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MISSIONS ABORTED

California Indian Life on Nineteenth-Century Ranchos, 1834–1848

By Stephen W. Silliman
University of Massachusetts, Boston

Flashy fiestas, adobe buildings, large families, flowing cattle, golden fields of wheat and barley, and mounted riders displaying their horse skills. If asked to describe life on a nineteenth century California rancho, many would craft such an image. Adjectives such as pastoral, bucolic, leisurely, and simple might accompany the scene. Students of California history know that this popular image is highly problematic, and beginning with seminal work by Sherburne Cook in the 1940s, they have worked for decades to enrich our understanding of rancho life and its complexities.¹

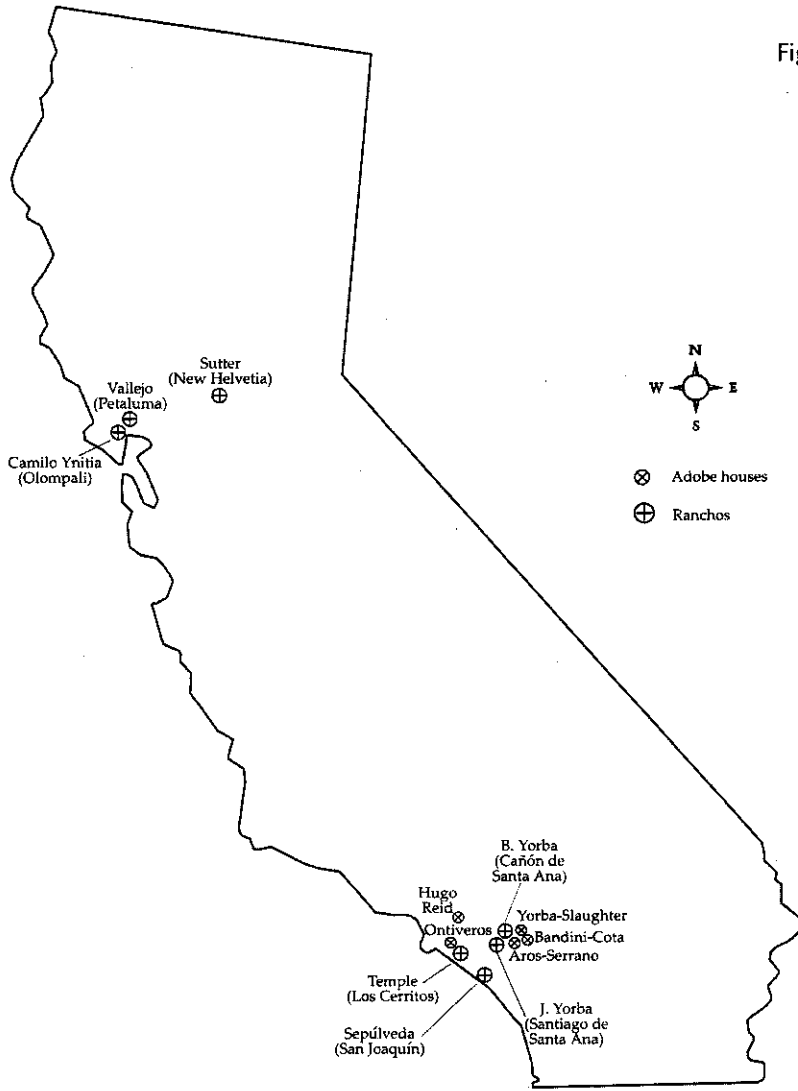
¹Sherburne F. Cook, *The Conflict Between the California Indian and White Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976); William S. Evans, Jr., "California's Indian Pottery: A Native Contribution to the Culture of the Ranchos," *Pacific Coast Archaeological Society Quarterly* 5.3 (1969): 71–81; Jay D. Frierman, "The Pastoral Period in Los Angeles: Life on the Ranchos and in the Pueblo, 1800–1850," in *Historical Archaeology of Nineteenth Century California*, eds. Jay D. Frierman and Roberta S. Greenwood (Pasadena: The Castle Press, 1992), 1–52; Jay D. Frierman, ed., *The Ontiveros Adobe: Early Rancho Life in Alta California*. Submitted to Redevelopment Agency, Santa Fe Springs, California (Pacific Palisades, CA: Greenwood and Associates, 1982); Roberta S. Greenwood, "The California Ranchero: Fact and Fancy," in *Columbian Consequences, Volume 1: Archaeological and Historical Perspectives on the Spanish Borderlands West*, ed. David H. Thomas (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1989), 451–465; Lisbeth Haas,

