This article discusses how and why the paddle and anvil ceramic custom was reinitiated (rather than reintroduced) in Santa Catarina, Baja California, during the 1980s, characterizing the revitalization efforts that have promoted the development and growth of the current market over the past 50 years. Only three women were regularly producing ceramics at the time of this research from 2017 to 2019, yet participants reported that there were more local people trained in the method than at any time they could remember. These objects have played an important role in the ethnic identity formation process that the Pa’ipai people have been engaged in since the 1970s. The custom, as it is practiced now, is of research value to anthropologists for the way in which past and present elements coalesce throughout every step of the process from clay procurement, preparation, production, and firing, to the creation of forms. This practice remains an integral part of the region’s history and has become incorporated in its diverse culture, holding different meanings for different social actors. It has perhaps reached a critical moment in which a little ingenuity could establish a wider market and see it flourish.

Esta obra explica cómo y por qué la costumbre de la producción cerámica con pala y yunque fue reiniciada (no reintroducida) en Santa Catarina, Baja California en los 1980, y caracteriza los proyectos revitalizadores que han promovido el desarrollo y crecimiento del mercado actual en los últimos 50 años. Durante esta investigación, del 2017 al 2019, solamente tres mujeres estuvieron produciendo cerámica con regularidad, aunque los entrevistados reportaron que en su memoria más gente nunca supo hacerlo. Estos objetos han jugado un rol importante en el proceso de formar una identidad étnica ante el Estado que la gente pa’ipai ha vivido desde los 1970. La costumbre, en su expresión actual, tiene valor científico para los antropólogos por la manera en que el pasado y presente confluyen en cada etapa del proceso desde la adquisición de la arcilla hacia la preparación, producción, quemada y la creación de formas. Esta práctica sigue siendo un elemento central en la historia de la región, ha sido incorporado en su diversa cultura y su significado varía entre actores sociales. Ha llegado, quizás, a un momento en que, con un poco de ingenuidad, se podría establecer un mercado más amplio y prosperar.

This article is the third of four publications resulting from the author’s doctoral dissertation exploring the cultural significance of paddle and anvil ceramic objects produced today in the Pa’ipai village of Santa Catarina, Baja California, and their connection to the past (Graham 2019a). The first article provided a general overview of the village, including logistics for arrival, local services and infrastructure, and preliminary impressions of the place and its people, establishing the context for developing grounded theory on the concepts of tradition, memory, and ethnic identity (Graham 2019b). The second presents the project results, classifying current forms into six “types” based on ceramists’ memories, testimony by non-residents, and information found in existing literature (Graham 2020). The fourth will explore the history of Yuman paddle and anvil ceramic production in Baja California, focusing on what archaeologists know about the arrival of Pa’ipai people and ceramics to the peninsula and characterizing historical influences on the industry and its products from its inception in A.D. 700 to the present.

This third publication is dedicated to describing the development of the current market, introducing the three full-time potters at the time of this research, identifying elements of continuity and change in the custom and its products, and predicting the future direction of the craft. Since the 1970s, Yuman ethnolinguisitc groups in Baja California have been working to increase their visibility on the political landscape in order to
obtain official recognition as indigenous peoples by the Mexican federal government (Garduño 2016:120). This ethnic identity formation process has entailed demonstrating close ties to the land and emphasizing the uniqueness of each local culture, in part by revitalizing folk-art forms such as music, dance, basketry, and ceramics. Various government agencies and other interested parties have been coordinating the dissemination of knowledge about these customs, and through economic incentive programs have laid the groundwork for the development of the current handcraft industry. The section below describes efforts by community members and outsiders alike to reestablish and increase ceramic production in Santa Catarina over the past 50 years as a means of generating income, facilitating continued ethnarchaeological research, and providing local and national governments with the identitary symbols required to gain and/or maintain legitimacy.

**DEVELOPMENT OF THE PA’IPAI CERAMIC INDUSTRY**

By the mid-twentieth century in Baja California, locally produced paddle and anvil ceramics had been almost entirely replaced by the quotidian use of imported, mass-produced domestic goods. In 1948, William Hohenthal (2001:166) identified only three remaining ceramists in Kumiai communities: Loreta Mata (Juntas de Neji), María Osuna (Manteca), and Martinita Kwiñi:l (San Pablo). Hohenthal (2001:166) noted that “Only three potters survive to my knowledge, and they are all older women; when they die, there will be no more since the younger generation takes no interest in such arts; the same is true as regards the present and future status of basket weavers.” By the 1980s—when historian David Zárate, of Dirección de Asuntos Culturales del Gobierno del Estado, delegation Ensenada, sought out potential artists in each village to revitalize the production of “surviving” customs fueled by local knowledge—Santa Catarina was the only place where a few elderly women were still capable of teaching the craft (Edna Cortés, personal communication 2018).

José Armando Estrada (personal communication 2018) of Instituto de Cultura de Baja California (ICBC) corroborated in a telephone interview that in the early 1980s, no one was producing ceramics in Santa Catarina and the custom was reinitiated (as opposed to reintroduced) from knowledge held by a maximum of four women who still knew the method. Teresa Castro and Josefina Ochurte were the two whose names he could remember. Although Zárate has since passed away, his student Edna Cortés (personal communication 2018) recalled the following:

Michelle: From what you remember, were ceramic workshops only conducted in Santa Catarina, or in other communities as well?

