

Chapter 1

NATIVES

As the eighteenth century was drawing to a close, opposition factions in tribal villages continued to resist Spanish intrusions into the East Bay hills...among them were escaped Christian and non-Christian Saclans, allied with some Jalquins. But...small groups of forty or fifty warriors, armed only with bows, lacked the power to protect their borders against Spanish invaders.
—Randall Milliken, *A Time of Little Choice*, 2009

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND THEIR EAST BAY HOMELANDS

The East Bay redwood forest is surrounded by the traditional homelands of three distinct tribal groups: the Saclan, the Huchiun and the Jalquin-Yrgin.¹ While all were multilingual, the primary ancestral language of the Saclan was Bay Miwok. The Huchiun and Jalquin-Yrgin spoke East Bay Ohlone/Costanoan² as their primary language.

The forest itself is in an area where tribal territories likely overlapped. It is the Jalquin-Yrgin or Saclan people who are believed to have been the primary residents near the redwood trees. In general, villages were located on major creeks that had reliable year-round water.

Within the East Bay redwood forest, subsequent logging activity has obliterated practically all evidence of Native habitation. Mortar rocks exist in a few remote locations. Incidentally, petrified redwood was present at Moraga sites, indicating that the redwood forest extended at least as far as Las Trampas in centuries long ago.³

Native people lived in harmony with nature for many centuries before the arrival of Europeans. Much knowledge of their traditional way of life has survived, passed on from generation to generation. But much has also been lost. The missionaries who accompanied the Spanish explorers aimed to extinguish the tribal cultures, seeing this as essential in achieving their goal of Christianizing the Natives.

Beyond the traditions that have been kept alive within the contemporary Ohlone community, much of what is known about the ancestral East Bay indigenous people comes from reports by early Spanish explorers and mission records.

“*Gente de los Palos Colorados*,” people of the redwoods, as they were identified in mission records, may have come from East Bay locations far from the hills. As various priests kept records at Mission San José, different conventions were followed in recording tribal data from 1797 to 1833.

Traditional Ways of Life

Before 1769, Native people had a varied and nutritious diet, using a wide variety of local plants. Protein sources were also plentiful, as there was abundant fish and game.

East Bay women gathered acorns and seeds from flowering plants to make into soups (*atole*) and savory cakes (*pinole*), steaming some in baskets. Acorns were carefully prepared by grinding the savory kernels into a flour that was used in various dishes. Acorn soup may have been cooked in baskets, using hot stones.

Men hunted deer, elk and bear using bows and arrows. Arrows were made from straight tule rods, with arrowheads of quartz or obsidian. Trout and salmon were taken from creeks using loosely woven baskets. Small game was caught using snares.

Native people managed the understory of the redwood forest and oak woodlands with small fires. This cleared brush from under the ancient trees. People lived in dome-shaped dwellings of branches thatched with tule. Granaries and nets were designed to protect foodstuffs from pests.

Traditional Native people had rich spiritual and ceremonial lives, with legends passed orally between generations. It is believed that ceremonial regalia, as well as clothing styles, differed greatly from one tribal group to another.

Of the people who lived in the East Bay redwoods, little is known of their specific practices. Could they have used redwood saplings in the construction

of their dwellings and baskets in the Pacific coast redwoods, as was done by the people of Ano Nuevo and Santa Cruz?

For a complete discussion of everyday life among the ancestral Ohlone/Costanoan people, please refer to the *Ohlone Curriculum* by Beverly Ortiz, PhD, available on the East Bay Regional Parks website (www.ebparks.org).

The East Bay Ohlone / Costanoans: Huchiuns

The Huchiun people lived on the flatlands and foothills of today's Oakland and Berkeley. They built a sweat lodge on Temescal Creek, between today's Montclair and upper Rockridge districts of Oakland. The lodge site was flooded when Lake Temescal was built by Anthony Chabot in 1869.

The mouth of Temescal Creek lies opposite the Golden Gate to the Pacific. Large marine creatures such as whales, sharks and seals came to shore. Indigenous people traveled from afar to enjoy this abundant seafood. Shellfish were probably gathered from boats crafted from tule reeds.

