PART ONE

Racial Ambiguities, Class Realities, and "Half Civilized" Mexicans in Anglo California

CHAPTER TWO

"The True Significance of the Word 'White' "

Given their free-labor sentiments and their profound belief in "Manifest Destiny," European Americans migrating into the new American Southwest could have been expected to despise completely the Mexican population they encountered in California. Although these prejudices undeniably affected their initial impressions of Mexican society, white immigrants actually assigned Mexicans an intermediate location in the new society they imposed in the region. Indeed, compared to the treatment ultimately afforded other racialized groups in California, the experience of Mexicans in the nineteenth century was without parallel.

For complex reasons, Mexicans occupied a qualitatively different "group position" from that of Indians, blacks, and Asian immigrants in the new racial hierarchy. Nineteenth-century relations between Mexicans and Anglos in California were powerfully determined by the class divisions within the two populations, divisions that led to divergent historical experiences for the Mexican working class and the ranchero elite. The introduction of a new, Anglo-dominated class structure led to bitter contention between powerful Mexican rancheros and European-American capitalists for control of the most arable land in the state. The strife that developed between the old Mexican ruling class and Anglo capitalists initially overshadowed the ethnic conflict that occurred at other class levels.

Unlike black, Chinese, and Japanese immigrants, for example, Mexican workers were not initially perceived as a formidable obstacle to white working-class aspirations, primarily because of such demographic factors

as the relatively small size of the Mexican population, the low percentage of adult male laborers, and their concentration away from urban economic sectors employing white laborers. By 1900, however, these class lines had been blurred, if not obliterated, as the ranchero class irretrievably surrendered its earlier privileged position. These changes, plus widespread Mexican immigration during the 1910s and 1920s, set the stage for a twentieth-century experience qualitatively different from that of the nineteenth.

Another unique feature of Anglo-Mexican relations at the time was the ability of upper-class Mexicans to resist European-American encroachment and protect themselves from the intense racial animosity and virulent discrimination that Anglos inflicted on other groups during the nineteenth century. This was principally the result of important political rights Mexicans gained at the onset of American control of California, rights based on the guarantees extended by treaty and by the U.S. Constitution and largely denied Indians, blacks, and Chinese and Japanese immigrants. For example, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo enabled Mexicans to obtain U.S. citizenship rights in 1849. Citizenship carried with it suffrage, which empowered Mexican elites to politically challenge Anglo control in areas of Mexican concentration. The citizenship rights Mexicans came to enjoy, though often circumvented, nevertheless protected them from the more onerous discriminatory legislation enacted against other racialized groups.

The claimed European descent of the Mexican ranchero elite, the so-called *gente de razon* (literally, "people of reason"), also facilitated the assimilation of segments of the upper class into European American society. The cultural distance between these Mexicans and European Americans proved less extreme than that between white immigrants and the unambiguously "nonwhite" populations. One important measure of the perceived assimilability of upper-class Mexicans was clearly evident in the degree of intermarriage between old Californio families and prominent Anglo immigrants. In sharp contrast, the Mexican working class was generally viewed like other racialized groups. Their degraded class status, combined with their inability to claim "pure" European ancestry, contributed to Anglo perceptions that they were unassimilable and certainly unworthy of intermarrying. Unprotected by the status European ancestry afforded the *gente de razon*, they were much more vulnerable to having their political and legal rights violated with impunity.

This chapter examines the major features of the unique nineteenth-century Mexican experience in Anglo California, focusing specifically on the divergent fates of the Californio elite and the Mexican working class.

The class divisions of the Mexican period (1821–46) laid the basis for these class-specific experiences. Remnants of the old Mexican class structure persisted after 1848, coexisting briefly with the emerging capitalist sector as part of the new social formation. These old and new class divisions structurally placed the Mexican ranchero and working classes into divergent types of conflict with European Americans at different class levels. By way of background to this history, let us first turn to a brief assessment of the Mexican society that structured group relations among Californios prior to U.S. annexation of the territory.

THE CLASS STRUCTURE OF MEXICAN SOCIETY IN ALTA CALIFORNIA

Class and race relations in Mexican California were fundamentally structured by the land-tenure system introduced after Mexican independence from Spain in 1821, when the Mexican National Congress enacted a liberal policy of granting large tracts of unoccupied land to individuals and encouraged further territorial settlement through the Colonization Act of 1824. This act provided the legislative basis for the rapid development and expansion of private land grants. More than seven hundred such grants, each of up to eleven square leagues (approximately 49,000 acres), were issued by the Mexican government between 1833 and the American occupation in 1846.[1]

The land-tenure system led to the rapid crystallization of a class structure dominated by individual families monopolizing ownership of immense expanses of land known as *ranchos*. According to historian Leonard Pitt, in 1849 "an estimated two hundred Californio families owned 14 million acres of land in parcels of from 1 to 11 leagues (nearly 4,500 acres to the league)."[2] He also notes that a mere forty-six of these Californios dominated political as well as economic affairs in California during the Mexican period.[3] The de la Guerra family of Santa Barbara, for example, amassed fourteen separate land grants comprising over 488,000 acres. The Carrillo family of Los Angeles acquired over seventeen claims encompassing approximately 320,000 acres of land. Other Mexican grantees with multiple holdings included the Pico family with 700,000 acres, the Vallejo family with 294,000 acres, and the Yorba family with 218,000 acres.[4] These ranchos were semifeudal institutions similar to those found throughout New Spain and Mexico in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.[5]

Below the ranchero class was an intermediate stratum composed largely

of rancheros and farmers with smaller holdings, skilled rancho laborers and foremen, artisans in the Mexican pueblos, and a few territorial and local officials. This stratum consisted largely of mestizos (mixed racial ancestry) and was typically viewed as a "middle class" by travelers visiting California during the Mexican period. This nonranchero population, particularly the déclassé Mexican laborers in the pueblos, were contemptuously viewed as "greasers" by Anglos visiting Mexican California. For example, the historian Hubert Howe Bancroft described this stratum as "the baser stock of Hispano-Californians . . . [the] greasers."[6]

At the bottom of the Mexican class structure of Alta California were the subjugated Indian population and a few mestizos. Most of the Indians who worked the ranchos had formerly worked on the Spanish missions and were bound to their new employers in three principal ways. Some secularized Indians "voluntarily" attached themselves. These Indians were given a subsistence existence by landholders in exchange for their labor. A second group was bound through debt peonage. Before indebted Indians could leave an area they were required to prove they were free of outstanding debts to rancheros. Finally, when sufficient labor could not be secured by noncoercive means, rancheros resorted to kidnapping and directly enslaving Indians. An open traffic in Indian women and children for use as ranchero servants also flourished during the Mexican period. Although Mexican law formally abolished slavery in 1829, it proved impossible to enforce in the isolated northern frontier of Alta California. Moreover, this type of enslavement flourished and was typically rationalized by rancheros as necessary retaliation for Indian vandalism and thievery.[7]

Indians laboring on large ranchos generally were not remunerated through wages. The few laborers who received cash payment were usually skilled workers such as *vaqueros* (cowboys) or *mayordomos* (foremen). Vaqueros, for example, periodically received modest wages of twelve to fifteen dollars per month plus room and board, while mayordomos were paid approximately sixteen dollars per month. Unskilled Indian laborers occasionally received from three to ten dollars per month or were given grain or colored glass beads. As a rule, however, the Indian population on these large estates received only food, clothing, and shelter.[8]

