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Racial and Cultural Dimensions of *Gente de Razón* Status in Spanish and Mexican California

by Gloria E. Miranda

The Spanish self-identity fascination of early California society was the direct by-product of two and one-half centuries of Spain’s colonial racial and social stratification policies. In actuality, while the Californians claimed Spanish ancestry, they were biologically more indigenous American than European. However, understanding the racial connection between the Hispanicized element and the tribal groups in Mexico and the Southwestern United States has remained confused to this day because of the fact that California’s first settlers carried Spanish surnames and were considered *gente de razón*. This meant categorization as non-Indians. A review of Spain’s colonial practices as they extended into Alta California should clarify the reason for the persistent but distorted notion concerning the self-identity preference of the province’s inhabitants as well as why the Spanish concept of *gente de razón* remained equally popular in usage into the Mexican period.

Tribal groups throughout New Spain during three hundred years of colonial rule commonly acquired Spanish names when baptized into the Catholic faith. At that moment missionaries bestowed on new converts Christian first names and Spanish surnames as permanent symbols of their new spiritual and cultural identity. As the number of converts grew, colonial officials found it necessary to distinguish the Christianized tribal Mexicans from the non-Christian ones. These officials devised a suitable distinction which they called *gente de razón* (literally meaning people of reason). The main purpose for using the label centered on documenting the cultural mobility of tribal Mexicans who had exchanged their former lifestyle for a Roman
Catholic outlook. In addition to these indigenous converts, Christianized mixed-bloods (castas) also were accorded gente de razón status in colonial society. Europeans automatically qualified as “people of reason” based on the supremacist belief of the time that they were culturally already Christian and therefore superior to the tribal Mexicans.

By the time Alta California became a Spanish province the gente de razón identity was commonly utilized throughout New Spain as a designation for all the crown’s Christianized subjects regardless of racial background. Yet in spite of original justification for the gente de razón cultural appellation, in California from the early nineteenth century on the label increasingly came to connote a privileged affiliation with Spanish or Caucasian ancestry. These erroneous claims acceded to the province’s first upper class group a “badge of [racial] respectability” that distinguished them from the rest of the populace. The genesis for this distorted cultural and racial state of affairs was not peculiar to California since most emerging communities throughout frontier New Spain perpetuated similar racial classification policies. Colonial social stratification patterns inherent in the caste system complicated and confused the actual purpose of “rational people” ranking.

Historians know that the colonial practice of classifying people “in accordance with the color of their skin” proved invaluable to Spain in its need for social stability during the lengthy colonial era because of the intimate associations forged by the large tribal Mexican population with the sizeably smaller African and Spanish ones. When the three groups mingled they produced various racial admixtures. It is nonetheless significant to note that miscegenation did not help forge a new hybrid race. Spanish census records instead indicate that tribal Mexican groups remained the largest segment of the population during the colonial age with castas a distant second most numerous group.

The castas who were located below the Spanish Europeans and their American-born progeny, the creoles included the numerous combinations of Indian-Spanish and African-Indian-Spanish miscegenation. The darker the casta, the lower the ranking. The blacks both free and slave, followed by the tribal Mexicans, were relegated to the lowest position on the social scale since they represented the colony’s non-European groups. However, for
tribal Mexicans, embracing Catholicism and acquiring European values signified attainment of the prestigious gente de razón cultural outlook. This custom of bestowing gente de razón standing on convert castas, Africans, as well as tribal Mexicans originated in the sixteenth century.

The urgency of establishing a “people of reason” label in the New World resulted from Spain’s conquest and colonization of the numerous tribal groups of the Caribbean and Mexico. The juridical and religious legal problems posed by this original contact generated a humanitarian and religious debate among sixteenth century theologians and theorists. The emphatic issue centered on the question of the rational aptitude of the recently conquered tribal Americans. Concerned scholars were primarily interested in the tribal American’s place in divine creation. They sought to determine whether tribal Americans possessed a soul and could thereby be evangelized and uplifted to the cultural level common among Western European Catholics.

