

Introduction to Delta Yokuts



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Note to Teachers:

This “Introduction to Delta Yokuts” section has fewer units, and fewer lessons in each unit, than the Ohlone Curriculum. For this reason, the unit numbers, and the lesson numbers in each unit, won’t always be chronological. Instead, the lesson numbers refer to correspondingly numbered lessons in “Teacher Resources.”

For an overview introduction to Delta Yokuts peoples and their language, see Supplemental Resources, pp. 59-60, “Introduction to Delta Yokuts,” and p. 61, “A Land of Many Languages: Delta Yokuts.”

For an annotated reference list of Delta Yokuts resources, see Supplemental Resources, pp. 77-78, “References: Delta Yokuts Resources.”

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Introduction to Delta Yokuts

Student Resources

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UNIT ONE, LESSON ONE

Learning About Other Cultures

Culture is a person's way of life. Different groups of people have different cultures. Even though many things can be the same or similar in different cultures, many things are also different from culture to culture. By learning about different cultures, we can learn a lot about ourselves and the world we are part of.

The first people of the United States are often called American Indians or Native Americans. Even though they are called by one name, there were hundreds and hundreds of American Indian cultures. In fact, here in California there were hundreds of different tribes of California Indians.¹

When people make movies and television shows that have American Indian characters, those characters usually show American Indians as if their way of life in the past was always the same. From this, people can get many wrong ideas about American Indians.

In these lessons, you are going to learn about the cultures of a group of local California Indians called Delta Yokuts today. The word Yokuts ("Yóh-cuts") comes from a similar word in a Yokuts language that means "(Indian) person" or "people." Some people pronounce Yokuts as Yókohch.

It is important to learn about Delta Yokuts peoples and their ways of life, because they have lived here for thousands of years longer than anyone else, since the human world began according to their accounts of creation.

By learning about Delta Yokuts peoples of the past, and about Delta Yokuts peoples today, it is hoped that you will learn to live in a closer way with other people and with nature.

UNIT ONE, LESSON THREE

Delta Yokuts Cultural Values

Respect
for yourself,
for other people,
for everything in the natural world

Generosity

Giving back for what you take

Fair play

Thinking about others before thinking of yourself

Patience

A sense of humor

UNIT TWO, LESSON TWO, Part I

A Land of Many Villages and Tribes

A Land of Many Villages

It wasn't really very long ago that cities, paved roads, cars, and electricity did not exist. Ranches and farms did not exist.

Until 1770, the only people who lived in the place we now call the Bay Area were Delta Yokuts, and other local California Indian groups. They lived in villages. Villages have populations that are smaller than the populations of towns and cities. About 40 to 200 people lived in each village.²

By comparison, how many children are there in your class? Do you know how many children attend your school? One class is almost big enough to be the size of an entire small village! Can you imagine what it would be like to live in a community where the population was so small that everybody knew everyone else who lived there really well? The size of local villages seems small compared with the size of today's cities. But during that time period, this area had a large population compared to how many people lived in other parts of the world where they also did not plant crops and fruit trees.

Delta Yokuts peoples usually built villages every three to five miles along creeks.³ Fish filled the creeks, especially when they were migrating from the place now known as the Delta to the hills. Grizzly bears sometimes caught and ate the fish. Deer ate the tender new shoots of bushes. Elk and antelope grazed in the grasslands.

Everyone's backyard included the beauty, color, sights, and sounds of nature. Delta Yokuts adults and children had fun games to play, and the children had fun toys to play with. Children also had fun using their imagination when playing in nature.

A Land of Many Tribes

The first people of this land organized themselves into tribes. Tribes were communities of villages who governed themselves. Each tribe usually had a population of between 200 and 300 people, who usually lived in three to five villages for most of the year. Each tribe had a home area (homeland or territory) of about eight to twelve square miles of land (see map on next page).⁴ Do you know how this compares with the number of square miles in your city? Do you know

how the number of villages in each tribe compares with the number of elementary schools in your city?



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Tribes of the San Francisco Bay Area

Not all American Indian groups were organized into tribes, even though tribe is the word most people use today for all American Indian societies. There were hundreds and hundreds of American Indian societies and they organized their societies in different ways. In English we often call the leaders of tribes or villages “headmen” or “captains.” Sometimes there were also “headwomen.”

A tribe has a special type of government where the leaders are closely related to everyone else in the society. In fact, everyone in a tribe is usually somehow related to everyone else in the tribe, and they want the best for everyone. Because of this, they shared the resources they needed to live in a nearly equal way. In fact, tribes had one of the most equal ways of sharing resources ever known in the history of the world.

This does not mean that people always got along. But they had rules, laws, values, and beliefs that helped them live in a close way with each other and with everything, everywhere in the world around them. They understood every plant and animal in the world as well as they understood their own human brothers and sisters and friends. By comparison, how well do you think you know the plants and animals in the San Francisco Bay Area or even in your local park?

UNIT TWO, LESSON TWO, Part 2

Delta Yokuts: A Grouping Term

When people from other parts of the world began coming into the place now called the Bay Area to live in 1770, very few of them were interested in learning the cultures (ways of life) of the local Native peoples. Non-Indians did not begin to get really interested in local Native cultures until more than 100 years later. When they did get interested, they began to notice that even though each tribe had things that were different about it, each tribe also had some things that were similar or the same. Because of this, some people began to group several tribes together under a single name. In the Bay Area, one of the grouping terms is Delta Yokuts. The Delta Yokuts used to be part of a grouping term called Northern Valley Yokuts.

The word Yokuts is based on a word in a Yokuts language that means “(Indian) person” or “people.” Delta is a name that we give today to a part of the Bay Area where the rivers now called the Sacramento and San Joaquin meet. The Delta has lots of shallow, marshy water with tule reeds, cattails, and other water-loving plants growing along the edges of the water, and lots of wildlife living there.

At one time, there were about 12 to 16 Delta Yokuts tribes, including the Cholvon, Coybos, Jalalon, Josmite, Nototome, and Tauquimne. Another tribe, the Luecha, is considered to be part of two groups, Delta Yokuts and Ohlone. The names of these tribes were first written down by people who spoke Spanish, so you should pronounce the names of these tribes like Spanish consonants and vowels are pronounced. Can you find these Delta Yokuts tribes on this map?



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Altogether, there were about 7,200-12,800 Delta Yokuts living in this region before 1770.⁵

The drawing on this page is an 1816 portrait of a Delta Yokuts man from the Cholvon tribe.



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UNIT TWO, LESSON TWO, Part 3

