

The Dead at El Conchalito: Ancient Burial Practices on La Paz Bay, Baja California Sur, Mexico

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Abstract

This paper examines the ancient burial patterns of El Conchalito, a multi-component archaeological site on La Paz Bay, Baja California Sur, Mexico. Well-preserved human skeletal remains and associated grave goods provide valuable insights into Pre-Columbian mortuary behavior. The variability of funerary rites identified at El Conchalito may have been prototypical for interment methods, belief systems, body preparation, arrangement of the body in the grave, and other mortuary customs that were practiced by Indian peoples of the Cape Region, including participants of the renowned Las Palmas Culture.

Introduction

The Las Palmas Culture area encompassed the mountainous and coastal regions of southern Baja California, ranging from the Isthmus of La Paz to Cabo San Lucas, and is renowned for its burial caves, most of them containing the red ochre-painted skeletal remains of hyperdolichocranic individuals. In fact, the practice of interring secondary bundles of defleshed human corpses has captured the public's imagination since ten Kate (1884, 1979), Diguet (1905, 1978), and Rivet (1909) explored the region over 100 years ago. In a late nineteenth century newspaper article, American ornithologist Lyman Belding described

his adventures in Mexico, calling the reader's attention to a noteworthy indigenous burial practice, which he summarizes as follows:

The Indians of Lower California south of 24 degrees 30 minutes buried their dead in caves below shelving rocks, without regard to the points of the compass, usually painting the bones, but how they made the bones clean and ready to be painted is still unknown. At Zorillo we were shown a small cave in a granite rock by our local guide, who said that an Italian collector, several years before, had found bones of a "gentile," the Mexican name for an Indian or heathen. The sand in the cave was dry, coarse disintegrated granite, about a foot deep. By digging in it I found the well preserved skeleton of an adult male Indian, who was perhaps the last of the Pericues. This skeleton was wrapped in cloth made from the bark of the palm and bound with three ply cord which had been plaited as sailors make sennit, the material being fiber of the agave... The package, which was about twenty inches long, did not appear to have been disturbed since burial, although

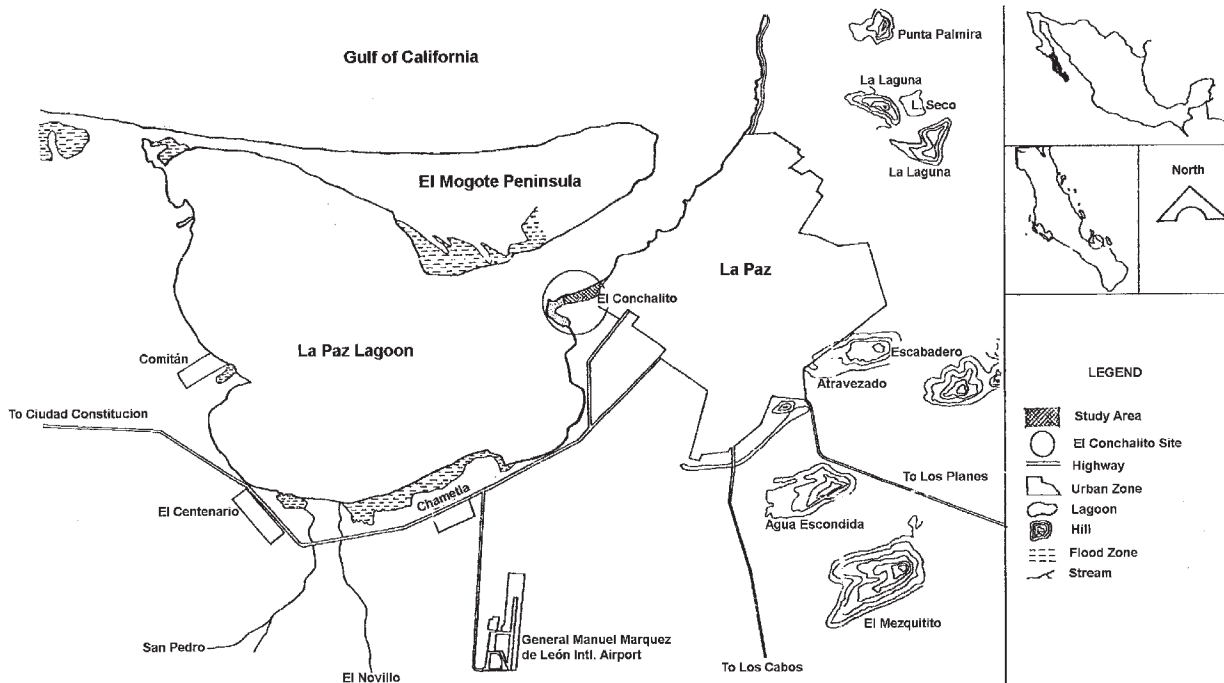
a femur and some small bones were missing, and nearly all of the bones had been unjointed. The bones of the hand were inside of the skull, which was full of small bones and sand (Belding 1885:22).

