



The Mexican North

In 1821, the three-centuries-old Spanish Empire collapsed, and Mexico became an independent republic. Mexico City set out to turn its slice of the empire into a national domain, and gradually the Spanish borderlands became the Mexican borderlands. There were fundamental continuities from the Spanish into the Mexican era. The Mexican North attracted few immigrants, and the old families continued to inhabit the borderlands. Mestizaje still conditioned social life. But there were also ruptures and new beginnings. Less concerned about foreign infiltration than the Spanish Crown, the Mexican government opened borders to U.S. merchants. Where the Spanish crown had expressed growing interest in developing the far northern borderlands, the Mexican government, beleaguered by fiscal crisis and political instability, often neglected the borderlands. Ignored by Mexico City, borderlanders took matters in their own hands, fashioning practices and policies that were not necessarily in line with Mexico City's expectations.

Whereas Mexico struggled to bring its northern borderlands into the national fold, the United States, bolstered by propitious land acquisitions and a booming economy, extended its reach deep into the Southwest, where it collided with Mexico's nation-building project and still powerful native societies. The history of the Southwest is generally divided into Mexican and American periods, starting in 1821 and 1848, respectively, but such neat divides do not always match the reality on the ground. Mexican and American eras blended into one another, and both were marked by indigenous power, giving rise to a borderlands history that pulled simultaneously in several directions. That the United States would absorb the Southwest seems inevitable only in hindsight; few contemporaries expected such an outcome in 1821. The Mexican government opened Texas to U.S. immigrants in 1825 with the expectation that they would become loyal Mexican subjects, and, for a while, the newcomers seemed to be doing just that. The majority of Americans in the East considered the acquisition of northern Mexico too ambitious and risky, fearing that their fragile republic would dissolve in an enlarged form. This concern did not start to recede until the 1840s, when Manifest Destiny, a belief that the United States was preordained to spread democracy across the continent, galvanized the nation.

This chapter explores how the collision of the native peoples, Mexicans, and Anglo-Americans in the Southwest borderlands played out on several levels: sovereignty and loyalty, nation-building and cross-cultural alliances, sex and intermarriage, and capitalist

expansion and identity formation. The Mexican North did not survive the collision, but the Mexican borderlands era should not be dismissed as just a transitional episode, a passage to U.S. dominance. Many developments of the turbulent era—the secularization of the California missions, the ascent of Spanish-speaking californios, the proletarianization of Texas Mexicans, the localization of politics, the Anglo-American recasting of Mexicans as racial inferiors—continued to shape the borderlands long after the Mexican flag had been lowered.

DOCUMENTS

Anglo-Americans began moving to Texas immediately after Mexico's independence, and, in 1825, Coahuila and Texas—the two provinces had been joined together a year before—passed a colonization law that allowed foreigners to obtain land in the state. Yet, Mexican officials soon grew anxious over Anglo-American influence in Texas. Led by empresarios—immigration agents who recruited settlers, allocated lands, and maintained order—Anglo colonists arrived in thousands, building distinct and seemingly inassimilable colonies. In 1828, the Mexican government sent General Manuel Mier y Terán to lead a special commission to inspect conditions in East Texas, where most Anglo newcomers lived. The first document is from the journal of José María Sánchez, a member of the Terán expedition, which reveals a diminishing Mexican influence in the region. Sánchez was struck by the cultural differences between Tejanos (Mexican Texans) and Anglo Americans, and he was skeptical of the prospects of mutual accommodation. He criticized Tejanos for their failure to contain Anglo influence and deplored their character, revealing a cultural chasm between Mexico's core region and its borderlands, but he also identified historical and structural factors that made the task of curbing Anglo-American power almost impossible. The findings of the Terán expedition became the basis of the law of April 6, 1830, which was intended to close Texas to further U.S. immigration but largely remained a dead letter. The second document is the petition sent by San Antonio's prominent Tejanos to the legislature of Coahuila and Texas, which identified a series of problems in Texas and criticized the state government for inadequate support. The petition reveals how local Tejano leaders viewed Anglo-American immigration and how their views differed from those of outsiders like Sánchez. Document 3, an extract of proposals that Donaciano Vigil, one of New Mexico's leading citizens, delivered to the New Mexico Assembly in 1846, provides a critical view of the U.S. commercial expansion into the Mexican borderlands that had begun in 1821 with the opening of the Santa Fe trade. Vigil deplores how the arrival of Anglo Americans changed relations between New Mexico and Indians and regrets the central government's failure to support New Mexico.

U.S. immigrants and markets were not the only foreign challenge Mexican authorities faced in the far North. Distracted by internal political instability, Mexican authorities failed to maintain the Indian alliance network they inherited from Spain, and, by the 1830s, independent Indians were raiding across Mexico's northern borderlands from California to Texas. A new war zone emerged in

New Mexico's western borderlands, where the Navajos began intensive raiding in the mid-1830s, in part in retaliation for New Mexican slave raids and in part as a response for the cessation of gift distributions. Navajos had adopted Spanish horses, cattle, and sheep in the seventeenth century, and, by the eighteenth century, they lived by a dual economy of farming and animal herding that supported some seven thousand people in the foothills and canyonlands west of New Mexico. In Document 4, written in 1837, Albino Chacón, a member of Governor Albino Pérez's administration, describes the effects of Navajo raiding in New Mexico and reports on Pérez's ill-fated expedition into Navajo territory. Chacón also discusses the factors that made New Mexico so vulnerable to Navajo attacks.

The devastation that Navajo raiding caused in New Mexico—and Mexican authorities' failure to suppress it—formed an undercurrent of fear and discontent that erupted in a popular uprising, the Chimayó Rebellion, in 1837. In 1835, political power in Mexico City moved from liberal federalists to conservative centralists, who imposed a new national charter known as *Las Siete Leyes* ("seven laws"), or Departmental Plan. The plan aimed to reduce the autonomy of the states, introduce direct national taxation, and impose nationwide religious reforms, and it sparked an armed rebellion in Texas and then in New Mexico, which until then had been exempted from national taxes. A coalition of thousands of poor *vecinos* (citizens), mestizos, and Pueblo Indians rose against Governor Pérez, beheaded him, and placed José González, a mixed-blood bison hunter and militia captain, in his stead. The rebels, headed by a war council known as *Cantón de la Cánada*, took hold of northern New Mexico and, on August 3, the cantón issued a proclamation of five objectives, reproduced here as Document 5. A coalition of conservative New Mexicans led by Manuel Armijo, ex-governor of New Mexico, staged a counterattack that suppressed the revolt by January 1838. Document 6 is a report written by Armijo on October 11, 1837, when the rebels had agreed to a treaty in Tomé pueblo (the revolt flared up again soon after). Armijo's description suggests how the Chimayó Rebellion had taken on an aspect of class conflict, and it reveals Armijo's distrust toward the border villagers with close ties to Pueblo Indians and independent native nations. The victorious conservative coalition launched a vigorous nationalistic program in New Mexico, but the state's incorporation into the national fold remained incomplete: A few months after the collapse of the Chimayó Rebellion, the president of Mexico extended New Mexico's historical exemption from national taxes for seven more years.

In 1834, California missions were secularized by a new liberal government in Mexico, which saw missions as colonial relics out of pace with a modernizing nation. Indians were emancipated, mission lands were privatized, and missionaries were replaced with parish priests. Document 7 is a report written in 1830 by Juan Bandini, a customs official in San Diego. It offers a local view into the secularization process. In the course of the 1820s, New England companies had taken over much of California's lucrative hide and tallow trade, and Bandini envisioned a modern California of private ranchos, international trade, and foreign immigration. A border crosser himself—he was born in Lima, Peru, in 1800—Bandini imagined California as a future transnational nexus. After the

secularization of missions, some California Indians obtained sizable tracts of land, but most secured only small plots or remained landless. The governors of California approved some seven hundred land petitions, granting vast holdings to wealthy *californios*, whose large private ranchos replaced missions as California's dominant economic institution.

1. José María Sánchez Criticizes Tejanos and Anglo-American Immigrants in Texas, 1828

The commerce, which is carried on by foreigners and two or three Mexicans, is very insignificant, but the monopoly of it is very evident. I could cite many instances to prove by assertion, but I do not wish to be accused of ulterior motives. Although the soil is very rich, the inhabitants do not cultivate it because of the danger incurred from Indian attacks as soon as they get any distance from the houses, as the Indians often lurk in the surrounding country, coming in the silence of the night without fear from the troops, for by the time the latter notice the damage done it is already too late. No measures can be taken for the maintenance of a continuous watch on account of the sad condition of the troops, especially since they lack all resources. For months, and even years at times, these troops have gone without salary or supplies, constantly in active service against the Indians, dependent for their subsistence on buffalo meat, deer, and other game they may be able to secure with great difficulty. The government, nevertheless, has not helped their condition in spite of repeated and frequent remonstrances. If any money arrives, it disappears instantly, for infamous hands are not lacking to take it and give the poor soldiers goods at double their normal value in exchange for what they have earned, suffering the inclemencies of the weather while these inhuman tyrants slept peacefully in their beds. I am not exaggerating; on the contrary, I keep silent about many worse things I could say. The character of the people is care-free, they are enthusiastic dancers, very fond of luxury, and the worst punishment that can be inflicted upon them is work.

The Americans from the north have taken possession of practically all the eastern part of Texas, in most cases without the permission of the authorities. They immigrate constantly, finding no one to prevent them, and take possession of the *sitio* [location] that best suits them without either asking leave or going through any formality other than that of building their homes. Thus the majority of inhabitants in the Department are North Americans, the Mexican population being reduced to only Bejar, Nacogdoches, and La Bahía del Espíritu Santo, wretched settlements that between them do not number three thousand inhabitants, and the new village of Guadalupe Victoria that has scarcely more than seventy settlers. The government of the state, with its seat at Saltillo, that should watch over the preservation of its most precious and interesting

José María Sánchez, "A Trip to Texas in 1828," trans. Carlos E. Castañeda, *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 29 (April 1926): 258, 260, 270-271, 273-274, 283.

department, taking measures to prevent its being stolen by foreign hands, is the one that knows the least not only about actual conditions, but even about its territory.

Villa de Austin [San Felipe de Austin], April 27 [1828]—We continued along hills without trees, the ground being wet and muddy, until we arrived at a distance of four or five leagues from the settlement of San Felipe de Austin, where we were met by Mr. Samuel Williams, secretary of the empresario, Mr. Stephen Austin; and we were given lodging in a house that had been prepared for the purpose.

This village has been settled by Mr. Stephen Austin, a native of the United States of the North. It consists, at present, of forty or fifty wooden houses on the western bank of the large river known as *Rio de los Brazos de Dios*, but the houses are not arranged systematically so as to form streets; but on the contrary, lie in an irregular and desultory manner. Its population is nearly two hundred persons, of which only ten are Mexicans, for the balance are all Americans from the North with an occasional European.... They are in general, in my opinion, lazy people of vicious character. Some of them cultivate their small farms by planting corn; but this task they usually entrust to their negro slaves, whom they treat with considerable harshness. Beyond the village in an immense stretch of land formed by rolling hills are scattered the families brought by Stephen Austin, which today number more than two thousand persons. The diplomatic policy of this empresario, evident in all his actions, has, as one may say, lulled the authorities into a sense of security, while he works diligently for his own ends. In my judgment, the spark that will start the conflagration that will deprive us of Texas, will start from this colony. All because the government does not take vigorous measures to prevent it. Perhaps it does not realize the value of what it is about to lose.

