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Title

'No Somos Animales:' Indigenous Survival and Persistence in 19th Century Santa Cruz, California

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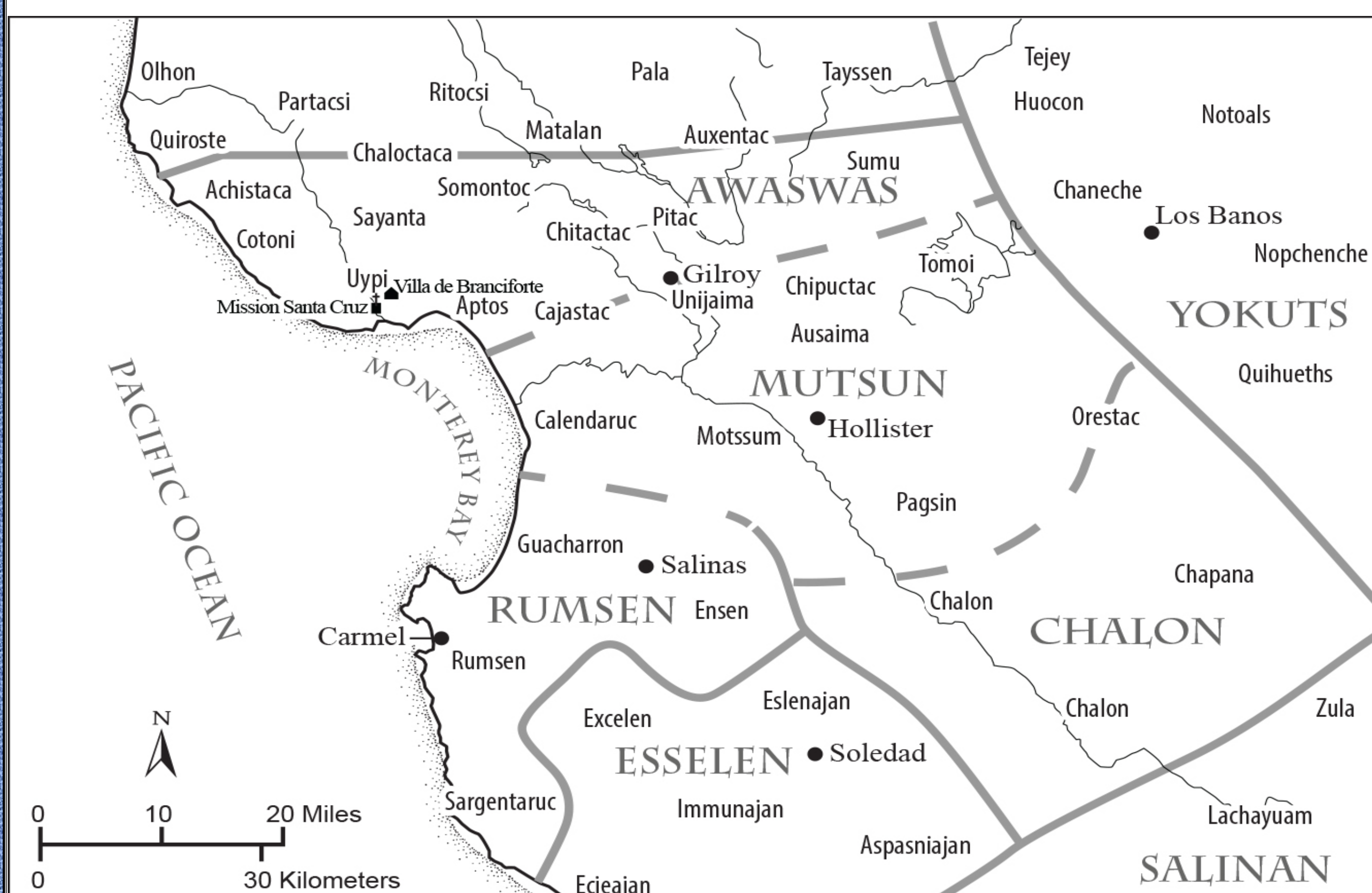
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Introduction

What happened to the people who called Santa Cruz their homeland?

