Chapter 2
Precolonial Encounters at Tamál-Húye: An Event-Oriented Archaeology in Sixteenth-Century Northern California

Matthew A. Russell

Introduction

During a brief span in the late sixteenth century, Indigenous hunter-gatherers on the northern California coast met European voyagers, both Spanish and English, for the first time. The Coast Miwok-speaking Tamal people, inhabitants of what is now coastal Marin County, California, were not isolated before the meetings. They had long-standing interaction and exchange with nearby village communities who spoke their language, as well as neighboring California Indians from other language groups. They participated in a complex trade network that moved coastal goods, such as clam and abalone shell inland in exchange for raw materials not available on the coast, such as obsidian and steatite (soapstone). The Tamal’s encounters with the sixteenth-century European visitors were unprecedented; however – not only were they very different than regular visits with neighboring California Indian groups but they also had potentially significant long-term implications, and they foreshadowed Spanish and Russian colonization of northern California more than 175 years later.

This essay highlights the brief intersection of European mercantile (precapitalist) expansion and northern California Indian culture in the late-sixteenth century, using short-term engagements between English and Spanish seafarers and Coast Miwok-speaking Tamal hunter-gatherers in 1579 and 1595 to explore how brief, precolonial encounters can contribute to broader anthropological inquiries of cultural change and persistence. The 1579 and 1595 encounters at tamál-húye, the Indigenous name for the area now encompassing Drakes Bay in Point Reyes National Seashore (Barrett 1908: 307; Collier and Thalman 1996: 14) (Figs. 2.1 and 2.2), represent two of the earliest intersections of Europeans and California Indians on the US Pacific coast. Research is examining the potential long-term implications of short-term events, in this case by focusing on a brief visitation by Sir Francis Drake and his crew to

M.A. Russell (✉)
Department of Anthropology, University of California, Berkeley, CA, USA
e-mail: matthew_russell@berkeley.edu

S.K. Croucher and L. Weiss (eds.), The Archaeology of Capitalism in Colonial Contexts, Contributions To Global Historical Archaeology, DOI 10.1007/978-1-4614-0192-6_2,
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tamál-húye in 1579, followed by the wreck of the Spanish Manila galleon San Agustín, under the command of Sebastián Rodríguez Cermeño, in the same area in 1595. These encounters represent the earliest cross-cultural encounters between Europeans and native peoples in northern California, and the last for more than 175 years until the Spanish colonized northern California beginning in 1769. I use these encounters to illustrate the analytical value of short-term events in archaeological research, and as a way to highlight the historical archaeology of postcontact, precolonial Indigenous societies, which have not received a great deal of attention from historical archaeologists studying processes of culture contact and colonialism (although see Lightfoot and Martinez 1995; Torrence and Clarke 2000a). This work contributes to ongoing efforts to reduce Eurocentric bias in historical archaeology.

**Fig. 2.1** Point Reyes Peninsula and tamál-húye, or Drakes Bay. Map by the author
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(e.g., Harrison 2002; Harrison and Williamson 2004a; Jordan and Schrire 2002; Torrence and Clarke 2000a) by focusing inquiry on native sites and Indigenous cultural practices in the context of cross-cultural encounters (see also Lightfoot 1995).

Silliman (2005) recently highlighted the importance of making clear distinctions between archaeologies of culture contact (short-term events) and colonialism (long-term entanglements) (see also Hill 1998). Using Silliman’s terminology, many archaeological studies have focused on investigating native responses to European capitalist and colonial enterprises and, therefore, emphasize the importance of long-term cross-cultural entanglements for culture change and continuity (e.g., Deagan 1983; 1995; Kirch and Sahlins 1992; Lightfoot 2005b; Lightfoot et al. 1991; 1997). Fewer archaeological inquiries have focused on the long-term implications of short-term events (e.g., Duke 1992; Gibbs 2002, 2003; Nutley 1995; Staniforth 1997, 2003a), especially in contact situations. An examination of the encounters at tamál-húye using an historical anthropological framework that rests on an archaeological foundation but that incorporates other types of evidence (historical, oral, ethnographic), therefore, presents an opportunity to approach issues of culture contact from a different perspective than previous studies. No material culture can be definitively attributed to the earlier Drake encounter, although the historical and ethno-graphic aspects of that encounter are a key component of the overall study. Archaeological research, however, focuses on artifacts from the 1595 San Agustín shipwreck. After the shipwreck, the Spaniards were only present in tamál-húye for a short time before they continued their voyage to New Spain (Mexico) in a small boat.

Fig. 2.2 Drakes Bay in Point Reyes National Seashore, an area called tamál-húye in the Coast Miwok language, and the location of sixteenth-century encounters between California Indians and European voyagers. Photo by author
When the Spanish departed, they left behind the *San Agustín* and its cargo. Archaeological evidence from extensive excavations around *tamál-húye* during the 1940s–1970s indicates that Tamal villagers took advantage of the body of introduced material culture from *San Agustín* by salvaging objects from the shipwreck and incorporating them into their cultural practices. Salvage of the ship’s cargo provides an exceptional opportunity to examine the choices made by the Tamal people in selecting specific objects for reuse in Indigenous contexts. In this case, the focus is how the Tamal actively selected European materials for salvage from a diverse range of goods, rather than selecting objects whose availability was mediated by early traders and colonists as is often the case in colonial contexts. Beyond the initial exchanges that took place with the Tamal, the Spanish were not present to structure use of European and Asian materials from the shipwreck.