May 12.—Our beasts of burden not being used to this climate suffered a great deal because of the bad forage. For this reason the general ordered that I should go to Mr. Groce, an American, to buy corn; and Mr. Chovell, wishing to accompany me, we started on our mission.... At about three in the afternoon we arrived at Groce's place and secured the corn we were to take back. We asked for some food, and it was given to us in the house, consisting, as is customary among Americans, of bacon, milk, and coffee; and when we had finished, we were taken upstairs to see Mr. Groce who was in bed and unable to move. Our visit was very short because we could not understand each other. After a short while, Mr. Groce's son came out with a doctor who appeared to be a pedant, and another young man, the son-in-law of Mr. Groce, all of them Americans, and by signs and sentences in Latin written with pencil they carried on a conversation with us, trivial in the main, but they did not deign to offer us shelter in the house, even though they saw us camping under the trees. Later, they asked us into the house for the sole purpose of showing us the wealth of Mr. Groce and to introduce us to three dogs called Ferdinand VII, Napoleon, and Bolívar. The indignation at seeing the name of the Colombian Liberator thus debased caused Mr. Chovell to utter a violent oath which the impudent fellows did not understand or did not wish to understand. We returned immediately to our camp and went to bed without supper because we could not get

anything. Groce is a man of 45 or 50 years of age; he came from the United States to establish himself on the eastern bank of the Brazos River in order to avoid paying the numerous creditors that were suing him. He brought with him 116 slaves of both sexes, most of which were stolen. These wretched slaves are the ones who cultivate the corn and cotton, both of which yield copious crops to Mr. Groce. Likewise, he has a great many head of cattle, innumerable hogs, and a great number of horses; but he is a man who does not enjoy his wealth because he is extremely stingy, and he treats his slaves with great cruelty.

The population [of Nacogdoches] does not exceed seven hundred persons, including the troops of the garrison, and all live in very good houses made of lumber, well built and forming straight streets, which make the place more agreeable. The women do not number one hundred. The civil administration is entrusted to an *Alcalde*, and in his absence, to the first and second *regidores*, but up until now, they have been, unfortunately, extremely ignorant men more worthy of pity than of reproof. From this fact, the North American inhabitants (who are in the majority) have formed an ill opinion of the Mexicans, judging them, in their pride, incapable of understanding laws, arts, etc. They continually try to entangle the authorities in order to carry out the policy most suitable to their perverse designs.

Different tribes of Indians such as the Tejas, Nadacos, Yguanes, Savanos, Cherokees, Kickapoos, Delawares, Cutchates, Alabamas, Quichas, and Cados, continually enter Nacogdoches, but they are all peaceful and carry on their trade in the city with skins, corn, pumpkins, and beans. These tribes are located in the neighborhood of Nacogdoches, their *pueblos* being intermingled with the settlements of the Americans who are scattered throughout Texas, but more particularly along the frontier because the greater part of them are settled without the consent of the government of the country. The Mexicans that live here are very humble people, and perhaps their intentions are good, but because of their education and environment they are ignorant not only of the customs of our great cities, but even of the occurrences of our Revolution, excepting a few persons who have heard about them. Accustomed to the continued trade with the North Americans, they have adopted their customs and habits, and one may say truly that they are not Mexicans except by birth, for they even speak Spanish with marked incorrectness.

2. Tejano Leaders Give Their Opinion of Anglo-American Immigrants, 1832

This town of [San Antonio de] Béxar was established 140 years ago, La Bahía del Espíritu Santo and Nacogdoches 116 years ago, and the fort of San Sabá, the towns of Jaén, San Marcos, and Trinidad, were founded in the intervening years along with other military establishments on the Guadalupe, Colorado and Brazos

David J. Weber, ed., *Troubles in Texas, 1832: A Tejano Viewpoint from San Antonio*, pp. 16-17, 19-21 (Dallas: DeGolyer Library, Southern Methodist University, 1983).

rivers. These communities have disappeared entirely; in some of them the residents dying to the last man. Many early settlers and their descendants have been sacrificed to the barbarians, and not a few others have died of hunger and pestilence, which have caused havoc in this part of the republic due to the inaction and apathy of those who govern. Other frontier communities, located toward the west have, perhaps, suffered much more, and every last one of us is probably threatened with total extermination by the new Comanche uprising.

And what shall we say concerning evils caused by the general law of April 6, 1830, which absolutely prohibits immigration by North Americans? The lack of troops and other officials capable of supervising it has made it impossible to enforce this law. On the other hand, the law prevents immigration of some capitalists and of some industrious and honorable men who have refrained from coming because of it, but has left the door open to wicked adventurers and others who constitute the dregs of society. Since they have nothing to lose, they have arrived furtively in large numbers and may cause incalculable harm.

The same is true of the numerous tribes of semicivilized Indians. Expelled from the United States of North America, they have crossed the Sabine River and, unchallenged, have established themselves in our territory. It will be very difficult to uproot them and even more so if we intend to make them observe our legal system. Yet, risking all kinds of dangers and inconveniences, North Americans reclaimed a considerable part of these lands from the desert prior to the passage of the law of April 6, 1830, and toiled assiduously to further agriculture and to introduce crafts unknown in these parts since the discovery of this land by the old Spanish government. They planted cotton and sugar cane, introduced the cotton gin, and imported machinery for the cultivation of sugar and sawmills to cut wood economically. We owe these advances to the efforts of these hard-working colonists, who have earned a comfortable living within seven or eight years. Theirs is not a precarious existence, the only kind known in Mexican towns, which depend solely upon the troops' payroll that circulates so slowly among us.

Immigration is, unquestionably, the most efficient, quick, and economical means we can employ to destroy the Indians and to populate lands they now occupy—directing the immigrants to the northern interior whenever possible. This goal can only be achieved by freely admitting these enthusiastic North Americans so they may live in this desert. They already are experienced in dealing with the barbarians in their native land, where they have done similar work. Not a single European nation that might be interested in colonizing offers their people similar advantages. Because they have been very regimented, the Europeans' transportation, climate, customs, and forms of government are very different from those of the neighboring republic and are not as suitable for Mexico.

The opening of roads going directly from Texas ports to New Mexico, Paso del Norte, or even Chihuahua, would place Texas at the rank it should occupy in the Mexican federation. This achievement, too, is the result of the immigration of North American capitalists. They built these at least more economically and in less time than could be accomplished by any other nation and even by Mexico itself. The same is true of direct communication from all the far northern

parts of our republic with the state of Missouri of the neighboring nation, which is maintained today despite great risk and cost of freight. The population of those lands [between Texas and Missouri, and between Texas and New Mexico] would benefit Texas and would be the best barrier against the Indians. It would thrust population 200 leagues farther north than it is today, and protect the entire line of defense for Coahuila, Nuevo León and Tamaulipas, and even that of Chihuahua.

3. Donaciano Vigil Mourns the Changing Relationships among New Mexicans, Anglo Americans, and Indians, 1846

In some ways, the lot of the heathens around New Mexico improved at the same time that ours worsened. Many Americans, persuaded by their own interests, established forts on the Platte, Arkansas, and Red rivers. Through these forts, heathens have been supplied amply with as much as they might need, in exchange for furs. Thus, little by little, all the heathens forgot us and lost their affection for us. As soon as they became familiar with firearms and considered themselves well supplied with them, they no longer feared offending us. Since then, one also notes, the livestock and buffalo, which once abounded even on the common lands of our villages, have been progressively diminishing so quickly that now we have come to feel their scarcity or their complete disappearance in many areas. Now our hunters travel over 100 leagues in search of them—a long journey of four months. For the last two years there has not been enough meat to sustain them on their return trip without coming home empty-handed. Under these circumstances [of shortage of game] the barbarians, incited by necessity, attack us in order to save themselves.

Gentlemen: Most of the inhabitants of New Mexico, and especially those who are most exposed to attacks by barbarians, are armed only with bows and arrows and these are scarce because they do not have the means to buy more—not to mention guns and ammunition. The central government of the nation, continually distracted and occupied with more general concerns, has not been able to provide us with the protection we need and that we have wanted for our security. The few troops that are in this Department are employed in this capital (which is the theater of all contests when there are any) in sustaining the authorities and in keeping order among the inhabitants. Due to their number and due to the deterioration of most of their equipment, even if the troops were free from this service [of keeping order in Santa Fe], they would not be able to defend more than the place where they live. The arrogance of our barbaric enemies requires us to defend our extensive borders with thousands of disciplined troops. These troops must be provisioned in the manner of the presidial system that was here in the era of the Spanish government—something that the National Treasury has not been able to do.

In any event, to wait for such protection from the central government of the nation would be to wait in vain. This is especially true given the degree to which the Republic has been weakened by the different [political] factions that are continually forming, as well as conflicting interests and unbridled ambitions. Thus, for our personal security and our interests (at least in regard to the barbarians), I believe we should not count on any protection or resources other than those the New Mexicans themselves can provide. But, so that the New Mexicans might display some new energy, we should obtain means of defense for them—arms and munitions. It is a calamity that we have always lacked these two very important items here. Although some of the wealthy class have acquired some luxurious guns from merchants who brought them for their own use, these cannot be obtained by most people. Nor is it the rich who usually go in pursuit of the barbarians when they have carried out a raid. The introduction of arms and munitions is prohibited by our laws, and the government has no public arsenal here for either arms or ammunition. Nonetheless, they are indispensable for us if we wish to exist in this Department. We are exposed to the same or worse horrors than those that occur in departments more populous and wealthy than ours, and that do not defend themselves well, no doubt due to some of the same problems we suffer here.

Gentlemen: I have heard reports regarding the barbaric tribes: of the number of Mexican captives, and especially of young Mexican women who serve the bestial pleasures of the barbaric Indians; of the brutal treatment they receive; and of the kinds of deaths that the barbarians are accustomed to inflicting for whatever capricious reason. Those reports have made me tremble with horror, have made me grieve, and have made me ashamed as I consider the degree to which bad luck has dogged our nation. The more so when I contemplate what the fate will be of many people whom I esteem, if timely measures are not taken to guard against such degrading misfortunes.