- Tribal nations of people known today collectively as the Ohlone lived on these lands for tens of thousands of years before Spanish Colonial occupation began in 1769.
- Mission Santa Cruz was founded in 1791, beginning a local colonial process of violent disruption. This included forced relocation and the imposition of Spanish Catholic spiritual, economic, social, psychological, and ecological practices. By the closing of the mission in 1834, nearly 90% of native peoples who entered the mission had died.
- Yet the Indigenous people at Mission Santa Cruz actively challenged and resisted colonization in the form of outright rebellion, assassination of an abusive Padre, ongoing flights of fugitives, and rumors of poisonings.
- Today, little is known about this history, while contemporary Native peoples struggle against this erasure along with an ongoing struggle for rights.
- **My research examines the physical violence enacted on local Native peoples through colonialism and links it to the epistemological violence of historical erasure of Native existence.**

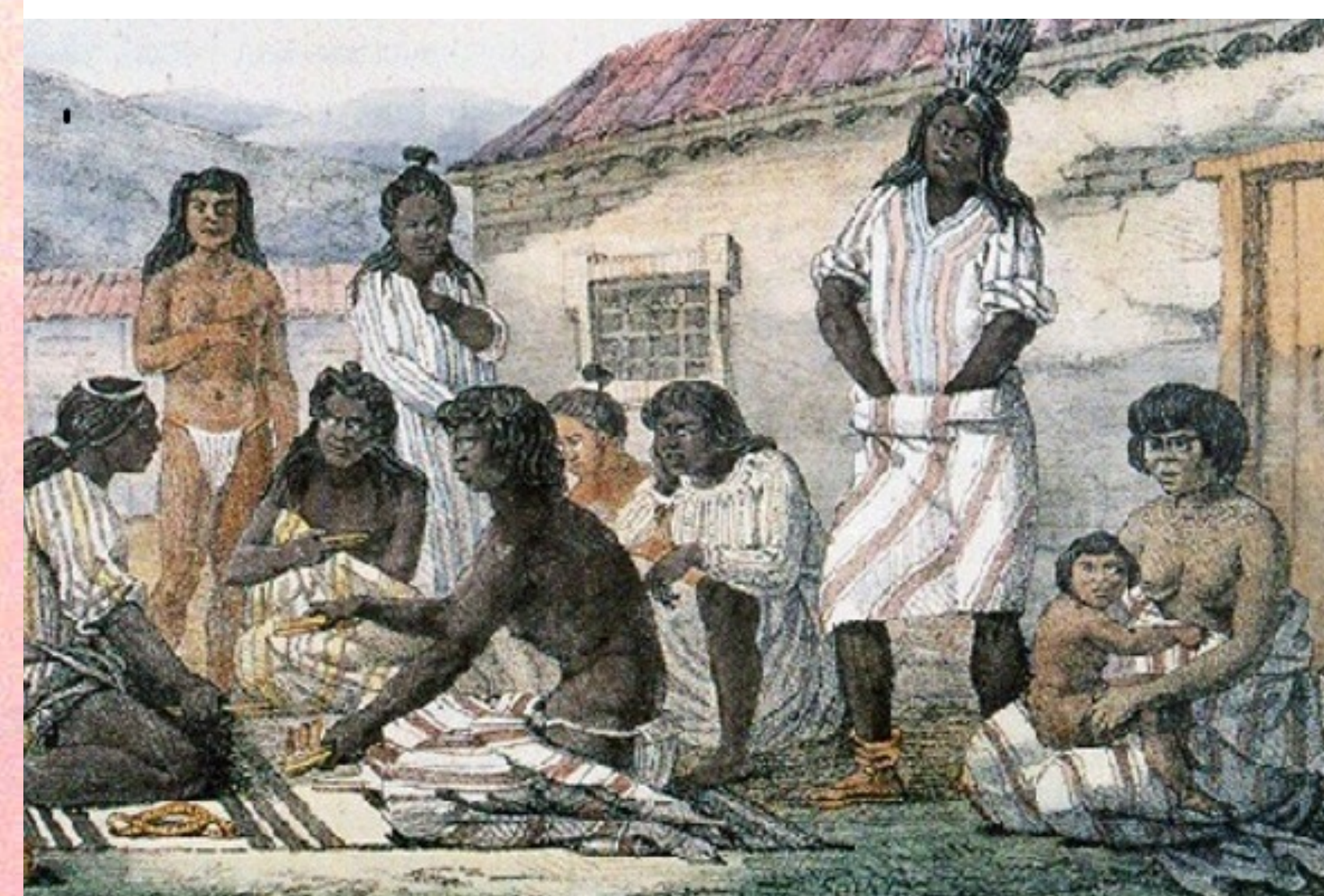
'The Mission of Padre Killers' – Mission Santa Cruz gained a notorious reputation among the local padres, but who were these Indigenous rebels?



