

THE CALIFORNIA HOLOCAUST

and

F. KITSEPAWIT

Commentary by Dr. John Anderson

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The Chumash Were Devastated by the California Holocaust

The Chumash Indians, who lived north of the modern city of Los Angeles, suffered devastating population declines long before the Spanish invaded California from their colonial stronghold in Mexico.

Plagues introduced by visiting sailors who landed on the Chumash islands (Santa Cruz, Santa Rosa, San Miguel, Anacapa) swept through the coastal seaports of the Chumash with heartbreaking speed. As a result, the Spanish succeeded in 'reducing' these coastal regions without heavy expenses or loss of life to their soldiers. A full scale military operation against the powerful Chumash alliance, was untenable at this early date of European colonial expansion.

It is probable that diseases that ravaged California were also spread by contacts with native travelers and refugees, who [routinely] traveled to the Pacific coast [from the contemporary states of Arizona, Nevada, and New Mexico]. The Colorado River tribes, such as the Mohave and the Yuman, first contacted the ravaging European diseases as they spread north from Mexico. In turn, they dispersed these diseases to the coastal tribes with whom they traded.

Kitsepawit's Holocaust Commentary

F. L. Kitsepawit, a leading Chumash historian, cited three holocaustal "plagues" which devastated the Chumash people prior to the invasion of California by American troops. N. Wech a Lulapin Chumash from the town of *Simomo*, taught Kitsepawit this ancient history

(Hudson, Eye of the Flute, page 31). *Simomo* was a very large seaport, located on the Mugu slough a little east of Oxnard.

Catastrophe One A pestilence started in *Simomo* [on the Mugu Slough east of Oxnard; presumably as a result of diseases spread by Spanish ships visiting the Chumash channel towns]. Many families fled the mass deaths and resettled nearby at *Mitskanaka*, next to the important seaport of *Shisholop* (Hudson, Flute, 11). *Shisholop* was located on the beach at Ventura, California, and *Mitskanaka* was located at what later became the San Buenaventura mission site.

Catastrophe Two This pestilence hit *Mitskanaka*, after the *Simomo* refugees multiplied. "People went about feeling sick, until they fell backwards, dead" (Flute, 11).

Catastrophe Three Civil war was the third pestilence to hit the Chumash living along the coast of Ventura county. K. Kipikip taught Kitsepawit about this bitter civil discord, when Kipikip was so old that he could no longer walk (Hudson, Flute, 11),

* Information on these events appears in Kitsepawit's historical account called *The Eye of the Flute*, which was published by the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History in 1997. The divisive civil war was presumably brought on by massive population relocations brought on by diseases spread by Spanish sailors visiting the Chumash coast. At the time of the 1769 Spanish invasion of California, the town of *Simomo* had recovered much of its population and was very influential among the Chumash living on the coast of Ventura county. It served as a center of resistance to the Spanish 'mission' that was built at *Mitskanaka* in 1782. [John Anderson, March 2000].

Catastrophe Four

Chumash narratives typically are divided into four phases or elements. The first three introduce the subject matter, such as a moral dilemma or an unresolved historical process. When I read Kitsepawit's commentary about the three catastrophes, therefore, I find myself looking for the fourth phase, which so often completes a narrative process.

The brutal occupation of California by the Spanish, Mexicans, and Americans almost certainly is the fourth and culminating catastrophic event in modern Chumash history. Kitsepawit hints at this explanation, but apparently was too polite to say so directly to his American interviewer [John Harrington].

What Kitsepawit did say was that he and other Chumash living in the 1910's were the fourth generation who were living when "all is lost" (Flute, 31). Kitsepawit described this historical period as "the conquest" (Flute, 31). Events that were prophesied by earlier spiritual leaders, such as N. Wech, had come true, and traditionalists like Kitsepawit complained that many Chumash no longer paid attention to the "old traditions". [Anderson, March 2000].

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[More Commentary]

The California Indians suffered holocaustal population declines, as a result of colonial intrusions by the Spanish, Mexicans, and Americans.

World religious leaders have taken the initiative in formally apologizing to victims of genocide, and the example of the Catholic Pope and other Christian theologians have stimulated discussion of apologies and related financial compensation to victims of genocide.

Persons interested in studying genocide in California may find recent international developments of interest, particularly in the area of reparation negotiations. The ethics of reparation receive headlines in Europe but are seldom discussed in the context of America's holocaust against native peoples. Below, you will find information and internet sites that discuss some of the issues involved in this often emotional dialogue.

[John Anderson, October 2, 2000]

Catholic Pope Apologizes for Genocide

Pope Paul visited the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial in Israel and told a world-wide audience that the Roman Catholic Church "is deeply saddened by the hatred and displays of antisemitism directed against [Jewish people] by Christians at any time and in any place." Paul stated that the Holocaust "lives on, and burns itself into our souls."

These comments came only a short time after the Pope made a historic appeal, asking forgiveness of non-Catholics for two thousand years of sins committed by Catholics. (March, '2000).

Germany Allocated \$5 Billion for Reparations

In the same week that the Catholic Pope asked forgiveness in Israel for its antisemitism, the German government in Berlin finalized an agreement allocating \$5 billion dollars to the surviving slave and forced laborers of Hitler's Germany. Critics objected to this settlement package, saying that it did not even begin to compensate the victims for their financial losses, much less deal with the complex moral issues of punitive damages.

And ongoing violence by neo-Nazis against immigrant workers continued to grow in Germany, as issues of national and 'race' identity continued to divide the country. (March, '2000).

Dutch Apology to Jewish Victims of Genocide

The Amsterdam stock exchange apologized for allowing Jewish-owned equity to be systematically confiscated under the German holocaust of the second world war. A federal

commission led the way in urging negotiations between the Jewish community and the national stock exchange. Included in the negotiations were financial compensation issues, such as nonreturned assets and suffering (February '2000).

These Dutch negotiations were taking place at a time when other European nations were struggling with their own collaboration with Nazi policies. Under Dutch law, many assets were returned to Jewish families after the defeat of the Germans but the Dutch banking and commercial interests refused to publicly admit their complicity with the Nazi genocidal regulations.

U.S. Congress Apologizes For Conquest of Hawaii

Public law 103-150 was passed November 23, 1993 by a joint resolution of Congress. Its purpose was "to acknowledge the one hundredth anniversary of the January 17, 1893 overthrow of the Kingdom of Hawaii and to offer an apology to Native Hawaiians on behalf of the United States for the overthrow of the Kingdom of Hawaii." See [Hawaii Apology](#) for further information.

Since the passing of this official apology, some progress has been made in expanding the public dialogue over returning land and natural resources to the native Hawaiians. Native Americans living on the mainland have joined hands with the native Hawaiians in their struggles, including some Chumash. For information on the Hawaiian independence movement, see [Independence](#).

Austria's Political System Shaken by Resurgence of Neo-Naziism

The election of a popular Austrian political figure to a position of power in the country, sparked a series of negative diplomatic reactions from the rest of Western Europe. For background information on the role of Austria in the Jewish holocaust, see [Austria](#)

The Chumash are a diverse peoples, with differing opinions on both historical and spiritual matters. The author encourages the reader to examine alternative viewpoints, from both Chumash and non-Chumash authors. Many sources are available including books, newspapers, magazines (both scholarly and popular), radio, television, and the internet.

This web page presents the views of the author, and does not necessarily represent the views of the Chumash Indians, either individually or in a group.