

The Spanish Impact on the Indians, 1769–1821



More than two centuries elapsed from the discovery of California by Europeans to the colonizing efforts that Spanish Franciscan missionaries began in 1769. Upon their arrival in what they called Alta (or Upper) California in the 1760s, Spanish colonists encountered a fragmented indigenous population ill suited to resist conquest. Indeed, considering their dispersed situation and their less developed technology (when compared with the Spanish), it is remarkable that so many of these small Indian tribelets managed to retain their native way of life to any meaningful degree in the face of overwhelming external pressures.

The Spanish, in turn, had long contemplated occupation of Alta California, but had been preoccupied with other imperial concerns. Despite glowing reports from various explorers of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries—such as the Portuguese Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo (sailing under the Spanish flag), the Englishman Sir Francis Drake, another Portuguese, Sebastian Rodriguez Cermeño, and the Spaniard Sebastian Vizcaino—there was for many years little interest in a remote region that appeared to lack enough mineral resources to justify the expense and difficulty of conquest. Indeed, it was not the expectation of wealth that finally prompted the Spanish advance into California. It was, rather, the growing fear that others—the Russians, in particular—would soon claim that area for themselves. Such unwelcome occupation would threaten Spain's interests in the rest of its world empire.

Imperial activism finally replaced long-standing disinterest when, in January 1768, the Spanish monarch Charles III ordered the viceroy to repel any Russian intrusions. Moreover, José de Gálvez, the king's visitador-general sent to investigate colonial affairs in Mexico, had become increasingly disturbed about Spanish weakness on the northern frontier in the face of Indian violence and rebellion. The energetic and determined Gálvez ultimately became convinced that it was necessary to occupy Alta California. To that end, in 1769 he organized an historic expedition into the region. Later, he entrusted the new missions established there to a group of Franciscan

priests from Baja (or Lower) California, under the leadership of Father Junipero Serra.

A challenge for students of California history is to analyze and evaluate the impact on the indigenous population of the Spanish imperial system and its three basic institutions: the presidio, or military post, where soldiers were stationed; the mission, which fulfilled the religious aim of conquest; and the pueblo, or town, which as the civil leg of the tripod was designed to attract civilian colonists. Spain's major goal with respect to the indigenous population can be stated simply: the Indian was to become both Spanish and Catholic. In the process, the social, cultural, and religious characteristics that distinguished Indians from Spanish were to be obliterated. We may inquire, therefore, whether the Spanish system, when compared with rival patterns of colonization (such as that of the British in North America), was basically humane and positive or whether it should be judged more harshly. To what extent did its espoused aims correspond with its actual practices? To what extent did the California missions resemble slave plantations, where freedom was exchanged for protection by the Spanish crown?



D O C U M E N T S

Historical accounts differ markedly about whether the Spanish imperial system had a positive or negative effect on Indians, in part because of reliance on different kinds of sources and in part because of competing interpretive positions. How observers fitted into that imperial system often affected their attitudes toward it. One such observer, a Franciscan priest named Father Luis Jayme, provides a window into both the religious and sexual relations between the Indians and Spanish in October 1772. Consider how his position as a priest shaped his interpretation of the incident in question. The second document is a letter from Father Junipero Serra, who participated in the Gálvez expedition of 1769 and who from then until his death in 1784 served as the vigorous Father-president of the missions in Alta California. In this letter, written to the Viceroy of New Spain in December 1775, Serra describes an Indian attack on the San Diego mission in the previous month, an attack that killed its senior Franciscan missionary (the same Father Jayme who authored the first document). Interestingly, Serra imagines himself in the position of the killed missionary and expresses his ideas about what should be done if he were ever to experience a similar fate.

In Chapter 2 we learned, from several Franciscan eyewitness accounts of mission life, of the triumph of Christianity over “brutish pagans” who, according to observers such as Father Boscana, were “idle and lazy.” That point of view was shared by the author of the third document, Captain Alejandro Malaspina, commander of Spain’s most ambitious scientific exploratory expeditions. In this account, Malaspina briefly describes the mission of San Carlos, founded by Gaspar de Portolá in 1770, and what he believes to have been the positive influence of the Spanish priests on the Indians. Other eyewitness recollections, such as those provided in the fourth document, present a very different picture. There are numerous examples of native resistance to the Franciscan system, including a sensational assassination of a Father Andrés Quintana, described in this document by a neophyte, Lorenzo Asisara, who

was a Santa Cruz Indian. Interviewed in July 1877 as part of a larger oral history project, Asisara provides an assessment of California's colonial past from a nonmissionary perspective.

Father Luis Jayme Criticizes the Behavior of Spanish Soldiers, 1772

With reference to the Indians, I wish to say that great progress would be made if there was anything to eat and the soldiers would set a good example. We cannot give them anything to eat because what Don Pedro has given is not enough to last half a year for the Indians from the Californias who are here. Thus little progress will be made under present conditions. As for the example to be set by the soldiers, no doubt some of them are good exemplars and deserve to be treated accordingly, but very many of them deserve to be hanged on account of the continuous outrages which they are committing in seizing and raping the women. There is not a single mission where all the gentiles have not been scandalized, and even on the roads, so I have been told. Surely, as the gentiles themselves state, they are committing a thousand evils, particularly those of a sexual nature. The fathers have petitioned Don Pedro concerning these points, but he has paid very little attention to them. He has punished some, but as soon as they promised him that they would work at the presidio, he turned them loose. That is what he did last year, but now he does not even punish them or say anything to them on this point. I suppose that some ministers will write you, each concerning his own mission, and therefore I shall not tell you about the cases which have occurred at other missions. I shall speak only of Mission San Diego.

At one of these Indian villages near this mission of San Diego, which said village is very large, and which is on the road that goes to Monterey, the gentiles therein many times have been on the point of coming here to kill us all, and the reason for this is that some soldiers went there and raped their women, and other soldiers who were carrying the mail to Monterey turned their animals into their fields and they ate up their crops. Three other Indian villages about a league or a league and a half from here have reported the same thing to me several times. For this reason on several occasions when Father Francisco Dumetz or I have gone to see these Indian villages, as soon as they saw us they fled from their villages and fled to the woods or other remote places, and the only ones who remained in the villages were some men and some very old women. The Christians here have told me that many of the gentiles of the aforesaid villages leave their huts and the crops which they gather from the lands around their villages, and go to the woods and experience hunger. They do this so that the soldiers will not rape their women as they have already done so many times in the past.

No wonder the Indians here were bad when the mission was first founded. To begin with, they did not know why they [the Spaniards] had come, unless they intended to take their lands away from them. Now they all want to be Christians because they know that there is a God who created

the heavens and earth and all things, that there is a Hell, and Glory, that they have souls, etc., but when the mission was first founded they did not know these things; instead, they thought they were like animals, and when the vessels came at first, they saw that most of the crews died; they were very loathe to pray, and they did not want to be Christians at all; instead, they said that it was bad to become a Christian and then they would die immediately. No wonder they said so when they saw how most of the sailors and California Indians died, but now, thanks be to the Lord, God has converted them from Sauls to Pauls. They all know the natural law, which, so I am informed, they have observed as well or better than many Christians elsewhere. They do not have any idols; they do not go on drinking sprees; they do not marry relatives; and they have but one wife. The married men sleep with their wives only. The bachelors sleep together, and apart from the women and married couples. If a man plays with any woman who is not his wife, he is scolded and punished by his captains. Concerning those from the Californias I have heard it said that they are given to sexual vices, but among those here I have not been able to discover a single fault of that nature. Some of the first adults whom we baptized, when we pointed out to them that it was wrong to have sexual intercourse with a woman to whom they were not married, told me that they already knew that, and that among them it was considered to be very bad, and so they do not do so at all. "The soldiers," they told me, "are Christians and, although they know that God will punish them in Hell, do so, having sexual intercourse with our wives. We," they said, "although we did not know that God would punish us for that in Hell, considered it to be very bad, and we did not do it, and even less now that we know that God will punish us if we do so." When I heard this, I burst into tears to see how these gentiles were setting an example for us Christians.