Map of local Indigenous tribal territories.

Research Project:

My dissertation looks at Indigenous resistance and perseverance through 19th Century Santa Cruz.



Drawings of Ohlone dancer (left) & gaming (right). Both drawn at Mission Dolores (San Francisco) by Russian Painter Louis Andreivitch Choris, circa 1822.

Approach / Methodology:

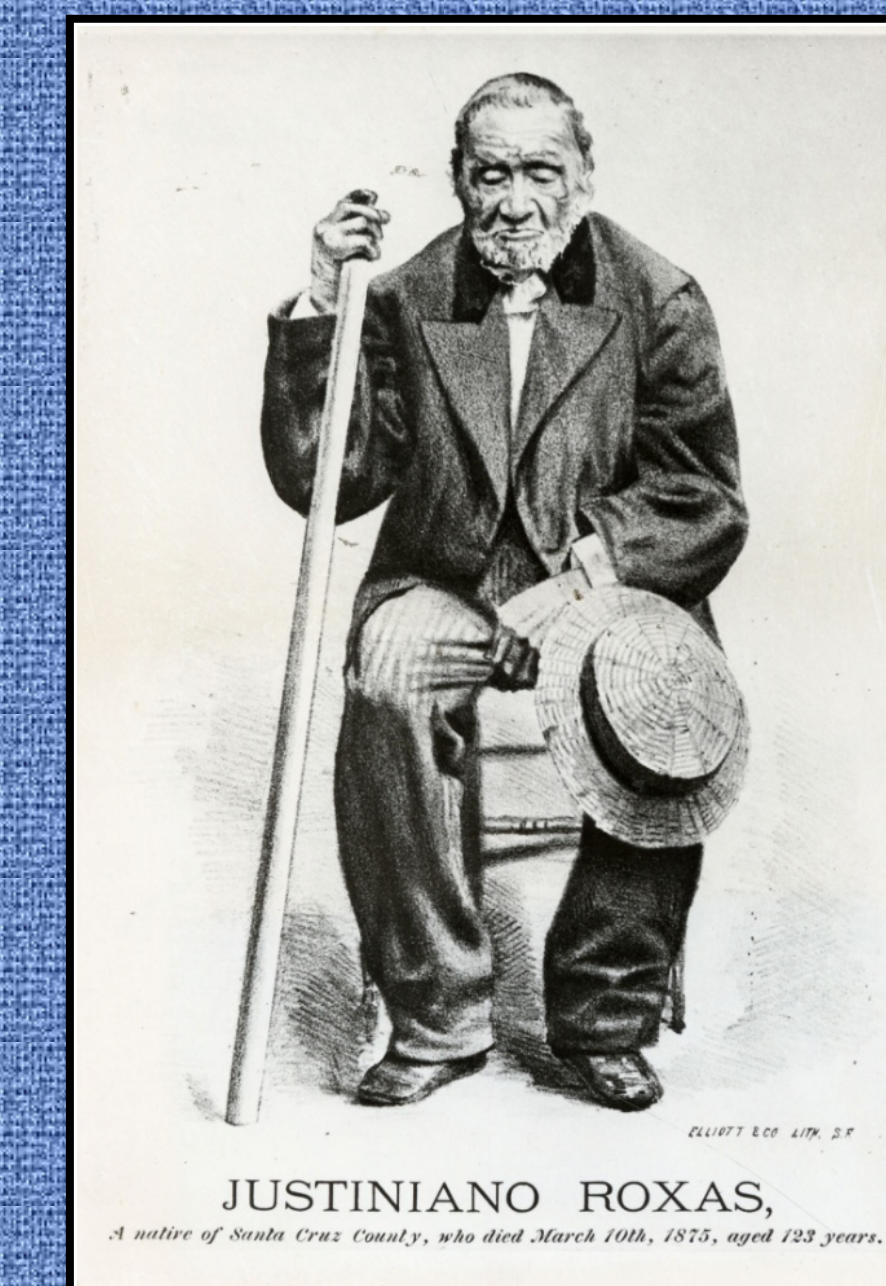
- To conduct this research, I travelled to archives throughout Mexico and California.
- In order to understand the Indigenous perspective of this history, I have drawn on bodies of knowledge that allow for a closer reading of Indigenous categories and epistemes, including Anthropology, Archaeology, Ecology, and Psychology.
- Additionally, I compiled tens of thousands of individual missionary records from Missions Santa Cruz, San Juan Bautista, Santa Clara, and more. These included baptisms, burials, marriages, confirmations, godparentage (*padrinos*), and marriage witness records. With this data, I've been able to trace the lives of families, tribes, kinship networks and individuals throughout the greater region.