Edna: The objective was to focus on the skills still existing in each community . . . and . . . so, it was basketry among . . . the Kamiais [sic] and Pa’ipai ceramics. I think there was another person . . . umm . . . I worked with her as well . . . Manuela, Manuela who has also passed away. She was another elderly woman that lived on the outskirts of the village in what was called *el rincón de Santa Catarina*. I had the opportunity to visit her and she also . . . umm . . . was supported by the workshop, was another artisan who participated in the project . . . and . . . knew the traditional method. In the case of Josefina, her daughter Toña, Antonia Arce, she didn’t . . . yes, I knew she could produce ollas but she never . . . was never much interested perhaps in doing so, but her cousins and other relatives were. You worked with Tirsa, didn’t you?

Michelle: Yes.

Edna: Tirsa is . . . she was married to Antonia’s brother . . . Ahh, there was also Margarita, Margarita was another woman . . . Margarita . . .

Michelle: Castro?

Edna: Margarita Castro, uh huh . . . and so, they, through this incentive program, taught . . . strengthened the teaching of ceramics first within their . . . to their immediate family, and from there the number of people who were learning, or relearning, began to grow.

Michelle: So, how would you characterize the quantity of people involved? How many teachers were there, how many students, more or less?
Edna: Well look, that I had the opportunity to meet . . . I’m speaking of three women in Santa Catarina, who we could say were like the teachers, right?

Michelle: Who were they?

Edna: They were Margarita, Josefina, and Manuela.

Michelle: Ok . . .

During the interview, the author mentioned to Cortés that people are now producing basketry in Santa Catarina as well, to which she said: “Hmm, well I don’t know if that’s good or bad,” suggesting that basket weaving is a practice that had been entirely forgotten in Santa Catarina by the 1980s and was recently reintroduced. That was not surprising since basketry is sold at substantially higher prices than ceramics and more funding has been allocated to it, making it an attractive choice. Cortés’ apparent disapproval of reintroduced customs and preference for reinitiated ones demonstrated how Mexican traditionalist politics stressed direct transmission through living memory, which she continues to perceive as superior, or “more authentic.”

The ceramists interviewed for this project reported that Michael Wilken-Robertson also held workshops in Santa Catarina and other communities during the 1980s. Tirsa Flores (personal communication 2018) recalled that she and Teresa traveled with him to San Antonio Necua, La Huerta, and Arroyo León to teach ceramic lessons, but the practice was never reestablished in any of them. As evidenced by the workshop Wilken-Robertson organized recently at the Tecate museum, he continues to be influential in spreading indigenous knowledge and promoting this custom. According to Daria Mariscal (personal communication 2017), it was he who first suggested that the ceramists begin signing their work, some 10 or 20 years ago, and now most carve their initials into the bottoms of their vessels.

The museum operated by Instituto de Investigaciones Culturales (IIC-Museo, UABC) in Mexicali is storing a sizable collection of Cucapá and Pa’ipai ceramics that was accessioned in the 1980s. The context within which these objects were produced has been lost. It is uncertain whether they were the result of workshops, or whether they were even produced in the 1980s or simply acquired and accessioned at that time. A project was conducted in El Mayor Cucapá by a non-indigenous ceramic artist from Mexicali, Juan José Cardoza, in 2013 with the purpose of reintroducing the practice among local youth. Various objects were produced, some of which went on display in the Nomadas de Barro exhibit at Campo Alaska in La Rumorosa, Baja California, while others were sold. Cardoza (personal communication 2016) indicated that when the eight ceramic lessons had concluded, sponsoring institutions and participants expressed disinterest in continuing these efforts and nothing more was done.

The continuance of the paddle and anvil custom in Santa Catarina is attributed to social, economic, and political conditions that led to the more enduring production and use of quotidian ceramics, then favored the development of a cash market for these goods once their personal use was no longer considered as necessary. According to Teresa (personal communication 2017), in the 1950s, people were still using low-fired earthenware in their kitchens for lack of commercial dishes, but there was almost no market for external sale. Tirsa’s mother, Margarita Castro (Teresa’s sister), was still using homemade ceramic dishes until Tirsa was a teenager, switching to store-bought goods around the 1970s. This change happened at different times for different families and there is still at least one woman in the village, Iliana Molina Castro, who prefers to cook in locally produced ollas (Tirsa Flores, personal communication 2018).

All four of the participants in this study reported that their grandmothers and/or mothers had produced ceramics and taught them to do so as children, yet they spent several years without practicing the craft and took it up again later in life. Since three of the women were approximately 60 years old at the time of the interviews, it can be inferred that despite the workshops described above, the period of relative non-production occurred from the 1980s into the early 2000s, by which time one participant said that ceramic production had again ceased altogether (Daria Mariscal, personal communication 2017). According to Wilken-Robertson (personal communication 2018), workshops he organized in the early 2000s “had as their main purpose to give students of archaeology the opportunity to learn directly from indigenous specialists. For example, the ceramics workshops helped students who would be finding potsherds or other types of evidence of prehistoric ceramic production to better understand the processes that go into making
the pots. However, there were more purposes such as helping the potters economically by paying them to give the workshops as well as through sales of their pottery while students were visiting them.”

