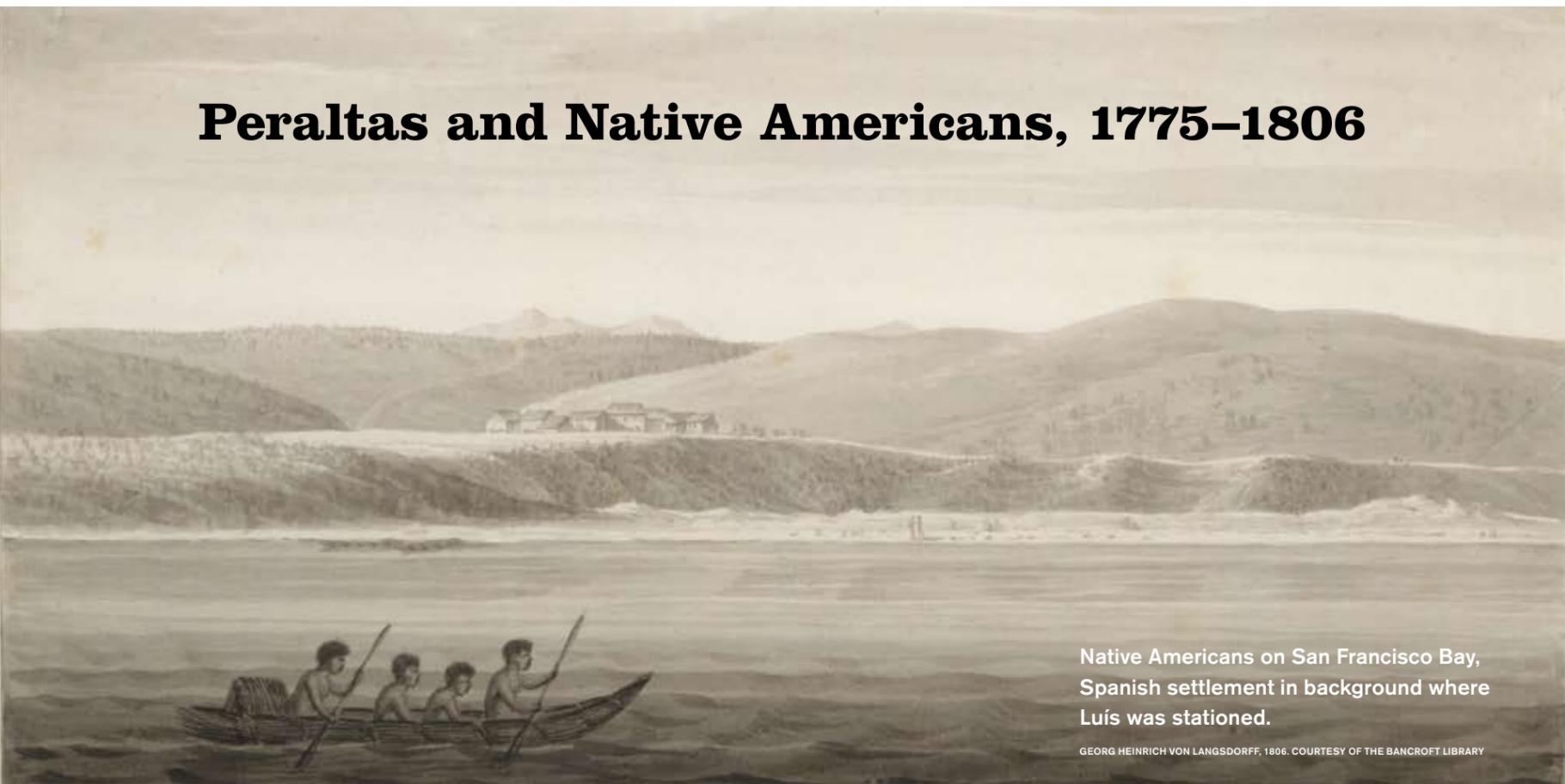
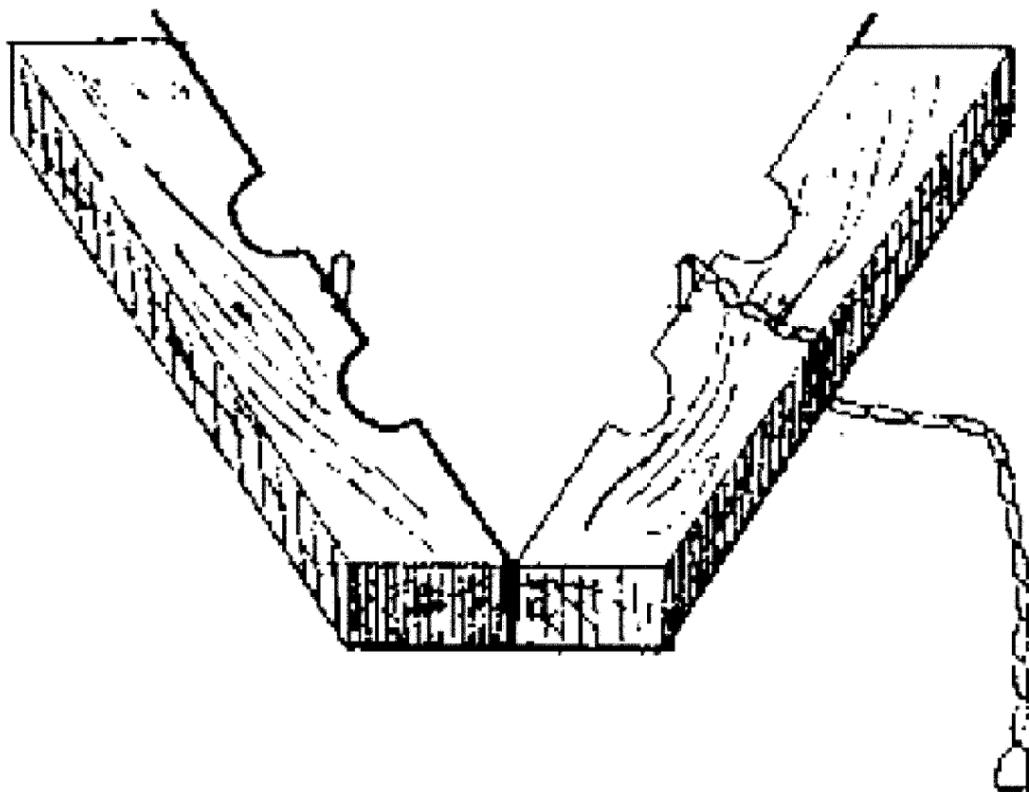


