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Halcyon Days:
Mexican California,
1826-1845

CALIFORNIANS caught an early glimpse of the modern era on November 20, 1818, when the Argentine pirate and patriot, Hippolyte de Bouchard, seized Monterey to imbue it with the "spirit of liberty." His hopes were soon dashed, however, when the men of Monterey neither rallied to his noble banner nor fought him, but instead preferred to stay at home with their panicking womenfolk and children. "Liberator" Bouchard, understandably discouraged, sacked the town and sailed away at the first opportunity.¹ Ten years more would elapse before California would feel ready for "liberation" and for the ideas that shattered Spanish power and inaugurated social revolution throughout Latin America.

The school of thought that celebrates the Spanish era as California's golden age marks its decline with Bouchard's raid, or, more properly, with the arrival of Mexican Governor José María Echeandía in 1826. This school argues that the saintly piety of the mission fathers and the heroism of the conquistadores gave way to the cruelty, materialism, and bathos of the Mexican políticos. Liberalismo became the villain, an ideology whose effect George Tays likened to that of a "malignant

¹Mariano G. Vallejo, "Recuerdos históricos y personales tocante a la Alta California: ... 1769–1848," 1875, MS, Bancroft Library (Berkeley, Calif.), II, 83-97; Peter Corney, Voyages in the Northern Pacific (Honolulu, 1896), pp. 119–138.

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malarial epidemic.” Another school regards the Mexican era as the "true Arcadia," the culmination of the promise inherent in the Spanish beginnings. In considering the decline of Hispanic California it is, however, more relevant to assess the Californians' own response to Mexicanization and gauge its future implications, rather than to bemoan or celebrate it. The problem, in other words, is to delineate the leading tendencies of the era 1826 to 1846 and to learn how they conditioned the Californians for their final ordeal, the confrontation with Americans.

In 1826, California's Spanish heritage was still in strong evidence. Only one generation separated California from the pioneer stage, a fact still obvious in the crudity and sparseness of settlement. Stretched along a 500-mile coastline, the "rationals," the gente de razón, numbered about 8,000 and in Monterey, the capital, 300. From the beginning, California had been little more than an outpost of empire, a remote frontier. Since the province lay at the farthest reaches of New Spain, itself a Spanish colony, California's colonial status was twice removed. This geographic and political isolation bred provincialism. An essentially medieval and clerical society, California had twenty-one Franciscan missions which subordinated all and sundry to their will. Neither the military officers at the presidios, nor the civilians in the pueblos and ranchos, could rival the power of the padres in their heyday.

The Spanish heritage, however, compared with the Mexican, creaked with decrepitude. Thus, liberalismo kept filtering into the province despite a wall of conservatism. Mariano Vallejo, ten years old during Bouchard's raid, gradually caught the drift of world history and acknowledged of those "liberators" that "patriotism was their incentive and liberty their god." The idealism of youth made a rebel of Vallejo,

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* See, for example, Gertrude Atherton, The Splendid Idle Forties (New York, 1902).
* This chapter leans most heavily on Hubert Howe Bancroft, History of California (I–IV, San Francisco, 1884–1890), still the most useful account of pre-Yankee days; see also his California Pastoral, 1766–1848 (San Francisco, 1888); Irving Berdine Richman, California under Spain and Mexico, 1535–1847 . . . (Boston, 1911); and Nellie Van de Grift Sanchez, Spanish Arcadia (Los Angeles, 1929), a "social" history.
but he was forced to bide his time because his elders remained “all very much attached” to king and pope and “prayed at the break of dawn, at noon, at sunset, and at bedtime.” His young nephew, Juan Bautista Alvarado, and their cousin, José Castro, also became rebels. These three young “conspirators” formed a secret junta for the study of politics and history and had absorbed a good dose of radicalismo by 1826, when Governor José María Echeandía arrived and became the chief resident apostle of the new ideology. In 1831, young Mariano boarded a Mexican vessel and took home a small library of banned books. As ill luck would have it, his sweetheart reported the “sin” to a priest, who promptly caught the youths red-handed with a forbidden work (Telemachus) and commanded them to yield the books, go to confession, and do penance. Much to the horror of their relatives, especially their mothers and sisters, the trio refused and were unofficially “ex-communicated.”