Father Junipero Serra Reports the Destruction of the San Diego Mission, 1775

Hail Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

Most Excellent Lord.

My most revered and most excellent Sir:

As we are in the vale of tears, not all the news I have to relate can be pleasant. And so I make no excuses for announcing to Your Excellency the tragic news I have just received of the total destruction of the San Diego Mission, and of the death of the senior of its two religious ministers, called Father Fray Luis Jayme, at the hand of the rebellious gentiles and of the Christian neophytes. All this happened, November 5th, about one or two o'clock at night. The gentiles came together from forty rancherías, according to information given me, and set fire to the church, after sacking it. Then they went on to the storehouse, the house where the Fathers lived, the soldiers' barracks, and all the rest of the buildings.

They killed a carpenter from Guadalajara and a blacksmith from Tepic. They wounded with their arrows the four soldiers, who alone were on guard

at the said mission. Even though two of them were badly wounded, they have already recovered.

The other religious, whose name is Father Fray Vicente Fuster, over and above the fright he got, received no further injuries than a wound in the shoulder, caused by a stone. He suffered pain from it for several days. On the morning following that sad night, he withdrew, in company with the handful still surviving, to the presidio. They carried on the shoulders of those Christian Indians who had remained loyal the dead, and the badly wounded. From there he writes to me asking me to tell him what he is to do.

This news I received the day before yesterday, at about nine o'clock at night, when the Captain Commandant, Don Fernando, came bringing it and the mail.

Yesterday, with the best part of the morning taken up with the Office for the Dead, the high Mass, and low Masses for the repose of the deceased Father's soul, and the afternoon, with Don Fernando's second visit and his departure, all I could do was to finish reading the letters. He told us that he was leaving in the afternoon, and I proposed to him that a religious go with him. But he answered that he would travel very fast, and nothing would hold him back; that probably he would not even get off his horse at the various missions en route. I then asked him if, later, they could provide an escort for a religious to go down there. His answer was no, because of the few soldiers that were left behind.

On this account, I gave up, as out of the question, my plans to go down there. . . .

I might suggest again to Your Excellency what I proposed in one of my earlier letters: that in conquests of this kind the place where soldiers are most important is in the missions. The presidios, in many places, may be most suitable and very necessary; but for the situation here, I describe only what is before my eyes.

The San Diego Mission is about two leagues from the presidio, but it is in such a position that, throughout the day, they can see the mission from the presidio; and the gunshot that is fired each morning at dawn in the presidio, to change the watchword of the night guard, can generally be heard in the Mission. Yet while the mission was all on fire, the flames leaping up to a great height from one or two o'clock in the morning until dawn, and during all that time shooting was going on, they saw and heard nothing at the presidio; and the wind, they say, was favorable.

Although there were only two men who fired shots during all that time, many lives were saved which would have been lost without the said defense. And now, after the Father has been killed, the Mission burned, its many and valuable furnishings destroyed, together with the sacred vessels, its paintings, its baptismal, marriage and funeral records, and all the furnishings for the sacristy, the house, and the farm implements—now, the forces of both presidios come together to set things right. . . .

Most Excellent Lord, one of the most important requests I made of the Most Illustrious Inspector General, at the beginning of these conquests was: if ever the Indians, whether they be gentile or Christian, killed me,

they should be forgiven. The same request I make of Your Excellency. It has been my own fault I did not make this request before. To see a formal statement drawn up by Your Excellency to that effect, in so far as it concerns me, and the other religious who at present are subject to me or will be in the future, would be for me a special consolation during the time Our Lord God will be pleased to add to my advancing years.

While the missionary is alive, let the soldiers guard him, and watch over him, like the pupils of God's very eyes. That is as it should be. Nor do I disdain such a favor for myself. But after the missionary has been killed, what can be gained by campaigns?

Some will say to frighten them and prevent them from killing others.

What I say is that, in order to prevent them from killing others, keep better guard over them than they did over the one who has been killed; and, as to the murderer, let him live, in order that he should be saved—which is the very purpose of our coming here, and the reason which justifies it. Give him to understand, after a moderate amount of punishment, that he is being pardoned in accordance with our law, which commands us to forgive injuries; and let us prepare him, not for death, but for eternal life. . . .

From this Mission, totally dependent on Your
Excellency, of San Carlos de Monterey, December 15, 1775.

Most Excellent Lord,

Kissing the hand of Your Excellency,

Your most affectionate and devoted servant and
chaplain, who holds you in the highest affection,

Fray Junípero Serra

Captain Alejandro Malaspina Praises the Beneficial Impact of Spanish Missions, 1792

Near the banks of the Carmel [River] and the seashore, and about two leagues from the presidio, is the mission of San Carlos [Borromeo]. Its buildings are a moderate-sized church, the hospice for the religious with accompanying offices, one storeroom for the shipments and farm tools and another for the grain, a small house for the corporal and four or five soldiers assigned to the mission guard and for other necessary uses. It was founded in 1770. It is administered by three apostolic missionaries of Propaganda Fide of the College of San Fernando de México. One of these is the president of all the missions of New California, named Fray Fermín de Lasuén. These religious deserve the praise and acquired the affection of all members of the expedition of the corvettes *Descubierta* and *Atrevida* because of their modesty, piety, austerity of customs, diligence in providing for the spiritual good of the natives, and their graciousness of conduct. They deserved from us of the schooners no lesser indication of the greatest esteem, and we found very clear evidence of the appreciation shown to this small congregation of virtuous men by those of the unfortunate expedition of Mr. La Pérouse.

With flattery and presents they attract the savage Indians and persuade them to adhere to life in society and to receive instruction for a knowledge of the Catholic faith, the cultivation of land, and the arts necessary for making the instruments most needed for farming.

In proof of this it will not be out of place to cite an example that gives evidence of the zeal and tenderness of the father president [Lasuén] and of the inclination of the savages.

The leader of one of these pagan tribes, as respected for his valor as he was loved by his people for the natural talents he possessed, was at death's door. He had shown esteem for the father president, and I don't know whether or not he had done him some kindness. When the latter learned of the sad situation of the former on a stormy night of constant rain, despite his dwelling place being some leagues away, he went there for the purpose of persuading him not to depart this world without embracing the Catholic faith and purifying himself with holy baptism. After great difficulty he arrived at last to talk with him, and having made known to him the reason for his trip and of the ardent desire that he had that a person whom he loved would not be lost forever, but rather, by trying to persuade him of the truth of what he was telling him and subjecting him to the ceremonies required by Christianity, he would obtain the reward that is promised to those who duly profess it. Then the pagan, being convinced, said to the father president: "I believe what you tell me and I will do what you direct because I find that no other interest but what you tell me can have motivated you to leave the comforts of your home to travel a number of leagues on a stormy night; I am convinced of your good will and I place myself in your hands."

Lorenzo Asisara Narrates the Assassination of a Priest by Santa Cruz Indians, 1812

The following story which I shall convey was told to me by my dear father in 1818. He was a neophyte of the Mission of Santa Cruz. He was one of the original founders of that mission. He was an Indian from the ranchería of Asar on the *Jarro* coast, up beyond Santa Cruz. He was one of the first neophytes baptized at the founding, being about 20 years of age. He was called Venancio Asar, and was the gardener of the Mission of Santa Cruz.

