California Indian History

SHORT OVERVIEW

OF

CALIFORNIA INDIAN HISTORY

REGIONAL LIFEWAYS

One manner in which we can seek to understand aboriginal California Indian cultures is to look at the tribes inhabiting similar climatic and ecological zones. What emerges from this approach is a remarkable similarity in material aspects of the many different tribes inhabiting those territories. Generally speaking technologies and materials used to manufacture tools, homes and storage containers show great similarity. Hunting, trapping and fishing technologies also are shared across tribal lines terrain, available water plants and animals affected the density of populations, settlement patterns as each tribe adjusted to its environment.

NORTHWEST

This area would include the Tolowa, Shasta, Karok, Yurok Hupa Whilikut, Chilula, Chimarike and Wiyot tribes. The distinctive northern rainforest environment encouraged these tribes to establish their villages along the many rivers, lagoons and coastal bays that dotted their landscape. While this territory was crisscrossed with thousands of trails, the most efficient form of transportation was the dugout canoe used to travel up and down rivers and cross the wider and deeper ones such as the Klamath. These tribes used the great coast Redwood trees for the manufacture of their boats and houses. Redwoods were cleverly felled by burning at the base and then split with elkhorn wedges. Redwood and sometimes cedar planks were used to construct rectangular gabled homes. Baskets in a variety of designs were manufactured in with the twined technique only. Many of these arts survived into the twentieth century and traditional skills have enjoyed a great renaissance in the past twenty years.

The elaborate ritual life of these tribes featured a World Renewal ceremony held each Fall in the largest villages. Sponsored by the wealthiest men in the communities, the ceremony's purpose was to prevent future natural catastrophes such as earthquakes, floods or failure of acorn crop or a poor salmon run. Supplication to supernatural spirits. Because such disasters directly threaten the community, great attention to detail and the utmost solemnity accompanied such ceremonies. This and other traditional rituals continue to be practiced, despite the grinding poverty that plagues many of these groups.

These tribes were governed by the most wealthy and powerful lineage leaders. The great emphasis on wealth found in these cultures is reflected in the emphasis on private ownership of food resources such as oak groves and fishing areas.

NORTHEAST

This region included the Modoc, Achumawi, and Atsugewi tribes. The western portion of this territory was rich in acorn and Salmon. Further to the East, the climate changes from mountainous to a high desert type of topography. Here food resources were grass seeds, tuber berries along with rabbit and deer.

These Indians found tule to be a useful source of both food (the rootbulb is consumed) and a convenient material when laced together to form floor mats and structure covering. Volcanic mountains in the Western portion of their territory supplied the valuable trade commodity obsidian. The Social-political organization of these peoples was independent but connected to their neighbors by marriage ties. Following contact, the Achumawi and Atsuguewi suffered a tremendous population decline due to vigilante violence and respiratory diseases. The Modocs spectacular 1872 resistance to removal to the Oregon territory was the last heroic military defense of native sovereignty in 19th century California Indian History.

Some surviving Northeast tribesmen received public land allotments around the turn of the century. The XL Rancheria was established for some of these Indians in 1938. Tragically the surviving Modocs were exiled to either Oregon or Oklahoma.

CENTRAL CALIFORNIA

This vast territory includes: Bear River, Mattale, Lassick, Nogatl, Wintun, Yana, Yahi, Maidu, Wintun, Sinkyone, Wailaki, Kato, Yuki, Pomo, Lake Miwok, Wappo, Coast Miwok, Interior Miwok, Wappo, Coast Miwok, Interior Miwok, Monache, Yokuts, Costanoan, Esselen, Salinan and Tubatulabal tribes.

Vast differences exist between the coastal peoples, nearby mountain range territories, from those living in the vast central valleys and on the slopes of the Sierra Nevada. Nevertheless, all of these tribes enjoyed an abundance of acorn and salmon that could be readily obtained in the waterways north of Monterey Bay. Deer, elk, antelope and rabbit were available elsewhere in vast quantities.

In this region basketry reached the height of greatest variety. Perhaps the Pomo basket makers created the most elaborate versions of this art. Both coiled and twine type baskets were produced throughout the region. Fortunately, basket making survived the years of suppression of native arts and culture to once again become one of the most important culturally defining element for Indians in this region.

Common in this area was the semi-subterranean roundhouse where elaborate Kuksu dances were held in the past and continue to this day. These rituals assure the renewal of the world's natural foods both plant and animal. Despite differences, between tribes, these rituals share similar purposes.

Like everywhere else, in California, villages were fiercely independent and governed internally. The abundant food supply allowed for the establishment of villages of up to 1000 individuals, including craft specialists who produced specific objects and goods for a living. In smaller communities, each family produced all that was necessary for survival.

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Southern California presents a varied and somewhat unique region of the state. Beginning in the north, tribes found in this area are the Chumash, Alliklik, Kitanemuk, Serrano, Gabrielino Luiseno Cahuilla, and the Kumeyaay. The landmass and climate varied considerably from the windswept offshore Channel Islands that were principally inhabited by Chumash speaking peoples. Communication with their mainland neighbors was by large and graceful planked canoes powered by double paddle ores. These vessels were called "Tomols" and manufactured by a secretive guild of craftsmen. They could carry hundreds of pounds of trade goods and up to a dozen passengers. Like their northern neighbors, the Tactic speaking peoples of San Nicholas and Santa Catalina Islands built planked canoes and actively traded rich marine resources with mainland villages and tribes. Shoreline communities enjoyed the rich animal and faunal life of ocean, bays and wetlands environments. Interior tribes like the Serrano, Luiseno, Cahuilla, and Kumeyaay shared an environment rich in Sonoran life zone featuring vast quantities of rabbit, deer and an abundance of acorn, seeds and native grasses. At the higher elevations Desert Bighorn sheep were hunted.