Peraltas and Native Americans, 1775–1806



Native Americans on San Francisco Bay,
Spanish settlement in background where
Luís was stationed.

GEORG HEINRICH VON LANGSDORFF, 1806. COURTESY OF THE BANCROFT LIBRARY



Mission authorities placed wooden hobbles, locked and secured with a chain, around the legs of mission workers who defied them. Can you find the model of the hobbles (*corma* in Spanish) in this room?

COURTESY OF THE BANCROFT LIBRARY

Luís Peralta joined the Spanish forces based in Alta California when he was 21, four years after his family came to the Bay Area on the Anza expedition. His main duty was to bring local people into the Bay Area missions.

The Spanish hoped these Native Americans, known as the Ohlone, would become Christians and work for them on the mission ranches and farms. Many resisted this plan.

Commanded by his superiors, Luís Peralta interrogated, pursued and punished local people who escaped, rebelled, or caught cattle from the Spanish herds.

Among his duties was guarding the new settlements of Spanish families. He sometimes officiated at ceremonies; documents tell us that he fired a musket to celebrate the founding of Mission San José in 1797.

Luís's father, Gabriel Peralta, helped found the town of San José, the missions at Santa Clara and San Francisco, and the San Francisco *presidio* (fort). The Peralta wives and daughters often acted as godparents for Ohlone children, who later would become their servants.

