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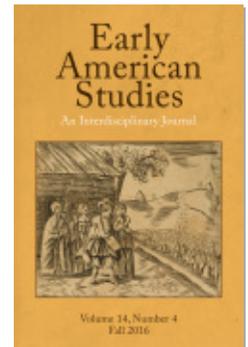
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Family, Spiritual Kinship, and Social Hierarchy in Early California

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ABSTRACT The study of kinship offers a rich opportunity for historians of early America to examine impositions of colonial power, subtle acts of resistance, and cultural adaptations evident in quotidian encounters between indigenous peoples and European American colonists. In Spanish and Mexican Alta California, colonial implementation of *compadrazgo* (Catholic godparentage) and the use of family metaphors, as well as the presence of Christian Indian auxiliaries from previously colonized regions, reveal colonial social hierarchies and evolving constructions of race, ethnicity, and class. While colonists and indigenous Californians both invested significant meaning in consanguineal and affective bonds, including spiritual kinship, Native peoples struggled to preserve and express precontact family values that included more fluid practices in marriage. Spanish-Mexican settlers and Franciscan missionaries attempted to impose a kinship system that would further goals of conquest and acculturate indigenous peoples by eradicating such fluidity. Spanish Mexican settlers, however, also exhibited an expansive understanding of kinship and family obligations, invoking them to function as a social safety net, as needed, and incorporating newcomers into existing networks. Thus, kinship is a useful measure of social relations and economic conditions and helpful for unraveling the scope and limitations of colonial rule in Alta California.

The most noteworthy aspect of the compadrazgo is its malleability, which permits it to emphasize, as needed, those variants . . . that facilitate response to the particular social needs felt by the members of a community.

—George M. Foster, anthropologist

For too long historians of early U.S. history have ceded the study of kinship to anthropologists rather than appreciating its potential for underscoring

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dimensions of race, ethnicity, class, and gender. Notable exceptions exist in métis studies and American Western history, such as Susan Sleeper-Smith's *Indian Women and French Men: Rethinking Cultural Encounter in the Western Great Lakes* (2001), Juliana Barr's *Peace Came in the Form of a Woman: Indians and Spaniards in the Texas Borderlands* (2007), and Anne Hyde's *Empires, Nations, and Families: A History of the North American West, 1800–1860* (2011), which show the importance of examining filial ties and kinship metaphors as key features of colonial projects and diplomacy. Taken together, these works reveal not only interethnic tensions and hostilities, but also the potential of kinship practices to serve as a stabilizing force in early America. Studying kinship, then, furthers our knowledge of interethnic encounters, the gendering of empire-building projects, and imposed stratifications along class, race, and gender in settler societies. As an analytical tool, kinship represents an innovative way of exploring “the emotional economy of colonialism” and the resistance of indigenous groups to colonial subjugation.¹

Although anthropologists have lamented the rise and fall of kinship studies, the pursuit of interdisciplinarity by historians may revive kinship as a field of inquiry by melding historical methods with theoretical questions and models introduced by anthropologists. The diversity and adaptability of *compadrazgo* (Catholic godparentage) in the Americas, I argue, sustain its relevance as an analytical lens. *Compadrazgo* evidences not only the religious importance of affective and consanguineal kinship bonds, but their social and economic significance as well. Despite the fact that the flexibility inherent in *compadrazgo* potentially opens up the practice to criticisms that it remains “undefined and vacuous,” I contend that the historical longevity of godparenting throughout Spanish America, which connected groups across racial, ethnic, class, and gender lines through bonds of reciprocity

1. Ann Laura Stoler, “Matters of Intimacy as Matters of State: A Response,” *Journal of American History* 88, no. 3 (2001): 893. For an explication of settler colonial theory, see Patrick Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (2006): 387–409, and “The Settler Complex: An Introduction,” *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 37, no. 2 (2013): 1–22. For works that refer to settler colonial theory and its applicability to the American West and Pacific Rim, see Frederick E. Hoxie, “Retrieving the Red Continent: Settler Colonialism and the History of American Indians in the US,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 31, no. 6 (2008): 1153–67; Adria L. Imada, “‘Aloha ‘Oe’: Settler-Colonial Nostalgia and the Genealogy of a Love Song,” *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 37, no. 2 (2013): 35–52; Evelyn Nakano Glenn, “Settler Colonialism as Structure: A Framework for Comparative Studies of U.S. Race and Gender Formation,” *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity* 1, no. 1 (2015): 52–72.

and obligation, illustrates its usefulness as a social barometer. Not only does compadrazgo offer snapshots of societal values during historical moments, but it shows how categories such as race and ethnicity changed over time.²

Despite the enduring power of compadrazgo, the practice and other expressions of kinship did not remain static even within specific regional settings. Certainly the religious, social, and economic benefits of compadrazgo and its elasticity are well illustrated by anthropologists who specialize in Latin America. For example, Hugo G. Nutini identified thirty-one types of compadrazgo relationships in rural Tlaxcala, Mexico, arguing that “the institution of compadrazgo is regarded as one of the important regulatory mechanisms of social control and behavior.” Sidney Mintz and Eric Wolf introduced two models of compadrazgo evident in Spanish America: horizontal (connecting groups sharing common traits) and vertical (linking persons of differing classes or social status in bonds of reciprocity and obligation).³ Both of Mintz and Wolf’s models were evident in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century California; however, relatively little research on kinship in the Spanish borderlands and early American West has been pursued by scholars. Nor have scholars of indigenous North American history delved sufficiently into the possibility that precontact kinship values persisted, in part, as a consequence of indigenous peoples’ incorporation of Catholic sponsorship rituals that may have masked, melded, or coexisted with earlier

2. David M. Schneider, *A Critique of the Study of Kinship* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1984), 185.

3. Stephen Gudeman, “Spiritual Relationships and Selecting a Godparent,” *Man* 10, no. 2 (1975): 221–37. For a discussion of godparent selection, taboos, and useful graph models of compadrazgo’s implementation, see Gudeman, “The Compadrazgo as a Reflection of the Natural and Spiritual Person,” *Proceedings of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* (1971): 45–71; Gudeman highlights the dichotomy made in Catholic theology (and lay customs) between the spiritual and natural being. Hugo G. Nutini, “The Systemic and Exocentric Dimensions of Compadrazgo in Rural Tlaxcala, Mexico,” *Paideuma: Mitteilungen zur Kulturkunde* 24 (1978): 232–33, quote on 235; Sidney W. Mintz and Eric R. Wolf, “An Analysis of Ritual Co-parenthood (Compadrazgo),” *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 6, no. 4 (1950): 341–68; Manuel L. Carlos and Lois Sellers, “Family, Kinship Structure, and Modernization in Latin America,” *Latin American Research Review* 7, no. 2 (1972): 95–124. For studies of kinship in the areas that became the U.S. Southwest, see Ramón A. Gutiérrez, *When Jesus Came, the Corn Mothers Went Away: Marriage, Sexuality, and Power in New Mexico, 1500–1846* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1998), and James F. Brooks, *Captives and Cousins: Slavery, Kinship, and Community in the Southwest Borderlands* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

beliefs. Finally, historians of nineteenth-century California have offered little analysis of *compadrazgo* during the Mexican period, when social networks grew increasingly important among the newly landed class of colonial settlers who strived for upward mobility and economic stability. In sum, the absence of kinship analysis in numerous studies of early American history represents missed opportunities in identifying historical constructions of gender, class, race, and ethnicity and their change over time.

