

# “HEROES IN THESE NEW LANDS”

## *Evolving Colonial Identities at the Spanish Royal Presidio of Monterey*

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### ***Introduction***

New Spain’s northwestern province, Alta California was a frontier for the Spanish empire’s imperial enterprises during the late 18th and early 19th centuries (Burbank and Cooper 2010: 8, 126). For the diverse colonists of Alta California, however, it was a frontier in which social, cultural, and ethnic identities could be negotiated, transformed, and reconstructed (Hackel 2010; Sahllins 1999: xii). This study examines how Alta California served as a frontier of new beginnings for the founding colonial soldiers, or *soldados de cuera*, and settlers, or *pobladores* (Pubols 2009: 19). More specifically, this study investigates those *soldados* and *pobladores* identified with the Spanish colonial military settlement of *El Real Presidio de San Carlos de Monterey* (founded 1770), or more commonly known as the Royal Presidio of Monterey. The Royal Presidio of Monterey serves as a case study of colonial society and identity formation on the frontier. Furthermore, this study intends to contribute to the current scholarship on the history and presidial ethnogenesis of Monterey within the broader context of the Spanish colonial experience in California.

### ***Spanish Colonial Studies of Alta California***

Most Spanish colonial studies of Alta California emphasize the role of the Franciscan missionaries in their organization of the missions. In particular, the literature fixates on the subsequent transformative impacts and reactions of Native Californian Indians recruited to those missions. By contrast, there is little prevailing scholarship on the four presidios in Alta California, which are greatly overshadowed by those studies on the missions. Of the presidio studies which exist, focus is centered on the Royal Presidios of San Francisco, San Diego, and Santa Barbara, whereas

### **About the Author**

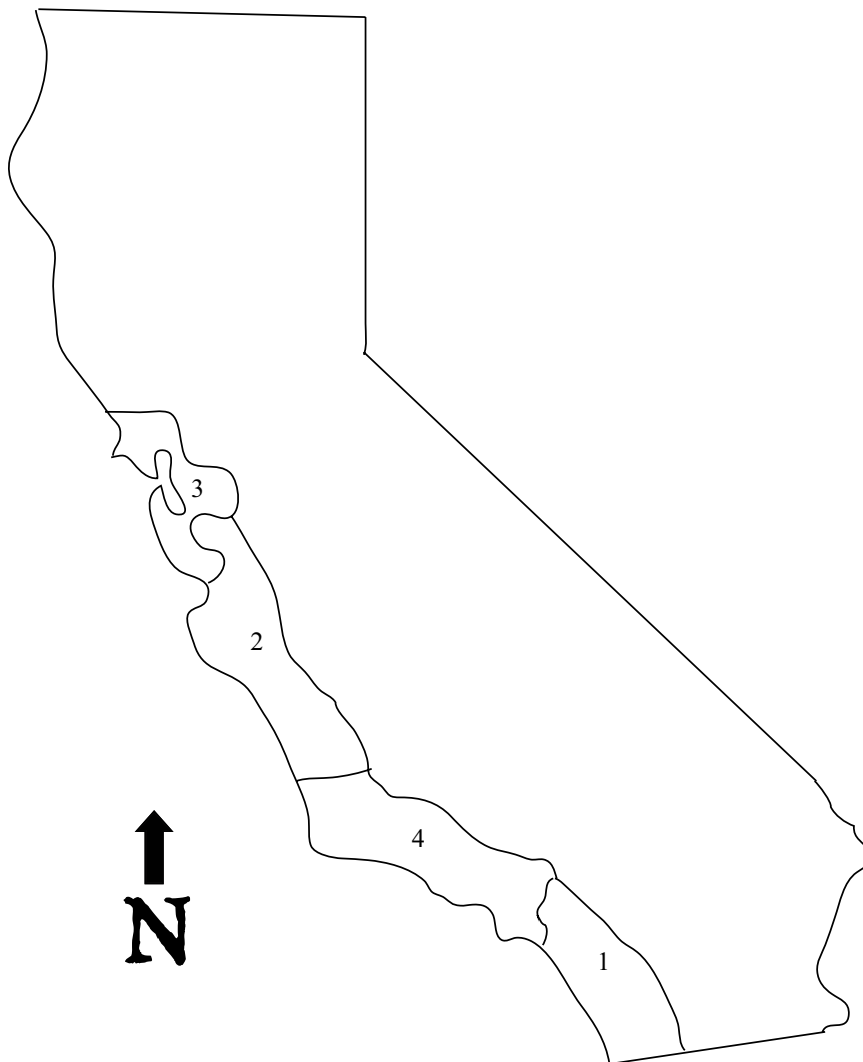
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Most recently Jennifer served as the managing editor for the 2013-2014 Sonoma State University History Journal. Ms. Lucido assisted leading a team of undergraduate students to publish *Evolving Landscapes in Human History*, a volume that focused on the diverse relationships and responses of humans with both their physical and cultural environments from around the world.



scholarship on the Royal Presidio of Monterey and the accompanying presidial population remains underrepresented (Bense 2004: 1-5; Williams 2004: 6-23; Voss 2008). Furthermore, no studies specifically address the presidial ethnogenesis process, the formation of new ethnic, social, and cultural identities, undertaken by the soldiers and settlers occupying the Royal Presidio of Monterey (Guerrero 2010; Voss 2005, 2008, 2012).

As noted by Spanish colonial scholar Judith Bense, “the presidio was an important frontier settlement of Spanish Borderlands, and their residents were the frontline of acculturation;” furthermore, these colonial settlements served as the foundation for modern-day cultures in the southwestern United States (2004: 1). Therefore, in-depth studies of presidios and presidial companies need to be included in mainstream history and archaeology in order to construct a more comprehensive understanding of Spanish colonial history in California, and North America more broadly. This is particularly true given that the presidios are a distinctive type of colonial development equally important to the founding of the Franciscan missions throughout the course of the Spanish colonization of Alta California.



**Figure 1. Map (not to scale) depicts the four presidial districts of Alta California. 1: Royal Presidio of San Diego (1769); 2: Royal Presidio of Monterey (1770); 3: Royal Presidio of San Francisco (1776); 4: Royal Presidio of Santa Barbara (1782). Adapted from Voss (2010: 269). Map redrawn by author.**

Despite this disproportionate representation of California presidios in Spanish colonial discourse, there are several Spanish colonial scholars who have sought to more fully integrate the presidial narrative into mainstream historical archaeology and into history more generally. These scholars have analyzed various lines of evidence, including the archaeological, documentary, and ethnohistorical records. Furthermore, these scholars have set the precedent for examining frontier identity formation and ethnogenesis in Alta California, a framework applicable to the study and interpretation of *El Real Presidio de San Carlos de Monterey*.