4. Albino Chacón Describes Navajo Raiding and Mounting Discontent in New Mexico, 1837

New Mexico, abandoned from the beginning of independence, did not appear to have any other relation with the rest of the republic other than that which comes from a common origin, language, and customs. Its only resources since then had been the product of duties [taxes] that a small annual caravan of North Americans paid on the goods that they introduced, which in even the most profitable years never, by far, had been sufficient to pay for the entire necessities of the presidial company's complement of personnel which, since that time, has not been complete. The geographical situation of New Mexico, separated from the rest of the republic by great distances, surrounded by barbaric tribes, some powerful and experienced in warfare, and almost all of them ferocious to its

inhabitants, was subject to furious attacks from its barbaric neighbors which patriotic love and national honor have made it resist, always with firmness, and many times it succeeded in giving severe retaliation to the Indians, even to the very center of their own territory. This [resistance], always at the expense and fatigue of its [New Mexico's] own inhabitants, and certainly the general government [Mexico] has not given assistance, not even one time, of arms and ammunition. During a series of hardships and sacrifices of many years, it had been represented many times to the supreme government about the critical situation of payment which, with each passing day, had been becoming more alarming because the number of its enemies was growing and because they were perfecting themselves in the art of warfare and were much more well supplied with arms and ammunition than the inhabitants of New Mexico, but the supreme government did not understand and for these reasons never heeded them. These poor inhabitants, their haciendas and the rest of their resources ruined, lost their enthusiasm and means of fighting, and their enemies became encouraged in the same proportion, coming to commit depredations with impunity, even on the outskirts of settlements. Reduced, then, in spite of such hardships, to such extreme misery that in various places they did not dare to plant their fields because of the great danger that they ran, the people began to manifest some discontent as is only natural in such misery.... New Mexico was in this state when it was learned that Señor Colonel Don Albino Pérez was arriving as governor, of whom the supreme government, upon announcing him, gave distinguished recommendations as to his character. This announcement raised hopes of improving the situation as much because of his talent and experience as because of his high military rank and important connections he had in the capital of the republic, which would enable him to obtain from the supreme government the aid that New Mexico needed so desperately. The arrival of Pérez in Santa Fe reinforced the notion that had formed at the announcement of his coming. His personal appearance, the accounts of the great services he had rendered to his country that were told by members of his retinue and those men who had close access to him, the military actions in which he had distinguished himself, the plans he had already formed to place in motion the troops of the territory and to procure the necessities to support them and to annihilate the Navajo Indians who, at that time, had continued to be very hostile, made most of the people form a promising opinion of him.... But as he could not get enough [funds] to continue the services or the troop by this means, and since he received nothing from Mexico in spite of his repeated requests, he went to the natives of the country whom he thought might be able to advance him what was needed individually or through the credit they had. For this reason, of course, he was observed to visit more frequently the houses of certain gentlemen who, without acceding to his aim, were persuaded of the influence they had and wanted to use it in protecting themselves against competitors.... Lacking the means to support the troops in arms, he had to give it up, forcing the troop to look for its own subsistence wherever it could find it, and the employees and officials were left reduced to their individual credit or that which the credit of the governor could procure for them in case there was not sufficient to maintain their ranks.

This condition, together with the bad feelings of some particular people, gave rise to recriminations in which the general calamity was blamed, by different individuals, on each other.... in the end everything became confusion. The Navajo tribe, at the same time, was not idle, committing depredations of all kinds in all areas, stealing large numbers of livestock, carrying away captives, burning various persons alive in their homes, and they even sent some parties to commit murders near Santa Fe, which was the best-guarded jurisdiction in all the territory. All with impunity.

There was made, it is true, among others, a general campaign against the Navajos, to which the governor went in person, but it produced no more effect than the loss of the major part of the animals it carried, and with this finished the ruin of many unhappy farmers. The public, in the midst of many misfortunes, was trying to find the cause of their misery. Some attributed it to the corruption and bad management of the civil employees, giving substance to the accusations being spread. Others blamed the governor, saying that the number of officials who worked with him consumed all the assets of the troop which, if well directed, could defend the territory.

5. New Mexico's Chimayó Rebels Denounce Mexico City's Plan for National Reform, 1837

Long live God and the Nation and the faith of Jesus Christ, for the most important issues they stand for are following:

1. To sustain God and the nation and the faith of Jesus Christ.
2. To defend our country until the last drop of blood is shed to achieve the desired victory.
3. Not to allow the Departmental Plan.
4. Not to allow any tax.
5. Not to allow the excesses of those who try to carry this out.

God and the Nation, Santa Cruz de la Cañada, August 1, 1837, in camp.

6. Manuel Armijo Reports on the Suppression of the Chimayó Rebellion, 1837

This department has been involved in the horrors of a disastrous and barbarous revolution into which perverse men led it, setting the people against the constitutional laws and government that rule us; after they committed in their exhilaration every kind of crime, impiously assassinating persons of the highest offices,

Janet Leconte, *A Rebellion in Río Arriba*, p. 20 (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1985).

Janet Leconte, *A Rebellion in Río Arriba*, pp. 136-139 (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1985).

and when they were preparing another bloody explosion even more dangerous, having for its only object general desolation and ruin, on the eighth of September last I pronounced in Tomé for order, constitution and laws.

On the 14th of September, as soon as I arrived in this capital where the worthy permanent company, which had been disbanded, again took up arms along with the citizenry with the greatest enthusiasm for repelling the cantonment of rebels who were expected any moment, I was recognized as commander in chief of all the troops, with the rank of colonel of the liberating army. The forces at my command were a thousand-odd men, whom I trained in the management of arms, for as citizens they knew almost nothing about it, and I saw to the mounting of artillery, repair of broken arms, and reinforcement of supplies, expecting also to enter into communications with the Cantón of rebels, now approaching; before fighting them, inasmuch as their force, numbering three thousand men, was considerable, and their position on high ground very advantageous, my object being to avoid battle and the loss of Mexican blood if possible, for I knew that most of the mob had been deceived in their ignorance by false promises, and that others of them had joined out of fear of the rebel force. I took the opportunity of having the commander of the Cantón, Don Pablo Montoya, direct a letter to Governor Gonzales (elected by the same factions) who had already been arrested in Santa Fe.

It was necessary to receive these men in the manner that had been offered to them, and to use them with all the prudence necessary for success in the undertaking, without loosing the torrents of blood they were prepared to shed, and as I used the greatest persuasion in conjunction with an energetic decision to fight them, it resulted in the drafting of terms of agreement by which they were obliged to dissolve their Cantón, declare their government and laws invalid, and subject themselves to my orders, giving me the position of superior head of both political and military commands until the resolution of His Excellency the president of the republic.

In this manner concluded a revolution that presented a most horrible aspect of misfortunes so frequent and so great that they filled the inhabitants of this soil with confusion, having no other recourse but to succumb, for fear of the terrifying army they saw committing crimes with the most outrageous cruelty. In fact, the way they killed the governor, Colonel Don Albino Pérez, district judge Don Santiago Abréu, prefect Don Ramón Abréu, secretary of government Don Jesús María [sic], Lieutenant Don Joaquín Hurtado, Alférez Don Diego Sáenz, Don Miguel Sena and others, cannot be described without the consternation humanity feels in the highest degree, being better, then, to omit the circumstances of such horrendous assassinations, even more criminal than merely having deprived the victims of life. One feels surprise and fear to know that these evildoers, with the show of authority that they pleased to put on, invited the barbarous nations that surround this department to form an allegiance against the supreme government, and to help by cutting off communication with the interior of the republic, counting as well on the Pueblo Indian people whom as a weak, credulous, ignorant people very addicted to the sack and spoils of war, they easily seduced, persuading them that the departmental laws would take from them a third part

of the fruits of their labor, taxing heavily the common benefits of water, wood, pastures, and even their own children and wives.

The aim of the factions was, as is evident, to remain independent of the government of the Mexican nation; to put an end to every person who has an average education; to be governed by no established law, which was their excuse for sentencing all the archives to the flames; to destroy fortunes in a general sack; and to live without subjection to any precept or authority, identifying themselves with the savage tribes and putting themselves on the same level, making the same cause with their same interests.

There is no doubt but that the Mexican nation would have lost, perhaps forever, this integral part of its territory had not some of its people taken a strong stand, seized the right opportunity, and shown great fortitude; but it is even more doubtful that this would have succeeded had not the supreme government extended its protecting hand to this unfortunate territory, providing the help required to quell the rebellion without much difficulty.

7. Juan Bandini Envisions an International Future for California, 1830

The possessions of the missions extend from one end of the territory to the other. Their borders come right up to each other. Even though they might not need all the land they appear to have for the care of the crops and the maintenance of their herds, they have insensitively appropriated all the area. They have constantly been opposed to any private person becoming involved in the affairs of the missions. With that sinister notion, they occupy the best lands and water sources. With but a small flock of sheep they rejoice at having come into possession of everything. They desire exclusive control over the productions of the country, whose bad condition stems from that deeply rooted source.

Counting all the missions, there are about twenty to twenty-one thousand indigenous listed in the mission registers. However, they are not equally distributed among the missions. Some missions have close to three thousand souls, while others can scarcely muster four hundred. The population at a mission more or less determines its prosperity.

By their nature, the Indians are careless and lazy. Even though they are able to imitate, they are not very clever. They can be educated, of course, but that would not be the most fitting way to develop their ability to reason. It is true that their inclinations are not of the type apt to create good impressions, since thievery, treachery, deceit, and lethargy are their dominant passions. From this, one can deduce that little usefulness can be drawn out of these Indians.

Generally speaking, the production of all the missions is the raising of cattle, sheep, horses, wheat, corn, beans, and other vegetables. The more southern missions are extensively engaged in vineyards and olives. However, the most lucrative

production is that of cattle, for there is an active, high demand on the part of the ships engaged in the coastal trade for their hides and crops. Indeed, these articles are the only items in demand which both the missions and private persons have in order to meet their needs. This is why all are anxious to stimulate this branch of trade as much as possible and why it receives the attention of everyone.

Foreign vessels have been allowed to collect hides here for the past eight years. Previously, it had been approved only on a case-by-case basis, but now those who export from the missions will deliver thirty thousand hides [annually] and about the same number of *arrobas* of tallow produced in the slaughters. And, in view of the method used in these slaughters, it seems certain that within three or four years' time the quantity exported of one or more of these items will double.

Hemp, wine, olive oil, grains, and other agricultural products could be cultivated more extensively if there were some stimulus to export more, but since there is none, they only plant enough for domestic consumption.

The only thing that makes the foreigners want to trade here is the untanned cattle hides and tallow. It is well known here that nothing else will ever be able to serve as money, for scarcely any money circulates. So it is that all who come here seek to exchange their goods for other goods. The items the ships bring as imports are designed for this kind of purchase. They know that the missionaries are not interested in money, but rather items the Indians need. Some ships that have arrived here only with cash have lost their business because they have not been able to obtain goods.

Therefore, if there is only one type of export, which barely produces enough to allow the settlers to purchase the absolute necessities to survive, what would happen if restrictions were placed on trading at the moment in which the exports were beginning to increase? It seems to me that the consequences would be more than obvious, yet I find it necessary to mention them here: (1) no ship would sail along these coasts, and the nation would lose the money that its wares bring in; (2) neither the missions nor private individuals would be able to obtain those articles which they most need for the field work, not to mention what they need in order to live with respectability and culture; (3) since the raising of cattle is the only useful branch of industry, and the one on which all are pinning their hopes, if harvesting the carcasses were thwarted, the populace here would once again become submerged in the poverty of eight years ago, which they attributed to this limited commerce; (4) there are many foreigners in the territory who have become naturalized citizens, but if they thought they would not be able to survive here in the future, they would abandon a country which only promised them misery. This would have an adverse affect on the whole colonization effort.