This circle of Monterey youths was experiencing nothing more than the awakening typical of the Creoles of Mexico and, indeed, of all Latin America. Because they lived on the farthest perimeters of revolution, they caught only partial glimpses and heard merely fugitive rumors of the main movements many months, and even years, later. Nevertheless, the message came through: They began to yearn vaguely for education, the reduction of clerical power, freedom of expression, liberation of bondsmen, the end of colonial status, and self-government. However belatedly, the Enlightenment was overturning the old order. Castro, Vallejo, and Alvarado soon had accomplices in every community—Carlos and José Antonio Carrillo of Santa Barbara; Juan Bandini, a Peruvian resident of San Diego; the brothers Pío and Andrés Pico at Los Angeles; Santiago Argüello; and Pablo de Portilla—until eventually most of the younger generation and some of their elders professed the liberal heresy proudly.

The first mutation caused by the spread of liberalismo was in the religious realm. The temporal authority of the clerics continued to annoy the younger men as they matured. As a grown man, Don Mariano flatly refused to pay a tithe to finance the “impracticable” schemes of the first bishop of California, Bishop García Diego, although he never rejected Catholicism itself and single-handedly patronized the village

*Quoted in ibid., p. 64.*
chapels at Sonoma. Outright resistance among the communicants everywhere except in Santa Barbara left the Bishop virtually penniless and paralyzed. At the same time, the new generation deliberately rejected Spanish forms of piety. Domestic devotions fell off among the male part of the population until, by the end of the Mexican régime, Sunday Mass had become an affair for women, children, and neophyte Indians; men participated in the livelier religious fiestas, but as nominal Catholics only. Doubtless, the decline of Catholicism represented an unfortunate disintegration of a unitary way of life. Yet, liberalism was a satisfactory surrogate for religion, and religious change probably prepared the Californians for a future life in a pluralistic society.

Politically, California remained wrapped in its cocoon until 1831. It then began to stir out, goaded by Yankees and Mexicans made restive by a willful Mexican governor, Manuel Victoria, whose credo was "love of order, respect for authority and constant consecration to duty." Although vague at first and always beclouded by petty interests, rebel aspirations hardened during a score of rebellions in the next fifteen years. Among the more important episodes was the unsuccessful assault of the Sonoran vaqueros of Los Nietos (near Los Angeles) against Governor José Figueroa in 1834; the attack on Governor Mariano Chico in 1835, which ousted him; and, most important, the uprising of the "federalists" Alvarado and Castro against the "centralist" governor, Nicolás Gutiérrez, in 1836, which secured the province virtual self-government. Thereafter, the Californians had many fallings-out among themselves until José Castro was about to battle Pio Pico in 1846, when the sudden intrusion of Captain John C. Frémont's "topographical engineers" ended that squall. By then, however, the Californians had realized their most important aspirations: autonomy within the Mexican Republic, separation of the military and civilian branches of government, and secularization of the missions.

Republicanism created new offices and expanded old ones, and thus gave the local gentry a practical knowledge of self-government. The numerous ceremonial positions aside, many offices carried an authority that nurtured in the incumbents a degree of sophistication. In a short

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8 Tays, op. cit., p. 147.
time hundreds of Californians served as governors, delegates to the Mexican Congress and the provincial junta, prefects, alcaldes, jueces del campo (judges of the plain), and representatives in the town councils and thus passed through a political or an administrative apprenticeship. Most observers questioned whether many Californios ever graduated to the rank of "journeyman"; Mexican Governor Chico asserted that all but a few Californians were "intimidated by energy and . . . bluster." Yet, even as apprentices they were not as bumbling as the Mexicans and Yankees made them out to be; Chico discovered this when they turned on him and sent him packing from the province.