Historical archaeologist Barbara L. Voss' book, *The Archaeology of Ethnogenesis: Race and Sexuality in Colonial San Francisco* is among the most prominent studies on ethnogenesis and colonial identity formation on the frontier of Alta California. Voss (2008) utilizes a case study of El Presidio de San Francisco (the Royal Presidio of San Francisco) in order to explore these transformative processes. Through the study of ethnogenesis, Voss examines the various approaches through which soldiers and settlers at El Presidio de San Francisco negotiated, manipulated, and ultimately transformed their ethnic, social, and cultural identities on the frontier. In addition to documentary evidence and research, Voss utilized the archaeological record to identify these processes. Through archaeological evidence, Voss was able to trace how material culture or artifacts and the built environment (i.e., buildings and structures) influenced changes in identity over time. In turn, Voss examined how these identity shifts also influenced changes in material culture and the built environment (2008: 462). Voss also examines how the frontier was utilized to heighten sexualized and gendered hierarchies among male colonists and indigenous women of California, aspects also reflected in changing material culture and the built environment (2008: 304). According to Voss, the combination of these different factors contributed to the construction of *Californio* identity (2008:100). Ultimately, Voss contends that this identity provided the presidio colonists with the opportunity to not only separate and differentiate from New Spain, but also served to distinguish them from the Native Californian Indian population.

In scholar Vladimir Guerrero's "Caste, Race, and Class in Spanish California," Guerrero examines the 18<sup>th</sup> century sociocultural *casta* (caste) and racial terms recorded in three Spanish colonial military, civil, and religious documents (2010: 1). Guerrero utilized the documentary record and textual sources in order to identify the emergence of new colonial identity designations (i.e., *gente de razón*) and social mobility on the frontier of Alta California. Like Voss, Guerrero argues that these predominantly non-European frontier soldiers and settlers actively participated in the identity formation process. Moreover, Guerrero acknowledges that given Alta California's relative isolation from New Spain, and thereby any official

*casta* arbitrators, “[s]ufficiently Hispanicized...a full-blooded Indian in the frontier could be a soldier, settler, tradesman, servant, etc., and as such, he would be a person of reason, or *gente de razón*, instead of an *indio* [Amerindian or American Indian]” (2010: 4, 17). Thus on the basis of the documents that Guerrero examined, he contends that the caste system employed in New Spain during the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries was attenuated and no longer impacted the lives of Spanish colonists in Alta California, as was the case in New Spain. Consequently, Guerrero infers that by establishing a new colonial identity on the frontier, soldiers and settlers could obscure their actual racial and ethnic designations and thereby elevate both their *casta* and social standing.

Historian William M. Mason’s book, *The Census of 1790: A Demographic History of Colonial California* (1998) establishes a critical foundation for the identification and interpretation of identity formation in the province of Alta California. Through intensive examination of the presidial census rolls of 1775, 1790, and the mission registers of 1790, Mason compiled a demographic profile of the soldiers, settlers, and their families that immigrated to the frontier. These Mason arranged according to the four presidio, and three civilian settlements, in Alta California. Thus having established this demographic composite, Mason provides the basis from which other scholars and researchers may document frontier identity formation and changes in *casta* during the 18<sup>th</sup> century Spanish colonization of Alta California. Moreover, Mason notes that 1790 was a significant year in the colonial history of Alta California because most colonists had arrived by that time. Subsequently, Mason attributes the colonial populace from this point in time as constituting the primary contributors to the Spanish colonial population (excluding Native California Indians), despite later influxes of colonists (1998: 44). Like Guerrero, Mason also emphasizes that these frontier soldiers and settlers were predominantly non-European. This contributes to the significance of the ability of these diverse colonists of New Spain to negotiate and transform their social and ethnic identities not only on the frontier, but also in the context of the Spanish empire. In addition, Mason examines the different factors that contributed to prospective colonists’ decision to migrate from their place of origin to Alta California. This provides further context for understanding the motives for migration of soldiers and settlers alike, a pull-factor that is perhaps more apparent than the prospects of challenging traditional *casta* identities.

### ***Frontiers and Borderlands as Places of Identity, Transformation, and Ethnogenesis***

In order to fully contextualize how it was that the frontier provided the presidial company at Monterey a setting for new beginnings and evolving

colonial identities, we must consider different theoretical perspectives. Borderlands and frontiers are largely construed as zones of transformation that ultimately impact identity, culture, and social organization (Chappell 1993; Hall 2000; Hu 2013). Therefore, the study of borderland and frontier provides a context-specific setting that can offer insights into those processes of ethnogenesis at work among the soldiers and settlers of the Royal Presidio of Monterey.

Thomas Hall (2000) has applied the use of biological analogies in order to describe colonialism on frontiers. Thus, Hall characterizes frontiers as a permeable membrane through which diverse colonial processes can affect those people contained therein (2000: 240). Consequently, both colonists and indigenous peoples are subject to the ongoing oscillation of variables as different interactions and opportunities shape, and reshape, existing sociocultural structures over time. Such a complex environment both directly and indirectly enables agents to generate (or adapt) new and or reconstructed identities (Chappell 1993: 274). Thus it becomes apparent that there are a vast range of experiences shared by both colonial powers and those subjected to colonialism that impact identity formation (Silliman 2005: 64).

However, prior to identifying and interpreting changes in social structure and identity on the frontier, and in the borderlands in particular, Di Hu notes that it is important to “trac[e] how social relations were organized before and after ethnogenesis as well as the precipitating causes of ethnogenesis, [social scientists] can effectively compare and contrast the processes and tipping points of ethnogenesis in different social and historical contexts” (2010: 378). Some of these “tipping points,” like identity formation, are situational and relational (Hu 2013:371). Hu presents four underlying mechanisms or the “tipping points” that influence the process of ethnogenesis. These include: (1) the rise of internal social inequality leading to fissioning; (2) resistance against institutionalized inequalities; (3) legitimization of unequal access to power and resources, or the maintenance of social inequality; and (4) frontiers located along imperial and colonial borders (2013: 381). These mechanisms can individually and or collectively affect identity, particularly as agents are confronted with diachronic change (Hu 2013: 377; Voss 2008: 26).

