

The Chumash Revolt of 1824: Another Native Account From the Notes of John P. Harrington

TRAVIS HUDSON

Blackburn (1975a), while researching the ethnographic notes of John P. Harrington, located an Ineseño Chumash account of the 1824 revolt against the missions. Apparently, the note had been recorded in 1914, some 90 years or so after this important historic event had taken place. The consultant was María Solares, a nonparticipant, who had passed on to Harrington what she had heard from her older relatives and friends.

Recently, I came across a Barbareño Chumash account of the revolt among Harrington's notes while researching data on Chumash material culture in the U.S. National Anthropological Archives.¹ In this case, the consultant was another nonparticipant, Luisa Ygnacio, born at Mission Santa Barbara about 1830 and interviewed from about 1912 to 1922, the year of her death (Blackburn 1975b:19). She was one of Harrington's primary Barbareño Chumash consultants. Based upon a statement found in the Solares account, it is evident that the Ygnacio account is the older of the two and recorded sometime prior to 1914, the date for the Solares account.²

Harrington sometimes made a typescript from his original handwritten notes, which is the case with the Ygnacio account; the original is presumed to be in one of several boxes of Barbareño notes in the archives. The typescript itself consists of two and a half sheets of double-spaced text, on regular size white paper, with the abbreviation "la." in the upper right corner. The abbreviation stands for Luisa Ygnacio. No heading or subheadings appear on the document. Light editing, mostly in the form of rearranging sentences and some paragraphs, has been required. Some secondary data in the text has been placed in the Notes, which follow.

THE ACCOUNT

At the time of the Indian revolt [of 1824] here [in Santa Barbara], [Luisa Ygnacio] was not yet born. A Spanish page at [Mission] Santa Ines said that he heard the priests talking, saying that they were going to kill the Indians when the Indians entered the church next summer [Sunday?]. At Santa Ines they (the Spanish?) cut the tongue and feet off of the page and put wood on top of him and burned his body. They did that just as soon as they found out what he had done.³

The Santa Ines Indians arrived at Santa Barbara with this surprising news [of what the page had said], and the following Sunday the [Santa Barbara] Indians were all armed with bows and arrows.⁴

They were going to kill the priest as he went in a coach from the Mission to the Presidio at Santa Barbara. But an Indian said: "We must

Travis Hudson, Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History, 2559 Puesta del Sol Rd., Santa Barbara, CA 93105.

lay him face down before we can kill him." Because they did not want to do that, they spared the priest. When the priest saw the hostile Indians walking around with bows in their hands, he became afraid and ordered his hack to take him to Santa Barbara town.⁵

The Presidio soldiers had to fight and beat the Indians that Sunday. When the trouble broke out with the Indians, Captain José Noriega (de la Guerra) was in charge of the Presidio at Santa Barbara. After the fight, about half of the Indians went immediately to the Tular. Men and women were already running off into the mountains.⁶

The half of the Indians who did not go began to loot all the property of those who went—all their things were taken.⁷ And on this same day, an Indian boy (they do not know his name) was killed by a drunken Indian, drunk on the whiskey robbed from the house of the priest at the Mission.⁸

The Indians who went into the mountains took nothing with them.⁹ When they started they stole things at San Roque Canyon at Father Antonio Ripoll's place—turkey and much, but took nothing with them. [Luisa Ygnacio's] husband's brother, a man named Juan, was along on the trip as a tiny boy.¹⁰ María Ygnacio, La.'s husband's mother, was also one who went on the Tular trip.¹¹ She took along a little acorn mush. They did not know how far they were going, and many Indians who went to the Tular died on the way.¹²

They stayed away four months in the Tular. The Tulareños received the Santa Barbara Indians well. Another tribe beyond the Tulareños, she forgets their name, gave the Santa Barbara Indians many things and treated them finely, even better than the Tulareños did.¹³

Then Jaime, an Indian who was a doctor, singer, and teacher, came as spokesman with some Presidio soldiers.¹⁴ He told them that if they did not come back, the soldiers would fight them right there. The women cried, think-

ing they would all be killed. Jaime took hold of them and persuaded them to return. The Presidio soldiers unloaded their guns and then they all came back.¹⁵

When they reached San Roque Canyon, the Indians killed a beef and ate there. Father Antonio Ripoll met the Indians there. The priest went crying, for he was touched deeply.¹⁶ He was crying because he had lost everything.¹⁷

A friend of Father Antonio Ripoll, named José Antonio Aguirre, told the priest: "Do not get discouraged. I have also lost a great deal and you will have money." And José Antonio Aguirre gave the priest a trunk of money, but the Indians stole that also.¹⁸

The Indians left San Roque Canyon and returned to the Mission quarters to work again, but all of their things were gone.