My father was a witness to the happenings which follow. He was one of the conspirators who planned to kill Father [Andrés] Quintana. When the conspirators were planning to kill Father Quintana, they gathered in the house of Julian the gardener (the one who made the pretense of being ill). The man who worked inside the plaza of the mission, named Donato, was punished by Father Quintana with a whip with wire. With each blow it cut his buttocks. Then the same man, Donato, wanted vengeance. He was the one who organized a gathering of 14 men, among them were the cook and the pages serving the Father. The cook was named Antonio, the eldest page named Lino, the others named Vicente and Miguel Antonio. All of them gathered in the house of Julian to plan how they could avoid the cruel punishments of Father Quintana. One man present, Lino, who was more

capable and wiser than the others, said, "The first thing we should do today is to see that the Padre no longer punishes the people in that manner. We aren't animals. He [Quintana] says in his sermons that God does not command these [punishments]—but only examples and doctrine. Tell me now, what shall we do with the Padre? We cannot chase him away, nor accuse him before the judge, because we do not know who commands him to do with us as he does." To this, Andrés, father of Lino the page, answered, "Let's kill the Padre without anyone being aware, not the servants, nor anyone, except us that are here present." (This Lino was pure-blooded Indian, but as white as a Spaniard and man of natural abilities.) And then Julian the gardener said, "What shall we do in order to kill him?" His wife responded, "You, who are always getting sick—only this way can it be possible—think if it is good this way." Lino approved the plan and asked that all present also approve it. "In that case, we shall do it tomorrow night." That was Saturday. It should be noted that the Padre wished all the people to gather in the plaza on the following Sunday in order to test the whip that he had made with pieces of wire to see if it was to his liking.

All of the conspirators present at the meeting concurred that it should be done as Lino had recommended.

On the evening of Saturday at about six o'clock [October 12] of 1812, they went to tell the Padre that the gardener was dying. The Indians were already posted between two trees on both sides so that they could grab Father when he passed. The Padre arrived at the house of Julian, who pretended to be in agony. The Padre helped him, thinking he was really sick and about to die. When the Padre was returning to his house, he passed close to where the Indians were posted. They didn't have the courage to grab him and they allowed him to pass. The moribund gardener was behind him, but the Padre arrived at his house. Within an hour the wife of Julian arrived [again] to tell him [the Father] that her husband was dying. With this news the Padre returned to the orchard, the woman following behind crying and lamenting. He saw that the sick man was dying. The Padre took the man's hand in order to take his pulse. He felt the pulse and could find nothing amiss. The pulse showed there was nothing wrong with Julian. Not knowing what it could be, the Padre returned to pray for him. It was night when the Padre left. Julian arose and washed away the sacraments [oil] that he [the Padre] had administered, and he followed behind to join the others and see what his companions had done. Upon arriving at the place where they were stationed, Lino lifted his head and looked in all directions to see if they were coming out to grab the Father. The Father passed and they didn't take him. The Father arrived at his house.

Later, when the Father was at his table dining, the conspirators had already gathered at the house of the alleged sick man to ascertain why they hadn't seized Father Quintana. Julian complained that the Padre had placed herbs in his ears, and because of them, now he was really going to die. Then the wife of Julian said, "Yes, you all did not carry through with your promised plans; I am going to accuse you all, and I will not go back to the house." They all answered her, "All right, now, in this trip go and speak to

the Father." The woman again left to fetch Father Quintana, who was at supper. He got up immediately and went where he found the supposedly sick man. This time he took with him three pages, two who walked ahead lighting his way with lanterns and behind him followed his Mayordomo Lino. The other two were Vicente and Miguel Antonio. The Father arrived at the gardener's house and found him unconscious. He couldn't speak. The Father prayed the last orations without administering the oils, and said to the wife, "Now your husband is prepared to live or die. Don't come to look for me again." Then the Father left with his pages to return to his house. Julian followed him. Arriving at the place where the two trees were (since the Father was not paying attention to his surroundings, but only in the path in front of him), Lino grabbed him from behind saying these words, "Stop here, Father, you must speak for a moment." When the other two pages who carried the lanterns turned around and saw the other men come out to attack the Father, they fled with their lanterns. The Father said to Lino, "Oh, my Son, what are you going to do to me?" Lino answered, "Your assassins will tell you."

"What have I done to you children, for which you would kill me?"

"Because you have made a *cuarta de hierro* [a horse whip tipped with iron] . . .," Andrés answered him. Then the Father retorted, "Oh, children, leave me, so that I can go from here now, at this moment." Andrés asked him why he had made this *cuarta de hierro*. Quintana said that it was only for transgressors. Then someone shouted, "Well, you are in the hands of those evil ones, make your peace with God." Many of those present (seeing the Father in his affliction) cried and pitied his fate, but could do nothing to help him because they were themselves compromised. He pleaded much, promising to leave the mission immediately if they would only let him.

"Now you won't be going to any part of the earth from here, Father, you are going to heaven." This was the last plea of the Father. Some of them, not having been able to lay hands on Father, reprimanded the others because they talked too much, demanding that they kill him immediately. They then covered the Father's mouth with his own cape to strangle him. They had his arms tightly secured. After the Father had been strangled, they took a testicle [*grano de los companonez*] so that it would not be suspected that he had been beaten, and in a moment Padre expired. Then Lino and the others took him to his house and put him in his bed.

When the two little pages, Vicente and Miguel Antonio, arrived at the house, the former wanted to tell the guard, but the other dissuaded him by saying, "No, they, the soldiers, will also kill your mother, father, all of the others and yourself and me. Let them, the conspirators, do what they want." The two hid themselves. After the Indians had put the Father in his bed, Lino looked for the two pages, and he found them hidden. They undressed the body of Father Quintana and placed him in the bed as if he were going to sleep. All of the conspirators, including Julian's wife, were present. Andrés asked Lino for the keys to the storeroom. He handed them over saying, "What do you want?" And they said silver and beads. Among the group there were three Indians from the Santa Clara mission. These proposed that

they investigate to see how much money there was. Lino opened the box and showed them the accumulated gold and silver. The three Indians from Santa Clara took as much as they could carry to their mission. (I don't know what they have done with that money.) The others took their portions as they saw fit.

Then they asked for the keys to the convent or the nunnery. Lino gave the keys to the *jayunte*, or barracks of the single men, to one of them in order to free them and gather them together below the orchard with the unmarried women. They gathered in the orchard so that neither the people in the plaza nor in the *ranchería* nor in the guardhouse would hear them. The single men left and without a sound gathered in the orchard at the same place where the Father was assassinated. There was a man there cautioning them not to make any noise, that they were going to have a good time. After a short time the young unmarried women arrived in order to spend the night there. The young people of both sexes got together and had their pleasure. At midnight Lino, being in the Padre's living room with one of the girls from the single women's dormitory, entered the Father's room in order to see if he was really dead. He found him reviving. He was already on the point of arising. Lino went to look for his accomplices to tell them that the Padre was coming to. The Indians returned and they crushed the Father's other testicle. This last act put an end to the life of Father Quintana. Donato, the one who had been whipped, walked around the room with the plural results of his operation in hand saying, "I shall bury these in the outdoor privy."

Donato told Lino that they should close the treasure chest with these words, "Close the trunk with the colored silver (that is the name that the Indians gave to gold) and let's see where we shall bury it." The eight men carried it down to the orchard and buried it secretly without the others knowing.