Current research focused on the encounters at *tamál-húye* utilize the body of existing archaeological data from previous excavations, and a historical anthropological approach that incorporates multiple lines of evidence and a holistic framework (Lightfoot 2005b), to evaluate how the Tamal people incorporated material culture from the shipwreck into their cultural practices, as well as to assess whether this short-term, precolonial event, and the material culture introduced as a result, was a possible source of long-term Tamal cultural change, or whether extended entanglement from later, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century colonialism was necessary for significant social transformation to occur. I examine these questions by reconstructing previous archaeological excavations through analysis of museum collections, archival excavation records, original field notes, and published reports from the earlier investigations, and by incorporating additional data from ethnography, historical documents, and native oral traditions. Using the wreck of *San Agustín* as a unique case where contact was mediated almost entirely through introduced material culture, my research considers a variety of evidence to reflect on how the Tamal may have negotiated these sixteenth-century cross-cultural encounters, how they may have recontextualized introduced material culture from *San Agustín* and integrated it into their daily lives, and if there were long-term implications of events that took place nearly 200 years before Spanish colonialism reached the region.

In this essay, I first outline the historical background of the encounters between the English seafarers, and later the shipwrecked Spanish voyagers, with the native Tamal. I explore how the world-views of the English, the Spanish, and the Tamal may have structured the encounters at *tamál-húye*, as well as subsequent Tamal salvage and reuse of material from *San Agustín*, highlighting the role of Indigenous agency. Although the interaction I discuss here took place during the period of sixteenth-century mercantilism, a precursor to the industrial society of fully fledged capitalism (Johnson 1996: 8), and it preceded Spanish colonialism in California by almost two centuries, I next frame how the encounter at *tamál-húye* can be considered part of a larger body of work on archaeologies of capitalism in colonial contexts that examines how indigenous societies negotiated capitalist world system expansion across the globe. Following Wolf (1982), I underscore the fact that the intercultural engagement between the English, Spanish, and Tamal did not take place in a vacuum, but was an aspect of larger processes taking place on a global scale. European and
Tamal history intersected on the beaches of tamal-huyé on two brief occasions in the late-sixteenth century, and the histories of each were interconnected from that point forward. Finally, by focusing on a short-term, precolonial encounter, I highlight the archaeology of the event, and I examine how an event-oriented archaeology can contribute to broader studies of cultural change and continuity.

The Encounters at Tamal-Huyé

Beginning in 1565, regular trade between the Philippines and New Spain (Mexico) became an important aspect of the global Spanish mercantile system. Silver from Mexican and South American mines was shipped from Acapulco to Manila, exchanged for Chinese luxury goods highly sought after by European elites, and then shipped back to Acapulco via a return route that passed northern California after a north Pacific crossing (Schurz 1939). The English, with a limited presence in the Pacific in the sixteenth century, sought to make inroads against their Spanish rivals with incursions by privateers and fortune hunters like Sir Francis Drake. Both the English and Spanish had encountered Indigenous peoples on many occasions and in many settings for more than a century before the encounters at tamal-huyé, so they had a well-developed cultural sense of the Indigenous “other,” and how such meetings could unfold (see, for example, Schieffelin 1991). The voyages of Drake and Cermeño are the only two documented European voyages that made landfall in northern California before the eighteenth century. Sir Francis Drake was the first in the summer of 1579, during a global circumnavigation in which he spent 5 weeks on the California coast preparing his ship for a long Pacific crossing and eventual return to England (Drake 1854 [1628]; Hakluyt 1854 [1600]). Scholars debate the precise location of the landfall, but most agree it was within the territory of Coast Miwok-speaking inhabitants of the northern San Francisco Bay Area, encompassing Marin and southern Sonoma Counties today; it was most likely, it was in what was called tamal-huyé in the Coast Miwok language, which Drake called Nova Albion (Heizer 1947, 1974; Heizer and Elmendorf 1942; Wagner 1926). Accounts of Drake’s interactions with the Tamal (or another Coast Miwok group) are documented in several detailed accounts (Nuttall 1914; Vaux 1854), and the episode is compelling because the Drake texts record a series of unusual and highly ritualized scenes after the English arrived in California (see below). After these events, Drake departed California and sailed on to England, leaving little or no significant material component of his visit – no archaeological remains have been conclusively associated with events in 1579 – although the rich historical account detailing aspects of the interaction indicate he may have made a lasting impression in other ways.

From an archaeological perspective, another interaction that took place just 16 years after Drake’s visit is more intriguing. The Spanish Manila galleon San Agustín, carrying a diverse cargo of Chinese trade goods including porcelain, silk, and other luxury items, wrecked in tamal-huyé in November 1595 while sailing from Manila to Acapulco. Cermeño and an 80-member crew left the Philippines on July 5, 1595...
aboard the San Agustín. After a 4-month Pacific crossing, they reached California in early November and anchored their vessel in a large, sheltered bay called the La Bahía de San Francisco (later renamed Drakes Bay) for reprovision and for assembling a small launch for coastal exploration. The San Agustín was driven ashore during a storm before they completed their tasks and became a total loss, forcing the Spaniards to modify the launch to accommodate the entire crew for their return to Acapulco. For more than a month, both before and after San Agustín’s wreck and while completing modifications to the launch, Cermeño’s crew interacted with the Tamal population (Cermeño 1924 [1596], 2001 [1596]). The Spanish voyagers quickly departed tamál-húye for Acapulco after the shipwreck event, but they abandoned the galleon and its cargo, leaving a considerable body of material culture behind.

The Tamal, on the contrary, had no exposure to Europeans before Drake and Cermeño’s visits. The Tamal and their ancestors had occupied and exploited the Drakes Bay area and its adjacent estuaries for at least 2,500 years, probably much longer. The Coast Miwok-speaking Tamal and their neighbors (whose descendants still reside in the area today as the federally recognized Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria) were hunter-gatherers who exploited a variety of terrestrial, estuarine, and marine resources. They occupied a series of permanent and seasonal habitation sites, hunted terrestrial game and sea mammals, foraged for wild plants, and collected shellfish and other coastal resources (Stewart 2003). California was inhabited by a dense population of complex hunter-gatherers organized as a series of small, independent polities, sometimes referred to as village communities (Kroeber 1925: 831), tribelets (Kroeber 1932: 258–259, 1962: 29–33), or tribes (Milliken 1995). Village communities in California, such as larger tribes in other regions of North America, were autonomous, self-governing polities that controlled a loosely defined territory for resource exploitation (Kroeber 1925: 831, 1962: 29, 49). Each community claimed the territory surrounding its settlements, often a portion of one or more watersheds, and maintained exclusive access to the available resources. Although surrounded by as many as a dozen village communities who shared the same language, the Tamal were an independent polity whose territory included the Point Reyes Peninsula (Emberson et al. 1999: 42).