Therefore, the workshops held during the 1980s by Zárate and others, with the goal of stimulating ceramic production among residents of Santa Catarina, eventually became workshops for students who visited from outside the community.

**CHANGES TO THE PRODUCTION PROCESS**

The difference between the workshops held in Santa Catarina and those conducted in other places at different times, such as in El Mayor Cucapá and Tecate, is that ceramic production, or at least local knowledge of it, never entirely disappeared in Santa Catarina. The 10-step process employed by these women, as described by Paul Campbell (1999:120-128), is difficult (or perhaps impossible) for a novice to replicate with any success. These steps include gathering the clay, crushing the clods, grinding and sifting, adding water and kneading, forming the vessel base, coiling and paddling the walls, drying, and decoration. Typically, the act of crushing, grinding, and sifting the naturally occurring quartz, feldspar, and mica inclusions and organic matter found in mountainous residual clays would lend it the plasticity required to prevent cracking during the firing process, unlike sedimentary desert types that always required added temper (Campbell 1999:123).

Nonetheless, Gena Van Camp (1979:52) observed that indigenous potters used innovative methods and production techniques varied somewhat among individuals. The only temper materials she identified as added to residual clays in the distant past were the extracts of yerba santa (*Eriodictyon californicum*) or prickly pear cactus (*Opuntia occidentalis*).

However, Kumiai potters interviewed in the 1940s by Hohenthal (2001:167) identified specific clay sources that did or did not require added temper, suggesting that different residual clays were subject to different preparation methods. In the 1990s, Campbell (1999:124) noted that potters in Santa Catarina occasionally added crushed potsherds, wood ash, or cow dung to their mixture, although this step was not always necessary. Further investigation is needed, yet this suggests that either archaeologists were wrong in thinking that residuals clays never required added temper, or its recent use is compensating for the discontinued use of plant extracts.

Ceramic procurement, once accomplished using jagged rocks and pointed sticks, is now done using tools such as a steel digging bar, shovel, and plastic buckets (Campbell 1999:123) (Figure 1). Similarly, clods that were once crushed and ground directly upon the bedrock with a rough stone, or by using a metate and mano, are now sometimes prepared using metal, even electric tools (Campbell 1999:124; Panich and Wilken-Robertson 2013a:89). Panich and Wilken-Robertson (2013a:89) observed that Daria ground her clay on a metate while teaching but used a mechanical grinder her late husband had built with an old washing machine motor when working alone. Lithic and organic tools once used during the coiling and decorating steps are now sometimes substituted for metal or plastic implements (Campbell 1999:127).

The wooden paddle, once oblong and fashioned using lithic tools, is now square and shaped using metal (Van Camp 1979:51). Different types of anvils have been observed in different regions, including a large cobblestone (common in the north), a mushroom-shaped concave ceramic disk with either a cup-shaped or nipple-shaped handle (common in the south), a shell, or a basket. The latter was common among the desert Kumiai (Van Camp 1979:51-52). In Santa Catarina, the author observed the ceramic disk variety with a nipple-shaped handle.

Despite the use of some non-local or innovated tools, Panich and Wilken-Robertson (2013b:112) observed that “the basic technique now in use is . . . in alignment with the outline of Kumeyaay pottery production observed by Malcolm Rogers” in the early twentieth century.² In general, much like life in the village and the architecture, the ceramic production process also combines past and present cultural elements. The firing process observed during this research was like that described by Van Camp (1979:53) except that certain improvisations were made using non-local materials. It proved to be a somewhat spontaneous process that required quick decisions to mitigate detrimental weather conditions such as cold wind and precipitation.

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² Malcolm Rogers observed in the 1920s that the Kumeyaay tribe had a distinctive pottery tradition that likely pre-dated the arrival of the Spanish and the introduction of European technologies and materials. The firing process described by Van Camp and others suggests a continuation of traditional methods, even if modified by the introduction of European technologies.
Daria (personal communication 2017) said that in calm weather, it takes approximately three hours to fire a batch of ceramics using yucca stalks as fuel. In the absence of yucca, she would use cow dung patties. During an unrelated interview, Tirsa (personal communication 2017) lamented that she was unable to fire her next batch of ceramics because she needed to hire a truck to take her a great distance to gather yucca and she did not have the $75 pesos ($4 USD) she needed to pay the driver. She reported having to go along on the trips because the stalks were specially selected: they must be completely dry, or they will not burn properly. When asked why people do not cultivate yucca nearby, her response was that it takes too many years for it to grow and die.

The visit with Daria was during an unseasonably cold weekend in May and she was almost unable to fire the ceramics as planned because just as we were finishing dinner, it began to spit rain. She contemplated the situation for about 10 minutes and concluded that she would have to cover the yucca to keep it dry and make the fire another day. However, she came back with a change of heart and rapidly began preparations. She chose a spot behind a large granitic boulder, sheltered from the cold wind. Her son, Felipe, leaned old tires and plywood against the rock to form a protruding barrier wall and archaeologist Antonio Porcayo parked the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (INAH) truck at a strategic angle to further block the wind.

