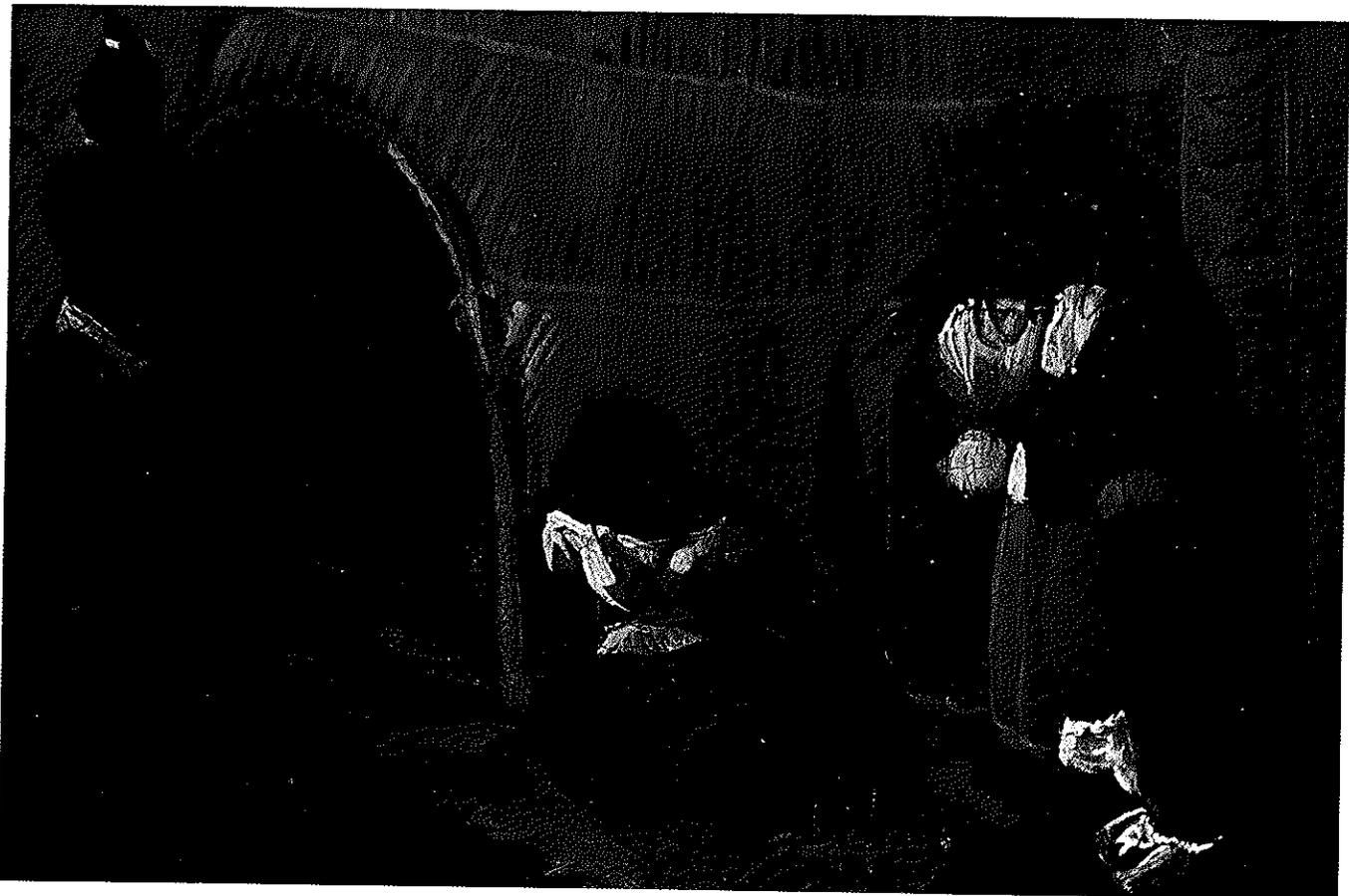


THE FIRST ANGELINOS

The Gabrielino Indians of
Los Angeles

by William McCawley



lack of interest in the mainland: "a set of twenty-five instructions was given him [Vizcaíno] to govern his conduct while on the voyage. . . . He was directed to be very cautious if Indians were encountered and to treat them well, and was forbidden to allow anyone to go inland to look for them, as that was not a necessary part of his business" (Wagner 1929:175).