The Tamal people shared a number of cultural characteristics with their fellow Coast Miwok-speaking neighbors, as well as neighboring ethnolinguistic inhabitants of surrounding areas, such as the Pomo (Kroeber 1925: 275). The Tamal also likely shared a common world view with surrounding village communities, and engaged in similar religious practices. California Indian cosmology was similar throughout the central part of the state, including the San Francisco Bay Area, although there are clear distinctions made by individual tribes. In general, central California Indians had an animistic world-view, believing that not only humans but also all of nature (animals, plants, rocks, celestial phenomena, features on the landscape, etc.) had spirits that formed the complex tapestry of life. Ghosts also played an important role in the spiritual beliefs of California Indians (Loeb 1926: 302–303). California Indian religious practices included a variety of community ceremonial observances meant to benefit the entire community (Kroeber 1907: 321). Ritual practice in Native California followed a rich and complex ceremonial calendar, and many rites were
performed by “secret societies,” whose members had access to spiritual knowledge not available to nonmembers. Each tribal group had a distinctive set of dances, ceremonies, and rituals that they performed throughout the year, but there was a common thread that ran throughout central California connecting the various tribes through a shared system of belief. Ceremonies likely practiced by the Tamal included secret society initiation ceremonies and specific tribal dances or ceremonies performed for a variety of purposes, but that generally ensured balance in the natural world. (Kroeber 1907: 335). The secret society initiation ceremonies included those that are part of the Kuksu cult system, north-central California Indian phenomena characterized by a series of ceremonies performed by society members who impersonated supernatural figures, including the mythological character Kuksu (Kroeber 1907: 336, 1932: 399–400, 423). The purpose and social function of the secret societies, as well as the specifics of the dances and enactments, varies between California Indian tribal groups (Kroeber 1932: 394), but seemed to center on the initiation and instruction of new members, and on the performance of healing rites (Kroeber 1932: 394, 396; Loeb 1926: 354). Numerous other dances and rituals were performed along with the Kuksu rites on a regular schedule throughout the year (Collier and Thalman 1996; Kelly 1978). The cultural context of the Tamal, especially their religious observances and world-view, likely influenced the way in which they perceived and interacted with the first European voyagers they encountered in the late-sixteenth century.

Although we can never know their true perceptions of these early encounters, there is at least one native oral tradition recorded about precolonial European encounters in northern California that offers some insight. It comes from the Kashaya Pomo, closely related neighbors of the Tamal to the north, as told by elder Essie Parrish to Berkeley linguist Robert L. Oswalt in 1958. As the story goes,

In the old days, before the white people came up here, there was a boat sailing on the ocean from the south. Because before that they had never seen a boat, they said, ‘Our world must be coming to an end. Couldn’t we do something? This big bird floating on the ocean is from somewhere, probably from up high. Let us plan a feast. Let us have a dance.’ They followed its course with their eyes to see what it would do. Having done so, they promised Our Father [a feast] saying that destruction was upon them…. When they had done so, they watched [the ship] sail way up north and disappear. They thought that [the ship] had not done anything but sail northwards because of the feast they had promised. They were saying that nothing had happened to them – the big bird person had sailed northward without doing anything – because of the promise of a feast; because of that they thought it had not done anything. Consequently they held a feast and a big dance…(Oswalt 1966: 245–247).

This tradition provides a glimpse into the California Indian perspective on early encounters, albeit filtered through many generations of oral tradition, and illuminates how at least one California Indian group made sense of their initial contact with European outsiders. Native perceptions of early encounters with European voyagers may be the product of an Indigenous cosmology or world-view that is very different than a European perspective. Interpreting archaeological remains that resulted from the encounters needs to consider that native populations may have thought about introduced material culture in very different ways than the Europeans who were the primary consumers of the objects.
Based on anthropological assessment of the historical accounts, the encounter with Drake and his crew in 1579 may have had important ritual connotations for the Tamal (Heizer 1947; Kroeber 1925: 276–278; Meighan 1981). After anchoring the *Golden Hind*, a lone individual in a canoe approached the ship and addressed Drake and his crew in an oratory greeting. After landing, the English crew observed that the assembled native inhabitants appeared to weep and scratch their faces in an elaborate display of anguish. Later, both sides participated in a ceremony in which the California Indians “crowned” Drake as their “king” (at least in the eyes of the English chronicler), followed by more ritualizing crying, shrieking, weeping, and face-scratching. While it is not known for certain, many scholars argue the native inhabitant’s actions may represent a variation of the Kuksu ceremony, or the ghost ceremony, both of which took place during the summer months. In this context, the encounter has been interpreted as the Tamal perceiving the English as returned spirits or ghosts of dead ancestors (Heizer 1947; Kroeber 1925: 276–278; Meighan 1981), or in a more nuanced interpretation, as symbolic individuals who had arrived in *tamál-húye* to participate in the ceremonial context of the Kuksu performances (Lightfoot and Simmons 1998).

From the Tamal perspective, the Spanish departure was likely just the beginning of their interaction with the shipwreck itself, as small-scale collecting, opportunistic salvage, or possibly systematic exploitation likely continued for some time. The Tamal salvaged and incorporated many objects from *San Agustín* into their cultural practices, and many of these have been recovered archaeologically. Together, evidence for the encounters at *tamál-húye* gives us the raw material for a rich historical anthropology of the interactions and a starting point for assessing the long-term implications of short-term events.