Only a few missions can transport their goods to another port at minimal cost, and these missions are precisely the poorest ones and the ones that produce the least. The missions that are going to attract the attention of the sailors are obviously the ones that are going to suffer due to the unfeasibility of their commerce. In addition, one should not forget the *pueblo* of Los Angeles, which is worthy of consideration because it has the wealthiest population in California

and a number of different foreigners also reside there. This *pueblo* is located one hundred and thirty leagues to the south of Monterey, and the course and fostering of its growth is due to the hide and tallow trade. If it becomes impossible to dispose of the hides and tallow, the city inevitably will be ruined.

As a result of this explanation, I can say with certainty that if foreigners are excluded from all ports except Monterey, I repeat, the commerce of Alta California will be completely finished.

Mission *ranchos*, and private ones as well, are found only in a narrow strip of the territory from north to south. Only a few are more than ten or twelve leagues inland, because the mountain range that also runs from north to south is a barrier. The missions have the best *ranchos* with the most abundant water and pastures. Private *ranchos* have had to face a thousand obstacles and barely have been able to obtain some small sites for a limited amount of cattle. Only around Los Angeles are there private *ranchos* of any consequence.

The climate and fertile valleys of California offer all types of vegetation a person could hope for. In addition to what has been stated previously, California produces the highest quality flax and hemp. The best vineyards are found in abundance here and there is no lack of cotton. Pear, apple, orange, and several types of peach trees abound, as well as other fruits. The olive tree is unsurpassable. It is very unusual to find a plain anywhere in the territory that is not able to produce fruitfully. In addition, all the fields and hillsides produce infinite types of wild fruit, such as strawberries and other exquisite and diverse herbs, many of which have not been botanically classified. The territory does not lack wood for the construction of ships, particularly around San Francisco, where pines and oaks are abundant everywhere around the mountains. Livestock reproduces with the most astonishing ease, especially the cattle, which become pregnant and are ready to give birth at two years of age. The wild horses are so numerous that it is necessary to round them up every year and kill a large number because of the damage they do to the fields. Also, their wildness can affect horses that already have been broken.

The sheep give the most exquisite wool and they reproduce wildly. The value of the livestock is about equal: a newly born calf is worth five *pesos*, and a horse is worth a bit more. The country also abounds in deer, rabbits, and hare. Unfortunately, there is also an abundance of bears, wolves, coyotes, squirrels, and moles, which do a good amount of damage in the fields, especially the latter three. Geese, cranes, and ducks are plentiful in season, and a unique type of quail is abundant. In sum, Alta California lacks none of the essential elements for an inexhaustible production. The only thing it does lack is people.

ESSAYS

In the first essay, Andrés Reséndez, professor of history at the University of California at Davis, challenges the conventional view of the U.S. takeover of northern Mexico as a simple tale of U.S. expansionism, which saw a belief in an inexorable expansion merging with a willingness to back up that belief with military might. The U.S. incorporation of the Southwest, Reséndez argues, began not

with propaganda and armies but with markets and merchants: The military conquest was preceded and propelled by a softer process of economic conquest. Far from being a passive observer of its national dismemberment, Mexico encountered U.S. economic penetration with nationalist rhetoric and rituals, turning the borderlands into a cultural battleground where the spoils were the resources and loyalty of local residents. In analyzing this history of colliding national projects and shifting cross-cultural alliances, Reséndez engages several questions that are central to the study of borderlands in general and the Southwest borderlands in particular: How do people construct identities in borderlands that are being pulled toward two competing national cores? Can identity be situational, a strategic choice, or is it something that is deeply engrained in our psyche and thus not easily moldable? What is the difference between personal identity and national identity; is it possible to say where one ends and the other begins? Why did New Mexico stay with Mexico twelve years longer than Texas?

The second essay, by Albert L. Hurtado, professor of history at the University of Oklahoma at Norman, explores the intersection of sex, gender, and power in the multicultural milieu of Mexican California. Hurtado analyzes intimate ties of incoming Anglo-American men with elite Mexican women and impoverished Indian women, focusing on how marital and sexual relationships shaped race, class, and power relations in the province. Intimate bonds and family formation, more than economic or military strength, he argues, decided who would rule California. Anglo-American immigrants may have modified but rarely abandoned their preconceived notions of Mexicans and Indians as racial inferiors and tended to assess relationships with both groups in utilitarian terms. Unions with women of high-status *californio* families—self-identified Hispanic families—opened access to social circuits and land ownerships and were eagerly pursued: Numerous Anglo men converted to Catholicism and became Mexican citizens in order to marry a *californiana*. Relationships with Indian women, by contrast, were social dead ends and therefore rarely developed beyond sexual encounters. As the essays in previous chapters suggest, multicultural unions had the potential of promoting mutual understanding, racial tolerance, and balanced power relations, but, in Mexican California, the opposite often held true: Attitudes hardened, whiteness and status conflated, and power flowed into the hands of Anglo-American patriarchs of racially mixed households. What factors made Mexican California different?

Markets, Persuasion, and Identity in the Southwest Borderlands

ANDRÉS RESÉNDEZ

Traditionally, we have told the story of how nations emerged as a triumphant tale of domination exerted by a determined center over reluctant peripheries and by persuasive officials over skeptical masses. The literature depicts state

Andrés Reséndez, "National Identity on a Shifting Border: Texas and New Mexico in the Age of Transition, 1821–1848," *Journal of American History* 86 (Sep. 1999): 668–688.

formation and nation building as originating from the core outward and from top to bottom. Sitting at the apex of all political and social organizations, the state has been granted the leading role. After all, it was the state that built the infrastructure linking the center to all corners of the nation, increasing the network of communications within a territory and thus helping integrate a national market. Under the auspices of the state, a nationalist ideology was fashioned and disseminated to all prospective citizens. Whether accounts spotlight institutions or identities, the underlying theme is centralization: The national state wins out over lesser political organizations and potential challengers, and the people divest themselves of previous ethnic or local loyalties as the nation becomes their over-riding identity.

This core-periphery, top-down model has recently come under criticism. Although nations tend to be promoted from above, they nevertheless have to be analyzed and understood from below.... People's perceptions (and not nationalist propaganda) constitute the most critical yardstick against which we can measure the success of attempts at national construction. Historians and theorists have been understandably concerned with state-sponsored nationalist discourse, but they have been less adept at explaining why this discourse was adopted by local communications and non-elite groups.

An approach that pays attention to both state designs and responses from local communities is badly needed to rethink the story of how Mexico's Far North became the American Southwest. This episode has long been explained through a sweeping narrative, that of American expansionism. Undoubtedly, expansionism was a powerful 'mood' that prevailed in the United States throughout the first half of the nineteenth century. But expansionism has been used in the historiography as a catchall, explain-all concept to describe the social psychology of early Americans, to elucidate the relations between American settlers and Native Americans, and to provide a rationale for the policy pursued by the United States toward the Spanish/Mexican possessions. The dramatic territorial exchanges of this era have been presented almost as logical outcomes of that irresistible ideology; they thus require no further explanation. Worse still, by emphasizing how Anglo-Americans expanded their domain, we have left unexamined how other peoples reacted to this offensive, often confining non-Anglo-Americans to the role of passive victims as they watched their homelands being taken away.

Yet when we look closely at this process, we obtain a starkly different image. Expansionism, at least on Mexico's northern frontier, meant first and foremost *economic* penetration that afforded local Hispanic and Native American elites the opportunity to profit. This circumstance led those local elites consciously to shift their allegiances to accommodate their interests, even in the face of opposition from other members of their own ethnic groups. Economic expansion provided the medium in which cross-cultural alliances were forged along Mexico's northern frontier. Rather than idle players, local elites were active agents who made choices of far-reaching consequences.

Just as we have tended to oversimplify the United States' drive for Mexico's territory, we have assumed that the northern frontier provinces were

unproblematically a part of Mexico, as if national identity had emerged full-blown right after Mexico gained independence from Spain in 1821. Municipal and state authorities resisted the intervention of the national government on several fronts, from elections of local officials to the regulation of economy or the organization of the military. In its most basic form, this tension between local and national elites acquired a clear nationalist dimension. In the fractious political environment of early-nineteenth-century Mexico, national leaders began to equate local and regional autonomy with territorial disintegration of the country and, accordingly, started to brand some power brokers in the Far North as separatists.

We need to recast the story of Mexico's northern frontier, paying attention to how the Mexican and the American national projects collided there and how conflicts played out at the local level. Did different provinces experience the change of sovereignty in the same manner? Did different social groups among Hispanics understand their loyalties and national attachments in the same way? Did Native Americans play the same role in California, New Mexico, and Texas as these provinces were being incorporated into the United States? Instead of a simple tale of domination in which a handful of resourceful Anglo-Americans managed to conquer an enormous territory, we have to unearth a far richer story of cross-cultural and cross-class alliances and counteralliances, each side struggling to define and shape whatever nation was emerging in its locality. In the following pages I attempt to trace some of the struggles over the nation, focusing on the cases of Texas and New Mexico. My contention is that communities in these two provinces were caught between two opposing forces. On the one hand, a web of local and regional economic interests increasingly tied Texas and New Mexico to the economy of the United States, thus affecting the livelihood and ultimately the loyalty of key social groups within the Hispanic, Anglo-American, and Native American communities. On the other hand, the Mexican government responded to this challenge by fashioning a defensive, antiforeign, patriotic rhetoric and by fostering rituals aimed at creating a sense of nationhood.

In the aftermath of independence, Mexico's political leadership, a clique of independence heroes and ardent nationalists, became fully aware of the difficulties of bringing the northern frontier into the national fold. They did not delude themselves about the fact that the enormous arc of provinces from Texas to Alta California was exposed to the designs of other nations and most alarmingly to those of the United States. They also knew that the northern frontier society was committed to deeply entrenched regional attachments, *las patrias chicas*. The people of the frontier gave primacy to their cherished identities as *tejanos*, *nuevo-mexicanos*, or *californios*, and understandably viewed with a certain skepticism newer and more abstract appellations such as *mexicano/a*. And finally, the heterogeneity of frontier society made the task of forging the nation there quite daunting. In Texas, for instance, the part of the population that was called "Mexican" was a tiny minority, amounting to some 2,000 inhabitants mostly concentrated in the San Antonio-Goliad region. In comparison, the Texas Indian population was larger, far more diverse, and dominant in a greater geographic area.