In 1769 Palos Verdes was visited by the *San Antonio*, a supply ship supporting Gaspar de Portolá's expedition to Alta California. Father Juan Vizcaíno, who sailed aboard the *San Antonio*, mistakenly described Palos Verdes as an "Island which must be near the port and the mainland." In his entry for March 23, 1769, he sighted an Indian settlement and reported that "from afar we could see their small cabins and some trees." The following day the padre realized that the "Island above-mentioned is not an Island, but a promontory" (Vizcaíno 1959:18-19). In his entry for March 26, Father Juan observed that "smokes have been seen all day in a ravine. . . . There is only one cut through which it seems flows a river into this large bay, formed by the point which reaches as far as the Port" (Vizcaíno 1959:20-21).

Five of the nine Gabrielino placenames reported for the peninsula, *Toveemonga*, *Chaawvenga*, *Swaanga*, *Aataveanga*, and *Xuuxonga*, appear to have been communities occupied during the late 1700s and early 1800s, as evidenced by notations in the baptismal registers of Mission San Gabriel. Two other placenames, *Kiinkenga* and *Haraasnga*, duplicate Gabrielino names for islands, *Kiinkenga* for San Clemente and *Haraasnga* for San Nicolas. These communities may have been occupied by island Indians relocated to the mainland during the late 1700s or early 1800s, perhaps to escape attacks from Indians brought down from Russian-owned Alaska to hunt sea otter near the Channel Islands during those years. The nature of two of the placenames, *Moniikanga* and *Masaawnga*, remains unclear.

A variety of locations has been suggested for *Swaanga*, which Reid (1852:9) described as the "largest and most populous village." José Zalvidea reported to Harrington that *Swaanga* was "one mile this side [?] of San Pedro. There was a cienega [marsh] there and a few cottonwood trees. . . . Swāṅa was in the plain." He also noted that the community was "near San Pedro, but inland" (Harrington 1986:R102 F371). According to José Zalvidea the name *Swaanga* "means junco [rush]. There was lots

of junco there about the village. Junco is called in G. [Gabrielino] swar" (Harrington 1986:R102 F371).

Reid (1852:8) simply noted that *Swaanga* was located at "Suang-na," suggesting that this was still a recognizable placename as late as 1852. This is borne out by an 1839 report by a special commission of the Los Angeles *Ayuntamiento* (city government). The commission was convened to investigate an ownership claim by Nathaniel Pryor to a 4000-acre portion of Rancho San Pedro commonly known as the *Suanga* tract; the claim was denied. An 1891 map reproduced in "Abstract of Title" for Rancho San Pedro clearly shows the "Suanga of Pryor" tract lying along the eastern border of the rancho, north of the Inner Bay of San Pedro (Gillingham n.d.; see also Gillingham 1961:54, 166-167). This location supports José Zalvidea's comments that *Swaanga* was located "in the plain" and "inland." Baptismal records from Mission San Gabriel confirm that the community of *Swaanga* was occupied at least as late as 1813 (Merriam 1968:117).

The placename *Masaawnga* was derived from information obtained from a Luiseño consultant, who located it at "San Pedro" (Kroeber 1907:144). José Zalvidea did "not seem to know well the placename," although he did note that *Masaawnga* "means junco. There is a lot of junco near San Pedro" (Harrington 1986:R102 F355). *Masaawnga* may simply be a variant name for *Swaanga*, or in some way associated with the latter community.

A number of Gabrielino placenames are associated with the San Pedro region, including *Chaawvenga*, *Tsauvinga*, *Sow-vingt-ha*, *Unavnga*, and *Navungna'a*. Reid (1852:8) placed the community of *Chaawvenga* on "Palos Verdes"; the name *Chaawvenga* may be translated as "place of the tip or thorn" (Munro n.d.). San Gabriel Mission baptismal records offer the names *Chaubit*, *Chauvit*, *Chautbit*, and *Chaubipet* for the community, and indicate that it was occupied until at least 1813 (Merriam 1968:106).

Variant spellings of *Chaawvenga* include *Tsauvinga* and *Sow-vingt-ha*. According to José Zalvidea, *Tsauvinga* "applies to San Pedro and not to any other place near San Pedro" (Harrington 1986:R102 F384). Taylor wrote in 1860 that "the beach or playa of San Pedro was called Sow-vingt-na" (Taylor 1860a, n.d.). Other names that may have referred to this community include *Unavngna* and *Navungna'a*. Kroeber, referencing information

obtained from a Luiseño, reported the name "Unavngna" for the community (Kroeber 1907:144). Manuel Santos, in response to the name *Unavngna* offered "Nāv̄ṇa," derived from the Gabrielino word "nāvut, tuna [tuna cactus, *Opuntia* sp.]." José Zalvidea added that "there used to be lots of tunas at Palos Verdes antes [formerly]" (Harrington 1986:R102 F388).