The Huchiun people lived in widely spaced villages. In 1776, explorer Juan Bautista de Anza, missionary Francisco Palou and sea captain Jose Canizares reported seeing villages with between forty and one hundred inhabitants. Canizares also observed one large village near the Carquinez Strait with four hundred people present. Perhaps this was an intertribal gathering.

The Jalquin-Yrgin People

Anthropologist Randall Milliken carefully studied records from Mission San Francisco (“Mission Dolores”), Mission San José (in today's Fremont) and Mission Santa Clara to determine locations of tribal homelands. While these records refer separately to the Jalquin and Yrgin tribes, Milliken determined that these peoples were highly intermarried. Milliken mapped the traditional homelands of the Jalquin people to today's San Leandro, along San Leandro Creek, and the southern part of today's Oakland. The Yrgin lived in today's Castro Valley and in the vicinity of Anthony Chabot Regional Park.



Individuals from different tribal groups present varied features. Ships' artist Ludwig Choris sketched these Natives at Mission Dolores in San Francisco in 1816. *Courtesy Bancroft Library.*

The Saclan People

Before to the mission era, the Saclan people occupied inland valleys, from San Pablo Creek in the north through Walnut Creek, Lafayette, Orinda and Moraga; east through the San Ramon Valley; and south through Sunol. Mission records stated that the Saclan villages of Jussent and Guquigmu were located within a few miles of each other, probably in the area of Lafayette or Moraga.

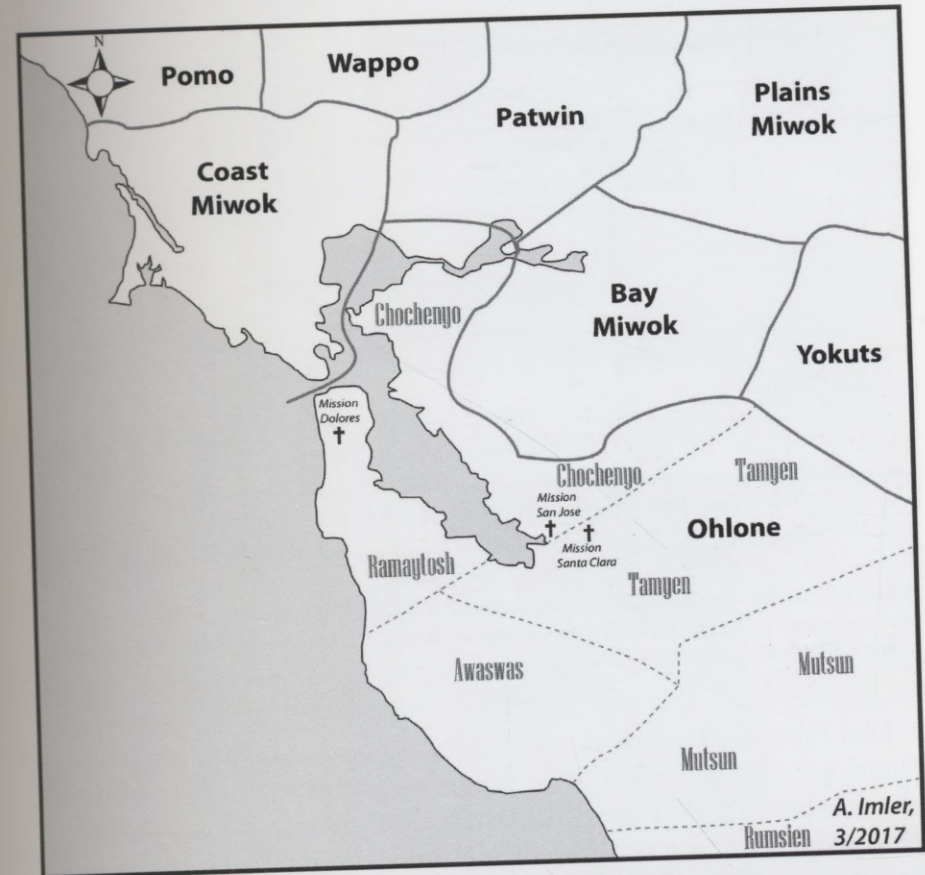
The last documented Saclan resident of Moraga continued to live in Indian Valley after 1797, after her fellow tribal members had gone to Mission San José.⁴