As preparation for service in gringo government, however, the old politics proved only partly useful. Its stock-in-trade was intrigue, not debate; rebellion, not compromise; élite leadership, not mass support; and, of course, the flaming pronunciamiento. When everything else failed, men reached for their guns. Such tactics conformed badly with the Anglo-Saxon scheme of things.

Because the Californians mixed serious ideological goals with naïve methods, their politics assumed a tragicomic air. Like the tribes of the Stone Age ever preparing for war but rarely fighting, the Californios cultivated a state of perpetual excitement which culminated in anticlimactic decrees or minor skirmishes; three casualties in one of these fights would represent a major tragedy. Some of the rebels themselves complained of speeches that rang too gloriously, of políticos who were too soft-hearted, of "great struggles" that were more like comic-opera episodes. Governor Carlos Carrillo, the first native-born governor, knew that his own family laughingly compared him to Sancho Panza.10

By Anglo-Saxon standards, California government came to be judged invidiously. Weighed properly by Latin-American standards, however, in the perspective of the movement for independence in the Spanish Empire, it fares much better. Viewed that way, correctly, California demonstrates an impressive unanimity on fundamental principles. After about 1835, scarcely a single active royalist remained in the

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*Tays, op. cit., p. 457.
realm, nor a major civilian opponent of secularization of the missions. The "religious question," which then wracked all of Latin America, yielded to acclamation in California. That province demonstrated, further, a talent for leadership. Local leaders had to manufacture civil government from the whole cloth, with little formal preparation, and had to work in a province of vast distances without steady finances, military support, and genuine respect from the mother country. Yet, they accomplished their main goals. Best of all, they shed less blood and destroyed less property in the process than any comparable group of Latin Americans.

The new era produced yet another innovation: an ambivalence toward Mexico and things Mexican. Though freely mimicking Mexico's new ideology, the Californios struggling for autonomy learned to despise the bearers of that ideology—governors, soldiers, and colonists from la otra banda (the other shore). Since, among the upstanding citizens of Mexico, "to speak of California was like mentioning the end of the world," the government had to empty the jails of Sinaloa and Sonora to encourage colonization and military occupation of the northern part of the province. As a sort of Siberian work camp, California acquired hosts of petty thieves and political prisoners—18 in 1825, 200 in 1829, 130 in 1830, and so on. These convicts usually arrived in a state of wretchedness exceeded only by that of the Indians. Bands of these so-called chulos (scoundrels) would brawl drunkenly on the public streets and commit theft and other assorted misdeeds—even homicide—while the political prisoners among them organized rebellions. This state of affairs greatly distressed the more genteel settlers.

Second-generation Californians, although often themselves the children of chulos, nevertheless greeted the newcomers dismally, in many cases making no distinction between the outright felons and the dedicated colonists. In 1834, the Hijar-Padrés Colony, a group of respectable Mexican artisans, teachers, and tradesmen, had to flee northern

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California, while the *nativos* hounded them with cries of "Death to Mexico!" and "Kill the Mexicans!" 18

Resisting the "degraded" influences of Mexico made men conscious of their California birth. In response to the new identity, the local nomenclature changed, until the native-born ceased calling themselves *Españoles* or *Mexicanos* and began to insist on the name *Californios*.

The province was, however, vast, and the Californios felt the strongest ties to an immediate locale. This led to another innovation in the Mexican period, a north-south regional consciousness; it, too, proved divisive. Regionalism polarized around Monterey, Los Angeles, and Santa Barbara, although the latter town, often caught in a cross fire remained indifferent and confused. After the capital had been moved from Monterey to Los Angeles in 1835, each passing year intensified the rivalry until, in 1845, *abajeños* (southerners) and *arribéños* (northerners) were ready for open warfare. No matter what Alvarado or Castro wanted for Monterey, Pio Pico and others spitefully demanded the opposite for Los Angeles; when northerners spoke of stronger ties with Mexico, southerners espoused greater independence, and vice versa. The best that could come of this rivalry was a division of power and a truce. In 1846, Monterey’s Castro seized control of the military headquarters and customhouse and gave the *Angeleño* Pico the governorship. North-south rivalries were further complicated by family feuds and personal ambitions, which later led to failures of communication and a lack of unity among the nativos—an inability to reach across space to make common cause against the superior gringo enemy. The final gift of political apprenticeship, then, was confusion and bickering.