It is clear from this fascinating account that Belding reported on his discoveries in a factual way; likewise, the sympathetic and insightful writings of men like Belding, Ten Kate, and Diguét, would represent the beginnings of modern anthropological research in Baja California Sur. However, William C. Massey (1947, 1955) is credited with defining the Las Palmas Culture, which rested on his archaeological field work at Cerro Cuevosa (BC 75), Punta Pescadero (BC 111), and Piedra Gorda (BC 114). Located on or near Bahía de las Palmas, these three caves were used exclusively for interment (Massey 1966:47). From the late 1940s onward, the general impression held by scholars was that Las Palmas peoples buried their dead

mainly in caves. Massey (1966) noted that ochre-painted secondary burials wrapped in palm fronds, hides, or sewn bark were unique in western North America as a funerary practice.

However, information gained from recent archaeological research indicates that funerary practices in the Cape Region were more varied and complex than previously assumed. For example, interment at open air sites has been noted at Los Frailes (Massey 1955:172-191), La Salina (Tuohy and Van Wormer 1995:79-91), El Médano (Fujita, de la Luz Gutiérrez Martínez, and Rosales-López 1996), Barco Varado 1 and 2 (Rosales-López and Fujita n.d.), and El Conchalito (Jiménez Ovando and Lagunas Rodríguez 1989:501-530). The latter deserves special attention. El Conchalito is the best-documented archaeological site in Baja California, having produced the greatest number of human burials yet uncovered on the peninsula (Rosales-López and Fujita 2000). The question of cultural

Fig. 1. Location of El Conchalito in the Bay of La Paz, Baja California Sur, Mexico, highlighting the study area.



ties between El Conchalito and Las Palmas period sites as Cerro Cuevoso, Punta Pescadero, Piedra Gorda, Los Frailes, and La Salina requires scholarly attention. In this paper the extensive mortuary data for El Conchalito is reviewed and placed in the context of the region's *in situ* archaeological development. We posit that many of the mortuary characteristics of Las Palmas Culture may have their antecedents in the El Conchalito mortuary complex.

El Conchalito

Extensive testing at El Conchalito, located on La Paz Bay, Baja California Sur (BCS), has produced evidence of human occupation, spanning 3000 years (Fig. 1). El Conchalito is very large and complex in relation to other settlements in BCS, representing the region's most intensely excavated archaeological site. El Conchalito is located at 24° 08' 40" north latitude and 110° 20' 32" west longitude on the southwest edge of La Paz Cove, Baja California Sur. The site is roughly 1000 meters long by 20-50 meters wide, encompassing an area of about 50,000 square meters. Major portions of the site have been degraded and submerged by sea level rise, but primary cultural deposits still exist. Since 1990, archaeologists from Mexico's Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (INAH) have documented roughly four millennia of human occupation at El Conchalito.