LANGUAGES SPOKEN BY EAST BAY NATIVES

Europeans observed early on that Natives could understand the languages spoken by neighboring tribes. Sailors on the ship *San Carlos* observed that Costanoan-language speakers in the East Bay could understand the words the sailors had learned from Rumsen Costanoan speakers in Monterey.

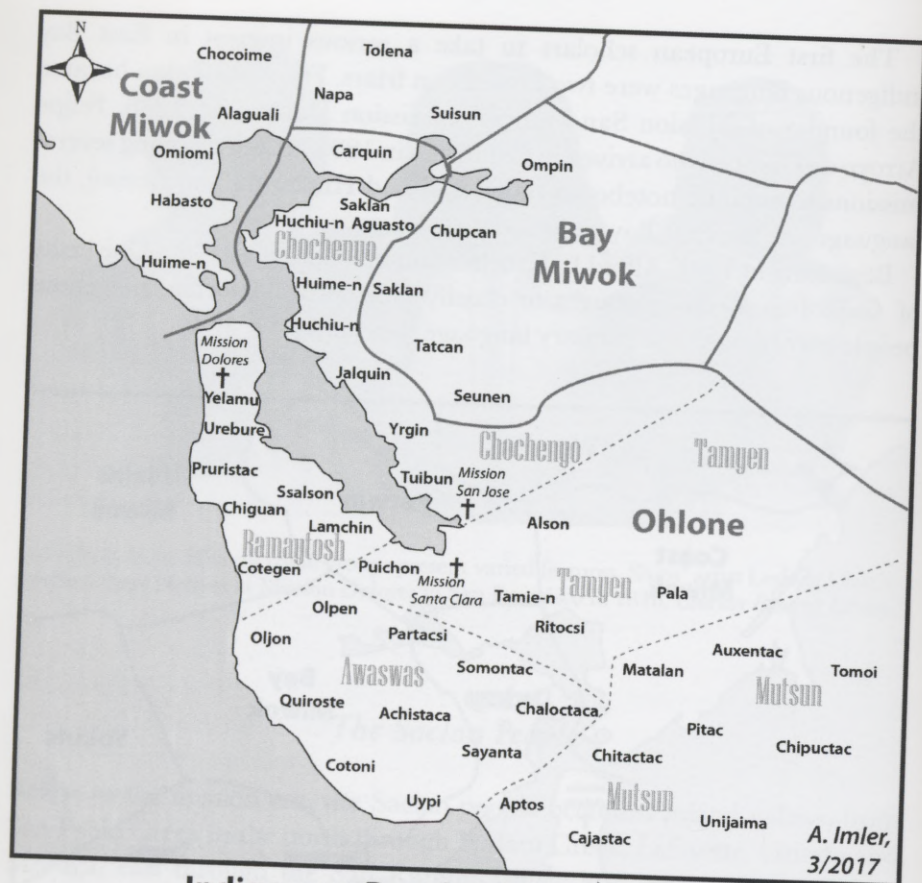
The first European scholars to take a serious interest in East Bay indigenous languages were two Franciscan friars. Francisco Palou became the founder of Mission San Francisco (Mission Dolores) in 1776. Felipe Arroyo de Cuesta, who arrived in California in 1808, traveled among several missions, compiling notebooks on Saclan and Huchiun (Chochenyo), the languages of the East Bay redwood people.

Beginning in 1901, Alfred L. Kroeber and his colleagues at the University of California-Berkeley sought to classify Northern California indigenous people according to the primary language they spoke.



