

NIKOLAI PETROVICH REZANOV AND
GEORG VON LANGSDORFF
1806

From the time of Vancouver's visit to the American conquest more than fifty years later, California's successive governors were never free from the fear of foreign invasion. San Francisco's *presidio* might appear to protect the Golden Gate, but Spain had no money to maintain such a costly edifice, let alone expand it. Even the most patriotic Spaniard recognized that there was little hope of defending such a long and empty coastline—for that settlers were needed, and California had few immigrants (its non-Indian population numbered only 1,800 at the turn of the century). Plans were developed to evacuate the coast in the event of an invasion, moving people and cattle to hidden interior valleys. Whenever a crisis appeared imminent, a watch was set for foreign ships, and mission *padres* were ordered to pray for a Spanish victory. But despite Spain's weakness, California's isolation was sufficient to hide its military frailty.

The few strange ships that did sail its coast in the first decade of the nineteenth century were New England smugglers bound for China and fur traders from England, France, Portugal, and, increasingly, Russia. Russian traders had been collecting sea otter pelts in

Alaska as early as the 1740s, and in 1799 such commerce fell under the control of a single monopoly, the Russian-American Company. That same year they established a permanent capital called Novo-Arkhangelsk (later Sitka) on Baranof Island in southeast Alaska. In 1803, Boston sea captain Joseph O’Cain and Russian governor Aleksandr Baranov agreed on a multinational, cooperative venture: local Alaskan Aleut Indians, converted by Russian Orthodox missionaries, used canoes and bone spears to hunt California beavers and otters; then Yankee ships transported the furs to China. Using the Aleuts and working from a series of bases down the coast, the joint company could send expeditions to systematically slaughter all the animals in a particular region. The first such trip brought Sitka \$80,000.

Trade soon flourished between these ships and California’s missions, *pueblos*, and *presidios*. Officially, Spanish trade with foreign vessels was outlawed, and any ship caught trafficking could be impounded and its captain and crew imprisoned. But Californians encouraged the illicit commerce, as they were desperate for everyday necessities and exotic luxuries from New England, Europe, and China not available from the annual supply ship from San Blas. As for the Russians, they needed California’s fruit, vegetables, and meat, which were in short supply at their northern settlements.

Nikolai Petrovich Rezanov, one of the founders of the Russian-American Company, launched the first Russian circumnavigation of the globe in 1803. Commanded by Captain Adam Johann Krusenstern, the expedition’s goals included improving trade relations with Japan and investigating the quality of life at the Alaskan colonies. Joining Rezanov onboard was a German naturalist, Georg Heinrich von Langsdorff. The two men could not have been more different. Rezanov was born into a noble family in St. Petersburg in 1764 and spent his youth working as a diplomat in Siberia for Empress Catherine II. Affluent and haughty, Rezanov dreamt of annexing western North America and populating it with Russians. Ten years younger, less worldly and more scholarly, Langsdorff was an

enthusiastic scientist with a doctoral degree in medicine and surgery from the University of Göttingen. He was so eager to see the world that, when not initially chosen for the Krusenstern expedition, he sailed to Copenhagen, checked into the same hotel as the officers, and pleaded with the captain. Krusenstern admired “the enthusiasm of this philosopher.... So great was his ardor to join in the voyage that he was not to be deterred.” In contrast, Krusenstern and Rezanov quarreled constantly, especially after a disastrous stop at Japan where Rezanov, laden with gifts for the *mikado*, was humiliatingly imprisoned.

The expedition finally reached Sitka in August 1805 only to discover a terrible scene of famine and disease caused by the delay of supply ships (not unlike similar scenes in California thirty years earlier). To make matters worse, cold rains drizzled for weeks. The 200 men of the colony were reduced to eating whatever they could catch on their desolate island, including eagles, crows, and manta rays. Their Aleutian converts were in even worse condition: “It is revolting to a mind of any feeling to see these poor creatures half-starved and almost naked,” wrote Langsdorff. He also recorded that the Aleuts were routinely “put to death in the most horrible manner” by the Russians. Rezanov was instructed to remain there and act as plenipotentiary while the expedition continued on to warmer lands. He talked Langsdorff into staying with him.

They managed to survive the cruel Alaskan winter, but Sitka had no food, medicine, or supplies. Luckily, the American trading ship *Juno* put in at Sitka, and Rezanov bought the entire ship and cargo for 8,000 dollars. The ship’s supplies offered temporary relief, but Rezanov and Langsdorff soon were forced to sail for the only colony on the Pacific that offered any hope of providing the food the Russians needed—California. With nearly every man onboard wracked with scurvy, the *Juno* limped through the Golden Gate on April 8, 1806. California seemed a paradise, its abundance of game and lush fields a stark contrast to Alaska. For several days the Russians did little but eat.

Gobernador Arrillaga, always a stickler for regulations, gladly fed the Russians but refused to furnish supplies for Sitka. In despair, Rezanov seized upon a plan to improve his bartering position—he proposed marriage to Doña Concepción, the fifteen-year-old daughter of José Argüello, commander of the San Francisco presidio. She agreed, undoubtedly awed by the well-traveled nobleman and his tales of courtly life in St. Petersburg. But she was Roman Catholic and he Eastern Orthodox, so Rezanov explained that he would first have to speak with Russian religious authorities, promising to return soon for a wedding. The *Juno* was then loaded with bread, dried meat, and supplies from the missions.

Meanwhile, Langsdorff was permitted to visit missions San Francisco and San José and to make drawings of local residents, plants, and animals. His unflattering descriptions of the mission Indians—he called them “filthy,” “badly proportioned,” and “dull, heavy, and neglectful”—reveal the stultifying effects of mission life, not to mention his cultural biases. His visit came at the beginning of the single worst epidemic of the Spanish era—between 1806 and 1810, measles killed more than one-third of all neophytes in the San Francisco Bay Area but left the Spaniards untouched. “Measles have wreaked havoc upon the Indians of this province, but none at all upon the *gente de razón* [Spaniards],” noted Father Martín de Landaeta at Mission San Francisco on April 28, 1806. “We missionaries here find ourselves with about 400 sick.” About 150 neophytes at Mission San Francisco alone perished from measles during the Russians’ visit, a tragedy Langsdorff only mentioned once in passing.

The *Juno* sailed back to Sitka on May 21. Langsdorff was by this time quite disenchanted with Rezanov. “Though at Kamschatka large promises were made me, both in writing and orally, as to what should be done for the promotion of scientific undertakings, no alacrity has been shown in fulfilling these promises,” he complained in his journal. He secured permission to leave Rezanov at Sitka on June 19, 1806, trekking overland through Siberia. It took him almost two years to reach St. Petersburg. He went on to be elected a full member

of the Russian Academy of Sciences and appointed Russian consul-general at Rio de Janeiro. His diary of the Krusenstern expedition was published as *Voyages and Travels in Various Parts of the World* in 1813. Eight years later he caught a fever (probably malaria) and went mad while leading an expedition into the interior of Brazil. He spent the last thirty years of his life being cared for by a friend in Freiburg.

In June 1806, Rezanov wrote his account of, in his words, “the first step of a Russian on the soil of Nueva California.” Addressed to Russian Minister of Commerce Nikolai Petrovich Rumiantsev, his report was not published until 1863 in *Historical Review of the Organization of the Russian-American Company*. Three months after finishing it, Rezanov followed Langsdorff’s frigid overland path but died of fever and exhaustion in Krasnoiarsk, Siberia, on March 8, 1807. His true intentions regarding young Doña Concepción died with him. In what would become California’s most famous love story, the fifteen-year-old bride-to-be reportedly languished for thirty-five years before learning of his death. The following narrative of Rezanov and Langsdorff’s visit to San Francisco Bay, drawn from their accounts, begins on April 8, 1806.