According to José Zalvidea, *Xuuxonga* was located "on the shore below San Pedro." In reporting the name, Zalvidea mentioned the phrase "mandaba el. The name means principal or ruling place" (Harrington 1986:R102 F392). Interestingly, Harrington noted that *Xuuxonga* seemed in some way to be associated in Zalvidea's memory with the San Fernando Valley community of *Muuhonga*, for the consultant "mentioned the story of how the animals were treacherously killed at muhu'ṇa in connection with this name" (Harrington 1986:R102 F392).

José Zalvidea identified *Moniikanga*, as "a place in the hill by San Pedro near the beach," and as a "hill by Pt. [Point] Fermin." According to Zalvidea *Moniikanga* means "lomita [hill] or loma poco grande [not very big hill]" (Harrington 1986:R102 F356,357). *Moniikanga* would seem to have been a small settlement, or perhaps merely a geographical placename.

Haraasnga appears on Reid's list of Gabrielino communities, although he offered no locational data (Reid 1852:8). José Zalvidea reported that *Haraasnga* was located near *'Aataveanga* and *Kiinkenga* (Harrington 1986:R102 F391), although on another occasion he offered that it was "otra sierra adentro del agua near pimú'ṇa [the other mountain in the water near pimú'ṇa]," to which Harrington added the comment "surely and clearly San Clemente Island" (Harrington 1986:R102 F462). *Pimú'ṇa* was the Gabrielino name for Santa Catalina Island, and the implication is that *Haraasnga* may have been both a mainland community located on the Palos Verdes Peninsula and an island community on San Clemente.

José de los Santos Juncos told Harrington that *Haraasnga* was "a little west of kíṇkiṇa, just [the] other side (west) of [the] first point west of kíṇkiṇa (kíṇkiṇa equals Point Fermin lighthouse)" (Harrington 1986:R102 F826). As White's Point is the first point west of Point Fermin, José de los Santos Juncos's information would place *Haraasnga* west of Royal Palms Beach Park, along the stretch of coast between

the park and Portuguese Bend (Harrington 1986:R102 F852).

The association of *Haraasnga* with both a mainland community and one of the Channel Islands is an intriguing puzzle. Although Harrington believed that the name *Haraasnga* referred to San Clemente Island, Kroeber disagreed, pointing out that *Haraasnga*, when translated into Chumash, was *Ghalas-at*, the name for San Nicolas Island (Kroeber 1925:635). It may be that groups of island Gabrielino relocated to the mainland and founded the community of *Haraasnga*, bestowing upon it the name of their traditional island home (see also Heizer 1968:110-111, note 24). Hints contained in historical and ethnographic accounts suggest that lineages did relocate from the islands to the mainland. When San Nicolas Island was abandoned in 1835, the Nicoleño were brought to San Pedro; although most of the islanders were dispersed among the missions, at least one, a man known as Black Hawk, remained in San Pedro until his death (see Hardacre 1880; Roberts 1933:77; Nidever 1937:38; Cheetham 1940:43; Phelps 1961).

According to José Zalvidea and José de los Santos Juncos, *Toveemonga* was "a place about one and one-half miles from San Pedro, up the coast from San Pedro, on the coast. . . . It refers to a great stone on the beach. . . . There was a big village there of Indians. . . . Tovēm̄ur is a rock at the very point of San Pedro hill, west of San Pedro" (Harrington 1986:R102 F382). José de los Santos Juncos reported that *Toveemonga* was "where [a] spring is, near [the] top of [a] sea cliff where a big hill runs out to form a second point west of Point Fermin lighthouse" (Harrington 1986:R102 F825). These descriptions place the community in the White's Point—Royal Palms Beach vicinity.

José de los Santos Juncos prepared a sketch map of the *Toveemonga* area, and according to Harrington "M. Palmer has dug there," a reference to early excavations conducted by the antiquarian Dr. Palmer, a local dentist who donated his collection to the Southwest Museum and also served as its director (Harrington 1986:R102 F852, R105 F589; see Chapter 1 for a discussion of Palmer's work). Mission records indicate that the community was occupied until at least 1804 (Merriam 1968:118).

José Zalvidea reminisced that "tovjēm̄ur was one of the first people and was turned into a great rock which stands erect on the shore of the ocean near San