Indigenous People of the Bay Area: Primary Languages Spoken, Regional Dialects

California indigenous people have been grouped by anthropologists according to their principal language. *Courtesy Alan Imler Cartography.*



Indigenous People of the Bay Area: Some of the Tribal Names in Ohlone and Miwok Regions

Before the mission era, Natives lived in many small tribal groups. Tribe names generally did not correspond to languages and dialects spoken. Based on research by Randall Milliken.
Courtesy Alan Imler Cartography.

John Peabody Harrington, working for the federal Bureau of American Ethnology, collected information and recorded Native speakers on wax cylinders between 1921 and 1929. Maria de los Angeles (Angela) Colos, of Pleasanton, began teaching Harrington and others the East Bay Costanoan language in 1921. José Guzman continued the instruction in 1930. Harrington named this language "Chochenyo."

In 1955, Madison Beeler of UC-Berkeley caught some of Kroeber's errors in identifying the homeland and language relationships of the Saclan. Beeler identified the Saclan language as being closely related to the Miwok



José Guzman, shown here with an unidentified girl, taught the Chochenyo dialect of the Ohlone language to Smithsonian anthropologist John Peabody Harrington in the 1930s.
Courtesy Antonio Peralta Hacienda Museum archives.

languages of the Sierra people. Thus, he gave the name Bay Miwok to the Saclan tongue.

Beeler characterized the Costanoan language as having three branches: the northern group, including Chochenyo; a southern group, including Mutsun (San Juan Bautista) and Rumsen (Monterey); and Karkin (Martinez), which is a unique branch of Costanoan.

In 1976, Richard L. Levy of UC-Berkeley and his colleagues coined names for the indigenous languages, trying to use more culturally appropriate Native words rather than the mission names applied by Kroeber. The name Ohlone, derived from the name of the Oljon tribe of Pescadero and San Gregorio, is now in widespread use for the Costanoan people.

In 1995, Randall Milliken began publishing his studies of mission records. Interestingly, he found that the name endings of women from the Jalquin tribe followed the conventions of the Bay Miwok language, but those of Yrgin females followed the Chochenyo Ohlone language.

The Chochenyo Language

Linguists today identify six languages of the Ohlone/Costanoan family: San Francisco Bay Costanoan, Karkin, Awaswas, Mutsun, Rumsen and Chalon. Within the San Francisco Bay Costanoan, there is an East Bay dialect: Chochenyo, the language of the Huchiun people. And within Chochenyo, there is even an Oakland dialect.

Thanks to the work of Angela Colos, José Guzman and John Peabody Harrington, much of the Chochenyo language has been preserved. A revival of Chochenyo is now underway among Bay Area Natives.

The Bay Miwok Language

Except for about one hundred words and phrases, the Bay Miwok language has been lost. In 1821, Crispio Jahuoesia taught these words to the Franciscan missionary Felipe Arroyo at the Mission Dolores *rancheria*. The priest made note of these words and phrases, spelling them as they sounded to a Spanish-speaker. In an 1821 commentary, Arroyo described Saclan as a "graceful" language.

NATIVES MEET EUROPEANS

Earliest Encounters

In initial encounters between the Spanish cavalry and the Native people, the newcomers were greeted warmly and, in some cases, with awe and wonder. Expedition leaders Pedro Fages and Juan Crespí and mariner Jose Canizares recounted how their hungry troops received gifts of food—*pinoles*, acorn and seed cake that tasted like roasted hazelnut and cooked fish. The Europeans gave the Natives glass beads and other items in exchange.

People of the village on San Pablo Bay told Canizares in 1775 that they had seen men on horseback before. This must have been the Fages-Crespí expedition of 1772. "Without doubt, horses were initially the most intimidating symbol of the Spaniards' extraordinary, possibly supernatural power," observed Randall Milliken.

Initially, people of the redwoods who entered the mission system went to Mission San Francisco, using their tule reed boats to cross the bay. Missionary Vicente Santa Maria, diarist on Canizares's ship, the *San Carlos*, recorded the names of Huchiun-Aguastos men who came to visit the ship: Capitan Sumu, second chieftain Jausos, Supitacse, Mutuc, Logeacse and Xacacse. Records show that several of these men and their family members were baptized at Mission San Francisco (Mission Dolores).