The Indians attached to any individual rancho ranged from a mere handful to several hundred. The Yorba family of Los Angeles utilized twenty-six Indian servants to maintain their twenty-five room house. An additional one hundred laborers tended to the livestock on their 114,480-acre rancho. In northern California, Mariano Vallejo relied on an estimated six hundred Indian vaqueros and laborers to work his 66,000-acre Rancho Petaluma and 90,000-acre Rancho Suscol. John Sutter, one of the few Anglos given a land grant in Alta California by the Mexican government, held an estimated six to eight hundred Indian workers on his 160,000-acre rancho estate near Sacramento.[9]

Indian workers performed numerous tasks on these rancho estates. Many tended the livestock that provided the basis of the hide and tallow trade with foreign merchants who frequented the California coast by the late 1820s. These laborers also assisted in the annual *matanza* or slaughter that occurred in late summer. Others helped prepare the hides and tallow. A number of skilled workers labored as tanners, shoemakers, harnessmakers, carpenters, wine makers, plasterers, and dairymen, and a few also cultivated the small garden plots that provided fruit, vegetables, and grains for use on the ranchos.[10]

While Indian men generally toiled in field activities, a gendered division of labor assigned Indian women to serve principally as personal servants in the ranchero's home, where they ground corn, washed clothes, and spun and sewed cloth. A visitor to Mariano Vallejo's home in 1844 found Indian women performing these essential tasks. Doña Vallejo told her guest that:

> Each of my children, boys and girls has a servant who has no other duty than to care for him or her. I have two for my own personal service. Four or five grind corn for tortillas. . . . About six or seven are set apart for service in the kitchen. Five or six are continually occupied in washing the clothes in the house; and finally, nearly a dozen are charged to attend to the sewing and spinning; for you must know that, as a rule they are not much inclined to learn many things. . . . All these servants whom we have in the house are very much attached. They are not accustomed to ask for money, nor do they have any fixed wages. We give them all they need. When they are sick we care for them as though they belonged to the family. When their children are born, we act as godfathers and godmothers, and we take charge of the education of their children. When they want to go some great distance to see their relatives, we give them animals and guards for the journey. In a word, we treat the servants as friends rather than servants.[11]

Doña Vallejo's paternalism reflected a sentiment common among the ranchero class. This paternalism was similar to that which bound black slaves to white masters in the antebellum South.[12] It was not merely an expression of the rancheros' benevolence, as it helped morally justify their exploitative use of Indian labor. Indians were viewed as stepchildren of the ranchero class, as dependents bound by a series of mutual duties and responsibilities as well as binding *compadrazgo* (godparent) relationships.

The ranchero class tended to the daily needs of their Indian wards while Indians, in exchange, performed the labor needed to ensure the smooth operation of the rancho estate.

The paternalism that characterized ranchero-Indian relations was vividly captured in an interview with Salvador Vallejo in 1844. This prominent ranchero told one of Hubert Bancroft's associates collecting data for his *History of California* that:

> Many of the rich men of the country had twenty to sixty Indian servants whom they dressed and fed. . . . Our friendly Indians tilled our soil, pastured our cattle, sheared our sheep, cut our lumber, built our houses, paddled our boats, made tile for our homes, ground our grain, slaughtered our cattle, dressed our hides for market, and made our burnt bricks; while the Indian women made excellent servants, took good care of our children, made every one of our meals. . . . Those people we considered as members of our families. We loved them and they loved us; our intercourse was always pleasant.[13]

As many as four thousand Indians in California were pressed into service on these immense Mexican ranchos. In northern California many Pomo, Wappo, Patwin, Maidu, Plains Miwok, and Central Valley Yukots fell victim to this exploitative relationship. In the southern part of the state the Luiseno, Cupeno, and Serrano Indians suffered a similar fate while the Gabrieleno and Chumash Indians experienced the final stages of extinction.[14]

Many American visitors to California during the Mexican period openly attested to the exploitative treatment of these Indians. During his visit to the Vallejo estate at Sonoma in 1842, an American named George Simpson described the conditions of Vallejo's Indians in these terms:

> During the day we visited a village of General Vallejo's Indians, about 300 in number, who were the most miserable of the race that I ever saw, excepting always the slaves of the savages of the northwest coast. . . . They are badly clothed, badly lodged, and badly fed. . . . Though not so recognized by law, yet they are thralls in all but the name, borne to the earth by the toils of civilization superadded to the privations of savage life, they vegetate rather than live. . . . This picture which is a correct likeness not only of General Vallejo's Indians, but of all of the civilized (i.e. former mission Indians) aborigines of California. . . . [15]

A similar observation was offered by James Clyman, a trapper traveling through California in 1846 who described the handling of Indians held by John Sutter at his fort near Sacramento. "The Capt. [Sutter] keeps 600 to 800 Indians in a complete state of Slavery and I had the mortification of

> seeing them dine I may give a short description 10 to 15 Troughs 3 to 4 feet long ware brought out of the cook room and seated in the Boiling sun all the labourers grate and small ran to the trough like so many pigs and feed themselves with their hands as long as the troughs contained even a moisture."[16]

Despite their maltreatment, Indian laborers were crucial to the survival of Alta California. Their value was recognized by the Mexican and those few Anglo rancheros who dominated the regional economy. John Marsh, for example, extensively used Indian laborers on the rancho he acquired in 1837. The Indians, probably Bay Miwoks and Northern Valley Yokuts, manufactured the adobe bricks for his Rancho Los Medanos, ploughed and cultivated his fields, and set traps and collected furs. In return, Marsh fed them, clothed them, and attended to their medical needs. In a letter on the "Aborigines of California," Marsh candidly acknowledged that "throughout all California the Indians are the principal laborers; without them the business of the country could hardly be carried on."[17]

RACIALIZED IMAGES OF MEXICAN "GREASERS" AND THE "GENTE DE RAZON"

White immigrants venturing into California after 1848 were initially repulsed by the existence of an economic system based on servile labor. The Mexican cattle-raising economy did not require the direct cultivation of the territory's fertile land and thus was not a fully "civilized" society in European-American eyes. This seemingly "unproductive" use of such a precious resource kindled intense white antipathy toward the Californios and led to their portrayal as idle squanderers unworthy of the good fortune they possessed. In the view of one Anglo traveler visiting California in the early 1840s, "Nature doing everything, man doing nothing" was the essence of the Mexican economy.[18]

The sectional sentiments of northern white immigrants, particularly their antipathy to slave societies, clearly colored their attitudes toward the society and people they encountered in California. At first glance, white immigrants perceived little difference between the ranchero elite and the southern plantation slaveholders. Nothing offended Anglo speculators and developers more than contending with yet another "aristocratic" class whose continued prosperity impeded their own aspirations. Holding the Protestant Ethic and white Anglo-Saxon values as the criteria for evaluating Mexicans, Anglos believed that California's undeveloped state was

simply the product of the Californios' cultural backwardness and lack of self-discipline. To overtake this class was no crime, for Anglo Americans were required to follow God's injunction to make the land fruitful, prosper economically, and attain their divinely appointed calling.

