
15 Ibid.
16 Ibid., 333-334.
17 Interview with Nancy Nagle and Dee Guacheño, conducted by Jared Aldern and student members of the Warner Native Pride Club, May 7, 2002.
19 Ibid.
20 Ibid., 217, note 1.
21 Ibid., 224.
23 Ibid., 163.
24 Ibid., 161.
27 Ibid.
28 Ibid.
29 Ibid.
30 Ibid.
31 Ibid.
34 Kearney, World View, 155.
35 Ibid., 159-160.
36 Ibid., 161.
37 Ibid., 168-169
Chapter 5
Restoration

Three Varieties of Truth

William James once defined a method for testing the truth of an idea: "The pragmatic method ... is to try to interpret each notion by tracing its respective practical consequences. What difference would it practically make to anyone if this notion rather that that notion were true?"¹ Truth, in this view, is not an abstract ideal divorced from the concrete, dynamic world. What are the consequences of assuming the truth of the idea that San Felipe Valley is a community? If we assume that the plants, animals, rocks, water, and fire of San Felipe are members of this community — and that they are members of us and us of them — how are our actions affected?

Perhaps something along the lines of Aldo Leopold's land ethic — which is intertwined with a land aesthetic — will emerge from such questions. In Chapter 1 of this thesis, Leopold was cited for characterizing land as a community, and a quotation in that chapter from Holly Demerus alluded to what Leopold called a "land ethic," which he expressed in *A Sand County Almanac* as: "A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of a biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise."² A thing is right, in other words, if it enhances the totality — this is the ethic. The statement works the other way, also: under this system of conduct the tendency to preserve beauty is an ethical act. Appropriate action is an end in itself; that is, a work of art — here lies the aesthetic. The ecological, evolutionary view declares that diversity is a form of beauty, and asserts that goodness is beauty — and beauty, goodness.³ Thus an
idea with roots in science – observations of complex systems – reaches to a mythical truth: all members of the community possess power and deserve respect.

This thesis has presented three sorts of interacting truths: those of science, history, and myth. The observations of science have revealed an impressive assortment of animals and plants in San Felipe, particularly in the riparian zones. Historical sources hint that what inhabited the place in the past may have been even more vibrant: lush grasslands and a more open riparian area with a higher stream level and water table. The fire management regime has changed, and livestock grazing has had a great impact over the past two centuries. Combined with variations in climate, these factors have transformed the local ecosystem.

Myth may provide an antidote to the declensional stories of environmental history. Myth tellers, singers, and listeners recreate the world by invoking mythic time and the relationships that still exist in it. As Gary Nabhan hints with his talk of “restorying” the landscape, retelling stories is a form of restoration, or a start toward it. Southern California myths explicitly state that plants and animals are persons, that they are members of a community to which we, too, belong. To tell and listen to myths is to participate in and renew the great community that resides in San Felipe.

The indigenous view is that the world can always be renewed. “A very rapid loss of power is believed to have occurred after the European contact as knowledge concerning the means of regulating power was lost,” Lowell John Bean writes. “Nevertheless, power is always partially retrievable as new rules are established for obtaining and maintaining it.” Further, it is a primary human responsibility to study the
world and rediscover these rules. "To maintain a viable world, it is considered mandatory that man acquire knowledge about the universe."

**The Work Ahead:**

**Current and Future Research and Ecological Restoration Projects**

Acquiring knowledge about the part of the universe that is San Felipe means observing and participating in its great community. Henry David Thoreau's multidisciplinary approach to understanding nature provides an example of how to go about the task: a study that combines science, history, and myth leads to the restoration of dynamic relationships among members of the natural community. The ecologists Paul K. Dayton and Enric Sala recently bemoaned a "vicious circle" in which "the loss of our natural heritage inevitably results in the loss of the human experiences in nature where the expectations and love of natural relationships are learned." What I propose here is to work toward a reversal of this process, toward a sympathetic circle. By learning the expectations and love of natural relationships, we enrich our experience of nature, and motivate ourselves to regain our natural community heritage. The restoration of this heritage raises our expectations and intensifies our passion for natural interactions, and a positive feedback loop, or sympathetic circle, sets into motion.