Unquestionably, the chief reform of the Mexican era was secularization of the missions. Beginning in earnest after 1831, reaching full flood by 1839, and completed by 1845, secularization cut the last cord still linking California to its Spanish “mother.” It upset class relations, altered ideology, and shifted the ownership of enormous wealth. It totally destroyed a fiefdom that in its heyday had included twenty-one

mission establishments, 15,000 Indian wards, great herds of livestock, millions of acres of land, and proceeds from a lucrative foreign trade. That revolutionary social and economic transformation was California’s most important event before the discovery of gold; indeed, nothing in the experience of the Californios compares with it, except possibly the dissolution of the ranchos in the 1880’s.  

That secularization came bloodlessly is a credit to both the padres and the civil officials. Authorized by the Mexican Constitution of 1824, it was set in motion late in Echeandía’s régime by his decree of 1831 but made little headway until 1836. Even liberals conceded that the California Indians “do not possess the qualifications” for freedom and needed protection “against themselves,” a thought probably shared by the governor when he made a tentative promise of citizenship to the Indians and rather gingerly asked the friars to limit their floggings to fifteen lashes weekly and to allow married couples immediate freedom. Another governor sought to ease the friars out of their mission establishments and onto the frontier for new labors among the heathens, but he was unsuccessful. The most onerous burdens the government managed to impose on the missionaries were a mild civil tax and ideological sniping, both of which the Franciscans could handle with ease.

The Franciscans held nearly absolute sway over their communicants and threatened to resign en masse, should the government take more strenuous measures. A missionary strike would have brought a crippling work stoppage throughout the province. Fortunately, this threat never came to pass, since the friars settled for token resistance by refusing to swear allegiance to the Mexican constitution and by sermonizing against the republicans. They castigated the “radicals” who went among the Indians “preaching and dogmatizing that there was no hell.” Father Narciso Durán, head of the mission system, easily carried every thrust of the civil officials who were, in his words, “but yesterday savages” and are skilled at no greater art than horsemanship, yet presume to “teach the way to civilize men.” The fact that the Franciscans tried to prevent the _emancipados_ from becoming slaves or

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15 Captain Portilla, quoted in _Tays, op. cit._, p. 847.
16 Alfred Robinson, _Life in California during a Residence of Several Years in That Territory_ (San Francisco, 1891), pp. 152–158.
17 Bancroft, _History of California_, III, 310.
savages and yet bowed graciously to the inevitability of secularization partly accounts for the absence of the bloodletting provoked elsewhere in Mexico by religious strife.

When the Californians took over the helm of provincial government in 1836, matters moved more swiftly. Doubtless, high ideals impelled them; but, whether a ranchero professed liberalismo and signed his letters "For God and Liberty!" or had no political persuasion at all, he knew that secularization might bring him wealth—he stood to gain whatever the padres and the Indians lost. The program thus proceeded apace in Alvarado's governorship, from 1836 to 1842. He sold or leased the mission lands and assets to private individuals for the supposed benefit of the creditors, of the government (which would collect a tax in the transaction), of the Indians (who would obtain land grants), and of the missionaries (who would be guaranteed subsistence).

The new owners and lessees began a rapid slaughter of mission livestock. By 1839, an investigation by Alvarado showed that two-thirds of the cattle had been butchered, three-quarters of the sheep, and half of the horses, for which the Franciscans and neophytes had received practically none of their rightful compensation. The governor, a better rebel than administrator, was guilty of favoritism and laxness, although not of lining his own pockets. To maintain the treasury, he issued drafts on mission property to government creditors, without recognizing the dwindling rate of mission inventories. His later attempt to reverse this policy and to salvage some property for the former mission inhabitants failed with the premature end of his term of office. By 1845, the original herds of 150,000 had dwindled to 50,000.