Nikolai Petrovich Rezanov (1764–1807). Courtesy of The Bancroft Library.

NIKOLAI PETROVICH REZANOV AND
GEORG VON LANGSDORFF

The Rezanov Voyage

REZANOV: Embracing at once the opportunity offered by a favoring wind and tide to enter the *puerto* on the following morning [April 8, 1806], and the suspicious nature of the Spanish government being known to me, I thought it best to go straight through the gate and by the fort, in view of our desperate situation. I deemed it useless to send in and ask for permission to enter, since, in the event of refusal, we should necessarily perish at sea, and decided that two or three cannonballs would make less difference to us than refusal.

With all sails full, we ran for the *puerto*. As we neared the fort a great commotion was observed among the soldiers, and when abreast of it one of them asked, through a speaking-trumpet, "What ship is that?" "Russian," we replied. They shouted to us several times to anchor, but we merely replied, "*Sí, señor; sí, señor,*" and simulated an active effort to comply with their demand, but in the meantime we had passed the fort and were running up the *puerto*, and at a cannon-shot's distance complied.

Some twenty horsemen—among whom were the *comandante* and one *misionero*—soon after this demanded the surrender of the ship, but we were not alarmed, as their cavalry was within range of our grape-shot. I dispatched Lieutenant Davidov to inform them that I was the Russian officer of whose coming I hoped they had been notified by their government; that I should have proceeded to

Monterey had not my ship been damaged by storms, which compelled me to seek shelter in the first port; that I should leave as soon as the repairs were made.

The answer brought back was that orders had already been received from the Spanish sovereign to render us all necessary assistance, and that the *comandante* invited me to dine with him at the *presidio*, at the same time assuring me that all my requests should be promptly attended to. Inspired by gratitude, I thereupon went ashore and was met by Don Luís Antonio Argüello,¹ a son of the *comandante*, temporarily in command during the absence of his father. We were proffered saddlehorses, but as the *presidio* is not more than a verst [about two-thirds of a mile] from the shore, we went on foot, with the *comandante* and the *misionero padre* José Antonio Uría.

The cordial reception by the hospitable family of the *comandante* overwhelmed us. An invitation to dinner followed. We remained until evening, and then returned to the ship.

Don Luís informed me with marked courtesy and tactfulness that he must send a courier to the *gobernador* at Monterey, the capital, to advise him of my arrival, and that he therefore found himself compelled to ask where our ships, the *Nadeschda* and the *Neva*, were, of which they had previously been notified.

I replied that I had ordered them back to Russia; that I had been entrusted by the emperor with the command over all his American territories, and had visited them during the past year, having wintered at Norfolk Sound; that I had finally decided to visit the *gobernador* of Nueva California to confer with him, as the chief of a neighboring territory, as to our mutual interests.

¹ Luís Antonio Argüello (1784–1830), son of José Dario Argüello and brother of Concepción Argüello, was twenty-two years old at the time of Rezanov's visit in 1806. In 1817, he succeeded his father as *comandante* of the San Francisco *presidio* and went on to become California's first native-born *gobernador* (1822–1825).

Be pleased, gracious sire,² not to consider that it was from empty pride, but merely to impress the Spaniards with the importance of our possessions in the north and to further our interests with them, that I thus proclaimed myself *comandante*. The welfare, the interests of our country required it. In any case, even here I transgressed but very little, as I really have the chief command, and that by our emperor's order, and also by the power of attorney given me by the [Russian-American Company's] shareholders. I made no improper use of these, but, on the contrary, sacrificed myself every hour for the benefit of those whom I represented.

By the courier sent by Don Luís Argüello to the *gobernador*, I also sent a letter in which I thanked him for his gracious manifestations of hospitality and informed him that as soon as the vessel was repaired, I should leave for Monterey.

On the following day, the *misionero padres* of the Misión San Francisco de Asís extended to us an invitation to dinner. This *misión* is about an hour's ride from the *presidio*, and with my officers I went there in compliance with the invitation. In our conversation with the *misioneros* there, we touched upon the subject of trade, and it was very perceptible to us that they were strongly inclined thereto.

Later, in a more fitting connection, I shall have the honor of setting out for the consideration of your excellency the condition of all the *misiones* and *presidios*, the trade, surplus, and requirements of this territory; but now, gracious sire, be kind enough to permit me to invite your attention to what are perhaps but trifling matters, that I may show you how, imperceptibly to those of whom I shall speak, I accomplished my purpose, despite the desperate straits we were then in, and also the means I employed.

Upon our return from the *misión*—not only as a vehicle for the reciprocation of the dinners given by the *comandante* and the

² Rezanov addressed his account to Russian Minister of Commerce Nikolai Petrovich Rumiantsev.

misioneros, but also in order to hide from the Spaniards our distress and needfulness, of which the Boston vessels had told them to our disadvantage—I distributed fitting and valuable presents, thus displaying every evidence of wealth and demonstrating our generosity. My efforts were crowned with success. There was not one, either male or female, who did not receive something especially desired, and the hearts of the people were won for us by the general satisfaction following. Not only this, but their reports of the generosity of the Russians allured the *padres* from distant *misiones*, while those nearby voluntarily offered to supply us with a cargo of breadstuffs.

Perceiving the possibility of obtaining a cargo of breadstuffs at this *puerto* in a short time, I decided to go overland to Monterey and sent by courier a letter to the *gobernador*, stating that as the repairs to my ship would perhaps detain me a considerable time at San Francisco, I would respectfully ask him to permit me to visit him. His reply was framed in the most courteous terms. He would not permit me to go to so much trouble; he would undertake the journey, himself, the following day; and stated that he had sent orders that I should be assisted in everything. At the same time, he sent me, through the *comandante* temporal, official congratulations on my arrival.

Thereupon I recognized the suspicious nature of the Spanish government, which at every point prevents foreign visitors from gaining a knowledge of the interior of the country and from observing the weakness of their military defenses.

In the meantime, the excellent climate of Nueva California, the abundance of breadstuffs there, and the comparison of the resources of the country with our destitution were hourly subjects of conversation among the members of our crew. We noticed their inclination and desire to remain here permanently, and thereupon we took the necessary precautions against their desertion.

The third day after we arrived, three Bostonians and a Prussian, who, when we purchased the *Juno*, entered the company's service as sailors, expressed to me their desire to stay. I told them that I would consult the *comandante*, but he, when conferred with, refused to consent, whereupon I ordered their removal to a barren island, where they were held until the day of our departure.

In the meantime, we placed pickets on shore and established rounds, and a mounted patrol was given us by the Spaniards; but, in spite of every precaution, two of our most esteemed men, Mikhail Kalianin and Peter Polkanov, seized the opportunity to escape when at the creek washing their clothes, vanishing without a trace.

Subsequently I obtained the word of honor of the Spanish authorities that the deserters, if found, would be deported to Russia by way of Vera Cruz; but I ask your excellency that they be punished and returned to America to remain forever. Without severe punishment as an example, it will be hard to control the others.

While awaiting the arrival of the *gobernador* we made visits daily to the residence of the hospitable Argüellos and soon became on intimate terms with them. Loveliest of the lovely sisters of Don Luís, the *comandante* temporal, the Doña Concepción is the universally recognized beauty of Nueva California, and your excellency will concur with me when I say that our past sufferings were thus delightfully requited, for our time was passed very joyously.