How does all this play out as a research and restoration program? First, the scientific approach. One way to engage in the community is through observation and fact gathering. Paul Jorgensen, the state park biologist, suggests several questions for future research on San Felipe's avian population. "The hunt for Yellow-billed Cuckoo breeding will intensify—I know it's my first priority," he writes. Other possible breeders in the
area include the Brown-crested Flycatcher, Warbling Vireo, Indigo Bunting and – perhaps remote possibilities – California Black Rail and Least Bittern.

Scientists from the San Diego Natural History Museum have obtained funding for bird studies in the area. Also, the park has begun clean up and habitat restoration efforts, focused mainly on tamarisk removal. Students and other “citizen scientists” may be able to get involved in these efforts. Perhaps these amateurs can participate in tamarisk removal and native willow plantings, and monitor the projects using rapid assessment techniques for monitoring vegetation and bird populations. Hikers could record birdealls every hundred meters along a trail through the tamarisk thicket, for instance, then repeat the recordings periodically as the tamarisk is removed and willows planted. With help from ornithologists from the Natural History Museum or other agencies, program participants could then analyze the recordings to identify species.  

In addition to birds, other animals might be foci of restoration programs in San Felipe Valley. As state park planners believe, “Through judicious management of historic watering areas, we believe it may be possible to attract Peninsular bighorn sheep back to the site,”  Pronghorns and California condors may also be candidates for reintroductions, though these reintroductions will have to be carefully planned to ensure that adequate habitat is available and to avoid interspecific conflicts. Insects may also be candidates for reintroductions or habitat enhancement projects.

Much historical work that bears directly on San Felipe restoration projects also remains to be done. Regarding insects, careful comparisons of historical butterfly species lists with current populations may give clues as to missing host plants. Also, though new
hydrological studies may be required to ensure the success of a tamarisk removal and native planting program, some historical records, such as flood reports and surveys of wells and springs, already exist. Caltrans records, produced for construction of the bridges on Highway 78, are an untapped source that may also shed light on the hydrology and soils of Sentenac Cienega and Canyon.

Other types of sources may also be found which will give clues as to the historical state of San Felipe’s ecosystem. Henry Wetherbee Henshaw collected a Diegueño vocabulary in San Felipe in the late 1880’s or 1890’s, which is housed in the National Anthropological Archives – what plant and animal species were named? The State Park, and the author and his students, continue to collect oral histories that relate to San Felipe. Finally, more scientific studies conducted over the past century and a half may emerge from the files of the San Diego Natural History Museum, the University of California, or other agencies.

Difficult questions remain to be answered regarding the proper fire management regime in the riparian areas of San Felipe and Sentenac. My rephotography of Carl Sauer’s photo sites of the 1920’s shows that woody vegetation has increased since that time. But restoration of the riparian areas to a more open structure might negatively affect the many endangered and sensitive species that currently live in these areas, and that might have relocated from other riparian areas that have been completely destroyed in historic times. Additional sources probably exist for rephotography studies and investigators from San Diego County may be able to conduct palynological work in San Felipe. These studies should be performed in order to construct a detailed fire and flood
history, but it is likely that difficult issues will remain unresolved regarding disturbance of the riparian areas in San Felipe.

Finally, there are cultural approaches to reestablishing the mythic connections between humans and non-humans in San Felipe. As discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, over the last two centuries power in San Felipe flowed from Indians to whites, and relationships among members of the local great community were severed as some came to be viewed as commodities. As the Community Education Coordinator for Warner Unified School District in Warner Springs, California, I am currently involved in several programs aimed at reestablishing community relationships by increasing American Indian and other youth involvement in local cultural and ecological studies. In a program called “Ask the Elders: Warner Culture and Language Community Program,” for instance, members of the middle- and high-school Warner Native Pride Club have been interviewing elders from the Los Coyotes and Santa Ysabel tribes, some of whom have family ties to San Felipe. Through this program elders have presented language lessons and students have recorded oral histories and myths. The topics of discussion have included local plant material and animal use, plant husbandry, and changes in local vegetation over time. As I write, students have begun to process the interviews and to produce summaries as well as poetry and digital movies based on the conversations. These products will be used as instructional materials in future elementary and secondary school classes at Warner.