Santa Cruz, like much of California, was a hostile place for Indians & Californios following the Gold Rush and American statehood.

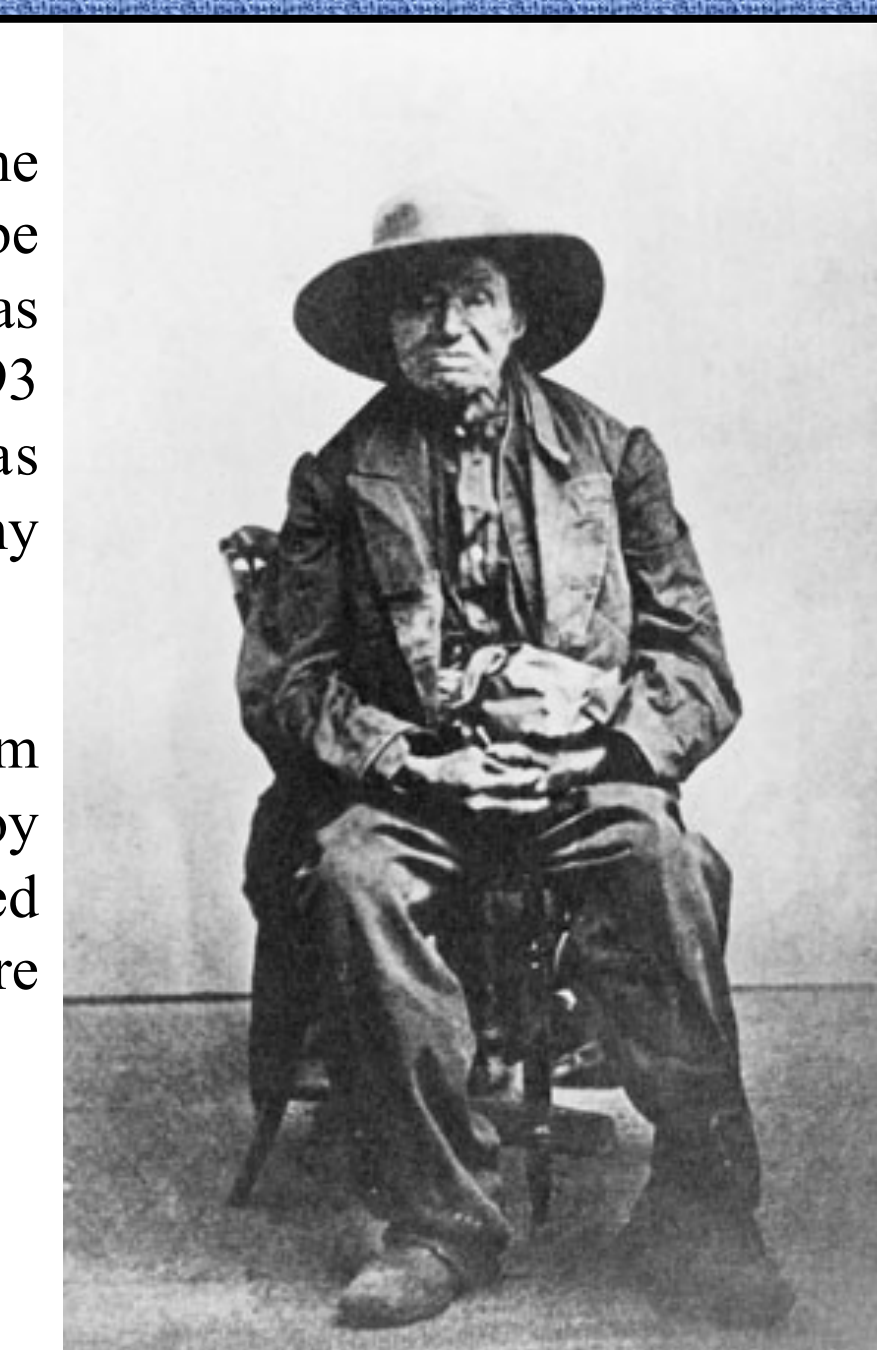
This picture (left) is of Jose Chamales and Francisco Arias, two local men hanged without trial by a white vigilante mob on the Water Street Bridge in 1877. This picture was taken and used as a postcard image, notice the children posing.