Given these sentiments, it is not surprising that European Americans believed Mexicans were an "indolent" people, whose backwardness reflected their having poor personal habits and collective deficiencies such as laziness or a penchant for extravagances. These disparaging evaluations were "class metaphors" fueled by class-specific perceptions of Californio society, especially of the ranchero elite.[19] The Anglo image of Mexicans as "lazy" was more than just a disparaging ethnic stereotype; the class-specific nature of these perceptions has not been fully appreciated.[20]

European-American evaluations of Mexicans were generally sensitive to the class-based differences among this population. Consider for the moment Richard Henry Dana's well-known travel account, *Two Years Before the Mast*. Therein he paints the Mexican rancheros as "thriftless, proud, and extravagant, and very much given to gaming."[21] While traveling in California in 1835, Dana disapprovingly lamented the absence of industry in the territory and made special note of the idleness of the Mexican elite. "The Californians," he wrote, "are idle, thriftless people, and can not make anything for themselves. The country abounds in grapes, yet they buy bad wine made in Boston and brought round by us, at an immense price. . . . Their hides too, which they value at two dollars in money, they give for something which costs seventy-five cents in Boston; and buy shoes (as like as not, made of their own hides, which have been carried twice round Cape Horn) at three and four dollars."[22] Dana was not the only European American who judged the Mexican ranchero class harshly for their lack of economic initiative and industriousness. Even Alfred Robinson, an Anglo merchant who married into the prominent de la Guerra family of Santa Barbara, shared this unflattering assessment. In his autobiographical *Life in California*, Robinson condescendingly described the Californio elite as "generally indolent, and addicted to many vices, caring little for the welfare of their children, who like themselves, grow up unworthy members of society."[23]

Some historians of the period have mistakenly attributed the rancheros' "indolence" and "thriftless" behavior to a dysfunctional value system stressing "an orientation toward the present." The Californios' penchant for making "pleasure the chief end of work" and reveling in the conspicuous consumption of food and drink at their innumerable *bailes* (dances), fandangos, and elaborate feasts ostensibly reflected this value system.[24]

There is little doubt that the Californios were fond of cultural-religious events that highlighted their superior status. The extravagance of Californio *bailes*, for instance, often involved the ostentatious display of precious silk and lace *rebozos* (shawls) and gowns, as well as elegant men's suits embossed with gold and silver. These displays, however, merely reaffirmed the status distinctions that were so central to semifeudal Mexican society. The Californios, after all, had only recently come into their wealth and status. Most rancheros had humble origins as Spanish soldiers or officials before being granted immense expanses of land. Conspicuously displaying their newly acquired wealth and social standing was merely a way of reaffirming the privileges this class enjoyed during the Mexican period. Unfortunately, the Californio's opulence and extravagant squandering (such as the merriment involving gold dust-filled *cascarones*, or hollowed-out eggs) held little value to most European Americans. Given the traditional Protestant value system which stressed hard work and frugality, it is not difficult to see why white newcomers witnessing these festivities would characterize them as flagrant examples of the spendthrift ways of an anachronistic gentry.

Most European-American travelers found little of value in assessing Mexican society. While they generally denigrated Mexican society in its entirety, some observers perceptively noted the class differences that internally stratified it. The readily apparent privileged station of the ranchero elite was described by Richard Henry Dana in 1840:

> There are but a few of these families in California; being mostly those in official stations, or who, on the expiration of their offices, have settled here upon property which they have acquired. . . . These form the aristocracy; intermarrying, and keeping up an exclusive system in every respect. They can be told by their complexions, dress, manner, and also by their speech; for, calling themselves Castilians, they are very ambitious of speaking the pure Castilian language, which is spoken in a somewhat corrupted dialect by the lower classes.[25]

Dana was particularly struck by the symmetry with which class divisions overlay differences in ancestry and skin color. He particularly noted that the Californio elite appeared to be composed largely of fair-complexioned individuals who proudly proclaimed their European ancestry. According to Dana, "From this upper class, they go down by regular shades, growing more and more dark and muddy, until you come to the pure Indian. . . . Generally speaking, each person's caste is decided by the quality of blood, which is itself, too plain to be concealed, at first sight. Yet the least drops of Spanish blood, if it be only a quatroon or octoon, is sufficient

to raise them from the rank of slaves, and entitle them to a suit of clothes . . . and to call themselves Espanoles, and to hold property, if they can get any."[26]

The claimed or real European ancestry of the Californio elite provided an important basis upon which they differentiated themselves from the more déclassé indigenous mestizo and Indian population in California. European-American travelers, on the other hand, often viewed their purported European ancestry, and implicit claims to civility, with open derision. The Californios were neither truly "white" in the northern European or Anglo-Saxon sense of the term, nor were they simply "uncivilized" Indians. Terms such as "semicivilized" or "semibarbarian" best capture the collective judgment European Americans made of Mexicans prior to the U.S.–Mexico war. Although some Californios could in fact trace their ancestry back to Spain, this did not lessen the contempt to which they were initially subjected by European Americans. Still, although they were not fully accepted as equals, their ostensible European ancestry and formidable class position did insure that white immigrants could not dismiss them as easily as the mixed or pure-blood indigenous populations.

THE PRIVILEGED POLITICAL STATUS OF MEXICANS IN ANGLO CALIFORNIA

One important measure of the unique social position that Mexicans came to occupy in the new Anglo society after annexation is clearly evident in their legal-political status in California. It highlights their intermediate "group position" as well as the modicum of deference and respect that European Americans grudgingly accorded the "half civilized" Californios. As noted previously, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo of 1848 guaranteed "all the rights of citizens of the United States" to those Mexicans who chose to remain in what is now the American Southwest one year after the treaty's ratification. This international agreement virtually tied the hands of white convention delegates when the issue of suffrage for Mexicans was raised. The California State Constitutional Convention of 1849 formally granted Mexicans the same citizenship rights as "free white persons" in California.

The Mexicans' distinctive mixed-blood ancestry apparently played a pivotal role in the extension of U.S. citizenship to them. Unlike other minority groups in California, some Mexicans were arguably part of the "white race." White immigrants generally made racial distinctions among

the Mexican population on the basis of the clearly perceptible class and somatic differences. Those whose class position and ostensible European ancestry placed them at the top of the hierarchy during the Mexican period, the "gente de razon," were reluctantly viewed as "white" by Anglo Americans. The dark complexioned, mestizo population (the "greasers" or *gente sin razon*—literally, "people without reason"), on the other hand, were viewed as "nonwhite" and not significantly different from pure-blood, Indian "savages" in the state.

Consequently, the designation of the Mexican population as "white" was not simply a matter of skin color or actual European ancestry but of the way European Americans came to define what they meant by race. Delegate Botts, for example, openly admitted that he "had no objection to color, except in so far as it indicated the inferior races of mankind." He was amenable to the extension of the suffrage clause to worthy Mexicans so long as it was denied "the African and Indian races."[27] During debates on suffrage for Mexicans one Anglo delegate, W. S. Sherwood of Sacramento, also openly stated that he did not wish to "debar the Spanish" from voting. Despite the fact that this population was "darker than the Anglo-Saxon race," he considered them "white men" and therefore entitled to vote.

Similarly, Delegate W. M. Gwin, who earlier had opposed the granting of the franchise to the "pure uncivilized Indians," ultimately (if reluctantly) conceded that "the descendants of Indians should not be excluded from the franchise." Delegate Kimball Dimmick of San Jose echoed this sentiment, commenting that "the mixed race, descended from the Indians and Spanish," should be permitted "to enjoy the right of suffrage as liberally as any American citizen." He had no objection to those who had a small amount of "Indian blood in their veins." In support of his view he noted that even "some of the most honorable and distinguished families in Virginia are descended from the Indian race."[28]

Don Pablo de la Guerra, a prominent ranchero and delegate from Santa Barbara, similarly argued that the term "white" was a reference to European ancestry and social standing, not merely to skin color. During the suffrage debate de la Guerra stated that "it should be perfectly understood in the first place, what is the true significance of the word 'White.' Many citizens of California have received from nature a very dark skin; nevertheless, there are among them men who have heretofore been allowed to vote, and not only that, but to fill the highest public offices. It would be very unjust to deprive them of the privilege of citizens merely because nature

had not made them White."[29] Ironically, de la Guerra further noted that if the Anglo delegates used the word "white" only as a term intended to "exclude the African race" from the franchise, then he was in agreement with this usage.[30] The final approved version of the new article of the constitution formally disenfranchised both Indians and blacks in California. Those entitled to vote were "White male citizens of the United States and every White male citizen of Mexico, who shall have elected to become a citizen of the United States."[31]