Similarly, the Anglo-American immigrants who came to Texas in waves during the 1820s and early 1830s ended up outnumbering Mexican Texans ten to one on the eve of the Texas Revolution of 1835-1836. New Mexico's demography was more favorable to the construction of the Mexican nation, but there was considerable heterogeneity. The Hispanic population amounted to close to 30,000 inhabitants. Yet Hispanics coexisted with the 10,000 Pueblo Indians living in twenty settlements who maintained significant autonomy. Moreover, Hispanics and Pueblo Indians were surrounded by nomadic groups that were generically called *barbarous*, *gentile*, or *errant* nations, including the powerful Comanche confederation, the Navajo, and the Apache. Although nomadic Indians were not generally considered Mexican citizens, they nevertheless, as contemporaries put it, formed part of "the extended Mexican family" whose members could one day become citizens if they were to abandon their wandering ways, pledge allegiance to the Mexican government, and convert to Catholicism.

Thus many of Mexico's early leaders at the national, provincial, and local levels attempted to impose uniformity and nationalist devotion along the northern frontier. One vehicle to create national awareness was the printed word. Newspapers, journals, gazettes, and random manifestos proliferated throughout the northern frontier during the first half of the nineteenth century. The impetus behind the majority of those—often fleeting—publications was political bickering, but regardless of their political orientation, editors and writers always cloaked themselves in the nationalist mantle. Benedict Anderson has argued that in postcolonial Latin America such printed material "created an imagined community among a specific assemblage of fellow-readers," and he thus assigns "the decisive historic role" of creating the nation in Latin America to Creole functionaries and provincial Creole journalists. Although the printed word undoubtedly helped foster a sense of nationhood in Texas and New Mexico, it is hard to contend that such publications played a decisive role, for very few people knew how to read and write. Even if we assume that the contents of the publications were spread by word of mouth beyond the actual readers, the number was nonetheless rather small. Geographic dispersion and cultural disparities added insurmountable barriers. Pueblo and nomadic Indians, for instance, simply could not participate in this virtual community of readers and writers, while Anglo-American colonists in Texas and New Mexico had their own publications where the symbology of the Mexican nation was greatly diluted, if it appeared at all, or where a different and incompatible national project was promoted.

Primary education became a more deliberate vehicle to bolster national loyalties. In Texas and New Mexico an educational crusade flourished between 1827 and 1834.... However, the educational crusade was short-lived. By 1834 most public schools in Texas and New Mexico operated very precariously or had closed down. Scarce funds were frequently diverted toward more immediate concerns such as fighting Indians or paying the troops their back wages.

For the vast majority of the frontier inhabitants, neither the print media nor the schools went very far in promoting a sense of nationhood. For them, the

most pervasive and perhaps the only indications of the existence of the Mexican nation were rituals and symbols. Officials in Texas and New Mexico introduced an endless succession of *reminders* of the nation: flags, coins, elections, commemorations of the birthdays and deaths of independence heroes. The crowns that had hitherto embellished public buildings and carriages during colonial times were mercilessly erased, and the word "imperial" was systematically replaced by "national." Emblems planned to the last detail and always boasting the eagle standing on a prickly pear devouring a serpent—symbolizing the foundation of the Aztec empire—sprung up even in the smallest and most remote villages.

From Mexico City the ritualistic onslaught was projected across the entire national domain.... Both New Mexico and Texas submitted to the mysterious new rituals, even though New Mexico did so belatedly. Gov. Agustín Melgares reported that the people of Santa Fe celebrated with what he ironically described as "inexplicable joy" in a program that included, among other features, an Indian dance, an allegorical parade with children dressed as angels and a little girl as the Virgin, and a patriotic performance in which three leading citizens (an alderman, the vicar general, and the military chaplain) played the parts of the three guarantees upon which the Mexican nation had just been brokered: independence, Catholicism, and unity.

It is exceedingly difficult to ascertain how people felt about these ceremonies. Melgares somewhat sardonically remarked that it was his hope that those "exteriorities" revealed genuine support for "our holy cause." Indeed, it is likely that such newfound patriotism was at least partly a fabrication of zealous local and state officials desirous of showing their constituencies in a good light to their superiors. But regardless of private feelings, Independence Day celebrations in Texas and New Mexico quickly became elaborate and ritualized affairs organized by patriotic committees that labored for months every year to reach all segments of society. All of this required substantial outlays of money by leading citizens, who were thus able to show how solvent and patriotic they were. Repetition and anticipation became powerful conduits. From the enthusiasm displayed in San Antonio for the festivities of September 16, 1835, one would not have suspected that Texas was in the throes of a major rebellion. In addition to the usual tolling bells, pyrotechnic fires, and cannon shots, a mass with *Te Deum*, and the party and dance *de rigueur*, a gas-filled globe was released from the main plaza to commemorate Mexico's deliverance from Spain. Even more enthusiastic was the Independence Day celebration of 1844 in Santa Fe, which lasted six entire days, including three days of bullfights.

Notwithstanding these attempts at national construction, sweeping economic changes tended to foil such efforts, imposing capricious cross-national alliances and intranational cleavages and in general making the logic of the market—free trade, free movement of peoples, unencumbered exploitation of natural resources—prevail over the designs of nationalist officials. Mexico's national leaders generally supported the pursuit of capitalist development in the northern frontier, but toward the 1830s, as they became more wary of real or imagined secessionist tendencies in the North, they attempted to regulate the region's integration with the economy of the United States and put obstacles in the way of increasing Anglo-American

immigration. However, in so doing national officials met with decided resistance from local and regional Hispanic and Indian elites as well as Anglo-American newcomers who had interests revolving around commerce and land and depended on laissez-faire policies for their well-being.

Initially, commerce provided the impetus for change. The Spanish colonies in America were long barred from trading with the United States and European countries other than Spain, and although the Bourbon monarchs did away with some trade regulations in the 1760s and 1770s, freedom of commerce outside the empire came only after independence from Spain. Trade liberalization had a particularly strong impact on Mexico's northern provinces as they were tantalizingly close to the United States, which was rapidly becoming one of the most dynamic trading areas in the world. In New Mexico the beginning of a new commercial era can be dated with precision. The people of Santa Fe were still digesting the news of separation from Spain in mid-November 1821 when word spread of an approaching caravan of Missouri merchants. This time New Mexico's governor allowed the Anglo merchants to trade with the locals unmolested. It was the beginning of the Santa Fe Trail, which within a few years became the most important trading route between the United States and northern Mexico.

Commerce brought a new set of social relations and interests to these provinces. In New Mexico the Santa Fe Trail was at first monopolized by an exclusive group of Anglo-American traffickers and a few Frenchmen who had preceded them. They controlled the bulk of the profits and wielded commensurate political influence. But New Mexico's traditional Hispanic elite soon made the transition from land-based and sheep-raising enterprises to commercial ventures. Manuel Armijo, three times governor of New Mexico, was the most striking example. He rapidly found a way to profit from the Santa Fe Trail, as the crafty governor began to sell foreign goods to other parts of northern Mexico where he had previously sold only sheep. He was hardly alone. Such families as the Chávez, Ortiz, Otero, and Perea became successful international merchants in their own right. By 1843, nuevomexicano merchants accounted for a full 45 percent of New Mexico's total exports and 22 percent of all shipments of foreign goods going into Mexico's interior.

Texas went through a similar transition. By 1826 Anglo-Americans dominated the trading business in San Antonio and Goliad, introducing merchandise at various times of the year. But as in New Mexico, it did not take long before entrepreneurial native sons staged a return to the commercial arena. Indeed by the early 1830s Anglo-American merchants squarely competed against a powerful tejano clique. These men had developed extensive trading networks comparable to those of their Anglo counterparts, webs stretching from New Orleans suppliers to Texas customs officers and store owners. This tejano group became a formidable power to reckon with.

Although relations between Anglo and Hispanic merchants in both Texas and New Mexico were sometimes contentious, the two groups generally got along well and often forged profitable and long-lasting partnerships. In many respects the two groups of merchants were complementary. While Anglo-Americans could make introductions and pave the way for their Hispanic

counterparts with suppliers in Missouri and Louisiana, Hispanic traders could reciprocate, helping their Anglo-American colleagues deal with Mexican customs officers and other authorities. The two groups were forced to travel together and to extend credit to one another. Many Anglo-American merchants married into *nuevomexicano* and *tejano* families. Above all, the merchants, regardless of ethnicity, were keenly opposed to outside meddling that threatened to interrupt the flow of profits coming from the north.

The emergence of a trading economy in Texas and New Mexico stimulated land deals, which provided yet another network of common interests. In Coahuila and Texas, state officials contracted with private developers or *empresarios* whose task was to settle at least one hundred families and to establish self-sustaining colonies in exchange for land. The majority of both *empresarios* and colonists turned out to be Anglo-American. The *empresario* system completely changed the face of Texas. In the 1810s Texas had been an undeveloped province with enormous *baldíos* (vacant lands) visited only by occasional Indian groups, hunters, and adventurous Texans. Within a few years, most of the land was parceled out among numerous settlers who showed claims under the authority of overlapping *empresario* contracts and other land development schemes. State officials in Coahuila and Texas created a powerful patronage system on the basis of land distribution. In secretive deliberations, state legislators and the governor conferred princely land grants, approved colonization enterprises, granted exclusive rights to navigate Texas rivers, and made profitable appointments for customs and land officials. From these transactions emerged a web of economic as well as political alliances that ran from state officials to *empresarios*, land commissioners, and colonists themselves, including widely diverse groups from *tejano* landowners to Anglo-American developers and speculators to Indian allies such as the Cherokees, who also secured a grant.

New Mexico went through a similar ... land drive.... As in Texas, these transactions naturally bound the grantees to New Mexican officials and created a network of interests that would be critical when war between Mexico and the United States broke out and the department of New Mexico tottered between the two countries.

Commercial and land transactions hindered the consolidation of the Mexican nation in Texas and New Mexico. This occurred not so much because there were cozy partnerships between local authorities and foreign businessmen as because the prosperity of those provinces hinged on the continuation and accretion of economic ties with the United States. Prominent *tejanos* and *nuevomexicanos*, with their Anglo-American partners, staked their future on the development of those provinces along federalist lines, which meant unrestricted trade with the United States, increasing immigration of Anglo-Americans, and flexible land policies that insured property rights for foreigners and recent arrivals. Given the demographic and economic imbalance between Hispanics and Anglos, this policy would eventually result in an overwhelming preponderance of Anglo-Americans along the frontier. On the eve of the Texas Revolution, northeastern Texas was largely inhabited by Anglo colonists who had prospered in a thriving cotton and cattle economy. In the years immediately before the

Mexican-American War, northern New Mexico was falling inexorably into the hands of wealthy Anglo-American merchants and some of their *nuevomexicano* partners.

These developments did not go unnoticed in centralist circles, and they eventually elicited a strong nationalist reaction.

Citizens who felt displaced by outsiders repeatedly resorted to patriotic rhetoric to strengthen their claims.... In sum, patriotic rhetoric became a potent cement binding local, regional, and national political groups who often pursued different immediate objectives but were all united under the same banner: to preserve the territorial integrity of Mexico.