The human history of El Conchalito is linked to geomorphological phenomena. From ca. 7,000-5,000 years ago, a slow accumulation of sand along the western edge of La Paz Bay eventually formed a protected beach and a small promontory or spit, which modern Paceños call *El Mogote*. The region is characterized by two geomorphologically distinct areas: (1) high ground adjacent to the intertidal zone, and (2) a low area, which is subject

to inundation from fluctuating sea levels and seasonal storms, surrounding the higher ground. The high ground supported intensive human activity, stretching out 25 meters onto *El Mogote*. In addition, this early Holocene environment supported diverse communities of invertebrate and vertebrate fauna, which ultimately attracted foraging peoples, exploiting a plethora of edible subsistence resources (Rosales-López and Fujita 2000).

Two periods of human occupation have been identified at El Conchalito. The older Hunting Period ranged from ca. 2,300 to 1,200 years before present (BP). The second and more recent occupation, which we call the Shellfish Gathering Period, ranged from about 1,200 BP to the Historic Period. Both periods are represented by a variety of tools and subsistence remains. Relatively minor amounts of tools, lithic debitage, and ecofacts suggest casual site utilization during the Hunting Period. On the basis of projectile points and sundry small-to-medium-sized mammal bone (e.g., deer and hare), we infer that hunting dominated the subsistence practices of El Conchalito's first settlers. However, the presence of grinding stones also reflects a mixed economy. Also, the absence of fresh water may have restricted population size and the length of time that people could sojourn there (Rosales-López and Fujita 2000).

In contrast, the Shellfish Gathering Period produced ample evidence of intensive site utilization, including significant quantities of stone tools, lithic debitage, and archaeofaunal remains. El Conchalito provided an ideal location for human settlement throughout the late Holocene, offering a plethora of marine foods, edible plants, and fruits. Just as El Conchalito was an ideal place to live, it also may have been a prestigious place to die.

Human Skeletal Remains

Forty-seven individuals have been discovered in single and multiple burial contexts since the initial work by Jiménez Ovando and Lagunas Rodríguez (1989). In all, archaeological research at El Conchalito has produced 57 individuals: 23 adult males, 15 adult females; seven adults of unknown sex, one sub-adult female, one juvenile, two adolescents, and eight children (Table 1). Thirty anatomically intact individuals were classified as primary burials. The study population includes five distinct burial types: extended, flexed, L-shaped (semiflexed), sectioned (dismembered), and secondary. No apparent correlation exists between age, sex, and burial orientation. The most prevalent burial type is classified as sectioned (dismembered), which includes 20 individuals in 17 separate burials. Literally, sectioned (dismembered) individuals have been physically separated by hand or tool.

INAH archaeologists have recorded three multiple burials at El Conchalito. Jiménez Ovando and Lagunas Rodríguez (1989) unearthed the remains of a young female adult, lying face down in a prone position; she was accompanied by three children: a six year old on her right side; a four year-old on her right leg, and a two year-old atop her left leg. The second and third examples of multiple burials were excavated under the direction of Alfonso Rosales-López. Multiple Burial 2 represented the skeletal remains of a sub-adult and child. The young adult exhibited portions of its extremities atop its thorax, suggesting post-mortem manipulation or sectioning. The child (Interment 27) was also sectioned (dismembered). Our third multiple burial consisted of one sectioned (dismembered) male, missing the entire lower half of his body, and a female, (Interment 40), exhibiting few anatomically articulated elements. Regardless of their burial position, which we discuss below, the dead at El

Conchalito shared three basic traits: (1) they were buried in shallow graves, ranging in depth from 30 to 50 centimeters; (2) their graves were lined with shells, forming a “bed” on which the bodies rested; and (3) they were covered with ash, charcoal, and seashells.

Extended Burials

Excavations produced 10 extended burials, of which five were supine (face up), four were prone (face down), and one was found lying on his left side. A magnetite stone object was found under the hips and between the legs of Interment 2. Three round pieces of petrified wood (10 centimeters long and 2.4 millimeters thick) rested on the jaw and cervical vertebrae of Interment 4. Interment 14 was buried with a projectile point on his left side. Extended burials date to the Hunting Period (ca. 400 BC to 800 AD), representing the oldest burial tradition at El Conchalito.