American state sponsored violence created a climate of terror. Federal funds supported scalp bounties & militias, while Indian Indenture laws legalized the kidnapping of Indian children. Many Native Californians passed as Mexican, concealing their heritage from Americans as a survival strategy.



JUSTINIANO ROXAS,
A native of Santa Cruz County, who died March 10th, 1873, aged 123 years.

Two pictures of Justiniano Roxas from the early 1870s (left & right), believed to be 125 years old. A painting of his image was sent to the Vatican as well as to the 1893 Chicago Worlds Fair, where he was displayed as an example of the healthy environment of California.

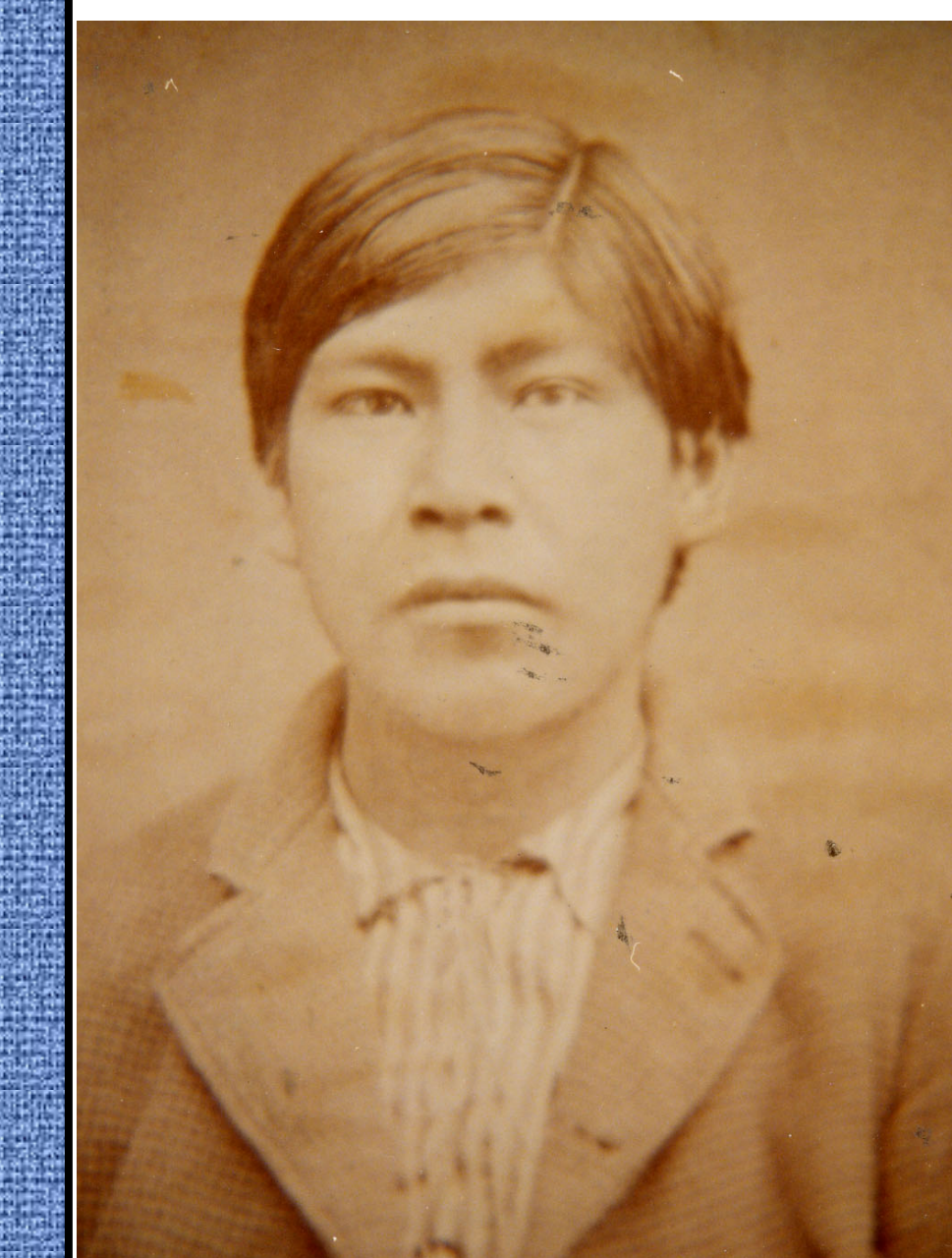


In reality, this seventy year old man from the Chipuctac village near modern Gilroy was named Yrachis. Yrachis witnessed great loss and violence in his time, before his death in 1873.