What did Luís Peralta do as a soldier in California?



Native American workers at Monterey, 1786

COURTESY IRIS ENGSTRAND / MUSEO NAVAL, MADRID

With trading networks up and down the state, the local people were interested in the Spanish-speaking newcomers—in their tools, clothes and guns—and in their domesticated animals, like cows and horses, which they had never seen before.

As time went on, some were forced to join the missions at gunpoint; some sought food during times of scarcity; others joined because they hoped the new religion might halt the diseases now spreading through their villages.

The Ohlone did not realize that being baptized committed them to living in the missions for good, in the priests' eyes.

Later, loss of plant and animal species on which the Ohlone depended, caused by cattle grazing and the Spanish takeover of the best land for agriculture, made it very difficult for the Ohlone to survive on their former territories; by then, they had little choice but to join the missions or leave their ancestral lands and flee inland, into other tribal territories.

Why did Ohlone people live in the missions?



Ohlone woman and Monterey soldier, 1791.

Spanish-speaking colonists like the Peraltas used the term *gente de razón*—enlightened people—to describe themselves. If local Native Americans converted to Christianity, learned to speak Spanish and began to follow Spanish customs, they could become *gente de razón* in the eyes of the Spanish.

Who were the “people of reason”?

FROM SPAIN'S LAWS OF THE INDIES:

LAW 33: Indians can't ride horses.

Ley xxxiiij. Que los Indios no puedan andar à cavallo.
D. Felipe Segundo en Madrid à 19 de Julio de 1568 en Cordova à 1 de Março de 1570
PROHIBIMOS, Que los Indios anden à cavallo, y mandamos à las Justicias, que así lo hagan guardar, y executar sin remission alguna.

LAW 35: The Inquisition can't prosecute Indians. Ordinary priests will judge cases against Indians concerning religion, and the courts in cases of witchcraft or spells.

Eclesiasticos conozcan en causas de Fè contra Indios: y en hechizos, y maleficios las Justicias Reales.
D. Felipe Segundo al 1 de 27 de Febrero de 1575
Veafe la L. 17. tit. 19. lib. 10
POR Estar prohibido à los Inquisidores Apostolicos el proceder contra Indios, compete su castigo à los Ordinarios Eclesiasticos, y deven ser obedecidos, y cumplidos sus mandamientos: y contra los hechizeros, que matan con hechizos, y vñan de otros maleficios, procederán nuestras Justicias Reales.

LAW 34: Governors can't grant rights to Indians that are prohibited here.

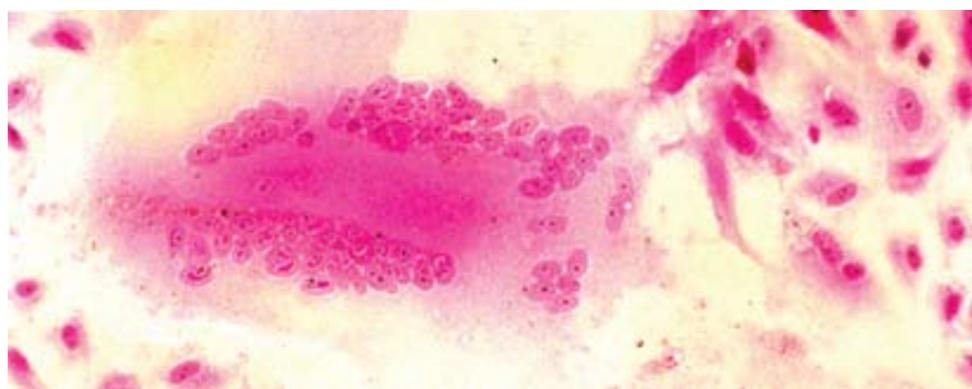
Ley xxxiiij. Que los Governadores no lleven derechos à los Indios por lo que en esta ley se manda.
D. Felipe Quarto en Madrid à 1. de Agosto de 1631
SIN Embargo de estar prohibido, que los Indios puedan andar à cavallo, excediendo los Governadores, les dån licencia para poderlos tener, y llevan por esta

LAW 36: You can't sell wine to Indians.