Flexed Burials

Nine flexed burials have been unearthed at El Conchalito (Fig. 2). Flexed burials lie on their sides in fetal position with knees drawn closely to the stomach or chest. It is worth noting that the position of the arms, bent toward the thorax, suggests that the bodies were tightly wrapped. Flexed burials seem to range in age from about 800 AD to Spanish contact.

L-Shaped (Semiflexed) Burials

Ten semiflexed L-shaped burials were found at El Conchalito. The bones of these individuals were manipulated to form an L-shape: the intersection of their vertical trunk and horizontal legs give the appearance of a 90 degree right angle and the letter L (Fig. 3). The contorted positions of the legs indicate post-mortem manipulation of the deceased,

Table 1. *El Conchalito burials and their features.*

Burial	Number of Individuals	Type	Orientation	Age	Sex	Observations
1	1		—	22-55	M	Found beneath mixture of sand, ash, and shells
2	1	Extended	NE-SE	22-55	—	Primary (dorsal) burial found with stone object
3	1	Sectioned (dismembered)	—	22-55	M	Found beneath mixture of ash, sand, and shell
4	1	Extended	NE-SE	22-55	F	Primary (dorsal) burial; upper body recovered
5	1	—	—	22-55	—	Primary burial associated with petrified wood
6	1	Flexed	W-E	22-55	—	Primary right-flexed burial
7	1	Flexed	SE-NW	22-55	F	Primary left-flexed burial
8	1	Sectioned (dismembered)	—	22-55	—	Found beneath mixture of ash, shell, and sand
9	1	Sectioned (dismembered)	—	22-55	M	Lower body found beneath ash, sand, and shell
10	1	Flexed	SW-NE	22-55	M	Primary burial (ventral); hip 90° from torso
11	1	Flexed	E-W	22-55	M	Primary right-flexed burial; rhyolite flake.
12	1	Sectioned (dismembered)	SE-NW	22-55	—	Individual found with deer bone tool
13	1	Flexed	S-N	22-55	M	Primary right-flexed burial
14	1	Ventral	N-S	22-55	M	Extended (primary) with projectile point
15	1	Sectioned (dismembered)	NW-SE	22-55	M	Associated with mixture of ash, shell, and sand
16	1	Sectioned (dismembered)	E-W	22-55	F	Ventral-flexed; hip rotated 50° from torso
17	1	Sectioned (dismembered)	Skull, N	Infant	—	Found beneath mixture of ash, shell, and sand
18	1	Extended	SE-NE	22-55	M	Primary burial (dorsal)
19	1	Sectioned (dismembered)	E-W	22-55	F	
20	1	L (semiflexed)	S-N	22-55	F	Primary burial
		L (semiflexed)				
21	1		NW-SE	22-55	F	Primary burial; hip in normal position
22	1	Sectioned (dismembered)	W-E	22-55	M	Hip found left of torso
23a	2	Sectioned (dismembered)	SE-NW	22-55	M	Cut marks
23b	2	Sectioned (dismembered)	SE-NW	22-55	M	Cut marks
24	1	L (semiflexed)	W-E	22-55	F	Primary burial; hip in normal position
25	1	L (semiflexed)	NW-SE	22-55	M	Primary burial; hip twisted 90° angle from torso
26	1	Flexed	S-N	22-55	F	Primary burial w/ deer bone artifacts
27a	2	Sectioned (dismembered)	NE-SE	22-55	M	Cleanly sectioned in half
27b	2	Sectioned (dismembered)	NE-SE	Infant	—	Cleanly sectioned in half