Whether these adjustments have been made in public memory and historical consciousness is debatable, and all scholars have not even broken from this mold, despite cogent arguments against a fanciful view of California ranchos.²

Conquests and Historical Identities in California, 1769–1936 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Steven W. Hackel, "Land, Labor, and Production: The Colonial Economy of Spanish and Mexican California," in *Contested Eden: California Before the Gold Rush*, eds. Ramón A. Gutiérrez and Richard J. Orsi (Berkeley: California Historical Society and the University of California Press, 1998), 111–146; Albert Hurtado, *Indian Survival on the California Frontier* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988); Douglas Monroy, *Thrown Among Strangers: The Making of Mexican Culture in Frontier California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); Douglas Monroy, "The Creation and Re-creation of Californio Society," in *Contested Eden*, eds. Gutiérrez and Orsi, 173–195; Kenneth Pauley, ed., *Rancho Days in Southern California: An Anthology with New Perspectives* (Studio City: The Westerners, Los Angeles Corral, 1997); George Harwood Phillips, *Indians and Intruders in Central California, 1769–1849* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993); Rosaura Sánchez, *Telling Identities: The Californio testimonios* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 179.

²Greenwood, "The California Ranchero," 451, 456, 461–464; William M. Mason, "Alta California's Colonial and Early Mexican Era Population, 1769–1846," in *Regions of La Raza: Changing Interpretations of Mexican American Regional History and Culture*, ed. Antonio Ríos-Bustamante (Encino: Floricanto Press, 1993), 169–187; Monroy, *Thrown Among Strangers*.

Figure 1. Map of select California ranchos.



cussions about California's ranchos.³ If they are mentioned, Native people are frequently portrayed as faceless props of the rancho scenery or as passive participants in a drama directed and enacted by named historical figures of typically non-Indian descent. Most studies of ranchos are biographical and chronological in nature, charting the timeline of events in the lives of rancho families or in the ownership transitions of a particular tract of rancho property.⁴ Since researchers tend to exclude Native American workers as central participants in the making of rancho history, the studies do not convey the anthropological and social historical significance of rancho labor. Clearly such topics are not in the purview of all California history specialists, but they remain issues worthy of attention.

³For noteworthy exceptions, see Gordon Morris Bakken, "Rancho Cañon de Santa Ana," in *Rancho Days*, ed. Pauley, 207–223; Edward D. Castillo, "The Impact of Euro-American Exploration and Settlement," in *Handbook of North American Indians, Volume 8: California*, ed. Robert F. Heizer (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1978), 99–127; Hurtado, *Indian Survival*. I do not deny the role played by Mexican and other laborers, but this topic is beyond the purview of the article. Instead, I focus on those whom the Californios termed *indios* and used as an Other to distinguish themselves as *gente de razón*. This the Californios did explicitly in their own reminiscences and testimonials in the later nineteenth century. "This heterogeneous society is not, however, the central focus of these Californio narrators. The social hierarchy constructed in the testimonials is primarily configured on the basis of discourses of caste, distinguishing *gente de razón* from *indios*, concealing in the process relations between exploiters and producers and blurring as well intra-Californio class differences" —Sánchez, *Telling Identities*, 179.

⁴See Pauley, ed., *Rancho Days*. For exceptions in that volume discussing some of the Native American elements of ranchos, see Sheldon Jackson, "The British Rancho, the Scotch Paisano, and the Indian Wife," in *Rancho Days*, ed. Pauley, 239–264; Bakken, "Rancho Cañon de Santa Ana," 208–209.