The *San Agustín* shipwreck itself has not yet been located, so archaeological evidence for the encounters at *tamál-húye* consists of objects from the ship excavated from Tamal sites on land. Archaeologists from a variety of institutions excavated, tested, or surface collected a number of sites in *tamál-húye* between 1940 and 1973 that produced a significant quantity of blue and white underglaze Chinese export porcelain, iron ship’s fasteners, and other objects of possible sixteenth-century origin found in wholly native contexts (Beardsley 1954a, b; Heizer 1941; King and Upson 1970; Meighan 1950, 2002; Meighan and Heizer 1952; Treganza 1959; Treganza and King 1968; Von der Porten 1968, 1972). The projects generated extensive museum collections and a vast archive of original field notes, artifact catalogs, and publications. Despite this rich record, however, there has been little published on the excavations that focuses on Tamal cultural practices or engages with the data from a contemporary, culture contact perspective.

Previous interpretations of Tamal interactions with Drake and his crew in 1579, in particular the possibility that the Europeans were perceived in supernatural or ceremonial terms, provide the cultural context for how the native peoples may have subsequently viewed the material remains from the *San Agustín* in 1595. Lightfoot and Simmons (1998: 160) suggest that after the shipwreck and the Spaniard’s departure, Tamal individuals may have collected porcelain vessels, ceramic fragments, iron spikes, and other material because they were valued as symbols of the previous
Drake encounter, and as objects that signified unknown worlds. This interpretation is based on the Tamal world-view, and it relies on a culturally informed view of history that preserves Indigenous agency and culture (Sahlins 2000). In this interpretation, it is “more apt to speak of an incorporation of the world system into the local polity than the reverse” (Thomas 1990: 64). It was not the English or the Spanish who drew the California Indians into the nascent world capitalist system with the interactions at tamāl-húye, rather it was the Tamal who drew the Europeans into their own world system through retention and reuse of introduced material culture from the shipwreck in their cultural practices. Examining how that process unfolded and in what ways the introduced material culture was incorporated into Tamal cultural practices offers a window into the ways the foreign goods can be recontextualized in local contexts, and if there are long-term consequences (Thomas 1991).

Culture Contact and Colonialism

While the encounters at tamāl-húye represent a precolonial intersection of European capitalism and Indigenous northern California culture, my examination of the cross-cultural encounters is situated within the larger body of work on archaeologies of culture contact and colonialism, especially as related to the expansion of mercantilism and capitalism in the early modern period. For many decades, up until the 1980s, archaeologists interested in studying processes of culture change during cross-cultural encounters often used established anthropological frameworks of culture contact, such as acculturation theory (e.g., Broom et al. 1953; Foster 1960; Linton 1940; Redfield et al. 1936; Spicer 1961) and world systems theory (e.g., Chase-Dunn and Mann 1998; Hall and Chase-Dunn 1993; Kardulias 1999; Kohl 1987; Kristiansen 1987; McGuire 1989). Both have been severely critiqued and are rarely applied today, although there are aspects of these early approaches that are important to acknowledge in our study of intercultural interactions (Cusick 1998). Models based on Wallerstein’s (1974) world system theory, in particular, have had a significant impact on the study of intercultural interactions. In addition to the overall historical perspective world systems approaches bring to the archaeology of cross-cultural encounters, part of their heuristic value is to reinforce the idea that societies are interconnected and cannot be evaluated in isolation (Rowlands 1987). This heuristic value is diminished, however, when its application inadvertently obscures past socio-economic relations by essentializing groups as either core or periphery (Dietler 1989; Dietler 2005; Rice 1998; Schortman and Urban 1998) or assuming a priori relationships based on economic inequality. Given the numerous critiques of Wallerstein’s model, appropriate archaeological application of world systems theory may be limited to research that examines relationships between European powers and their colonies in the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries (e.g., Williams 1992) – indeed, such approaches are still used today (e.g., Delgado 2009). In general, however, these examples fall outside the boundary of what are normally considered culture contact studies.
Despite widespread criticism of world systems theory in anthropology, most contemporary researchers acknowledge that local archaeological cases can only be understood fully when placed within a broader regional context. There is both theoretical and analytical value to the study of structural forces as long-term undercurrents that powerfully influence people’s lives, and they do not need to be portrayed as deterministic – these structures are in turn shaped and transformed by historically situated events (Sahlins 1981b: 111). For my current purposes, we cannot simply assume that the Europeans dominated interaction and exchange with the Tamal people or directed subsequent outcomes. This may be particularly true in my study because of the unintentional nature of the encounter at tamál-húye – when shipwrecks are the reason cultures come into contact, structural dynamics of the engagements may shift significantly from what would be expected in a world systems framework (see, for example, Keate 2002 [1788]). This is one of the reasons maritime archaeology can make such important contributions to the archaeology of intercultural interaction (see below).

Moving beyond world system approaches, a more productive framework for assessing brief, precolonial encounters like that at tamál-húye is one that not only discards the assumption that Europeans always dominated relations with non-Europeans during early encounters but also acknowledges that contact situations are simultaneously part of a larger global process, as well as historically contingent and situated within specific contexts. Like Wallerstein, Wolf (1982) argues that world history is systemic, but he suggests that the system should not highlight European expansion at the expense of other cultures. Instead, all peoples and cultures are part of an interconnected system that developed as Europeans drew together numerous preexisting local exchange networks into a global complex. As this process unfolded, the histories of all peoples became inextricably linked into a shared, common history. Some societies prospered, others were decimated, but all were touched in some way. Thus, writes Wolf, “the history of these supposedly history-less peoples is in fact a part of the history of European expansion itself” (Wolf 1982: 194). In this sense, the Tamal were briefly touched by European contact in the sixteenth century, but we do not know if there were long-term implications of that contact. From the point of contact onward, however, as the Tamal salvaged and incorporated Chinese porcelain vessels and other objects into their cultural practices, their history became part of the history of global connections.