LANGSDORFF: The Misión Santa Clara de Asís, lying between San Francisco and Monterey is—with regard to its fine situation, fertility of soil, population, and extent of buildings and grounds—considered the largest and richest *misión*. All the *misiones* have cattle in great numbers and an abundance of other productions necessary to the support of man; and the *padres*, in general, conduct themselves with such prudence, kindness, paternal care, and justice, in their at-



Georg Heinrich von Langsdorff (ca. 1774–1852). Courtesy of The Bancroft Library.

itude towards the *neófitos*, that tranquillity, happiness, obedience, and unanimity are the natural results of their methods. Corporal punishment commonly follows disobedience. The *padres* have recourse to the *presidios* only on very extraordinary occasions, as, for instance, when expeditions are sent out in pursuit of prospective

converts, or when couriers carrying communications require protection, or as a precaution against sudden attacks.

The number of soldiers being so small and their services so slight, it does not seem worthwhile to maintain an establishment for them. The *Presidio de San Francisco* has not more than forty, and it has three *misiones* under its protection. These are San Francisco (same name as the *presidio*), Santa Clara, and San José, the last named being established but a few years ago [1797]. There are seldom more than from three to five soldiers at any time at any *misión*, but this seemingly small number has hitherto been always found sufficient to keep the Indians under proper restraint. I was assured by a person worthy of credit that the Spanish *cortes* [representative assembly] does not spend less than a million *piastres* annually for the support of the *misiones* and their military establishments in the two Californias; and that, too, without deriving any advantage from them, other than the spreading of Christianity in these *provincias* of Nueva España.

Each of the *padres* has several horses for his own use, and when one starts out on an expedition for finding prospective *neófitos*, he is always escorted by one or more soldiers, who precede him on the way. At such times the soldiers commonly throw over their breast and shoulders a deerskin in mantle, which is intended as a protection against the arrows of the Indians, these being incapable of piercing leather. This mantle is worn on other occasions, also, as on dress parade, and when approaching a *presidio* or *misión*. By a royal command, it is not permissible for the *misioneros* to go any distance without military protection. As they carry only the Bible and the cross as their personal protection, a military escort accompanies them at such times.

This information was imparted while we were enjoying our breakfast, after which we were taken around to see whatever was worthy of notice.

Behind the residence of the *padres* there is a large courtyard, enclosed by houses. Here live the Indian women of the *misión*, who are employed under the immediate supervision of the *padres* in useful occupations, such as cleaning and combing wool, spinning, weaving, etc. Their principal business is the manufacture of a woolen cloth and blankets for the Indians' own use. The wool of the sheep here is very fine and of superior quality, but the tools and looms are of a crude make. As the *misioneros* are the sole instructors of these people, who themselves know very little about such matters—scarcely even understanding the fulling—the cloth is far from the perfection that might be achieved.

All the girls and women are closely guarded in separate houses—as though under lock and key—and kept at work. They are but seldom permitted to go out in the day, and never at night. As soon, however, as a girl marries, she is free, and, with her husband, lives in one of the Indian villages belonging to the *misión*. These villages are called “*las rancherías*.” Through such arrangements or precautions, the *misioneros* hope to bind the *neófitos* to the *misión* and spread their faith with more ease and security. About a hundred paces from the buildings properly called the *misión* lies one of these Indian villages or barracks. It consists of eight long rows of houses, where each family lives separate and apart from the others. The Indian *neófitos* here are about twelve hundred in number.

The principal food of the Indians is a thick soup composed of meat, vegetables, and pulse. Because of the scarcity of fish here, or the want of proper means of catching them, the *misioneros* obtained a special dispensation from the pope allowing the eating of meat on fast days. The food is apportioned three times a day—morning, noon, and evening—in large ladlefuls. At mealtimes a big bell is rung, and each family sends a vessel to the kitchen and is served as many measures as there are members. I was present once at the time the soup was served, and it appeared incomprehensible to me how

anyone could consume so much nourishing food three times a day. According to what we were told by our *cicerone*, from forty to fifty oxen are killed every week for the community. Besides this meal, bread, Indian corn, peas, beans, and other kinds of pulse are distributed in abundance, without any regular or stated allowance.

After satisfying our curiosity at the *ranchería*, we inspected several other serviceable institutions for the promotion of production and economy in the establishment. There was a building for melting tallow and another for making soap; there were workshops for locksmiths and blacksmiths, and for cabinet-makers and carpenters; there were houses for the storage of tallow, soap, butter, salt, wool, and ox-hides (these being articles of exportation), with store-rooms for corn, peas, beans, and other kinds of pulse.

When one considers that in this way two or three *misionero padres* take upon themselves such a sort of voluntary exile from their country, only to spread Christianity, and to civilize a wild and uncultivated race of men, to teach them husbandry and various useful arts, cherishing and instructing them as if they were their own children, providing them with dwellings, food, and clothing, with everything else necessary for their subsistence, and maintaining the utmost order and regularity of conduct—when all these particulars, I say, are considered, one cannot sufficiently admire the zeal and activity that carry them through labors so arduous, nor forbear to wish the most complete success to their undertaking.

Meanwhile, we were called to dinner and were served with a very appetizing soup seasoned with herbs and vegetables of different kinds, roast fowl, leg of mutton, different kinds of vegetables dressed in different ways, salad, pastry, preserved fruits, and many fine sorts of food dishes prepared with milk. All these were things to which our palates had been so long strangers that we were not a little pleased with them. The wine offered us had been brought from the peninsula of Antigua [Baja] California and was of but an

ordinary quality. Soon after dinner we were served with tea of poor quality and chocolate of superexcellence.

Thereafter we were shown the kitchen garden, but it did not equal our expectations. There was very little fruit, and that, of inferior quality. Most of the beds were overgrown with weeds. Of fine vegetables and herbs there were few. Northwest winds, which prevail on this coast, and a soil dry and sandy by nature, are insurmountable obstacles to horticulture. The only vegetables that grow well in the gardens are asparagus, cabbage, several kinds of lettuce, onions, and potatoes. In outlying fields, more sheltered from the winds, peas, beans, corn, and other pulse are cultivated and thrive fairly well. Corn is here less productive than it is in some other parts of Nueva California. Notwithstanding this, the Spanish government thought it necessary to establish a *misión* in the neighborhood of such an excellent port as that of San Francisco, with a *presidio* for its protection. Both establishments are in a flourishing condition, principally on account of the great number of cattle bred....

Although we acquired but a slight knowledge of the Indians of this *misión* on this day, I will combine here all that I learned concerning them with my observations during our entire stay.

The *neófitos* of the Misión San Francisco are the original inhabitants of these and the neighboring parts. A few come from the mouth of a large river that flows into the northernmost part of the harbor, and some from the neighborhood of Port Bodega, which lies to the north of San Francisco. All these people that inhabit the coasts of Nueva California are divided into tribes, under the names of Estero, Tuiban, and Tamien.³ Some other tribes, who live more

³The Tuiban and Tamien Indians both spoke an Ohlone language and lived along the southern coast of San Francisco Bay; Estero (meaning "estuary") was not a tribal group but an arbitrary designation given by the *padres* to a variety of Indians, including the Alson and Tuiban.

inland to the eastward of these, and who were formerly in continual warfare with them, called themselves Cholvon and Tamcan.⁴

The former are nomadic, with no fixed abode. Their food consists partly of fish, sea dogs, shellfish, and other sea foods, partly of animals killed in the chase, and partly of seeds, herbs, and roots. The last mentioned are considered the greatest dainties.