The question of rationality, and thereby humanness, remained clouded until 1537 when Pope Paul III issued a formal declaration on tribal American rationality. The papal bull, *Sublimus Deus* [In the Image of God], had two purposes. First, the decree provided a theological basis for native American rationality and conversion. Second, the bull reaffirmed the validity of all baptisms conferred since the conquest of central Mexico. Significantly, the historic pontifical declaration of June 2, 1537, proclaimed that the tribal Americans were “true men.” This meant that the Church considered them “capable of understanding the Christian faith” as well as the Europeans. Thus, the term gente de razón represented an acknowledgement of the fact that the so-called American “Indian” possessed inherent rational abilities and natural rights. A fact that became more evident as he progressed from a pagan mind-set to a westernized lifestyle like the more civilized Europeans.

The Spanish crown initially failed to accord full support to the papal position during the early colonial age. But the Spanish perceived Hispanicization as a benevolent program for culturally uplifting tribal American societies in much the same fashion as the ancient Romans had made a lasting impact on Iberia and Western Europe centuries before.

Hence, in the colonization project of Church and State, the
tribal Mexican would be guided to a higher level of human and spiritual enlightenment. But, without a complete corresponding loss of Indian self-identity. In other words, Christianization and Hispanicization represented a socialization process that focused on the eradication of barbarous pagan practices like cannibalism, human sacrifice, incest, abortion and polygamy. Yet it permitted Pre-Columbian values that were harmonious or analogous to Christian ones to be retained by tribal converts.9

The rationality decree was destined to influence significantly the remote northern frontiers where few peninsular Spaniards settled during the colonial age. Mixed-bloods, Christian Mexicans [baptized tribal members], and the local tribes of the north replaced peninsular Spaniards as the largest group resident in these regions. As a consequence, race lines were frequently blurred since skin color was as diverse among the indigenous tribes as among the castas. Light and dark hues were common in each group. Thus, the “rational people” term grew in importance in these areas out of practical necessity. “Gente de razón” proved more useful in categorizing essentially non-white frontier inhabitants than classification along pure race lines.

However, cultural mobility stopped short of including neophytes in the gente de razón category due to their incomplete catechesis which confined them to mission centers. Generally, mission policy permitted neophytes to leave the religious center only after their catechumanate was complete. Admission into the frontier social structure followed after the neophytes were more fully westernized and Christianized. In this fashion, for example, a Catholic Pueblo, Yaqui, or Chumash earned gente de razón status. By contrast, census officials identified tribal Mexicans who refused missionization and resisted Spanish acculturation as Indios gentiles [non-Christians] or Indios sin razón [without reason].10

In concert with these cultural designations, frontier custom mandated imitation of the established social and racial ranking trends of metropolitan Mexico. In northern communities, as in the urban regions, a deep-rooted desire to advance to Spanish ranking was characteristic of local social patterns. Residents of these areas frequently aspired classification as españoles. Assigned racial inferiority resultant of mixed-blood origin proved no barrier for those who sought upward social mobility on the
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frontier. By the end of the colonial period many castas possessed sufficient confidence as gente de razón to assume with impunity a Spanish self-identity in areas where few peninsular Spaniards resided. The fact that the majority of frontier residents held similar inclinations added to the abundance of Spanish identification claims in these regions.

Father Ignaz Pfefferkorn, an eighteenth-century Jesuit missionary in Sonora, made a perceptive analysis regarding this practice. He observed very few true Spaniards living in Sonora and "scarcely one who could trace his origin to a Spanish family of pure blood. Practically all those who wish to be considered Spaniards are people of mixed-blood." The misinformation on biological roots handed down to succeeding generations was also the consequence, to some extent, of the failure of frontier officials to investigate the correct racial ancestry of inhabitants of these regions.

Needless to say, this contributed to irregularities of social stratification. As an example, in 1774 a royal official affirmed that frontier gente de razón persons included individuals of not only European but those of African or Indian ancestry as well. Evidently, by the eighteenth century racial and social ranking was significantly relaxed to permit non-whites seeking upward mobility to dishonestly claim incorrect European racial ancestry. The original cultural categorization for separating the baptized from the non-baptized through the "people of reason" title was ignored.

In this vein Alta California settlers reflected practices from both the traditional and frontier caste systems in their own social structure but with some modifications. Wealthy peninsular Spaniards were not among the area's first inhabitants and wealth was not a common measurement stick for higher social ranking in Alta California in the early Spanish era. It was not until the Mexican period that an influential wealthy group of large landowners emerged to provide the frontier with an "aristocratic-like" society. Hence, attainment of aristocratic status evolved slowly in the first decades especially since a large segment of the population was mixed-bloods of humble origins. The few Europeans in California were numbered among the clergy, crown, and military officials and never exceeded the larger groups of tribal Californians, Christian colonial Mexicans, and
blacks who gave the province a definitive non-Spanish racial dimension.