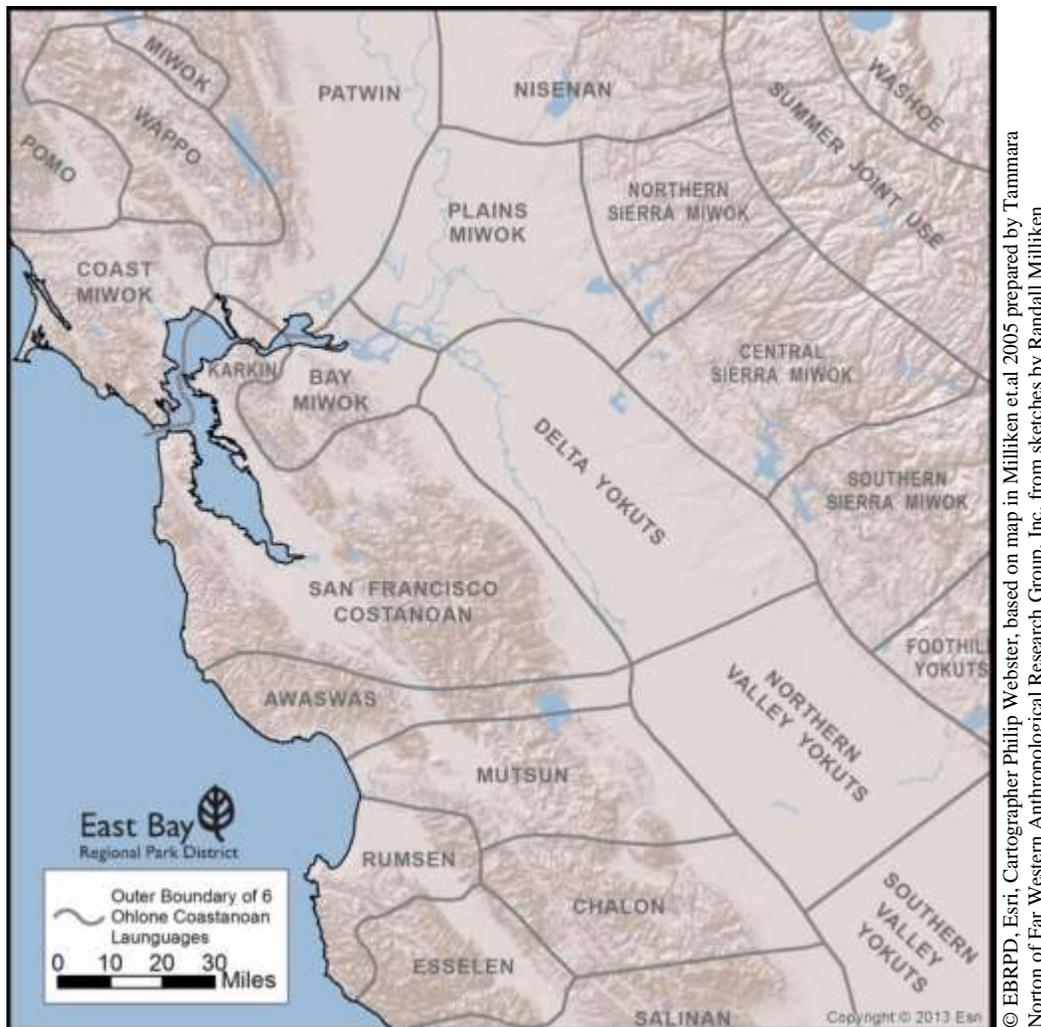
Cultural Nationalities (Language Areas)

Remember the grouping term Delta Yokuts? Some people refer to Delta Yokuts as a “tribe,” but this isn’t really correct. It is also confusing, since there were 12–16 Delta Yokuts tribes.

Some people call Delta Yokuts a “cultural nationality.” By this they mean a group of tribes that had some things about their cultures that were the same or similar, but others things about their cultures that were different.⁶

Other people call Delta Yokuts a “language area,” because the Delta Yokuts tribes all spoke the same language.

This map shows the areas where different California Indian languages were spoken in this region. Can you find the area where the Delta Yokuts language was spoken?



Some of the languages on the previous map were more different than others.⁷ Even though the languages the different tribes spoke weren't always the same, they could speak to each other, because they knew how to speak more than one language, sometimes many different ones.⁸ Can you speak more than one language fluently?

UNIT TWO, LESSON THREE

A Land of Many Languages

Since the people in each tribe knew how to speak two or more languages, they could speak with people from other tribes. They also married people from other tribes. When people from two different tribes got married, their children were usually raised as part of the husband's tribe, but sometimes as part of the mother's tribe. The children also stayed close to their relatives in the other tribe. This is something that helped the people from different tribes get along with each other.

Delta Yokuts Languages

Delta Yokuts is one of three Yokuts languages spoken in the northern San Joaquin Valley. Today, we only know a few words in the Delta Yokuts language.

UNIT FOUR, LESSON ONE, Part I

Sacred Places and Narratives

Sacred Places

Delta Yokuts peoples believed, and continue to believe, that everything in the world needed, and needs, to be respected and taken care of. They believed, and continue to believe, that everything in the world had, and has, a spirit or life, whether a plant, animal, rock, fire, or water. Delta Yokuts peoples viewed, and continue to view, some places in the landscape as sacred, or holy. The word “sacred” means something associated with spiritual or religious beliefs. The word “holy” means something set apart for spiritual (religious) reasons.

Sacred places are places in the landscape that relate in some way to Delta Yokuts religious beliefs and practices past to present. They include land, water, and air; areas of gathering, ceremony, and worship; and burial sites.⁹ They include places talked about in Delta Yokuts accounts about the creation of the world. Sacred places can be compared to churches, mosques, synagogues, temples, and other holy buildings where people gather to pray, except that sacred places are located outside, in the natural world.

Sacred places have spiritual meaning for Delta Yokuts peoples. At certain special times of the year, Delta Yokuts religious leaders went to certain sacred places to pray. They prayed for the health and well-being of the earth, and everything and everyone in it.

Sacred Narratives

Delta Yokuts sacred narratives describe how the world was created. They feature supernatural beings with animal names. In English these beings are sometimes called “First People” or “Animal People.” They have some traits and abilities of animals and some traits and abilities of humans, including the ability to speak like humans. They also have extraordinary, supernatural abilities.

Sacred narratives describe how the First People created the world and made it safe for human beings. They describe how the First People created the things humans would need to live, and the rules and laws that humans should live by. Then they created humans. Sacred narratives describe how, after the First People finished creating the world, their love for the humans they created was so great, they gave

up their physical form, and many of their special abilities, to become the animals of today and the spirits in everything.

UNIT FOUR, LESSON ONE, Part 2

Delta Yokuts Are Working to Protect Places of Their Ancestors

Modern building activities can damage or destroy sacred places. They can damage or destroy other types of places, too, like the places where the ancestors of today's Delta Yokuts had villages. Once these places are destroyed, they are lost forever.

Katherine Erolina Perez is one of the Delta Yokuts who are working to protect ancestral cultural sites and sacred places from being destroyed. Here is what she has to say about this:

“We’re very concerned about the protection of our cultural sites. This includes our sacred, prayer, and burial sites. It includes the places where we gathered for religious reasons, and the places where we gathered our herbs for our medicines and our materials for our baskets. It includes our water sources. We want to keep them clean and pollution free.

We’re not against the development of housing projects, roads, farms, and ranches, but we don’t want these things to be built where we have cultural sites. When people want to build something at these sites, we ask them to go somewhere else to put in their project. If they won’t go somewhere else, then we try and work with them to change their plans, so whatever they build won’t disturb the site.”

UNIT FOUR, LESSON TWO

Delta Yokuts Spiritual Beliefs and Ceremonies¹⁰

Delta Yokuts peoples believed, and continue to believe, that everything in the world needed, and needs, to be respected and taken care of. They also believed, and continue to believe, that everything in the world had, and has, a spirit or life, whether a plant, animal, rock, fire, or water.

At certain times of the year, Delta Yokuts peoples held ceremonies to honor the spirit in everything. All year long they gave thanks for everything in this world by behaving properly, doing good acts, praying, leaving offerings for the spirits, and participating in religious ceremonies.

UNIT FIVE, LESSON ONE

Generations of Knowledge: Understanding Plants and Animals as Well as You Understand Your Own Human Relatives¹

Delta Yokuts peoples are often described in books as hunters and gatherers. How they lived wasn't really as simple as that, however. They were more like caretakers and managers of the natural world. They couldn't gather as many plants or hunt as many animals without first taking care of the landscape by managing it.

Today, many modern people describe their own relationship with the land as living *on* the land. But Delta Yokuts peoples believed, and continue to believe, that people should live *with* the land. What do you think is the difference between these two ideas? Can you think of ways you and other people might live *with* the land today?