Table 1 (cont.): *El Conchalito burials and their features.*

Burial	Number of Individuals	Type	Orientation	Age	Sex	Observations
28	1	Sectioned (dismembered)	NW-SE	22-55	M	Cleanly sectioned in half
29	1	Sectioned (dismembered)	Skull, N	3-9	—	Disarticulated
30	1	Sectioned (dismembered)	—	Teenager	—	Covered with shells; cut marks on cranium
31	1	L (semiflexed)	NW-SE	22-55	M	Primary burial
32	1	L (semiflexed)	E-W	22-55	F	Primary burial
33	1	Sectioned (dismembered)	S-N	22-55	M	Cleanly sectioned in half
34	1	L (semiflexed)	E-W	22-55	F	Primary burial; hip in normal position
35	1	Sectioned (dismembered)	—	22-55	—	Cut marks from stone tools
36	1	L (semiflexed)	SW-NE	22-55	F	Primary burial; hip rotated 90° from torso
37	1	L (semiflexed)	SW-NE	22-55	M	Primary burial w/shells; hip 90° from torso
38	1		SE-NW	22-55	M	Primary burial with associated objects
39	1	Dorsal flexed	SE-NW	22-55	F	Primary burial
40a	2	Sectioned (dismembered)	—	22-55	M	Fragmentary with some articulated elements
40b	2	Sectioned (dismembered)	—	22-55	F	Fragmentary with some articulated elements
41	1		NW-SE	22-55	M	Primary burial; ventral extended
42	1	Extended	NW-SE	22-55	M	Primary burial (ventral)
1c (a)	4	Secondary	—	22-55	M	Water damage
1c (b)	4	Secondary	—	22-55	F	Water damage
1c (c)	4	Secondary	—	Infant	-----	Water damage
1c (d)	4	Secondary	—	Infant	-----	Water damage
I	1	Left flexed	S-N	19-21	-----	Primary burial
IIa	2	Sectioned (dismembered)	—	22-55	-----	Articulated body parts
IIb	2	Sectioned (dismembered)	—	11-18	-----	Articulated body parts
IIIa	Multiple?	Extended	NW-SE	19-21	F	Primary (ventral) burial found in older stratum
IIIb	Multiple?	Left extended	NW-SE	Infant	-----	Primary burial found in older stratum
IIIc	Multiple?	Extended	NW-SE	Infant	-----	Primary (dorsal) burial found in older stratum
IIId	Multiple?	Extended	NW-SE	Infant	-----	Primary (dorsal) burial fund in older stratum
IV	1	Left flexed	N-S	22-55	F	Primary burial; hip not articulated



Fig. 2. Burial 7 rests in flexed position, lying on left side. The 20-centimeter scale points north. Photograph taken by Rosales-López.

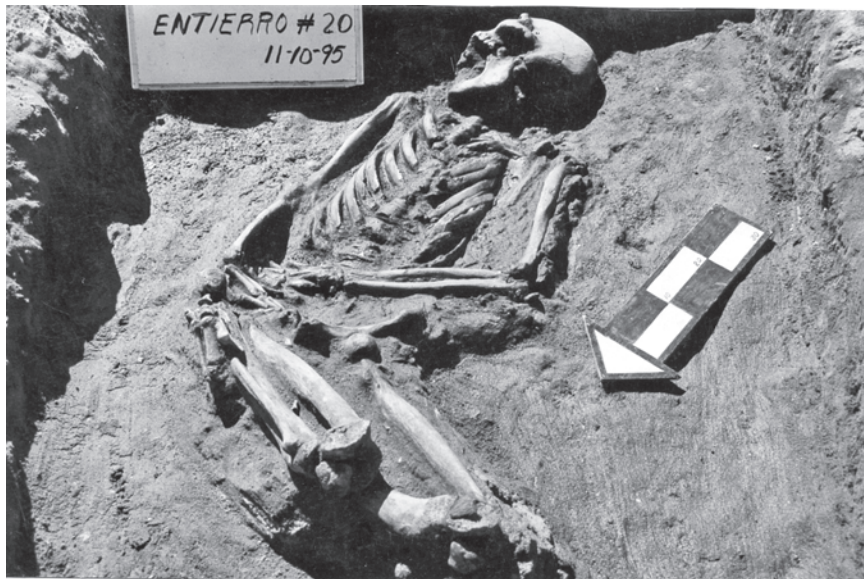


Fig. 3. L-shaped Burial 20. The 30-centimeter scale points north. Photograph taken by Rosales-López.

