

## The Ohlone People and the Missions

### Purpose of the California Missions

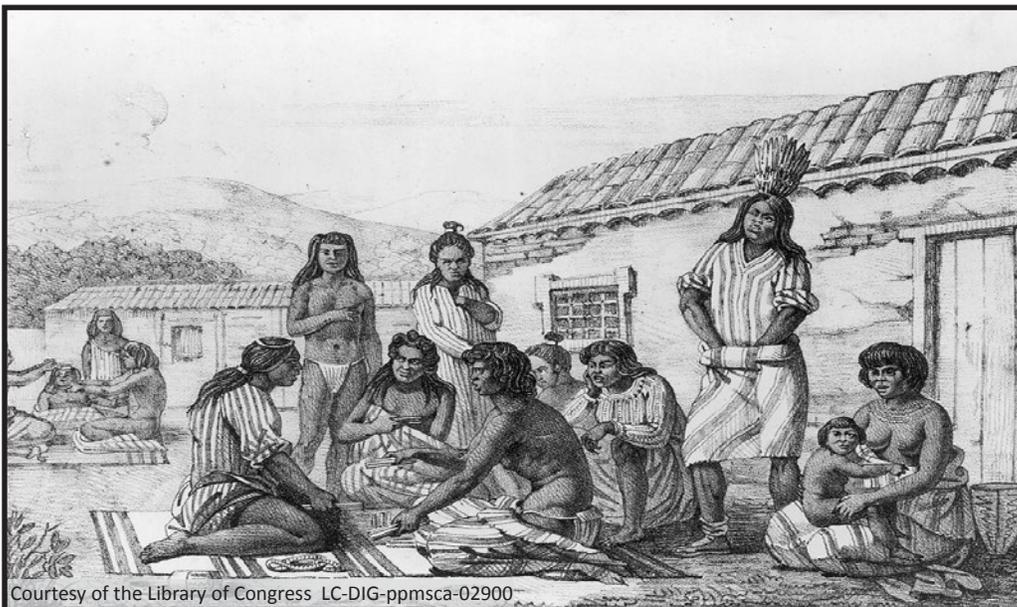
The Mission San Francisco de Asis register lists many native peoples who entered the mission and gave the Lands End location as their home village.

The primary focus of the California missions was the Indians. Central to the efforts of the Franciscan padres at all of the California missions was to gather the native peoples into villages surrounding the location of a mission. At these transitional villages, the native peoples underwent a process called *reduccion*. There they were incorporated into the missions by being taught Christian doctrine and morality, as well as European cultural values. Spanish laws and government were further established by the creation of townships (*pueblos*) of Hispanicized farmers and artisans out of the indigenous population. Spanish law provided that Indian tribes would have their lands preserved intact under the management of the mission padres and have self-governing *pueblos* in place within 10 years.

The Spanish philosophy of colonization was "the assimilation of a conquered people into Spanish society by absorption of their own culture" according to Rob Jackson and Ed Castillo. The Spaniard firmly believed that the greatest gift that he could give the Indian was to remake him in a Spanish mold, which included, of course, the Catholic religion. The Indians of a locality were gathered into a mission to be taught Christianity and the rudiments of European civilization.

A mission was much more than a church, though the sacred place of worship was surely its heart. In addition, there were quarters for the padres, soldiers and guests, homes for the Indians, workshops, storehouses, and acres and acres of land devoted to agriculture and livestock. Theoretically, the mission would continue until a native clergy had been developed, at which time the mission would be converted into a parish and the vast mission lands divided among the Indians.

The ultimate purpose of the Spanish Church and the Spanish government was to absorb the converted Indians into Spanish society as "useful vassals of the Crown" according to anthropologist Sherburne Cook.



Ohlone people playing a game of chance at Mission Dolores, depicted by Russian-Ukrainian expedition artist Louis Choris, 1822.