This essay analyzes *compadrazgo*, kinship ties, and family metaphors employed in Spanish and Mexican California by colonial settlers and Native inhabitants to show its potential for illustrating social conditions and colonial hierarchies in what would eventually become the American West. First, I evaluate how Franciscan missionaries, Spanish-Mexican settlers, and colonial authorities furthered the Christianization and settler colonial project by employing *compadrazgo* as a vehicle for improving interethnic relations and their hold over California. By transmitting material and spiritual sustenance through godparenting, indigenous and Spanish-Mexican inhabitants reified blood ties, transformed strangers into kin, and established codes of normative behavior. Next, I demonstrate the part that Christian Indian auxiliaries from Baja California played as role models to neophytes, but also their social exclusion from full membership in Spanish society. Integral to Spanish colonial aims was the erasure of indigenous ancestral ties to the land by Hispanicizing indigenous identities through *compadrazgo*. Despite these destructive efforts, traditional constructions of the family endured among Native Californians within the mission system, which demonstrates indigenous resistance and cultural persistence. Finally, I turn to hardening racial ideologies during the Mexican era that were simultaneous with efforts by colonists to claim indigenous lands and diversify their economic interests by incorporating white foreigners as kin. When American forces entered California in 1846, *compadrazgo* remained firmly entrenched among Spanish-Mexican and indigenous Catholics and persisted into the American period, proving that the obituary for kinship studies by its critics may be premature.⁴

4. This essay alternately uses the terms *kinship* and *family*. The term *fictive kinship* holds no weight here because the spiritual bonds of kinship forged voluntarily through sacramental sponsorship, even in the absence of blood ties, proved potentially stronger and more enduring than those that existed among blood relatives. Whether using the term *kinship*, which may imply a blood relation, clan-moiety connection, or filial tie, or the term *family*, which pertained to household members or persons related by blood, clan-moiety, or marriage, early Californians expressed understandings of family or kinship through acts of affection, deference, reciprocity,

Beginning in the late eighteenth century, Spanish-born Franciscan missionaries, military men, and settlers from northern New Spain established new Catholic communities through a series of settlements, presidios, and missions that dotted the coastline of California. The success of these installations depended on the presence of family groups of settlers and their ability to increase their numbers; however, skewed sex ratios plagued the colony during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries owing to the lack of marriageable *gente de razón* women.⁵ As of January 1775, colonists totaled only around 170, according to the census scholar William M. Mason, and additional expeditions in the coming years brought only a few hundred more recruits. The majority of settlers in Spanish California came from racially diverse and economically humble backgrounds. Many took the chance of colonizing Alta California after struggling in economically depressed parts of Baja California, Sinaloa, and Sonora, regions that witnessed hardships such as Indian raids, a downturn in mining, and a major flood in 1770 that left scores of inhabitants homeless. Others settlers came as military families accompanying soldiers who were obligated to serve in the new outpost. These families and soldiers sought upward mobility and a fresh start; a key to their success was the gradual demise of a complex racial caste system in the northern frontier and the openness of California's early colonial society for racially mixed people who constituted the majority of the *gente de razón* population.⁶

Many racial castes (*castas*) fell into disuse in northern New Spain just before Alta California's colonization. According to one scholar, earlier prohibitions that prevented racial castes from certain occupations, membership in trade guilds, military service, and other privileges "were usually not enforced in more remote areas, especially on the northern frontiers." While terms such as *lobo*, *mestizo*, *mulatto*, *español*, and *indio* persisted in Alta

and obligation. Although *compadrazgo* persisted during California's American period, it is beyond the purview of this article. By Alta California's Spanish era, I mean the period 1769–1821, and by the Mexican era, 1822–48.

5. The term *gente de razón* (people of reason) referred to culturally civilized Catholics of Spanish descent and was influenced by the Enlightenment. In California the term applied to colonial settlers of varied racial backgrounds, including those with indigenous or African heritage whose families had successfully acculturated. The term was not applied to Catholic Indians from California.

6. For an analysis of racial castes (*castas*) employed in northern New Spain at the time of California's colonization, see William M. Mason, *The Census of 1790: A Demographic History of Colonial California* (Menlo Park, Calif.: Ballena Press, 1998), 23. For conditions in northern New Spain fueling migration, see *ibid.*, 66–67.

California, many others were rarely, if ever, recorded in church or secular records. One scholar estimates that by 1790, only eleven of approximately twenty-five designations could be found in California. The racial identities of numerous Spanish-Mexican settlers, particularly men who needed to racially qualify for military service, whitened over time, according to census and military records. This whitening was due partially to the subjective judgments of different persons responsible for assigning *casta* categories, but categories also shifted as settlers gained esteem and status over time. Despite the fact that *castas* declined in usage in colonial Alta California, many early settlers were descended from African and indigenous ancestry, which undoubtedly influenced their desire to demarcate themselves from newer groups of indigenous peoples. *Castas* varied even among members of the same family in Alta California, as the Pico and Amézquita siblings show. Over time, the majority of colonial California broke down into a handful of *españoles* (Spaniards), *gente de razón* (people of respectability of Spanish descent), and *Indios* (often referred to interchangeably as *neófitos*, or Catholic converts).⁷

In European traditions, Catholic godparentage established spiritual bonds of obligation and reciprocity between godparents, godchildren, and the biological parents of sponsored children, which offered potential social and spiritual benefits. Ideally, spiritual co-parentage required godparents to share in the responsibility of child rearing in partnership with biological parents. Adult converts entering the faith also received godparents, who sponsored them for baptism and participated in their ongoing religious instruction. One of the outgrowths of the Council of Trent (1545–63) for Catholics was an increase in church-observed sacramental rituals; of these, which included marriage, confirmation, and confession, baptism represented the most important in California, for it served as the entry point for individuals into the Catholic community.⁸

The ideal Catholic nuclear family symbolized by Mary, Joseph, and baby Jesus served as an important tool in Franciscan efforts to indoctrinate indigenous Californians. When Spanish missionaries and soldiers first entered San Diego in 1769, they were joined by approximately two dozen Indians who were previously Christianized in the Jesuit missions of Baja California. These Cochimí-speaking people, commonly referred to as “Californios” or

7. *Ibid.*, 9, 54. For racial designations of the Picos and Amézquitas in census records, see *ibid.*, 53.

8. “The Seventh Session,” *The Council of Trent*, <http://history.hanover.edu/texts/trent/ct07.html>.

“Yndios Californios,” accompanied the Franciscans to upper California because of promises of better lands and quality of life in exchange for their assistance in founding new missions.⁹ The Franciscans anticipated that the Yndios Californios, many of them married couples who held cultural similarities to some of their northern neighbors, would model proper Christian and Hispanic behavior to newly targeted Indians. A letter penned by Father Junípero Serra to Viceroy Antonio María de Bucareli y Ursua on March 13, 1773, detailed his vision for the Baja Indian auxiliaries: “Two purposes will be accomplished. The first will be that there will be an additional two or three Indians for work. The second, and the one I have most in mind, is that the [Alta Californian] Indians may realize that, till now, they have been much mistaken when they saw all men, and no women, among us; that there are marriages, also among Christians.”¹⁰ Serra believed the presence of these California Indians, especially the women, would demonstrate to local Natives that the Spanish did not enter California for the purpose of stealing their women; furthermore, these Cochimí Indians eventually intermarried with local Natives while in Alta California, advancing missionary goals of transforming precontact indigenous practices to conform to Spanish ideals of church-sanctioned marriages and Catholic families.

9. For baptisms recorded in 1777 referring to Baja Indians as “Californio,” “la California,” or “Yndio Californio,” see Mission San Juan Capistrano Baptisms, 1777–1938, US/Can reel no. 1290447, nos. 9, 10, 16, 24–25, 30–31, Latter-Day Saints Los Angeles FamilySearch Library, West Los Angeles, Calif. (hereafter cited as LAFSL). Similar references exist in a few other Alta California mission baptismal records, such as Mission San Diego, but Baja California Indians were not present in all the missions.

10. The Cochimí language is distantly related to other Yuman dialects such as those in the San Diego region spoken among Diegueños, Kumeyaay (possibly including Kamia or Kamiai), Pa-ipai and Tipai. See Alfred L. Kroeber, *Handbook of the Indians of California* (Berkeley: California Book Co. 1953), 709–10; Bárbara O. Reyes, *Private Women, Public Lives: Gender and the Missions of the Californias* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009), 20–25, 44; Junípero Serra, *The Writings of Junípero Serra*, 4 vols., ed. Antonine Tibesar, O.F.M. (Washington, D.C.: Academy of American Franciscan History, 1955–66), 1:311; For a list of seven families and four orphans who accompanied the Franciscans to Alta California, see Fermín Francisco de Lasuén, “Conveyance of San Borja Mission,” June 15, 1773, in *The Writings of Fermín Francisco de Lasuén*, 2 vols., trans. Finbar Kinneally (Washington, D.C.: Academy of American Franciscan History, 1965), 1:33. For indigenous auxiliaries and their role in facilitating multiple waves of conquest, see Edward H. Spicer, *Cycles of Conquest: The Impact of Spain, México, and the United States on the Indians of the Southwest, 1533–1960* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1962), 289.