This decision enabled the Californio elite to utilize their status as free white citizens to effectively challenge and resist the more onerous measures European Americans used to subordinate other racialized groups in California. Under ranchero leadership, Mexicans retained an important degree of political influence after statehood and even held political control of important communities in California for a number of years. For example, in his social history of Mexicans in southern California, Albert Camarillo found that the Californio elite retained political control of Santa Barbara as late as 1876. Despite being a numerical minority in that city after 1870, they remained a politically influential group until the early 1880s. Mexicans also enjoyed a modest degree of political success in Los Angeles and San Salvador, where the Mexican electorate constituted an important voting bloc well into the late 1860s.[32] The experience in San Diego, however, provided a sharp contrast. There, the Californio elite never contested the political domination of Anglo Americans; many had even supported the United States during the U.S.-Mexico War.[33]

From their stronghold in southern California, the Mexican population also helped elect a number of statewide representatives between 1850 and 1876. Prominent rancheros such as Pablo de la Guerra and José Maria Covarrubias (Santa Barbara), Andres Pico and Ygnacio del Valle (Los Angeles), Mariano Vallejo (Sonoma), and M. Pacheco (San Luis Obispo) served as senators and state assemblymen during the first legislative sessions. A Californio even occupied the governor's chair in 1875 when Romualdo Pacheco of Santa Barbara, who had been elected lieutenant governor in 1871, served out the final year of Newton Booth's term.[34] Governor Booth had vacated the position after his election to the U.S. Senate. By the time Pacheco assumed the governor's chair, however, Mexicans no longer had major statewide political influence. According to historian Leonard Pitt, the election of 1851 was a "turning point" for the Californios. Despite the election of Mexicans to a number of legislative offices after that year, the tremendous influx of Anglo voters into the state rendered the Mexicans' political influence marginal.[35]

The principal beneficiaries of the rights accorded Mexicans were the ranchero elite who remained politically influential in the state. They were primarily among those nominated and elected to public office during the period. Although technically entitled to these same rights, members of the Mexican working class were never viewed by Anglos as political equals of the old ranchero elite. Despite being eligible for citizenship rights, the Mexican working class was not afforded any better treatment than other racialized groups in the state. Some racially discriminatory legislation, in fact, was specifically enacted against this segment of the Mexican population during the period. One such law was the 1855 Vagrancy Act targeting "idle" Mexicans in the state. Popularly known as the "Greaser Act," this bill sanctioned the arrest and imprisonment of individuals guilty of vagrancy or levied fines against them, which they were forced to pay either in cash or through temporary labor service.[36]

Given perceptible class differences among Mexicans and their ambiguous racial status in the eyes of some European Americans, it is not surprising that their legal rights were not always respected. This is particularly true in the case of the working class. They were often denied their legal rights by being categorized as Indians. One notable instance reflects the ease with which anyone with a dark complexion could be so treated. Manuel Dominguez, who served as an elected delegate to the California State Constitutional Convention of 1849 and as a member of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, traveled to northern California in April 1857 to enter testimony in a San Francisco courtroom. Before Dominguez could testify, however, the Anglo lawyer for the plaintiff objected to his taking the witness stand. The lawyer argued that Dominguez was an Indian and therefore ineligible to enter testimony. The judge upheld the objection and dismissed Dominguez.[37] Although Mexicans were legally accorded the same rights as free white persons, actual extension of these privileges to all segments of this population was quite another matter.

EUROPEAN-AMERICAN AMBIVALENCE TOWARD MEXICAN ASSIMILATION

The class-specific treatment of Mexicans in the polity also had its parallel in European-American ambivalence about the assimilation of Mexicans into Anglo culture. Class-based status differences among Mexicans directly shaped views about their suitability for the new Anglo society. Nowhere was this perception more apparent than in attitudes toward intermarriage.

Unlike blacks, Indians, or Asian immigrants, Mexicans were the only ethnic population in California during the nineteenth century that Anglos deemed worthy to formally marry. The various antimiscegenation statutes that prohibited intermarriages between white Americans and other racialized groups were not enacted against Mexicans. This social tolerance toward Anglo/Mexican amalgamation was, nonetheless, rigidly circumscribed along predictable class lines. Only the daughters of the California elite were viewed as appropriate partners for European Americans, especially for white men of means. Occurring with less frequency were marriages between Californio men and middle-class Anglo women. Even more uncommon, and subject to greater social sanctions, were unions between Anglo men and women and lower-class Mexicans.[38]

Generally speaking, freely entered marital unions by men and women from both dominant and subordinate status groups can be taken as a measure of a host society's openness to amalgamation. The existence of de jure or de facto discrimination against such intermarriage (codified in antimiscegenation laws) clearly reflects a society's desire to maintain formal racial or ethnic boundaries and reinforce status distinctions.[39]

Historians continue to investigate the frequency of these Anglo-Mexican intermarriages. Richard Griswold del Castillo estimates that between 1850 and 1880 these endogamous marriages ranged from 12.2 percent (1850) to 8.7 percent (1880) of Mexican marriages in Los Angeles.[40] Unfortunately, Griswold del Castillo does not indicate if these marriages were predominantly between white men and upper-class Mexican women. In another study, historian Ronald Woolsey estimates that approximately 35 percent of Mexican marriages in Los Angeles between 1860 and 1870 were with Anglos.[41] Like Griswold del Castillo, Woolsey also does not indicate if these intermarriages were predominantly between Anglo men and Mexican women. (Methodological differences and use of different archival sources [manuscript census schedules or marriage certificates] account for the wide disparity in these figures.)

Given their privileged status during the Mexican period, it is not surprising that the Californio elite occasionally arranged marriages between their daughters and wealthy Anglos in an attempt to forestall their complete loss of influence. These Anglos had the financial resources and business acumen the new political economy required and which the rancheros sorely lacked. Indeed, Anglo sons-in-law provided some defense against the most egregious injustices that some European Americans inflicted upon rancheros. Negotiations with unscrupulous lawyers, merchants, and others

who preyed on the ignorance of the Californios was but one important advantage that such intermarriages provided.

For their part, European Americans also were not oblivious to the advantages of marrying into wealthy ranchero families. With eligible white women being scarce in the territory, fair-complexioned, upper-class Mexican women were among the most valued marriage partners available. While white men derived a degree of status from marrying the Californio's daughters, more important were the tangible political and economic opportunities that such unions afforded. These marriages provided strategic access to land held by the old elite. Thousands of acres passed into the hands of Anglo men as part of the inheritances some Californio women brought to marriage. Moreover, Anglo sons-in-law were often the first ones given access to land sold by rancheros desperately needing cash.

Numerous marriages occurred during the nineteenth century between wealthy European-American settlers and upper-class Mexican women. No matter how sanctimoniously shrouded these marriages were in religious and romantic terms, these Californio women were arguably being "trafficked" between the old and the emerging ruling classes.[42] Such women may be viewed as the tribute offered by the pragmatic old ruling class to the new. They often became the exotic prize that many Anglo men arrogantly believed were part of the spoils of conquest.