At about two o'clock in the morning, the young girls returned to their convent and the single men to their *jayunte* without making any noise. The assassins gathered once more after everything had occurred in order to hear the plans of Lino and Donato. Some wanted to flee, and others asked, "What for? No one except us knows." Lino asked them what they wanted to take to their houses, sugar, *panocha* [a sugar loaf], honey, or any other things, and suggested that they lay down to sleep for a while. Finally everything was ready. Donato proposed to return to where the Father was to check on him. They found him not only lifeless, but completely cold and stiff. Lino then showed them the new whip that the Padre was planning to use for the first time the next day, assuring them that he [Father Quintana] would not use it. He sent them to their houses to rest, remaining in the house with the keys. He asked them to be very careful. He arranged the room and the Bible in the manner in which the Father was accustomed to doing before retiring, telling them that he was not going to toll the bells in the morning until the Mayordomo and Corporal of the guard came and he had talked to them. All went through the orchard very silently.

This same morning (Sunday), the bells should have been rung at about

eight o'clock. At that hour the people from the villa de Branciforte began to arrive in order to attend the mass. The Mayordomo, Carlos Castro, saw that the bells were not being rung and went to ask Lino, who was the first assistant of the Father, in order to ask why the Padre had not ordered him [to toll the bells]. Lino was in the outer room feigning innocence and answered the Mayordomo that he couldn't tell him anything about the Father because he was still inside sleeping or praying, and that the Mayordomo should wait until he should speak to him first. The Mayordomo returned home. Soon the Corporal of the guard arrived and Lino told him the same as to the Mayordomo. The Mayordomo returned to join in the conservation [*sic*]. They decided to wait a little while longer. Finally Lino told them that in their presence he would knock on the door of the room, observing, "If he is angry with me, you will stand up for me." And so he did, calling to the Father. As he didn't hear noise inside, the Mayordomo and Corporal asked Lino to knock again, but he refused. They then left, encharging him to call the Father again because the hour was growing late. All of the servants were busy at their jobs as always, in order not to cause any suspicion. The Mayordomo returned after ten o'clock and asked Lino to call the Padre to see what was wrong. Lino, with the keys in his pocket, knocked at the door. Finally the Mayordomo insisted that Lino enter the room, but Lino refused. At this moment, the Corporal, who was old Nazario Galindo, arrived. Lino (although he had the key to the door in his pocket) said, "Well, I am going to see if I can get the door open," and he pretended to look for a key to open the door. He returned with a ring of keys but he didn't find one that opened the lock. The Mayordomo and the Corporal left to talk to some men who were there. Later, Lino took the key that opened the door, saying it was for the kitchen. He opened another door that opened into the plaza (the key opened three doors), and through there he entered. Then he opened the main door from inside in front of which the others waited. Lino came out screaming and crying, and carrying on in an uncontrolled manner saying that the Padre was dead. They asked him if he was certain and he responded, "As this light that illuminates us. By God, I'm going to toll the bells." The three entered, the Corporal, the Mayordomo, and Lino. He didn't allow anyone else to enter. The Corporal and the Mayordomo and the other people wrote to the other missions and to Monterey to Father Marcelino Marquinez. (This Marquinez was an expert horseman and a good friend.) The poor elderly neophytes, and many other Indians who never suspected that the Father was killed, thought that he had died suddenly. They cried bitterly. Lino was roaring inside the Father's house like a bear.

The Fathers from Santa Clara and from other missions came and they held the Father's funeral, all believing that he had died a natural death, but not before examining the corpse in the entrance room, and had opened the stomach in order to be certain that the Padre had not been poisoned. Officials, sergeants, and many others participated in these acts but nothing was discovered. Finally, by chance, one of those present noted that the testicles were missing, and they were convinced that this had been the cause of

death. Through modesty they did not reveal the fact and buried the body with everyone convinced that the death had been a natural one.

A number of years after the death, Emiliana, the wife of Lino, and Maria Tata, the wife of the cook Antonio, became mutually jealous. They were both seamstresses and they were at work. This was around August at the time of the lentil harvest. Carlos Castro was with his men working in the cornfields. Shortly before eleven o'clock he returned to his house for the meal. He was a man who understood well the language of the Indians. Returning from the cornfields, he passed behind one of the plaza walls near where these women were sewing and heard one tell the other that she was secretly eating *panocha*. Castro stopped and heard the second woman reply to the first, "How is it that you have so much money?" The first replied, "You also have it, because your husband killed the Father." Then the second accused the husband of the first woman of the same crime. The war of words continued, and Castro was convinced that Father Quintana had been assassinated, and he went to tell Father Roman Olbés, who was the missionary at Santa Cruz, what he had heard. Father Ramon went to tell Padre Marquinez. The latter sent one of his pages to the orchard to warn Julian and his accomplices that they were going to be caught. At noon, at about the time of the midday meal, Father Olbés spoke to Lino and asked him to send for his wife to come there and also to cut some pieces of cloth. Emiliana arrived, and Father Olbés placed her in a room where there was clothing and gave her some scissors with which to cut some pieces, telling her, "you will eat here." Then he sent a page to bring Maria Tata to take some dirty clothing out of the church to wash. The Mayordomo was observing the maneuverings of the Father. He made Maria Tata stay to eat there. He placed her in another room in order to cut some suits for the pages. The Mayordomo and the two fathers went to eat. After the meal, and when the two women had also eaten, Father Olbés said to Emiliana, "Do you know who eats a lot of white sugar?" She answered that it was Maria Tata, "because her husband killed Father Quintana." The Father made her return to the room and called for Maria Tata. The father asked her, "Tell me if you know who it was that killed Padre Quintana; tell me the truth so that nothing will happen to you." Lino and Antonio often took their meals in the kitchen. Maria Tata replied, "Lino, Father." Father Olbés then sent them to their houses to rest, offering them a present. Then the Father sent for the Corporal Nazario Galindo to arrest the assassins. They began with the orchard workers and the cook, without telling them why they were under arrest. Antonio was the first prisoner. Put in jail, they asked him who his accomplice was. He said who his accomplice was and the man was arrested, and they asked each one the name of their respective accomplices. In this way, they were all arrested, except Lino, who was looked upon as a valiant man of great strength. He was taken through the deceit of his own Compadre Carlos Castro, who handed him a knife to pare some black and white mares in order to make a hakamore for the animal of the Father. Suspiciously, Lino said to Castro, "Compadre, why are you deceiving me? I

know that you are going to arrest me.” There were already two soldiers hidden behind the corral.

“Here, take your knife, Compadre, that which I thought is already done. I am going to pay for it—and if I had wanted to, I could have finished off the soldiers, the Mayordomos, and any others that might have been around on the same night that I killed the Father.”

The result of all this was that the accused were sent to San Francisco, and among them was my father. There they were judged, and those who killed the Father were sentenced to receive *novenano* (nine days in succession) of fifty lashes for each one, and to serve in public works in San Diego. The rest, including my father, were freed because they had served as witnesses, and it was not proven that they had taken part in the assassination.

All returned after many years to their mission.

The Spanish Padres were very cruel toward the Indians. They abused them very much, they had bad food, bad clothing, and they made them work like slaves. I also was subjected to that cruel life. The Padres did not practice what they preached in the pulpit. The Same Father Olbés for all his cruelties, was once stoned by the Indians.

San Andres Ranch/Santa Cruz

Jurisdiction of Watsonville

July 10, 1877

Lorenzo Asisara

(rubric)



ESSAYS

Francis F. Guest, a Catholic priest and scholar, begins the first essay by examining possible explanations for the ways in which Franciscan missionaries dealt with the high mortality rate among Indian neophytes. By considering the larger context of social conditions in eighteenth-century Europe, where death was a common feature of everyday life, he argues that Americans of the late twentieth century can understand missionaries' attitudes without at the same time completely exonerating them from responsibility for what happened to California's indigenous population. As institutions, Guest acknowledges, the missions "were an important cause of death among the converted Indians." Yet, according to his point of view, it is important not to impose twentieth-century cultural and ethnocentric norms on eighteenth-century behavior.