creating the distinctive L-shape. Four males and six females were buried in this manner. No discernible pattern, regarding the general orientation of these skeletons, was observed; individuals were found, lying face up or down, and lying on the right or left side. Based on the arrangement of the arms, we

believe that the upper body was not wrapped. Some individuals exhibited arms that were bent in front of the thorax; others displayed bent arms, resting at the sides of the individual; and the arms of other L-shaped burials lay outstretched out on either side of the body.

Secondary Burials

Secondary burials represent the fourth category of inhumation at El Conchalito; apparently, individuals were buried, exhumed after sufficient deterioration of soft tissue had occurred, and reburied. However, these individuals were reburied in a disorderly fashion, lacking anatomical coherence.

Sectioned (Dismembered) Burials

The sectioned (dismembered) burial represents the most unusual burial type identified by INAH investigators, appearing to have been the principal funerary practice among El Conchalito's prehistoric population. Various sectioned (dismembered)



Fig. 4. Circular patches of compacted dark-colored sand and shell contain shallow graves. Photograph taken by Rosales-López.



Fig. 5. Burial 9 provides an excellent example of post-mortem sectioning (dismembering). Note: lower half of the body straddles his thorax. The 20-centimeter scale points north. Photograph taken by Rosales-López.

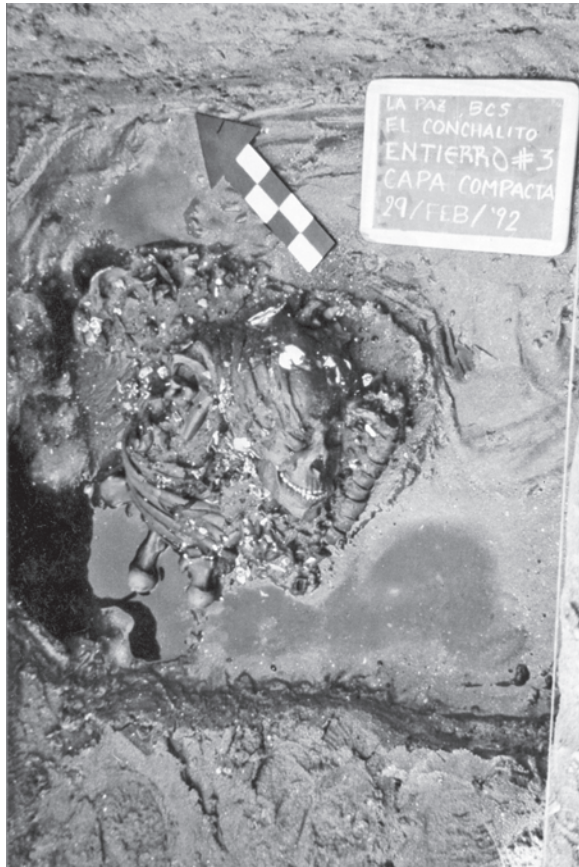


Fig. 6. Lower portions of excavation units are inundated at high tide. Note water collecting to the south and west of Burial 3 (sectioned or dismembered). The 20-centimeter scale points north. Photograph taken by Rosales-López.



Fig. 7. Detail of Burial 3. Note the juxtaposition of the individual's face and spinal column. Photograph taken by Rosales-López.

burials were discovered beneath circular patches of darkly-colored and ashy beach sand, representing shallow graves. Due to their coloration, these features were easy to identify on the white sandy beach. The discovery of human skeletal remains beneath 40 to 60 centimeters of this cement-like substance of extraordinary hardness created a significant challenge to the INAH team, resulting in countless hours of arduous and tedious excavation (Fig. 4).