Before statehood, well-known Anglo settlers such as Alfred Robinson, John R. Cooper, Abel Stearns, William G. Dana, and Thomas Larkin married daughters of the Mexican ruling elite. These "Mexicanized Anglos" played a key role in ameliorating animosity toward Mexicans in the postwar transition period. Although these Anglos were few in number, they were socially well-respected and often important figures in the economic affairs of the territory. Historian Leonard Pitt estimates that "two dozen of them owned one-third of southern California's developed land in estates as large as 60,000 acres."[43]

After statehood, prominent Californians such as Stephen Foster, Robert S. Baker, James Winston, and Henry V. Linsey also married into the Californio class. Important Californio families such as the Yorbas, Sepulvedas, Bandinis, Picos, and Dominguezes celebrated the marriage of their daughters to Anglo immigrants. According to Pitt, these marriages between the old Mexican ruling elite and prominent Anglos "made the Yankee conquest smoother than it might otherwise have been."[44]

Less common, because they violated white men's exclusive access to white American women, were marriages between the sons of elite Cali-

fornios and European-American women. Juan Sepulveda's son and Ramualdo Pacheco, the former governor of the state, were among the few Mexican men who successfully transgressed this norm and married middle class Anglo women. So too did Platon Vallejo, son of Mariano Vallejo of Sonoma, who married a young white woman he met while attending medical school in Syracuse, New York.[45]

Many of the sons and daughters of the ranchero elite who married Anglos were described by contemporary observers as being of "Caucasian origin." If this observation is correct, it would seem to indicate that intermarriage was selective and favored the more fair-complexioned members of elite families. There is little evidence that many marriages occurred between Yankee men and mestizo women. But one such union did occur between George Carson and Victoria Dominguez, daughter of the dark-complexioned Manuel Dominguez of Los Angeles. Carson married Doña Dominguez in 1857 and moved into his father-in-law's rancho in 1864 in order to manage the elderly man's business affairs. After his death in 1882, Don Manuel Dominguez's dwindling 24,000-acre estate was divided among his six daughters and their spouses.[46]

THE CLASS AND GENDERED REPRESENTATIONS OF MEXICANS IN ANGLO CALIFORNIA

This symbolic trafficking in upper class Californio women was accompanied by the emergence of a dichotomous image of Mexican women reflecting the salience of class lines among this population. One popular representation veiled her in positive terms: chaste, beautiful, and charming. Nearly all nineteenth-century accounts by Anglo settlers and visitors in California represented the rancheros' wives and daughters in these terms. For example, Alfred Robinson wrote in *Life in California* that "there are few places in the world, where in proportion to the number of inhabitants, can be found more chastity, industrious habits, and correct deportment, than among the women of this place."[47] Similarly, in *Two Years before the Mast*, Richard Henry Dana noted, with some surprise, the degree of chastity observed by these women. Although Dana questioned the virtue of some of these women, he believed them to possess "a good deal of beauty."[48]

Given their high estimations of themselves, white men generally believed that Mexican women welcomed their advances. This arrogant sentiment was clearly reflected in a popular wartime folk song of the period:

Already the senoritas
Speak English with finesse.
"Kiss me!" say the Yankees,
The girls all answer "Yes!"[49]

This white male attitude toward Mexican women was also expressed in a poem published in Boston in June 1846. Aptly entitled "They Wait for Us," it reflected the dominant racial stereotypes of Mexicans at the time—men being lazy and women being available. The poem's contribution to these popular representations lay in fusing an explicitly sexual theme to the Yankee's masculinist thrust into Mexico at midcentury:

The Spanish maid, with eye of fire,
At balmy evening turns her lyre
And looking to the Eastern sky,
Awaits our Yankee chivalry
Whose purer blood and valiant arms,
Are fit to clasp her budding charms.

The man, her mate, is sunk in sloth—
To love, his senseless heart is loth:
The pipe and glass and tinkling lute,
A sofa, and a dish of fruit;
A nap, some dozen times a day;
Sombre and sad, and never gay.[50]

A less poetic expression of European-American sexual bravado was baldly conveyed by a veteran Anglo miner in a letter to the *Stockton Times* on April 6, 1850. In the course of characterizing the animosity toward Mexicans born of wartime experiences, he stated flatly that most Anglos believed that "Mexicans have no business in this country. . . . The men were made to be shot at, and the women were made for *our* purposes."[51] Indeed, white men in California believed that their superior status entitled them to all of the bounty available in the new state. Mexican women, it appears, were often seen as mere spoils of war awaiting the amorous embrace of the white man's "valiant arms."

Unlike the elite Californio's daughters, however, lower-class Mexican women were rarely viewed and represented in positive terms. In fact, they were derisively portrayed in Anglo travel literature as sexually promiscuous women of ill-repute. This class-specific, dichotomous image of Mexican women in the Anglo mind simultaneously devalued lower-class Mexican women, who were deemed unworthy of marrying upstanding white men, while elevating the status of the elite women, who were openly

courted. Although all Mexican women were viewed as available to white men, only the more fair-complexioned Californio women were loftily viewed as pure and chaste, an image they shared with middle-class European-American women. The unique status of elite Mexican women in Anglo society was a product of their privileged class position; it did not have a counterpart among other racialized women in California during the period.

These European-American perceptions of class-based differences among Mexican women also had a corollary in their representations of Mexican men. Lower-class Mexican men generally were seen as libidinally uncontrolled and sexually threatening. The Anglo mind conjured an image of them as "rapacious" and "hot-blooded" creatures who wantonly lusted after innocent white women. The inferior class position and mestizo ancestry of these men contributed directly to these negative sexual representations, which were clearly the product of the way class and racial stratification lines in California shaped popular perceptions.[52]

AT THE BORDERS OF HEATHENISM AND SAVAGERY

Religion was another factor contributing to potential assimilability. Despite widespread European-American hostility to Mexican society, Mexicans were much closer to white Americans in their religious beliefs and cultural sensibilities than were other racialized groups. Mexicans were, after all, a Christian people whose conversion under colonization by Spain had elevated them from the "heathenism" rampant in the territory. White immigrants were not, for instance, as alarmed by Mexican religious practices as they were by the more repulsive practices of California Indians or the Chinese "pagan idolators" who arrived after statehood. Although anti-Catholic sentiment among European Americans existed in the state, Mexican Catholics were at least a God-fearing people and therefore seen as more closely approximating European-American notions of civility.

During the postwar period many Californios were pleasantly surprised by the Bear Flaggers' deference to Church interests, protection of mission property, and respect of Catholic marriage traditions. Many Yankee Catholics who settled in racially segregated communities, such as Los Angeles, even attended ethnically mixed services. Historian Leonard Pitt has argued that tolerant Anglo attitudes toward Mexican Catholics in southern California helped mollify tensions during the turbulent period after U.S. annexation. He suggests that the strongest drive for religious conformity came

from within the Catholic Church, which became the "prime mover for acculturation." Rather than confronting Protestant hostility from Yankee "blond-haired heretics," Mexican Catholics were coaxed into adopting American Catholic traditions and forms of worship.

Elements of the Catholic Church's "Americanization" program included changes in church personnel (typically Americans replacing Mexicans), diocesan reorganization, and the introduction of Baltimorean Church institutions such as bilingual parochial schools, orphanages, hospitals, and newspaper publications. These institutions functioned as acculturating mechanisms that drew religious boundaries and ethnic bonds among Mexicans and other Catholic populations in the area. As a consequence, Catholicism provided a stabilizing basis for Mexicans' ethnic identity and facilitated their structural integration into Anglo society in a period of intense political and economic upheaval.[53]

The presence of prominent "Mexicanized gringos" was also critical to the early stages of this selective assimilation. Individuals such as Abel Stearns, John R. Cooper, William G. Dana (Richard Henry Dana, Jr.'s uncle), and John Warner converted to Catholicism during the Mexican period, married into Californio elite families, and became economically influential. Their close relationship with the Californio elite led them to serve as mediators against the most virulent Yankee anti-Catholic sentiment. Others such as John Downey, Benjamin Hayes, and Stephen Foster generously helped finance the Church's reform efforts and also promoted ethnic harmony on religious terms.[54]

European-American attitudes toward Mexicans at the time were also shaped by other cultural considerations such as language. Unlike the completely alien tongues spoken by Asian immigrants or the California Indians, which were discordant to Anglos' ears, Mexican Spanish was at least a European romance language, which they had greater facility in comprehending. This shared linguistic tradition appears to have facilitated communication between both groups as Spanish-speaking Anglos and English-speaking Mexicans helped bridge cultural barriers before and after statehood. Because of the concessions agreed to after the U.S.-Mexico war, Anglos also acquiesced to the publication of all state laws in Spanish. In fact, such bilingual publication was specifically mandated in the 1848 California State Constitution. Although Anglos would not honor this commitment in later years, this proviso had no parallel in the experiences of other "nonwhite" groups or even foreign-born, white immigrants in the state.[55] The Mexicans' status as a conquered people who were nominally European, and at least partially "civilized" in the white man's eyes, posi-

tioned them to exact state-sanctioned concessions from Anglo society that other groups found impossible to secure.