Delta Yokuts peoples had a huge amount of knowledge about plants and animals. They had a great understanding of how to take care of each type of plant, so each one would grow even better in the future. They had a great understanding of each animal, too.

It was like Delta Yokuts peoples knew and remembered an encyclopedia full of knowledge about all of the plants and animals in their homeland. This knowledge was based upon thousands of years of living in the same place, and upon thousands of years of taking care of that place.

Delta Yokuts peoples knew that if they took good care of the plants, the plants would be healthier and there would be more wildlife. They knew that by taking good care of the plants and animals, the plants and animals would take good care of them by providing them with the things they needed to live.

Older relatives, called elders out of respect, taught each new generation of children about the rules and laws that made it possible for their tribe to live in the same area for thousands of years without destroying that place and the plants and animals that lived there, including themselves.

Helping Plants Grow Healthier and Stronger and the Animals to Have More Food

As part of living with the land, Delta Yokuts peoples knew the right seasons to gather plants. They also knew there were special methods they could use to take

care of plants. These methods would help the plants grow stronger, healthier, and in larger numbers than if Delta Yokuts women and men never gathered anything from the plants. In turn, the new, healthy plant growth they caused became food for grazing and browsing animals. Grazing animals, like tule elk and pronghorn antelope, eat grass. Browsing animals, like black-tailed deer, eat the tender, new leaves of bushes and small, flowering plants.

Delta Yokuts peoples used three main methods to manage plants so they grew healthier, and also to provide better plant food for the animals they hunted: (1) digging; (2) burning; and (3) pruning.

Digging (Cultivation)

Another name for digging is cultivation. Cultivation by careful digging helps keep the soil loose and full of oxygen. Plants need oxygen to live, just like we do. Cultivation mixes rotting plant material on the soil surface into the soil itself. Once in the soil, this decaying plant material becomes fertilizer that helps new plants grow. Fertilizer contains nutrients, like nitrogen, that plants use. Did you know that plants need nutrients, just like you do?

Cultivation removes certain small plants that might compete for space, light, and nutrients with other plants Delta Yokuts peoples gathered from. Cultivation causes bulbs and other underground parts of plants to grow healthier and in larger numbers than they would have otherwise. In English, some California Indians call some of the native plants they dig “Indian potatoes.”¹² Do you think that’s a good name for them?

When Delta Yokuts peoples dug “Indian potatoes,” they took out the older ones that had reached their full size. They left behind younger and baby ones, which now grew even better, because these now had more space to grow, and the soil had been loosened from the digging.

Burning

Delta Yokuts peoples used fire as a tool to help certain plants grow healthier. Today we call this type of burning “cultural burning” and “prescribed burning.” Today’s cultural or prescribed burning requires a lot of special training, so the fire helps rather than harms the plants, and so that the fire does not escape into areas where people have built homes, barns, and other things.

Delta Yokuts peoples set fires in grasslands and meadows every year in late fall or winter. The fires moved slowly across the landscape, because they did not have much fuel. They burned low and cool, creating much more smoke than flames, leaving some patches of grass and small flowering plants unburned, and preventing bushes from being able to take over grasslands and meadows.

Cultural burning caused the tops of grassland plants to be turned into fertilizer in the form of ash. This type of fertilizer has a lot of phosphorous and nitrogen, two things that the future plants need to grow well. The fires reduced disease organisms and insect attacks, increasing the health and strength of spring's new growth. This tender, new growth provided food for grazing and browsing animals—including tule elk, pronghorn antelope, and black-tail deer—which the men of the villages hunted, in turn.

Delta Yokuts peoples used the seeds for food of many of the grasses and small flowering plants they burned. The seeds of some small flowering plants cannot sprout and grow unless the soil has been heated to a certain temperature, and unless the soil has no dry plant material or rotting plants on it. Fire can make both of these things happen. But remember, fire can be dangerous, so you should never light a match. That should only be done by an adult.

Pruning Plants

Pruning involves cutting back branches, and even the trunks of bushes and young trees, in the wintertime, when the trees and bushes have lost their leaves. At this time, the sap of these plants is stored in underground roots and stems (rhizomes). The next spring, when the sap begins to flow out of the roots and underground stems, and into the stems and branches, the plant will grow long, straight, flexible new shoots.

Pruning can be compared to taking a bush that is several years old and turning it into a newborn baby bush that is ready to grow healthy, strong, new branches. Pruning helps the plant, and it helps the person who wants to gather from the plant. It helps the person by causing the growth of straight shoots and branches of the type used for baskets, bows, arrows, “digging sticks,” and other things.

Have you ever seen anyone prune a plant? It's something that you can learn how to do when you get older, if you want to.

Thanking Plants for What They Provide

Delta Yokuts plant gatherers worked, and continue to work, with respect for the plants. They sang songs and said a prayer of thanks, as some still do. They talked to the plants, and continue to talk to them, so the plants will know they are appreciated. Gatherers also left, and continue to leave, different kinds of offerings (small gifts of thanks) for the plants. At certain times of the year, they held ceremonies of thanksgiving to dedicate spring's first fruits and autumn's first acorns, as some still do.¹³

By giving back for what was taken, Delta Yokuts plant gatherers showed, and continue to show, appreciation for the plants, so the plants will be there in the future.

Gathering Tools

Gathering involves the use of specially made baskets and tools. Here are three examples:

Seedbeaters and Burden Baskets

Delta Yokuts and other Central California Indian women knocked ripened, edible seeds off plants using specially shaped baskets called seedbeaters. Seedbeaters have a woven handle the women held. The women knocked the seeds into large, cone-shaped baskets called burden baskets, which they held by the rim. As the women walked through a field of tarplant, red maids, chia, or melica grass, and knocked the seeds of these plants into their burden baskets, other seeds fell to the ground, where those seeds could grow into new plants.

Digging Sticks

Women used straight branches of certain plants with sturdy wood, called "hard wood" in English, to dig or cultivate the soil. The bushes and young trees from which Delta Yokuts peoples harvested their digging sticks thrived with human management, in the forms of cultural burning or coppicing, which caused the wood to grow straight.

UNIT FIVE, LESSON TWO

Staple Foods¹⁴

Delta Yokuts Plant Foods

Today, we know that Delta Yokuts peoples enjoyed many of the same plant foods that other local Native peoples enjoyed. Sadly, though, we have very little specific information about Delta Yokuts foods, because of the history of change that their ancestors lived through after Europeans came to California.

While we know that Delta Yokuts, and other local Native peoples enjoyed many of the same plant foods, we also know that they would not have used all of the same plant foods. When they did use the same plants for food, they would not have always used them in the same way.

There also would have been differences in how the people in different Delta Yokuts tribes used plants for food and other purposes. While all Delta Yokuts tribes would have used many, if not most of the same plants in the same or similar ways, they would have used some of the same plants in different ways. Also, some Delta Yokuts tribes would have used plants that other Delta Yokuts tribes did not use.

On the following pages, and in future lessons, you'll read about some of the things we know about Delta Yokuts plant uses, starting with Delta Yokuts staple foods.

Staple Foods from Acorns

A staple food is one that contains carbohydrates, an important “fuel” for our bodies. In the past acorns provided one of the main staple foods of Delta Yokuts peoples. Tiny seeds from grasses and small flowering plants provided the other major source of carbohydrates. In fact, we now know that Delta Yokuts peoples gathered tiny seeds in such large quantities (amounts) that these were as important a source of carbohydrates in their diet as acorns, if not more important.

We don't hear as much about these small seeds today as we do about acorns, because the plants that these seeds come from were almost completely replaced by European plants. Since the oaks and tan oaks from which acorns come grow huge, modern people notice and protect them more easily.

