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# SCIENTIST CHEATS GRAVE

## *Ethnologist Gets Tribal History from Last of San Juan Indians Just Before Her Death*

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SAN FRANCISCO, Jan. 31. (AP)—The last full-blooded member of the San Juan tribe of California Indians, Mrs. Ascencion Solorsano de Cervantes, 100 years of age or more, will be buried tomorrow by the Maryknoll Fathers from the historic mission of San Juan Bautista.

Death withheld his scythe long enough to permit Prof. J. P. Harrington of the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, a member of the Bureau of American Ethnology, to visit the aged woman during the past few months, learn her language and piece together bit by bit from what she told him the story of the ancient language, customs and religion of her tribe, information previously lost to scholars of the world and generally considered dead.

a little Spanish, and Prof. Harrington was forced to learn her language during the seven months he lived in her hut. She was married when 14 years of age and was the mother of sixteen children, two of whom survive her.

### HISTORY OF TRIBE

Prof. Harrington learned that the language of the San Juans, who called themselves the Ama tribe in the old days, contained only the five vowels and five consonants. The tribe worshipped a single god they called Ho-Le. They were peaceful; they had no tomahawks, but had bows and arrows, spears and hunting knives. They had family feuds, however, which raged for generations.

### SPECIAL CHURCH HONORS

Because of the fidelity of the San Juan Indians to Catholicism, the Maryknoll fathers will give the last member of the tribe a funeral with the pomp and ritual of the church, while her grave will be beside the mission's walls—a special honor. She died Wednesday night at San Juan, the community which had been her birthplace and her home.

They went unclothed. Fathers gave their daughters in marriage, but once married the women had an equal footing in tribal law with men. The fiercest fights were between the squaws, sometimes ending in death, but the husbands never interfered. The tribe was ruled by a single chief, who also was judge of tribal disputes.

As a child she knew the Indians of the eighteenth century, who passed on to her in their native language the ancient customs of before the coming of the padres and the white colonists. She never learned English, although she knew

Prof. Harrington will return to Washington after the funeral, where this and other information he has gathered will be placed in the Smithsonian Institution's records.