Villages varied in size from poor desert communities with villages of as little as 100 people to the teaming Chumash villages with over a thousand inhabitants. Conical homes of arroweed, tule or croton were common, while whale bone structures could be found on the coast and nearby Channel Islands. Interior groups manufactured clay storage vessels sometimes decorated with paint. Baskets were everywhere manufactured with unique designs. Catalina Island possessed a soapstone or steatite quarry. This unique stone was soft and could easily be carved with cutting tools and shaped into vessels, pipes and cooking slabs.

Each tribe and community had a chieftain, sometimes females, whose duty it was to organize community events and settle conflicts among their followers. This leader was usually assisted by a crier or assistant, Shaman or Indian doctors were known everywhere and greatly respected. The ritual use of the hallucinogen jimsonweed (Datura meteloides) was primarily in male puberty rituals. Like other California Indian communities, society was divided into three classes, the elite, a middle class and finally a less successful lower class. These robust peoples were among the first to encounter the strangers who would change their world forever.

HISTORY

The Spanish entrada into Alta California was the last great expansions of Spain's vastly over extended empire in North America. Massive Indian revolts among the Pueblo Indians of the Rio Grande in the late 17th century provided the Franciscan padres with an argument to establish missions relatively free from colonial settlers. Thus, California and its Spanish Colonization would be different from earlier efforts to simultaneously introduce missionaries and colonists in their world conquest schemes. Organized by the driven Franciscan administrator Junipero Serra and military authorities under Gaspar de Portola, they journeyed to San Diego in 1769 to establish the first of 21 coastal missions.

Despite romantic portraits of California missions, they were essentially coercive religious, labor camps organized primarily to benefit the colonizers. The overall plan was to first militarily intimidate the local Indians with armed Spanish soldiers who always accompanied the Franciscans in their missionary efforts. At the same time, the newcomers introduced domestic stock animals that gobbled up native foods and undermined the free or "gentile" tribe's efforts to remain economically independent. A well-established pattern of bribes, intimidation and the expected onslaught of European diseases insured experienced missionaries that eventually desperate parents of sick and dying children and many elders would prompt frightened Indian

families to seek assistance from the newcomers who seemed to be immune to the horrible diseases that overwhelmed Indians. The missions were authorized by the crown to “convert” the Indians in a ten-year period. Thereafter they were supposed to surrender their control over the mission’s livestock, fields, orchards and building to the Indians. But the padres never achieved this goal and the lands and wealth was stolen from the Indians.

Epidemic diseases proved to be the most significant factor in colonial efforts to overcome native resistance. Soon after the arrival of Spanish colonists, new diseases appeared among the tribes in close proximity Spanish missions. Scientific study of demographic trends during this period indicate the Indians of the America’s did not possess any natural immunities to introduced European diseases. Maladies such as smallpox, syphilis, diphtheria and even children’s’ ailments such as chickenpox and measles caused untold suffering and death among Indians near the Spanish centers of population. Even before the outbreak of epidemics, a general population decline was recorded that can be attributed to the unhygienic environment of colonial population centers. A series of murderous epidemic diseases swept over the terrified mission Indian populations. Beginning in 1777 a voracious epidemic likely associated with a water born bacterial infection devastated Santa Clara Valley Costanoan children. Again, children were the primary victims of a second epidemic of pneumonia and diphtheria expended from Monterey to Los Angeles was recorded in 1802. By far the worst of these terrifying epidemics began in 1806 and killed thousands of Indian children and adults. It has been identified as measles and attacked Indian populations from San Francisco to the central coast settlement of Santa Barbara. Sadly, the missionary practice of forcibly separating Indian children from their parents and incarcerating children from the age of six in filthy and disease-ridden gender barracks most likely increased the suffering and death of above mentioned epidemics. Excessive manual labor demands of the missionaries and poor nutrition probably contributed to the Indians inability to resist such infections. Less easily measured damage to mission Indian tribes occurred as they vainly struggled to understand the biological tragedy that was overwhelming them. Faith in their traditional shaman suffered when native efforts were ineffective in stemming the tide of misery, suffering and death that life in the missions resulted in. With monotonous regularity, missionaries and other colonial officials reported upon the massive death and poor health of their Indian laborers. Pioneering demographer Sherburne F. Cook conducted exhaustive studies and concluded that perhaps as much as 60% of the population decline of mission Indians was due to introduced diseases.