In the eyes of the gente de razón, Indian liberation had succeeded famously, but for the Indians themselves it was a painful experience. The neophytes were torn tragically between a secure, authoritarian existence and a free but anarchic one. Those who had spent their lives in the shadow of the Cross often rejected the proffered liberty, not out of fear of the padres' wrath but of the uncertainties of the outer world. Although examples of neophyte self-leadership were rare, Pacifico, an untypically forward young Indian of Mission San Buenaventura, demanded in 1828 that the 150 neophytes receive immediate release and land allotments. At best, however, the emancipados gained an illusionary freedom. By 1829, the number of mission Indians had fallen from
15,000 to 4,500; by 1847 virtually all the remaining ones had gone free and either melted into the lower class of the pueblos, took up residence on the ranchos, went back to their rancherías (villages), or disappeared behind the pale. There, from 1836 to 1839, the "civilized" Indians stirred up their "wild" brethren so much that, in San Diego, for example, entire ranchos had to be abandoned. Even by the 1850's the neophytes remained a demoralized class, alternately a prey to disease, liquor, violence, submission, and exploitation.¹⁸

Mexican Governor Manuel Micheltorena, in 1843, gave the Franciscans a respite by calling a moratorium on secularization, an act that was of little use to the friars for lack of morale and of material support. California Governor Pico, who succeeded Micheltorena, returned to Alvarado's policy and, in fact, extended it by liquidating the missions altogether. For this some writers have maligned him, yet he evidently acted in good faith—perhaps even wisdom—since the remaining institutions were too small, too encumbered with debts, and too expensive for efficient operation. Through a controlled liquidation, Pico hoped to guarantee to the Indians some small measure of communal property, to the state a small tax, and to the friars subsistence. The final sale and lease of mission property came in May, 1845.¹⁹

The dethronement of the padres elevated the rancheros and introduced a new social order based on their authority. More than eight hundred of them shared in the carving up of 8 million prime acres. So swift was the division that, between 1841 and 1844, thirty new ranchos appeared in the Los Angeles district alone. Land in parcels up to 11 leagues could be had practically for the asking by those with the right connections or with a record of civil or military service. Some families obtained several great adjoining parcels and thus prevailed over 300,000 acres or more. By 1846, according to a list compiled by Thomas Oliver Larkin, forty-six men of substance, influence, or political power ruled California. They were largely self-made men, the arriviste corps of the recent past who had inherited little wealth from their fathers and mostly were landowners.²⁰

¹⁸ Ibid., IV, 43–85; Ord, op. cit., p. 25.
²⁰ Thomas Oliver Larkin, "Notes on the Personal Character of the Principal
The widespread distribution of land in Mexican California shaped a social structure notably different from that which evolved in the opposite end of the "Spanish borderland," New Mexico. In the province centering on Santa Fe, far fewer land grants were distributed relative to the size of the population. That society remained more rigid and more dependent upon the semifeudal bond between the petrón and his peons. New Mexican villages held the bulk of the population and became strong enough to resist disintegration even in the twentieth century. In California, village life tended to be eclipsed by rancho life. The availability of ranchland even to underlings, combined with the presence of an Indian laboring class to work that land, prevented the creation of a peon class among the gente de razón of California. Without peons, the patrón system lacked adequate grounding and developed only sketchily in California, whereas in New Mexico it had a powerful and lasting effect and merged with the American political and economic structure.  

The one institution that developed as strongly in California as in New Mexico was the family—a phenomenon that tends to underscore Margaret Mead's assertion that "to be Spanish American is to belong to a familia." In California, the most important type of family was that of the ranchero. All lines of dependency radiated outward from his casa and embraced his children, his in-laws, other relatives, orphans, a bevy of Indian servants, sometimes also the residents of the nearest village. As Robert Glass Cleland puts it, the ranchero "provided a home for a host of poor relations, entertained strangers, as well as friends, . . . and begat as many sons and daughters as the Hebrew patriarchs of old."  