In my opinion, the most outstanding problem with the romanticized view of ranchos lies not as much in the misrecognition of hardship and variable wealth among rancho owners and families or of political difficulties sustained by Californios with the arrival of American control in the region, but in the subtle erasure of the rancho work force and the politics of rancho labor regimes. California Indian people comprised the bulk of workers on many nineteenth-century ranchos, particularly the larger ones, but their demographics, roles, experiences, and struggles are rarely entertained in any depth during dis-

In this article, I approach this gap in rancho history in both a conceptual and an empirical way. At a conceptual level, I consider the ways that Native American people have been portrayed in rancho studies, examine the role of labor and materiality in understanding indigenous peoples' experience of ranchos, and underscore the need to develop a sophisticated model of Native social agency. In the latter regard, I take my cues from California scholars such as Lisbeth Haas, Albert Hurtado, Kent Lightfoot, and George Harwood Phillips who have worked to critically investigate Native American responses to colonialism.⁵ I respond to the relatively unheeded call made by Sherburne Cook over sixty years ago that "the Pacific Coast Indian, particularly in his [sic] labor relations, deserves a chapter in the social history of the United States."⁶ In so doing, I argue that the workers deserve as much analytical attention as the rancho owners. At an empirical level, I relate a brief summary of my study of Rancho Petaluma, an enormous California rancho north of San Francisco Bay that was owned and operated by Mariano G. Vallejo in the 1830s and 1840s (Figure 1). I align with Hurtado's observation that we need more research on Native communities in interior northern California to complement the wealth of information on southern reaches of the region.⁷ The project addresses the possibilities of recovering archaeological and archival evidence for Native American workers and exploring the nature of material culture and labor in a specific rancho setting.⁸

⁵Haas, *Conquests and Historical Identities*; George Harwood Phillips, "Indians and the Breakdown of the Spanish Mission System in California" *Ethnohistory* 21.4 (1974): 291–301; Hurtado, *Indian Survival*; George Harwood Phillips, *Chiefs and Challengers: Indian Resistance and Cooperation in Southern California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975); Phillips, *Indians and Intruders*; Kent G. Lightfoot, Antoinette Martínez, and Ann M. Schiff, "Daily Practice and Material Culture in Pluralistic Social Settings: An Archaeological Study of Culture Change and Persistence from Fort Ross, California," *American Antiquity* 63.2 (1998): 199–222.

⁶Cook, *The Conflict*, 456.

⁷Hurtado, *Indian Survival*, 6–7.

⁸For additional details, see Silliman, *Lost Laborers in Colonial*

A BRIEF HISTORY OF CALIFORNIA RANCHOS

To discuss Native Americans on California ranchos requires setting a broader historical context. Beginning in 1769, Spanish colonization thrust into Alta California with four major institutions: missions, presidios, pueblos, and ranchos. Franciscan missions were to provide the spiritual and economic base for transforming the indigenous people into loyal denizens of the State, presidios were to supply the military backing for colonization along California's coastal region, and pueblos were secular towns that would serve as models of proper citizenship and provide goods and services. The rancho appeared almost concurrently with the mission-presidio-pueblo "power" triad, but it held a peripheral role for many years. Ranchos were land grants devoted to the raising of livestock and growing of crops, originally designed in California as ranching adjuncts to missions. A handful of private individuals received rancho lands during the earliest colonial efforts, but the Spanish government in Mexico granted only 25 California ranchos in the next 46 years.⁹

Following Mexican independence in 1821, ranchos expanded across Alta California. More were granted again with the passage of the Colonization Act of 1824 and the Supplemental Regulations of 1828 that opened California's land to private individuals.¹⁰ The economic focus of the rancho explains its fluorescence after Mexican

California: Native Americans and the Archaeology of Rancho Petaluma (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2004, in press); Stephen W. Silliman, "Agency, Practical Politics, and the Archaeology of Culture Contact," *Journal of Social Archaeology* 1.2 (2001): 190–209; Stephen W. Silliman, "Using a Rock in a Hard Place: Native American Lithic Practices in Colonial California," in *Stone Tool Traditions in the Contact Era*, ed. Charles Cobb (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2003), 127–150.

⁹Julia Costello and David Hornbeck, "Alta California: An Overview," in *Columbian Consequences, Volume 1*, ed. Thomas, 303–332; Federico A. Sánchez, "Rancho Life in Alta California," *Masterkey* 60.2–3 (1986): 16.