In the past, ceramics were produced only during the warm, dry months of summer because cold weather would provoke the ollas to explode and cause rheumatism in the hands and arms (Daria Mariscal, personal communication 2017). Gloria Regino (personal communication 2017) noted that the best months were still June and July because in August it rains and the clay does not dry. Teresa (personal communication 2017) said that the earliest ceramic artists she remembered had produced their wares sitting directly in the sunlight, but people no longer do that. Production now occurs year-round, a change probably made possible through continuous experimentation motivated by financial need.

The first step in the firing process was to build a cama (bed) with one layer of yucca stalks. Then the ceramic objects were placed across the surface and buried in layers of yucca until they could no longer be seen and no obvious gaps were visible. Daria rejected a small stalk because it was not dry enough. She indicated that when the stalks are not completely dry, they contain juices that stain the ceramics during firing. About one third of the way through the firing process, the author said “So far, so good . . . if they...
were going to explode, around when would that happen?” and Felipe joked “Well, it’s just about time now, hahaha.” Fortunately, they did not. The fire was reduced to ash and embers within one hour (because of the wind, according to Daria), and all the objects emerged in one piece. Daria informed us once the ceramics had been fired that they would stay out all night and be collected in the morning; it no longer mattered if they were exposed to the elements, they would not break. She did, however, worry that the chickens might disturb them. The entire firing process is depicted in Figures 2 through 4.

Throughout the interviews, potters spent a great deal of time describing past customs associated with ceramic production that may or may not be observed any longer. For example, people used to consider it bad luck for others to see their work before it was fired, but not anymore (Daria Mariscal, personal communication 2017; Tirsa Flores, personal communication 2017). This change in custom, like the innovations permitting year-round production, apparently privileges financial need and anthropological interest over past cultural beliefs and practices.

Daria said that in the past, pregnant women were not allowed to look at unfired ceramics, or even touch the clay. They were also unable to be present during the firing process or the ollas would explode. Archaeologist Miriam Stark (2003:204) cited other cultural contexts in which pregnant women were not able to make pottery or be present during its manufacture. It was also considered bad luck in Santa Catarina to remove an anthropomorphic figurine from the location in which it was found, as one would run the risk of losing their entire family and it had happened to someone Daria knows (personal communication 2017).

Gloria (personal communication 2017) insisted that a potter must have ánimo (spirit) for their work to come out right. Similarly, Tirsa (personal communication 2017) said that ceramics need to be made with buen corazón (good heart) and if they fail to come out right it, the person did not think, or is envious of another potter. Ceramics cannot be made just for the sake of doing it, it must be done from the heart. She also said that when people go out to procure clay, they should not smoke tobacco or else “el barro no da,” the clay does not give. According to her, women have a better chance of finding clay, so they usually go instead of men, but sometimes even then the clay “nos castiga” (punishes us). Some people resort to burning dried chamizo blanco (willow ragwort, Barkleyanthus salicifolius) at the source as a blessing so that the clay will give. Daria (personal communication 2017) was unable to corroborate Tirsa’s stories about not smoking and burning chamizo blanco, indicating that if those practices were ever universal, they are no longer. Daria brings her partner, Ubaldó, and other men to help her collect clay without issue.

Ceramic technology was not always passed from mother to daughter. Many women learned from their grandparents or other community members outside their own families (Panich and Wilken-Robertson 2013b:111). A measure of inconsistency was noted in comparing stories as, for example, one woman would claim to have learned the trade from her mother while another would insist that her counterpart’s mother had never produced ceramics at all and that she, in fact, had taught her as well as all the other current potters. The only women of Daria’s grandmother’s generation who she could remember making ceramics were Juana and Petra Higuera (sisters), and Perciliana Flores, relative of Tirsa (Daria Mariscal, personal communication 2017). Gloria (personal communication 2017) also remembered the Higuera sisters from her grandmother’s generation, recalling that they had made ceramics both to use and to sell. They passed away approximately 35 to 40 years ago (around the late 1970s). Ralph Michelsen (1970:1) described cordage as a necessary item in Santa Catarina yet predicted that it would “probably die along with Petra and a few of her old friends and relatives. The younger generation feels no need to labor so long and hard for something so trivial as a piece of string.” Ceramics were apparently headed in that direction as well.

However, by 2010 when the video Sukuín Shkuin was produced, community members estimated that 20 individuals could produce ceramics in Santa Catarina, principally ollas, plates, pipes, and rattles (Delfín et al. 2010). Most of these artists or their kin also wove basketry and made jewelry, among other items. Teresa reported in 2017 that ceramics were being produced more than she could ever remember because the market had grown. Her daughter, Telma Cañedo, agreed that sales are now at an all-time high, saying that “they even receive orders.” She said Americans did not start coming to the community regularly until sometime during her lifetime (she was 50 years old in 2017), perhaps steadily increasing over the past 40 years (Teresa Castro and Telma Cañedo, personal communication 2017). Based on these testimonies, it
seems that if the Mexican government and other interested parties had not promoted the continued practice of ceramic production in Santa Catarina from the 1980s, and if at the same time Yuman groups had not needed to make their culture more visible for political reasons, the industry would not be what it is today.

