

Indo-Chicano:

Notes on the Early History of the Yolo Plains

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The early history of the Yolo Plains, the region from Suscol (Vallejo) to Colusa (Kolus), is almost totally unknown, both to scholars and to the general public. Prior to about 1321 the history of the region is wholly Indian and until 1850 it is primarily Indo-Chicano.

It seems a shame that the schools of Solano, Yolo and Colusa counties are largely unable to deal effectively with the story of the region, but that situation is not unique. Much of California's rich heritage is currently unavailable to the public because Anglo-oriented colleges have generally refused to encourage the indepth study of Indian and Mexican-American history.

The establishment of ~~Deganawidah~~ Quetzalcoatl University, between Davis and Winters, will help to correct this situation since Indian and Chicano scholars will be able to study the first 10 or 20 thousand years of the region's history, teachers will be able to take courses in this subject, and school children will be able to visit comprehensive museum exhibits.

As an example of the wealth of information to be derived from research which will be performed at "D-Q," let us review some facts relating to early travelers in the region.

Probably the earliest traveler in Yolo County, known by name, was Samyetoy (Solano), a chief of the Suisun Indians. About the year 1800 Solano made a business trip north to Chiuructo (Churuptoy), a village located on Cache Creek just northwest of Woodland (at Yolo). While there, Solano was taken by the charms of a local girl, whom he proceeded to carry off as his wife. Her father, with the aid of allies from the Clear Lake region, sought to recover her, but all to no avail. This Chiur^ycto girl, later known as Isidora

Solano, proved to be a good wife for Solano. In 1874 she dictated her memoirs for posterity, probably being the first Woodland-born person to be so honored. She lived out her last years at Sachyma Montis near Suisun.

In 1821 Luis Arguello led a Spanish-Mexican expedition into the region, via the Estrecho de los Carquines (Strait of the Karkim^A Indians). The party, with two Indian interpreters and guides (Marin and Rafael), traveled overland to Suisun and Tonelas (on the plain of Suisun). On the following day (Oct. 23) they journeyed northward to the village of the Ululato People (at Vacaville) and then on to the village of Libayto (Liwaito) at Winters (on the banks of the Rio de San Pedro, Kapa Liwai, or Putah Creek). At Ululato there were only thirty gentiles (non-Christians) along with some Christian Indians.

On October 21 Arguello had sent on ahead some Ululato and Canucaymus converts resident at San Francisco who were being allowed to visit their homes. They were sent ahead to reassure their relatives that Arguello's expedition was not going to carry them off. This was necessary because many Indians from the region had already been seized or lured away to San Francisco and San Jose missions. For example, on April 2 and 16, 1821, 54 Ululato children were baptized at San Francisco while on June 15, 1821 some 80 Ululato adults were baptized there. Similarly, Indians from Ululato and Putta (Pootahtoy) were baptized at San Jose before 1821.

Arguello found that the Ululatos were at war with the Gualactos (Walactos), possibly the people of Guiritoy (three hours south of Kolus) or of Gualactole (north of Ukiah).

The Spaniards found that Liwaito had ho^uses enough for 400 people but that only 50 were present, the rest being away gathering seeds. An impression was gained that the Liwaitos had never seen soldiers and were afraid of horses.

Arguello and his men crossed Putah Creek and camped on the "opposite bank," thus indicating that Liwaito was on the south side of the stream.

On October 24 the expedition, guided by some Liwaitos, journeyed northward for 4 1/2 hours to where they met some Indians gathering seeds. The natives fled to the neighborhood of the village of Chila (perhaps Chita or Kachituli) located on the banks of Cache Creek at the edge of an oak forest (between Woodland and Madison). The people of this town (which had about 900 inhabitants) were very angry at the intrusion but an old Suisun woman living there and Rafael, the expedition's interpreter, were able to arrange a peace.

Guides were obtained from the chief men and the soldiers passed on two leagues (about 4 to 5 miles) to a camping spot, perhaps near Chiuructo. On October 25 the party continued on to Goroy (probably Yoloy, Yolotoy, or Yoloy at Knight's Landing). This town was "fortified with a stockade, which formed a wall; it presented a very pleasant view because of its situation, its land although uncultivated seemed very fertile, since it has an abundance of wild grapes. Its inhabitants exceed one thousand souls...." They greeted the Spaniards saying "Buey, buey, guerete, guerete" which meant "Welcome, welcome, it is good, it is good." The Spaniards camped on a nearby forested little hill along the Sacramento River, receiving presents from the Indians.

Arguello learned that two Europeans had earlier visited the village of Guiristoy to the north, some time before. Possibly these were Russians from Fort Ross.

In the afternoon the Spaniards marched on, (now to the northwest) along the river for four leagues with involuntary guides from Yolotoy. On the next

day, after eight hours of travel, the expedition reached the town of Guiritoy (or Guilitoy), "situated on the banks of the Río Jesús María (Sacramento) on a spacious plain; it fronts upon a spacious grove of large oaks a gunshot away which form a line of more than 10 leagues; its inhabitants exceed 1,700 souls of both sexes including three villages which are branches of it, the one is found to the left one cannonshot away, another at its back and very close, and the other on the opposite bank of the river." (The Indians of Guilitoy were probably the "Wallie" group which inhabited the Grand Island area as late as the 1880's and who worked for the farmers of Yolo County. Kroeber gives the village names as Nawidihu, Paio, Namachaysen and Koshempu).

The Guilitos were frightened by the arrival of the Europeans and a battle ensued, in which at least one Indian was killed and the Spaniards lost a mule loaded with cartridges. Peace was later restored and on the afternoon of the 27th the expedition reached the village of Capa (Kaph) on the river at the mouth of Cortina Creek.

On the next day, the soldiers passed north to Coru (Korus) and Cha. The two towns, which were near each other, each had about 1,500 inhabitants. Indians came out to greet the travelers in a friendly manner carrying "various flags." (Kroeber, using data of a much later date, placed the village of Kashi just north of Koru and that of Cha much farther north, just below Princeton).

On the 29th the expedition acquired new guides and marched north along the river, passing the villages of Teroti, Hutulrabe, Dacdac and Pachi. After eight hours of travel they camped at the village of Sunus. Here they had reached the end of the area where their interpreter could be understood, and from now on, for the rest of their journey, they had to depend upon sign

language. Sunús was, therefore, the southernmost village of the Nomilaki or Winton Indians, near Butte City, while the region passed through heretofore was inhabited by people speaking the apparently closely-related Poo-eh-win and Patwin dialects. (Kroeber later places the villages of Tarno, Kachil, Waltere, Cha, and Bodope along the route of the 29th. Tarno might be Teroti and Hutulrabe might be the same as Waltere).

On the 30th the Spaniards traveled north to the villages of Cheno and ~~L~~Yali (Yali), an 8 1/2 hour journey. On the next day they left the Sacramento River, traveling to the west to the Stonyford region. In subsequent days they were among the Shoteah (Stonyford or Salt Pomo), who had been visited by two men on horseback (probably Russians) and who possessed blue^e cloth and a blue tunic obtained via other Indians from the Russians.

The Spaniards then made their way back to the Bay Area via the Russian River valley and Petaluma.

Thus one finds that in 1821 the Solano, Yolo, and Colusa County area was inhabited by numerous Indian people with comparatively large towns. Each one of these towns has, of course, its own distinctive history, a history which D-Q University will help to uncover in the near future.

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