Even before the first people who were not California Indian began to live in the place now known as California in 1769, the seeds of European wild oats and

filaree, a small flowering plant, had begun to spread in California. Spanish people, the first non-Indians to live in the region now known as the Bay Area, brought the seeds of European grasses and other plants with them. Often these European seeds came by accident, as “hitchhikers” in the ships, and in the fur of the horses and cattle the Spanish brought.

The climate of the Mediterranean area of Europe, where these hitchhikers originated, is similar to that of California, so the European plants began to spread. Many of the European grasses are fast growing. Soon, these grasses began to outcompete and replace native grasses.

The Spanish outlawed cultural burning, the Delta Yokuts land management practice that enabled native seed-making wildflowers and grasses to grow in huge numbers. The burning cleared the soil and added fertilizer in the form of ash. For many native wildflowers, the heat of a fire causes germination (sprouting) of the seeds. Today the seeds of European grasses and other plants have almost completely crowded out the native seed-producing plants that Delta Yokuts peoples had relied on for thousands of years.

Although burning can be good for nature, remember fire can also be dangerous, so only people trained in cultural or prescribed burning should ever do that burning.

UNIT FIVE, LESSON THREE

Other Plant Foods: Cultural Context¹⁵

Nature is filled with plants that provide food for humans and other animals, if you know how to recognize and use these plants. As you learned earlier, Delta Yokuts peoples had many ways to help plants grow healthier and in greater numbers than if they just left them alone.

When the first non-Indians came to the place now known as the Bay Area, the seeds of plants from other countries travelled with them. The plants that grew from these seeds made other seeds, and soon these plants began to spread throughout the area, sometimes crowding out or replacing the native plants that Delta Yokuts peoples and their ancestors loved, tended, and took care of for untold generations. But the plants that Delta Yokuts peoples used, and continue to use, still grow here. And it's interesting to think about how many of these plants can be eaten.



© Jo Ann Frisch

Poison hemlock

Poisonous plants that people need to be careful of also grow here. One of the most poisonous plants that grows in this area today came from Europe. It's called poison hemlock. Poison hemlock is related to carrots and parsley. Sometimes poisonous plants and the plants that are safe to eat look almost the same. You should never eat a wild plant unless you're with an adult who knows how to tell the difference between poisonous plants and plants that are safe to eat.

Delta Yokuts children learned from a young age how to tell the difference between the edible plants and the poisonous ones, even when those plants looked very similar. In fact, Delta Yokuts peoples knew so much about plants, they knew

how to take certain plant parts that had poisons in them, like acorns and buckeye fruits, and remove the poisons, then make what remained into a delicious food. It's one of the many ways that local tribal peoples made friends with the plants. It's one of the many ways that they continue to make friends with them. It's kind of like they made an agreement or covenant with the plants: "You take care of me, and I will take care of you. We'll take care of each other." Have you ever taken care of a plant?

Three More Things to Know about Delta Yokuts Plant Uses

The first thing:

Delta Yokuts peoples used many plant parts for foods. These included bulbs, inner bark, fern fiddleheads, fruits, leaves, nuts, pollen, seeds, and stems. These also included corms (similar to bulbs, but without the “scales”), false fruits (plant parts that seem like fruits, but really aren’t, like wild strawberries), rhizomes (underground stems), taproots (enlarged roots, similar to carrots), and tubers (enlarged stems, similar to potatoes). In fact, Delta Yokuts peoples had dozens of different types of plant foods to enjoy!

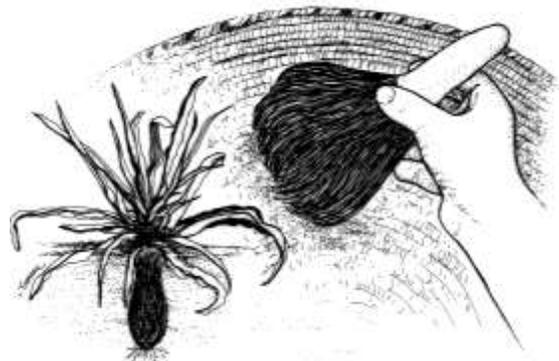
All of the plant parts that provided food for Delta Yokuts peoples provide food for us today. It’s just that the kinds of plants that have these edible plant parts are different today. Today we grow most of our foods on farms and in orchards, while Delta Yokuts peoples gathered their foods directly from nature.

The second thing:

Plants did not just provide Delta Yokuts peoples with food. They also provided them with medicines, tools, clothing, houses, boats, hunting equipment, baskets, string, fire making equipment, hair rinses, soap, brooms, and much more. In return for what the plants gave them, Delta Yokuts peoples gave songs, prayers, and gifts (offerings) to the plants. They said hello to them. They took care of them in a way that helped the plants grow healthier and in greater numbers than if Delta Yokuts peoples never used and took care of them.

The third thing:

A single kind of plant can be used for many different reasons. Soap plant is an example of a plant with many uses. In addition to eating the tender, young leaves of soap plants, local Native peoples used the bulb of this plant to make a detergent foam for soap. They used the soapy substance in the bulb as part of a fishing method. They made a wash for hair from the pounded stem to reduce dandruff. They used the bulb, and the fibers covering the bulb, to make soap plant brushes, a type of whisk broom.



© Linda Yamane

UNIT SIX, LESSON TWO

Objects of Daily Life: Beauty and Usefulness Combined¹⁶

Delta Yokuts peoples used natural materials to make the things they needed to live, and to make the games they enjoyed playing. It took practice to learn how to make these things well. Everything Delta Yokuts peoples made had a certain beauty to it. It was like art was part of everyday life.

We know that Delta Yokuts peoples made most, if not all, of the same things as the people in surrounding tribal areas. We also know that when they made the same things, they did not always make or use them in exactly the same way. For this reason, whenever information or an illustration in this lesson comes from another area, the area will be described.

The following sections teach about some of the things Delta Yokuts peoples made.

Houses

Early Spanish descriptions of houses in the place now known as the Bay Area let us know that Delta Yokuts peoples built some of their houses in a dome shape. The frame for the house was likely made of willow. The house itself was likely covered with tules or long grasses, depending on where they lived.

The drawing to the right shows a grass-thatched house in the Monterey area in 1791. Note the dome shape and the height of the door. Note, as well, that the women have two-part skirts with soft, shredded inner bark on the front, making it easy to walk and run, and tanned deer, elk, or antelope hide on the back. It must have been a cold day, because two of the women have rabbit- or otter-fur capes draped over their shoulders for warmth. Imagine how soft these fur capes must be.



Detail of 1791 drawing probably by Tomás de Suria. © Courtesy Museo Naval, Madrid

Today it is difficult for some people to imagine how a house could have been thatched with grass. But the image of grass-thatched houses is easier to form, if you understand that the stems of healthy stands of purple needlegrass, one of the grasses the local tribal peoples used for thatching, can grow as tall as five feet, and blue wildrye can grow even taller.¹⁷

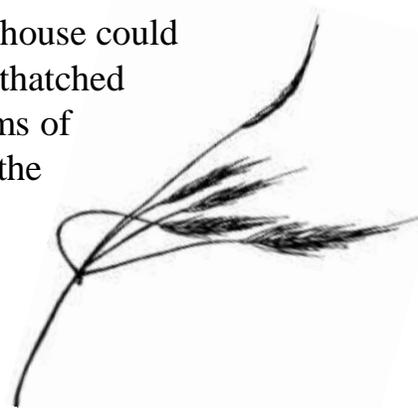
Hearth fires, small fires in the center of the houses, kept the houses warm and dry. Since heat rises, low doors that you sometimes had to bend down to enter helped hold the heat in the house. When rain falls on dry plant material, it can soak in and cause that plant material to rot. But Delta Yokuts houses did not rot, since the hearth fires kept the houses dry in the rainy season. The creosote (carbons) in the smoke also helped keep the plant materials from rotting.