From an archaeological perspective, Stein (2002, 2005) has attempted to synthesize principles shared by contemporary archaeologists studying cross-cultural encounters and colonialism, and offers a way forward. He has suggested that recent scholarly attention to intercultural engagements and colonial encounters has seven interconnected elements that draw it together. These include a combination of processual and postprocessual approaches; a rejection of unilinear models, such as acculturation and core–periphery (world systems); a multiscalar approach; recognizing patterned variability in power relations; recognizing that individual societies are heterogeneous and cannot be essentialized; acknowledging internal dynamics as well as external forces for change; and consideration of human agency
as well as larger structural constraints. These principles acknowledge that contact situations and colonial entanglements are historically contingent and situated within specific contexts, which makes an all-encompassing theory of culture contact unrealistic and inappropriate. Yet, there are enough similarities between cross-cultural encounters that a broadly comparative approach, which recognizes the distinctive nature of individual intercultural engagements, can be productive (Alexander 1998; Lightfoot 2005a; Stein 2005).

Stein’s principles underlie my study of the encounters at *tamál-húye*. The unique circumstances of the Tamal people’s encounter with Drake in 1579, which may have included a ritual or ceremonial element, and of their salvage of material from the *San Agustín* after a brief set of interactions with the Spanish and Filipino crew following the shipwreck in 1595, require a research approach that highlights an Indigenous understanding of the events to examine both the immediate effects and potential long-term implications on California Indian society. A more nuanced approach such as this can combine both macroscale and microscale perspectives, and may consider episodes of culture contact as dynamic zones of cross-cutting social interaction and active identity construction. Negotiating identities will be archaeologically visible in innovative transformations of material culture adoption and use on both sides of the encounter, and by interpretations that allow for the active use of material culture to create new social identities and foster cultural interactions (Lightfoot and Martinez 1995).

In addition, my research highlights an approach that explicitly acknowledges that processes of culture contact and colonialism, as well as the long-term implications of each, can span both prehistory and history – and oftentimes may reside in the liminal “protohistoric” zone. Understanding this calls into question the usefulness of the sharp disciplinary divide between “prehistoric” and “historical” archaeology that exists today (Lightfoot 1995; Rubertone 2000). This problematic dichotomy is especially evident in cases where Indigenous cultural practices continued virtually unchanged into the colonial period, even with incorporation of introduced material culture (e.g., Colley 2000; Duke 1992). Both prehistoric and historical archaeologists can work to dispel this separation by using a long-term perspective that highlights the dynamic nature of culture, continuous change over time, as well as cultural persistence and continuity, as part of a natural rhythm. This approach does not see the arrival of Europeans or other outsiders as a sharp break with the past, but rather contextualized within a diachronic framework, prehistory and postcontact are part of a single historical continuum (Lightfoot 1995; Torrence and Clarke 2000b; Williamson 2004). In addition, the artificial divide between prehistory and history can be obscured by focusing attention on a variety of “traditional” archaeological site-types, such as middens, rock shelters, lithic scatters and rock art, as I do in this project. As is the case at *tamál-húye*, these sites often persisted into the historical period, and although some may not contain obvious signatures of contact such as quantities of European-made artifacts, they can nonetheless contribute to an Indigenous perspective on cross-cultural encounter (Colley 2000; Torrence and Clarke 2000b).
Event-Oriented Archaeology

As I previously mentioned, what makes the project at *tamál-húye* unique, however, is that it is not focused on long-term colonial encounters, but instead focuses on two brief, maritime events. The first encounter with Drake may have had singular significance because of the cultural context in which it occurred, while the second, the *San Agustín* shipwreck, was also unprecedented because of the significant material element. Because of this, the project is an example of the unique contributions that event-based archaeologies, which can include shipwrecks but that can focus on a variety of historical site-types, can make to anthropological scholarship. Maritime archaeology in particular, however, is often uniquely positioned to address broad anthropological questions about large-scale social processes, such as the study of culture contact and colonialism (Dellino-Musgrave 2006). Shipwrecks can be indicative of larger patterns of trade and commerce, and may often give distinctive insight to the expansion and movement of people around the world. In addition, however, shipwrecks can be touchstones to specific moments of cross-cultural engagement and can help us understand how these interactions unfolded. Shipwrecks and their cargos, like other material remains from early cross-cultural encounters, can contribute a unique perspective to understanding these engagements (e.g., Campbell 1997; Campbell and Gesner 2000; Fallowfield 2001; Gesner 2000; Illidge 2002). While I interpret the particular historical contingencies of the encounter at *tamál-húye* as an early example of the intersection of native California with European mercantilism, one of the most distinctive aspects of shipwreck events, including that of the *San Agustín*, is that they were entirely unintentional. This makes shipwrecks unique archaeological sites, and it positions maritime archaeology to address the effects of interaction between Indigenous populations and Europeans and their material culture in specific locations before the advent of formal colonial enterprises (see Gibbs 2003, 2006). Shipwrecks also represent the kind of unintentional interaction that can significantly alter the power dynamics of cross-cultural encounters between native societies and Europeans. Due to the unintentional nature and historical contingencies of the encounter, the brief Tamal interaction with the English and Spanish at *tamál-húye*, and their later salvage of the *San Agustín*, provides an example of how shipwrecks can significantly alter the dynamics of cross-cultural encounters between native societies and representatives of the expanding world capitalist system.