NATIVE RESISTANCE

The unrelenting labor demands, forced separation of children from their parents and un-ending physical coercion that characterized the life of Indians under padre’s authority resulted in several well documented forms of Indian resistance. Within the missions, the so-called “converts” continued to surreptitiously worship their old deities as well as conduct native dances and rituals in secret. By far the most frequent form of mission Indian resistance was fugativism. While thousands of the 81,586 baptized Indians temporarily fled their missions, more than one out of 24 successfully escaped the plantation like mission labor camps. Many Mission Indians viewed the padres as powerful witches who could only be neutralized by assassination. Consequently, several assassinations occurred. At Mission San Miguel in the year of 1801 three padres were poisoned, one of whom died as a result. Four years later another San Miguel Yokut male attempted to stone a padre to death. In 1804 a San Diego padre was poisoned by his personal cook. Costanoan Indians at Mission Santa Cruz, in 1812, killed a padre for introducing a new instrument of torture which he unwisely announced he planned to use on some luckless neophytes awaiting a beating. Few contemporaries Americans know of the widespread armed revolts precipitated by Mission Indians against colonial authorities. The Kumeyaay of San Diego launched two serious military assaults against the missionaries and their military escorts within five weeks of their arrival in 1769. Desperate to stop an ugly pattern of sexual assaults, the Kumeyaay utterly destroyed Mission San Diego and killed the local padre in 1775. Quechan and Mohave Indians along the Colorado River to the east destroyed two missions, killed four missionaries and numerous other colonists in a spectacular uprising in 1781. This last rebellion permanently denied the only overland route into Alta California from Northern New Spain (Mexico) to Spanish authorities. Military efforts to reopen the road and punish the Indians were met with utter failure. The last great mission Indian revolt occurred in 1824 when disenchanted Chumash Indians violently overthrew mission control at Santa Barbara, Santa Ynez and La Purisima. Santa Barbara was sacked and abandoned while Santa Ynez Chumash torched 3/4 of the buildings before fleeing. Defiant Chumash at La Purisima in fact seized that mission and fought a pitched battle with colonial troops while a significant number of other Chumash escaped deep into the interior of the Southern San Joaquin Valley. After 1810 a growing number of guerrilla bands evolved in the interior when fugitive mission Indians allied with interior tribes and villages. Mounted on horses and using modern weapons, they began raiding mission livestock and fighting colonial military forces.

The impact of the mission system on the many coastal tribes was devastating. Missionaries required tribes to abandon their aboriginal territories and live in filthy, disease ridden and crowded labor camps. Massive herds on introduced stock animals and new seed crops soon crowded out aboriginal game animals and native plants. Feral hogs ate tons of raw acorns, depriving even the non-missionized tribes in the interior of a significant amount of aboriginal protein. Murderous waves of epidemic diseases swept over the terrified Mission Indian tribes resulting in massive suffering and death for thousands of native men, women and children. The short life expectancy of mission Indians prompted missionaries to vigorously pursue runaways and coerce interior tribes into supplying more and more laborers for the padres. Missionary activities therefore thoroughly disrupted not

only coastal tribes, but their demand for healthy laborers seriously impacted adjacent interior tribes. Finally, by 1836 the Mexican Republic forcibly stripped the padres of the power to coerce labor from the Indians and the mission rapidly collapsed. About 100,000 or nearly a third of the aboriginal population of California died as a direct consequence of the missions of California.

Despite the devastating population decline suffered by tribes in whose territories missions had been established, many managed to maintain tribal cohesion. After 1800, most mission populations were a hodgepodge of different tribes speaking a multiplicity of languages. Because many Indians refused to learn or feigned ignorance of the Spanish language, missionaries appointed labor overseers from each tribe to direct work crews. Such practical policies kept tribesmen from losing culturally distinct identity. Further evidence of cultural persistence was the practice of tribes maintaining separate housing in multi-tribal Indian villages built next to the missions. Finally, many former mission Indians continued to speak their native languages and provide researchers with detailed ethnographic and linguistic data well into the 20th century.

INDIANS AND THE MEXICAN REPUBLIC

In 1823 the Spanish Flag was replaced by that of the Mexican Republic. Little immediate change in personal or Indian policy occurred. However, the independence government was decidedly anti-clerical and the growing body of colonial leaders deeply resented the monopoly of Indian lands and the unpaid Indian labor enjoyed by the Franciscans. While no land grants to the colonists had occurred under Spanish rule, some 25 grazing permits or concessions had been issued to colonial citizens. This was the beginning of the dispossession of tribal lands by colonial authorities. The vast plantation like missions claimed about 1/6 of the present territory of the state. But legal title to these lands were assigned to the Spanish crown. The missions were only supposed to last 10 years, after which the developed estates were to be distributed to surviving mission Indians. It was assumed that the Indians would evolve into hardworking, tax paying citizens of Mexico. But the missionaries kept coming up with excuses why they should not surrender the rich pastoral and agrarian empire they had erected with the lands, resources and hard labor of mission Indians. The Mexican Republic's 1824 constitution declared Indians to be citizens with rights to both vote and hold public office. Despite this liberal declaration, Indians throughout the republic continued to be treated as slaves.

COLLAPSE OF THE MISSION SYSTEM

In actual practice, the new government gave 51 land grants to its colonial citizens between 1824 and 1834. These lands actually belonged to various tribes then incarcerated in nearby missions. These actions just increased the lust for more Indian lands by a growing body of colonial ranchers. There followed a growing chorus of demands that the missionaries surrender their monopoly on Indian labor and "free" the Indians. The sincerity those sentiments should be seriously doubted. The power of this class prevailed and between 1834-36 the government revoked the power of the Franciscans to extract labor from the Indians and inaugurated a plan to distribute mission lands. Venal public officials in charge of the distribution granted the most valuable lands to themselves and their relatives. The secularization processes, it was called, was so restrictive that few ex-mission Indians were eligible for the distributed lands. More significant still, the majority of surviving mission Indians were not native to the areas of coastal missions. Most neophytes at this time had been forced to relocate from their tribal domains and promptly returned to them following their liberation.

Many of these returned exiles were faced with difficult tasks of reconstructing their decimated communities in the wake of crippling population declines. Furthermore, their tribal lands had become transformed by the introduction of vast herds of horses, cattle, sheep, goats and hogs that destroyed the native flora, the primary source of native diet. Wild game animals were likewise driven off by these new animals. What developed from this new condition was the emergence of guerrilla Indian bands made-up of former fugitive mission Indians and interior tribesmen from villages devastated by official and unofficial Mexican paramilitary attacks and slave hunting raids. Eventually a significant number of these interior groups joined together to form new conglomerate tribes. These innovative and resilient tribes quickly converted the anti-mission activities of their members into systematic efforts to re-assert their sovereignty by widespread and highly organized campaigns against Mexican ranchers and government authority in general.