Given European-American cultural assessments of Mexicans, it is not surprising that some Californios successfully made important inroads into the new social order. This partial integration largely befell the second generation, particularly the sons of the old ranchero elite. They gained access to Anglo public institutions and secured occupational niches that rapidly accelerated their structural assimilation. Throughout the period from 1850 to 1900, for instance, a small segment of the Mexican upper class attended state-financed public schools. Some of the sons of the ranchero elite even attended the University of California after its founding in 1869. Many later became professionals securely ensconced in privileged spheres of the class structure that were closed to other racialized groups.[56]

Romualdo Pacheco's colorful career best typifies the upper reaches of these second-generation Californio success stories. Born the son of a Santa Barbara army officer in 1831, the young Pacheco was educated in the Sandwich Islands and served as a supercargo on various trading vessels plying the California coast during the Mexican period. After U.S. annexation, Romualdo managed his family rancho in San Luis Obispo and parlayed his privileged status into a state assembly seat in 1862. He later served in the state senate and was successfully elected state treasurer in 1863. He relinquished this post four years later to his kinsman, Ramon Pacheco, and eventually became the Republican party's candidate for lieutenant governor in 1871. In February 1875 he served out the remaining year of Governor Booth's term when the state leader took an interim seat in the U.S. Senate. Upon leaving state office, Romualdo Pacheco also served as a northern California congressman before devoting his time to personal business ventures in San Francisco.

Another native-born Californio politico of this generation was Reginaldo del Valle, son of Ygnacio del Valle of Los Angeles. The young del Valle succeeded Antonio Coronel as "boss" of the "Spanish vote" in this region during the closing decades of the nineteenth century. Born in 1854, del Valle studied law and passed the bar in 1877. He was elected state assemblyman in 1880 (serving as president of the Assembly in 1881) and state senator in 1882. He later served as chairman of the 1888 state Democratic convention as well as on numerous government boards and civic communities before his death in 1938.[57]

Not every member of the second generation led such illustrious lives as these two. Many followed alternative paths that generally led them into the middle or lower end of the new class structure. Some took their turn at

becoming agriculturalists in the emerging agribusiness industry, a fate most of their ranchero fathers were unprepared to successfully embark upon. Sons and grandsons of elite families such as the Ramirez, Pico, Castro, Coronel, and Olivera clans became farmers on small parcels of subdivided rancho land. Blas Lugo, for example, turned to farming a small family plot after he unsuccessfully tried his hand at law. A few of the young gentry found financial success in real estate. Relying on the sale of family land, the Sepulveda brothers from Los Angeles owned four thousand acres of San Pedro's best land, worth an estimated five hundred to two thousand dollars an acre in the 1880s. They parlayed their business success into a life in the finest residential area of San Pedro and membership in Anglo-dominated fraternal orders.[58]

Others made inroads into the sheep industry, which provided a transitional link between the old ranching economy of the Mexican period and the new agriculture industry of the American period. Given the limited opportunities within Anglo society, a few apparently gravitated to activities that labelled them as "thieves" or "bandits." Renowned local families such as the Castros, Sepulvedas, Vallejos, Amadors, and Lugos contributed to a breed of native-born "badmen" accused—often falsely—of preying upon European Americans and committing countless crimes such as highway robbery, stage holdups, and cattle rustling.[59]

The modest structural integration of segments of the ranchero class, however, was not paralleled by the Mexican working class. Sons and daughters of this class had little opportunity to attend public schools, to prosper economically, or to marry and mingle socially with upstanding European Americans. White Americans were acutely aware of the class differences within the Mexican population and viewed the largely mestizo working class as unassimilable. Their ambivalence toward the social integration of all Mexicans was clearly the product of the way class lines internally stratified this population both before and after U.S. annexation of California. These class-specific lines, and the gender-specific experiences therein, carried profound implications for the degree to which Mexicans would grudgingly be accorded an intermediate "group position" in the new Anglo society.

DISPLACING THE ANACHRONISTIC MEXICAN RANCHERO CLASS

Although U.S. annexation of California may have led to the modest cultural assimilation of some Mexicans, this social accommodation did not

also lead to their wholesale structural integration into the new capitalist economy. While some sons of the ranchero elite may have achieved some success in securing a niche in the new economy, the same cannot be said for the class as a whole. Statehood brought with it the rapid displacement of the Mexican ranchero class, as privately held land was transferred on a massive scale from Mexican hands into that of Anglo immigrants between 1848 and 1880.

This process was set in motion by the enactment of the Federal Land Law of 1851 which empowered a Board of Land Commissioners to verify Spanish and Mexican land grants in California. The right to retain ownership to these granted lands was initially conferred to Mexican citizens in the Southwest under provisions in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. The Land Commission convened between January 1852 and March 1855, adjudicating 813 claims brought before them. The vast majority of these claims, over three-fourths, were adjudicated in favor of the claimants. Sixteen of the eighteen cases the government presented against Mexican rancheros before the U.S. Supreme Court were decided in favor of the original claimants. These cases involved the sixteen most strategically situated properties in Marin, Alameda, and Sonoma counties such as Mariano Vallejo's 44,380-acre Rancho Petaluma and Domingo Peralta's Rancho San Ramon.[60]

Nevertheless, in the process of defending their claims, the Californios' position was greatly weakened. While most Mexican claimants ultimately retained possession of their granted estates, they did so only after years of expensive litigation before the Land Commission, District Court of Appeals, California State Supreme Court, and, on occasion, the U.S. Supreme Court. The average time devoted to settling these disputed claims was seventeen years.[61]

This protracted and often bewildering litigation exacted a tremendous toll on the ranchero class. Legal fees to white lawyers were exorbitant, often forcing the Californios to sell portions of their holdings in order to meet their financial obligations. On some occasions, rancheros conveniently transferred ownership of portions of their newly certified titles to the lawyers who had represented them in U.S. courts. Overall, these white lawyers were unscrupulous in their dealings with the ranchero class, often scandalously defrauding them. One early European-American pioneer who befriended many of the Californios in southern California candidly characterized the demise of the ranchero class in the following way:

> The Californians were very ignorant of business and this perhaps had been one of the greatest sources of their misfortunes. It has exposed them to the numberless traps that have been laid by designing and unprincipled foreigners to cheat them out of their property. The Land Commission, full of defects as it was, also contributed to defraud them when its object was to protect them in the rightful possession of their lands. Between the poor ignorant native and the lordly Land Commission, in too many cases the medium of communication was the lawyer, often crafty and dishonest, who in securing the approval of a title took half of the land as his fee, or even more when the pretext of appeals could be used to advantage. In countless other ways have their simplicity and ignorance been taken advantage of to the impoverishment of their estates.[62]