The Baja California Indians never experienced full integration into colonial society partly as a consequence of bias exhibited toward them by missionaries but also because of colonists' resistance to their social inclusion on an equal basis. Father Lasuén's letter dated August 3, 1775 to the Father Guardian of San Francisco College noted the unfortunate mistreatment of these Natives despite their contributions to the missionary project in Alta California: "To their toil is due if not all, at least the greater part, of what the mission produces and what it needs for its sustenance. Despite all this, they are treated like stepchildren."¹¹ He went on to say that his fellow Franciscan brothers favored local Native neophytes over those who had journeyed northward to assist in the colonial project. Lasuén hoped to spare these helpers of "the discovery that there are some missionaries who find it difficult to extend to them the same treatment and to show them the same affection that they give to the Natives of their own missions."¹² Whether Franciscan mistreatment stemmed from the Baja Indians' previous association with Jesuit missionaries or simply from their own preference for local neophytes remains unclear. It seems inconsistent that the Franciscans would exhibit racial hostility to Baja California Indians but affection and favor to local Natives. As this example suggests, ethnic nuances shaped interethnic encounters, and Spanish racial ideologies remained unevenly applied.¹³

One measure of the social hierarchy that gradually evolved in Spanish

11. Lasuén, *Writings*, 1:49. Patrick Wolfe notes that reliance on indigenous labor was customary in the early stages of settler colonialism: "When colonists first arrive, they generally try to persuade the Natives to work for them." He maintains that settlers eventually abandoned this practice of "reliance on a population that one is simultaneously seeking to eliminate" and to avoid promoting "the survival of the bearers of sovereignties that exceed the settler import"; Wolfe, "The Settler Complex," 1, 2. Despite this assertion, indigenous labor in California remained essential to Spanish-Mexican missions, presidios, and ranchos. Exploitation of indigenous labor later became codified in California state law during the early years of American conquest in the mid-nineteenth century through indentured servant laws that are beyond the scope of this article. For Indian codes in California after U.S. statehood, see Robert F. Heizer and Alan J. Almquist, *The Other Californians: Prejudice and Discrimination under Spain, Mexico, and the United States to 1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), chap. 2.

12. Lasuén, *Writings*, 1:50.

13. Evelyn Nakano Glenn notes that "settler colonialism's response to undesirable exogenous others has often swung (and still does) between the poles of 'elimination' and coercive 'exploitation.'" This may explain the inconsistent treatment that Christianized Baja Indian auxiliaries experienced as important contributors to the initial stages of conquest in Alta California and their social marginalization. Glenn, "Settler Colonialism as Structure," 60.

California is interethnic godparenting patterns. Christianized Indians never sponsored gente de razón children for baptism. Though the reverse pattern was pervasive throughout the Spanish period, especially in the early stages of conquest, mission registers show that colonists never enlisted indigenous Californians as godparents. In keeping with customary deference shown to godparents, sponsorship of gente de razón godchildren by indigenous godparents would have required that Spanish children offer them signs of deference and respect. The biological parents of gente de razón children and indigenous godparents would become spiritually linked as co-parents, but an implicit imbalance existed in relationships between *compadres* (co-parents). The anthropologist Hugo G. Nutini argues that a major structural difference exists between asking someone to serve as a sponsor and being asked to sponsor: “The person requesting the initiation of the *compadrazgo* relationship must by definition place himself in the debt of the person being asked.” For Spanish colonists in Alta California, submitting to indigenous *compadres* in a relationship that subsumed colonists to Indians was unthinkable.¹⁴

Although *compadrazgo* fulfilled filial and spiritual obligations and offered an economic safety net during moments of crisis, interethnic godparenting in early California predominantly flowed power along a vertical social plane and helped establish colonial hierarchies, thus demonstrating the limitations of Catholic conversion for the full social inclusion of indigenous Californians and their ability to attain social parity to Spanish colonists. Consequently, interethnic sponsorship situated gente de razón as godparents rather than godchildren in accordance with Spanish understandings of race, culture, and social hierarchy. Furthermore, because it was not uncommon for godparents to step in as surrogate parents to godchildren when biological parents died or became incapacitated to care for their children, it was inconceivable for Spanish-Mexicans to seek a godparent from a newly converted populace of Indians in anticipation of such an event. Because an inherent goal of conquest and settler colonialism entailed the wresting away of lands and resources from Native control, Spanish-Mexicans held greater material resources to support the cultural lifestyle of a gente de razón child in California than did neophyte indigenous godparents. As this discussion suggests, although Spanish and Spanish American

14. Hugo G. Nutini and Betty Bell, *Ritual Kinship: The Structure and Historical Development of the Compadrazgo System in Rural Tlaxcala*, vol. 1 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 56.

compadrazgo traditions spiritually joined people of differing ranks, ethnicities, and gender, persons holding a higher social rank customarily served as the godparent and not the inverse when a social asymmetry existed.¹⁵

The existence of spiritual kinship ties shaped marriage and sexual taboos and other social behaviors because persons united through compadrazgo were considered relatives in the eyes of the church. Likewise, canon law prohibited consanguineal relatives within certain degrees of closeness from marrying.¹⁶ Persons deemed close relatives by blood or compadrazgo sought dispensations from church officials to marry. This seemed a likely occurrence in Alta California, where the pool of colonial settlers remained small for most of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Intermarriage with local Indians offered a wider pool of potential marriage candidates to colonists, but such formalized marriages were rare because of racial and cultural prejudices, as well as the reluctance of indigenous Californians who remained suspicious of Spanish intentions. Interethnic sexual unions certainly occurred between Indians and Spanish-Mexicans, but children born of these relationships typically melded into the indigenous community rather than augmenting the settler population. Existing cultural and racial biases in eighteenth-century California thus limited the potential growth of the settler colony, a demographic factor that shaped the region's economic and political future.¹⁷

15. I have not come across evidence of Catholic Indians' godparenting a gente de razón child. On rare occasions, Christian Indian women from Alta California sponsored a mixed-race child but did so only alongside their razón spouses. This supports Lisbeth Haas's findings on godparenting patterns. See Lisbeth Haas, *Conquests and Historical Identities in California, 1769–1936* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 21; Mintz and Wolf, "Analysis of Ritual Co-Parenthood," 329; George M. Foster, "Cofradía and Compadrazgo in Spain and Spanish America," *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 9, no. 1 (1953): 9.

16. "Session of the Twenty Fourth," *The Council of Trent: The Canons and Decrees of the Sacred and Oecumenical Council of Trent*, ed. and trans. J. Waterworth (London: Dolman, 1848), Hanover Historical Texts Project, <http://history.hanover.edu/texts/trent/ct24.html>. The Council of Trent cites the book of Leviticus as its guide for marriage prohibitions based on consanguineal and affinal relatedness. Leviticus is vague about those considered close or near relatives, but chapter 2 of the Council's twenty-fourth session defined the "spiritual relationship" contracted among godparents, godchild, and natural parents as part of the body of marriage prohibitions. See also United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), "Laws Concerning Sexual Behavior," Leviticus 18, www.usccb.org/bible/leviticus/18.