Vastly overestimating their power, Mexican authorities authorized an additional 762 land grants by 1847. In reality, the effectiveness of Indian stock raiders increased dramatically when American and Canadian fur trappers provided a lucrative market for purloined horses by the mid 1830's. Interior Mexican ranches were increasingly abandoned in the face of economic ruin by native stock raiding activities. Even Johann A. Sutter was reduced to begging the Mexican government to buy his fort following a mauling at the hands of Miwok Indians near the Calaveras in June of 1846.

Despite these successes, a series of murderous epidemics in the twilight years of the Mexican era severely reduced the interior population. For instance, in 1833 an American party of fur trappers introduced a murderous scourge of malaria into the Sacramento and San Joaquin River drainages. While traversing the epicenter of the plague, J. J. Warner reported,

> ***"From the head of the Sacramento to the great bend and slough of the San Joaquin we did not see more than six or eight live Indians; while large numbers of their skulls and dead bodies were seen under almost every shade tree near the water, where the uninhabited and deserted villages had been converted into graveyards."***

In this tragedy, more than 20,000 Central Valley Miwok, Yokuts, Wintun, and Maidu Indians perished. A new outbreak of small pox devastated Coast Miwok, Pomo, Wappo, and Wintun tribes. Approximately 2000 died in this 1837 epidemic originating from Fort Ross. By 1840 these and other murderous maladies had so thoroughly saturated the Indian population of Mexican California that diseases became endemic.

Mexican forced labor and violence at the hands of the militia and paramilitary slave hunting parties account for a significant amount of the population decline suffered by California Indians. On the eve of the American take-over the aboriginal population of approximately 310,000 had been reduced to about 150,000. This gut wrenching 50% decline had occurred in just 77 years. The implications for survivors is largely a mute tale of suffering and grieving over the loss of a stunning number of children, parents and elders. What came next was worse still.

THE AMERICAN INVASION

Alta California the poorly managed and badly neglected stepchild of Mexico was rapidly overwhelmed by a combination of aggressive Indian raids and the arrival of United States Army, Navy and Marine forces in the summer of 1846. Despite a seemingly irrational murderous attack on Sacramento River Maidu Indian villages by U.S. Army forces under the command of John C. Fremont, the majority of California Indians involved in that struggle aided the Americans as scouts, warrior-soldiers and wranglers.

When Mexican resistance collapsed in January of 1847, thereafter Indian Affairs was administered by a succession of military governors. Stock raiding Indians in the interior recommenced their depredations when they learned Indian slavers such as Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo and Johann A. Sutter had been appointed as Indian sub-agents. Military government's policy was to suppress stock raiding and furthermore imposed draconian restrictions on the free movement of Indians and required Indians to carry certificates of employment.

THE GOLD RUSH

The discovery of gold in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada at a sawmill construction site developed by Indian Agent Johann Sutter, ushered in one of the darkest episodes of dispossession widespread sexual assault and mass murder against the native people of California. Sutter immediately negotiated a treaty with the chief of the Coloma Nisenan Tribe which would have given a three-year lease to lands surrounding the gold discovery site. During those negotiations, the chief prophetically warned Sutter that the yellow metal he so eagerly sought was, "very bad medicine. It belonged to a demon who devoured all who searched for it". Eventually the military governor refused to endorse Sutter's self-serving actions.

Within a year a hoard of 100,000 adventurers from all over the world descended upon the native peoples of California with catastrophic results. The entire state was scoured by gold seekers. Thinly spread government officials were overwhelmed by this unprecedented deluge of immigrants and all effective authority collapsed. Military authorities could not prevent widespread desertion of soldiers and chaos reigned.

A virtual reign of terror enveloped tribesmen the mining districts. Wanton killings and violence against Indians resisting miners developed into a deadly pattern. An Oustemah Nisenan female named Betsy later recalled,

> ***"A life of ease and peace was interrupted when I was a little girl by the arrival of the whitemen. Each day the population increased and the Indians feared the invaders and great consternation prevailed …. as gold excitement advanced, we were moved again and again, each time in haste. Indian children…. when taken into town would blacken their faces with dirt so the newcomers would not steal them…."***

Numerous vigilante type paramilitary troops were established whose principal occupation seems to have been to kill Indians and kidnap their children. Groups such as the Humboldt Home Guard, the Eel River Minutemen and the Placer Blades among others terrorized local Indians and caused the premier 19th century historian Hubert Howe Bancroft to describe them as follows.

> ***"The California valley cannot grace her annals with a single Indian war bordering on respectability. It can, however, boast a hundred or two of as brutal butchering, on the part of our honest miners and brave pioneers, as any area of equal extent in our republic……"***

The handiwork of these well-armed death squads combined with the widespread random killing of Indians by individual miners resulted in the death of 100,000 Indians in the first two years of the gold rush. A staggering loss of two thirds of the population. Nothing in American Indian history is even remotely comparable to this massive orgy of theft and mass murder. Stunned survivors now perhaps numbering fewer than 70,000 teetered near the brink of total annihilation.