Individuals coveting the fourteen million acres of land formerly held by the Californio elite resorted to other questionable tactics to achieve this divestiture. Property transferred hands through outright sales, unlawful "squatting" on Mexican land, bankruptcy proceedings, and in payment for personal indebtedness resulting from extravagant expenditures, gambling, delinquent property taxes, and usurious interest rates to moneylenders and land speculators.[63]

This dispossession had a devastating effect on the old ruling families. According to one historian, of the forty-five "principal men" of the old regime, representing the twenty-five most prominent Californio families, the vast majority "went to their graves embittered. . . . [T]hey were a ruling class militarily conquered, bereft of national sovereignty and a constitutional framework, and alienated from their land, homes, civil rights, and honor. They had retained little else besides their religion and a thin residue of honorary political influence."[64]

From the European-American point of view, the demise of the ranchero elite was simply the product of their inability to adapt to the tempo of the new social order. They perceived this as an inevitability given the old elite's lack of business acumen and spendthrift proclivities; it was the necessary price that "progress" exacted. The Anglo's remorseless assessment of the ranchero's decline is vividly captured in Alfred Robinson's postscript to *Life in California*, where he attributes the Californios' fate to commonly-held sentiments about the role their "indolence" and "passivity" played in their deteriorating status: "The early Californians, having lived a life of indolence without any aspiration beyond the immediate requirement of the day, naturally fell behind their more energetic successors, and became impoverished and gradually dispossessed of their fortunes as they idly stood by, lookers-on upon the bustle and enterprise of the new world

before them, with its go-aheadativeness and push-on keep-moving celebrity."[65] That the Californios' value system reflected the social organization of the semifeudal society that this gentry class enjoyed throughout New Spain cannot be denied. These traits were, from a European-American point of view, "dysfunctional" in the new free-labor economy they introduced in the state.

However self-serving assessments such as Robinson's may now appear, the actual fate of individual rancheros was a personal tragedy. Although they were far from innocent victims of Anglo chicanery (their own widespread use of exploited Indian laborers makes such a defense impossible to advance), their demise had devastating consequences. Ygnacio del Valle provides us with a mild example of the fate that befell this elite. His holdings during the Mexican period covered nearly 48,000 acres of land in the mountains north of San Fernando Mission near present-day Newhall. By 1861 he retreated to his beloved Rancho Camulos in order to cover losses, resulting in a decline of his private property to a mere 1,500 acres. He was forced to mortgage this estate in 1879 to the Newhall family for $15,776. According to one source, the "gracious and charitable" Newhall family never pressed the bill, which grew enormously due to the high interest rate negotiated. Don del Valle went to his grave the following year without having paid off the debt.[66]

Even more lamentable was the impact on Don Julio Verdugo, who mortgaged his Rancho San Rafael (comprising present-day Glendale and part of Burbank) in order to repair the deteriorating estate and meet outstanding financial obligations. In 1861 he signed a $3,445.37 loan at 3 percent monthly interest (36 percent a year). By 1870 the mortgage had ballooned into a debt of $58,750. This precipitated a foreclosure and sheriff's sale at which his lawyers bought the 36,000-acre Rancho San Rafael and forced the sale of his Rancho La Cañada. Thereupon, Don Verdugo retreated to neighboring Rancho Los Felix. He eventually subdivided and sold large parcels of this estate in order to settle outstanding debts and taxes. In 1871 an American court ordered the subdivision of the 6,600-acre Los Felix, ultimately leaving the former ranchero's children with a meagre inheritance of 200 acres; a pittance in light of the ranchero's former wealth.[67]

A similar fate befell Don Juan Bandini. Once one of the richest men in southern California, Bandini gave up ownership of his Rancho Jurupa to his son-in-law Abel Stearns in August 1859. The former baron died a broken man three months later.[68]

THE PROLETARIANIZATION AND STRUCTURAL SUBORDINATION OF THE MEXICAN WORKING CLASS

Unlike the bitter discord between the old and the emerging propertied classes, relatively little conflict flared between the European-American and Mexican working classes during the nineteenth century. The only notable instance of class-specific hostility between Mexicans and Anglos at this level erupted in the mining regions during the Gold Rush. Here Sonoran miners and independent white miners were pitted against each other in direct economic competition.

Approximately thirteen hundred native Californians entered the mining region in the early phase of the Gold Rush. Hostility toward them from "fist-swinging Oregon Yankees" was not moderated by their claim that the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo guaranteed them the same rights to work the mines, and most quickly abandoned the mines.[69] Replacing them were thousands of Mexicans from Sonora, Peruvians, and Chileans. Anti-Mexican sentiment was principally directed at the highly successful Sonoran miners, who were categorically deemed "foreigners" at this time. These Sonorans were, according to one authority, "more visibly mestizo, less consciously Spanish than the Californians," and as a result, "seemed 'primitive' by local standards."[70] The negative image of Mexicans as "foreigners" was further darkened with the taint of unfree-labor systems by the arrival of Mexican *patrons* who brought bands of Indian and mestizo workers into the mining region, typically paying for their upkeep in return for half the gold they mined.

The success of the Sonorans, who were highly skilled miners, evoked the wrath of Anglo miners, who bitterly protested their "unfair competition." White miners typically came as independent, self-employed individuals seeking their fortune in an openly competitive environment. In this context, nothing infuriated them more than to compete with "bondsmen" tied to an "overlord" or *patron*. Anglos made little distinction between Sonoran independent miners and those Mexicans working in the mines as bondsmen for Mexican *patrones* and local rancheros. The success of both, but especially of the latter, was seen as, or at least rationalized as, cheapening and degrading the value of white labor.

The hostile treatment of Mexican nationals and Latin Americans in the mines was partially fueled by the specter of slavery that their presence evoked. According to historian Leonard Pitt, these Latin miners "came into California precisely when the Yankees felt most irritated on this score and

could see most clearly the parallels between Negroes and their masters, on the one hand, and the peons and patrons, on the other. Yankee prospectors ejected from the mines with equal vigor any combination of bondsmen and masters. . . . The prospectors put into effect a local code prohibiting the mining operation of all master-servant teams, whatever their relationship."[71]

To compound matters, Anglos' resentment intensified when enterprising Sonorans managed to reap large profits from the sale of thousands of pack mules in the mining regions. This activity had unfortunate consequences when "Sonoran peddlers marched into the mines and sold 10,000 pack mules in three years, thereby depressing the price of mules (from $500 to $150 a head in a matter of weeks) and of freight rates (from $75 to $7 per hundredweight in two months)."[72] The Sonorans' business activities provoked the bitter ire of local Anglo entrepreneurs, who sought the mass expulsion of these business rivals. This competition between white miners and Latin Americans for economic position in the mining region led to the enactment of the Foreign Miners' Tax Law of 1850, a clear example of an attempt at social closure. The statute required a twenty-dollar mining permit from all "foreigners" in the mines. The bitter strife that followed the passage of this legislation led to thousands of Latin Americans fleeing the region and seeking their fortunes elsewhere. In due course, some relocated in bustling urban centers such as San Francisco and Stockton, a few fled to Southern California, while others simply returned *en masse* to Mexico or other parts of Latin America.[73]

Although anti-Mexican hostility flared throughout California, particularly in the southern section of the state, a unique aspect of the Mexican experience during this period was the relative absence of class-specific conflict between native-born, working-class Mexicans and white workers. This is accounted for by both demographic factors and the early pattern of Mexican working-class employment during the late nineteenth century. The Mexican population was relatively small; as noted above, from 1850 to 1900 the permanent Mexican population hovered around just thirteen thousand. The rapid increase in California's overall population after the Gold Rush quickly rendered Mexicans a minority. This occurred initially in northern California and by the early 1870s in southern California as well.[74]

California's population increased more than sixfold between 1848 and 1850, from approximately 15,000 to nearly 93,000 people. Even as early as 1850 Mexicans comprised only 11 percent of the state's total population.