Investigating a short-term, precolonial encounter between the sixteenth-century world capitalist system and Indigenous hunter-gatherers in northern California demonstrates how an event-based perspective can contribute to broader studies investigating issues of cultural change and continuity. An approach that considers the long-term implications of short-term encounters has a theoretical foundation based on Marshall Sahlins’ “event-oriented anthropology” (Sahlins 1981a, 1985, 1991, 2004, 2005), a term used by Biersack (1991: 7) to describe Sahlins’ standpoint. Along with the work of other practice-oriented scholars (e.g., Sewell 2005), Sahlins emphasizes the importance of the “event” in history. Similarly, an archaeologically based research perspective that focuses on brief, precolonial intercultural interactions
can be termed an “event-oriented archaeology.” Several previous archaeological studies have focused on the “archaeology of the event” (e.g., Duke 1992; Gibbs 2002, 2003; Nutley 1995), but Staniforth’s Annales-based approach (Staniforth 1997, 2003a, b), which emphasizes shipwrecks as unique events representing cultural continuity, is the most explicit example.

Archaeologists began incorporating ideas from the French Annales school of historiography in the 1980s (Bintliff 1991a; Knapp 1992b). The Annales school has its foundation in the 1930s as an interdisciplinary approach merging history, sociology, anthropology, geography, psychology, and archaeology in a multifaceted methodology for studying premodern societies. Although Annales lacks a single, unifying framework, important themes include a focus on the daily lives of ordinary people, population demography, analysis of class structure, patterns of diet and health, and ideologies and world-view (Bintliff 1991b). Fernand Braudel, representing the second generation of Annales scholars, has been the most influential Annaliste for archaeologists. Braudel’s most important contribution is his “wavelength” historical framework, characterized by a well-known tripartite scale of history, which includes the longue durée; a medium-term wavelength; and a short-term wavelength, highlighting the history of events (Braudel 1972: 20–21). While recognizing multiple levels of time, Braudel’s attention is mostly focused on the long and medium terms, which act as structuring influences that both constrain and enable human action. Braudel equates the event, on the contrary, with traditional, narrative political history (Knapp 1992a: 6). A more serious attention to historical events is taken up in more detail by third generation Annalistes, including Jacques Le Goff and Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie.

An archaeological approach that specifically draws on third-generation Annales emphasis on the event is Mark Staniforth’s “archaeology of the event” (Staniforth 1997, 2003a, b). This is an innovative perspective with a foundation in maritime archaeology, highlighting shipwrecks as particular events. Staniforth suggests that while certain types of archaeological evidence may not be suited to investigation at the level of the individual event, shipwrecks, which result from a specific event, may be uniquely suited to just that role (Staniforth 1997: 18). Focusing on colonial-period shipwrecks in Australia, Staniforth demonstrates that wreck events are tied to larger structural processes, such capitalism, consumerism, and colonialism (Staniforth 1997: 20). Using a broadly comparative theoretical framework, Staniforth argues that successful British colonization of Australia required expanding trade networks to supply colonists with appropriate consumer goods that allowed them to maintain their familiar British social system and identity. Using individual shipwreck events and the material culture carried on board as representations of broader British attitudes and world-views, Staniforth demonstrates an effort by colonists to maintain cultural continuity. Staniforth (2003b: 2) notes that “[i]n the colonial context, cultural continuity was one of the critical ways in which people established order in their world.” Recognizable architecture, alcohol, food and beverage helped maintain that order. Staniforth’s “archaeology of the event,” therefore, uses events to show how culture is reproduced and maintained. At heart, it demonstrates cultural continuity. Staniforth’s proximate object of study is material culture from shipwreck
events, but his ultimate object of study is the structure that produced them. In this way, by using events (shipwrecks) to reflect larger structures (British world-view), Staniforth’s approach may actually have as much in common with a Braudelian perspective as it does the third generation *Annales* scholars.

**An Event-Oriented Archaeology**

Like Staniforth, my research focuses in part on a specific shipwreck event, although I approach an event-oriented archaeology from a different perspective. An alternative way to view the relationship between structure and events (rather than events reflecting larger structures) is to acknowledge that there is a dialectic between the two, in which structure both enables and constrains events, while events both reproduce and transform structure (Giddens 1979: 5). A view of events rooted in theories of practice in which they play an active role in cultural transformation is essential to what I term an “event-oriented archaeology,” a perspective based on Sahlins’ theoretical analysis of the event, which views short-term events – whether shipwrecks or cross-cultural encounters – as “turning points” that stimulate cultural change (e.g., Sahlins 1981a).

An event-based anthropology foregrounds the importance of short-term “events” and places them on equal theoretical footing with the broader concept of “structure.” Like Giddens, Sahlins’ work highlights the recursive relationship in which events produce and reproduce structure (Sahlins 1981a, 1985). Structure is shaped by history and events, and events are directly linked to cultural transformation (Sahlins 1985: vii). While cultural reproduction results in ongoing societal transformation, significant cultural transformation can occur in the interaction between structure and event, that is, when a group’s underlying cultural logic (structure) is confronted by an entirely unique circumstance (event) that it must make sense of and incorporate into its realm of understanding (Sahlins 1981a: 8). This is especially true when cultural groups encounter one another for the first time – each approaches the other with its own cultural logic and through such encounters both are transformed in a “structure of the conjuncture” – a new structure that results from a revised cultural understanding (Sahlins 1981a: 68). An important question is what makes an event historically significant, and when and under what circumstances it fundamentally transforms cultural practice (Sahlins 1991, 2004, 2005). Sahlins suggests that “[a]n event becomes such as it is interpreted. Only as it is appropriated in and through the cultural scheme does it acquire an historical significance” (Sahlins 1985: xiv, emphasis original). An event’s significance is entirely situated within particular cultural contexts; each situation is unique and must be evaluated with reference to its historically contingent condition (Sahlins 1991: 44–45). What constitutes a historically significant event can only be understood through a detailed analysis of cultural context. An event has the power to engender change because of how it is interpreted, and an interpretation of an event as significant enough to cause change depends on the cultural context in which the event occurs. In other words, the event is dependent on structure for significance, and when significant, can result in structural change.
Further, rather than social change solely occurring through gradual production and reproduction of cultural practices, specific events can redirect historical trajectories in ways not predictable from knowledge of what came before (Sewell 2005: 227). In practice, to argue that short-term events can initiate structural change, it is necessary to effectively demonstrate how structure has been altered. Demonstrating structural change requires a detailed grasp of structure both before and after the event under study to know how structure has been changed, which requires in-depth knowledge of the historical details surrounding the event in question (Sewell 2005: 219).