In the second essay, Antonia Castañeda, who teaches at the University of Texas, Austin, examines the treatment of Indian women in Alta California by Spanish soldiers during colonization. Using gender as a category of analysis, Castañeda takes a very different approach than that of Guest and reaches a very different conclusion. In describing the sexual and political devaluation of Amerindian women by Spaniards of the late eighteenth century, she does not (unlike Guest) hesitate to judge the Spanish imperial system according to her own twentieth-century values and prefers to emphasize ultimate outcome over original motivation.

Cultural Perspectives on Death and Whipping in the Missions

FRANCIS F. GUEST, O.F.M.

As every graduate student of California history knows who has ever enjoyed the dubious distinction of assembling statistics on the death rate at the missions, the number of deaths at a given mission in a given year usually exceeded the number of births. The reasons customarily given for this unfortunate situation are commonly known and need not be repeated here. The aboriginal peoples of California had little or no immunity to diseases of European origin. The question we wish to raise in this context, however, is this: How could Franciscan priests, dedicated to the missionary service of the Church and the ideals of St. Francis of Assisi, conscientiously continue their work when they knew that, as they expressed the tragic truth themselves, the shadow of the Spaniard was the death of the Indian? How could they do it? . . .

To find an answer to these questions, let us turn our attention to social conditions as they were in Latin Europe in the late eighteenth century. . . .

In Spanish cities and towns unhygienic conditions prevailed. Competent physicians were scarce, even in populous centers. And infant mortality was extraordinarily high. . . .

[T]ravelers in eighteenth-century Spain paint a rather grim picture of health conditions. In 1754–1757 a plague of locusts afflicted Portugal and southern Spain, the result being famine in the provinces of Andalucía, Murcia, and Valencia. Joseph Townsend, the English scholar and traveler, says of Spain, “. . . few countries have sustained such losses by epidemical diseases, few have been so often ravaged by pestilential fevers.” And with respect to Spanish physicians, he says: “In point of honour, no class of citizens meets with less respect than the physicians . . .” Speaking of the epidemic of yellow fever in southern Spain in the year 1800, Domínguez Ortiz says it carried off 12% of the people of Cádiz, a probable 19% of those of Sevilla, and one third the population of Jerez. . . . A military traveler in Spain in the 1830s speaks of whole villages being depopulated by intermittent fevers. . . .

Judging from the evidence here presented, one concludes that death, in the eighteenth century, came often to Spanish cities and towns and stayed long. The people of Spain were much closer to death in the late eighteenth century than they are today. They were familiar with its face. They were also accustomed to the early approach of old age. The Spanish padres who served in the California missions were habituated, then, from early childhood on, to rubbing elbows with death. Of the 123 Franciscans who crossed the ocean from Spain to labor in the California mission field, 93 were brought up in small towns located in rural areas, where disease was frequent, food supplies limited, medical service inadequate, and only the more

rugged survived. . . . The Franciscan missionaries of Hispanic California, 1769-1848, saw death and the death rate at the missions with different eyes than those of late twentieth-century Americans.

This is not to say, of course, that the missionaries were so inured to death as to be indifferent to the mortality rate among the missionized Indians. In their annual and biennial reports they kept a meticulous record of baptisms, deaths, and marriages at the missions. . . .

It is not surprising that the medicines so industriously acquired and administered by the padres and others to the Indians were without adequate effect. . . .

Indeed, Father Narciso Durán was of the opinion that it might be better for the padres not to attempt to administer medicines and other remedies to neophytes who had been taken ill. He pointed out that if a Spaniard administered medicine or even so much as a bowl of chicken broth to a sick Indian, and the Indian should die, the bereaved relatives would blame the Spaniard for the loss of their kinsman. And the result would be alienation of these same Indians. . . .

One does not wish to present all this evidence as an apologia for the Spanish missionaries, excusing them of all blame for the high rate of mortality among the neophytes. . . . [T]he missions themselves, as institutions, were an important cause of death among the converted Indians. One merely wishes to point out that the impression of the Spanish missionaries as callous and indifferent witnesses to the presence of so many fatalities among the Indians is one that should normally be revised in the light of social and health conditions as they were in France and Spain in the eighteenth century. . . .

A second . . . [fact] that needs to be seen in cultural perspective is . . . the whipping of delinquent Indians by the padres of the California missions. We find the same dilemma here as we did in the case of the death rate at the missions. As members of the clergy, the Franciscans were dedicated to the spiritual ideals of the Gospels. As Franciscans, they were pledged to follow in the footsteps of St. Francis of Assisi. On the one hand, there is abundant evidence that the missionaries, in their correspondence, repeatedly expressed their love for the Indians. And they often underwent sacrifices for their neophytes and protected them against the abuse and exploitation to which they were often exposed at the hands of some of the soldiers and townsmen. And yet, on the other hand, there is incontrovertible testimony that delinquent Indians were whipped, sometimes excessively, by the padres. How does one explain this obvious anomaly? How does one reconcile the cross the missionaries carried in one hand with the whip they bore in the other? . . .

To answer these questions, one must remember that the Franciscan presence in Alta California was not only a European presence; it was also a Spanish presence. And it was a Catholic presence dating from the late eighteenth century. Let us do here what we did with the high mortality rate at the missions—study Spanish conditions as they were when the padres who labored in California left Spain for the New World.

Reading about the use of the whip in the Spanish past, we find, first of all, that boys of the lower and middle classes in Spanish elementary and secondary schools were accustomed to severe punishments for not having studied and learned their lessons. They memorized the declension of Latin nouns and the conjugation of Latin verbs to the accompaniment of shouts, reproofs, cuffs, and whippings. All this was part of the Spanish way of life and neither the boys nor their parents thought anything of it. In California mission documents, then, it is not surprising to find a missionary observing that "in an average school a person would receive more punishment for not knowing his lesson than he would receive here for living in concubinage."

We find, secondly, that during the eighteenth century in some churches and chapels in Spain, laymen would come for evening penitential services once or twice a week throughout the year. To begin the ceremony, the religious in choir would chant the appropriate psalms. Then the lights would be put out, both the religious and the laymen would kneel and bare their backs, and all present, while more psalms were chanted, would apply the discipline. The discipline was a whip made of rope, the strands of which were thickened at the ends with knots. Joseph Townsend, the British scholar and traveler . . . , testifies that the whipping at these penitential services went on for a period of twenty minutes. It was not unusual for the penitents to discipline themselves with such vigor and fervor as to draw blood. . . .

[W]hipping played a significant role in Spanish culture in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. It was part of the domestic, social, and religious life of the people. Children were whipped at home and in the schools. Criminals were flogged in prisons. Servants were beaten by their masters. Indian house boys and ranch hands in Mexican California were whipped by their employers much as they had been by the padres at the missions. Among clergy, religious, and lay people self-flagellation was practiced by the devout for religious reasons. . . .

Now then, let us apply this information on the role of whipping in Spanish culture to the punishment of delinquent Indians at the California missions. According to Father Fermín Francisco de Lasuén, a missionary could impose no more than twenty-one strokes of the whip on a given Indian delinquent, striking his bare back with a rope, a lariat, or a pliable reed or cane. According to Lasuén, anything that might draw blood or cause a bruise was to be avoided. But, allowing five seconds for each stroke of the whip, one can deliver twenty-one strokes to a given person in slightly less than two minutes. A number of missionaries raised the permissible punishment to twenty-five strokes, which would have taken slightly more than two minutes to deliver. It will be remembered, however, that once or twice a week throughout the year in Spain there were lay people and religious who were accustomed to flagellate themselves for twenty minutes at a time. Even when one raises the number of strokes to fifty, as a few of the missionaries did in punishing given Indians, the chastisement seems limited when compared with what pious Spaniards customarily inflicted upon themselves every week in their spiritual exercises. . . .