¹⁰Hackel, "Land, Labor, and Production," 132.

Independence as the new government relaxed strict prohibitions on external trade that had been imposed under Spanish rule. The same situation prompted Franciscan padres to shift their missions' focus to hides and tallow.¹¹ For the earliest years of rancho operation, documentary and archaeological sources have revealed that rancheros, or rancho owners, could not compete with missions for production of hides and tallow and therefore geared their agriculture and livestock processing to subsistence rather than surplus trade levels. Not until final secularization of the missions in 1834 did the ranchos approach the "zenith of rancho life and the hide and tallow trade."¹² Ranchos once existed as often antagonistic and poor contemporaries of the Franciscan missions, but in the fourth and fifth decades of the nineteenth century the larger ranchos provided a direct replacement of missions as the major centers for land-holding, economic production, and Native American involvement in a colonial world.

Private control of rancho land increased by orders of magnitude when the Franciscan missions were secularized, a process anticipated for well over a decade but not taking hold in California until 1834 (Figure 2).¹³ Anchored in a philosophical rejection of the mission's feudal and communal characteristics, secularization wrested control of California's land from padres and opened it for extensive secular settlement. The ensuing process of mission disintegration and rancho expansion followed two trajectories. First, the Mexican-California government granted vast

tracts of private property to influential political and military figures as repayment for their service. Mariano G. Vallejo's acquisition of the Rancho Petaluma north of San Francisco Bay serves as a prime example. Second, Californios pursued various channels to obtain land and livestock previously allocated to ex-mission neophytes as a condition of secularization. In the end, as secular officials fought to eradicate mission control over, any indigenous claims to the enormous California land base, most mission property found its way into Californio or immigrant hands, rather than back into Native hands.¹⁴ Poignant but rare reversals of this trend can be found in the handful of Native-owned ranchos.¹⁵

California ranchos underwent significant changes and precipitous declines with the steady arrival of United States citizens and governance in 1848, and many historians have studied this "American Period" in considerable depth, both as a broader event and as a specific and grave situation for Native Americans.¹⁶ The growing multiethnic and racist nature of California society after 1850 ushered in a variety of complex alterations to the colonial pattern, but despite these changes, ranchos as a social phenomenon continued well into the American period in several regions. Many labor practices remained essential-

¹¹Greenwood, "The California Ranchero," 453; Julia Costello, "Variability among the Alta California Missions: The Economics of Agricultural Production," in *Columbian Consequences, Volume 1*, ed. Thomas, 436.

¹²Greenwood, "The California Ranchero," 455-457.