These theoretical perspectives, and the works of Voss, Guerrero and Mason, provide a framework and a foundation by which to document and interpret how it was that soldiers, settlers, and their families engaged frontier identity formation within the context of *El Real Presidio de San Carlos de Monterey* in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. Thus, one must ask, how did the process of colonization affect the colonizers? And, how did the act of relocating to the frontier of Alta California transform said colonizers?

## *Evolving Identities at the Royal Presidio of Monterey*

The ethnicity of the colonizing *soldados* and *pobladores* on the frontier of Alta California consisted of Spanish, variants of mixed Spanish-Indian (Mexican), Spanish-African and Indian-African, Afro-mestizo ancestries, and Hispanicized Mexican Indians. In the Viceroyalty of New Spain or *Nueva España* (present-day Mexico), ethnic categories of the colonists and indigenous populations were organized into a *sistema de castas* or caste system that originated in the 16th century (Castañeda 2000: 30; Mason 1998: 9; Voss 2005: 463). The primary *casta* classifications included Spanish or *español*, Indian (either Mexican or California) or *indio*, and African or *negro*. *Casta* designations were further determined through intermarriage. For example, *español* and *española* beget *español/a*; *español/a* and *indio/a* beget *mestizo/a*; *español/a* and *negro/a* beget *mulato/a*; *español/a* and *mulato/a* beget *morisco/a*; *mestizo/a* and *indio/a* beget *coyote*, among numerous other *casta* variations (Castañeda 2010: 30; Guerrero 2010: 2; Mason 1998: 8-9). Furthermore, *casta* paintings and portraits in New Spain provided visual representations of the different racial possibilities and *casta* terminology for over forty legal codifications of the *casta* (Guerrero 2010: 2; Voss 2010: 463).

These *casta* designations from New Spain continued into northern frontier and are documented in the Alta California *padrón* or census of 1790. The 1790 census, also known as the Revillagigedo Census of 1793, was conducted under the administration of Viceroy Revillagigedo in New Spain (Mason 1998: 1). At that time, some 1000 or so colonial persons were documented in Alta California, of which, only 463---less than half of the entire colonial population---had caste designations recorded (Guerrero 2010: 16; Mason 1998: 2, 47). This suggests that the application of strict *casta* identification was in decline, at least in the context of the frontier. Of those designations, only six were utilized in the 1790 census, which again demonstrates a diminished adherence to the *sistema de castas* on the frontier. In addition, this indicates that for lower-status and lower-*casta* citizens of the Spanish empire, relocating to the frontier afforded the potential for greater social and ethnic fluidity.

The six *casta* classifications included in the census of 1790 are *español*, *mestizo*, *mulato*, *indio* (including California and Mexico), *morisco*, and *coyote*. However, the census only documented the *casta* of the males of Alta California. Fortunately, Mason's demographic studies of Alta California provide additional data on the census of 1790. In his analysis, Mason identified missing women and children residing at or associated with all of the presidios of Alta California. This Mason accomplished by thoroughly investigating a host of mission baptismal, marriage, death, and other church registers.

Figures 2 & 3 (next page). Details from Las pinturas "de castas." These paintings demonstrate the social, cultural, and ethnic diversity in play during the 18th century in New Spain, and to some extent, Alta California. Figure 2 depicts an *española* married to a *negro* with their son, a *mulato*. Figure 3 depicts an *español* married to an *india* with their son, a *mestizo*. Courtesy of Museo Nacional de Historia. Photos by Rubén G. Mendoza, 2014.