Ley xxxvj. Que no se pueda vender vino à los Indios.
D. Felipe Quarto à 5. de Abril de 1637 y en 6. de Junio de 1640
El mismo al 1 de Mayo de 1574
Veafe la L. 15. tit. 6 lib. 7.
ORDENAMOS, Que en los Lugares, y Pueblos de Indios no entre vino, ni se les pueda vender, y los Alcaldes mayores, y Corregidores no contravengan à las ordenes dadas, ni por su cuenta, ó interposicion de otras personas lo hagan comerciar, por el grave daño, que resulta contra la salud, y conservacion de los Indios, y los Virreyes, y Audiencias castiguen estos excessos, con el rigor, y demostracion, que conviene.

The Laws of the Indies governed Spanish colonies worldwide. The Laws stated that native peoples would receive land grants and cattle after ten years of instruction by the Spanish. Then they were to run the new towns as Spanish-speaking Christians, subject to the king. California's Native peoples were not consulted, and did not accept this plan, and their ancestral lands were never granted back to them.

What was the Spanish plan for California?



Measles cells. The Spanish introduced new plants and animals into California. Some were microscopic, the living cells for diseases such as measles and smallpox. Coastal people, including the Ohlone, were the first California Natives to suffer their lethal effects. Epidemics among the inland Natives came later, as the newcomers conquered and settled new areas.

California natives, like other peoples of the Americas, had been separated from Europe, Africa and Asia for so long that they had lost immunity to the ancient diseases of those continents.

When Europeans entered the New World, they carried these diseases in their bloodstreams, unknowingly unleashing epidemics that killed Native Americans by the millions in North, Central and South America.

The measles have wreaked havoc upon the Indians of this province, but none at all upon the gente de razón. We missionaries here find ourselves with about four hundred sick.

FATHER LANDAETA, MISSION SAN JOSÉ, 1806.

Why did Native Americans die in such numbers?



Native American dancers at Mission San José, 1803.

WILHELM GOTTLIEF TILESUS VON TILÉNAU. COURTESY OF THE BANCROFT LIBRARY

In 1803, a measles epidemic struck Mission San José (in today's Fremont). It raged for six weeks, killing three-quarters of the mission's Native American children under five, as well as nearly half the adult women and nearly one quarter of the men.

It seems shocking that, at the height of the epidemic, Father Cueva, the priest at the mission, offered a dance demonstration to Russian guests visiting California on a scientific expedition. One of the scientists wrote about it in his diary:

Father Cueva announced that they were to dress themselves in their very best attire. . . . He distributed a number of ornaments among the best dancers. They assembled towards noon in the large court of the mission.

GEORG VON LANGSDORFF

How did diseases strike in the missions?



Detail from *La Pérouse at Monterey*.

COURTESY IRIS ENGSTRAND / MUSEO NAVAL, MADRID

Year after year, more Ohlone died than were born. Military raids and round-ups disrupted Ohlone village life while spreading disease through the countryside. In the missions—with their crowded and unsanitary living conditions—disease also flourished; syphilis made the situation worse by causing birth rates to fall.

Traditional Ohlone village life had disappeared from the land where Alameda County is today by 1806, thirty years after the founding of the Bay Area missions. Only 2,000 Ohlone remained from an original population of 20,000. Nearly all of the 10% who survived now lived in the missions.

A few Ohlone worked on the margins of the Spanish pueblos, or lived at the edge of mission lands in *rancherías* (Indian settlements) where soldiers went to get laborers for seasonal work.

The Karkins and the Chupcans were the last Ohlone groups to be missionized. They moved to San Francisco in 1806. The Carquinez Straits are named after the Karkins.

Why did 90% of the Ohlone die?