NOTES

1. I thank the Smithsonian Institution for providing me with an opportunity to study these notes through a short-term study grant.

2. As we shall see, the Ygnacio account mentions that the page responsible for the rumor which triggered the revolt was killed and burned, while in the Solares account the statement is made "he was not burned, as far as María heard" (Blackburn 1975a:227). Thus, the Ygnacio account must have been recorded prior to Harrington's interview about the revolt from María Solares.

3. The Solares account also mentions the involvement of the page in initiating the revolt by telling the Indians, and later the priests, that each group was about to attack the other. The Hispanic accounts, however, state that the cause was the flogging of a Mission La Purisima Indian at Mission Santa Ines on Saturday, February 21, 1824. If the page was killed, there is apparently no record of it except for the two native accounts.

4. News of the revolt at Santa Ines reached Mission Santa Barbara in the early morning hours of Sunday, February 22nd. The neophytes were quick to react to it (Geiger 1970).

5. Luisa does not tell us which mission, for it is known that the priest at Mission Santa Ines sought refuge at the Presidio of Santa Barbara, while the priest at Mission Santa Barbara, Fr. Antonio Ripoll, was able to move about them without fear of harm (Geiger 1970:348, 361). Engelhardt's (1932: 31-25) description of the events would suggest it was Fr. Francisco Xavier Uria of Mission Santa Ines; a rumor mentioned that Fr. Uria tried to escape, but that the Indians discovered his trail and followed. The priest reportedly shot and killed one of his pursuers. On the basis of logic alone, Engelhardt disclaims the rumor as "manifestly untrue," since "there is no evidence that Fr. Uria endeavored to escape in the way imagined." Fr. Uria did, however, flee to Santa Barbara and was never to return to Santa Ines.

The presidio mentioned was one of four established by the military to protect the California coast. In terms of the Royal Presidio of Santa Barbara itself, Luisa Ygnacio added this comment in the text:

The Presidio was here by the Santa Barbara courthouse. There used to be one live-oak tree about where the courthouse is now, the acorns of which used to crack, and that is why they called Santa Barbara 'Alpinche. They also had a fort at the Castillo, La. says, when I suggested it.

6. Fr. Ripoll's account states that when the news arrived at Mission Santa Barbara, the women and children were sent into the hills. Ripoll himself headed for the Presidio to inform Captain José de la Guerra, who it seems already knew of it. The Indians armed themselves with bows and arrows. When the priest returned, he was unable to convince them that the rumor was untrue. Presidio soldiers later moved in and the battle began. It lasted for three hours. The soldiers had 4 men wounded; the Indians had two killed and three wounded (Geiger 1970:348-350; Ord 1956:7-8).

7. According to Ripoll, the Indians looted his quarters and took everything, including his money (Geiger 1970:350). Cook (1962:153-154) published native accounts in which it was stated that the money was used in gambling when in the Tulares. It was the soldiers, however, who looted the neophyte

quarters on Tuesday, the 24th, under orders from Ensign José Maytorena (Geiger 1970:350-351).

8. The boy's identity is unknown. Ripoll mentions several murders undertaken by Presidio soldiers against unarmed Indians.

9. Departing from the mission that afternoon, they moved into the high country via Mission Canyon until they reached a place which Ripoll states was three leagues away. There they stayed for eight days to rest, collect food, and to see what was taking place nearby. Apparently, they were in contact with Fr. Ripoll by messenger, but the murders, lootings, and armed soldiers convinced them to refuse his request and head further inland. Geiger (1970:350-352, 362) suggested that this temporary retreat may have been San Roque Canyon. Luisa Ygnacio's account supports this.