Their habitations are small round huts of straw, cone-shaped, erected at any stopping place. These huts are burned upon their leaving, and the hut in which a person dies is also given to the flames. Both sexes go almost naked, wearing merely a girdle tied around the waist. Only in the coldest days of winter do they throw over their bodies a covering of deerskin or the skin of the sea otter. They also make for themselves garments of the feathers of several kinds of water fowl, particularly ducks and geese. These they bind closely together in a string-like fashion, which strings are afterwards joined tight, making a dress of a feather-fur appearance. Both sides are alike, and it is so warm that it would be an excellent protection against the cold of even a more northerly clime. Sea otter skins are also cut by them in small strips, and these they twist together and join in the same manner as with the feathers just described, and also as with the feathers, both sides alike. These coverings are worn principally by the women, and but very rarely by the males.

These Indians are of middling or rather short stature, and their color is of such a dark brown that it approaches black. This color is owing very much to their filthy mode of living, to the power of the sun's rays, to their custom of smearing their bodies with mud and ember dust, and their slovenly way of wearing their scanty covering.

Their lips are large, thick, and protruding; their noses broad, flat, and negro-like. Their features in many respects resemble those of the negro, and their color also, but their black hair, however, is

⁴The Cholvon and Tamcan Indians both spoke Northern Yokuts and lived along the Old River branch of the lower San Joaquín River.

in the highest degree different, being long and straight. Left to grow naturally, it would often hang down even below the hips, but they commonly cut it to the length of four or five inches, when it sticks out like bristles, and this to the eyes of a European is very repellent. The forehead appears extremely low, as the hair grows very far down towards the eyes. The eyebrows are not very hirsute. The beard is but moderately thick, and many pinch out the hairs with mussel shells.

None of the men that we saw were over five feet in height. They were badly proportioned, and their appearance was so dull, heavy, and neglectful that we were all agreed that we had never before seen the human race on such a low level.

Their weapons consist of the bow and arrow, and as these contribute essentially to the acquisition of many of the necessaries of life, their construction seems a principal object of their skill and industry. The shape of the bow is pleasing in appearance. It is made of wood, is from three to four-and-a-half feet long, neatly constructed, and drawn together very ingeniously with tendons of the deer. By this means the wood is kept in place securely, and the bow has such elasticity that very little strength and dexterity are required to draw the arrow. Both the bow and the arrow are very neatly made, and the arrows are pointed with vitrified lava, or obsidian, which is inserted in the shaft and bound with tendons. The Spaniards, on their first encounters in the country, had reason to remember with sorrow the skill of the Indians in the use of this weapon.

Among the articles in use in their habitations, I saw baskets made of the bark of trees.⁵ These were so ingeniously woven, compact, and impervious to water that they are used as drinking-vessels, food dishes, and even as roasting-pans. Corn and pulse are put in them, and the Indians, by turning them quickly and dexterously over a slow charcoal fire, get every grain thoroughly browned

⁵ Actually split roots and stalks.

without the basket being scorched in the least.⁶ Many of these baskets, or vessels, are ornamented with the scarlet feathers of the *Oriolus phoeniceus*, or with the black crest-feathers of the California partridge (*Tetraonis cristati*), or with shells and corals.

However dull and heavy, however filthy, ugly, and disgusting these people appear, they show a great fondness for ornaments and sports. Their ornaments are of many kinds and are generally fashioned of shells and feathers. Among the shells chiefly used is a sort of sea-ear—probably the *Haliotis gigantea* [abalone]—which abounds on these coasts, chiefly in the vicinity of Monterey, and which, in brilliancy of color, is scarcely inferior to the *Haliotis iris* of New Zealand. Small rings are made of another sort of shell [clams], but I never saw a perfect one. These rings are all of the same size, and are of perfectly accurate make and bored through the middle without the aid of any kind of instrument. In appearance they are much like glass beads and are strung together to make necklaces.

Their most beautiful head ornament is made of the two middle tail feathers of the golden-winged woodpecker (*Picus auratus*), the shafts of which are naturally of a brilliant vermilion color. They are stripped to within an inch of the end, and then very cleverly strung and bound together so as to form a sort of bandeau for the head, the effect of which is very pleasing.

Among other curiosities that I procured from these people—in exchange for European glass beads, silk ribbons, knives, and other articles—was one of these bandeaus, which consisted of 450 feathers; hence 225 birds were required in the making of it. I could not imagine, nor did I learn, how so large a number of these birds was procured, as the golden-winged woodpecker is a bird that frequents only a heavily-timbered territory, and there is very little timber within the region of San Francisco. Another head ornament, which is usually worn by these Indians at their dances, is made of

⁶ Rather, hot rocks were added to heat up grains and soups.

the feathers of a vulture very common in these parts, the *Vultus aura*. The tail and wing feathers are woven together in such a way that the ornament resembles a Turkish fez.

Tattooing is a common practice, but principally among the women. Some have a double or triple line from each corner of the mouth down to the chin, while others have, in the middle of the chin only, a few concentric stripes, which converge. Most have simple long and cross stripes from the chin over the neck down to the breast and upon the shoulders.

Among all their amusements there is none in which they take so much delight as in their dances. But of these I shall speak more particularly later. Another of their games or pastimes they call *tussi*. A number sit together in a circle, one of whom has a little stick in his hand. This he passes, in a covert manner, from one hand to the other, singing the while. When he thinks he has twirled and twisted it about so effectually that the company does not know the hand that holds it, he turns suddenly to some one of them, and, with both hands shut and looking at him steadfastly, utters a loud "Ha!" It is the part of the one so addressed to guess in which hand the stick is. Should his guess prove accurate, he takes the stick and juggles with it in turn, but if he misses, a loud laugh is raised against him by the whole company.

When it is considered that two or three *padres* and four or five soldiers keep in order a community of from a thousand to fifteen hundred rough and uncivilized men, and make them pursue a course of life wholly different from that to which they had always been accustomed, it must be presumed that the cause is principally to be found in the mildness and forbearance with which they are treated, and in the paternal care and kindness extended toward them. I must, however, also attribute the cause, in no small measure, to the simplicity of these poor creatures, who, in stature no less than in mind, are certainly of a very inferior race of human beings. I believe them

wholly incapable of forming among themselves any regular and combined plan for their own emancipation.

Although it must be allowed generally, as facts incontestable, that a moderate climate is the most favorable to the human species, and that the mild regions of the globe are those which nature points out to man as the most friendly for his habitation, here we find a most striking exception to the general rule.

Here, on this western coast of North America in the thirty-eighth degree of north latitude, where the aborigines live in a very moderate and equable climate, where there is no lack of food and no care about habitations or clothing, where by hunting they can obtain sustenance, where an abundance of roots, seeds, fruits, and the products of the sea, in many varieties, are at their hands—these people are, notwithstanding, small, ugly, and of bad proportion in their persons, and heavy and dull in their minds. Yet several tribes living on the same coast, on the contrary, as, for example, the Kolosh, in the fifty-eighth and fifty-ninth degrees of north latitude, are strong, well built, and handsome, and possessing so much acuteness of mind that by their shrewdness or cunning they have often foiled both the English and the Russians. I frankly acknowledge that the phenomenon of these Californian pigmies, in such a mild climate and with an abundance of food, is to me a puzzle.