The newcomers sometimes met organized Indian resistance. In 1850 a Cupeno chief named Antonio Garra Sr. organized local Southern California Indians to resist an illegal tax imposed upon San Diego Indians by the county sheriff. Sporadic attacks upon both Americans and some Mexicans by Garra's followers resulted in a massive crackdown on Indian communities. Soon a rival Cahuilla chief captured Garra and turned him over to the authorities who promptly hung him and several of his followers. In 1851 several mountain Miwok tribes offered armed resistance to the hoard of miners overrunning their territory. When one tribe destroyed a trading-post owned by an American who kept at least 12 Indian "wives" a paramilitary militia was formed and aggressively attacked Indians throughout the southern mines area. Eventually this group calling itself the "Mariposa Battalion" breached the unknown granite fortress of the valley of Yosemite. A ruthless campaign against the Yosemite Indians resulted in the capture of their Chief Teneya and a temporary exile to the San Joaquin River "Indian Farm".

In reality, these Indian campaigns were motivated by rapacious greed of the miners to gain Indian lands and provide political capital for ambitious office seekers. Sadly, both the state and federal government eventually reimbursed the vast majority of these paramilitary forays for expenses incurred. This is indeed a dreary story of subsidized murder on a scale unequaled in all of this country's Indian wars.

TREATY MAKING AND TREATY REJECTION

In 1849 Washington sent two special emissaries to California to report on the nature of Mexico's recognition of Indian land titles in California. Neither spoke to a single Indian and eventually produced an ambiguous and inaccurate report to the great disadvantage of the Indians. Upon this misinformation, and in an attempt to stem the unprecedented chaos and mass murder of the gold miner's confrontation with the California Indians, Congress authorized three federal officials to make treaties with the California Indians. Their purpose was to extinguish Indian land titles and provide the Indians with territories that would be protected from encroachment by non-Indians. They were given just $25,000 to accomplish this monumental task. Soon after their arrival in San Francisco in January of 1851, the enormous size of territory prompted the commissioners to split up and negotiate treaties on their own. The reports and correspondence of the treaty commissioners clearly demonstrate that the suspicious and reluctant Indians who could be persuaded to attend the treaty meetings were only vaguely aware of its purpose. This can be attributed to the frequent problems of translators who often had to translate several Indian dialects into Spanish and again into English. Few if any of the Indians could understand English. The random manner in which the commissioners organized the meetings resulted in the majority of tribes not participating. Despite these crippling drawbacks, the treaty process proceeded until January 5th of 1852. In all, eighteen treaties were negotiated. The treaties agreed to set aside certain tracts of land for the signatory tribes. They additionally promised the assistance of farmers, school teachers, blacksmiths, stock animals, seeds and agricultural equipment, cloth and much more. In return, the signatory tribes promised to forever quitclaim to the United States their lands. Just what specific lands being surrendered were not specified. Anthropologists in the 20th century could only identify 67 tribes, 45 village names and 14 alternative spellings of tribal names. Eighteen groups were unidentifiable. Despite the obvious fact that not all California Indian tribes had been consulted or contacted they too would be bound by the negotiations. Nevertheless, the federal government promised to reserve 7,466,000 acres of land to the dispossessed Indians,

An immediate outcry from an enraged public followed the completion of the commissioner's task. It was revealed that the commissioners had overspent their budget by a half a million dollars in the incredibly inflated economy of gold rush California. Local newspapers orchestrated an abusive campaign and local politicians echoed the fears of their compassionate electorate that the treaty reserves might contain something valuable, like gold. Most Americans simply wanted the Indians removed to some other territory or state. California's newly elected state senators provided the final blow. On July 8, 1852, the Senate in executive session refused to ratify the treaties. They were filed with an injunction of secrecy that was finally removed in 1905!

Meanwhile, Congress had created a commission to validate land tittles in California. The commission was required by law to both inform the Indians that it would be necessary to file claims for their lands and report upon the nature of these claims. Because no one bothered to inform the Indians of these requirements, no claims were submitted. Through this neat trick, the federal government "legally" avoided the normally lengthy and duplicitous negotiations over land sessions.

The practical result was the complete dispossession of the Indians in the eyes of the government. Despite this chicanery, several tribes would violently and later legally contest these frauds to defend their territory, homes and families.

From the native viewpoint, signatories of the treaties had agreed to move to specific locations promised in the treaties. Yet such attempts often met with violent attacks by miners and others opposed to the very existence of Indians. Non-treaty groups simply endured the madness and race hatred of those waging a merciless war against them. Most tribes did their best to withdraw from all contact with the mayhem overwhelming them.

A HARSH STATE GOVERNMENT

The formation of the state government proved to be an official instrument of the oppressive mentality of the miner's militia. In Governor McDougall first address to the legislature he promised, "a war of extermination will continue to be waged between the races until the Indian race becomes extinct……." Despite guarantees in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, Indians were denied state citizenship, voting rights and more important still, the right to testify in court. These acts effectively removed all legal redress for native peoples and left them to the mercy of anyone who chose to sexual assault, kidnap even murder them. Despite entering the union as a free state in 1850, the California legislature rapidly enacted a series of laws legalizing Indian slavery. One of the laws sanctioned an indenture system similar to Mexican peonage in widespread practice throughout California prior to 1850. All levels of state, county and local governments participated in this ugly practice that evolved into a heartless policy of killing Indian parents and kidnapping and indenturing the victim's children. Indian youth could be enslaved by the cruel act to the age of 30 for males and 25 for females. This barbarous law was finally repealed four years after President Lincoln's emancipation proclamation in 1863.