As another aspect of the community education program, three local Indian basket weavers taught classes in history, culture, and basketry at Warner Middle School this past
school year. Bonnie Salgado, Teri Sloan, and Joan Smith told indigenous stories to fifth-through-eighth graders and presented lessons on local history and genealogy. These lessons were prerequisites to making baskets, said the instructors; basketry is not merely technique, isolated from story and knowledge. Salgado, Sloan, and Smith have expressed interest in working with State Parks and other agencies on a basket-plant restoration and management project, perhaps in the Sentenac Cienega area. Perhaps as a part of this program, plants can be managed in traditional ways—including burning—for optimum conditions for basket materials. A related historical-artifact study might be to find protohistorical baskets from San Felipe in private and museum collections and analyze them for plant content. See pages 103-107 for examples of student work from the “Ask the Elders” program and the basket class.

Conclusion

San Felipe is an intricate place. Perhaps its human and natural communities could most profitably be viewed as games, dramas, or texts, following the lead of modern ethnographers. But the most effective way of conducting ecological restoration in the area may start with encouraging the careful observation of its current ecosystem, with the retelling of its history and myths, and with the relearning of its languages and songs. To do so is to engage in the great community of San Felipe, to encourage a way of thought that will have consequences in the physical landscape. Once a complex of mutually beneficial relationships begins to re-establish itself, the biggest part of the job is done, and the details of ecosystem composition, structure, and function can fall into place.
As this thesis was taking shape, Charles C. Mann published an article in *The Atlantic Monthly* describing evidence gathered over the last few decades that has caused a revolution in historical circles, resulting in a picture of a pre-contact Western Hemisphere “vastly more populated and sophisticated” than previously thought. Included as part of this picture is a fresh appreciation for the intensity of and effectiveness of Indian land management practices. “If [modern nations] want to return as much of the landscape as possible to its 1491 state,” writes Mann, “they will have to find it within themselves to create the world’s largest garden.” This may be true to a point, but as the preceding pages have argued, if we broaden our notions of history and science to include mythology and if we intensify our participation in the great communities that surround us — if we engage, in other words, in challenging work in actual places — we may find that “garden” is an inadequate term for the world in which we live.

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2 *Leopold, Sand County Almanac*, 224-225.


7 Paul Jorgensen, “Treasures of San Felipe.”

California State Parks Colorado Desert District, “Sentenac Canyon & Cienega and Scissors Crossing Acquisition Project” (Grant Proposal, 1996).

Henry Wetherbee Henshaw took photos in the San Felipe area in the late nineteenth century; these are housed in the National Anthropological Archives in Washington. Edward H. Davis took photographs of the Cienega village in 1903, but the prints and negatives were not found with his associated manuscript at the San Diego Historical Society. They might be in the collection of the Southwest Museum in Los Angeles. Also, Constance Goddard Du Bois took photographs in San Diego County around the turn of the twentieth century, which are housed at the San Diego Museum of Man. Some of these may have been taken in San Felipe.

Deborah Dozier, personal communication.


Ibid., 53.

Below are a summary and poetry samples by a high school student, drawn from an interview with Ruth Cassell, a tribal elder from Los Coyotes Indian Reservation (near San Felipe). These are first drafts, presented here to give an idea of the sorts of discussions and writing we are beginning to conduct in the area.

Summary

In the interview with Ruth Cassell, she talks about how life was different back then. There were small schools, less people, and to me, it sounds like they had good food. It sounds more peaceful, than what it is now. The kids back in the day had to work hard to get what they wanted, unlike kids these days. We get what we want by whining to our parents till we get it.

There's a lot of different things about the past and present. The schools, the wildlife, and the people are all different in many ways. I am happy to see our elders coming in to talk to us. It's good to see wisdom flow into the minds of the students of Warner High.

School (Found Poem)

Eighth grade, separate, seventh
One big school, buses, cars
San Felipe, Oak Grove, Santa Ysabel
Schools together, different kids

Beans and potatoes
Gather the acorns, shawii, old Indian
Grow, watermelons, cantaloupes, green beans
Yucca plants, cabbage, tortillas, scrambled eggs
Corn, tomatoes, back in those days

Animals, hunt, rabbits
Gray squirrels, brown squirrel
Live in the trees, campground, Los Tules
Wood rats, would boil them, onions, salt
Pepper, oven, good to eat

Back to school, learn more
Should have listened, should have studied
Keep going to school, stay in school, advice
Don't do drugs, wisdom, listen, respect
Good advice

On the following pages are photos documenting work completed in the Warner Middle School basketmaking class this spring.
Figure 6. Warner Middle School basketmaking instructors Bonnie Salgado, Joan Smith, and Teri Sloan study a collection of baskets.
Figure 7. Middle School student baskets.