But I will return to the *religiosos* of the *misiones*. Properly speaking, they are merely the stewards through whose instruction the *neófitos* obtain the comforts of life, a habitation, and food and clothing. The *neófitos* are principally employed in such work as husbandry, tending cattle, and shearing sheep, or in handiwork, such as building, preparing tallow, and making soap and household articles. They are also employed in the transportation of provisions, as well as other goods, from one *misión* or *presidio* to another. The most laborious work, the grinding of the corn, is left almost entirely to the women. It is rubbed between two quadrangular oblong stones

until ground into meal. Although the flour made is very white, the bread is very heavy and hard. The excellent and friendly La Pérouse, with the object of overcoming this fault in the bread, left a hand mill here, but it was not in existence at the time of our visit, neither had it been used as a model for the manufacture of others.⁷

When we consider that in the whole world there is no other country in which windmills are more numerous than in Spain, it appears incredible that these very useful machines have never been put to use here. I learned, however, that in preferring the poorly ground flour produced by the methods just described, the good *misioneros* are really actuated by economic motives. As they have more Indians of both sexes under their care than they can keep constantly employed the whole year, they fear that the introduction of mills would only be productive of idleness, whereas under the present system the *neófitos* can be kept busy making flour during the periods of unemployment.

The cattle, horses, and sheep do not require any particular attention. The herds are left in the open the whole year through. Only a sufficient number are kept in the neighborhood of the establishment to serve immediate wants. When a supply of cattle is wanted, some of the *neófitos* and soldiers are sent out to the pastures on horseback, and with riatas, which they throw very dexterously, catch by the horns the number required.

The immense herds of cattle now seen here are supposed to have sprung from five head brought to this *misión* in the year 1776. The *gobernador* of Monterey,⁸ and with whom we became acquainted during our stay, informed me that the cattle had increased

⁷In reality, French navigator Jean François de La Pérouse (who visited California for ten days in 1786) left the hand mill at Mission San Carlos in Monterey.

⁸José Joaquín de Arrillaga (ca. 1750–1814), twice *gobernador* of California (1792–1794 and 1800–1806), arrived from Monterey ten days after the Russians anchored at San Francisco.

to such a degree in the years immediately preceding—in the three northerly and contiguous *misiones* of San Francisco, Santa Clara, and Santa Cruz—that some months ago he had been compelled to send out a party of soldiers to kill not less than 20,000, wherever they should meet them, as he began to be afraid that from the immense increase there might in a short time be a lack of sufficient pasturage.

Plowing, etc., is done by oxen. Horses are kept principally for military service and for the use of the *misioneros*, and for the transportation of goods and provisions from one establishment to another one. Mules are also employed for similar transportation. The carts and wagons are of rough construction. Here, as in Spain and Portugal, block-wheels are in use, and they are generally very far from being perfectly round.

The government has not, nor have the *padres*, anything in view other than the propagation of the Christian religion. Hence it may be supposed that the Indians, to whose maintenance and instruction all their efforts are devoted, must be much happier in their condition of comparative civilization than they were before, since they are permitted to retain their former habits and customs not interdicted by the *misioneros*.

In their dances, amusements, sports, ornaments, etc., they are liberally indulged. They have a little property of their own in fowls and pigeons. Upon obtaining permission, they may go hunting and fishing. Altogether, they can live much more free from care than in their previous wild, natural state.

Notwithstanding all that has been said in favor of the treatment of the Indians at the *misiones*, an irresistible desire for freedom sometimes breaks out in individuals. This may probably be referred to the natural genius of the race. Their attachment to a wandering life, their love of alternate diversion from hunting and fishing to entire idleness, seem, in their eyes, to overbalance all the benefits they enjoy at the *misiones*, and these to us appear very great. The

result is every now and then attempts to escape are made. On such occasions, no sooner is the *neófito* missed than search for him is at once begun, and as it is always known to what tribe he belongs, and on account of the enmity that subsists among the different tribes, he can never take refuge with any other—a circumstance which perhaps he thought not of beforehand—it is hardly possible for him to escape those sent in his pursuit. He is almost always brought back to the *misión*, where he is bastinadoed, and an iron rod a foot or a foot-and-a-half long and an inch in diameter is fastened to one of his feet. This has a twofold use, in that it prevents the Indian from making another attempt to escape, and has the effect of terrifying the others and deterring them from indulging in escapades of a similar nature....

As soon as we were informed of the arrival of the *gobernador* [Arrillaga], Lieutenant Davidov was sent ashore to welcome the company and extend our warmest acknowledgments for the friendly manner in which we had been received. On the following morning, when we expected our visit to be returned, there came two *religiosos* tendering the apologies of the *gobernador* that, being advanced in years and of a feeble constitution, he hoped to be excused from returning the visit, and at the same time requesting Rezanov, with all of the officers, to visit him at the *presidio*. The invitation was accepted, and we all went to the *presidio*, where we became acquainted with the *gobernador*, a venerable-looking man of sixty years. He had come a distance of no less than twenty-five German miles,⁹ solely for the purpose of showing respect to us and of making our stay as agreeable as possible.

The principal matter to be agreed upon between Rezanov and the *gobernador* was the furnishing of food supplies and other

⁹Monterey to San Francisco is about 100 miles; Rezanov commented that Arrillaga, “whose hair was white, was actually fagged out from the journey on horseback, as there is no other mode of traveling overland in California.”

necessaries to the Russian settlements. Rezanov thought that a trade might be established between these and the *provincias* of Nueva España, which would be of mutual benefit, and that it might be carried on by vessels running from one to the other at stated periods.

The *gobernador*, however, did not think he had the authority to establish such an intercourse, but he agreed that the proposition was one worthy of consideration as being mutually advantageous. He said that the proposal should be submitted to the cabinet at Madrid, as not even the viceroy of Nueva España had the authority to entertain it.

There was, however, no difficulty about getting the supplies necessary for the continuance of our voyage. The *gobernador* even dispatched couriers to all the neighboring *misiones*, authorizing the sending of corn, meal, flour, meat, salt, and other supplies. We were permitted, as we could not pay in cash, to make payments in such merchandise as we carried and as was desired....

We often amused ourselves with shooting the crested partridges and rabbits, which abound upon the surrounding sand hills. 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 was 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. In vain we sought for [mountain] lions (*Felis concolor*), tigers (*Felis onca*), and bears. The last are very numerous here, while the others are found but rarely. On the north shore of the bay the roe abounds, and the chase of it is very alluring, and yields an abundance. In a number of aquatic trips, I found most of the birds with which I had become familiar at Sitka, e.g., *Pelicanus*, *Colymbus*, *Anas perspicillata* and *A. nigra*, *Haematopus ostralegus*, and others. There were also seals of various kinds, and, pre-eminent, the precious sea otter, which, almost unheeded, was swimming about the bay in numbers.

Almost every afternoon some of us were at the *presidio*, and the evening parties were ordinarily enlivened by dancing and music. The sternness of Fray José Uría, who was almost a daily visitor at the *presidio*, was in striking contrast with the vivacity of Fray Pedro De la Cueva, who lived there with the Argüello family. When the former spoke, all was silence and profound attention, but hardly had the latter opened his lips than laughter followed from the whole company. He seemed to abound in wit and humor, and entertained us in a manner most agreeable.

The popular dance here is called *barrego*. It is performed by two couples, who stand opposite each other. They sing a tune in six-eighths time and stamp the measure with their feet, making the figure of a half-chain, then balance opposite each other to a slow tune, when they recommence the dance. We were at some pains to teach the *señoras* English country dances, which they liked so much that we afterwards commonly danced them. They seemed particularly well pleased that all could dance at one time. Some soldiers of the garrison, who could play the violin and guitar, were our musicians.