The Texas Revolution would set the terms of the national identity struggles in Mexico's Far North in the decades to follow. Most traditional histories either trace the revolt of 1835-1836 to cultural or ethnic incompatibility between Mexicans and Americans or adopt a sweeping Manifest Destiny explanation, casting the revolution as merely a step in the westward drive of Anglo-Americans into Spanish America. Yet a growing interest in Mexican Texans has shown that the revolution was not carried out exclusively by dissatisfied Anglo colonists but that *tejanos* as well were actively involved. Indeed, the initial momentum to organize state militias and resist the central government's authority, even if that entailed using force, originated in Coahuila and the San Antonio-Goliad region, not in the Anglo colonies. Indians also played a crucial part in this story.... It was an unwieldy coalition of Anglo-American colonists, *tejanos*, and Indian tribes fighting against the national government and its local and regional allies.

The origins of the Texas Revolution have to be traced back to the clash between regional and national elites in Mexico, especially as their struggle affected the network of interests that had flourished in Texas in the 1820s. Those who advocated autonomy for the states and defended local interests against national encroachment—a heterogeneous group that came to be known as “radical liberals” or “federalists”—began to chafe after the offensive launched by their “centralist” opponents in the early 1830s.... The national government instituted reforms that threatened to alter the fundamental economic and political relations prevalent in Coahuila and Texas.

Having said this, however, we should avoid another form of historical reductionism—following contemporary rhetoric—that described the Texas Revolution as a quest for freedom against military despotism from Mexico's heartland. First, the nationalist rhetoric employed by centralists commanded enormous popular support, especially given the truly scandalous speculation and the rapid Americanization of Texas. Even within Coahuila and Texas a vocal antifederalist faction responded enthusiastically to the patriotic harangues to regain Texas for Mexico. Second, federalists and revolutionists in Texas—whether Anglo, *tejano*, or Indian—may all have been fighting under the collective banner of “freedom,” but “freedom” was often linked to self-interest.... Both Anglo-American and *tejano* merchants objected to the establishment of customs houses, and both remained generally supportive of the revolution even as secession from

Mexico became permanent. Undoubtedly, in the course of the fighting, ethnic and racial tensions surfaced, but initially Texans made a revolution to protect their freedoms, their beliefs, and their interests; in the process they took the momentous decision to create a new nation.

Ten years after the Texas Revolution, in the summer of 1846, Col. Stephen W. Kearny found himself marching along the Santa Fe Trail, commanding a small army, with instructions from the United States government to take possession of New Mexico. War had begun between Mexico and the United States. On August 18, about two thousand weary and dusty American soldiers marched unopposed into Santa Fe. Their commander formally took possession of the territory of New Mexico. The Army of the West had conquered New Mexico "without the firing of a shot or the shedding of a single drop of blood," according to a contemporary description that historians have repeated ever since. Yet five months later, an anti-American rebellion broke out in the northern and western districts of New Mexico. The uprising eventually claimed the lives of the recently appointed American governor of New Mexico, several other Anglo-American residents, and at least two *nuevomexicano* "collaborationists." The two episodes, the unopposed march of American troops into Santa Fe and the Taos rebellion, marked the two ends of the pendulum swing in the sovereignty struggles unfolding in New Mexico. The war created an environment in which local political grievances, economic interests, and evolving identities played themselves out throughout Mexico's Far North against the backdrop of an impending invasion and possible annexation to the United States. It is tempting to interpret the war squarely as a conflict between two clearly defined nations, and it is easy to understand the ensuing territorial exchange as solely a military outcome. And yet, from the perspective of the border society—rather than that of Mexico City or Washington, D.C.—what we find is an army of invasion negotiating with local and regional actors whose loyalties did not always conform to simple national lines.

Much in the attitudes of leading *nuevomexicanos* toward Kearny's Army of the West in the summer of 1846 has to be traced back to a network of interests that had developed among key *nuevomexicano* officials and Anglo-American merchants and residents during the 1840s. Some days before the arrival of the Army of the West, Manuel Alvarez, the Spanish-born consul of the United States in Santa Fe, tried to persuade Governor Armijo not to resist. Alvarez found Armijo "vacillating to the last" and utterly undecided. Although the consul admitted that he could not persuade the governor to turn over the Department of New Mexico to the Americans, he asserted that he had had more success with "other officers" and Armijo's "confidential advisers." Santiago (James W.) Magoffin, a seasoned merchant of the Santa Fe Trail who had been commissioned by President James K. Polk to use his connections to win the northern provinces over to the American side, reported that prior to Kearny's arrival he had met many of the "rich" and the militia officers of New Mexico and, with only one exception, had found that they would be perfectly satisfied if the area became a territory of the United States. Magoffin told *nuevomexicano* officers that they would be

happy under the star-spangled banner because their property would be respected, their houses would rise in value, and the political system would change for the better. Robert B. McAfee, another merchant, sarcastically summed up this phenomenon for President Polk: "Touch their money and you reach their hearts. Make it their interest to have peace and we will soon have it."

The events that followed are not entirely clear. The governor began preparations to face the American army of occupation at a formidable pass called *el Cañón*, fifteen miles east of Santa Fe. Yet two days before the showdown would have occurred, Governor Armijo took the momentous decision to disband the volunteers he had summoned. With seventy soldiers the governor retreated to Chihuahua, thus clearing the path of the invading army.

McAfee may have been accurate in describing the outlook of the privileged few whose interests depended on the Santa Fe Trail, but displaced elites and commoners thought otherwise. In the aftermath of the American takeover, significant discontent surfaced throughout New Mexico. The Pueblo Indians of Taos, for instance, resented the encroachment of Anglo-American and Mexican merchants on their land. Aided by the influential parish priest of Taos, José Antonio Martínez, Pueblo Indians had denounced the Miranda-Beubien land grant, claiming that it included communal lands that belonged to the Taos Pueblo and were used for hunting buffalo. They managed to persuade nuevomexicano officials to suspend the grant in 1844, but only temporarily. After the American occupation, Pueblo Indians feared that land encroachment would proceed more rapidly.

New Mexico's Catholic establishment also fiercely opposed annexation to the United States. Even before the military occupation of New Mexico, Father Martínez had been the most outspoken critic of Armijo's administration for "caving in" to the Americans and had delivered a series of sermons "arousing the people to a determined resistance." He warned his congregation of impending disasters and told them of his nightmares about the national government disposing of New Mexico. As the embattled priest interpreted New Mexico's situation with some hyperbole, a mob of "heretics were ready on its confines to overrun this unfortunate land." Father Martínez's patriotic rhetoric drew on a wellspring of religious symbology and Pueblo Indian mythology.

The conflicts that rocked Mexico's northern frontier in the first half of the nineteenth century, including the Texas Revolution and the Taos rebellion, were ultimately struggles over sovereignty and identity. These events cannot be reduced to ethnic conflicts between Hispanics, Native Americans, and Anglo-Americans. The surprising decision of tejano merchants to support the Anglo-American drive to secede from Mexico in 1835-1836 or the Pueblo Indians' intention to restore Mexico's sovereignty over New Mexico in 1847 seem to defy common sense because their loyalties did not conform to previous ethnic solidarities. For this reason those events well illustrate how much national identity depended on economic arrangements as well as an imagery able to speak to the needs and longings of diverse peoples.

The Mexican government, having inherited the Spanish imperial bureaucracy and its political-religious mental world, attempted to forge a Mexican

identity in the northern frontier by developing patronage lines leading from the center to the remote provinces by using the overlapping administrative structures of church, military, and civil government; by promoting civic and religious rituals derived chiefly from the independence struggle; and by fashioning—often unwittingly—a defensive, antiforeign, nationalist rhetoric that was appropriated by border communities and political groups to advance their own interests and agendas. Yet, this nationalist project went against the grain of a network of economic, social, and political cross-cultural alliances brought about by the prodigious economic development of the frontier region and its growing integration into the economy of the United States.

Adopting the perspective of the people living in these border provinces, we can recast the sovereignty struggles as a vast project to organize society. The decision to become Mexican or American or Texan was not only a question of placing or imagining oneself within one collectivity; most critically, it involved choices about the organization of the economy, the contours of the political system, and religious and moral values. And in making all of those critical choices, different social groups, classes, and ethnicities that coexisted in Mexico's Far North had different and often conflicting ideas. Tejanos, federalists, indigenous communities, *nuevomexicanos*, centralists, merchants, *empresarios*, Anglo-Americans, and common people attempted to shape the nation to their own wishes and their best interests. In this frontier world where interests, political ideology, and national allegiances were inextricably intertwined, the deployment of Mexicanist rhetoric—or its absence—became another weapon in their everyday life struggles. The nation did not emerge full-blown right after emancipation from Spain in 1821, nor was it purposefully constructed according to blueprint laid out by the "Mexican founding fathers," it was simply a by-product of complicated alliances and counteralliances contingent on a set of local arrangements in constant flux.

Sex, Marriage, and Power in Mexican California

ALBERT L. HURTADO

Alfred Robinson, twenty-seven-year-old native of Massachusetts, figuratively kissed the hand of his future father-in-law, Don José Antonio Julián de la Guerra y Noriega. Robinson was an agent for Bryant, Sturgis and Company, a Boston-based firm that dominated California's hide and tallow trade. Don José was a native of Spain, soldier, respected man of affairs, and the richest man in the Santa Barbara region. His principal business was in raising thousands of cattle that he slaughtered for their tallow and hides, which he sold to Bryant, Sturgis, and similar companies. Doña Anita, the object of Robinson's desire, was thirteen years old.

The betrothal of Doña Anita to Alfred Robinson was emblematic of California's changed state of affairs. In 1821 Mexico had achieved its independence

from Spain and California became a part of the new American nation. Mexico reformed the antiquated trade laws of Spain that in most cases had restricted colonies to trading only with the mother country. Consequently, enterprising Mexicans and Americans began to carry goods along the Santa Fe Trail, and California ports became open to merchants who obtained the necessary license in Monterey, the provincial capital. But what did California have to trade? There were hundreds of thousands of horned cattle grazing on the yellow coastal hills, but before the days of refrigeration it was impossible to ship fresh meat over great distances and markets for salt and jerked beef were limited. Bryant, Sturgis soon sent an agent who gained a share of the market and eventually dominated the California hide and tallow business, although they had many competitors.

Under Spain, missions had been the primary economic institution of California. Franciscan missionaries controlled most of the arable land, vast livestock herds, and a workforce of thousands of Indians who tended the herds and plowed mission fields. The Mexican government would secularize the missions—convert missions to small parish churches and convey the vast pastoral holdings of the church to private ownership. Theoretically, mission Indians would receive land grants from the missions where they had lived and worked, but this seldom happened. Because the missions were so important to the economic well-being of California, the governors at first appointed secular administrators, who administered the missions as they were being broken up. Administrators could compel the former neophytes to labor on mission lands even as they were granted status as citizens. Few Indians were willing to work for new masters at their old missions. Most of them went to work for Mexican *rancheros* and became peons in the process, or moved to the interior where they lived with independent Indian communities. Secular administrators liquidated the mission property and arrogated mission revenue to themselves. Ultimately, the Mexican government gave more than five hundred grants of land to applicants, who got tens of thousands of acres after paying a small filing fee and meeting nominal government requirements. Most of these grants were made from former mission lands. This transfer of property created a private *latifundio* system and an elite that was land- and cattle-rich, but money-poor. It also made the daughters of the de la Guerra, Carrillo, Bandini, Vallejo, and other California families exceedingly attractive marriage partners. By making favorable matches, landed *californio* families could consolidate holdings through marriage, and newcomers—such as Robinson—could become a part of the gentry.