17. According to Patrick Wolfe, "Elimination is an organizing principle of settler-colonial society rather than a one-off (and superseded) occurrence." Elimination comes in many forms, from outright violent extermination to "officially encour-

Godparenting played an important role in forging bonds of familiarity and stabilizing tensions between Spanish-Mexican settlers and indigenous peoples who previously held no affective ties. For example, Spanish military officers and soldiers such as Captain Fernando Rivera y Moncada, commander of California, and leatherjacket soldiers like Juan Joseph Robles sponsored indigenous converts in the earliest days of Mission San Diego's founding in 1769. Occasionally the surnames of soldiers such as Joseph Ygnacio Olivera were bestowed on indigenous godchildren, such as Juan "Juanillo" Olivera, at their baptism, but this practice varied by mission and left neophytes with little enduring patrimony.¹⁸ Father Junípero Serra reported in correspondence dated 1774 and 1775, however, that godfathers occasionally provided additional food or cloth as an expression of their obligation to indigenous godchildren. One Chumash Indian, Fernando Librado Kitsepawit, also reported that in the mid- to late-nineteenth century, a "godfather might pay the *paha* [ceremonial leader] \$2.50" for traditional dances such as the fox dance at an Indian wedding or baptism, melding indigenous and European cultures in the commemoration of life events while also reinforcing a sense of indigeneity.¹⁹

aged miscegenation," as evidenced by Junípero Serra's proposed intermarriage policy, "child abduction, religious conversion," and other modalities apparent in Alta California; Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," 388. For behavioral restrictions and obligations involving godparents, see Stephen Gudeman, "The Compadrazgo as a Reflection of the Natural and Spiritual Person." Gudeman indicates that over time folk customs arose, such as that of a godchild avoiding marriage with a godparent's child, which shows that understandings of affinal relatedness could be extended. Similarly, Nutini notes that *compadrazgo* exists beyond immediate participants, or dyadic relationships, and consists of an exocentric web incorporating numerous persons in a community. Nutini, "The Systemic and Exocentric Dimensions of *Compadrazgo*," 245.

18. Mission San Diego baptism database nos. 2–4, 6, Huntington Library, *Early California Population Project* (2006) (hereafter cited as ECPP). Also Mission San Gabriel Archangel Baptisms, 1771–1819, US/Can reel no. 0002643; see founding years 1771–72 for Spanish surnames bestowed on indigenous neophytes, LAFSL. *Compadrazgo* was a modality that embodied contested meanings: when adopted by Catholic neophytes, it potentially reinforced or perpetuated indigenous kinship values, as indicated in this article, but when it was used by Spanish-Mexican colonists and missionaries, baptism replaced indigenous names with Hispanic ones and undermined the larger collective memory of a people, erasing indigenous claims to sovereignty. Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," 388.

19. Serra, *Writings*, 2:71–73, 307. Fernando Librado Kitsepawit, *The Eye of the Flute: Chumash Traditional History and Ritual as Told by Fernando Librado Kitsepawit to John P. Harrington*, ed. Travis Hudson, Thomas Blackburn, Rosario Curletti, and Janice Timbrook, 2nd ed. (Banning, Calif.: Malki Museum Press, 1981), 69.

The material dimension of spiritual kinship in California often depended on the economic wealth of the godparent. Material wealth such as cattle, land, or trade goods was not likely to flow from indigenous godparents in Alta California to indigenous godchildren. Take, for example, an Indian woman named Eulalia María of the Juyubit village who sponsored sixty-two neophytes at Mission San Gabriel from 1781 to 1802. Eulalia María and other individuals sponsoring large numbers of neophytes for baptism were unlikely to hold sufficient material resources to distribute to all their godchildren. Consequently, mass sponsorship by prolific godparents probably reinforced spiritual community bonds rather than material incentives. In social terms, mass sponsorship indicated that godparents were esteemed within their mission community and perhaps a broader network of villages.²⁰ The same was probably true of Baja California Indians who held no material wealth to convey to indigenous godchildren in Alta California. Thus, kinship ties forged between Baja and Alta California Indians through *compadrazgo*, marriage, and procreation evidenced horizontal bonds among those who shared a similar status in Spanish colonial society.

Conquest in the Americas required the binding together of strangers as an act of diplomacy and as an extension of the Spanish presence. The transformation of strangers into kin in California, as in other parts of the Spanish-indigenous borderlands, distinguished the practice of *compadrazgo* in the Americas from Iberian *compadrazgo*, which typically forged bonds between persons already familiar with each other. Acts of affective colonialism such as intermarriage and *compadrazgo* held the potential to ameliorate some, although certainly not all, of the tensions accompanying Spanish conquest. The Crown anticipated that Christianized Indians in Alta California would augment the Spanish settler population and become taxpaying, self-sufficient members of the colonial community. Hispanicized Indians would also contribute to the defense of the empire, as logistically California represented a protective zone that insulated northern New Spain from European rivals such as the Russians, English, and French, who were probing the Pacific Rim in search of opportunities for trade and colonization. Those indigenous groups that resisted inclusion—such as the Yokuts, Mojaves,

20. See Mission San Gabriel godparents database for entries for Eulalia María, ECPP. Eulalia María's village was often listed as Juyubit, but occasionally incorrectly as Tobpet. In all the baptism entries her spouse was listed as Anacleto María or Matthias Lorenzo, her second husband. Eulalia became a godmother at approximately sixteen years old and continued well into her late thirties. See also Mission San Gabriel Marriage database no. 00083 and baptism database no. 00177.

and Quechans, who lived in the interior—were subjected to violent raids by Spanish and Mexican colonists.²¹

Upon their arrival in Alta California, Franciscan missionaries made a concerted effort to alter sexual practices, indigenous kinship, and other forms of intimate knowledge deemed pagan and contrary to church law. But their success in revolutionizing indigenous families remains questionable. When we analyze kinship ties evident in sacramental records, we find that polygynous family units were frequent targets of missionary reform efforts. But those same records also show the determination of indigenous families to maintain their cohesiveness and human dignity, even after missionization and baptism.

As a prerequisite to Catholic marriage, missionaries demanded that a newly baptized Christian man previously engaged in polygyny select one of his wives to marry in a church ceremony. He was required to set aside any other wives after receiving baptism, as was the case for forty-year-old Victoria, who was noted in her son's baptismal record as the "*segunda mug[er] repudiada haora*" (second wife now repudiated) of the village chief (*capitán*) Abundio Ylüelgil. Baptismal records document the existence of another wife, Abundia, of the same age as Victoria; all three were from the village of Sunomnos. As catechumens, all three underwent Christian instruction before baptism. The children of Victoria and Abundio included their sons Acisclo Josjeat, ten, and Alberto Punqueuelni, seven, both baptized on June 16, 1828, as well as two-year-old Aduato, who was baptized ten days before his brothers. A ten-year-old boy named Epifanio Piguacsu was also baptized on June 16, and the boy's *pariente* or relative was Acisclo. The kinship connection between Epifanio and the others is murky, as Epifanio's parents were not recorded, nor is he listed as a relative of the others. Nevertheless, the missionary noted a kinship tie, and Epifanio hailed from the same village and was baptized in the same month, which suggests that he was a member of the family. Victoria was baptized on June 21, several days after her sons; two months later, on August 20, 1828, the baptismal record of a

21. For Bourbon reforms and the divergent goals among Franciscans and royal officials for colonizing Alta California, see David J. Weber, *Bárbaros: Spaniards and Their Savages in the Age of Enlightenment* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 121–26, 134, 144. For an excellent analysis of indigenous borderlands in California's interior that thwarted settler colonial expansionism but also exacerbated borderland violence such as raids for captives, see Natale A. Zappia, *Traders and Raiders: The Indigenous World of the Colorado Basin, 1540–1859* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014).

twelve-year-old girl named Canuta Huliate contained an abbreviation indicating that she was Victoria's sister or daughter. Acisclo's one-year-old half-sister, Doda Mihiquinachume, was baptized a day before him, and his eight-year-old half-brother, Aquileo Yoyayué, was also baptized on June 16. The parents of Doda and Aquileo were Abundio Yluelgil and Abundia Tupopate. Nine days later, Abundio and Abundia consecrated their marriage in the church immediately following their baptism that day. The marriage record indicates that the ceremony represented a renewal of their gentile (preconversion) marriage; thus, Abundia became Abundio's only legitimate wife in the eyes of the church. Mysteriously, the birth order of Victoria's children suggests that she was Abundio's first wife, yet the missionary record designated her as the second. Whether Abundio exercised personal preference or the Franciscans influenced his decision is unclear. Significantly, Victoria never remarried, and neither woman had any further children by Abundio, according to mission records.²²

Clearly, Abundio and his entire family were prominent members of their village, whether Costanoan, Northern Valley Yokut, Plains Miwok, or Patwin. In all likelihood, this family continued to view Victoria as one of Abundio's wives and a family member owing to preexisting kinship bonds. Many indigenous societies in early California accepted plural marriage among prolific hunters and village elites who held the economic capacity to provide for multiple spouses and children.²³ Franciscans' efforts to eradicate polygyny proved uneven in effecting lasting changes to indigenous filial ties, even after a period of instruction in the Catholic faith. The fact that nine of the ten family members received baptism within days of each other in June 1828 shows that this family entered the mission around the same time

22. Mission Santa Clara baptism nos. 08163 (Aduato), 08177 (Doda), 08182–3 (Acisclo and Epifanio), 08189 (Alberto), 08202 (Victoria), 08213 (Abundio), 08223 (Abundia), 08245 (Canuta), 08186 (Aquileo), and Mission Santa Clara marriage no. 02343, ECPP. The ECPP database contains digitized scans of the sacramental records for this particular family. Canuta's entry includes the abbreviation h^a, which stands for *hermana* (sister) or *hija* (daughter).