Burial 9 represents a 25 to 30 year-old adult male, resting on a bed of shells (Fig. 5). His hips and legs neatly straddle his upper torso—the hips cover the facial bones and the knees rest on the lower ribs. Interment 3, a 30 to 35 year-old male, was sectioned (dismembered) in several areas, exhibiting an unusual skeletal arrangement (Fig. 6). His skull and cervical vertebrae retain their normal position. Otherwise, the spinal column was separated from the neck, hip, and ribs and placed in front of the face (Fig. 7); lower limbs were placed in the thoracic cavity; and the feet rested beneath the skull. Apparently, one humerus bone was forcibly inserted through the skull. The hip bones rested on the opposite side of the skull beneath the long bones. Finally, the bones that had been detached from the rib cage covered the individual: the right ribs were located above the skull and the left ribs were found above the long bones. Interestingly, each set of ribs retained its correct anatomical position. Burial 17, the relatively well-preserved remains of a newborn infant of undetermined sex, demonstrates that dismembering the dead was performed indiscriminately. In this case, the child's articulated spinal column was placed behind its intact skull; its upper and lower limbs, which were completely articulated and flexed, were found to the left of the spinal column. As well, the ribs were anatomically intact.

Sectioning (Dismembering) Techniques

We posit that sectioning (dismembering) occurred in the following manner: soon after death, a fetal-positioned individual was wrapped or bundled in deerskin or palm fronds, and placed in a shallow grave, ranging from 40 to 50 centimeters deep. The individual rested on a bed of shells and was covered first by a mixture of ash and charcoal, and then, sand. After some time had elapsed, the body was exhumed, preparing the individual for his second burial. While holding and applying pressure to the hips of the deceased, the legs were turned clockwise and counterclockwise, endeavoring to separate the torso from the hips; a cutting or slicing implement may have been used to sever ligaments or tendons from the bone. The separation was usually done at the waist (lumbar region), which in some cases, involved the fifth lumbar and sacrum. Once separated, the lower portion of the body was repositioned to the side or atop the torso, placing the bones of the hip in front of the face or behind the skull. A successful procedure would result in a neat separation of the lower half of the body with regard to the thorax and hip bones. A failed procedure resulted in the complete anatomical disorganization of the skeleton. If this occurred, the bones were piled, buried elsewhere, or destroyed. The deceased was then reburied—covered first by a layer of shells, ash, and charcoal, and then sand.

In most cases, we observed damage to the coccyx-sacrum joint and at the juncture of the ileum and sacrum. Skeletal injury to Burial 10 and interments 16, 19, 22, and IV provide insight into the sectioning process. We infer that the upper body was held while the lower half of the body was twisted to the left. In this instance, the body was neatly separated into two sections. Unsuccessful procedures produced the opposite result. Interments I and II were completely disarticulated; lower

bones were piled randomly next to the upper body. We surmise that failed procedures resulted in the jumbling of skeletal elements, some of which were distributed atop the individual's skull and fragmented spinal column.

Three individuals were sectioned (dismembered) with stone tools. The upper cranial vault of Interment 30 was severed with a stone instrument; two adult males (Interment 23) exhibited cut marks; the vault of the skull may have been separated from the lower skull by the stone hand-axe, which was found in direct association with the skull. Disarticulated long bone fragments with cut marks were associated with Interment 23; the calcaneus and the patella of Burial 35 (adult female) also exhibited cut marks. As well, her hip and lower limbs were articulated, and the spinal column was shifted to the right, which suggests that her trunk had been manipulated—possibly by twisting and pulling. However, these actions did not cleanly separate the body. It is plausible to suggest that the 106 fragmented and disarticulated bones we found represented an unsuccessful sectioning procedure.

We conjecture that stone tools were used only when sufficient soft-tissue decay had not occurred, facilitating the sectioning process.