Baptized California mission Indians also received the "rational people" ranking. As members of gente de razón society, they increased their chances for social mobility. Culturally speaking, then, the humblest Christian Indians and castas were technically equal to true-born Spaniards like José de la Guerra and José Antonio Yorba by virtue of the "people of reason" status. Predictably, these aspiring indigenous-born pioneers (along with the castas) who could not otherwise experience rapid social mobility in colonial society in urban areas, took advantage of more relaxed frontier practices in Alta California by claiming non-Indian ranking. As a consequence, cultural advancement to a gente de razón status in time became synonymous with a Spanish heritage. And later when the military emerged as the province's first upper class group, the soldiers established and popularized the custom of professing a Spanish link which their offspring and descendants also claimed for themselves. This practice gave birth to the romantic myth that was accepted later by many California historians.

Careful scrutiny and review of provincial census records and other official documentation points to a significant native American heritage (in part or whole) among Spanish surnamed colonists. In the case of presidial society, the majority of the soldiers were devoid of any measurable Caucasian blood. According to Bancroft, most of the noncommissioned officers were, "to a considerable extent, of mixed lineage and the wives of the soldiers in many cases Indians." At Santa Barbara, the presidio's first population included mulattoes, lobos, mestizos, coyotes, and Christian Mexicans as well as españoles (i.e., Mexican-born whites). The native American historian, Jack D. Forbes tabulated the African and tribal composition of the early communities and concluded that at Santa Barbara 19.3 percent of the settlers in 1785 were part-black "while more than one half were officially classified as non-Spanish [Indians, mestizos, and coyotes]." In other words, the non-Spanish category was synonymous with tribal Mexican roots.

Forbes discovered that similar percentages prevailed at the other presidios. At Monterey in 1790 "mulattoes constituted 18.5 percent of the population and the castas constituted another 50.2
percent." Furthermore, the total non-Spanish element was even higher at 74.2 percent. San Francisco's racial profile varied only slightly with 47.2 percent listed as non-Spanish. At San Diego the 1790 census affirmed that the presidial residents were of equally indigenous roots.17 With the exception of the Spanish Catalanian volunteers, well over half of the soldiers in California were of tribal Mexican background.18

Town resident were of complimentary diverse racial ancestry with even greater numbers of non-Caucasian admixtures. At San Jose 55.5 percent of the pueblo dwellers by 1790 were non-Spanish. Los Angeles' 1792 census reported that "part-Africans constituted 38.5 percent of the population of Los Angeles."19 The founding of Branciforte in 1797 did little to alter this racial pattern.

The fact that Spanish California remained geographically isolated from central New Spain, coupled with a rigid Spanish policy that prohibited trade contacts with foreigners, contributed to the shaping of a frontier provincialism among the inhabitants. In concert with colonial ranking practices, this state of affairs clearly permitted the military and their descendents to fulfill their personal yearning for Spanish status that in turn facilitated acquisition of a privileged ranking in society. Isolation from the core of New Spain's society also detached Californians from the colony's cultural centers and produced a significant alienation from their indigenous roots. The unwillingness to give immediate allegiance to Mexican independence in 1821 reflected the emotional pro-Spanish sentiments of California society. A penchant for Spanish affiliation prevailed and later gave rise to social ostracism of incoming settlers from central Mexico.

By the dawn of Mexican independence, the upper class had come to associate gente de razón standing with a non-Indian or non-Mexican biological posture. The popular social addiction of racial reclassification to a lighter skin color was still in vogue throughout the province as socially aspiring residents unabashedly claimed español ancestry. In the waning years of Spanish dominance government officials' attempts at racial categorization of some communities like Santa Barbara had become extremely difficult. Father Ramon Olbés, a local missionary, remarked that such enumeration was in vain since the inhabitants of the district considered themselves Spaniards.20
Residents of the towns, when feasible, also claimed European ancestry. Census data for Los Angeles, in fact, in the late eighteenth century documents the racial reclassification tendencies of the pueblo's predominantly non-Caucasian population. Within ten years of the town's founding the populace had considerably "lightened" itself racially through re-identification as non-Africans and non-Indians. Yet racial reclassification did not propel the civilian populace to the top of the social scale. In some instances, military men scorned the pueblo residents as the dregs of society and as their social inferiors. Consequently, prestigious upper class standing in California remained a monopoly of those families with military backgrounds well into the Mexican period. The leadership position of the military was so well entrenched by then, that as retired soldiers, they and their offspring enhanced their elite social ranking into the 1820s and 1830s even though the strategic value of the presidios had declined by that time. Historically few of the important pre-American families are linked to any town dweller origins.