23. For class dimensions of polygyny, see Lowell John Bean, *Mukat's People: The Cabuilla Indians of Southern California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 80; Claude N. Warren, "The Many Wives of Pedro Yanunali," *Journal of California Anthropology* 4, no. 2 (1997): 245–47; William McCawley, *The First Angelinos: The Gabrielino Indians of Los Angeles* (Banning, Calif.: Malki Museum Press, 1996), 92, 153; Kroeber, *Handbook of the Indians of California*, 834. For tribes associated with Mission Santa Clara, see "Native Americans of Santa Clara de Asis," *California Missions Resource Center*, www.missionscalifornia.com/content/native-americans-santa-clara-de-asis.html.

and remained determined to preserve their cohesiveness (see chart 1 below). This family is not unique. Other examples abound in the records of missions such as San Gabriel, San Carlos, San Juan Bautista, and San Francisco de Asís (Dolores), which were inhabited by diverse indigenous nations. Missionized Indians in California adopted ritualized kinship from Spanish-Mexican Catholics as a new vernacular to express precontact traditions. The fact that indigenous Catholics continued godparenting even after Mexican secularization policies ended Franciscans' tenure as mission administrators in the 1830s and 1840s illustrates the usefulness of certain Catholic rituals. Consequently, participation in Catholic baptism and *compadrazgo* may outwardly appear to be signs of Hispanicization by missionized Indians, but documentary evidence suggests that Native peoples adopted Catholic rituals to reify existing family bonds. Thus, kinship analysis enables historians to tease out efforts of indigenous Californians to assert their own understandings of family and emotional attachments embedded in otherwise mundane records of empire.

Franciscan efforts to eradicate alleged pagan practices among Indians often proved ineffective because of linguistic barriers. Missionaries frequently failed to fully understand indigenous kinship terminologies, and Franciscan-authored confessional and doctrinal manuals demonstrate their struggle. Fray José Señán of Mission San Buenaventura complained, "It is extremely difficult to unravel blood relationships among these people, who call brother and sister, without any distinction, any first or second cousins, even distant relatives, and perhaps even those whose blood relationship is neither real nor true." Frays Juan Cortés and Señán produced diglossic texts in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries that contain sample confessional questions, catechisms, and prayers written in Spanish and Chumash dialects associated with Missions Santa Barbara and San Buenaventura. The confessional manuals include questions typically asked by a missionary of indigenous neophytes during the sacrament of confession. The texts' purpose was to provide a guide for missionaries unfamiliar with local dialects to effectively communicate with neophytes to ensure a full confession.²⁴

24. José Señán, "The Ventureño Confesionario of José Señán, O.F.M.," ed. Madison S. Beeler, *University of California Publications in Linguistics* 47 (1967): 41; Juan Cortés, *The Doctrina and Confesionario of Juan Cortés*, ed. and trans. Harry Kelsey (Altadena, Calif.: Howling Coyote Press, 1979). Fray José Señán administered Mission San Buenaventura from 1797 to 1823 and authored his text at some point during his tenure. Fray Cortés authored his text around 1798. Missionaries undertook the task of writing confessional and doctrinal manuals at the end of the

During the Lenten season, neophytes were subjected to heightened interrogation by missionaries about sins committed over the course of the year. Frays Cortés's and Señán's confessional and doctrinal manuals suggest that spousal exchange, polygyny, incest, and nonprocreative sex were of particular concern to them. During annual confession, Franciscans probed into the intimate sexual practices and kinship relationships of neophyte penitents with questions such as "Have you given your wife to another so he could sin with her?" and "Do your wife and the other woman [your lover] have the same father and mother?" Particularly concerned about incest and confused by the use of the same kinship term for different family members, missionaries tried to ascertain degrees of relatedness.²⁵ Missionaries also failed to realize that plural marriage was practiced by a small minority, specifically elites such as Abundio, the capitán of Sunomnos, and the Chumash chiefs Domingo Joseph, Pedro Yanunali, and Francisco Yuyanatset.²⁶ Traditionally, such marriages solidified kinship ties among different villages or tribal groups for diplomatic purposes. In other instances, plural marriages involved spouses from the same village or family. Among the Chumash, for example, sibling relationships were held in greater esteem than those between husband and wife or parent and child. Consequently, sororal polygyny (a man's marriage to sisters) represented the persistence of traditional kinship values and the primacy placed on siblinghood. Similarly, levirate marriage practices preserved the kinship bonds previously forged between the same families. In the minds of Catholic religious, however,

eighteenth century. See Katherine Turner, "Salinan Linguistic Materials," *Journal of California and Great Basin Anthropology* 10, no. 2 (1988): 266. According to the historian Steven W. Hackel, these manuals originated at the direction of the College of San Fernando in Mexico; author's conversation with Steven W. Hackel, USC–Huntington Borderlands Seminar, April 17, 2010, Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino, Calif. (hereafter cited as Huntington Library). For forerunners of these Franciscan manuals, see Raymond F. Bulman and Frederick J. Parrella, eds., *From Trent to Vatican II: Historical and Theological Investigations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); Lu Ann Homza, "The European Link to Mexican Penance: The Literary Antecedents to Alva's *Confesionario*," in Bartolomé de Alva, *A Guide to Confession Large and Small in the Mexican Language, 1634*, by Don Bartolomé de Alva, ed. Barry D. Sell and John Frederick Schwaller (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999), 33–48.

25. Cortés, *The Doctrina and Confesionario of Juan Cortés*, 117; Señán, "The Ventureño Confesionario of José Señán," 43, 41.

26. Warren, "The Many Wives of Pedro Yanunali," 244–45.

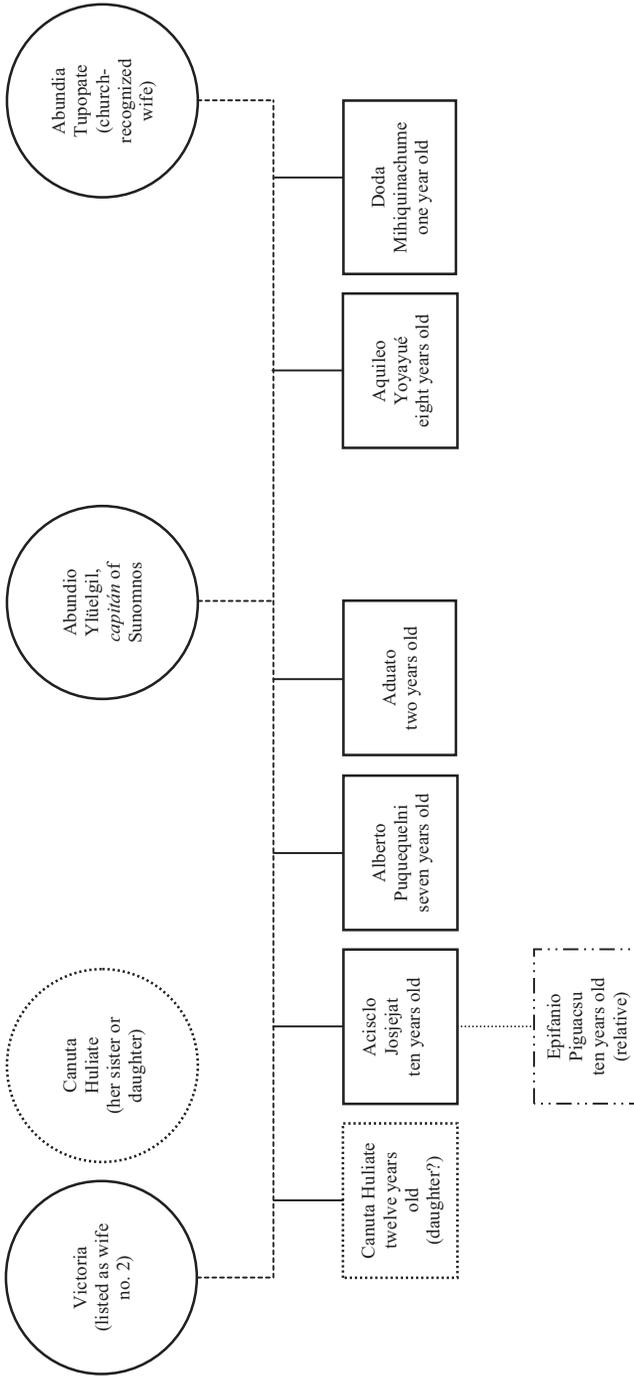


Chart 1. A family from Ranchería Sunomnos, baptized at Mission Santa Clara in 1828 (nine of ten members in June alone).