During preliminary fieldwork, semi-structured interviews were conducted with six women (Teresa Castro Albañez, Telma Cañedo Castro, Rogelia Cañedo Albañez, Tirsa Flores Castro, Daria Mariscal Aguiar, and Gloria Regino Arballo), only three of whom—Tirsa, Daria, and Gloria—regularly produced ceramics. Rogelia and Telma reported knowing how but said they rarely do so. Teresa was the eldest person interviewed, 83 years old at the time, and no longer produced ceramics on a regular basis due to her failing eyesight (Telma Cañedo, personal communication 2017). One of these women approached the author during a meeting at Wamuch Ram Nuach on April 30, 2017, and introduced herself as Rogelia, Anacleta’s daughter. She extended an invitation to her home to take a photograph of the last ceramic vessel Anacleta had made before she passed away (Figure 5). She had taught Rogelia approximately three years prior to her
death in order that the practice not be lost. As it turned out, Petra Higuera was Rogelia’s grandmother. She appeared to share this information on her family’s ceramic legacy with great pride.

Ceramists were asked to add to the author’s notes on past and present potters. The small number of ceramists identified from the earliest generations might be owed more to the limits of current memory than the actual number of women who produced ceramics at that time. Teresa was particularly helpful in this exercise and the results are discussed below.

**Oldest Generation of Ceramists in Living Memory**

The oldest generation included Juana and Petra (González?) Higuera (sisters), Priciliana Flores (?), and Erminia Albañez Tambo (Teresa and Margarita’s mother, Tirsa’s grandmother).

**Intermediate Generation**

Teresa and Margarita Castro Albañez (sisters), Manuela Aguiar Carillo, Josefina Ochurte González, Anacleta (?) (Rogelia’s mother).
Recent Potters Spanning Three Biological Generations

Tirsa Flores Castro, Daria Mariscal Aguiar, Gloria Regino Arballo, Celia Flores Castro (Tirsa’s sister), Teresa Aguiar, Adelaida Albañez, Telma Cañedo Castro (Teresa’s daughter), Victoria Cañedo Castro (Teresa’s daughter), Maria Antoñia Cañedo Castro (aka Inés; Teresa’s daughter?), Marisela (?) Cañedo (Teresa’s granddaughter), Rogelia Cañedo Albañez, Elia Cañedo Albañez, Julia Ochurte Espinoza, Oralia (?) Flores (Tirsa’s daughter), Dionisia (?) Flores (Tirsa’s daughter), Dalila Mariscal Regino (Gloria’s daughter).

Participants identified a minimum of 16 people who were able to produce ceramics in 2017, spanning three biological generations to include children, mothers, and grandmothers. All interviewees agreed that more ceramics were being produced than at any time they could remember. Although this custom was historically associated with women, some men are beginning to practice the craft as well. When the author asked Daria (personal communication 2017) why she had not signed her initials on an arrow shaft straightener purchased in her shop, her response was that Felipe had made it and she was teaching her partner, Ubaldo, to produce ceramics as well. This change may be occurring as men witness the profitability of the endeavor, however unpredictable the income. Stark (2003:205) observed that “cross-cultural research on the sexual division of labor among potters (Byrne 1994) suggests that the locus of production moves from women to men as access to traditional resources decreases and ceramic production becomes a more lucrative economic livelihood.” Another possible explanation could be that Daria has no female relatives at home to teach.
Regarding ceramic production, Stark (2003:212) noted that motor habits used while shaping objects generally resist change while decorative techniques are more sensitive to it. That observation was reflected in temporal changes to the ceramics in Santa Catarina. Over time, the use of the paddle and anvil has remained constant despite changes in the shape and/or composition of the instruments, yet stylistic and decorative techniques are constantly changing. Telma (personal communication 2017) commented that the ceramics made in the past used to be more rustic but are now more polished and prettier because they are made to sell. She said that she knows how to make them but does so only as a hobby. Her pieces are crude, and she likes them that way. According to Daria (personal communication 2017), the earliest ollas had thinner walls and then they became thicker/cruder for a time. Now they are more delicate and prettier again because they are made for sale. It is possible that ceramics became cruder during the mission period when some individuals who had not previously made ceramics settled at the mission and learned how. This hypothesis should be tested on archaeological specimens.

Gloria (personal communication 2017) said that the difference between the ceramics made in the past and those made now is that they used to be polished with stones and had incised or punctate decorations. Objects in her shop displayed both types of decoration, and she had a small, smooth cobblestone that looked like it was used for polishing. She was intentionally reintroducing those attributes, which she and others have associated with the cultural past (Van Camp 1979:63, 65). When asked to identify different ceramists’ styles, one woman said that although Daria had been making ceramics longer, Tirsa´s work was finer. She also mentioned that a woman by the name of Camila Albanez (now deceased) had produced vessels with walls so thin that they made a musical sound when tapped with the finger. One of those vessels was reportedly still in Camila’s sister’s house (Anonymous, personal communication 2017).