The ranchero, in effect, had inherited the esteem enjoyed by the patrón but not the peons customarily accompanying it. Ideally, his authority ran so deep that he could even legally flog his married children who already had their own offspring. In the more traditional households of Santa Barbara, youngsters solemnly kneeled and kissed papa's

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# The Cattle on a Thousand Hills: Southern California, 1850–1880 (San Marino, Calif., 1951), p. 43.
hand before filing off to bed at night, and no son, not even one in his sixties, dared smoke, sit, or wear his hat in his father’s presence without asking permission. Vallejo generalized: “In the breast of the old time Californians love of family was stronger than selfish and vile interest.” Speaking of the Montereños who had clung to their casas instead of fighting off Bouchard, he estimated that “had they been Yankees it is likely that they would have acted differently.”

Family feeling and respect for age thus produced powerful sentiments whose weakening the Californians would later find especially painful.

The entire economy depended on the production of cattle for the hide and tallow trade. Most rancheros also grazed sheep and horses, or raised grain crops or wine grapes. With the exception of soap, wine, and cloth, however, they rarely made finished products. The Yankees remonstrated with them about the neglect of other resources such as timber and fish, but the Californios showed no visible remorse; their rejoinder was that nobody starved in California, and that many enjoyed luxurious living. The gradual increase in shipping reduced California’s long-standing economic isolation. As the traders from the United States and Britain took away larders of tallow and bales of dried skins, they introduced the finished products of the industrial revolution and some of the frills of more highly developed societies: furniture, dry goods, clothing, agricultural implements, salt, fireworks, and lumber. These imports reduced the crudities of frontier living and gave the gentry reason to regard themselves as enjoying the well-earned rewards of service to king or state—grandees without a court, aristocrats in a republic.

An orientation toward the present, not the past or the future, permeated the value system of the Californios. The “old mañana habit,” to use Don Eugenio Plummer’s term, implied a satisfaction with what one had today. Men did not prepare for the future, as such. They did do hard work when it was necessary and did take pride in it, but more in anticipation of the fun that came right at the end of it, rather than for any anticipated distant need. Owing to a happy combination of good climate, ample land, and cheap Indian labor, the rancho order

“Quoted in Tays, op. cit., p. 74.

worked smoothly on the basis of this value system. Once these conditions worsened, however, the Californios had neither the necessary psychological nor the economic reserves to fall back upon. The future, in short, would come as a shock to them, and the Anglo-Saxon's preoccupation with labor, profit, and savings for the future always remained something of a mystery to them.

Bernard De Voto remarks on another aspect of the Californios' old value system, namely, that the standard of manners in California always exceeded the standard of living. Thus, the rancheros, who had behaved like aristocrats even while poor, eased into affluence naturally, as if living up to a preestablished level of life—say, that of Spain in the eighteenth century.

The Californios exemplified the tendency of Latin Americans to make pleasure the chief end of work. Most of their enjoyments were formalized and communal. Saint's days and other religious holidays took a great deal of advance planning, but in most communities few days passed without either a spontaneous baile (dance), a fandango, an evening of singing and guitar playing, a cockfight, a round of bullfighting and bear baiting, or a horse race as part of the daily routine. On these occasions the celebrants consumed heroic amounts of food and drink, clearly indulging in conspicuous consumption. As to "recreations," the Californios' attitude could not possibly have been more opposite to that of the Americans.