An analysis of significant events and their impact on culture change can, in certain circumstances, be investigated through a historical anthropology based on archaeology (Beck et al. 2007). The late-sixteenth century intercultural engagement between the Tamal people of northern California and European voyagers shipwrecked in the San Agustín may be one of these unique events that give us a window into processes of culture change and continuity. The key concern here is whether the short-term shipwreck event and resulting introduction of foreign material culture precipitated culture change, or if later, long-term colonial entanglement was necessary for such change to occur. For my purposes, an event-oriented archaeology is one that attempts to trace cultural change, whether internally or externally generated, to a specific or short-term event. Archaeologically, one effective way to do this is by a methodology similar to Le Roy Ladurie’s (1979) structure–event–structure model. That is, to examine key variables that provide insight into structural conditions before an event, and look for fundamental change, steady continuity, or perhaps some combination, after the event. When events are given equal theoretical footing as structure, it restores people as the primary force in historical change, a view that links key theoretical concepts of agency and event. Combining historical and maritime archaeology may offer a unique opportunity to address such questions about culture change.

**Archaeology of the Encounters at Tamál-Húye**

Since the San Agustín shipwreck has not yet been located, current archaeological evidence for the encounters at tamál-húye consists of nearly 800 blue and white underglaze Chinese export porcelain sherds, earthenware and stoneware fragments, iron spikes, and a handful of other small objects from the shipwreck that were found among traditional California Indian artifacts in wholly native contexts in Tamal village and midden sites during excavations from the 1940s to 1970s (Fig. 2.3). At least 15 sites have been investigated in tamál-húye that may include material culture from the San Agustín shipwreck. Previous researchers either viewed Tamal reuse of the porcelain ceramics either in a strictly utilitarian way, assuming typical Western uses such as food preparation, serving, and storage, or that they were collected as simple curiosities, although they did note a few porcelain fragments that had been modified into bead blanks and pendants, or flaked as bifacial tools (Fig. 2.4) (Heizer 1941; Treganza 1959; Treganza and King 1968; Von der Porten
1968). My current project uses multiple lines of evidence, built on an archaeological foundation, to evaluate competing hypotheses that view Tamal perception of introduced objects as either utilitarian vessels or “merely trifles,” or alternatively as powerful objects imbued with symbolic meaning, as suggested by Lightfoot and Simmons (1998).

To evaluate Tamal recontextualization of introduced material culture from the San Agustín shipwreck, I utilize existing museum collections and archival field data from previous archaeological excavations, some nearly 70 years old, as my primary data source. I use these collections and the accompanying data to reconstruct the previous excavations and reanalyze the data to address my research questions. In this way, while the research can be broadly considered historical archaeology, at the same time it is archaeological history. My archaeological analysis follows two primary lines of inquiry. First, I reconstruct the excavation from six primary sites at tamál-húye within a Geographic Information System (GIS) framework, and I conduct exploratory spatial data analysis (ESDA) to look for intrasite patterning. In particular, I evaluate whether introduced objects are clustered in statistically significant ways with native artifact-types or features representing specific cultural practices. I also evaluate whether the layout and use of space within sites changed after introduction of the sixteenth-century material culture. Second, I conduct a detailed analysis of introduced objects from all 15 sites that have yielded material
from the San Agustín to look for clues as to how Tamal individuals incorporated them into their cultural practices.

At present, this research remains a work in progress. The GIS study is ongoing and results are not yet available. Preliminary evidence from examining the museum collections, however, may offer some insight into how the Tamal perceived the introduced objects from San Agustín, in particular the Chinese porcelain. As suggested by previous excavators, one way that Tamal individuals may have used introduced artifacts is for pragmatic or utilitarian purposes. New objects such as ceramic vessels may have been incorporated into existing cultural practices in ways that resulted in no significant change to their daily lives. For example, the Tamal may have used porcelain plates, bowls, and other ceramic vessels from the shipwreck as food preparation, serving, and storage containers, which they discarded as they broke (Heizer 1941). If this interpretation is correct, then Tamal people may have used ceramic vessels as an equivalent to baskets and food platters that were simply made from a new, previously unknown material. One archaeological finding that would support this premise is if particular vessel forms were selected more frequently than others. A preference for selecting hollowware versus flatware vessels, for example, may indicate utilitarian incorporation of porcelain ceramics into existing native foodways that favored stews, porridges, and gruels (Cabak and Loring 2000;
To test this, I compared percentages of Chinese porcelain vessel forms carried to Tamal village sites, and later recovered during archaeological excavations to the percentages of available vessel forms on the shipwreck. I reconstructed available ceramic vessel-types from a collection of more than 420 beach-collected porcelain sherds that have washed ashore seasonally from an offshore site, presumably from the shipwreck site itself. This beach-collected assemblage of porcelain represents a random sample of vessels available on the shipwreck, and may be used as a control to compare to culturally selected items.

During my examination of the collections, I determined the archaeological assemblage of porcelain fragments includes a total of 692 sherds, representing a minimum number of vessels (MNV) of 209, while the beach-collected assemblage includes 420 individual porcelain fragments representing an MNV of 102. While examining the assemblages to determine MNV, I also recorded vessel type, distinguishing between open and closed vessels, and dividing open vessels into flatwares and hollowwares when possible. Results of the analysis (Table 2.1) indicate very similar percentages of vessel forms from both the excavated and beach-collected assemblages, which may indicate the Tamal had no preference for selecting specific vessel forms for salvage from the San Agustín. This may indicate that pragmatic or utilitarian concerns were not a top priority for Tamal villagers when they collected porcelain vessels and fragments.