The hide and tallow trade would dominate the Mexican California economy through the mid-1840s. Every year American and British traders bartered manufactured goods for thousands of hides destined to be made into harness, boots, shoes, and leather goods. Some of these finished products returned “round the horn” to California, and were bartered to Californians for more dry hides and bags of tallow—at a profit handsome enough to attract Yankee investors and competitors from the United States and England. One observer claimed that more than 100,000 hides were shipped from California each year.

Virtually no cash changed hands in the hide trade. Cow hides were known as California banknotes and were worth about \$1.50, although the value varied

according to the market. Sea captains and the few permanent merchants who established stores advanced credit to Californians who guaranteed their debts with hides from future slaughters. Thus the californios, seemingly so rich in land and cattle, were snared in a system of debt and credit and made dependent on an international trade in which they traded raw materials for manufactured goods. This was a relationship that historian David Weber has called "the new colonialism." Mexicans had cast off their old political masters, but in their haste to enter the capitalist marketplace they failed to recognize that as providers of raw materials in exchange for manufactured goods they were in a disadvantageous position. They were accustomed to doing business on a small scale with people whom they knew and often to whom they were related either by blood or by *compadrazgo*—a system of godparentage that linked Californians in a fictive kin network. Children received *compadres* (godparents) at birth and other important life events. These authority figures provided advice, security, and sometimes became foster parents in the event of the birth parents' death. This elaborate network of blood and fictive kin connected californio families in the Spanish and Mexican periods and beyond. These extended biological and fictive families gave Mexican Californians identity and security. Additional kinship ties with Yankee and Anglo traders seemed to assure mutuality in trade and a degree of continuity with familiar traditions. It was logical that the de la Guerra family added William Hartnell, the first hide and tallow trader in California, as a son-in-law. Many another californio family would follow the de la Guerra's example.

While the hide and tallow trade embodied a colonial relationship between frontier Mexico and the industrializing United States, marriages like Robinson's evoked another old institution—patriarchy. When Robinson begged for the hand of Don José's daughter, he was not merely observing a formality that had lost its literal meaning. Truly, Don José held the key to Robinson's happiness, "in this world," as the suitor said. The father could have prevented the marriage of Alfred and Doña Anita had he so desired, for in California the father's permission was required before a woman could marry. In theory a woman was not required to marry against her will, but law and traditions that spanned the Spanish and Mexican eras supported fathers' control over their daughters' marital future. Moreover, elite families often arranged the marriages of their children so that a good match would be assured rather than leaving this important matter to the whims of mere youthful passion. Betrothals of girls who had yet to reach menarche—which may have been the case with thirteen-year-old Doña Anita—were not unknown. In theory, Mexican Californians could have married Indian women, and some of them did. Most californios were in fact from mixed or entirely non-Spanish stock, but elite families that claimed to have pure Spanish blood were deeply concerned about maintaining the supposed racial purity of their line. In this respect Anglo Americans could be helpful. Even though they were not Spanish they were white, and on that account were eligible to marry in the best families.

Studies of the marriage record show that only a small fraction of Spanish and Mexican colonists married Indians during the Spanish period.

In colonial California, as in other frontier regions, there were far more men than women, a condition that drove male competition for eligible women and fostered early betrothal of some young girls.

Not all of the young women who were married by arrangement were complacent or content, but there was little that they could do about it. Marriage, the production of legitimate children, and the protection of family honor were the common duties of most California women. Those who resisted faced the combined wrath of brothers, husbands, and fathers both temporal and spiritual.

Lack of power, however, did not keep all women from accusing men of sexual crimes or of violating sexual mores themselves.... californianas denounced seducers, and accused rapists. The record also shows that women had their share of illicit affairs. In one case, Juan Francisco Bernal threatened to beat his mother after learning that she was having carnal relations with Marcelo Pinto, a notorious soldier. There were accusations and counteraccusations of adultery, corruption of minors, and dishonor. Priests recorded the births of illegitimate babies in the mission registers and were accused of fathering some of them. Sexual competition for females and women's desire to control their sexual lives made it impossible to uphold the absolute standards that Spanish-Mexican patriarchy demanded.

This was the society that foreigners entered in the nineteenth century. For New Englanders like Robinson, the California world was quite different from their homeland in several respects. Of course, Bostonians had their own forms of patriarchy, and Anglo-Protestant men and women were as capable of rape, fornication, and adultery as were Hispanic Catholics. The formal rules of Anglo sexual behavior and marriage were in some ways similar to those that pertained in Hispanic California. Men and women were both supposed to be virgins when they married; extramarital sex was forbidden; divorce was very difficult to obtain. In 1821 women's rights were as strictly limited in Boston as they were in Monterey. Women were legal appendages of their husbands, who usually retained custody of children in the rare event of divorce. In one respect, Anglo American women were even less free than their California counterparts because they lost control of their property when they married; californianas did not.

In the early nineteenth century Anglo American beliefs about female sexuality differed markedly from Hispanic ideas. Until the mid-1700s Anglos believed that women enjoyed sex, although ideally sex was for procreation and not merely for pleasure. In the nineteenth century medical men and moralists began to propose a new notion—that women were naturally frail, nervous creatures who lacked much interest in sex except as a means to have babies. These theories emerged as women began to challenge patriarchal authority and the United States was experiencing the upheavals and uncertainties that accompanied industrialization. In such an unsettling time many men preferred women who did not challenge authority in or out of the marriage bed. The "cult of true womanhood" was the prevailing ideology that governed women's behavior. Women were supposed to be pure, pious, and domestic. They aspired—or so it was thought—to nothing more than raising children, keeping house, and making

the home an undisturbing sanctuary for the husband/father when he returned from his worldly struggle to gain a living for his wife and family.

On the other hand, Spanish-Mexican men believed that women were naturally lustful creatures who were apt to meekly submit to the sexual demands of a would-be seducer. That is why families chaperoned young couples, even when they were engaged. It was important to maintain family honor and the unquestioned virginity of daughters. If a young woman was rumored to have had sex, her value on the marriage market was diminished—at least as far as making a good match with an elite family was concerned. Here was another reason to betroth very young girls and to marry them as soon after menarche as possible. Of course, neither Anglo nor Hispanic women necessarily lived according to the sexual ideologies that prevailed in the nineteenth century. But the ideals of their respective societies conditioned expectations about sexuality of Anglo and Mexican men and women alike.

The Anglo American hide traders who went to California in the Mexican era knew that they would have to remain for an extended time, perhaps for many years. Those who wished to marry during their sojourn would almost certainly have to marry a californiana, a match that would, it was hoped, secure domestic happiness as well as property and an advantage in trade. Hide traders would have to adjust to California marriage customs to marry a daughter from one of the elite families. Among other things, they would have to become Catholics. Church and state required that Protestants convert to Catholicism before a marriage took place and foreigners had to apply to the governor for permission to marry. Naturalization was not required to marry, but for Mexican citizens there was land to be had for the asking. Religious and national qualms seldom deterred Robinson and his colleagues from marrying or acquiring land. Many a Boston man renounced his U.S. citizenship in order to gain the landed wealth that was so enticingly available.

Robinson worked hard in the hide business, sailing up and down the coast trading with the ranchers and learning the ropes. He became a Catholic, but evidently did not become a Mexican citizen. With the approval of Doña Anita's father, Robinson's citizenship proved to be no bar to marriage, although they waited until she was fifteen before marrying (perhaps delaying until she was sexually mature). The people of Santa Barbara celebrated the alliance between the Bryant, Sturgis agent and the de la Guerra family as if it were a state affair.

While Robinson's financial interests in California and the de la Guerras were obvious, it is also evident that he had more than a pecuniary association with his in-laws. He affectionately corresponded with them about family matters, even after Doña Anita died in 1853. He seemed to take great pleasure in discussing political matters with his father- and brother-in-law, and took special delight in satirizing the Democratic party. Surely, Robinson married for more than money.

The precise number of marriages between californianas and Americans is not known, but nineteenth-century historian Hubert Howe Bancroft compiled brief biographies of all of the prominent California pioneers, including marriage data. While his list is incomplete, it provides a reliable source of information on the best-known mixed marriages. He recorded eighty such unions between 1817

and 1848. Half of the men were from the United States and nearly one-third were from the northeastern states—mostly from Massachusetts. Forty percent of the grooms came from the British Isles (nearly one-quarter were English). The men who married into California's elite families truly were Anglo American.

Mixed marriages began as soon as foreigners began to arrive and continued throughout the Mexican period.... Five to six years was the median period that grooms spent in California before marrying, although part of that time may have been spent on voyages back to Massachusetts, or waiting through a long engagement. Nevertheless, it is clear that most foreigners did not jump into marriages with californianas. This may have been due to the californios' strict rules of propriety as well as circumspection on the part of the prospective husbands. Bancroft's "Pioneer Register" is a limited source of data for mixed marriage, but it suggests that grooms and prospective in-laws considered marriage a very serious undertaking that should not be rushed into. Marriage was meant to be a permanent arrangement that would benefit the family for as long as it lasted.

While maritime merchants married into Mexican families on the coast, a new group of Europeans and Americans began to filter into the great central valley of California. In 1827, Jedediah Smith led a party of trappers into the interior in search of beaver pelts. He found some, and he also found another potentially valuable export commodity—horses. Smith purchased horses from the ranchos on the coast and drove them north to Oregon, hoping that he could eventually sell them at a profit. Umpqua Indians foiled his scheme, took the horses, killed most of Smith's men, and barely missed putting an end to Smith. Nevertheless, scores of American trappers followed Smith into California by the southwestern route, and the British Hudson's Bay Company sent expeditions from Oregon as well. Some trappers emulated Smith's horse-trading venture, but not all of them relied on legal purchases to acquire stock. Instead, they teamed up with Indians who lived in the interior—Yokuts, Miwoks, and ex-mission Indians—and who raided the coastal herds. Thus engaged in horse rustling, these newcomers cared nothing about maintaining good relations with elite Mexican families. Nor did they live permanently in the interior, preferring instead to make an annual journey to California and drive their stolen stock back to the Missouri frontier. While all this was going on, Mexican rancheros and soldiers periodically raided Indian communities in the central valley.