The first large groups of Huchiun went to Mission San Francisco in the fall of 1794. The first baptisms of Saclan people were recorded that same year. After Mission San José was built in 1797, East Bay Natives went there to live instead.

Natives Work on the Ranchos

After the founding of Mission Dolores in 1776 and Mission San José in 1797, many Native people had moved to the mission *rancherias*, leaving vast swaths of unoccupied land. Statewide, the missions capitalized on this wealth of real estate through cattle ranching. This not only provided a way for the residents to sustain themselves and the church but also generated export commodities in the form of tallow and hides, in an economy that was largely based on the barter system. Value was added through the unpaid labor of Native men, who worked as cowboys, and women, who performed every domestic task imaginable.



Ohlone men were given time off from their hard labor at Mission San José to demonstrate a ceremonial dance for visitors. Wilhelm G. Tilesius von Tilenau is believed to be the artist who depicted the dancers at Mission San José sometime between 1803 and 1807. *Courtesy Bancroft Library.*

One local example of Native cowboys working mission cattle in the early nineteenth century was *El Rancho San Ysidro de los Juchiunes*. This was a cattle ranch in the Richmond–San Pablo region of the East Bay to supply Mission Dolores. The *vaqueros* were Huchiun men.

ORGANIZED RESISTANCE TO THE MISSION SYSTEM

From the perspective of the Spanish missionaries, it was their duty to bring the Natives into the protective embrace of the church. They were taught to abandon traditional ways. They were to provide a labor force for the missions. The details of the bargain were not initially spelled out. But once a person had been baptized, the Spanish expected him or her to accept



Natives from many tribes, including the people of the redwoods, *Gente de los Palos Colorados*, lived and died at Mission San José. *Courtesy Society of California Pioneers.*

them as their masters. Once *neofitos* entered the mission system, they were forbidden to leave. The *padres* did not hesitate to send troops to bring back runaways (*cimarrones*).

The Chimenes Incident

After an epidemic, likely typhus, caused many deaths at Mission San Francisco in March 1795, a group of Saclan converts secured permission to return to their homelands for a visit (*paseo*). What followed was recorded in detail in the diary of Monterey governor Diego Borica. When the Saclan converts had failed to return by April 27, missionary Antonio Danti sent a group of fourteen Christianized men to pursue them to a ceremonial dance

at a village the Spanish called Chimenes Rancheria. (Milliken suggested that this was probably the village of Tcimenukme near today's Napa.) When eight Mission San Francisco men confronted the runaways outside the dance house, a battle ensued. Seven of the pursuers died. Only Oton, a Huchiun pursuer from the mission, survived to tell the tale.

Rounding Up Runaways

Two years later, having resolved to build the new Mission San José, missionaries sent one Costanoan and one Bay Miwok interpreter, with an escort of three soldiers, to Native villages on the Fremont plains to recruit a construction crew. There were few, if any, volunteers. The church men observed that at least two hundred of the village inhabitants were runaways from Mission San Francisco.

Around the same time, on July 20, 1797, authorities at Mission San Francisco sent a party of thirty *neofito* troops northward to round up runaways. Their *capitán* was Raymundo El California, a Native from Baja. The men crossed the bay in tule balsa boats, apparently landing at San Pablo Bay.

Raymundo's troops discovered three Huchiun villages with some of the escapees—men, women and children—present. The Huchiun people fought the troops to avoid being recaptured. The troops retreated to their boats, pursued by the Huchiuns.

Spanish Cavalry Attack on the Saclan

Meanwhile, back at Mission San José, Sergeant Pedro Amador had arrived by July 7, 1797. In what may have been a tragic cross-cultural misunderstanding, Amador had heard that the Saclan men were manufacturing arrows with intent to go to war. This may have merely been a seasonal gathering of men making the year's arrows for hunting, as the tule reeds were ripe for use at the time.