Houses did not need to be large, since Delta Yokuts peoples built separate granaries to store the acorns, seeds, and nuts that they gathered every year. Also, unlike today, people spent most of their time out-of-doors. They used houses and other structures to sleep, to take shelter from the rain, and to store objects. They stored objects in baskets and nets that they hung from the framework of their houses.

Sweathouses

There were periods of time when men and older boys did not sleep with the rest of the family, but instead slept in the sweathouse, a structure heated with a central fire that appeared to rise out of the ground like a small hill. We call such structures semi-subterranean, since they are partly built into the ground. Sweathouses were covered with thatching material before being covered with soil. The soil helped hold the heat inside of the sweathouse, keeping it insulated and warm. Is the building where you live insulated to help hold in heat in winter, and to keep it cooler in the summer?

Based on descriptions of sweathouses used by other Central California Indian tribes, we know that sweathouses provided a type of men's clubhouse. The men also went into sweathouses to cleanse themselves physically and spiritually before going on a hunt for deer, elk, or antelope. To cleanse their bodies, the men and older boys would stay inside until their bodies sweated from the heat of the fire. Sweathouses get very hot inside, since they aren't tall enough to stand up in, and they hold in a fire's heat so well. Those inside used a special bone tool, called a sweat scraper, to



Purple needlegrass

© Jo Ann Frisch

scrape the sweat from their bodies and open up the pores in their skin. When they got really hot, they dove into a nearby creek.

Have you ever sweated in a modern sauna bath? Modern sauna baths, as well as sweat lodges made by some American Indians, use water to create steam. Delta Yokuts peoples didn't use water to create steam in their sweathouses. Instead, they sweated from just the heat of the fire, called a "dry heat" in English.

Granaries

Granaries are tall, narrow structures made from particular types of plant materials. Delta Yokuts peoples used granaries to store dried nuts for later use, including acorns. Granaries protected the nuts from animals, including rodents and insects that would eat the nuts. They also protected the nuts from rain, so the nuts wouldn't get moldy. Today we no longer know exactly how Delta Yokuts peoples built their granaries. Nor do we know what plants Delta Yokuts peoples used to build them.

Clothing

Today, we are used to wearing a lot of clothing, but in the past, or "old days," Delta Yokuts peoples wore little clothing. Instead, due to the moderate climate, they became used to the temperature of the world around them. In different parts of Central California, when the weather was nice, men and boys wore nothing, while women and girls wore two-parted skirts. The back "apron" of women's skirts was usually made of deer hide, which becomes soft when tanned. The front apron was made of strips of soft inner bark, probably of willow or maple in this region. In the springtime, when the sap is actively flowing through willow and maple plants, the bark can be easily removed in narrow strips. As long as only some bark is stripped off, the plant will heal by growing new bark.

Throughout Central California, to make the front apron, the outer bark, which is rough, was stripped away, while the smooth inner bark was "shredded" or separated into thin strips. Women doubled these inner bark strips over a plant-fiber rope, then twisted handmade string back and forth around the strips just below the rope. The finished front apron was beautiful and comfortable to wear.

For winter warmth, Delta Yokuts peoples cut otter or jack rabbit furs into strips with an obsidian knife. Women twined the twisted strips together to form a blanket or cape that had fur on both sides. Can you imagine how comfortable and warm that otter or rabbit fur blankets and capes would be? Sometimes Delta Yokuts

peoples and other Central California Indians made capes or blankets with soft feathers. Here’s an 1806 description of capes and blankets made with bird feathers and otter fur:

“They also make for themselves garments of the feathers of many different kinds of water-fowl, particularly ducks and geese, bound together fast in a sort of rope, which ropes are then united quite close so as to make something like a feather skin... In the same manner they cut the sea-otter skins into small strips, which they twist together, and then join them as they do the feathers.”¹⁸

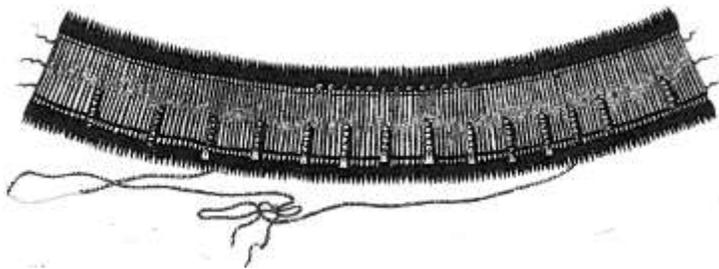


© Chris Cochems

Sea otter

Ceremonial Regalia

The most elaborate (fancy) garments (clothes) were reserved for ceremonial use. These are called regalia in English, not costumes. Costumes are for pretend dressing up. Wearing regalia is like wearing your finest clothing. Throughout Central California for the men, regalia included feathered net capes, and bands made of beautiful, reddish-orange flicker quills that hid the men’s eyes.



An Ohlone or Bay Miwok man made this flicker feather band, which was drawn in 1806. Ohlones or Bay Miwoks also made the feathered topknot below, and the regalia on the next page.



Feathered topknot drawn in 1806

Men also wore abalone pendant necklaces and finely decorated, feathered “hairpins” inserted into their long hair, which was bound up in a hand-made net. The men also wore feather topknots, where the feathers stood up in a cluster.

Both drawings © courtesy of The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, BANC Pic 1963.002:1022—ffALB, attributed to Georg Heinrich von Langsdorff

For the women, regalia included skirts with front and back aprons of tanned hide, beautifully decorated with gray pinenut beads, strings of shell beads, and abalone pendants. They wore necklaces of clamshell disk beads, abalone pendants, and magnesite beads. Magnesite is a type of soft, light-colored stone that when baked, turns into a harder, shiny, reddish-orange colored stone. The women also wore feathered “topknots” on their heads. The feathers stood up in a cluster. As the women danced, the feathers moved in a pleasing way, and the firelight reflected off the blue-green abalone pendants.



All drawings © courtesy of The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, BANC Pic 1963.002:1022—ffALB, attributed to Georg Heinrich von Langsdorff

Top left: Necklace with abalone pendants and clamshell disk beads drawn in 1806.

Top right: Clamshell disk bead necklace drawn in 1806.

Bottom: Necklace with abalone pendants and clamshell disk beads drawn in 1806.

All of this jewelry is Bay Miwok or Ohlone made.

Men only decorated their bodies with paint at special, ceremonial (religious) times, not as something they did every day. The designs they painted had special, religious meaning. They made paint out of a red-colored mineral, black-colored ash, and white-colored clay.

Tule Boats

Can you imagine what it would be like to make a boat out of reedy plant stalks? How might it feel to float on those stalks? Delta Yokuts peoples and other Central California Indians made their boats out of tule, a tall, skinny plant stalk with no leaves. Tules grow in shallow water. Tules store lots of oxygen in their stalks, which have little holes inside, like a sponge. This oxygen makes it possible for

tules to live partly underwater. It's as if tules have a built-in oxygen tank, like scuba divers wear so they can breathe underwater. Because of the oxygen in tule stems, the stems float really well. So well, in fact, that when you bundle them together to make a boat, that boat will float even in rough, stormy waters!

In 1775 a Spanish man wrote with amazement and awe about how well the tule boats he saw floated in the San Francisco Bay, better than the Spanish longboats, a type of wooden rowing boat that ships can carry.¹⁹

Baskets

Types of Baskets

Although people often admire California Indian baskets as art forms because they're often very beautiful. Delta Yokuts peoples and other California Indians made baskets to use in their daily life. Each family had as many as 15 or more different types of baskets. They used baskets for such activities as gathering plant foods; trapping small mammals, birds, and fish; carrying, processing, cooking, and serving food; cradling babies; and storing food and objects. They also used baskets as gifts, and as parts of games.