The federal government finally decided to establish an Indian policy in California in 1854 when Edward F. Beale was appointed Superintendent of Indian Affairs for California. Beale quickly established a prototype Indian preserve within the boundaries of the Army's military reserve in the Southern San Joaquin Valley, called Fort Tejon. The site was chosen because of the continuing problem of local horse raiding by Southern California Indians. Yokut, Gabrielino and Kitanemuk tribesmen were gathered together on this barren 50,000-acre parcel call San Sebastian. Beale's instruction from Washington authorized him to establish four additional reserves with a $250,000 budget. Apparently, Beale squandered his entire allocation on less than 200 Indians at San Sebastian. This action becomes comprehensible only when it is known that within a decade, Beale wound up owning much of that short-lived reserve. His behavior in office set the standard for decades of widespread corruption and incompetence that distinguishes the Bureau of Indian Affairs in California and elsewhere. Following Beale's removal from office in 1856, Col. T.J. Henely established Indian Reserves on the Klamath River, Nome Lackee near Colusa, Nome Cult (Round Valley) and the Mendocino Reserve at the mouth of the Noyo River on the coast. The latter two were both located in Mendocino County.

These hastily organized communities provided little in the way of support or even minimal refuge for native peoples cajoled to move there. These unsurveyed reserves lacked game, suitable agricultural lands and water. They soon became overrun with white squatters who systematically corrupted the Indians and introduced an epidemic of venereal diseases. More unsatisfactory still, were Indian Farms located on lands rented from newcomers now holding legal title to said lands. The Fresno and Kings River Indian Farms were established in the south-eastern San Joaquin Valley along the rivers of the same name. Federal records clearly show these farms provided only a handful of Indians homes, the majority completely lacked cultivation, but they did provide paychecks for the superintendent's friends and political cronies. The majority of these early reserves and Indian Farms were abandoned in the 1860's due to the state's Indian slavery codes that allowed all able-bodied males, females and even children to be indentured to white citizens. A great many reservation residents could not participate in the agricultural and ranching programs because their labor "belonged" to private state citizens. Frequently, federal and Indian agents themselves indentured his wards for personal enrichment. Government records for this period show that fewer than 3000 of the less than 70,000 surviving California Indians received recognition let alone provisions for reservations. South of the Tehachapi Mountains California Indians remained totally ignored by Washington. So what were the vast majority of Indians doing during this period?

LATE 19TH CENTURY ADAPTATION AND RESISTANCE

The vast majority of California Indians struggled to survive without government aid or recognition. Many on the verge of actual starvation dispersed throughout their territories and sought to support themselves through agriculture and ranch labor for the new "owners" of California. This was a traditional pattern of behavior when drought and other natural catastrophes struck. Deprived of land and their life sustaining resources, they were left with no other options. With a few notable exceptions, the mass murder of the Gold Rush era diminished, as Indian victims became scarce and survivors learned to avoid Americans whenever possible. The great hardships of this adaptation were made bearable with the development of a messianic cult movement called the Ghost Dance of 1870. In part triggered by the introduction of Christian missionary activities, this new religious movement was pan-tribal in nature and obviously a response to the massive population decline. The movement promised the return of dead relatives and the disappearance of the oppressors. It was most desperately embraced by those tribes who had most recently suffered great population declines. Despite lasting only a few years, it was fundamental in revitalizing intra-tribal religious integration. In short, it provided hope for the nearly hopeless situation Indian found themselves confronted with.

The last organized violent reaction to dispossession and federal Indian policy erupted between 1860-1872. The first was a series of Indian wars in Northwestern California. Here Yurok, Karok, Hupa and other tribes fought the increasingly paranoid and aggressive Americans who routinely murdered them, stole their children and burned their villages. Jack Norton, a Hupa historian characterized the situation as a "deranged frontier". Attempts to disarm Indians and continued kidnapping for sexual slavery quickly led to violent resistance. In 1858, the militia established a fort in the Hupa Valley to make war on the Wilkut and Chilula tribes. Many members of those tribes had been captured and deported to the Mendocino Reservation. Frustrated by the stiff resistance

of interior groups, the militia found it easier to murder nearby inoffensive peaceful and non-hostile Indians. The notorious Indian Island massacre in Humboldt Bay was the bitter fruit of that race hatred. Eventually some Hupa Indians agreed to assist the soldiers in hunting their hostile neighbors. Despite this defection, several bands of Hupa joined the hostiles and effectively resisted until 1864 when they surrendered. This led to the establishment of the Hupa Valley Reservation in August of 1864.

Because both state and federal authorities seriously underestimated the number of surviving California Indians, plans to remove all Indians to the handful of reservations already established, proved impractical. Several attempts to place multiple tribes on single reservations frequently resulted in violence, mass murder and war. The Modoc war of 1872 was caused by such a policy that insisted the Modocs be deported out of California to the Klamath Reservation in Oregon. Driven twice from that reserve, a third attempt to deport the Modocs back to Klamath resulted in a stunning war in 1872. The Indian service removed the Konkow Indians of Chico and the Atsugewi of Shasta County to the Round Valley Reservation in 1862. Squatters overrunning the Reservation descended upon these unfortunate tribesmen and murdered 45 of them. The mob justified its actions by claiming the Indians might steal food from the squatters. Survivors fled in terror back to Chico, only to be again removed to Round Valley sometime afterwards. The BIA showed little interest in assisting such tribes. Those lucky enough to have reservations established in the aboriginal territories were understandably reluctant to share the scant advantages they enjoyed with newly arrived emigre tribes. Also true was the fact that no tribes desired to be relocated outside of their aboriginal territories. After all, each tribe's creation story emphasized the sacred nature of its own particular landscape. Tradition emphasized territorially and to stray from it required one to steal food resources from neighboring tribes. Non-Indians could not fathom the intensity and depth of the Indians spiritual attachment to their territories.