William Heath Davis, an American who married the daughter of a prominent native California family, observed over many years of intimate interaction with the populace that a caste-like society existed "more or less" among them. The wealthier families, he wrote, were "somewhat aristocratic," and normally "did not associate freely with the humbler classes; in towns the wealthy families were decidedly proud and select, the wives and daughters especially." Socializing with the lower socioeconomic classes or even intermarriage with tribal Californians occurred infrequently among this group.

Nonetheless, other factors help explain the reason why in this period the sons and daughters of military families formed a frontier aristocratic group. First, the leadership inherited from late eighteenth and early nineteenth century settlers grew more socially significant as geographic contact with central Mexico remained unchanged in the 1820s and 1830s. Second, allegiance to Spain, while politically severed, nonetheless, retained for the upper class possible social benefits as descendents of "Spaniards." More specifically, as heirs of the first colonists, they had generated class distinctions, particularly as a second generation became alienated from the more ignoble "Indian" and central Mexican settlers, who were of lowly socioeconomic roots. Third,
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Mexico's foreign policy which welcomed travelers at California ports, especially the race-conscious Anglo-Americans, intensified and magnified the upper-class' need to disassociate itself from the poorer and darker complexioned groups in the territory. Without question, Anglo-American contacts added an irreversible dimension to the psychological outlook of California's upper classes.

Foreign observations also serve as a useful guide for better understanding the California population's distorted definition of gente de razón in the Mexican period. José Bandini, the Spanish sea captain who settled in the province in the Mexican era, surmised in 1828 that California's inhabitants who considered themselves people of reason also considered themselves racially Caucasian and culturally non-Indian. The Frenchman, Alexander Duhaut-Cilly, who visited the area in the same decade, observed pronounced elitist-like practices among the upper class similar to those of creoles in other areas. In particular, he found that the practice of frequent and restricted intermarriage in the 1820s among the creoles had contributed to a more numerous light-skinned Californian. Intermarriage with naturalized foreigners by California's upper-class females, a new social pattern, also enhanced the growth of the physically Caucasian-looking society.

While Duhaut-Cilly's contact with the California population was casual and superficial, he nonetheless calculated that the "creoles" would someday emerge as the only inhabitants of the region. Duhaut-Cilly hypothesized that the inevitable decline of the tribal Californian population would in the end limit and restrict "gente de razón" miscegenation with indigenous Americans and hence eliminate darker-skinned progeny. The Frenchman's prophecy proved both premature and speculative at best, since in fact it was based on superficial observations of only one segment of the population — the affluent upper classes. Duhaut-Cilly had dismissed the lower classes in his perusal of California racial trends. In reality mixed-blood Mexicans were not declining numerically nor did they exhibit any affinity for exogamous unions with Caucasian non-Mexicans. Finally, skin color was and remains an unreliable criteria for measuring race and categorizing a population as Caucasian. No profound genetic alteration resulted from the endogamous practices of the upper
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classes. Unions of non-whites with non-whites produced non-white offspring. At best part-Caucasians begot mixed-blood children. But obviously a small degree of white ancestry did not make a person Caucasian.

Another Frenchman, Duflot de Mofras, who visited the region during the height of its cultural prosperity, observed that by the 1830s the "people of reason" zealots considered themselves the intelligentsia of the territory. Mofras' comments point to the presence of intellectual elitism by the period that coincided with California's prosperous rancho age. Numerous families collected books and maintained substantial libraries in their homes which were brought to California on ships sailing up the coast. These literary treasures, however, rarely circulated outside family circles and thus remained elitist status symbols.