Don Luís Argüello had talked much to us ever since we arrived of the combats between animals. These form a part of the amusements of the place. On the 10th of April he sent out eight soldiers on horseback to catch a live bear to fight with a wild bull at the *presidio*. They returned on the evening of the same day with a large dark-brown bear, taken by means of ropes and slings. He lay upon an ox hide stretched over branches of trees bound together, and had been drawn on this for some miles by a pair of oxen. He had been muzzled, and his paws were tied fast together. This confinement, together with the way in which he had been dragged, and his rage, had heated him exceedingly. When he arrived at the *presidio* most of the bands securing him were loosened. Water was thrown over his body, and he seemed much refreshed by this. Afterwards he was tied, by his hind feet only, to a stake driven into the ground near a

pool. He soon began to drink of the water and splashed about in it to cool himself. No one dared to venture near him, for he growled and glanced about furiously.

An order was now given to catch some wild bulls to fight with the bear, and the next day was set for the combat. We awaited the time impatiently, and at the appointed hour looked eagerly for the horses, but when they arrived we were greatly disappointed, as we were told that the bear had died in the night. According to what we were told by the Spaniards, the bear generally gets the worst of the fight.

To make some amends for our disappointment, the *comandante* promised that we should have a bullfight, and this fight was had in the afternoon. Several soldiers, on foot and on horseback, killed one bull after another with spears, but the animals did not fall until they had received many wounds.

As these bullfights are well known as one of the national sports of the Spaniards and Portuguese, and have been often described, it would be useless here to repeat such descriptions, especially as none of the combatants on this occasion displayed any dexterity or skill. I ought, however, to say that I could not help being impressed upon seeing that the *padres*, who in all their instructions to their *neófitos* insist so strongly upon the cultivation of tenderness of heart and feelings of compassion, never offer any opposition to these national sports, though there is no denying that they are very cruel and barbarous. Perhaps, accustomed as they are to the sport from their youth up, all sense of cruelty is lost, and they are no more affected by the sight of this worthless slaughter of animals, in a manner revolting to those unaccustomed to it, than the natives of Nukahiva¹⁰ are by the eating of human flesh.

In the same light must be regarded cockfights, which are quite frequent in Nueva California, and are, it must be admitted, to the

¹⁰ Possibly Nukualofa, capital of Tonga, a group of islands in the South Pacific visited by Captain James Cook in the 1770s and colonized by British missionaries after 1797.

humane, no less cruel and repugnant. We saw no more of this sport than the little knives that are fastened to the legs of the birds when they fight.

Our intimate association daily with the Argüello family—the music and dancing, the sports—aroused in the mind of Rezanov some new and important speculations. These led to the formation of a plan of a very different nature from the original scheme for the establishment of commercial relations.

The bright, sparkling eyes of Doña Concepción had made upon him a deep impression and pierced his inmost soul. He conceived the idea that through a marriage with the daughter of the *comandante* of the Presidio de San Francisco a close bond would be formed for future business intercourse between the Russian-American Company and the *provincia* of Nueva California. He had therefore decided to sacrifice himself, by wedding Doña Concepción, to the welfare of his country, and to bind in friendly alliance both Spain and Russia.

REZANOV: Seeing that our situation was not getting better, expecting every day that some serious unpleasantness would arise, and having but little confidence in my own men, I decided that I should assume a serious bearing where I had before been but formally polite and gracious.

Associating daily with and paying my addresses to the beautiful Spanish *señorita*, I could not fail to perceive her active, venture-some disposition and character, her unlimited and overweening desire for rank and honors, which, with her age of fifteen years, made her, alone among her family, dissatisfied with the land of her birth. She always referred to it jokingly, thus, as “a beautiful country, a warm climate, an abundance of grain and cattle—and nothing else.”

I described Russia to her as a colder country, but still abounding in everything, and she was willing to live there, and at length I imperceptibly created in her an impatient desire to hear something more explicit from me, and when I proffered my hand, she accepted.

My proposal was a shock to her parents, whose religious upbringing was fanatical. The difference in religion, besides the prospective separation from their daughter, was, in contemplation, a dreadful blow to them.

They sought the counsel of the *misioneros*, who did not know what to do. The parents forced their daughter to church and had her confessed. They urged her to refuse me, but her brave front finally quieted them all. The holy *padres* decided to leave the final decision to the throne of Rome.

Not being able to bring about the marriage, I had a written conditional agreement made and forced a betrothal. Consent was given on condition that the agreement be kept secret pending the decision of the pope. Thereafter my department in the house of Comandante Argüello was that of a near relative, and I managed this *puerto* of his Catholic majesty as my interests called for.

LANGSDORFF: Misiones de San Francisco de Asís, Santa Clara de Asís, San José—the three most northerly of the Franciscan *misiones* of Nueva California—lie near the southeast part of the Puerto de San Francisco; and although water communication from one to the other would be of the utmost benefit, it seems almost incredible that in not one of them, no, not even in the Presidio or Puerto de San Francisco, is there a vessel or boat of any kind.

Perhaps the *misioneros* are afraid that if they had boats the escape of the Indians—who never wholly lose their love of freedom or attachment to their original habits—might be facilitated, and

therefore consider it better to confine their communication with one another to the means afforded by land—to the horse.

The Spaniard, as well as his nursling the Indian, is but seldom forced to trust himself to the waves, and this may be the reason that communication by water here is hardly yet in its infancy. When such an occasion does arise, they make a kind of boat of straw, reeds, and rushes, bound so compactly that it is water-tight, and in this they manage to go very well from one shore to the other.¹¹ It is called by the Spaniards *balsa*. The oar used is a long, narrow pole, somewhat wider at the ends, with which they row, sometimes on one side and sometimes on the other.

This total lack of vessels—which are, so to speak, keys to all their southern and eastern possessions—is a strong proof of the recklessness of the Spanish government. It is because of this lack that they had to wait so long on shore on the day of our arrival, and were thus precluded from all communication with us until we sent out our ship's boat

As Misión San José¹² lies on the opposite or southeastern shore of the *puerto*, at a distance of sixteen leagues, communication by water would prove of infinite benefit to the *misioneros*. Notwithstanding that this convenience is so easily within their reach, they have no other means of intercourse than that by land. Thus they are obliged to go round the bay—at least three times the distance.

The difficulty of conveyance by land, the small number of *neófitos* at the Misión San José, and the breaking out, this year, of an infectious disease (the measles, hitherto unknown in California)—which had spread from Antigua California to the northern settlements and had for some weeks attacked great numbers of the

¹¹ A *balsa* is not watertight, but buoyant because of the lightness of its tule reeds.

¹² Misión San José de Guadalupe was founded by Father-President Fermín de Lasuén in 1797. It is in present-day Fremont.

Indians in the contiguous *misiones*—caused much delay in the delivery of the supplies agreed upon. Count Rezanov therefore applied to Gobernador Arrillaga for permission to send our ship's boats to Misión San José, so that the delivery of the supplies might be expedited. The advantage accruing, in saving the labor of men and horses, was so obvious that the *gobernador* readily consented....