It should be added that the refugees, under Andrés, were also in contact with the inland groups. A Gabrielino man named Alberto informed the Spanish in June, 1824, that Andrés had sent presents ahead to the Tulares during his retreat so that his people would be well received (Cook 1962:153).

10. Luisa added that María Ygnacio was the mother of her husband, José Ygnacio, and that María Paula was the mother of María Ygnacio. María Ygnacio Creek, which crosses Highway 101 in Santa Barbara, was named after her.

11. Luisa said that Juan later died in the mines in 1849.

12. The inland trek was begun about March 2nd. It is not surprising that many died on the way—for, as Fr. Ripoll noted, they suffered from hunger, traveling with their sick and old (Geiger 1970:352).

13. The Tulareños were the Yokuts living about Buena Vista Lake. The tribe beyond may well have been Tübatulabal, or perhaps the Kitanemuk.

14. Fr. Ripoll also mentioned Jaime, describing him as an aide with great intelligence, the most hispanicized among the neophytes. Working from mission records, Geiger (1970:348, 361) identified this man as probably Jaime José, baptized July 31, 1791, at about six years of age. Thus, at the time of the revolt, Jaime would have been about thirty-

three. According to Pablo de la Portilla's account of the meeting, the Indians assembled for the surrender, and one among them with some authority was named Jaime. He came forth to receive the governor's pardon and acted as spokesman for the refugees (Cook 1962:155).

15. There had already been a military encounter at Buena Vista Lake when Lt. Narciso Fabregat, with 80 soldiers, engaged them on April 9th. Rather than follow Capt. de la Guerra's orders to return with the Indians to the mission, Lt. Fabregat retreated to the Presidio (Engelhardt 1923:132-133).

The second encounter, briefly mentioned in Note 14, occurred on June 8th and was preceded by a grant of pardon from Governor Argüello, delivered to the refugees via two Tulareño neophytes. The Indians were still doubtful. After discussions, the Indians decided to return on June 16th (Engelhardt 1923:135-136).

16. Fr. Antonio Ripoll was born March 27, 1785, at Palma, Majorca, Spain, and arrived in California in 1811. He served at Mission Santa Barbara from June 14, 1815, to January 23, 1828 (Geiger 1969:207-208). Luisa Ygnacio added this statement:

Father Antonio Ripoll, who was a Spanish of old Spain, used to sleep at San Roque Canyon for safety. The Indians called the place *Taqsh*. The old adobe house still stands as a ruin on Florentino García's (Luisa's son-in-law) place.

Fr. Vincent Francisco de Sarria, commissary prefect, accompanied the expedition, along with Fr. Ripoll, who at first refused. According to Pablo de la Portilla's account, the returning party rested on the morning of June 22nd at San Roque, before coming into Santa Barbara that afternoon.

17. Fr. Ripoll was quite touched, as witnessed by his own words (Geiger 1970) and by how others, such as Angustias de la Guerra Ord (1956:7-8), saw him.

18. The reference to more money may relate with the rumor that when Fr. Ripoll fled to Spain in 1828, he took with him a large sum of money (Geiger 1969:207-208).

REFERENCES

- Blackburn, Thomas
 1975a The Chumash Revolt of 1824: A Native Account. *Journal of California Anthropology* 2(2):223-227.
 1975b December's Child: A Book of Chumash Oral Narratives. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Cook, S.
 1962 Expeditions to the Interior of California, Central Valley, 1820-1840. *University of California Anthropological Records* 20(5).
- Engelhardt, Zephyrin
 1923 Santa Barbara Mission. San Francisco: James H. Barry Co.
 1932 Mission Santa Ines. Santa Barbara: Mission Santa Barbara.
- Geiger, Maynard
 1969 Franciscan Missionaries in Hispanic California, 1769-1848. San Marino: The Huntington Library.
 1970 Fray Antonio Ripoll's Description of the Chumash Revolt at Santa Barbara in 1824. *Southern California Quarterly* 52(4):345-364.
- Ord, Angustias de la Guerra
 1956 Occurrences in Hispanic California. Washington, D.C.: Academy of American Franciscan History.