these marital forms ran afoul of canon law as set forward by the book of Leviticus.²⁷

Clearly, language barriers posed problems for Franciscans' ability to understand kinship relations and the intimate lives of neophytes. Franciscan missionaries in Spanish California instructed neophytes in local indigenous dialects as well as in Spanish in accordance with the synod of Mexican bishops' decree. Such efforts were undermined by devastating rates of death in the mission system, which resulted in the Franciscans pursuing conversion of more distant indigenous nations. As the missionaries of San Gabriel noted in an official report dated 1813, "They find it difficult to learn to speak Spanish at this mission, since each year pagans arrive to become Christians and the greater number of these are old people."²⁸ The arrival of new waves of indigenous peoples resulted in repeated infusions of Native dialects in the missions and ongoing instructional challenges for missionaries.

Despite decades of missionization, neophytes resumed traditional practices such as polygyny and divorce in rare moments of freedom from missionary control. According to the testimony of Andrés, a Native *alcalde* (mission leader) at Mission Santa Bárbara, people who fled several coastal missions in the aftermath of the Chumash Revolt of 1824 resumed the precontact practice of separating from spouses if they so desired. "Some Indians did not remain with their wives," he recalled, but to the dismay of these runaways, they were reunited with Catholic spouses once the revolt ended. Indigenous Californians resented intrusions into their intimate lives and family formations and evidenced this by determining their own meanings of family and kinship whenever opportunities arose. Such acts show that social hierarchies and interventions into the intimate lives of Native

27. For oral histories emphasizing Chumash sibling relationships, see Thomas C. Blackburn, ed., *December's Child: A Book of Chumash Oral Narratives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 60–63; for levirate practice, see *ibid.*, 63, 104–12. For Gabrielino oral history about Pleiades as a story of seven brothers married to seven sisters, see Hugo Reid, "Letter on the Los Angeles County Indians [No. 13]," republished in Susana Bryant Dakin, *A Scotch Paisano in Old Los Angeles: Hugo Reid's Life in California, 1832–1852, Derived from His Correspondence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 246–48. USCCB, "Laws Concerning Sexual Behavior," Leviticus 18:16 and 18:18, www.usccb.org/bible/leviticus/18.

28. Maynard Geiger, Don Ygnacio María Saludo, Fr. Fernando Martín, and Fr. José Sanchez, "Questionnaire of the Spanish Government in 1812 concerning the Native Culture of the California Mission Indians," *Americas* 5, no. 4 (1949): 487.

Californians by Spanish- and Mexican-era colonizers were resisted whenever possible and that indigenous peoples may not have desired full social inclusion in colonial society, even if offered it.²⁹

Mission records display not only the ethnic and cultural aspects of quotidian encounters, but also the gendering of conquest and spiritual kinship. Spanish-Mexican and indigenous women earned influence and esteem in their respective societies through Catholic sponsorship, but the symbolism embedded in women's sponsorship diverged significantly on the basis of race. As discussed earlier, indigenous women such as Eulalia María of Juyubit, near Mission San Gabriel, acted as intermediary figures to neophytes undergoing missionization. But Spanish-Mexican women's sponsorship reveals that colonial women claimed their own arenas of power by exerting superiority over indigenous peoples in ongoing processes of conquest. It was not uncommon for young adult *Californianas* (Spanish-Mexican women) to stand as godmothers to much older indigenous women. Felipa Osuna sponsored twenty-three people for baptism in the 1820s, mostly Native children at Mission San Diego. Notably, she sponsored two older indigenous women for the sacrament, seventy-five-year-old Ana Sentelemac and fifty-six-year-old Dolores Esñauayau. This asymmetrical pairing of a much younger godmother with elder indigenous godchildren suggests that Osuna held a higher position by virtue of her race and cultural respectability as one of California's *gente de razón*. Social distinctions between these two groups are reflected in imperial archival practices. Sacramental records maintained at the missions contained separate indices for *indios* and *razón*, which demonstrates the racial distinctions made between the two groups.³⁰ Although

29. For Andrés's testimony, see Maynard Geiger, trans. and ed., *Fray Antonio Ripoll's Description of the Chumash Revolt at Santa Barbara in 1824* (Santa Barbara: Mission Santa Barbara, 1980), 10.

30. For entries of Felipa Osuna as godmother, see Mission San Juan Capistrano baptisms, no. 3883; Mission San Diego Baptisms, nos. 5868, 5991, 5998, 6012, 6086, 6101, 6177, 6192–93, 6229–30, 6275, 6303–35, 6377, 6386, 6409, 6443, 6456, 6480, 6517, 6635, 6653, 6667, 6724, 6736, 6743a, 6897, 6943, 6991, 6996, 7012, 7057, 7059, 7066, 7083 (dating from 1823 to 1845), ECPP. Mission registers throughout California maintained separate indices for *gente de razón* and Indians. For a discussion of *gente de razón* as a religious and ethnic signifier in colonial New Mexico, see Gutiérrez, *When Jesus Came*, 195. In New Mexico, the use of the category "gente de razón" fell away, which resulted in more common usage of the racial categories *español* and *indio*; Gutiérrez, *When Jesus Came*, 196–97. In California, however, terms such as *razón*, *Californio*, *poblador* (settler), *vecino* (neighbor), and *ciudadano* (citizen) became common descriptors of Spanish-Mexicans in California,

some indigenous Californians attained a full understanding of Christianity and multiple generations were even born into the faith, they were always categorized as Indian rather than *gente de razón*. Despite the traditional deference paid to elders in both Spanish-Mexican and indigenous cultures, the example of Felipa Osuna and her Native goddaughters and mission archival practices reveal the hierarchical aspects of conquest that relied on intersections of race, gender, and religion.

Shortly after Mexico achieved its independence from Spain in 1821, Spanish-Mexican colonists in Alta California began expressing a new regional identity predicated on race, region, and culture. These colonists appropriated the term *Californio* from the Baja Indian auxiliaries, who had arrived in the first years of Spanish settlement. In so doing, the new *Californios* affirmed their right to the land and crafted a historical narrative for themselves that erased the indigenous presence.³¹ Non-Christian Natives were often denigrated as savage or *indios bárbaros* (barbarous Indians), a sentiment that fueled raids of extinction or captivity by colonists against these racialized “others.” In his writings Fray Fermín Francisco de Lasuén described pagan Indians as a “savage race” and said that they needed transformation “into a society that is human, Christian, civil, and industrious,” implying that non-Christians were subhuman. As for Christianized Indians from Baja and Alta California, they may have been viewed as human in the eyes of colonizers, but they never acquired full recognition as independent adults. Franciscans frequently referred to Christian Indians as their “wards,” invoking kinship metaphors to craft an image of mission communities as burgeoning Catholic families in which missionaries served as “good parents” or patriarchs. The missions’ father-president, Junípero Serra, asserted,

especially in the Mexican period. But these terms never applied to Indians, who were always designated as *indios*.