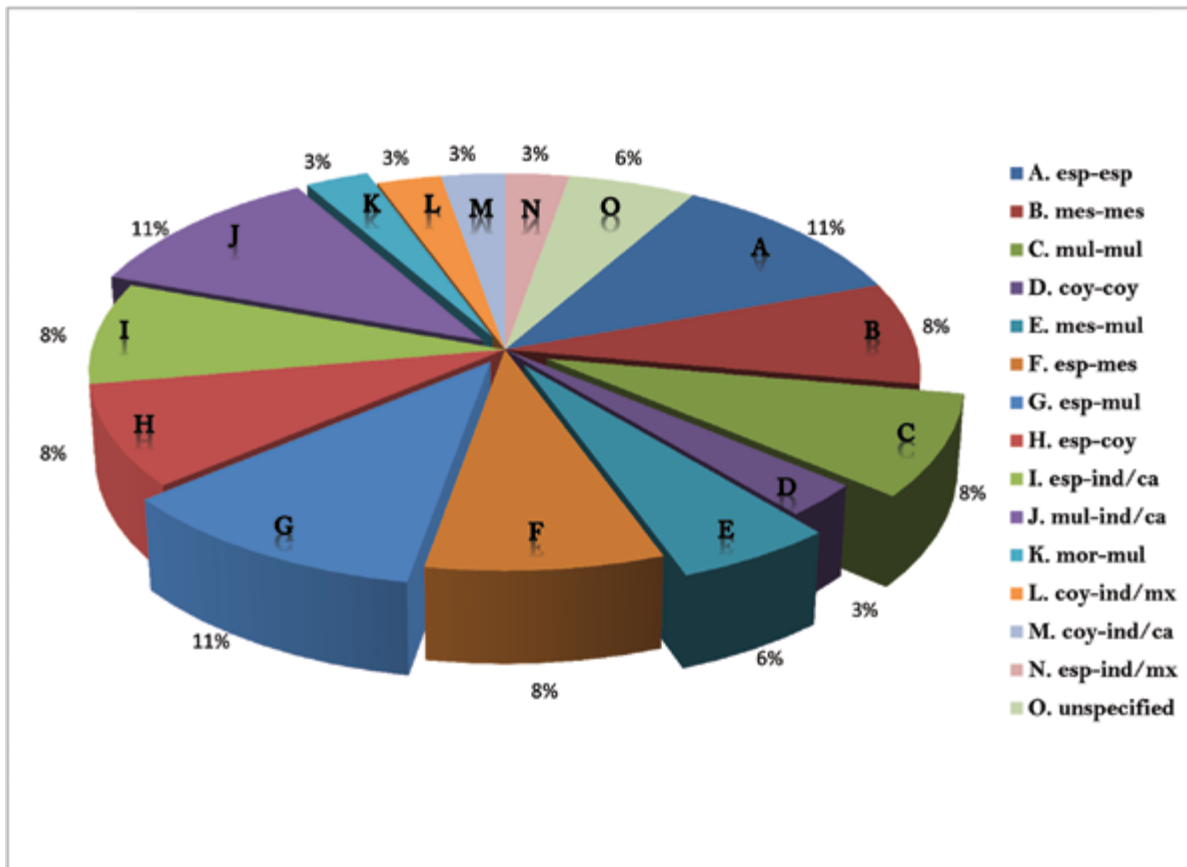




While the census data only represents the year of 1790, it provides a demographic insight into the founding colonial settlements of Alta California, including that of the colonial population of the Monterey. The six *casta* designations are reflected in the 1790 colonial population of Monterey (Monterey County Genealogy Society 2000). Of the 110 adults residing and/or affiliated with the Presidio in 1790, 30% were recorded as *español*, 20% as *mestizo*, 24% as *mulato*, 3% as *indio* (Mexico), 7% as *indio* (California), 3% as *indio* (not identified as either California or Mexico), 4% as *morisco*, 7% as *coyote*, and 2% unspecified (Mason 1998; Monterey County Genealogy Society 2000). Among the 110 adults, there were 36 married couples. At the Presidio, 70% of those marriages were intermarried with different *castas*. Of the marriages that did not intermarry with other *castas*, only 11% were *español* married to *española*, thereby exhibiting a minority selection at the Presidio from which future *español* and *española* *castas* could emerge.

Thus, the census of 1790 provides the foundation upon which all subsequent census and mission records of the colonial population of Alta California may be compared, particularly when identifying changes in *casta* designation. For example, a preliminary sampling (see Figure 5) of those individuals, and their families, identified in the 1790 census as compared with the mission *padrones*, demonstrates instances in which *casta* transitions occurred. The data in Figure 5 illustrates changes in *casta* over time. In addition, the data reflects the introduction of “*razón*” as in “*gente de razón*”

Figure 4. Pie chart representation of the 1790 *casta* marriages at the Royal Presidio of Monterey.\* A: *español* married to *española*; B: *mestizo* married to *mestiza*; C: *mulato* married to *mulata*; D: *coyote* married to *coyote*; E: *mestizo/a* married to *mulato/a*; F: *español/a* married to *mestizo/a*; G: *español/a* married to *mulato/a*; H: *español/a* married to *coyote/a*; I: *español* married to *india* (California); J: *mulato* married to *india* (California); K: *morisco/a* married to *mulato/a*; L: *coyote/a* married to *indio/a* (Mexico); M: *coyote/a* married to *india* (California); N: *español/a* married to *indio/a* (Mexico); O: unspecified. \* “/a” indicates that the spouse may be either male or female. The extruded slices of the chart represent the Afromestizo and African origin marriages documented at the Royal Presidio of Monterey in 1790 Chart by author.





which served as an elevated sociocultural identity for soldiers and settlers on the frontier. Upward mobility in *casta* and identification as *gente de razón* is demonstrated with Joaquin Castro, Jose Vicente Gonzales, Macario Castro, Gertrudis Valencia, and Salvador Espinosa. However, discrepancies of *casta* classification in the census and mission registers are also evident from this small selection, as observed with Marcos Briones, Vicente Briones, and Manuel Mendoza. In contrast, the *castas* of Mariana Briones, Hermenegildo Sal, and Juan Jose Peralta remained virtually unchanged, the exception being that Hermenegildo Sal. Whereas Sal is in fact from Spain, he is documented first as  *europeo*  or European in 1777, and later as  *español*  from Spain in 1790. Nevertheless, additional census and mission register research is necessary in order to more fully document the evolution of the *castas* of the colonial population of the Royal Presidio of San Carlos de Monterey.

Census data and mission records are not the only types of documentation available for assessing the evolution of frontier identity. Correspondence between different Spanish colonial authorities also demonstrates efforts to recontextualize *casta* identity in Alta California. This transition is particularly evident around the time of the turn of the 18th century.

In 1812, the Spanish government issued a detailed questionnaire, or *interrogatorio* (also spelled “*ynterrogatorio*”), to all overseas colonial

Figure 5. This table represents a preliminary sampling of the colonial population at the Royal Presidio of San Carlos de Monterey. The first column represents the name of the individual as recorded in the 1790 census. The second and third columns represent the *casta* and occupation of the individual as recorded in the 1790 census. The fourth, fifth, and sixth columns document demographic information collected from The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens, “Early California Population Project Database, 2006”. ECPP is comprised of all twenty-one California mission registers. The fourth column represents the type of mission register (i.e., baptismal, marriage, or death) and its year. The fifth column represents the *casta* as recorded in the mission register and ECPP. The sixth column represents the mission code identifier (created by ECPP) and the original reference number as listed in the respective mission record and utilized on the ECPP database.

Name	1790 Casta	Occupation	Type of Mission Register / Year	Casta on Register	Mission Code / Record Number
Joaquin Castro	<i>mestizo</i>	Soldier	Marriage / 1791	<i>español</i>	SFD/00217
Jose Vicente Gonzales	<i>mulato</i>	Soldier	Marriage / 1790	<i>razón</i>	SC/00405
Marcos Briones	<i>mulato</i>	Soldier	Marriage / 1784	unspecified	SC/00263
Vicente Briones	<i>mulato</i>	Retired	Marriage / pre-1776	<i>razón</i>	SLO/00001
Mariana [wife of Vicente]	<i>india</i>	Settler	Marriage / pre-1776	<i>india</i>	SLO/00001
Manuel Mendoza	<i>coyote</i>	Soldier	Marriage / 1785	<i>razón</i>	SCL/00103
Hermenegildo Sal	<i>español</i> [Spain]	Second Lieutenant	Marriage / 1777	<i> europeo </i>	SFD/00004
Juan Jose Peralta	<i>español</i>	Soldier	Death / 1832	<i>razón</i>	SCL/06772
Macario Castro	<i>morizco</i>	Corporal	Death / 1809	<i>razón</i>	SC/01872
Gertrudis Valencia	<i>mestiza</i>	Settler	Death / 1795	<i>razón</i>	SC/01074
Salvador Espinosa [husband of Gertrudis]	<i>mestizo</i>	Soldier	Death / 1815	<i>razón</i>	SC/02129

authorities (Geiger, Saludo, Martín and Sánchez 1949). The *interrogatorio* served as an investigation into the cultures of the indigenous people living in the Spanish colonies, but also documented the extent to which the colonial efforts to Hispanicize the indigenous populations were successful (Geiger 1950). Moreover, the *interrogatorio* was to provide information “with all possible scientific accuracy, so that, by this means, the [Spanish] government may have knowledge and information for its impartial guidance, management and administration of those subjects in the way of utility and beneficence” (Geiger 1949: 478). In Alta California, this responsibility was assigned to the ecclesiastical authorities, the Franciscan friars, who were administering the twenty-one missions and the diverse Native Californian Indian communities associated with those missions. Therefore, the Franciscans were required to obtain the required information, and then send their responses or *respuestas* to Don Ciriaco González Carvajal, the provisional secretary of the Spanish colonies in the Americas (Geiger 1950: 476).