Now let us turn to the question "Why did the missionized Indians submit to these whinnings so patiently?"

In the eighteenth century it was customary for religious throughout Latin Europe and Latin America to take the discipline regularly, some more severely and rigorously than others and usually in private rather than in public. In the statutes for the apostolic missionary colleges of the Franciscan Order one reads as follows: "And as regards the use of the discipline, fasting at times other than those prescribed by the Rule, the chapter of faults, and other austerities and practices conducive to observance of the Rule, of monastic life, and of regular discipline, let the friars conform to the General Constitutions of the Order." In the Province of Cataluña in Spain the friars were accustomed to take the discipline every day except for Sundays and for festival days of the first and second class. . . .

[M]ay it not reasonably be inferred that this extraordinary spiritual phenomenon, this self-flagellation, was probably the principal reason why the missionized Indians submitted so patiently to the whippings imposed upon them for their bad behavior? Why did they allow the padre to whip them? Was it not because they knew that he whipped himself much harder and more often than he did them? One may well ask how many of the Indians would have remained at the missions to be beaten for their misdoings if it had not been for the fidelity of the missionaries in their practice of taking the discipline.

[T]he padre's religion made the cross the crux of this mysterious cultural encounter in which converted Indians, in punishment for their defects, received whippings at the hands of ecclesiastics. It was devotion to the cross of Christ that led to self-flagellation by the missionaries. And it was the self-flagellation of the missionaries that seemingly did more than anything else to induce the Indians to accept with some measure of resignation the physical punishments imposed upon them by the force of Spanish custom. . . .

Without the aid of the cultural perspectives outlined above, an American reader might easily be led to describe the Franciscan missionaries as callous and brutal in the way they punished delinquent Indians. Actually, there were some occasions when missionaries were undiscerning and unfeeling in this matter. . . . But to proceed from a page of statistics on whipping to the conclusion that the missionaries were insensitive, harsh, and pitiless is to take more than just a long step. It is to take a leap of considerable distance, even a leap in the dark. . . . Judging by the standards of contemporary American society, one feels inclined to condemn the physical punishments imposed upon delinquent Indians—whippings, shackles, the stocks—as severe, much too severe. One must not fail to devote due attention, however, to the subjective order, the order of thought, the order of conscience. How did these practitioners of physical punishment see themselves? How did they judge their own conduct? Father Fermín Francisco de Lasuén, second Father President of the California missions, leaves one with the impression, in his correspondence, that in these penal practices he saw nothing objectionable, nothing to be indignant or alarmed about, nothing with which to reproach his conscience. Father Estevan Tapis, the third Father President, points out that the Indians from the forest came freely and gladly to the mission. observed everything that went on.

including the punishments, received instruction, and asked for baptism when they knew they were free to return to the wilderness if they wished. The non-Christian Indian visitors knew the converted Indians were corrected gently at first and then, when gentleness finally proved ineffective, received some form of punishment. If the non-Christians had been scandalized, repelled, and alienated by these punishments, would they have asked for baptism and entered the ranks of the neophytes? These are facts that challenge our respect. It is certain that the whipping of delinquent Indians was an error in judgment on the part of the missionaries. It is not at all certain that it was necessarily an exercise in brutality. Argumentative though these lines may seem to be, their purpose is not to disinfect mission history. It is to make some kind of sense out of it. . . .

The Spanish missionaries in California followed the dictates of Spanish culture, the California Indians those of their own aboriginal culture. Each culture, the Spanish and the aboriginal, was complete, distinct, and unique. Each consisted of many minute parts, all closely interrelated, all functionally organized into a kind of living social organism. Each had its own configuration, its own *Weltanschauung*, its own world view, its own spirit. . . .

[T]he Franciscan missionaries in Hispanic California . . . made numerous errors both in planning and in implementing their methods of evangelization. The mission, with its fields, crops, granaries, workshops, and church, effected an almost complete separation of recently converted Indians from their aboriginal culture. The missionaries performed a kind of surgical operation on Indian society, cutting off one member after another and placing each one in a totally different society with totally different cultural norms and practices. Furthermore, the unconverted Indians, in the eyes of the missionaries, were heathens, victims of barbarism, of superstition, of error, and they were to be removed from these unfortunate circumstances as soon as possible and Christianized. And finally, they were not only to be Christianized, they were to be Hispanicized, absorbed into Hispanic culture, embodied into the Spanish empire as useful vassals of the Crown. The contrast between Catholic missionization of today, both in doctrine and in practice, and the Spanish missionary program of two hundred years ago is like the difference between day and night. . . .

The Spaniards, by custom, by the weight and force of three hundred years of precedent, were impelled almost irresistibly in the direction they took in their approach to the Indians. It was not reasonably possible for them to have been other, in their missionary policies and methods, than they were. Hence if we Americans today had been Spanish missionaries in California two hundred years ago, we would have found ourselves driven by the force of custom to follow much the same path as that taken by the friars themselves, at least the better ones. . . .

The culture of the Spanish was markedly different from that of contemporary Americans. Their concept of humanism and of humanity belonged to another place and another age. Their definition of what was cruel and unusual in punishment differed greatly from that of contemporary

American schools, courts, and legislators. The spirituality of the padres, as had been explained, was physically demanding. When an Indian submitted to a whipping, he knew that the stripes imposed upon him on this one occasion paled into insignificance when compared with those that the padre inflicted upon himself regularly at least three times a week. And even when he was compelled to wear hobbles or sit in the stocks, the discomfort he suffered was minor in comparison with what the padre freely took upon himself faithfully and often.

To sum up, the solution to the question whether or not mission administration was brutal lies in the use of the discipline, curious and unwonted as that instrument of physical penance may seem to present-day Americans. It lies in the Spanish concept of physical penance as it was in the period of Baroque Catholicism. It lies in the religious devotion of the Spanish to the passion of Christ. And it lies in the conviction of rugged Spaniards that physical punishment, carefully measured and controlled, was good for the character of those who misbehaved.

Now then, was mission administration brutal or not? Let us answer the question briefly. If judged from the standpoint of contemporary American life, mission administration was quite obviously brutal. But if judged from the standpoint of the padres and the other Californios, it quite obviously was not. The two sets of standards differ. To appeal to the subjective order, what seems brutal to Americans of today was not conceived of as brutal by the missionaries and the other Hispanic people of early California. One cannot judge eighteenth-century people by twentieth-century standards. . . . One cannot use Indian standards by which to judge the Indians and then use American standards of today by which to judge the Spanish missionaries of Hispanic California. One cannot absolve the Indians of savagery and then accuse the missionaries of it.

Spanish Violence Against Amerindian Women

ANTONIA I. CASTAÑEDA

In the morning, six or seven soldiers would set out together . . . and go to the distant *rancherías* [*villages*] even many leagues away. When both men and women at the sight of them would take off running . . . the soldiers, adept as they are at lassoing cows and mules, would lasso Indian women—who then became prey for their unbridled lust. Several Indian men who tried to defend the women were shot to death.

Junipero Serra, 1773

In words reminiscent of sixteenth-century chroniclers Bernal Díaz del Castillo and Bartolomé de las Casas, the father president of the California

missions, Junipero Serra, described the depredations of the soldiers against Indian women in his reports to Viceroy Antonio María Bucareli and the father guardian of the College of San Fernando, Rafael Verger. Sexual assaults against native women began shortly after the founding of the presidio and mission at Monterey in June 1770, wrote Serra, and continued throughout the length of California. The founding of each new mission and presidio brought new reports of sexual violence.