Anglo-American contact and intrusion, with its social influences and economic benefits, provided a conclusive forceful motivation for altering permanently the actual tribal ties of Hispano-Mexican society in Mexico's northern province. In light of the then hostile and negative Anglo-American attitude towards "Indians" and "half-breeds," the upper class aspiration to disassociate itself totally from any non-Caucasian racial or cultural heritage perhaps is more self-evident. This attitude became particularly pronounced when intimate ties were established with foreigners through intermarriage. In the eyes of naturalized Mexican citizens like Alfred Robinson and William Heath Davis, for example, their wives were identified as "Spanish ladies" in order to disavow a heritage that was reserved only for lowly or despicable Indians or Mexicans. Consequently, by the 1830s the "people of reason" complex assumed a more profound anti-Indian and ambivalent Mexican cultural posture in concert with the popular pro-Spanish connection. These attitudes gradually inured a hostile and ultimate rejection of tribal Mexican ties which other Anglo-Americans, then entering northern Mexican America, further kindled. Many of these newcomers exhibited and "expressed quite unabashedly their distaste for Mexicans purely on racial grounds."

Visitors to California like the callously narrow-minded Thomas Jefferson Farnham disdainfully ridiculed the "half-breed" tribal ancestry of the Mexican population. In a typically antagonistic nineteenth-century fashion Farnham described
“half-breeds” as lazy, filthy, and lacking in intelligence. Given the jaundiced perception of men of Farnham’s ilk, the upper class recognized the need, no doubt, to disassociate itself completely from the lower classes in California society. As a consequence, the “gente de razón” label and claim to Spanish ancestry assumed higher cultural proportions among the group.

The negative commentary on Mexican California by Anglo-Americans included observations on social life among the province’s upper stratum as well. The classic example of this pastime was the notably ethnocentric New Englander, Richard Henry Dana, whose work, *Two Years Before The Mast*, introduced eastern United States society to the distorted psychological mindset of the gente de razón. His stinging and unkind comments on upper class activities indicted the group as idle, backward, and unwilling or incapable of making anything of themselves. Although Dana’s contact with the Californians was casual, he found particularly amusing their obsession with the outward manifestations of status. He cited as one example the waltz which the people of reason considered a mark of aristocracy and high accomplishment confined to a chosen few. Dana further listed the group’s preoccupation with “Castilian” ties as another example. Dana remarked that the upper classes preferred to call themselves Castilian, and, were very ambitious of speaking the “pure” Castilian language.

The New England traveler also recorded evidence of a vestige of the Spanish caste system in California even though Mexico had officially abolished it in 1821. He observed that “from the upper classes they go down by regular shades, growing more and more dark and muddy, until you come to the pure Indian…” However, “the least drop of Spanish blood, if it be only a quadroon or octofoon, is sufficient to raise one from the position of a serf, and entitles him to wear a suit of clothes… and to call himself Español, and to hold property, if he can get any.”

The remnants of the caste system viewed by Dana were never formally structured. Yet, he correctly assessed that Caucasian status was simply a courtesy distinction for the upper class since the majority of the populace was of mixed-blood or tribal ancestry. Or, as less prudent observers preferred to say, “half-breeds.” Therefore, identification with a glorified Spanish heritage served as a label of politeness where applicable in
California-Anglo interaction. The self-ascribed affiliation never accurately measured the person's correct ancestry. Doubtless, critical and observant foreigners understood this situation better than the aspiring "Spanish" Californians.34

Some prominent Californians like Pablo de la Guerra and Juan Bandini were indeed paternally linked to Spain. However, others like Manuel Domínguez and Pío Pico had no Spanish parents. Consequently, as insurance that their upper class social ranking as Spaniards would continue unchallenged, the gente de razón secured political and economic dominance of California society until the end of the Mexican era. Even after the United States military conquest of the region, this social stance remained popular among the deposed upper class as late as the latter part of the nineteenth century.

By that period, the gente de razón appellation had long been discarded and replaced by the more popular and idyllic Spanish Californian identification. In the more racially intolerant Anglo-dominated environment there was little social acceptance of former "people of reason" pretensions. But the romantic illusions of "Spanish" ancestry flourished, not only due to an uncompromising anti-Mexicanism among the pioneer Anglo-Americans, but because of consanguinity ties between some whites and former gente de razón families who still were courteously identified as Spanish. True to form, the Californians delighted in this final chapter of fictionalized European heritage.35

NOTES

1The widespread custom was first introduced among the tribes of Central Mexico. See Robert Ricard, The Spiritual Conquest of Mexico (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1966), p. 89.