Women wove most baskets, but Central California Indian men also wove certain types of baskets—in particular those used in hunting and fishing.

Delta Yokuts peoples and other Central California Indians peoples used two types of methods to weave their baskets—twining and coiling. They made coiled baskets by pulling a “sewing strand” through a hole that they poked in the basket’s foundation, or core. To twine, they used their fingers to wrap two or three sewing strands horizontally back and forth around one or two vertical shoots. The methods and materials varied, making it possible to identify which group of people made particular types of baskets.

Basket Materials

The plant materials used in Delta Yokuts baskets usually must be gathered long before weaving can begin. Burning or winter pruning causes the growth of long, straight, bendable shoots. Careful digging in the right type of soil causes rhizomes (underground stems) to grow long and straight.

Weavers gathered their materials at specific times of the year, sometimes in the winter, after the leaves had fallen off the plants and the sap had dropped into the root system. They gathered in a prayerful way, with good and happy thoughts, since

anything they were thinking or feeling became part of the basket. Offerings (small gifts to the plant) provided a way to give thanks to the plant, or, in other words, to return something to the plant for what it had given the basket maker. Can you think of any modern ways we can give back to nature for what it has given us? How about the three R's that we call reduce, reuse, and recycle?

Basket makers cured (slowly dried) most basketry materials for as long as a year or more before using them in a basket. For tightly woven baskets, the weavers scraped some materials to an even diameter (roundness). They split and trimmed others to an even width, or thickness. They did all of this before ever weaving a single stitch.

Some baskets can be woven very quickly. Other baskets take a long time to make. An average-sized, watertight cooking basket can take 400 to 600 hours or more to complete.²⁰

UNIT SIX, LESSON THREE

Hunting²¹

Hunting Animals for Food and Other Reasons

Delta Yokuts peoples ate many animal foods, including fish, fresh water shellfish, waterfowl (ducks and geese), and other types of birds, like quail. They also ate particular types of roasted insect larvae (baby insects) and roasted grasshoppers. Did you find yourself thinking, “Ew,” when you read that local tribal peoples ate roasted insect larvae and roasted grasshoppers, or did you want to find out more about this? When the foods we buy in the supermarket are being prepared for sale by food companies, insect parts sometimes get in them. So you sometimes eat insects without even knowing it. These insect parts aren’t harmful. In fact, they contain protein and other nutrients, and they’re so small you can’t even see them in the food.



Quail

The types of roasted insect larvae and grasshoppers that Delta Yokuts peoples ate have a rich, nutty taste. If you ever have an opportunity to eat them, you will find this out.

Delta Yokuts peoples also hunted, cooked, and ate the meat of small mammals, including rats, ground squirrels, brush rabbits, and jack rabbits, a type of hare. Did you find yourself thinking, “Ew,” when you read that they ate rats? Actually, woodrats and kangaroo rats tasted very good.



Jack rabbit

Both photos © Chris Cochems

Here’s a description from 1806 about jackrabbit and brush rabbit hunting:

“One day we went out, accompanied by a party of twelve, and conducted by some thirty or forty Indians, to catch hares and rabbits. This is done by a peculiar kind of snare. Inside of three hours, without firing a shot, we had taken seventy-five, and most of them alive.”²²

Large mammals, including deer, elk, and antelope, are the most well known of the animals that local tribal peoples ate. Many deer still live in open lands in the Bay Area. Antelopes were entirely killed off in the Bay Area by Americans after California became a state. So were elk. Elk have been reintroduced into hill lands near the places now called Pleasanton, Sunol, and Concord, where they're sometimes spotted.



© Chris Cochems

Tule elk

From the point of view of Delta Yokuts peoples, when the men hunted an animal, that animal was giving up its life so that they could live. They honored and respected the animal for this great gift by using every part of it that they could. Some of the animal parts that Delta Yokuts peoples used included:

- the meat and some of the inside organs for food;
- the hide for clothing;
- the sinew, a type of tendon that runs along the legs and back of deer and other mammals, for bows and bowstring;
- tips of deer antlers to chip obsidian for making arrow points;
- antler wedges to split wood;
- the canon, or lower leg bone of deer, for awls, a sharp-pointed tool used to poke holes in hides and baskets;
- deer hooves for a type of religious instrument;
- olivella, clam, and abalone shells for making jewelry;
- certain types of feathers for making down blankets, beautiful ceremonial outfits, and decorating baskets; and
- fur for making blankets and capes.



© Lee Eastman

Tule elk

What kind of things do we use animal parts for today? Are you wearing any animal parts now?

Hunting Methods and Materials

When most people think of California Indian hunting methods, they usually think of deer hunting with bows and arrows. Would it surprise you to know that Delta Yokuts peoples, and their ancestors, did not start hunting with bows and arrows until about 800 years ago? Instead, for thousands of years before this, they hunted deer and other large mammals with darts, spears, and spear throwers, called atlatls (át-LATT-ls).²³ Local Native peoples hunted other types of animals with snares, nets, traps, duck decoys, and other methods.

Obsidian and chert provided the raw materials for making spear and arrow points, and chert drill bits for putting holes in disk beads. However, plants provided the raw materials for most hunting equipment, including bows. Bows and arrows, like baskets, took knowledge, practice, patience, and skill to make.

Hunters throughout Central California carried extra arrow shafts and foreshafts in a fur quiver. They sometimes stalked a deer wearing a deer disguise and imitating the movements of the deer. For this disguise, they wore a stuffed deer head and its hair-covered skin over their head and back. This way they could get close enough to shoot and kill the deer, so it would not suffer.

These 1816 drawings show two views of the same Delta Yokuts hunter from the Cholvon tribe. The first one shows his arrows in his gray fox fur quiver. The second one shows how he uses his bow and arrows. Notice that this hunter isn't wearing a deer disguise. We don't know today if any Delta Yokuts hunters ever wore a deer disguise.



Detail from larger portrait © Courtesy of The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, BANC PIC 1963.002:0368--B, detail from drawing by Louis Choris, 1816, lithographer Franquelin

UNIT SIX, LESSON FOUR

Games and Toys

Delta Yokuts and other California Indian peoples had many fun games and toys. Sometimes parents made the game pieces, toys, and dolls for their children. Sometimes the children made these things themselves, using leaves, stones, sticks, and other natural objects. We play with games and with toys for the same reason Delta Yokuts peoples did, because they're fun.

Today, we no longer know anything specific about the games and toys that Delta Yokuts children played with.

UNIT SEVEN, LESSON ONE, Part I

Europeans Arrive from Spain²⁴

In 1770 people from Spain began to move permanently into the place now known as the Bay Area, first into the place they named Monterey. Spanish arrival caused huge changes in the lives of Delta Yokuts peoples. The Spanish used Indian labor to build two missions and one presidio (fort) in Ohlone homelands in what is now San Francisco and Fremont. During the first weeks of Spanish settlement, the Spanish killed anyone who opposed them with weapons that local Native peoples did not have—muskets, steel swords, and lances. The Spanish also had another kind of weapon that nobody could see or touch, and about which nobody in the 1700s knew the cause. Do you know what it was?

This weapon was disease—diseases from Europe that Delta Yokuts peoples had never before known, including measles. Although Delta Yokuts doctors could cure other diseases, they could not cure these new diseases, which spread very fast among the Native population. The young (the future generations) and the old (the people of wisdom and knowledge) died in greatest numbers. The elders who died included specialists, people who studied about and knew how to do certain jobs that other people did not know, or could not do, just like your fathers or mothers may have studied and learned to do certain special jobs today.