Whatever the failings of their civilization, the Californians took delight and pride in it. It gave them land, wealth, regal fun, family pride, a stake in government, and a sense of aristocratic refinement that was rare in the more isolated reaches of Latin America. Although whatever they possessed by 1846 had come to them but recently, they had held it long enough to cherish it, should anyone threaten to seize it. As Alvarado explained to incredulous Americans who wondered why the Californians defended themselves so well, "we who from our youth had been reared in the school of adversity . . . loved our country most dearly because we had only been able by immense sacrifice to maintain it at the level of contemporary civilization." 27

HALCYON DAYS

"I myself, as a trader prefer everything as it is," Thomas Oliver Larkin confided to a friend on April 27, 1846; "the times and the country are well enough for me." A decade later he still confessed a yearning for "the times prior to July 1846 and all their honest pleasures, and the fleshpots of those days. Halcyon days they were. We shall not see their likes again." 28 Coming from Larkin, a levelheaded Yankee never given to flights of fancy, the phrase "halcyon days" amounts to the highest possible compliment for Mexican California.

Nonetheless, Larkin here expressed what definitely was a minority opinion: those aspects of California life which pleased him the most would have revolted a majority of his countrymen. With rare exceptions, they were not content merely to describe or to criticize California but wished to stand in moral judgment over it. If they occasionally conceded some favorable points—California's gorgeous scenery, the rancheros' splendid horsemanship, the punctuality with which their debts were paid, the openhanded hospitality, the Yankees made sure to recite a longer catalogue of the venial and cardinal sins practiced in the province.

The eyewitness accounts of Americans in California provide a rare example of culture conflict; they express both collectively and individually a deep-seated clash of values between the Anglo-American and the Latin-American culture. This clash involved elements such as the Protestant's condescension toward Catholicism; the Puritan's dedication to work, now familiarly known as the "Protestant Ethic"; The republican's loathing of aristocracy; the Yankee's belief in Manifest Destiny; and the Anglo-Saxon's generalized fear of racial mixture. In few places where Yankees embraced a non-Anglo-Saxon people—in Louisiana, New Mexico, Texas, Hawai'i—did they document their fears so well as in California. At the same time, the travel accounts of no other area made as much of an impact on the popular mind; the forty-niners had devoured descriptions of California before rushing for the gold mines. Thus, the seeds of culture conflict were carried away from California and back again, over great distances.

"Judgmental" is the word for the Anglo-Saxon spirit in California in

that period, and examples of it are legion. Among the more influential published accounts were those by trappers James Ohio Pattie, who arrived in 1827, and James Clyman, who came in 1846; naval Lieutenant Charles Wilkes and lawyer Thomas Jefferson Farnham, who visited in 1841; and the resident trader, Alfred Robinson, whose widely read _Life in California_ appeared in 1846. Richard Henry Dana, Jr.'s, _Two Years before the Mast_ (1840), probably the most popular book ever written about California, is of course also prime evidence. A volume published in 1847 by a responsible Englishman, Sir George Simpson, suggests that Anglo-Saxons generally had similar attitudes.

Every aspect of life in California came up for their scrutiny. What the Californians regarded as a high degree of family unity, those observers interpreted as parental neglect. The men, Robinson explained coolly, are “generally indolent, and addicted to many vices, caring little for the welfare of their children, who like themselves, grow up unworthy members of society.” 30 The women, Dana added, “have but little virtue . . . the jealousy of their husbands is extreme, and the revenge deadly and almost certain.” 30 (Robinson, married to a Californian, took offense at this remark, but in defending California’s womanhood, damned its manhood all the more.) The political activity the Californians so relished, the Americans regarded as absurd. Clyman saw “every [political] change for the worse,” 31 since no matter which faction seized power, the government ignored the time-honored safeguards of a republic, including the distinctions among the branches of government, a free press, public schools, and equal protection of the law. In addition, the courts, in Simpson’s judgment, were “rotten to the core.” 32 Although the rancheros congratulated themselves on having liberated the Indians, the Yankees saw the natives as still in thralldom; thus Pattie found their condition inside the missions to be no better than Clyman considered it to be outside. Indians, Clyman asserted, are “kept in a state of Slavery having or Receiving no compensation for

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31 Richard Henry Dana, Jr., _Two Years before the Mast: A Personal Narrative of Life at Sea_ (Boston, 1895), p. 162.