While the vast majority of the thirty-six questions in the *interrogatorio* sought information about the native cultures, the first three questions inquired about the colonial populations. More specifically, these first three questions of the *interrogatorio* requested detailed statistics regarding the *castas* of the colonies, “omitting no group whatsoever” (Geiger 1949: 478). In Alta California, the colonial populations that resided at or were affiliated with the missions were described in varying detail in the Franciscans’ responses to the *interrogatorio*.

The colonial population at Mission San Carlos Borromeo de Monterey (also known Mission San Carlos Borromeo de Carmelo) was closely affiliated with the Royal Presidio of San Carlos de Monterey. This was due to relative proximity of the two settlements, but was also due to the Mission’s location within the 3<sup>rd</sup> military District of the Presidio of Monterey’s jurisdiction (Beebe and Robert M. Senkewicz 2001: 356). Thus, when Father Juan Amorós, one of the presiding Franciscan friars of Mission San Carlos, replied to the *interrogatorio*, he described both the colonial and presidial populations. On 3 February, 1814 Father Amorós wrote in his *respuesta* to the first three *interrogatorio* questions:

Our first observation is that we have charge of two churches or settlements; the one is the chapel of the royal presidio of Monterey. Here reside the governor of the province, the officials, and soldiers, cavalrymen of the leather-jacket company, and some retired soldiers with their families. In their own group, as well as throughout the province, they are called *gente de razón*, without distinction of class or caste. They are considered heroes in these new lands, provided they speak Spanish [or Castilian] in some measure. Thus we will be excused for making no distinction of caste or class among these people, for they are not classified as such, and they look upon themselves as Spaniards [*gente de razón*] only. The other church or settlement is the Mission of San Carlos, commonly called Carmelo because it is situated in the plain of the Carmelo River. There

the guard of five or six soldiers from the abovementioned company lives, with their families. The remainder of the population consists of full-blooded Indians, some but recently baptized, others born of neophytes, baptized at a very early period. We proceed to give an accurate account of them according to the information obtainable (Geiger 1950: 476-477; Guerrero 2010: 12).

Father Amorós' statement against employing *casta* classifications at both Mission San Carlos and the Presidio is both a momentous and symbolic declaration, particularly given that he is representing himself and the colonial community of Monterey in an official capacity. Such is an overt departure from the two-hundred year *casta* tradition of New Spain as well as a transition from the simplified *casta* system utilized during the initial colonization phase of Alta California. Father Amorós' statement is additionally significant given that he wrote to the provisional secretary of the Spanish colonies in the Americas. Not only did Father Amorós disregard the *interrogatorio* instructions to include all *casta* designations for the colonial population, he essentially invalidated the relevance of the *casta* system at Mission San Carlos and the Presidio of Monterey, and by extension, Alta California.

Furthermore, Father Amorós demonstrated support for the collective colonial self-designations as *gente de razón* or "people of reason." As noted in Figure 5, *gente de razón* was a new colonial identity that emerged on the frontier. It is documented in the mission registers and gradually came to replace most of the *casta* classifications utilized in earlier census and mission records. Moreover, this new designation served dual functions. First, the *indios*, or the Native Californian Indians, were generally construed in the Spanish colonial mindset as without having reason or enlightenment--*gente sin razón*--despite the Franciscan missionaries' efforts to convert, Hispanicize and "civilize" the indigenous populations. Thus, the colonists throughout Alta California utilized this identity in order to assert their social, cultural, and ethnic superiority over that of the *gente sin razón* despite their initial, more diverse *casta* classifications (Hackel 2005: 60). However, establishing and reinforcing distinctions between colonizer and the colonized is inherent to the colonial process. Therefore, it is this latter function for the collective *gente de razón* identity that bears greater significance. By associating *gente de razón* with Spanish or the *español casta*, the colonists of Mission San Carlos and the Presidio of Monterey elevated their social, cultural, and ethnic status to equal the *español casta* in not only New Spain, but also Spain itself--a feat only possible on the frontier. Such is the case when Father Amorós identified the "Spanish" colonial peoples not only as pioneers on the frontier, but as heroes--an achieved status not likely realized in the heartland of New Spain. Moreover, it is precisely the establishment of this frontier identity that initiates an informal declaration of independence and demonstrates a movement toward autonomy, particularly as the benefits of being Spanish colonial subjects declined in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.



Alta California can be understood as a frontier for the formation and recontextualization of new colonial identities during the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The tradition of the *sistema de castas* that was exercised throughout New Spain waned in the *Provincias Internas* of the northern territory. Rather, the soldiers and settlers of Alta California exploited the frontier as an opportunity to manipulate and transform their social, cultural, and ethnic identities. Such was the case for the colonial population of the military settlement of El Real Presidio de San Carlos de Monterey. The presidial census of 1790 demonstrated this trend through two key components. First, only six *casta* designations were utilized in the census compared to the forty or so that were employed in New Spain at that time. Second, the reduced *casta* classifications created the environment in which lower-status and lower-*casta* soldiers, settlers, and their families at the Presidio could engage in greater social and ethnic fluidity---even if unintentionally. Changes in *casta* are clearly documented in the mission registers. However, discrepancies in *casta* designation necessitate additional research of the census and mission registers. One approach might involve tracing the life spans and family trees of individual soldiers, settlers, and

**Figure 6. Soldado de Monterey and Mujer de un Soldado.** Reproduction of drawings, originals by José Cardero in 1789-1794 during the Malaspina expedition to Monterey. These drawings represent the dress of a presidio soldier, or soldado de cuera, and the dress of a soldier's wife, both from El Real Presidio de San Carlos de Monterey, Alta California. Courtesy of the Royal Presidio Chapel Heritage Center, Monterey, California. Photo by author, 2012.



their families at or affiliated with the Presidio. This would require an examination of all census and mission registers that a given individual is identified with, rather than with one or two individually recorded entries.