Next, I addressed the question of Tamal reuse and recontextualization of the artifacts through detailed examination of each artifact. I carefully examined all objects for evidence of Californian Indian reuse, including modification into traditional artifact classes such as bifaces, beads, and pendants. Understanding the variability in artifact modification is a critical component of addressing my primary research questions pertaining to utilitarian versus nonutilitarian artifact use. I found that out of a total of 692 porcelain fragments from archaeological contexts on the Point Reyes Peninsula, just 46, or 6.6%, showed any indications of cultural modification. This included a number of sherds used as possible bead blanks, pendants, and medallions, although the majority are simple bifaces. Results of this analysis indicate that a large majority, almost 94% of the porcelain fragments, show no sign of modification. This could support the idea that the Tamal people collected the porcelain fragments because of symbolic meaning,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vessel form</th>
<th>Archaeological assemblage (MNV = 209)</th>
<th>Beach-collected assemblage (MNV = 102)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flatware (plates and saucers)</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hollowware (bowls)</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown open vessels</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bottles and vases</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>5</td>
<td>2.5</td>
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Farnsworth 1996; Voss 2008). To test this, I compared percentages of Chinese porcelain vessel forms carried to Tamal village sites, and later recovered during archaeological excavations to the percentages of available vessel forms on the shipwreck. I reconstructed available ceramic vessel-types from a collection of more than 420 beach-collected porcelain sherds that have washed ashore seasonally from an offshore site, presumably from the shipwreck site itself. This beach-collected assemblage of porcelain represents a random sample of vessels available on the shipwreck, and may be used as a control to compare to culturally selected items. During my examination of the collections, I determined the archaeological assemblage of porcelain fragments includes a total of 692 sherds, representing a minimum number of vessels (MNV) of 209, while the beach-collected assemblage includes 420 individual porcelain fragments representing an MNV of 102. While examining the assemblages to determine MNV, I also recorded vessel type, distinguishing between open and closed vessels, and dividing open vessels into flatwares and hollowwares when possible. Results of the analysis (Table 2.1) indicate very similar percentages of vessel forms from both the excavated and beach-collected assemblages, which may indicate the Tamal had no preference for selecting specific vessel forms for salvage from the San Agustín. This may indicate that pragmatic or utilitarian concerns were not a top priority for Tamal villagers when they collected porcelain vessels and fragments.

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although it does not rule out the hypothesis that they were collected as simple curiosities. Additional material research, as well as the intrasite spatial analysis, may offer additional lines of evidence for evaluating various ideas of Indigenous recontextualization of the introduced objects, as well as whether there were long-term implications.

Conclusions

An archaeological examination of the encounters at *tamál-húye* asks whether the wreck of the *San Agustín*, the intercultural interaction with European voyagers, and recontextualization of introduced goods into Indigenous cultural practice was a historical “event” for the Tamal people – if it resulted in measurable changes to their cultural practices. In this regard, the project may be considered an “event-oriented archaeology.” This approach is rooted in the work of practice-based scholars whose analyses consider “events” to be as theoretically rich as the “structures” that shape them, suggesting in fact that events mold structure as much as structures transform events. According to this viewpoint, unique events, whether shipwrecks or short-term intercultural engagements, can represent “turning points” that precipitate cultural change.

Silliman (2009) offers a cautionary note regarding this line of inquiry. He suggests that researchers should not automatically assume that cross-cultural encounters resulted in either change or continuity as two mutually exclusive outcomes. Silliman writes,

> [F]or social agents, communities, or households to move forward, they must change and remain the same. But to have moved forward means to have carried on. Therefore, the incorporation of so-called ‘European/Euro-American’ objects into Indigenous cultural practices in ways that insure their survival as individuals, families, and communities should not lead us to interpret them in terms of loss or passive acquiescence (Silliman 2009: 226).

This is an important point for my study, which although examining the long-term implications of the intercultural interaction and recontextualization of introduced material culture by looking for change in cultural practices triggered by or associated with the introduced objects, is not asking these questions within a research framework that suggests that the Tamal population were passive recipients of new technologies and imposed cultural transformation (Harrison and Williamson 2004b). Rather, since the event under study is a short-term encounter rather than a long-term colonial entanglement, I would suggest that any change to Tamal cultural practices occurred within the structure and logic of their own cultural practices, world-view, and cosmology, and was due to active engagement by native populations, with the sixteenth-century cross-cultural encounters and the introduced material culture from the *San Agustín* simply an impetus that allowed them to “move forward” after the encounters in their own culturally informed way (see also Thomas 1997, 2002).
Sewell remarks that what makes events such as the encounters at *tamal-huyé* unique is the particular cultural context in which they occur:

The specific nature of the structure of the conjuncture will, of course, be different in every event. But if Sahlins’s theory of the event is correct, it should always involve a novel conjuncture of structures. Hence, we cannot predict in advance what structure of the conjuncture will shape the novel acts of reference that constitute the core of a given event. But we do know what to look for: a conjunction of structures that sets off a synergetic interaction between actors attempting to make structural sense of a highly volatile situation (Sewell 2005: 223).

Given this starting point outlined by Sewell, the sixteenth-century intercultural interactions on the Point Reyes Peninsula are an exceptional set of circumstances in which to look what types of cultural change may be precipitated by short-term events. In this case, this approach uses short-term engagements between English and Spanish seafarers and Coast Miwok-speaking Tamal hunter-gatherers in 1579 and 1595 to investigate how brief, precolonial encounters can contribute to broader anthropological inquiries of cultural change and continuity.

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