31. For the supplanting of aboriginal claims to the land and the crafting of a new historical identity by colonizers in California, see María Raquel Casas, *Married to a Daughter of the Land: Spanish-Mexican Women and Interethnic Marriage in California, 1820–1880* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2007), 9. The term’s use became commonplace among these settlers and soldiers by the Mexican era and was often synonymous with *gente de razón*. For settler colonial practices of cultural appropriation or the creation of nostalgic narratives of belonging to further claims to the land, see Glenn, “Settler Colonialism as Framework,” 58, 59. Adria Imada analyzes “settler colonial nostalgia” and contested meanings of princess Liliuokalani’s love song and its transformation into a “melancholic serenade” that symbolized the “material and symbolic process of Native expropriation and displacement” in “Aloha ‘Oe” 36, 37.

“They are our children . . . we look upon them as a father looks upon his family. We shower all our love and care upon them.”³²

But racial ideologies remained contested even among so-called Spaniards. Despite the fact that the term *gente de razón* represented a racially superior group, the Spanish-born Serra noted with distaste that many who claimed to be Spaniards were “people of mixed blood,” and he strenuously opposed proposals by royal officials for the establishment of additional Spanish pueblos among gentiles. Serra disparaged the moral quality of settlers and soldiers already in Alta California, and he prevented interactions between *gente de razón* and Indians whenever possible, fearing such exposures would undermine missionary goals of Christianization and instilling proper values among Natives. He reluctantly agreed to a future experiment in interethnic community building, but only if officials sent Spaniards of “good conduct and blameless life.”³³

Spanish colonizers were clearly not of a singular mindset when it came to ideas of race, but settlers consistently invoked their Spanish ancestry as social capital in California and psychologically distanced themselves from Christian and pagan Indians to lay claim to lands by right of conquest. Born of decades of frustration with economic and military neglect from the Spanish Crown and Mexican government, their sense of ongoing struggle in the frontier owing to government neglect reified a regional pride and feelings of distinction from inhabitants of mainland Mexico, a sentiment not unlike that exhibited by their Tejano counterparts in Texas.³⁴ “The

32. Fermín Francisco de Lasuén, “Refutation of Charges,” June 19, 1801, in *Writings*, 2:202, 203; Serra, *Writings*, 3:253; Weber, *Bárbaros*, 108. For Indians and their position in Spanish hierarchies, see Weber, *Bárbaros*, 14–17, 77.

33. Serra, *Writings* 3:253, 255.

34. For conflicts between frontier settlers, the Spanish Crown, and the Mexican government over inadequate support and intracommunity divisions in the northern frontiers, see *ibid.*, 267–70; Andrés Reséndez, *Changing National Identities at the Frontier: Texas and New Mexico, 1800–1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 26–29 and chap. 5; Thomas E. Sheridan, *Los Tucsonenses: The Mexican Community in Tucson, 1854–1941* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1986), 26–27; Susan Calafate Boyle, *Los Capitalistas: Hispano Merchants and the Santa Fe Trade* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997), chap. 2. For eyewitness testimony of California’s political upheavals in the Mexican era, see Alfred Robinson, *Life in California, during a Residence of Several Years in That Territory* (1846; repr., Santa Barbara: Peregrine, 1970), 48–49. For the role of secularization in solidifying Californio identity, see Douglas Monroy, “The Creation and Recreation of *Californio* Society,” in Ramón A. Gutiérrez and Richard J. Orsi, eds., *Contested Eden: California before the Gold Rush* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 179.

Mexican government declared itself California's stepfather and denied it protection as if it were a bastard child," one Californio angrily recalled of the transition from Spanish to Mexican authority. Throughout the Mexican period, Californios crafted a historical narrative predicated on the heroic perseverance of their ancestors, those founding mothers and fathers who, despite years of neglect from their government, managed to survive in the borderlands in spite of being surrounded by hostile Indians.³⁵

The 1820s through the 1840s, commonly referred to as the golden era of the ranchos, resulted in the distribution of approximately five hundred land grants by the Mexican government to private owners, which gave rise to greater disparities in wealth and a hardening of racial ideologies. The majority of land grants followed the implementation of a secularization policy in 1834 that weakened Franciscan authority and allowed colonial families to claim lands and exploit the labor of indigenous Californians for their own enrichment. Within a generation, Spanish-Mexican families experienced a significant transformation in terms of property ownership and upward mobility. According to Alfred Robinson, a foreign-born trader who married into the de la Guerra family of Santa Barbara, "Many that were poor soon became wealthy, and possessors of farms, which they stocked with cattle." This new prosperity contributed to the emergence of the moniker Californio among newly landed colonists.³⁶

Concurrent with the rise of a landowning class and the dispossession of indigenous Californians of their ancestral lands, *compadrazgo* patterns in Mexican California exhibited declining numbers of Spanish-Mexican settlers and soldiers sponsoring indigenous neophytes. This suggests a widening social gulf between these groups despite the heavy reliance of Californios on indigenous labor. Baptism records show that scores of indigenous neophytes sponsored each other for baptism and marriage as early as the late 1700s, forging indigenous Catholic communities at missions and in the surrounding *rancherías* (villages). Although some missions, such as San Gabriel, exhibited a greater persistence of interethnic sponsorship because

35. Antonio María Osio, *The History of Alta California: A Memoir of Mexican California*, trans. Rose Marie Beebe and Robert Senkewicz (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996), 80. See also note 31, above.

36. W. W. Robinson, *Land in California* (New York: Arno Press, 1979), 61; Louise Pubols, *The Father of All: The de la Guerra Family, Patriarchy, and Power in Mexican California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010); Pío Pico, *Don Pío Pico's Historical Narrative*, trans. Arthur P. Botello (Glendale, Calif.: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1973), 25; Robinson, *Life in California*, 117. For secularization and the crafting of a Californio identity, see Monroy, "Creation and Re-creation," 179.

of the mission's proximity to a Spanish pueblo, settlers in other locations rarely appeared on the pages as sponsors of neophytes. This general decline in interethnic sponsorship and social separation was based not only on cultural differences, but also on perceived racial ones on the part of the Californios, who readily claimed white racial identities for their mixed-race ancestors and themselves. "The inhabitants of these pueblos are white people, and in order to distinguish them from the Indians they are commonly called gente de razón," proclaimed the elite rancher José Bandini in 1828. The Spanish colonist and prolific godmother Eulalia Pérez de Guillen, a resident of San Gabriel and San Diego, similarly emphasized her racial superiority, asserting that she was born in Loreto, Baja California, and her parents "both were white people through and through." Such sentiments evidence desires to minimize the racially mixed origins of the first generation of colonial settlers and of their descendants. As was true during the Spanish era before and in spite of decades of Christianization and exposure to Hispanic culture, Indians in Alta California still did not sponsor Spanish-Mexicans for sacraments in the late Mexican or early American era, proof that godparentage and kinship served as useful measures of social hierarchy.³⁷

The significant social changes introduced by Mexican independence also emanated from new trade policies that opened California to foreign-born merchants of varied nationalities and ethnicities and their incorporation into Californio society. Their arrival signaled a further diversification of the region's settler population and a renewed expansion of interethnic kinship networks. Despite the fact that these merchants differed culturally from locals, Californio families forged horizontal bonds between themselves and these foreigners (*extranjeros*), whom they perceived as racial equals. This is shown by the acceptance of dozens of extranjero sons-in-law into Californio families through intermarriage. But foreign-born sons-in-law also immersed themselves in existing kinship networks through *compadrazgo*, demonstrating their Mexicanization and integration into existing social networks.

When merchantmen from across the globe arrived on California's shores

37. José Bandini, *A Description of California in 1828 by José Bandini*, trans. Doris Marion Wright (Berkeley: Friends of the Bancroft Library, 1951), 9. Eulalia Pérez, "Eulalia Pérez," in *Testimonios: Early California through the Eyes of Women, 1815–1848*, trans. Rose Marie Beebe and Robert M. Senkewicz (Berkeley: Heyday Books, 2006), 99. Pérez's testimony was recorded in 1877.

in the 1820s, they brought with them an understanding of kinship obligations that often initiated their entry into trade in the first place. John Forster, an Englishman from Liverpool, testified that he entered the employ of his uncle James Johnson in the early 1830s and gained merchant trade experience in Guaymas and Hermosillo, Mexico, where he acquired familiarity with the Spanish language and Mexican culture. Other foreign-born men, such as William Heath Davis and Hugo Reid, noted similar stories of male relatives mentoring their entry into global trade and of their exposure to Peruvian and Mexican cultures.³⁸ Away from their homelands for years at a time and desiring to establish a family, a significant number of these men integrated themselves into existing kinship networks by marrying into Californio families and participating in *compadrazgo*. Marriages to Californianas in the Mexican era required that foreign-born suitors convert to Catholicism if they were not already Catholic.