Even though the California interior was an isolated region, between 1827 and 1839 it became an international frontier where Indians, agents from the Hudson's Bay Company, American trappers, horse thieves, Mexican soldiers, and rancheros converged. They struggled to control California's horse herds, a critical resource in an economy based on wild, long-horned cattle. Until 1839, however, Indians did not have to worry about any of these newcomers settling in the interior. Spanish and Mexican officials had deemed new mission projects too expensive and risky, so they left the venture to private parties who, they hoped, would take up land grants east of coastal settlements. Mexican rancheros were not quick to move into a region where they had been fighting with Indians for decades, so the government relied on foreigners to occupy this disputed district. In 1837, John Marsh, a former U.S. Indian agent who claimed to be a

physician, made his home on a grant that he purchased on the western edge of the San Joaquin Valley. Two years later, John A. Sutter convinced Governor Juan Alvarado that he was a man of great military experience who would be useful in suppressing Indian livestock raiding. Alvarado permitted Sutter to colonize the Sacramento Valley where the American River flowed into the Sacramento.

Marsh and Sutter not only made permanent settlements for themselves, they inspired other Americans to make the overland journey and settle in the California interior. Sutter's Fort, near the confluence of the American and Sacramento rivers, was the military heart of the Swiss-American's New Helvetia agricultural business and became the destination for overland immigrants to California. Sutter employed scores of American immigrants and hundreds of Indian laborers who kept his enterprise humming. To obtain Indian labor, Sutter relied on diplomacy, trade, and blunt force. He established an Indian army that intimidated surrounding tribes and protected his herds and those of his neighbors.

While imposing his military and economic will on the Indian communities of the Sacramento and San Joaquin valleys, Sutter altered native traditions of courtship and marriage. Formerly Central California Indians forged alliances through marriage. Usually the prospective husband asked permission of the parents of his intended spouse. If they were agreeable, the young man brought meat from the hunt and other goods to the home of his in-laws. Then the couple could marry. Some powerful and rich men had two or more wives, but most had only one. As usual, marriages were meant to link families in a kinship network that assured friendship, prosperity, and allies in troubled times.

Sutter, the self-proclaimed patriarch of New Helvetia, took it upon himself to intervene in the Indians' long-established marriage customs. Years later, he reminisced that "polygamy obtained among the Indians and I determined to stop it" because "the chiefs had so many wives that the young men ... could have none." Claiming that he had the interests of young Indian men at heart, Sutter put all of the marriageable men and women in rows facing each other. "Then I told the women one after another to come forward and select the man they wanted." Sutter denied "the chiefs more than one or two wives each," but he did not mention that white men were also competing for Indian women, including the lord of New Helvetia himself. Taking Indian helpmeets—at least temporarily—was a time-honored practice among fur trappers and traders, although fur men often abandoned their Indian wives when they left Indian country or when racially suitable wives became available.

While Sutter subverted Indian marriage customs, he arrogated the authority of the Catholic Church and Mexican state in matrimonial matters as well. He evidently believed that he had civil authority to marry people because he was the New Helvetia *alcalde*. In 1844, he therefore married several American couples, including Cyrus Alexander (an American) and Rufina Lucero, who was from New Mexico. "Oh yesh," Sutter reputedly assured Alexander, "I ish der law, I cans perform der serremony, und all ish den right." Alexander accepted

Sutter's bland assurances and allowed the captain to marry him at the fort. Some time later a priest from the Mission Santa Clara informed the Alexanders and other couples whom Sutter had joined that they were not legally married, and that their wives must return to their parents until they were married in the church. Alexander was outraged because he believed that the priests were merely trying to extort money from him, and because his young son was now illegitimate. Three other couples who had married under Sutter received similar notification, but only two of them and the Alexanders dutifully—and angrily—went to Santa Clara to be married again. The disobedient man later teased the couples because the war with Mexico soon limited the priests' authority over civil marriages and asserted that by obeying the priests Alexander had admitted that his marriage under Sutter was illegal. Alexander retaliated by saying that his tormentor and his wife simply had no shoes and didn't want to get married barefoot. Such were the airs of propriety among Americans in the 1840.

The custom of taking an Indian wife may have been time honored, but it was not universally respected or admired in Anglo American society. "Squaw man" and "half-breed" were racial slurs that condemned interracial sex and the progeny that came from it. Once the frontier era had passed, male pioneers and their biographers often extolled their heroic exploits while politely forgetting to mention the Indian women who baked their bread and bore their children. Yet they often sneeringly divulged the sexual adventures of other fellows who crossed the color line. Captain Sutter was especially vulnerable to rumormongers. He had abandoned his wife and children in Switzerland to escape debtors' prison. In the Sandwich Islands Sutter picked up a Hawaiian mistress, Manaiki, who was his favorite consort at New Helvetia, but she had to share him with Indian women. Heinrich Lienhard, who was critical of everyone's behavior but his own, charged that there was a special room for young Indian women adjoining Sutter's apartment in the fort. Worse, he accused Sutter of having sexual relations with Indian girls as young as ten. Lienhard may have embellished his accusations, but Sutter's own correspondence explicitly reveals a trade in boys and girls that hints at a sexual dimension. Sutter captured these children during his attacks on Indian communities and sold or leased them to other ranchers. John Chamberlain, Sutter's blacksmith, said that "it was customary for Capt Sutter to buy and sell Indian boys & girls." Accusations that Sutter was a pedophile are not proven, but charges of child abuse are conclusive.

Just as Chamberlain exposed Sutter's transgressions, John Yates pointed to Chamberlain's sexual habits. The blacksmith was "given to gazing on the native females," Yates reported, and Chamberlain did more than look at Indian women. "I learnt that he had been married nineteen times to native women & to my own certain knowledge he was when I last saw him newly married to an American girl of thirteen." Neither was Yates altogether blameless in this regard, for Yates kept two Indian mistresses. Eventually he married a sixteen-year-old immigrant, but the marriage foundered because the Indians refused to give up their white husband. And so it went. Up and down the valleys, Americans and Europeans mated with Indian women in the 1840s, then the esteemed pioneers snickered and pointed their fingers at others a quarter-century later.

For most whites, these unions were doubtless alliances of convenience that were necessary when frontier conditions prevailed and Indians were a large majority in the region. In addition to the domestic and sexual services of their Indian wives, whites gained friends, laborers, and allies through Indian kinship ties. Once equipped with a local Indian wife, these men were no longer mere interlopers but members of an Indian community. This status, reinforced with Sutter's military presence, enabled a small group of whites to live among Indians in relative security and to benefit from Indian labor. After the discovery of gold and the ensuing rush of new people to California, the need for native workers and soldiers subsided, so white men usually abandoned their Indian wives for new mates. The Indians—wives and kin alike—who joined in these unions gained temporary access to trade goods and a modicum of security in rapidly changing times. When times changed and the connubial arrangements with whites dissolved, they had to find new ways to satisfy these needs. In the end, they were left to rely on their own resources for survival during the extravagant upheavals of the gold rush and its aftermath.

Intermarriages in the interior and on the coast occurred according to the needs of the people who lived in their respective regions. On the coast Californios were clearly in political control, so Americans and others seldom violated the prevailing marriage laws and customs. Rancheros may have been in a disadvantageous position in a colonial trade network, but they were unquestioned patriarchs at home. Yankees like Alfred Robinson therefore kissed the hands of their fathers-in-law, joined the Catholic Church, and oftentimes became citizens of Mexico. More than that, Yankee husbands often displayed more than perfunctory attention to their religious and marital obligations after the change in national sovereignty in 1848. To be sure, they had material reasons for keeping up appearances. Most of them had acquired substantial landholdings and might inherit even more when their fathers-in-law passed on. They also had children of their own to provide for. In American and Californio minds alike, there was no racial problem in the marriages to elite California families. Californios insisted that they were white, that they were of unmixed blood, and they often claimed to be descended from Spain's noble lines. Whatever the facts may have been, Americans happily accepted this bleached version of California family history. It was a good thing for an American to be married into a California family.

A connection to an Indian woman, whether solemnized with Sutter's supposed authority or more casually effected, had little lasting value for the white men involved. American society scorned "squaws," "squaw men," and their "half-breed" children. Indians were not part of a landed gentry, but a despised racial minority whose fate, as far as most Americans were concerned, was to be dispossessed and obliterated. Once the country was settled, an Indian family could only hinder the social advancement of pioneers. Thus, the custom of mixed marriage in Mexican California proceeded along two paths. One was seemingly a highway to material wealth and social status; the other was a dead end to be abandoned at first opportunity. Both were well-traveled roads.

FURTHER READING

- Blackhawk, Ned. *Violence over the Land: Indians and Empires in the Early American West* (2006).
- Brooks, James F. *Captives and Cousins: Slavery, Kinship, and Community in the Southwest Borderlands* (2002).
- Brown, William E. *The Santa Fe Trail: The National Park Service 1963 Historic Sites Survey* (1988).
- Casas, Maria Raquél. *Married to a Daughter of the Land* (2007).
- Craver, Rebecca McDowell. *The Impact of Intimacy: Mexican-Anglo Inter-marriage in New Mexico, 1821-1846* (1982).
- Griffen, William B. *Utmost Good Faith: Patterns of Apache-Mexican Hostilities in Northern Chihuahua Border Warfare, 1821-1848* (1988).
- Hackel, Steven W. *Children of Coyote, Missionaries of Saint Francis: Indian-Spanish Relations in Colonial California, 1769-1850* (2005).
- Iverson, Peter, and Monty Roessel. *Dine: A History of the Navajos* (2002).
- Jackson, Jack, ed., and John Wheat, trans. *Texas by Terán: The Diary Kept by General Manuel de Mier y Terán on His 1828 Inspection of Texas* (2000).
- Kenner, Charles L. *The Comanchero Frontier: A History of New Mexican-Plains Indian Relations* (1969; rev. ed., 1994).
- Langum, David J. *Law and Community on the Mexican California Frontier: Anglo-American Expatriates and the Clash of Legal Traditions, 1821-1846* (1987).
- Lecompte, Janet. *A Rebellion in Río Arriba*. (1985).
- Matovina, Timothy M. *Tejano Religion and Ethnicity: San Antonio, 1821-1860* (1995).
- McNitt, Frank. *Navajo Wars: Military Campaigns, Slave Raids, and Reprisals* (1972).
- Monroy, Douglas. *Thrown Among Strangers: The Making of Mexican Culture in Frontier California* (1990).
- Moorhead, Max L. *New Mexico's Royal Road: Trade and Travel on the Chihuahua Trail* (1958).
- Mulroy, Kevin. *Freedom on the Border: The Seminole Maroons in Florida, the Indian Territory, Coahuila, and Texas* (1993).
- Pubols, Louise. *The Father of All: The de la Guerra Family, Power, and Patriarchy in Mexican California* (2010).
- Ramos, Raúl A. *Beyond the Alamo: Forging Mexican Ethnicity in San Antonio, 1821-1861* (2008).
- Reséndez, Andrés. *Changing National Identities at the Frontier: Texas and New Mexico, 1800-1850* (2005).
- Tijerina, Andres. *Tejanos and Texas Under the Mexican Flag 1821-1836* (1994).
- Walker, Henry Pickering. *The Wagonmasters: High Plains Freightling from the Earliest Days of the Santa Fe Trail to 1880* (1966).
- Weber, David J. *Taos Trappers: The Fur Trade in the Far Southwest, 1540-1846* (1968).
- . *The Mexican Frontier, 1821-1846: The American Southwest Under Mexico* (1982).