The despicable actions of the soldiers, Serra told Bucareli in 1773, were severely retarding the spiritual and material conquest of California. The native people were resisting missionization. Some were becoming war-like and hostile because of the soldiers' repeated outrages against the women. The assaults resulted in Amerindian attacks, which the soldiers countered with unauthorized reprisals, thereby further straining the capacity of the small military force to staff the presidios and guard the missions. Instead of pacification and order, the soldiers provoked greater conflict and thus jeopardized the position of the church in this region.

Serra was particularly alarmed about occurrences at Mission San Gabriel. "Since the district is the most promising of all the missions," he wrote to Father Verger, "this mission gives me the greatest cause for anxiety; the secular arm down there was guilty of the most heinous crimes, killing the men to take their wives." Father Serra related that on October 10, 1771, within a month of its having been founded, a large group of Indians suddenly attacked two soldiers who were on horseback and tried to kill the one who had outraged a woman. The soldiers retaliated. "A few days later," Serra continued, "as he went out to gather the herd of cattle . . . and [it] seems more likely to get himself a woman, a soldier, along with some others, killed the principal Chief of the gentiles; they cut off his head and brought it in triumph back to the mission."

The incident prompted the Amerindians of the coast and the sierra, mortal enemies until that time, to convene a council to make peace with each other and join forces to eliminate the Spaniards. The council planned to attack the mission on October 16, but changed the plan after a new contingent of troops arrived at the mission. Despite this narrowly averted disaster, the soldiers assigned to Mission San Gabriel continued their outrages.

The soldiers' behavior not only generated violence on the part of the native people as well as resistance to missionization, argued Serra; it also took its toll on the missionaries, some of whom refused to remain at their mission sites. In his 1773 memorial to Bucareli, Serra lamented the loss of one of the missionaries, who could not cope with the soldiers' disorders at San Gabriel. The priest was sick at heart, Serra stated: "He took to his bed, when he saw with his own eyes a soldier actually committing deeds of shame with an Indian who had come to the mission, and even the children who came to the mission were not safe from their baseness."

Conditions at other missions were no better. Mission San Luis Obispo also lost a priest because of the assaults on Indian women. After spending two years as the sole missionary at San Luis, Father Domingo Juncosa asked for and received permission to return to Mexico because he was

"shocked at the scandalous conduct of the soldiers" and could not work under such abominable conditions. Even before San Luis Obispo was founded in the early fall of 1772, Tichos women had cause to fear. The most notorious molesters of non-Christian women were among the thirteen soldiers sent on a bear hunt to this area during the previous winter of starvation at Monterey.

The establishment of new missions subjected the women of each new area to sexual assaults. Referring to the founding of the mission at San Juan Capistrano, Serra wrote that "it seems all the sad experiences that we went through at the beginning have come to life again. The soldiers, without any restraint or shame, have behaved like brutes toward Indian women." From this mission also, the priests reported to Serra that the soldier-guards went at night to the nearby villages to assault the women and that hiding the women did not restrain the brutes, who beat the men to force them to reveal where the women were hidden. Non-Christian Indians in the vicinity of the missions were simply not safe. They were at the mercy of soldiers with horses and guns.

In 1773, a case of rape was reported at San Luis Rey, one at San Diego, and two cases at Monterey the following year. Serra expressed his fears and concern to Governor Felipe de Neve, who was considering establishing a new presidio in the channel of Santa Barbara. Serra told Neve that he took it for granted that the insulting and scandalous conduct of the soldiers "would be the same as we had experienced in other places which were connected with presidios. Perhaps this one would be worse."

Native women and their communities were profoundly affected by the sexual attacks and attendant violence. California Amerindians were peaceable, non-aggressive people who highly valued harmonious relationships. Physical violence and the infliction of bodily harm on one another were virtually unknown. Women did not fear men. Rape rarely, if ever, occurred. If someone stole from another or caused another's death, societal norms required that the offending party make reparations to the individual and/or the family. Appropriate channels to rectify a wrong without resorting to violence existed.

Animosity, when it did surface, was often worked out ritualistically—for example, through verbal battles in the form of war songs, or song fights that lasted eight days, or encounters in which the adversaries threw stones across a river at each other with no intent actually to hit or physically injure the other party. Even among farming groups such as the Colorado River people, who practiced warfare and took women and children captive, female captives were never sexually molested. The Yumas believed that intimate contact with enemy women caused sickness.

Thus, neither the women nor their people were prepared for the onslaught of aggression and violence the soldiers unleashed against them. They were horrified and terrified. One source reported that women of the San Gabriel and other southern missions raped by the soldiers were considered contaminated and obliged to undergo an extensive purification, which included a long course of sweating, the drinking of herbs, and other

forms of purging. This practice was consistent with the people's belief that sickness was caused by enemies. . . .

It is clear that the sexual exploitation of native women and related violence seriously threatened the political and military objectives of the colonial enterprise in California. Repeated attacks against women and summary reprisals against men who dared to interfere undermined the efforts of the priests to attract Amerindians to the missions and to Christianity. They also thwarted whatever attempts the military authorities might make to elicit political or military allegiance from the native peoples.

From the missionaries' point of view, the attacks had more immediate, deleterious consequences for the spiritual conquest of California, because such actions belied significant principles of the Catholic moral theology they were trying to inculcate. As the primary agents of Christianization/Hispanicization, the missionaries argued that they could not teach and Amerindians could not learn and obey the moral strictures against rape, abduction, fornication, adultery, and all forms of sexual impurity while the soldiers persisted in their licentiousness and immorality. Their actions repudiated the very morality the friars were to inculcate.

Early conflict between ecclesiastical and civil-military officials over deployment and discipline of the mission escort soon gave rise to constant bitter disputes centering on the question of authority and jurisdiction over the Indians in California. The conflict over control of the Indians revolved around the issue of their segregation from the non-Indian population. Rooted in the early conquest and consequent development of colonial Indian policy, the issue has been extensively discussed by other historians. The concern here is to examine it specifically from the point of view of sex/gender and to define a context for explaining why, despite strenuous efforts by church and state alike, there was little success in arresting the attacks on Indian women.

Serra, for his part, blamed the military commanders and, once appointed, the governor. They were, he said, lax in enforcing military discipline and unconcerned about the moral fiber of their troops. They failed to punish immoral soldiers who assaulted native women, were flagrantly incontinent, or took Amerindian women as concubines. In California, he stated, secular authorities not only condoned the soldiers' assaults on Indian women but interfered with the missionaries' efforts to counter the abuse, and thereby exceeded their authority with respect to Amerindians. . . .

In eighteenth-century California, the status of Amerindian women—as members of non-Christian, indigenous groups under military conquest on Spain's northernmost outpost of empire—made them twice subject to assault with impunity: they were the spoils of conquest, and they were Indian. In the mentality of the age, these two conditions firmly established the inferiority of the Amerindian woman and became the basis for devaluing her person beyond the devaluation based on sex that accrued to all women irrespective of their sociopolitical (race, class) status. The ferocity and longevity of the sexual assaults against the Amerindian woman are

rooted in the devaluation of her person conditioned by the weaving together of the strands of the same ideological thread that demeaned her on interrelated counts: her sociopolitical status, her sex, and her gender.