Once the diseases began to spread, and the young and old began to die, Delta Yokuts peoples could no longer live the way they once had, and they had little choice about moving to the missions.

The Spanish newcomers did other things that also made it impossible for people to continue to live as their ancestors had. For instance:

- They brought cattle and horses to California, which they allowed to graze in such large numbers that the cattle and horses ate too much of the grasses.
- They made it against the law for local tribal peoples to manage the landscape through burning, as their ancestors had. Soon it became harder and harder for local Native peoples to be able to find enough seeds to gather.
- Also, the seeds of new European grasses and forbs (small flowering plants) began to spread across the hills and valleys. As these European

plants began to spread across the landscape, they replaced the grasses and forbs from which Delta Yokuts peoples gathered seeds for pinole.

The Spanish introduced a whole new way of life that Delta Yokuts peoples had never known before:

- The Spanish interfered with Delta Yokuts personal lives. For instance, at night they locked older girls and unmarried Indian women into dormitories called *monjeriós*.
- They introduced new types of jobs and ways of working that meant people had to work harder and for longer hours than they did in the past.
- They whipped Delta Yokuts to punish them, and put them in stocks.
- They forced any Delta Yokuts who ran away to their homelands to return to the missions.

How would you feel if this happened to you? This new way of life caused a lot of sadness and suffering for Delta Yokuts peoples.

UNIT SEVEN, LESSON ONE, Part 2

Spanish Missions

The Europeans who visited and moved here from Spain and other European countries sometimes wrote in journals about what they saw and experienced.

One man from France, who visited the mission in Monterey in 1786, wrote about what he saw there. As you read what he wrote, think about how what he is describing is different from how Delta Yokuts peoples lived before the Spanish came.

“The Indians as well as the missionaries rise with the sun, and immediately go to prayers and mass, which last for an hour. During this time three large boilers are set on the fire for cooking a kind of soup, made of barley meal, the grain of which has been roasted previous to its being ground. This sort of food, of which the Indians are extremely fond, is called atole....

The time of repast is three quarters of an hour, after which they all go to work, some to till the ground with oxen, some to dig in the garden, while the others are employed in domestic [household] occupations, all under the eye of one or two missionaries.

The women have no other employment other than their household affairs, the care of their children, and the roasting and grinding of corn. This last operation is both tedious and laborious, because they have no other method of breaking the grain than with a roller upon a stone.”²⁵

As you read this description of mission life, did you recognize the word atole? Do you remember what the original atole was? What way is the atole described here different from the atole Delta Yokuts peoples ate before the missions?

Estanislao: A Delta Yokuts Outlaw or Hero?

A Delta Yokuts man named Estanislao Cucunuchi, baptized in 1821 at Mission San Jose with a group of Delta Yokuts Lacquisemnes, became a leader at that mission. Today’s Stanislaus County is named for Estanislao Cucunuchi.

In 1821 California became part of Mexico. A few years later, in early 1828, some Lacquisemnes revolted and fled Mission San Jose under the leadership of

Estanislao. They joined a larger number of runaways from four other Delta Yokuts tribes under the leadership of a man named Cipriano. Although they wanted the freedom to return to their tribal homelands, the Mexican authorities sent out several expeditions to capture Estanislao and Cipriano and punish everyone who joined them. In May 1829 Estanislao and his men were defeated by a party of 104 Mexican troops and 50 mission Indian auxiliaries under Mariano G. Vallejo, for whom the present-day city of Vallejo is named.²⁶

This revolt was one of many attempts by local tribal peoples to resist the terrible conditions at the missions and return to the lands that they knew and loved as a free people. To the Spanish authorities they were outlaws, but to many Indian people, they were, and are, heroes.

UNIT SEVEN, LESSON TWO

Mexican Ranchos²⁷

At one time, the country known today as Mexico was part of “New Spain.” New Spain was ruled by the Spanish government. At that time, California was part of a region of New Spain called “Alta California.” In 1821, Mexico became independent of Spain. When that happened, Alta California became part of Mexico. Under Mexican rule, the Spanish mission system was ended and a system of privately owned *ranchos* was created. Ranchos were large cattle ranches with thousands of acres of land.

Under this new rancho system, most Delta Yokuts became laborers (workers) for the *rancheros* (ranch owners). The older boys and men worked as *vaqueros* (horsemen and cattle herders). The older girls and women took care of the children, cleaned, sewed, and completed other household chores.

The Spanish had promised Delta Yokuts and other Native peoples who lived and worked at the missions that one day they would get the mission lands back to ranch and farm. Originally, some 7,200 to 12,800 Delta Yokuts lived in the Bay Area. But, after California became part of Mexico, no Delta Yokuts ever received their own ranchos, or even permission to farm.

Instead, Delta Yokuts became laborers on ranchos that did not belong to them. They did not receive money for their work, only food, clothing, and a place to stay. And, if they did not cooperate with what the rancho owners wanted, corporal (physical) punishment was used to bring them back into line.

Imagine you are a Delta Yokuts girl or boy writing in a journal about your life living at a rancho. What would you write about the treatment of you or your family by rancho owners? What thoughts, concerns, worries, or hopes might you share?

UNIT SEVEN, LESSON THREE

American Government²⁸

In 1850 the place now called California became the 31st state in the United States. Like the Spanish and Mexican governments that came before, Americans used Delta Yokuts peoples as laborers. California was called a “free state,” because its government did not have slavery of people from Africa, and their descendants. However, California was not a free state for Delta Yokuts peoples or other California Indians. One of the first laws in the new state, sometimes called an “apprenticeship act,” allowed non-Indian ranchers, farmers, and miners to “own” Indian boys and young men until they were 25 years old, and Indian girls until they were 21 years old. These “apprentices” worked hard in return for only food, clothing, and a place to stay. How would you feel if that could happen to you? That law, and a second apprenticeship act in 1860, was not stopped until after the Civil War, when Americans fought each other to end slavery.

Under the Spanish, Mexican, and early American governments, Delta Yokuts peoples lived through a time of sadness and suffering. In order to survive they had to change their way of life and stop doing many of the things their ancestors once did.

UNIT EIGHT, LESSON ONE, Part I

California Indian Sovereignty²⁹

Sovereignty (SAHV-wren-ty) is an important part of a group of people’s way of life (culture). It involves the way a group of people comes together to practice their power to govern themselves. They come together in order to meet their political, social, and cultural needs.

Put another way, sovereignty is “the common interest” that binds a group of people together. Do you know what the words political, social, cultural, and “common interest” mean? If you don’t know, ask your teacher or look these words up in a dictionary.

In the place now known as the United States, we come together to practice our sovereignty as a nation through the United States (federal) government. We also have city, county, and state governments.

American Indians in the United States also come together to practice their sovereignty as members of particular tribes or groups. They have sovereignty, or the power to govern themselves, in part because their governments were here for thousands and thousands of years before the United States existed. Some modern American Indian tribes operate under written constitutions, just like the United States has a constitution. Others operate under customary or spiritual laws handed down from generation to generation. Still others operate under a combination of both customary or spiritual laws and constitutions.

California Indians are citizens of the United States, as well as citizen members of their tribes. Like the people of the United States, the members of tribes can elect their own tribal officials. Tribes can create their own constitutions, create and enforce their own laws, and create their own businesses, programs, services, and projects to benefit their people.

Treaties are agreements or contracts between two or more countries or other governments. California Indians who signed treaties with the United States in 1850–1851, agreed to give up ancestral land, and some, but not all, of their people’s sovereign powers, in exchange for receiving some land and certain services and benefits from the federal government. Since the treaties California Indians signed with the federal government were never made into law by the United States, some California Indian tribes still have all of their sovereignty, but none of the things the treaties promised.