The next section of this article introduces in greater detail the work of four women who were selling ceramics at the time of this research and provided most of the information for this project: Teresa Castro, Tirsa Flores, Daria Mariscal, and Gloria Regino. The latter three became key participants in the project. The ceramic objects described in the section below for which photographs have not provided can be found in other publications (Graham 2019a, 2019b, 2020).

Current Full-Time Potters and Their Wares

*Teresa Castro Albanez*

Teresa was 83 years old in 2017 at the time of this research, the eldest living ceramic artist. She began producing ceramics in the mid-1960s when she got married and her husband’s grandmother taught her how, but she was no longer working on a full-time basis at the time of our interview due to her failing eyesight (Telma Cañedo, personal communication 2017; Varela 2011). She had also taught herself to make baskets based on specimens she viewed at the San Diego Museum of Man and once gave workshops at La Huerta, teaching Kumiai students. She reported that her granddaughters also know how to make handicrafts and work on them daily lest they forget (Delfín et al. 2010). Her granddaughter, Marisela, was producing bean ollas of such good quality that a client ordered them from the United States. The client’s name was Rosy and she was of Mexican descent, but married to an indigenous man from a group up north. They lived in La Pechanga and purchased Marisela’s ollas via Facebook (Telma Cañedo, personal communication 2017). Of the four artists introduced in this section, Teresa was the only one who did not routinely sign her work. The other three carved their initials into the bottoms of their vessels.

Teresa’s mother, Erminia Albanez Tambo, was of Ko’al descent and had produced ceramics as well. Her father, Pedro Castro Machado, was Pa’ipai. Her daughter, Telma, and one of her nieces were also present for the interview and spoke Ko’al and Spanish. Teresa (personal communication 2017) reported the ability to speak some Pa’ipai, but more Ko’al. On the day of our interview, she had set up a table outside her daughter’s front door laden with handicrafts in anticipation of visits by students from UABC, Mexicali, who were in the village conducting health workshops that weekend. Her work included cordage, basketry, and 11 ceramic items: one shallow bowl with a fluted rim; one bowl for burning sage with three rows of
holes perforated around the wall and suspension holes drilled through lugs on either side of the shoulder sustaining a palmilla fiber carrying cord; two vessels with a double neck; and seven jars/ollas of varying shapes and sizes. In general, Teresa’s jars/ollas resembled common archaeological forms from this area albeit with uncharacteristically long necks and flared or fluted rims. One other vessel had suspension holes like those on the sage burner described above.

_Tirsa Flores Castro_

Tirsa, Teresa’s niece, was 64 years old in 2018. She showed the author photos taken by anthropologists of her mother, Margarita Castro (Teresa’s sister), and her grandmother, Erminia Albañez, demonstrating that the ceramic custom has been continuous in her family. Her diverse heritage was demonstrated through the following testimony:

_Michelle:_ This one came out pretty with the black design (signals a fire cloud). In English it’s called a fire cloud, is there a word for that in Pa’ipai or Spanish? Do you speak Pa’ipai, or Ko’al?
_Tirsa:_ Both.
_Michelle:_ Both? Wow. Yes, I’ve noticed that there are some people here who speak Pa’ipai and others who speak Ko’al. Are there Kumiai people here, too?
_Tirsa:_ Here no, the Kumiai are in La Huerta.
_Michelle:_ Ok. So, which language is more common, Pa’ipai or Ko’al?
_Tirsa:_ Well, here we know a little Kuiak because of my grandma, because she, according to her, was from, of Cucapá.
_Michelle:_ Cucapá, oh ok . . .
_Tirsa:_ Yes, because she didn’t know how to speak . . . yes she could speak Spanish, but she . . . no no . . . she spoke Kuiak, but she didn’t learn Spanish . . . yes yes . . . she could understand it, yes, but she didn’t speak it, or Pa’ipai either.
_Michelle:_ I asked that question because everyone calls Santa Catarina a Pa’ipai village.
_Tirsa:_ Yes, there are more Pa’ipai.
_Michelle:_ And for example, I saw that Daria called her museum Museo Kuahl. So, does that mean that some people identify as Ko’al?
_Tirsa:_ Yes, and Kuiak, yes.
_Michelle:_ And do Ko’al people understand Pa’ipai?
_Tirsa:_ Some do, and some don’t.
_Michelle:_ Only some words?
_Tirsa:_ Yes, only some words.

Josefina Ochurte, Tirsa’s mother-in-law, had learned to produce ceramics from her mother, Juana Higuera. Tirsa’s testimony matched Cortés’ memory that only two other women were producing ceramics in Josefina’s time: Margarita Castro and Manuela Aguiar. Josefina signed her work with a double “XX” instead of her initials. Tirsa’s sister, Celia, had learned to make ceramics from these women along with Tirsa and did so until she passed away (Tirsa Flores, personal communication 2018).