A steady population decline accompanied by widespread reports of destitution and hunger haunted those tribes without reserved lands. Despite hardship encountered, survival demanded innovation and adaptation. Being driven to the edge of extinction, Indians demonstrated again and again a strong will to survive. That determination notwithstanding, the widespread kidnapping, slavery and violence took a frightful toll on tribesmen and their cultures. Leadership lineages became scattered and displaced. Many ceremonies could no longer be held because access to sacred places was now denied. Cultural mandates to feed ceremonial guests could no longer be achieved by those who otherwise were able to hold public rituals. Finally, Christian missionaries gained control at many reservations under President Grant's Peace Policy of 1869. These folks were determined to destroy Indian culture and aboriginal belief systems that undergirded it.

The California superintendency attracted a succession of special investigators caused by constant reports of corruption that reached Washington. Special reports conducted in 1858, 1867 and 1883 clearly and thoroughly document the corruption and inefficiency plaguing government programs for Indians. President Grant's Peace Policy of 1869 inaugurated an era of acculturation under duress. Policy makers in the government declared the only path of salvation for surviving Indians would be Christianization, along with the adaptation of private ownership of' property. Once these twin goals were realized, Indians would be rewarded with citizenship and take their place among the lower classes with other non-whites in American society. Reservation agents insisted their residents join churches and cease practicing the old ways. The General Allotment Act of 1887 forcibly divided reservation tribal lands, doling out small parcels to individual Indians and their families. If the allotee built a house, engaged in farming or ranching, sent his children to government Indian schools and renounced his tribal allegiance and otherwise pleased the agent, he would (after 25 years) receive title to his land and citizenship. Unlike tribal lands, these parcels would become taxable. The program was inaugurated in California in 1893. By 1930 approximately 2,300 allotments had been carved out of the tiny communal tribal reservation lands. Traditional Indians opposed the detribalizing goals of allotment. The uneven and unequal distribution of allotments was used by Indian agents to keep tribal populations divided and politically impotent. Nevertheless, considerable tribal resistance and pan-tribal organizing developed in opposition to allotment. The program ground to a halt in 1930 due to Indian opposition and failure of BIA to complete the necessary paperwork. The law was repealed in 1934. Thousands of acres of California Indian lands and millions of acres nationally were lost to this destructive and ill-conceived policy.

PAN-INDIAN GROUPS, LANDLESS INDIANS AND RANCHERIAS

Several hundred individual land allotments were distributed to California Indians from public lands found principally in northern California. Often times these were isolated havens from hostile neighbors. Many were assigned to clusters of individuals who were related by kinship and are likely core tribal members who otherwise hand no lands. The tribal communities often held traditional ceremonies and participated in those of their more fortunate reservation Indians.

Southern California Indians were finally provided with recognition when several parcels of their former tribal domains were set aside by executive order beginning in 1873 with the establishment of the Tule River Indian Reservation. Fourteen Southern California Indian Reservations were set aside by executive orders beginning in 1891 and amended in 1898. Unfortunately, Indians in both Orange and Los Angeles counties were excluded from land distributions due in part to the value of coastal real estate. Nevertheless, small tribes from this area participated in pan-Indian organizations.

Reduced to severe destitution the majority of Indians struggled to support their families as landless laborers. Only 6,536 Indians were recognized and living on reservations about the turn of the century. Every Indian who survived to see the dawn of the 20th century had witnessed great suffering and the irreplaceable loss of numerous grandparents, mothers, fathers and children. Some lineages disappeared altogether. The nadir had been reached. Demographer S.F, Cook determined the California Indian population declined to fewer than 16,000 individuals in 1900. This figure represents a gut wrenching descent from over 300,000 into a vortex of massive death in just 131 years of colonization! These staggering losses prompted non-Indians of good will to assist Indian tribes in efforts to secure lands for the still numerous landless Indians.

Several Indian reform groups blossomed before and after the turn of the century. One of their earliest successes was a long legal effort to prevent the Cupa Indians from being dispossessed of their ancestral village of Warner's Hot Springs. While losing the legal case Cupa Indians and their allies managed to secure lands on the nearby Pala Indian Reservation in San Diego County. More important for the majority of landless Indians were the efforts of the Northern California Indian Association that goaded the BIA into enumerating landless Indians in 1905. The result of the survey and political pressure from Indians and their friends resulted in federal actions creating 36 new reservations and Rancherias in 16 Northern California counties. Rancherias were very small parcels of land aimed at provided homesites only for small bands of landless Indians. They are all located in Northern California. Unfortunately, the BIA's investigator failed to visit 12 other counties, thus ignoring the luckless Indians in those areas. Between 1933 and 1941 Congress authorized the enlargement of several Southern California reservations by 6492 acres. No rancherias or homesites were made available for landless Southern California Indians.

Important developments occurred as a result of political activism on the part of both tribes and pan-Indian organizations from 1921 to the present. Beginning with the early efforts of the Indian Board of Cooperation, numerous California Indians self-help organizations and tribes pushed for a lawsuit over the failure of the United States to compensate the Indians of California for the loss of their aboriginal lands. Congress relented and passed the Jurisdictional Act of 1928. This legislation allowed the Indians to sue the federal government and use the state Attorney general's office to represent them. Lacking control of their legal representative a controversial settlement was finally achieved in 1944. $17,053,941.98 was offered for the failure of the government to deliver the 18 reservations promised in treaty negotiations of 1851-2. Incredibly, the government decided to deduct all of its "costs" of providing reservations, supplies and even the salaries of corrupt and do-nothing Indians agents native peoples had endured for nearly a century. After an-other long battle, little more than 5 million dollars were finally distributed on a per-capita basis to 36,095 California Indians in 1951. A paltry $150. was distributed to surviving Indians. This parsimonious and unfair settlement prompted California Indians to seek further legal redress.