In addition to the census and mission records, primary sources such as the *respuesta* from Father Juan Amorós of Mission San Carlos Borromeo de Monterey also document identity formation and recontextualization. While the *interrogatorio* specified details and statistics regarding the *castas* of the colonial and presidial populations, Father Amorós instead identified one group---the *gente de razón*. Father Amorós contends that the designation *gente de razón* was the only social status necessary to account for the colonial and presidial populations of Mission San Carlos and El Real Presidio de San Carlos de Monterey, and the settlements of Alta California more generally. Therefore, the previous *casta* identifications of *español*, *mestizo*, *mulato*, *morisco*, and *coyote* (*indios* being the exception) were no longer relevant to the original colonial and presidial populations and subsequently, their descendants. Moreover, such an assertion justified the emergence and application of *razón* in the mission registers. Thus, the founding colonial soldiers, settlers, and their families demonstrated that Alta California was indeed a frontier for transforming identities. Additionally, the frontier was one that rejected the *sistema de castas* utilized in the heartland in order to establish a distinctive and more unified identity.

### ***New Beginnings on the Spanish Frontier***

While the frontier of Alta California served as an opportunity for negotiating, transforming, and reconstructing social, cultural, and ethnic identities for the founding Spanish colonists of the late 18th century, additional factors influenced these founding groups to emigrate from their home provinces in New Spain. By exploring various influences that prompted these colonists to depart their homelands in order to begin anew as colonial agents of the Spanish empire, insights relating to the social climate of New Spain must first be examined. Moreover, by identifying the determinants that motivated Spanish subjects to relocate to Alta California during the initial colonization phase, observations about the extent to which they actualized their different roles as colonists may be inferred. Ultimately, examining the broader circumstances that initially influenced people to move to Alta California will contribute to understanding the motives of the soldiers and settlers identified with the Spanish presidial settlement of Monterey.

The colonial populations of Alta California have been consistently “misrepresented, underrepresented, or not represented at all in California history” (Mendoza 2014). This sentiment is shared among various scholars of Spanish colonialism in California. For example, Mason recognized that misrepresentation in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century American popular history is one of the prevailing issues in understandings regarding the colonial



populations of California. This is in large part because it portrays colonists with fallacious and misleading details (Mason 1998: 4; Williams 2013). For example, Mason describes one popular that depicts soldiers and settlers as pureblood Spaniards of “old” Spanish ancestry (1998: 4). Such is not the case as documented in census data of the colonial populations of Alta California, in which various castes of social and ethnic significance are identified and transformed. Mason identifies another myth that identifies these founding colonists as outcasts, convicts, and other undesirables (Mason 1998: 4). In his archival and archaeological research of the Royal Presidio of San Diego, California, Jack S. Williams contends that “these views represent an inaccurate picture of the [presidial] settlement[s] and its people” (2004b: 121). Understanding the biographical background, living conditions, and social circumstances of these pioneering colonists prior to their departure for Alta California contributes to the identification of their respective motives or incentives for relocating in the first place. Moreover, reconstructing the cultural and environmental context in place preceding the initial colonization of Alta California also contributes to contesting and dispelling these stereotypes assigned to these first colonists in popular history.

The majority of colonists to Alta California originated in the northwestern provinces of New Spain, or modern-day Mexico. These source provinces were identified in the census of 1790, and included primarily Sinaloa and Sonora as well as Baja California, Jalisco, Nayarit, Chihuahua, and Durango (Mason 1998: 65). Prior to their exodus from other regions of New Spain, many of these soldiers and settlers were “farmers, artisans, cattle-herders and shepherds” (Hackel 2005: 57; Mason 1998: 5). During the late 18th century, a series of events impoverished the prospective colonists and their sources of employment, particularly in the provinces of Sinaloa and Sonora. The silver and gold mines in Sinaloa and Sonora were depleted and flooded, crops failed, and ongoing attacks and raids on Spanish settlements by Native American groups, including the Apache and Seri, were commonplace (Hackel 2005: 57; Mason 1998: 45).

During this time, there were two major soldier and settler recruitment campaigns decreed by the Governor of Alta California, Felipe de Neve. In 1776, Neve first ordered Captain Juan Bautista de Anza of the Tubac Presidio of Arizona to recruit and accompany some 200 soldiers, settlers, and their families from Sinaloa and Sonora to Alta California (Hackel 2005: 56; Mason 1998: 29). In 1781, Neve ordered another colonial recruitment led by Commander Fernando de Rivera y Moncada (Mason 1998: 36). Given the timing of the aforementioned events, relocation to the frontier provided the opportunity to start anew, particularly for those prospective colonists originating in Sinaloa and Sonora.

In addition to declining and unfavorable conditions throughout New Spain, the Spanish Crown under the Bourbon Reforms promulgated various royal decrees that also likely influenced these people to depart their homelands. King Charles III of Spain issued the *Reglamento E Instruccion Para Los Presidios Que Se Han De Formar En La Linea De Frontera De La Nueva España. Resuelto por el Rey Nuestro Señor en cédula de 10 de Setiembre de 1772* or the Royal Regulation of 1772 in order to more efficiently govern the presidios throughout the northern and northwestern frontiers of New Spain (Brinckerhoff and Faulk 1965: 6-7). The Royal Regulation of 1772 thus held sway over all presidios in the Spanish frontier provinces, including Nueva Vizcaya, Sonora, Sinaloa, New Mexico, Coahuila, Chihuahua, Texas, Nuevo Leon, Nuevo Santander, and of course, Alta and Baja California, jointly referred to as the Californias. These provinces were collectively identified as *las Provincias Internas*, or the Interior Provinces of New Spain, and by 1776, were construed as separate and independent region from that of the mainland of New Spain (Brinckerhoff and Faulk 1965: 6; Williams 2004a). Despite this autonomy, frontier policies detailed in the Royal Regulation of 1772 continued to guide presidios of the Interior Provinces.