Between 1860 and 1900 the total number of Californians rose from 380,000 to nearly 1.5 million. By 1900 Mexicans accounted for no more than 1 or 2 percent of the state population.[75] In that year, Mexicans were numerically surpassed by the Chinese and Native American populations and were about as numerous as black and Japanese immigrants. Moreover, the Mexican population in the state was principally concentrated in southern California, where they did not extensively compete with urban white workers. Furthermore, unlike the Chinese and Japanese population at the time, the Mexican population had a fairly equal sex ratio. As a result, fewer Mexican men were directly competing with white laborers, a fact that undoubtedly also mitigated against widespread working-class antagonism.

The slow integration of Mexican workers into the Anglo-controlled labor market also contributed to the surprisingly low level of racial conflict with European-American workers. Unlike racialized immigrant groups such as the Chinese, who were initially recruited as cheap laborers and rapidly integrated into the new economy, Mexican workers were a belated addition to the capitalist labor market. From 1850 to 1880, numerous Mexican workers in southern California, for instance, remained largely tied to occupations in the traditional Mexican economy. Many continued to work on Mexican ranchos in the seasonal rodeos (roundups) and matanzas (slaughters). Others retained employment as harness makers, saddlers, silversmiths, trasquiladores (sheepshearers), and vaqueros.[76] As a consequence, Mexican workers were not fully integrated into this labor market until the late 1870s and 1880s.[77]

The gradual decline of the Mexican pastoral economy during the 1870s and 1880s, however, forced Mexicans into the evolving capitalist labor market. The number of Mexican skilled workers employed on ranchos and in such Mexican pueblos as Los Angeles, Santa Barbara, and San Diego declined appreciably, because of the loss of rancho land to European Americans and its conversion from "unproductive" cattle raising to agriculture. In the pueblos, this shift also contributed to the inability of skilled Mexican craftsmen such as cigar makers, shoemakers, and hatmakers to compete successfully with white merchants selling Eastern manufactured goods.[78] Unskilled Mexican urban workers were also affected negatively. They were propelled into new forms of unskilled employment in the burgeoning urban economy where they were structurally integrated at the bottom end of the emerging labor market.

Mexican entrance into this market also coincided with the belated

development of the employment sector in areas where Mexicans were most heavily concentrated. Employment opportunities in the new Anglo labor market did not fully emerge in southern California until the 1880s, two or three decades after it initially took root in the northern California mining and manufacturing industries. By 1880 approximately 85 percent of the male Mexican work force in Santa Barbara and San Diego and 65 percent in San Salvador (near San Bernardino) and Los Angeles labored as unskilled or semiskilled manual workers. They became construction laborers, street graders, pick and shovel workers, and teamsters, and toiled in numerous other menial jobs in the emerging cities of southern California.

At the same time, their limited access to employment opportunities compelled them to take jobs in new industries like agriculture where unskilled labor was in great demand. By the early 1900s, Mexicans had become the principal source of farm labor in the southern California counties of Los Angeles, San Bernardino, Tulare, and Ventura.[79] It was here, in the southern California farm labor market, that the first expressions of Mexican working-class opposition to agribusiness interests initially emerged. Successful unionization and strike activity among Mexicans first took place in the southern California community of Oxnard in 1903. (The issues and events leading to this successful effort are explored in detail in chapter 7.)

In sum, because Mexicans remained tied to the pastoral economy in southern California, a part of the economy most European Americans had no interest in entering, they did not pose a major threat to the white working class. Although some Mexicans and Indians were coercively incorporated into the Mexican rancho system, their unfree labor status did not ignite the same widespread white antipathy that the presence of blacks did. Their small numbers and initial concentration in the most undesirable sectors of the new economy effectively militated against white working-class antagonism.

Widespread labor-market conflict between Mexican laborers and the white working class did not occur until the early decades of the twentieth century. Not until the massive immigration of Mexicans during this period did organized white labor become alarmed by their presence in the state, and mounting white unemployment in the 1920s and 1930s eventually intensified animosity toward these Mexican immigrants. This hostility paralleled that faced by Chinese and Japanese immigrants decades earlier.[80] Moreover, the immigration of thousands of Mexican peasants to California after 1900 also led to a metaphorical "darkening" of the Mexican image in the white man's mind. The earlier moderating influence of the

Europeanized Californios had diminished as this elite was displaced and/or absorbed into Anglo society. The class and ethnic integration of the ranchero class, plus the rapid immigration of a largely mestizo Mexican peasantry, contributed to a major reinscription of the popular image and representation of Mexicans in the state.[81]

CONCLUSION

The Mexican experience in nineteenth-century Anglo California differed significantly from that of other racialized groups in the new state. The central conflict engendered between European Americans and Mexicans was a very class-specific struggle between Mexican rancheros and Anglo capitalists who bitterly contested control of the state's best farm lands. The white male businessmen and developers who ventured into California after 1848 sought their fortunes in a free state. The realization of their economic aspiration required the undermining of the Mexican economy and its reorganization along capitalist lines. White immigrants believed that only an economy structured this way held promise for the rapid development of the territory. Guided by Protestant values and a commitment to white supremacy, these free-labor advocates sought to rapidly undermine the society Mexicans had created in California. The dispossession of the rancheros who dominated the territory was an essential feature of this process.

This conflict notwithstanding, some segments of the Mexican population were structurally integrated into Anglo society more easily than other racialized groups. This was the result of their being deemed a "half civilized" population because of the Europeanized culture they had adapted through their initial colonization by Spain. As a consequence, there was less cultural distance between European Americans and Mexicans (principally the ranchero class) than with other racialized ethnic groups. Mexicans spoke a romance language, held Christian beliefs, and practiced traditions that placed them closer culturally to Anglo Americans than Indians or Asian immigrants.

Moreover, given their at least partial European ancestry, Mexicans were also legally defined as a "white" population in the state. The citizenship rights Mexicans were granted through the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo included the right to vote, hold public office, offer testimony in U.S. courts, freely own and homestead land, and ostensibly enjoy the same privileged political status of European Americans. These rights momentarily empowered Mexicans, principally the ranchero elite, to contest white male domination and avoid the discriminatory legislation that structurally subor-

dinated other racialized groups during this period. This rather anomalous historical circumstance would, of course, become subject to major reconfiguration with the demise of the ranchero class and widespread immigration from Mexico after the turn of the century. Thereafter, labor conflict replaced contention over land as the principal basis of group antagonisms between European Americans and Mexicans in the state.

CHAPTER THREE

"The Ravages of Time and the Intrusion of Modern American Civilization"

The broad, statewide pattern of Mexican-Anglo relations in nineteenth-century California had immediate consequences for both populations in various localities throughout the state. The contention between Mexican rancheros and European-American capitalists for control of land, for example, reached feverish proportions in southern California after 1860. This bitter strife was particularly pronounced in the "cow counties" of Santa Barbara, Los Angeles, and San Diego, the main Mexican population center and a region where the Mexican rancho system had reached its highest stage of development.

California historians such as Albert Camarillo, Leonard Pitt, Mario Garcia, and Richard Griswold del Castillo have skillfully documented the most important features of the region's transformation during the late nineteenth century.[1] One section of southern California that has not as yet been the subject of scholarly research in Chicano history or been brought into comparative analytical focus is Ventura County. This area was originally the township of San Buenaventura in the southeastern section of Santa Barbara county until 1873, when it secured separate county status. It was a region of the state in which a well-entrenched ranchero class was irretrievably undermined by the white supremacist transformation of California.

This chapter sharpens and refocuses our analysis of this transformation by carefully documenting its impact in this southern California county between 1860 and 1900. In so doing, it provides a window into the larger