The efforts of California Indians to sue the federal government under the Jurisdictional Act of 1928 resulted in the creation of the federal Indian Claims Commission in 1946. This federal body allowed Indian groups to press for compensation to tribes over the theft of their lands in the 19th century. By August of 1951, twenty-three separate petitions had been filed by attorneys on behalf of tribes in California. After 20 years of tortuous maneuvering all separate claims were consolidated into a single case. A compromise settlement of $29,100,000 was offered for 64,425,000 acres of acres of tribal territory. After deduction of attorney's fees ($12,609,000) and the addition of interest and about half a million left over from the first settlement the payment worked out to an offer of 47 cents per acre! The purchase of public domain lands in California in 1850 was never less than $1.50 per acre. This outrageous offer offended many Indians who had pinned their hopes on a settlement that would provide seed money for desperately needed economic development. Despite bitter opposition by many of the original claimants, the federal government prepared a census of eligible Indians in preparation for an anticipated judgment. The BIA organized a series of meetings to convince the litigants to accept the settlement. Eventually a majority of the groups agreed, except the Pit River tribe. They offered strong, vociferous and persistent opposition. However, through questionable balloting, the government declared they had accepted the offer in 1964. Nearly 65,000 California Indians were deemed eligible to share in the settlement. Payments of little more than $600 per person was distributed in 1968. What is of great significance here is the fact that the entire claims activities were conducted outside of normal court proceedings protected by the constitution. Thus, Indians are the only class of citizens in the United States who are denied constitutional protection of their lands by extra-constitutional means.

TERMINATION

During the divisive and controversial land claims battle the BIA began to submit plans to end all services to California Indians and transfer all authority over federal Indian reservations to the State. This new policy, called Termination, was put into motion in 1951. Special agents were sent to prepare for the end of federal jurisdiction over tribal lands. At first the state was enthusiastic over the prospect of increasing its tax base with the anticipation of the privatization of federal trust properties. Termination became law in California under authority of the Rancheria Act of 1958. This statute allowed tribes to vote on a plan to divide communal tribal property into parcels to be distributed to its members. Distributees would receive title to their lands and be free to sell it and be obliged to pay property tax from that time forward. The BIA targeted the smallest, least organized and most isolated tribes to persuade them to accept this plan for cultural and tribal suicide.

Government personnel promised acceptance would result in freedom and economic independence. They further made elaborate promises to upgrade squalid housing, pave roads, build bridges, construct water projects and even provide college scholarships in return for a vote to terminate. Between 1958 and 1970 twenty-three rancherias and reservations were terminated. Chronically high unemployment rates, low educational achievement and sometimes emergency medical needs soon forced many to make loans on, or sell their lands. Worse still, many BIA services like health, education were abruptly ended for all Indians in the state. Like the earlier allotment policy, the implementation of termination set in motion a series of events that ultimately divested small tribes of 10,037 acres of land, disrupted tribal institutions and traditions and ultimately left these tribes more desperate, and impoverished than ever. Termination failed miserably to improve the socioeconomic or political power of the California Indians.

The occupation of Alcatraz Island in the San Francisco Bay, by nearly 100 American Indian College students in the fall of 1969 ushered in a new era of Indian affairs. A new generation of young, energetic and highly educated California Indians emerged during this period. Highly skeptical of the government they were committed to protecting tribal sovereignty. More important still, they found great value in tribal traditions. They encouraged traditional ceremonies, language retention and sought to remove impediments to the exercise of tribal religious practices. These developments paralleled a new generation of tribal leaders who would dynamically defend tribal rights. These activities made three things apparent; many California Indians were still landless, terminated tribes had been swindled, and some tribes had never been recognized by the federal government. However, reservation, landless and unrecognized tribesmen all shared lives of desperate poverty and little hope for employment or economic development.

In recognition of the growing sophistication of California Indians, the state legislature created the, Native American Heritage Commission in 1978. This all Indian commission works as a liaison between state, federal and tribal governments. It has been successful in protecting Indian burials, sacred places and providing access to government lands to harvest native plants for ceremonial practices and basketmaking.

To date 17 rancherias and reservations have reversed the disastrous termination process. Other tribes are currently pursuing legal avenues to reverse their termination status. Unrecognized tribes have vigorously pursued acknowledgment processes whose requirements are so impossibly demanding that many large tribes in Arizona and New Mexico could not today meet such standards of cultural continuity. Nevertheless, the Acagchemem of San Juan Capistrano the Muwekma of the San Francisco Bay area, and the Coast Miwok of Marin County are close to federal recognition and acquiring a trust land base.

Government developed economic development plans have a history of nearly a century of total failure. Currently more than thirty reservations and rancherias have established gaming businesses on their lands. Some are highly successful while other are not. Some public opposition to these activities seems to center around the fear that Indians may be cheated by their business partners. Such fears smack of paternalism and ignore the reality that few if any valuable resources can be found on Indian lands. Few private investors have come forward to work with Indian tribes outside of the gaming industry. With few choices, wise reservation leadership view gaming as an interim step toward greater economic independence. The Viejas Band of Kumeyaay Indians are the best example of how that dream can be achieved.

The amazing adaptive capabilities of California Indians has demonstrated the resiliency and genius of these much misunderstood and hardworking tribes can achieve under the most unfavorable of circumstances. We know, and our friends and counter parts in local and national governmental agencies must understand that only through the exercise of our tribal sovereignty can we successfully take our rightful place in our prosperous and free nation. We enter the next century filled with optimism.

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