Figure 7. Photograph of an original Reglamento, the Royal Regulations of 1772. Copies such as this would have available at all of the presidios in the Provincias Internas, including the Royal Presidio of San Carlos de Monterey in Alta California. Courtesy of the California Historical Society, San Francisco, California. Photo by Rubén G. Mendoza, 2014.



The Royal Regulation of 1772 advanced policies and instructions regarding presidio architecture and construction, detailed the functions and roles of presidial captains, officers, soldiers, and chaplains, standardized presidial attire and armament, presidial salary and gratuities, preferred treatment of Amerindians or Native Americans, general presidial governance, and these among a host of other bureaucratic details. While the Regulation of 1772 primarily served these administrative functions, it also operated as an informal recruitment strategy to enlist frontier soldiers and their families. Under the fifth item delineated in Title One of the Royal Regulation of 1772, the Regulation states:

5. Because these troops are in continual warfare and must be of the highest quality and caliber, it is my [King Charles'] pleasure that they be considered among the most reliable in my armies; their officers, sergeants, etc., are to alternate in everything with regular troops and to have equal right to promotion, honors, rank, and pay, and also to retirement pay when because of wounds, illness, or advanced age they no longer are able to continue the hardships of service (Brinckerhoff and Faulk 1965: 15).

Whether by reading this point or by virtue of being informed indirectly from a secondary source or person, the aforementioned passage makes clear the professional and socioeconomic opportunities available to a frontier soldier (Serra 1955: 153). As signified by its name, the Royal Presidio of San Carlos de Monterey is an example of such a presidio at which a soldier had the potential for attaining higher social standing given its direct royal association with the Spanish Crown. Given such considerations, a prospective soldier in New Spain may have been enticed to enlist and relocate to the Interior Provinces in order to further his professional, economic, and social credibility and status.

In addition to these social pull factors, the Regulation outlines further incentives for soldier enlistment and relocation to the Interior Provinces, and to Alta California in particular. Under the first point of Title Eleven, "Political Government" of the Royal Regulation of 1772, the Regulation states:

1. With the justified aim that protection by well-regulated presidios will foment settlement and commerce in the frontier area, and that the strength of the presidios likewise will be augmented by a great number of inhabitants, I [King Charles] order the commandant-inspector, captains, officers, and other persons on no pretext to impede or dissuade people of good reputations and habits from entering and settling in their districts; and when their presidio is no longer large enough to contain the incoming families, they are to expand it on one side, the work to be done in common since it redounds to the benefit of all. At the same time I order the captains to distribute and assign lands and town lots to those that ask for them, with the obligation that they cultivate them and they keep horses, arms and munitions for use in expeditions against enemies when necessity demands it and they are so ordered. In the distribution of lands and town lots (tierras y solares), preference will be given to the soldiers who have

served their ten-year enlistments and to those who have retired because of old age or illness and to the families of those who have died; to all these will be delivered the balances due them, as well as the one hundred pesos that should have accumulated in the treasury of the common fund, in order that they may provision themselves for their labors (Brinckerhoff and Faulk 1965:35).

This point further demonstrates the long-term potential and benefits to enlisting as a frontier soldier. Where incentives are concerned, first and foremost is the prospect of owning and cultivating land. Given the timing of the Regulation issued, the lure of land would have been particularly attractive to those soldiers, farmers, and their families from the northwestern provinces of Sinaloa and Sonora who suffered inordinately as a result of economic decline, natural disasters, and crop failure. The Regulation also addresses financial allowances given soldiers who migrated to the frontier, thereby providing not only personal impetus for the soldiers, but also incentives for their families as well. However, the first point of Title Eleven also makes clear that serving a ten-year commitment as a presidial soldier was mandatory in order to merit said benefits. Considering this fact, the Regulation implies an informal first-come, first-serve policy to entice and prompt soldiers and prospective soldiers to claim lands and town lots. Thus, it was the hope of the King and his royal subjects that by providing social and economic incentives (such as those described above), such would recruit committed soldiers to remain as productive and reproductive Spanish colonists on the frontier of Alta California.

In addition to the Regulations of 1772, prominent Spanish colonial figureheads sought to influence the emigration of soldiers and prospective settlers. Father Junípero Serra, Order of the Friars Minor (OFM), the first President of the missions of Alta California, and Catholic religious founder of both the Mission and Royal Presidio of San Carlos de Monterey, was one such person. While as a Franciscan missionary his objectives concentrated on the Catholic conversion and Hispanicization of the indigenous peoples of Alta California, Serra also attempted to persuade prospective colonists to relocate to the frontier. Writing to the Viceroy of New Spain, Antonio Maria de Bucareli y Ursua on 19 July, 1774, Serra recounted his promise to settlers and artisans:

I promised the poor families of blacksmiths and carpenters, whom I brought from Mexico and Guadalajara, and another besides from Tepic, that, in addition to their salaries as laid down by the Regulations, they should be given food rations for themselves and their wives; for married people, that the amount given to the husband should likewise be given to his wife...if the rations for man and wife were not sufficient for the whole family, they would find the doors of the royal warehouses open for them to buy what they needed, and the price would be deducted from their salaries (Serra 1955: 131).

Serra's statement demonstrates that soldiers were not the sole beneficiaries of the Royal Regulations of 1772. Settlers and artisans were also afforded

salaries and food rations. This was an aspect that Serra conveyed to potential settlers and artisans in the hopes that these people would settle permanently in Alta California, and like the presidial settlers, become fruitful and procreative Spanish colonists. Such also demonstrates the influence a religious figurehead had on settlers and artisans. Moreover, given that Serra identified food rations as just as important a consideration for relocation as salaries, suggests that such a basic need was not being met throughout New Spain, thus providing further incentive for prospective settlers and artisans.

Furthermore, Serra was also attentive to addressing the social and economic needs of the soldiers and their families of Alta California in the late 18th century. Significantly, Serra referenced some of the key economic and social incentives for both the presidial soldiers and Catalonian Volunteers (soldiers from Spain) at the Royal Presidio of San Carlos de Monterey as stated in the Royal Regulation of 1772. In a letter penned to Viceroy Bucareli y Ursua on 24 August, 1774, Serra explained:

The soldiers, volunteers from Catalonia, who have been married in the Mission of San Carlos de Monterey, at the Carmel River, with convert Christian girls of this country are: Manuel Butrón, Antonio Torba, and Domingo Arús. And those who are making up their minds to marry soon, either at the San Luis Obispo Mission, or in another, are: Francisco Cayuelas, Antonio Montaña, and Geronimo Bullferic. They all wish for and anxiously ask and beg that with permission to leave the service, a piece of land be assigned them on which to settle down, and as is provided in the new Regulations: a seaman's salary for two years, and rations for five years for themselves and their wives. The first three declare that, if the Officer had not given them assurances to this effect, they would not have married (Serra 1955: 149).