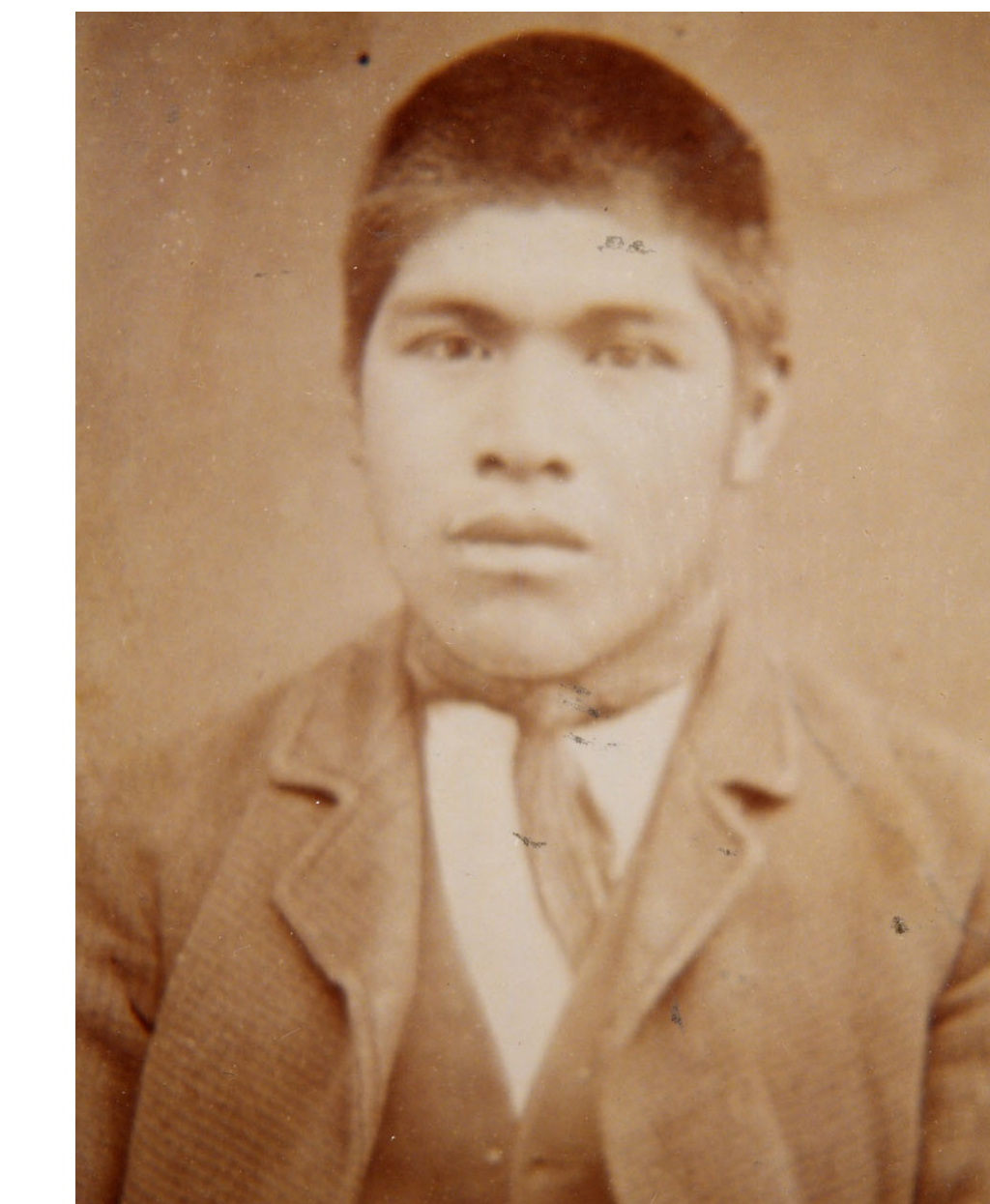
Conclusions:

My dissertation reveals:

- Stories of families and individuals who challenged their oppressive conditions.
- The emergence of three distinct Indigenous communities which formed following the close of Mission Santa Cruz by 1839.
- The persistence of cultural and spiritual practices, rituals, language, songs and dances that helped these survivors to find strength and community.



Rafael "Tahoe" Castro (left) and Jose "Cache" Lend (right). In 1884, the two young men were arrested for arson and sent to San Quentin. The two were well regarded, they played Shortstop & Catcher for the local baseball team, worked as tanners, as gardeners, and coach drivers. The barns and homes burned were on former Indian lands by the mission, lands their parents and grandparents had recently lost. Neither men survived their sentences.



Implications

While Ohlone and Yokuts survivors found ways to navigate these challenging times, most Californians have learned little of their history or struggles. Instead we are taught flawed narratives that continue to harm descendants. Contemporary struggles for State and Federal recognition face uphill battles in challenging misconceptions and romanticized notions of California mission life. My dissertation attempts to rectify this legacy of misinformation and offers a version of the this Indigenous past that reveals, rather than erases, the complex world of local Indigenous survival.

Right: Amah Mutsun Land Trust (AMLT) boundaries. Established by the Amah Mutsun Tribal Nation in 2013, the AMLT is involved in numerous projects intended to provide land conservation and stewardship within their traditional Tribal territories.