On the 20th, therefore, with a sailor and a huntsman, I set out in a three-seated *bidarka* that I had brought from Sitka. We left San Francisco early in the morning and about noon reached the plain lying in front of the *misión*. We then sought for the principal channel, which is supposed to be in the vicinity of several hills, and these are indeed the principal guides in finding it. They stretch from the northwest to the southeast and are surrounded by a muddy shallow extending a considerable distance along the shore, to avoid which one must steer to the west until the southern hills (which on our first attempt on the 14th we had mistaken for an island) lie to the east. The channel that must then be taken winds among the heights, and the lowest two of these left to the north and the others, which are much higher, to the south. This channel runs at first in a northwesterly direction, and then, after many windings, southeasterly into the interior. At flood-tide the depth of water is from six to nine feet, but even at ebb-tide it is navigable by small boats. At low water it is almost impossible to land, on account of the muddy shore, and at high water the landing is not unattended with difficulty. The many little channels intersecting this flat land make it an absolute labyrinth, and as we were not acquainted with the terrain, we were mistaken at many times and had to turn back, often missing the main by turning into a side channel.

Wearied at length by continually going astray, I ascended a hill nearby, where I could get a better view of the terrain, and saw a landing place from which we could proceed overland to the *misión*, which lay three-and-a-half leagues east-northeast. The country now

to be traveled over rises gradually over the low-lying plain, and is bounded by a chain of moderately high hills, which stretch from the north-northwest to the south-southeast. Numerous herds of horses and cattle were running wild here without any attention being paid to them. The bulls even render the country unsafe for foot-passengers. We also saw many foxes and a large wolf that ran away frightened. The foxes seemed to live on the most peaceable terms with the young calves and followed the cows like the calves.

Shortly before sunset we arrived at the *misión*, very much fatigued. It was now under the charge of two *misioneros*, Padre Luís [Gil y Taboada] and Padre Pedro De la Cueva. The latter only was at the *misión*. He received us with open arms and sent at once horses to the shore to fetch our baggage and the sailor. We had left the sailor to take care of the *bidarka*, and he was now relieved by some Indians. Fray Luís was now at San Francisco on a short visit. On the morning of the 21st, all the Indian *neófitos* were assembled to receive from Fray Pedro their allotted work for the day. He had promised, when I saw him at San Francisco, to entertain me with an Indian dance at his *misión*, and he therefore now announced to them that they should have a holiday, and that they might dress themselves in their best and prepare for the dance. He distributed, for this purpose, a number of ornaments among the best dancers, who immediately withdrew with them to make the necessary preparations.

In the meantime, Fray Pedro showed me about the buildings and grounds belonging to his *misión*. They are of considerable extent, although it is only eight years since work was begun on them. Grain in the storehouses, as to quantity, greatly exceeded my expectations, there being over 2,000 fanegas of wheat, and a proportionate quantity of maize, barley, peas, beans, etc. The kitchen-garden is exceptionally well laid out and kept in very good order. The soil is everywhere productive, and the fruit trees, although still small, are doing very well. A rivulet runs through the garden, with sufficient

water to irrigate. Some vineyards have been planted within the past few years, with vines now yielding exceedingly well. The wine is sweet and resembles Málaga.

The site of the establishment is exceedingly well chosen, and the common opinion is that the *misión* will in a few years be one of the richest and best in Nueva California. The one and only disadvantage is an entire lack of forests of tall timber. The native Indians have, now and then, thoughtlessly, simply to make a bonfire, set fire to the forests and burned down large tracts, leaving few trees standing;¹³ hence timber for building purposes must be brought from a distance of several miles. But, in comparison with other *misiones*, this disadvantage is compensated by the presence, in the neighborhood, of chalk hills and an excellent clay, whereby brick kilns may be erected and the main structures built of brick.

The *misión* is richer in grain than in cattle, and the number of cattle slaughtered weekly is hence much smaller than at Misión San Francisco, but the distribution of corn and pulse is much greater. The interior arrangement and organization of this *misión* is entirely the same as that of Misión San Francisco. The habitations of the Indians—*las rancherías*—are not yet finished, so that the *neófitos* live for the most part in families, in straw huts of a conical form.

Fray Pedro, who showed me about everywhere, invited me—when we had seen all that was worth seeing—to go and see the Indians getting ready for the dance. We went to a rivulet, by the side of which the dancers were gathered, very busy in smearing their bodies over with charcoal, red clay, and chalk. While one Indian was ornamenting his own breast, abdomen, and thighs, another was painting his back with various regular figures. Some were covering their nude bodies all over with down, which gave them rather the appearance of monkeys than of human beings. Their heads, ears,

¹³ Actually, Indian burning practices—mimicking lightning fires—carefully managed the landscape, maintaining open woodlands and meadows.

and necks were set off with a great variety of ornaments, but, except a covering tied around the waist, their entire bodies were nude. The women were at the same time, in their huts, performing the offices of the toilet, and were all, consistently with the customs of decorum, dressed. Their faces and necks, only, were painted, and they were adorned with a profusion of shells, feathers, corals, etc.

The Indians assembled in the courtyard toward noon. They are very different from the Indians of Misión San Francisco, as to size, appearance, and build. The men are well-built and almost all are above middling stature. Very few indeed are what may be called undersized. Their complexions are dark, but not negro-like, and if their physiognomy cannot absolutely be called pleasing, there is nothing about it that would provoke aversion. I thought that they strongly resembled the northern tribes. They have very coarse black hair, and some are possessed of extraordinary strength. In general, the women seem proportionately taller than the men, and many are over five feet high. If there were not any, either among the men or women, that I could call handsome, I did not note in one the dull, heavy, and repugnant look of the *neófitos* of San Francisco. The Indians of this *misión* are indeed generally considered the handsomest in Nueva California, and hence the Spanish soldiers, in the absence of Spanish women, often marry the Indian women of this *misión*.¹⁴

The dancers were divided into two companies. Each distinguished itself by specific ornaments and a special kind of song. One of these companies was composed of Indians inhabiting the coast, and the other of Indians belonging to inland tribes. The coast Indians were not so well made, nor so strong, nor so good-looking, as those of the interior. These neighboring tribes formerly lived at great mutual enmity. Although they are now united here by the bond of

¹⁴Perhaps the relative "handsomeness" of the neophytes of Mission San José was due to the fact that they had been living at the mission a far shorter time than those at Mission San Francisco.

religion, the old hostility is so rooted in them that it is still apparent. As an instance of this, the *misioneros* cannot induce them to intermarry. They will unite themselves with only those of their own tribe, and it is an exception that they mingle or associate with members of any tribe other than their own.

In their dances the Indians remain almost always in the same place, endeavoring—partly with their bows and arrows, partly with the feathers they hold in their hands and wear on their heads, and also by measured springs, by different movements of their bodies, and by facial contortions—to imitate scenes of battle or of domestic life. Their music consists of singing and clapping with a stick split at one end. The women have their own particular song and their own particular manner of dancing. They hop about near the men, but never in time with them. Their principal action or practice is in pressing the abdomen with the thumb and forefinger, first to one side and then to the other, in regular measure. As soon as the men begin to dance, the women also begin, and cease the moment the men cease.

At about two o'clock we sat down to a very fine dinner, and afterwards went again to see the Indians, who were still engaged in dancing and were now about to enact a mock battle. A large straw figure represented the enemy, and a number of the men, armed with bows and arrows, sprang and danced about with fierce gesticulations and contortions to defy their adversary, who, had he been able, would have done likewise. One of the Indians finally gave a signal, and at the same moment the straw figure was pierced with many arrows, whereupon it was presented in triumph to the man who personated the chief.