Artifacts Associated with El Conchalito Burials

Some interments were associated with artifacts. Interment 11 exhibited a small stone blade at the tip of the left foot; two burins and a deer-bone spatula accompanied Interment 26. Burial 37 was accompanied by an arrangement of *Chione californiensis* (banded clam) shells, resembling a necklace; no perforations were noted. Burial 38 was an adult male associated with three small quartz stones (situated at the neck, hip on the left side, and instep of the left foot), a shark's tooth (found beneath the last rib), a fragmented whale rib (placed near the hip), and a *mantilla* or shawl of *Olivella* (*Olivella* sp.) beads, which was found beneath the thorax. In addition to these artifacts, an arc-shaped pile of 42 stones was placed about 10 centimeters apart on the right side of the body, starting at the level of the elbow and ending near the middle of the thigh. The stones were placed in



Fig. 8. Burial 38 shown in association with rock feature. The 30-centimeter scale points north. Photograph taken by Rosales-López.

two levels; they exhibited two vertices, one at the level of the elbow, culminating with a *mano de metate* (grinding stone), and the other at the thigh. Based on the artifacts associated with Burial 38, and the care taken to arrange the stone feature, we believe that he may have been an esteemed resident of El Conchalito (Fig. 8). Burial 38 exhibited more objects than any other, representing the only individual associated with a stone feature.

Discussion

Archaeological inquiry at El Conchalito has identified a distinctive mortuary complex characterized by L-shaped (semiflexed), sectioned (dismembered), and bundled burials. Extended and flexed burials are found commonly throughout Baja California (Massey 1955; Laylander 1987). Unique to this region, however, are L-shaped and sectioned (dismembered) burials. To the best of our knowledge, L-shaped burials are found only at El Conchalito. Based on the report of a sectioned (dismembered) burial at La Salina (Tuohy and Van Wormer 1995), a Las Palmas era shell midden on the Gulf of California located between Bahía de Las Palmas and Cabo Pulmo, this distinctive mortuary custom may be confined to the Cape Region of Baja California.

According to Massey (1966), Carmean and Molto (1991:23), Molto and Fujita (1995), and Tyson (1977), the Las Palmas tradition dates to at least the 13th century if not earlier. Nevertheless, the Las Palmas burial tradition was securely in place when Fortún Jiménez and Hernán Cortés visited the region in 1533 and 1535, respectively. Fortuitously, a reference to this funerary custom was recorded by Juan Jacobo Baegert (1942:121), an 18th Jesuit missionary stationed in Loreto, Baja California:

Even though one of them told me that in previous times (the Indians) used to

fracture the spinal column of their dead before they buried them, and then throw them in the grave curled up like a ball, under the pretext, that if they did not perform this bestiality, the deceased would come back to life...

This comment clearly relates to the archaeological behavior we observe at El Conchalito, although we are not implying a cultural connection between these disparate regions. The practice of sectioning (dismembering) the dead may have ceased after Spanish colonization; however, memory of the ritual lingered in the minds of acculturated Indians for at least two centuries after European contact. As well, Baegert posits that sectioning (dismembering) and reburial would ensure the individual's safe passage to an afterlife, preventing his return to earth.

Conclusion

El Conchalito was initially occupied roughly 2300 years ago. However, site utilization intensified about 1200 years ago, overlapping the Las Palmas era for roughly three centuries. Based on the available data, we offer the following hypotheses about El Conchalito's long-standing prehistoric mortuary tradition: (1) two completely unrelated ethnic groups occupied El Conchalito; one during the Hunting Period, and another during the Shellfish Gathering era; (2) El Conchalito represents a continuous occupation by the same ethnic group, and that the burial tradition of said group evolved from simple extended burials, culminating in sectioned (dismembered) burials and the renowned "mummy" bundles identified by Massey on Las Palmas Bay; or (3) an ethnic group, represented by extended and flexed burials, was replaced by interlopers, as defined by a distinctive mortuary style.

Since El Conchalito has significant time-depth, it is plausible to suggest that the Las Palmas funerary tradition, as defined by Massey (1966), could have evolved from behaviors first practiced on La Paz Bay. Future research at El Conchalito will address this and other hypotheses regarding the Las Palmas Culture and the role that El Conchalito played in its development. Ongoing morphogenetic and ancient DNA research conducted by one of us (J. Eldon Molto) will necessarily be required to address these important questions.

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