UNIT EIGHT, LESSON ONE, Part 2

Delta Yokuts Peoples and Federal Recognition³⁰

Some American Indian governments in the United States are recognized by the United States. Others are not. The United States government calls federally recognized groups “tribal entities,” because they don’t all have the same type of government.

It is a kind of accident of history which ones of the hundreds of independent tribes of California Indians ever received federal recognition after California became a state. California has 109 federally recognized tribes.³¹ None are Delta Yokuts, although one Delta Yokuts tribe is trying to become federally recognized.

The name of the Delta Yokuts tribe trying to become federally recognized is the North Valley Yokut Tribe.

UNIT EIGHT, LESSON TWO

Delta Yokuts Heroes

Heroes are people who make a difference in other people's lives. They have courage and character.

There are many kinds of heroes. Local Indian heroes include tribal elders, leaders, and the men and women who have served in the United States Armed Forces.

In this lesson you will have an opportunity to learn about a Delta Yokuts hero who kept alive the history, cultures, and language of his ancestors, and the nearby Chochenyo dialect of the San Francisco Costanoan language, even when it wasn't easy to do so, because of the terrible, sad, and difficult things his ancestors experienced in history, and the discrimination he faced.

© C. Hart Merriam, courtesy Muwekma Ohlone Tribe



*José Guzman and his granddaughter
Margaret Guzman in about 1934*

José Guzman (Delta Yokuts), born near Dublin about 1853, shared his knowledge with a researcher named John Harrington in 1921 and 1930. On August 21, 1892, at Mission San Jose, he was married to Francisca Nonesi (Jalquin Ohlone/Bay Miwok).³²

Today, because of the sad and terrible history that the ancestors of today's Delta Yokuts lived through under the Spanish, Mexican, and early American governments, there are few surviving Native people who trace their heritage back to Delta Yokuts tribes. After being brought into the mission system, most Delta Yokuts died of European diseases. Those who survived intermarried

with other mission Indians who were from neighboring tribes, as well as tribes located at greater distances than would have married during pre-mission times.

Today's descendants of José Guzman trace their heritage to a Yatchikumne Delta Yokuts baptized at Mission San Jose beginning about 1815. Many of José Guzman and Francisca Nonessi's descendants are members of today's Muwekma Ohlone Tribe.

Here, in her own words, José Guzman’s and Francisca Nonessi’s great-granddaughter Sheila Guzman Schmidt (Ohlone/Bay Miwok/Delta Yokuts), tells more about her family, and her own efforts to honor and share her cultural heritage:

“My family’s heritage is very important to me. I proudly represent my Native American heritage as a tribal councilwoman for the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe of the San Francisco Bay Area and as co-chair of the Muwekma Language Committee, through which we are bringing back the Chochenyo language.

My great-grandfather José Guzman’s parents were Delta Yokuts from five tribes: Passasimni, Tamcan, Yachikumne, Lacquisamne, and Josemite. These tribes had villages in the Stockton and Stanislaus River regions. José Guzman was one of the last speakers of the Delta Yokuts and Chochenyo languages until his death in 1934. José married Francisca Nonessi, whose mother was the younger sister of Jose Antonio, the last leader or “*Capitan*” of the Alisal Rancheria/Verona Band community from the Sunol, Niles, Pleasanton, and Livermore areas.

José Guzman and Francisca Nonessi’s middle son was Alfred (Fred) Guzman, my grandfather, who was born in 1896. Fred served in the 28th Infantry Division in France during World War I. He married my grandmother, Minnie Higuera from Pleasanton. My father was their third child, Frank Harry Guzman, born 1926. My dad served in Europe during World War II in the U.S. Army 345th Infantry Regiment.

As a Native California Indian growing up in the East Bay and Central Valley, I feel that it is very important for our rich history and cultural heritage to be both preserved and presented to school children.”¹



© Tyler Schmidt

Sheila Guzman Schmidt

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Randall Milliken, personal communication 2012; Heizer 1978.
- ² Milliken et al. 1995:19–20; Milliken et al. 2005:66.
- ³ Milliken 1995:19; Milliken et al. 2005:63.
- ⁴ Milliken 1995:21; Milliken et al. 2005:64.
- ⁵ Milliken et al. 2005:65; Randall Milliken, personal communication 2012.
- ⁶ Beverly R. Ortiz, field data 1995-present.
- ⁷ Milliken et al. 2005:6–7.
- ⁸ Beverly R. Ortiz, field data 1991-present.
- ⁹ Resolution #SD-02-027, National Congress of American Indians, 2002.
- ¹⁰ Ortiz 1991, 1995, field data 1981-present.
- ¹¹ Blackburn and Anderson 1993; Ortiz 1993, 2004, field data 1981-present; Anderson 2005.
- ¹² Kathleen Smith, personal communication 1991.
- ¹³ Beverly R. Ortiz, field data 1995-present.
- ¹⁴ Unless otherwise indicated, all of the information in “Staple Foods” comes from late 1700s and early 1800s Spanish journals and documents, and the author’s field research, 1977-present.
- ¹⁵ All information in “Other Plant Foods: Cultural Context” comes from late 1700s and early 1800s Spanish journals and documents; the author’s field research, 1977-present; and the author’s comparative study of published ethnobotanies that feature the plant uses of varied California Indian groups.
- ¹⁶ Unless otherwise indicated, the information in “Objects of Daily Life: Beauty and Usefulness Combined” comes from late 1700s and early 1800s Spanish journals and documents; the author’s field research, 1977-present; and the author’s comparative study of ethnographic and archaeological reports focused on the material culture of Delta Yokuts and other Central California Indian groups.
- ¹⁷ Amme 2004:23.
- ¹⁸ Langsdorff in Milliken 1995:19.
- ¹⁹ Santa María [1775] in Galvin 1971:51-55.
- ²⁰ Arlene Anderson, personal communication 1983.

- ²¹ Unless otherwise indicated, the information in “Hunting” comes from late 1700s and early 1800s Spanish journals and documents; the author’s field research, 1977-present; and the author’s comparative study of ethnographic and archaeological reports focused on varied aspects of hunting by Delta Yokuts and other Central California Indian groups.
- ²² Langsdorff in Milliken 1995:18.
- ²³ Milliken et al. 2005:61, 73.
- ²⁴ The information in this lesson comes primarily from Milliken 1995.
- ²⁵ La Pérouse 1989 [1786]:85–86.
- ²⁶ Milliken 2008:69.
- ²⁷ The non-quoted information in this lesson comes from Rawls 1984:76–77 and Milliken et al. 2005:153–174, 181.
- ²⁸ The information preceding the quotes in this lesson comes from Rawls 1984.
- ²⁹ The information in this lesson about sovereignty comes from an unattributed book chapter by the Institute for the Development of Indian Law entitled “What is Sovereignty.” For more about sovereignty and federal recognition, see Pevar, Stephen L. (2012), *The Rights of Indians and Tribes*, NY, NY: Oxford University Press.
- ³⁰ The information in this lesson about sovereignty comes from an unattributed book chapter by the Institute for the Development of Indian Law entitled “What is Sovereignty.” For more about sovereignty and federal recognition, see Pevar, Stephen L. (2012), *The Rights of Indians and Tribes*, NY, NY: Oxford University Press.
- ³¹ For a complete list see Supplemental Resources, “109 Federally Recognized Tribes in California.”
- ³² Mills 1985:81–86; Milliken 1995:247, 254; Milliken et al. 2005:198-199; Alan Leventhal, personal communication 2012; http://www.icimedia.com/costanoan/history_ascencion.html; <http://asms.schoolloop.com/AscencionSolorsano>; <http://www.muwekma.org/tribalhistory/historicaltimeline.html>.