After closing the book that contained photos of her relatives, Tirsa held it gently upon her chest for a few moments and uttered softly under her breath before bringing it back into the house. She indicated that her mother and grandmother had primarily produced large ollas, the vessel forms she most enjoys making. She said large ollas are the most difficult type of vessel to produce and need to be made in hot weather or the walls will collapse. Those with narrow openings were used to store water or other liquids while the wider rimmed ollas were used for cooking. Seeds were stored in a specialized olla with no neck and a very narrow mouth through which they could be poured. The hole was plugged with a pine cork to keep the seeds safe from pests when not in use. Erminia had made those jars and vessels with double necks as well.
Tirsa reported obtaining some of her ideas for ceramic forms from books, magazines, and television. She indicated that she had come across one such book in the local elementary school. She mentioned an oblong vessel she used to produce with an opening at the top to one side that had been described in the book as a “vasija para miar,” (pot to piss in) and we laughed (Tirsa Flores, personal communication 2018). She said that customers always want to know what things are supposed to be for or they will not buy them (Tirsa Flores, personal communication 2017).

On one visit to the community, Tirsa’s workshop was the third place visited and the author had no money left to make a purchase. As we said our goodbyes, Tirsa remained sitting in the workshop rather than accompanying her guest out to the road, as was observed to be her custom. The feeling of guilt provoked by leaving empty handed could not be reconciled at that time and the experience served as a reminder that visitors were primarily viewed as customers, sources of income. It had not been the author’s intention to shop consistently or provide participants with other compensation since institutional funding was not provided for that purpose, but it was impossible not to adapt to participants’ expectations to some extent given their financial need.

Daria Mariscal Aguiar

Daria was 61 years old in 2017 and began producing ceramics full-time around the year 2000, in her mid-40s. She claimed to have retaught herself based on childhood memories, as she had first learned to make paddle and anvil ceramics from her mother around the age of ten. She and her brother fashioned small vessels and zoomorphic figurines as children to play with in a small toy house they had built out of stones on their property in Rancho Escondido. She said the toy house and ceramics may still be there and she should go find out, but when we made an appointment to travel there together, she rather cryptically warned that there were people on site who “would not let us pass.” She stopped making ceramics after childhood, and for years worked as a day laborer at neighboring ranches. When she grew tired of the physical strain, she decided to stay home and produce handcrafts instead. First, she wove basketry with pine needles and palmilla fiber, then she began producing ceramics as well (Daria Mariscal, personal communication 2017).

There is a clay source in Rancho Escondido containing an abundance of mica. There used to be a Yuman community there, but many people have since moved or passed away and not even the houses remain. Vessels produced with that clay made a musical sound when tapped with the finger, but they were very fragile because of the mica and the objects broke easily. Daria (personal communication 2017) mentioned a woman named Rita of the Cañedo Castro family who had made ceramics from that source and said she was related to Rogelia, but Rogelia might not remember her; the person who would remember was Teresa. Daria’s work, as compared to Teresa’s and Tirsa’s, was more innovative regarding the array of forms present. She was making a series of zoomorphic figurines that corresponded with the story about her childhood games and represented the animals she encountered in her daily life.

Gloria Regino Arballo

Gloria was roughly the same age as Tirsa and Daria. She did not reveal the exact age at which she began to produce ceramics but said her mother had taught her how. She was unsure if her grandmother had been a potter because she never had the chance to meet her (Gloria Regino, personal communication 2017). Another ceramist contradicted Gloria’s story, claiming that her mother had not produced ceramics at all and she herself had taught her (Anonymous, personal communication 2017). Like Rogelia, Gloria owned an olla produced by one of her ancestors, her aunt Camila, and permitted it to be photographed (Figure 6). This was probably the same Camila whose delicate work was described earlier in this section.

Gloria (personal communication 2017) presented two ceramic objects of her own that the author had never seen or heard of before. They were replicas she had made of vessels she said were produced in the
past. One large olla had two small holes in the wall below the rim that she said were meant to allow bees in and out. People would trap bees inside, cover the top, and they would begin to produce honey, coming and going freely through the holes. When other ceramists were questioned on the history of this form, they were unable to corroborate Gloria’s story.

Teresa (personal communication 2017) indicated that bees made honey in rock crevices and people simply knew where to go to find it. On this topic, Hohenthal (2001:140) noted that “Honey is called miu:l, and since it seems to be a Spanish loan word (miel), I would say that honey was not used aboriginally as a food, and that the present bees in the area are descendants of escaped bees introduced into Baja California by the Spanish. Also, bees are known only by their Spanish name (abejas).” Therefore, if this custom was practiced as Gloria described, it must have occurred at some time after the arrival of the Spanish. Oral testimony by a Cucapá man in El Mayor known as El Muñeco (The Doll) suggested that it may have happened in the Colorado River region (Antonio Porcayo, personal communication 2017). However, Daria (personal communication 2017) insisted that in Santa Catarina honey containers had been made only from hollowed-out yucca stalks.