Mission registers reveal that foreign-born men consistently facilitated the entry of other *extranjeros* and that they forged godparenting bonds with peers along ethnic and national lines. It was common for New Englanders, British subjects, and Frenchmen to sponsor fellow countrymen and their offspring for baptism and marriage. In 1839 Alpheus B. “Alfeo Basilio” Thompson stood as godfather for José Ramón Mateo Hill, the son of his fellow Bostonian Daniel Hill. In 1848, during the transition period from Mexican to American rule, the Scotsman “Perfecto” Hugo Reid sponsored Charles “Carlos” Foster of Great Britain. Even as California was on the cusp of statehood, *extranjeros* such as the Bostonian Lewis “Luís” Burton sponsored “Francisco” Lewis, a fellow Yankee, for baptism in 1850. Finally, the Frenchman Luís Bauchet and his Californiana wife sponsored a French-Californiana couple’s child, Esperidion Baric. Ethnic and national solidarity persisted among men who shared a common history as businessmen who established families in California.³⁹

Occasionally, affinal connections involving Mexicanized *extranjeros* proved more meaningful than consanguineal ties among Californio family members. In 1845 María Villalobos petitioned the Mexican judge of first

38. John Forster, as dictated to Thomas Savage, “Don Juan Forster: Southern California Ranchero,” ed. John D. Tanner and Gloria R. Lothrop, *Southern California Quarterly* 52, no. 3 (1970): 197–98; Charles B. Churchill, “Hawaiian, American, Californio: The Acculturation of William Heath Davis,” *Southern California Quarterly* 76, no. 4 (1994): 342–44.

39. Santa Barbara Presidio baptism nos. 1348 (Hill), 1981Y (Lewis), 1067 (Burton); and Los Angeles Plaza Church nos. 965 (Baric), 1911 (Foster), ECPP.

instance to appoint her grandson's godfather, Luís Bauchet, as guardian of José de la Cruz Tapia, an orphaned minor. A family dispute arose when the boy's uncle Inocente Valdez contested Bauchet's appointment. As an heir to the estate of his father, Tiburcio Tapia, the minor required a guardian to protect his interests. The grandmother María had transferred her responsibility to Bauchet, preferring that a trusted male relative oversee the boy's education and upbringing. Valdez argued that Bauchet was of old age and "physically incapacitated and in bad health," questioning the Frenchman's ability to properly administer the estate in consideration of the large expenditures and maintenance that it required. Valdez pointed to Mexican law as legitimizing his claim as guardian. "As in this case the mother is dead and as the grandmother refuses the guardianship, it falls upon the uncles, among whom I am included," he maintained. Outraged, María Villalobos informed the court of Valdez's immoral character, including his rape and impregnation of Presentación Duarte, his niece by marriage. The grandmother declared, "I have never waived my rights [as guardian] but merely transferred them to Don Luís Bouchet, in whom I have great confidence, and because he is a cousin-in-law of the child and also godfather. This placed him *doubly close* in the most immediate relationship." Ultimately the court found in favor of Bauchet, and this case illustrates the significant meaning invested in godparenting and in-law ties among Californio families that potentially supplanted blood ties to profligate family members such as Inocente Valdez, a misnomer indeed.⁴⁰

Last wills and testaments yield useful information about the importance of spiritual kinship for transmitting wealth among Californios in the Mexican era. It was not uncommon for godchildren to receive land, cattle, or other forms of property from godparents, especially if a godparent was childless. Captain Francisco María Ruíz, commander of the San Diego presidio, never married and stood as *padrino* (godfather) to several of Joaquin Carrillo's children. He later deeded a house and a garden in Old Town, San Diego, to his godchildren in 1835. María Ignacia Verdugo "received from her godfather on the 17th day of May, 1814, one hundred and sixty five head of cattle," according to her father José María Verdugo's will, dated 1828. Property transfers such as these benefited godchildren irrespective of gender, and godparents evidenced strong affection and obligations to their

40. Los Angeles Prefecture Records, 1825–50 (microform), Mss MFilem 00382, Huntington Library; emphasis added. The Prefecture records consist of Spanish- and English-language transcriptions and English translations of the Spanish-language original archives maintained during the Mexican and early American eras.

godchildren, especially in the Mexican era, when cattle and property holdings increased among Californios.⁴¹

Wills and testaments also reflect the obligations exacted on godchildren because of the existence of spiritual kinship. In April 1848 a sickly woman on her deathbed named Josefa Ballesteros dictated her last will and testament, stating, "I wish to appoint as sole executor and heir of all my property, my godson Francisco Ballesteros[s], for having helped me in the care and development of the said property." The assets specified included cattle, a cattle brand, and "new structures of my property which are ready to be roofed" in Los Angeles. Josefa further stated, "I beg and recommend my aforesaid executor to comply religiously and exactly with all the requirements ordained therein," detailing her request that Francisco pay for Catholic Masses that she had promised to pay for during her lifetime, in addition to making sure that other monies owed by her were paid from her estate.⁴²

Ties between godchild and godparent occasionally transcended those between blood relatives. Francisco Ballesteros was called on to serve as a guardian for his godmother's brothers. Josefa Ballesteros's will indicated that she served as the long-term caretaker for her brothers: "I declare to have three insane brothers, namely, Juan de Dios, Francisco, and Roman Ballesteros, who have known me as a mother by having always lived under my care; because of this infirmity I request and recommend my aforesaid executor to shelter and maintain Juan de Dios and Roman under his good care." Josefa made other arrangements for the care of her third brother, Francisco, but she still worried about the fate of her other siblings. Rather than making bequeaths to her mentally ill brothers, Josefa believed that the best course of action was to entrust her adult godson with the responsibility of caring for her two brothers, fully expecting her godson to use the material resources from his inheritance to fulfill his godmother's wishes and to honor her memory by upholding their godchild-godparent bond. As the cases of wills and testaments demonstrate, kinship analysis offers useful insight into

41. *Ibid.*, 1045–52.

42. Last Will and Testament of Josefa Ballesteros, April 19, 1848, Los Angeles Prefecture Records, 1825–50 (microform), Mss MFilm 00382, vol. A, 461–64, Huntington Library. A baptismal record exists for Francisco de Jesus Ballesteros that lists Juan Ballesteros and Maria del Carmen Figueroa, both from the Santa Barbara presidio community, as parents, and Josefa Ballesteros, an unmarried woman, as godmother, alongside José Antonio Ramírez. Mission San Gabriel baptism no. 6793, ECPP.

articulations of family and prescribed behaviors and obligations attendant on them.⁴³

CONCLUSION

Kinship studies remain an essential part of unraveling social dimensions of early California and contradictory meanings of the word *family*. Interethnic godparenting revealed that Spanish-Mexican men and women equally participated in a process of settler colonialism by supplanting indigenous claims to the land, erasing indigenous pasts, and attempting to introduce affective bonds and kinship rituals that would soften the blow of conquest. Indigenous Californians, whether from Baja or Alta California, participated in and reproduced *compadrazgo* practices but invested them with their own cultural meanings shaped by precontact traditions. Indigenous family practices did not disappear despite missionization, and kinship analysis allows us to highlight emotional attachments among cohesive family units as they attempted to negotiate new realities. Finally, the meaning of family in California was defined not solely by consanguineal relationships but by filial ones forged voluntarily, sometimes involving people of different nationalities and ethnicities. Underpinning all these daily interactions between settlers and Natives was an evolving social hierarchy predicated on gender, class, and racial differences. Although hierarchical power ebbed and flowed, kinship in early California shows the potential spaces that existed for crafting new racial identities, but also the limitations of full inclusion in colonial society for others. Kinship, then, reveals more than just family ties but dimensions of power and authority as well.

43. Last Will and Testament of Josefa Ballesteros, April 19, 1848, Los Angeles Prefecture Records, 1825–50 (microform), Mss MFilm 00382, vol. A, 461–64, Huntington Library.