From their earliest contact with Amerindian peoples, Europeans established categories of opposition, or otherness, within which they defined themselves as superior and Amerindians as inferior. These categories were derived from the Aristotelian theory that some beings are inferior by nature, and therefore should be dominated by their superiors for their own welfare, and from the medieval Spanish concept of "purity of blood," which was based on religion and which informed the sense of national unity forged during the reconquest. These ideas—which were fundamentally political concepts that separated human beings into opposing, hierarchical subject-object categories—prevailed during the era of first contact with Amerindians and the early conquests of the Americas.

By the late eighteenth century, a different political concept—racial origin—defined place and social value in the stratified social order of colonial New Spain. Race was inextricably linked to social origin and had long been a symbol for significant cleavages in society; it was one primary basis for valuation—and devaluation—of human beings. In the contemporary ideology and society, Amerindian women were thus devalued on the basis of their social and racial origins, which placed them at the bottom of the social scale, and as members of a conquered group.

Two aspects of the devaluation of Amerindian women are especially noteworthy. First and foremost, it is a political devaluation. That is, it is rooted in and driven by political considerations and acts: by war, conquest, and the imposition of alien sociopolitical and economic structures of one group over another. Second, the devaluation rationalized by conquest cuts across sex. At this level, women and men of the conquered group are equally devalued and objectified by the conquering group. Amerindian women and men were both regarded as inferior social beings, whose inferiority justified the original conquest and continued to make them justifiably exploitable and expendable in the eyes of the conqueror. The obverse, of course, also holds in this equation: women and men of the conquering group share the characterization and privileges of their group. In this instance, the primary opposition is defined by sociopolitical status, not sex.

Although the ideological symbols of sociopolitical devaluation changed over time—from religion to socioracial origins to social class—the changing symbols intersected with a sex/gender ideology that has remained remarkably constant from the fifteenth to the twentieth century. As the term implies, the sex/gender ideology defines two categories of opposition—sex and gender—within which women are categorized as superior or inferior in relation to others.

With respect to sex stratification, women are placed in opposition and in an inferior position to men, on the assumption that in the divine order of nature the male sex of the species is superior to the female. In this conception, the ascribed inferiority of females to males is biologically constructed.

The opposition centering on gender revolves around sexual morality and sexual conduct. This opposition creates a level of superior-inferior or good-bad stratification based on social and political value-centered concepts of women's sexuality. This dichotomization provides a very specific, socially constructed, "sexual morality" category for valuing or devaluing women.

Rooted in the corollary patriarchal concepts of woman as the possession of man and of woman's productive capacity as the most important source of her value, this ideology makes woman a pivotal element in the property structure and institutionalizes her importance to the society in the provisions of partible and bilateral inheritance. It also places woman's value, also termed her "honor," in her sexual accessibility—in her virginity while single and, once wed, in the fidelity of her sexual services to the husband to ensure a legitimate heir.

Within this construct, women are placed in opposition to one another at two extremes of a social and moral spectrum defined by sexuality and accessibility. The good woman embodies all the sexual virtues or attributes essential to the maintenance of the patriarchal social structure: sexual purity, virginity, chastity, and fidelity. Historically, the norms of sexual morality and sexual conduct that patriarchal society established for women of the ruling class have been the norms against which all other women have been judged. These norms are fundamentally rooted in questions of the acquisition and transference of economic and political power, and of women's relationship to that power base.

Since the linchpins of these ideological constructs are property, legitimacy, and inheritance, a woman excluded from this property/inheritance structure for sociopolitical reasons (religion, conquest, slavery, race, class), or for reasons based on sexual immorality (any form of sexual misconduct), is consequently excluded from the corresponding concepts and structures of social legitimacy. A woman so excluded cannot produce legitimate heirs because she is not a legitimate social or sexual being.

The woman who is defined out of social legitimacy because of the abrogation of her primary value to patriarchal society, that of producing heirs, is therefore without value, without honor. She becomes the other, the bad woman, the embodiment of a corrupted, inferior, unusable sex: immoral, without virtue, loose. She is common property, sexually available to any man that comes along.

A woman (women) thus devalued may not lay claim to the rights and protections the society affords to the woman who does have sociopolitical and sexual value. In colonial New Spain, as in most Western societies until the very recent period, the woman so demeaned, so objectified, could be raped, beaten, worked like a beast of burden, or otherwise abused with impunity.

The soldiers, priests, and settlers who effected the conquest and colonization of Alta California in the last third of the eighteenth century perceived and acted toward Amerindians in a manner consistent with the ideology and history of conquest—regarding them as inferior, devalued,

disposable beings against whom violence was not only permissible but often necessary. For, despite the Laws of the Indies, the contradictions in the ideology and corresponding historical relations of conquest were great from the very beginning. These contradictions were generally exacerbated, rather than resolved, across time, space, and the expansion to new frontiers.

From the very beginning, the papal bulls and scholarly (ideological) debates that affirmed the essential humanity of Amerindians and initiated the legislation to effect their conversion and protection sanctioned violence and exploitation under certain conditions. Loopholes in the royal statutes that were technically intended to protect Amerindians and guarantee their rights, but more specifically protected the crown's interest in Indian land and labor, had permitted virulent exploitation of Indians since the laws were first passed.

More contemporary military and civil laws, such as those enacted by Neve, Fages, and Borica, carried severe penalties for illegal contact with or maltreatment of Indians; but these laws were especially contradictory because they were intended to curb certain kinds of violence by soldiers who were trained to kill Indians and who were sent to California to effect the temporal (military) conquest of this region. Thus, violence against Amerindians was permissible when it advanced the particular interests of the Spanish Conquest, but punishable when it did not. Since the sexual violence that occurred in this region was but the most contemporary manifestation of a national history that included the violation of enemy women as a legitimate expression of aggression during conquest, it would seem that sexual violence became a punishable offense only when it was the source of military or political problems.

Finally, perhaps the greatest contradictions were those of the greatest champion of Amerindian rights—the Catholic church. On the one hand, Catholic clergy sought to remove Amerindians from contact with Spaniards, in order to protect them from the exploitation and violence of conquistadores, soldiers, and colonists; on the other hand, Jesuits, Franciscans, and other religious orders relied heavily on corporal punishment in their programs to Christianize and Hispanicize native people. While proclaiming the humanity of Amerindians, missionaries on the frontier daily acted upon a fundamental belief in the inferiority of the Indian. Their actions belied their words.

Accordingly, in his lengthy memorial of June 19, 1801, refuting the charges of excessive cruelty to Amerindians leveled against the Franciscans by one of their own, Father President Fermín Francisco de Lasuén disputed the use of extreme cruelty in the missions of the New California. Force was used only when absolutely necessary, stated Lasuén; and it was at times necessary because the native peoples of California were "untamed savages . . . people of vicious and ferocious habits who know no law but force, no superior but their own free will, and no reason but caprice." Of the use of force against neophyte women, Lasuén wrote that women in the mission were flogged, placed in the stocks, or shackled only because they deserved it. But, he quickly added, their right to privacy was always respected—they

were flogged inside the women's dormitory, called the *monjero* (nunnery). Flogging the women in private, he further argued, was part of the civilizing process because it "instilled into them the modesty, delicacy, and virtue belonging to their sex."

A key element in the missionaries' program of conversion to Christianity included the restructuring of relations between the sexes to reflect gender stratification and the corollary values and structures of the patriarchal family: subservience of women to men, monogamy, marriage without divorce, and a severely repressive code of sexual norms.

In view of the fact that ideologies, structures, and institutions of conquest imposed here were rooted in two and a half centuries of colonial rule, the sexual and other violence toward Amerindian women in California can best be understood as ideologically justified violence institutionalized in the structures and relations of conquest initiated in the fifteenth century. In California as elsewhere, sexual violence functioned as an institutionalized mechanism for ensuring subordination and compliance. It was one instrument of sociopolitical terrorism and control—first of women and then of the group under conquest.



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