As suggested by Serra, the social and economic benefits associated with marriage on the frontier---whether with indigenous wives or wives from other areas of New Spain---also served as a pull-factor for active and prospective soldiers. However, marriage on the frontier also functioned to attract single women, particularly given that prior to the year 1774 there were no colonial women in Alta California (Mason 1998: 21). According to Antonia Castañeda, "single women were encouraged to find husbands among the soldiers who were starved for women of their own kind. The crown hoped that as marriage quelled their lustful behavior, the soldiers would choose to settle in the frontier once their military duty was completed. Thus the colony would prosper and be populated increasingly by *gente de razón*" (Castañeda 1990: 121). Moreover, and as noted earlier, the Royal Regulation of 1772 identified the wives and families of soldiers as recipients of financial allowances, food rations, and elevated social status, thus provisioning incentives for the women of New Spain to immigrate to Alta California. In subsequent letters to the Viceroy, Serra described what



he envisioned for the respective role of wives of soldiers and settlers on the frontier. Written on 8 January, 1775, Serra proposed:

The families which I suggested in my first Memorandum to Your Excellency might be brought from Sinaloa: soldiers from respectable stock, taking care that in their number there would be some who should bring their families with them; that two such families be placed in each mission, so that the wives of these soldiers should devote themselves to instructing the women of the missions—a piece of work that presents obvious difficulties to the Fathers (Serra 1955: 203)...

While women's roles in a colonial society are typically represented by virtue of their reproductive capacities, Serra in fact alludes to the economic and social roles that colonial women could engage in, and contribute to, on the frontier. Moreover, Serra presents women's roles as equal in significance as those of the roles of soldiers, settlers, artisans, and by extension, the Franciscan friars. This latter significance is necessarily defined in terms of women's domestic skill sets--skills that presented challenges to the Franciscan fathers.

Given the aforementioned examples, it is evident that a host of explicit incentives served to influence prospective Spanish colonial soldiers, settlers, artisans, and their families to emigrate from their home provinces in New Spain to settlements such as that of the Royal Presidio of Monterey, and the Interior Provinces more generally. Incentives such as offers to subsidize the costs of living on the frontier for soldiers, settlers, and artisans were endorsed by the Spanish Crown in order to streamline colonization. Moreover, incentives such as land ownership, retirement, and elevated social standing functioned to stimulate the colonization of Alta California. Furthermore, natural disasters and indigenous warfare, such as that affecting Sinaloa and Sonora, also served to propel people into the northern frontier.

The Royal Regulations of 1772 demonstrated that all men were eligible for enlistment in presidial companies given that they were of good standing and reputation, and of the highest quality and caliber. Despite this preference, those people that were subject to impoverished conditions in their homeland still had the opportunity to begin anew on the frontier. Moreover, these soldiers and settlers had the support of influential individuals, including such leaders as Captain Juan Bautista de Anza, Commander Fernando de Rivera y Moncada, and Father Junípero Serra. While Anza and Rivera y Moncada sought direct recruitment of soldiers and settlers in order to convey Spanish subjects to Alta California, Serra sought to impel colonists to the frontier in order to contribute to the social and economic welfare of the missions. Considering these diverse factors, one is left to inquire about existence of the so-called outcasts, convicts, and other undesirables that are thought to have founded Alta California.

Without these frontier soldiers and settlers, the Spanish empire's efforts to colonize of Alta California would have been significantly impaired.

### ***Conclusions***

During the late 18th and early 19th centuries, Alta California served as a frontier of new beginnings for the colonial *soldados*, *pobladores*, and artisans emigrating from the different provinces of New Spain. As demonstrated in this essay, these new beginnings and opportunities for colonial men and women are represented by virtue of two primary trends during initial phases of colonization in Alta California: first, through colonial identity formation and *casta* (colonial caste) transformation; and second, through the various incentives and initial pull-factors set forth in the Royal Regulation of 1772 issued by the King of the Spanish empire. Moreover, it is the combination of these two trends that influenced prospective soldiers, settlers, and artisans to relocate from their respective home provinces in New Spain to the frontier province of Alta California. Thus, it was these same trends that influenced prospective colonists to serve at the frontier military settlement at Monterey. Ultimately, understanding such trends contributes to the interpretation of colonial identity formation on the frontier of Alta California in addition to understanding the broader circumstances that primarily influenced soldiers and settlers to move to Alta California. Such then also contributes to current scholarship on the history of Spanish colonial military settlements, including El Real Presidio de San Carlos de Monterey, as well as the broader founding colonial experience in California.

The examination of these initial influences that prompted soldiers, settlers, and their families of various *castas* to depart their homelands in the northwestern provinces of New Spain in order to relocate to the frontier of Alta California provided insights into the social climate of Hispanic society in New Spain. The opportunity to begin new lives as colonial agents of the Spanish empire suggested that the socioeconomic conditions in New Spain were to some extent lacking and/or unsatisfactory. Moreover, given the adverse circumstances in provinces such as Sinaloa and Sonora, the advent of colonizing Alta California was particularly apropos. Therefore, without these early pull-factors that pushed prospective soldiers and settlers into the frontier, the Spanish empire's efforts to colonize Alta California, and the Interior Provinces more broadly, would have been greatly hindered. Furthermore, while these economic incentives promised under the Royal Regulation enticed the founding colonial populaces to migrate to the frontier, these colonists were then able to utilize their new roles to negotiate, transform, and reconstruct their social, cultural, and ethnic identities, as demonstrated through the census and mission records at El Real Presidio de San Carlos de Monterey.

Further studies might then examine the extent to which these pioneering men and women actualized their different roles as colonists. In that way, understanding how the frontier shaped their experience as colonists and subsequently how the colonists shaped their experience on the frontier may further be explored. Ultimately, these initial waves of colonial migration to the frontier of Alta California demonstrated that despite their ascribed *castas*, these soldiers, settlers, and their families were pioneers and opportunists, serving not only the prerogatives of the Spanish Crown, but also utilizing the opportunity to begin anew.



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