Amador sent word to Governor Borica, recommending that the Spaniards go to war against the Saclans. The governor responded on July 10, ordering Amador to attack. According to Milliken:

At dawn on July 15, 1797, twenty armed Spanish horsemen struck the Saclan village of Jussent, probably located in the present Moraga

or Lafayette area of central Contra Costa County. The Spaniards were surprised to find that the village had been divided into three separate house clusters. They approached the middle house cluster, which contained about fifty men and women (probably no more than twenty of whom were adult males capable of fighting). The Saclans had prepared ditches beforehand to keep the soldiers from charging through the village on horseback.⁵

The battle that followed lasted two hours. Soldiers advanced on Saclans who were barricaded in wells.

The Amador party continued north, leading thirty prisoners. Along the way, the raiders were attacked by Saclan men from other villages. At dawn on July 17, the party entered a Huchiun village at San Pablo Bay.

Having collected eighty-three Christians and nine non-Christians captured from the Saclan and Huchiun villages, the Amador party marched along the bay shore for three days, returning to Mission San José on July 18. Five days later, the party began a three-day walk up the peninsula to San Francisco.

The captured non-Christian Saclan and Huchiun men were put on trial on August 9, 1791. All were found guilty of various charges.

Potroy, of the village of Jussent, was implicated as the leader of the April 29, 1795 Chimenes armed defense. Potroy acknowledged that he had helped to kill the seven mission men at Chimenes Rancheria. He was sentenced to seventy-five lashes (twenty-five each on three occasions), plus one year in shackles. Caguas and Ojyugma, confederates of Potroy, were similarly sentenced. Milliken concluded:

The Chimenes battle was a catalyst for the mass flight of the population of frightened new neophytes. It also ignited a serious threat to Spanish hegemony over the many Bay Area tribes....Not a single tribal couple appeared at Mission San Francisco for baptism from the day the killings were reported until March 1800. No similar mass flight or ongoing resistance occurred again in west Central California until the late 1820s.⁶

THE END OF THE MISSION SYSTEM

Despite the militancy of the Saclan resistance leaders, most Native people were ultimately forced into the mission system. There, under crowded conditions, malnourished and depressed, more than half of the population

died. Within each mission, each year seemed to bring new outbreaks of disease—pneumonia, measles, smallpox, typhoid, diphtheria, scarlet fever, tuberculosis and syphilis.

By the 1820s, the mission system was in decline, despite the church having assumed control of at least one-third of the most valuable coastal land in Alta California.

In 1821, Mexico declared its independence from Spain. Soldiers who had served the Spanish Crown, as well as the *Californio* ranchers and farmers, increasingly objected to the accumulation of wealth and land by the church. The process of secularization began in 1834, with the Mexican government seizing control of mission property and sending the Franciscan missionaries into exile.

By 1836, when Mission San José was secularized, the process was complete.

BAY AREA NATIVES TODAY

In the twenty-first century, many local residents with Saclan and Ohlone heritage are descendants of the survivors of the brutal mission system. Native individuals today may have genetic heritage from several different tribes.

Even among people who have similar tribal affiliations, a wide range of political views and social perspectives are voiced. But there is one matter on which there is general agreement: Natives today want the public to understand that they are alive and well.

The Muwekma Ohlone Tribe of the San Francisco Bay Area is a well-known association of local Natives that conducts historical research and interfaces with government and public agencies. According to the tribal website (<http://muwekma.org>):

The present-day Muwekma Ohlone Tribe is comprised of all of the known surviving American Indian lineages aboriginal to the San Francisco Bay region who trace their ancestry through the Missions Dolores, Santa Clara, and San Jose; and who were also members of the historic Federally Recognized Verona Band of Alameda County.

Today, East Bay Natives form a community with ongoing social and cultural expression. Ancient traditions are being taught to young people.

Cultural groups are affiliated with local colleges and universities, as well as historical centers at both Mission San José in Fremont and Mission Dolores in San Francisco. Native voices are being heard regarding social, academic and land use policy development.