Upon this occasion I perceived that most of the Indians were skillful marksmen. Yet it appeared to me that if the enemy was courageous and would attend more to the use of his weapons and less to gesticulations, he could hardly fail to win. These people were



"A Dance of the Indians at the Mission of St. Joseph [San Jose] in New California," 1806, by Georg von Langsdorff. "The hair of these people is very coarse, thick, and stands erect; in some it is powdered with down feathers," noted Langsdorff. "Their bodies are fantastically painted with charcoal dust, red clay, and chalk. The foremost dancer is ornamented all over with down feathers, which gives him a monkey-like appearance; the hindermost has had the whimsical idea of painting his body to imitate the uniform of a Spanish soldier, with his boots, stockings, breeches, and upper garments." *Courtesy of The Bancroft Library.*

never in the habit of eating the enemy killed in battle, the greatest endeavor of each party being to steal the young girls and the wives of the enemy.

Another party of Indians danced before a large fire, from which each one, apparently for his own gratification, took, now and then, a glowing ember as large as a walnut, and without further ceremony put it into his mouth and swallowed it. It was not deception. I watched them very closely and saw it done repeatedly, although it is utterly beyond my comprehension how it could be done without the mouth being burned.

I was also entertained with a representation of a hunting party. The Indians fasten the horns of a deer on their heads and throw a portion of the skin over their shoulders. Thus disguised, they lurk in the high grass, where the stags and the roes come to feed, imitating their actions so well that, though naturally shy and timid, they are duped and allow the Indians, with their bows and arrows, to come within a few feet of them. Several are often killed without the others having any idea of their peril.

Directly east, about seven leagues from Misión San José, there is an arm of a great river [San Joaquín River] that first winds toward the north, and then, making a turn to the west, empties itself at last into the bay of San Francisco at its northeastern part. In the region of this river there are numerous Indian villages, but the natives do not yet consort with the Spaniards or the baptized Indians. When Misión San José was first founded they became troublesome from time to time. Only a year-and-a-half before I was there, they had murdered five soldiers and dangerously wounded one of the *padres* and another soldier. Upon this a strong military expedition was sent out against them, and a great slaughter of the Indians was the result, whereupon they were compelled to conclude a peace. There has been no trouble with them since. The Spaniards and the Indian *neófitos* occasionally go among these Indians, remaining with them for perhaps a fortnight or longer, with the intention of gaining *neófitos*, if possible. Some of them make visits to the *misión*, at which times they always return home enriched with presents of various kinds.

Three leagues from the Misión San José, to the southwest, lies the Pueblo de San José de Guadalupe. The word *pueblo* is used here to indicate a sort of village composed of *inválidos*, who are released from military service. They cultivate the soil and raise cattle, and live in the midst of plenty. There are several *pueblos* such as this, in different parts of Nueva and Antigua California, and here there is a

yearly increase in population. Gobernador Arrillaga assured me that in twenty years the population of the Pueblo de San José de Guadalupe had increased from 100 to 700. It is peculiar that, conversely, and notwithstanding their good treatment, there is a continuous diminution in the number of the *misión* Indian *neófitos*.

On the 23rd I took leave of Fray Pedro, to whom I owe my public acknowledgments for his kindly reception and hospitality. He had horses saddled for us, and we went, accompanied by a soldier, in search of our *bidarka*, which we found at the very spot where we had left it. Some wild bulls followed us on our way and caused us much uneasiness. A number of foxes, on the contrary, ran off terrified.

We rowed in shallow water, through the channel that winds among the hills, down to the bay. The muddy banks that stretched on either side were overspread with sandpipers, snipes, wild ducks, and sea-mews [gulls]; but we did not attempt to shoot any of them, as it would have been impossible to get them out of the deep mire. We saw also a great number of sea otters, one of which we shot, but as it took refuge in one of the smaller channels, we had not the disposition to lose time in its pursuit.

Scarcely had we reached the open waters of the bay than a strong north wind arose. It was now an impossibility to proceed. Wet through and through by the dashing waves, held back by the rush of the current, and suffering from hunger and thirst, we were forced at sunset to relinquish all hope of going forward and resign ourselves to the probability of the open, in a low boggy place near the landing. Not having anticipated such a condition, we had brought with us provisions for only one day, and now nothing was left but a little bread and cheese and an insignificant quantity of brandy. We laid ourselves down to rest with empty stomachs, not being able even to quench our thirst, since we were surrounded by the saline tidewater. We endeavored to shelter ourselves somewhat

from the force of the strong winds by means of our wet sailcloth, and in this situation and stiff with cold, waited for daybreak.

By the morning our clothes, which had been wet through by the storm yesterday, were tolerably dry, and at ten o'clock we were ready to leave. But we found that on account of the tide being still at low ebb there was still a larger extent of muddy shore than it was possible to cross. Nor would it admit of our re-embarking until about noon. Scarcely, then, had we seated ourselves in the boat than the same north and northwest wind returned, and left not a probability of our being able, even on that day, to reach San Francisco [*presidio*]. We consequently decided to row to the opposite shore, which looked to be much higher and well-wooded, and reached that side at about three o'clock in the afternoon. But here we found a low boggy plain, overgrown merely by a saltwort (*Salsola*), and, like the plain on the eastern shore, intersected by many little channels, so that there was no possibility of our reaching the woods on foot.

However, we followed, in our *bidarka*, the widest channel, and, rowing amidst the many windings for about three-quarters of an hour, were lucky enough to find a place to land and from which there was reason to hope that we might soon reach the wood, where we hoped to find fresh water. Armed with guns and pistols, and taking with us our last morsel of bread and cheese and an empty bottle, we went on our way. Infinitely annoyed, we traveled about in search of some brook or spring where we might quench our thirst. We reached the wood before nightfall, after walking more than a German mile, but nowhere found a drop of water. We at length saw a numerous herd of bulls and cows, feeding wild among luxuriant wild grass in a meadow. Keeping these off with our guns and pistols, we searched in a thorough manner for water, but all in vain—again not a drop could we find. Exhausted by fatigue and suffering from hunger and thirst, in listless despair we laid ourselves down, when suddenly we heard, at some distance, the croak of a frog.

Never did the tuneful notes of the nightingale sound to our ears half so delightful. We started up, and, following the call and seeming invitation of this creature, soon found ourselves, in the darkness of the night, by the side of a little stream of excellent water. As for two days we had been upon a short allowance of food and with nothing to quench our thirst, we drank the water with such avidity that in two hours we consumed fourteen bottlefuls. It should be stated that we were a party of only three.

The night was cool and damp. So we made a fire to warm ourselves and rested 'til midnight, when, the moon being very bright, we decided to return to our *bidarka*. On the way we encountered several bears and wild bulls, which we kept off with our guns, and at about three o'clock in the morning we reached our *bidarka*. It was then perfectly calm. In a very fine morning we set out upon our return to [the harbor of the Presidio de] San Francisco. The channel that we followed to reach the bay was full of sea otters and sea dogs [seals]. Many were lying on the muddy shores, and many swimming, their heads just above the water. The trials of the past few days were so fresh in our memories, and the craving of our stomachs for nourishment so insistent, that we renounced all the joys and advantages that might accrue from a chase of these animals. Despite this, three sea otters that lay sleeping almost beside our *bidarka* presented a temptation that could not be resisted. These we did kill and carry off with us.

Towards noon we were pretty near the Misión San Francisco, but a northwest wind that arose at the moment again retarded us so much that we did not reach the ship until about three, exhausted by hunger, thirst, and fatigue.

To my inexpressible regret, a number of objects of natural history collected by me on my journey, chiefly plants and birds, had become a prey to the stormy waters, and I brought nothing back with me but the three sea otters.