Nicolas León, Las Castas Del México Colonial: O Nueva España (Mexico, D.F.: Museo Nacional De Arqueología, Historia y Etnografía, 1924), p. 8, defines gente de razón as everyone but Indians; Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, La Población Negra de Mexico (México, D.F.: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1972). p. 155, explains that the basic distinction between gente de razón and sin razón [without reason] status was an individual's Christian ranking and Hispanic acculturation; John L. Kessell, Mission of Sorrows: Jesuit Guerari and the Pimas, 1691-1767 (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1976), pp. 51-52, contends that gente de razón applied to "free rational persons subject to the laws of the land and to the jurisdiction and tithe of the secular clergy. They were in other words, not wards of a mission"; Maynard Geiger, O.F.M., "Mission San Gabriel in 1814," Southern California Quarterly, LIII (September 1971): 294, note 3, states that it applied to all "non-mission people of whatever racial strain or mixture"; Robert F. Heizer and Alan F.
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Almquist, *The Other Californians* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), p. 16, affirm that rational persons were individuals who spoke Spanish and lived as Spaniards. “In theory such emancipated Indians were equals and had acquired enough education and faculty in speaking Spanish to be entitled gente de razón.”

California census lists categorized presidial and civilian settlers as castas and gente de razón in ranking separate from mission Indians. For an example of these classification practices, see Resumen general que manifiesta el estado en que se hallan los nuevos establecimientos de la provincia de la Nueva California con relación a la población en fin de Diciembre de 1814. Archives of California (CA). Provincial State Papers (Benicia) Military, 1809-1821, V: 17, Transcripts, Bancroft Library.


Aguirre Beltrán’s study is the most thorough one on the African race in colonial Mexico. See also Morner’s *Race Mixture in the History of Latin America*, pp. 16-19, for an overall view of the black man in Latin American colonial history.


9Pre-Columbian values and customs that survived into the colonial age included family life standards of respect, honor, etiquette, good behavior, and role-playing; food, music, song, dance, and aspects of the language to name a few.

10In New Spain tribal groups were commonly referred to as naturales which implied a non-rational people categorization. Another common colonial practice included labeling the various tribes as Indios Chichimecos, Indios Tarascos, Indios Texcaltecos, and so forth. See E.C. Orozco, *Republican Protestantism in Aztlán* (Glendale, Calif.: Petersens Press, 1980), p. 242. See also Aguirre Beltrán, *La Población Negra*, pp. 155-156, for a brief summary of colonial terms frequently utilized to categorize the tribal Mexicans.

11In the latter half of the eighteenth century the crown permitted castas the privilege of purchasing licenses, cedulas de gracias al sacar, which allowed them to legally claim white or Caucasian ancestry. See Morner, *Race Mixture in Latin America*, p. 45.


15Padron de la Población de Santa Barbara, December 31, 1785, CA. State Papers, Missions, V: 50, Transcripts, BL.


18Alexander Avilez, “Population Increases into Alta California in the Spanish Period,
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1769-1821” (Master’s Thesis, University of Southern California, 1955), p. 44. Even the Catalan soldiers had married Indian women.


23The aristocratic aspirations of the early presidial clans led the Franciscan missionary, Father Ramon Olbés, to remark that the group’s most constructive pursuits were limited to “riding on horseback.” Zephrym Englehardt, O.F.M., Santa Barbara Mission (San Francisco: The James H. Barry Company, 1923), p. 98.


25Between 1769 and 1800 there were approximately twenty-four marriages between gente de razón males and neophyte women. See Bancroft, History of California (7 vols.; San Francisco: The History Company, Publishers, 1884-1890), I:610 note.


29Several prominent families who maintained private libraries also believed that their sons could obtain a superior education abroad. See Doyce B. Nunis, Jr., Books in Their Sea Chests: Reading Along the Early California Coast (Berkeley: California Library Association, 1964).


32Richard H. Dana, Two Years Before the Mast (New York: The Heritage Press, 1947), pp. 67, 69, 212, was astonished by the extravagance of California women. Since he and his associates mingled almost exclusively with the upper classes, his observations are best understood in light of these circumstances.

33Farnham, Travels in California, p. 140.

34During the hide and tallow trade era Californians eagerly exchanged these plentiful commodities for the finest clothes and jewelry from the outside world. Dana and Abel Du Petit Thouars, Voyage of the Venus: Sojourn in California (Los Angeles: Glen Dawson, 1956), p. 47, were two very observant foreign visitors who recorded this social trend.