The other item Gloria (personal communication 2017) presented was a cuna (cradle), an oblong vessel approximately two feet long, one foot wide, and six inches deep. There were holes perforated below the rim all the way around, with cordage threaded through them for decoration like one of Tirsa’s ollas. She recounted that these vessels were made in the past and functioned as incubators for premature infants. The baby was placed inside, and the vessel partially buried in earth that had been warmed with hot coals. None of the other artists corroborated that story either, yet a similar vessel was on display at the Nomadas de Barro exhibit at Campo Alaska in La Rumorosa. Interestingly, a different potter claimed—as the author had suspected of the honey container—the cradle had, in fact, been commissioned by an INAH archaeologist (Anonymous, personal communication 2018).

When asked how she decided what forms to produce, Gloria said: “Pues, así nomás” (just like that), meaning that if there were outside forces affecting her decisions, she was unaware of them or unwilling to reveal them. In general, Gloria’s style was as innovative as Daria’s, but in a different way. Compared to the other three artists, her work seemed guided more by external influences. She mentioned two other clients who had recently ordered utilitarian forms of non-indigenous origin. That sort of commercial, experimental work was apparently her specialty, at least during this research.
DISCUSSION AND FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

Several conclusions can be drawn from this research regarding the potters and the nature of their craft. The eldest woman, Teresa, preferred to create small versions of typical archaeological forms (placed on gravesites in Santa Catarina) and other objects used for ritual purposes in contemporary Yuman communities, such as the vessel with a double neck (used in wedding ceremonies) or those with a palmilla carrying cord (possibly used in keruk/mourning ceremonies [Van Camp 1979: 56]) and the perforated sage burner (used for blessing or purifying). The objects she made were also produced in some form by the other three potters and can be attributed to the women’s personal memories—demonstrated during interviews to run three biological generations deep—of ceramic traditions recently or currently practiced in local and/or regional culture(s).

Teresa’s niece, Tirsa, preferred making the kind of large ollas she remembered elder women in her family making. Like Teresa, she dramatically flared or fluted the rims of some of her vessels, a technique the other two potters did not use, suggesting that this tendency runs in the family. However, unlike Teresa, Tirsa was producing recent forms such as piggy banks and a jug, as well as experimenting with objects she had seen on television, or in magazines and books. In some cases, as with her anthropomorphic figurine or Daria’s zoomorphic coyote, local and non-local indigenous elements coalesced; those objects were reminiscent of artifacts found in southern Mexico.

Daria, and especially Gloria, made several recent forms displaying elements associated with the Spanish mission period and beyond, taking inspiration from a variety of sources: Daria seemed to be drawing more ideas from her personal experience and immediate surroundings, while Gloria was experimenting based on suggestions by customers. Some of the forms these women were making, such as Daria’s ceramic bule (rattle), her son’s arrow shaft straightener, and Gloria’s honey olla and cradle, had apparently been commissioned by archaeologists at some point in the past. These forms were interpreted as invented traditions per Éric Hobsbawm’s (1983) theory since they were purely symbolic or decorative representations of past cultural objects that were once made locally from a material other than clay.

This project revealed the diverse cultural history of Santa Catarina, a community characterized as Pa’ipai by majority consensus in which members reported a combination of Pa’ipai, Ko’al, and Cucapá ancestry. That diversity was reflected in the ceramics, especially in Tirsa’s work, as she was producing anthropomorphic figurines modeled in the round and clay beads associated more directly with the archaeological assemblages of neighboring groups. Some stylistic or decorative techniques associated with one or another human group, past or present, local, regional, or global, were being blended into the local culture through the glocalization process described by Roland Robertson (1995). The potters considered the entire ceramic custom to be their herencia, part of their heritage (Tirsa Flores, personal communication 2018), and the only objects deemed less or non-traditional were those that had recently been commissioned by archaeologists. There is great potential for increasing the sale of these goods by marketing them together with their associated histories, as told by their creators.

NOTES

1. Gloria Regino (personal communication 2017) indicated that ánimo (spirit) is need for a potter’s work to come out right, and Tirsa Flores added the importance of buen corazón (good heart). Another key factor Tirsa attributed to success was avoiding envy of another potter’s work (personal communication 2017).

2. Kumeyaay is the English spelling of Kumiai. Because this study was conducted in Mexico, Spanish spellings were preferred unless others who used the English version were cited directly. Pa’ipai and Ko’al were spelled per linguistic anthropologist Mauricio Mixco (1997), although many variations are found in existing literature.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Upon completion of this doctoral research, I found myself looking back over the past seven years of graduate school and feeling most grateful toward those who contributed to my professional development without undue gain. Dr. Margie Burton taught me how to structure a research paper in the clear, concise fashion required of archaeology. Drs. Paul Ganster, Suzanne Griset, Lee Panich, Susana Gutiérrez, Mario Magaña, Christian Fernández, and several others thoughtfully read and commented on my thesis or dissertation with genuine interest and shared enthusiasm for the topic. I am grateful to the potters in Santa Catarina for generously allowing me to hang around, sharing their time and knowledge, and providing content for this publication. Your dedication to a craft so highly valued by others should be more adequately compensated. María Luisa Rivera and Patricia Chávez of IIC-Museo provided essential logistical and moral support for the successful completion of this project. This work would not have been possible without financial support from Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología (CONACYT-Mexico). Thank you!

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