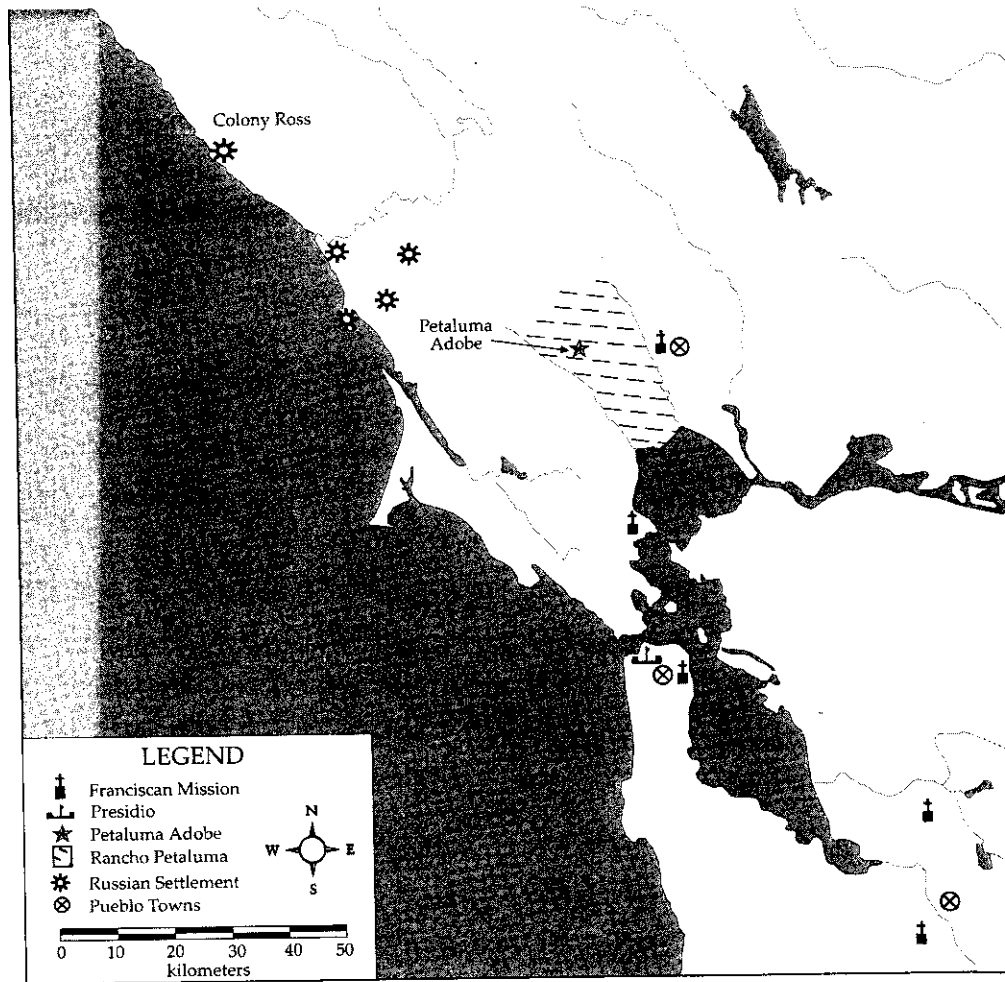
¹³Costello and Hornbeck, "Alta California," 319; Monroy, *Thrown Among Strangers*, 115; for recent discussions of secularization, see James E. Ivey, "Secularization in California and Texas," *Boletín: The Journal of the California Mission Studies Association* 20.1 (2003): 23-36; Lisbeth Haas, "Emancipation and the Meaning of Freedom in Mexican California," *Boletín: The Journal of the California Mission Studies Association* 20.1 (2003): 11-22.

¹⁴Costello and Hornbeck, "Alta California," 319; Greenwood, "The California Ranchero," 457; Haas, *Conquests and Historical Identities*, 38; Monroy, *Thrown Among Strangers*, 125.

¹⁵Pamela McGuire Carlson and E. Breck Parkman, "An Exceptional Adaptation: Camilo Ynitia," *California History* 65.4 (1986): 238-247; Laurence H. Shoup and Randall T. Milliken, *Inigo of Rancho Posolmi: The Life and Times of a Mission Indian* (Menlo Park: Ballena Press, 1999).

¹⁶I provide only a sampling here: Hurtado, *Indian Survival*, 72-210; Leonard Pitt, *The Decline of the Californios: A Social History of the Spanish-Speaking Californians, 1846-1890* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966); James Rawls, *Indians of California: The Changing Image* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1984); James A. Sandos, "'Because He is a Liar and a Thief': Conquering the Residents of 'Old' California, 1850-1880," in *Rooted in Barbarous Soil: People, Culture, and Community in Gold Rush California*, eds. Kevin Starr and Richard J. Orsi (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 86-112.

Figure 2. Map of the northern San Francisco Bay region, circa 1835.



ly unchanged, but the composition of the work force shifted to include more people of Mexican descent in an increasingly “whitened” California. I choose not to tackle this complex post-1848 terrain and instead restrict my focus here to the post-secularization peak of rancho prominence between 1834 and 1848. It is in this period that California Indians often disappear from history books.

LIFE AND LABOR ON RANCHOS

Ranchos varied depending on their size, organization and owner, but all had a strong focus on economic production, whether for self-sustenance or export. Smaller ranchos tended to be minor family affairs with some fields in cultivation, a few head of livestock and perhaps no more than one or two Native workers; whereas larger ranchos had numerous laborers, enormous livestock herds and extensive fields.¹⁷ Cattle hides and tallow were the most lucrative and marketable products, but rancheros devoted considerable effort to agricultural production. For large ranchos, the multitude of crops, especially wheat and barley, served not only to feed rancheros, their families and their laborers, but also to provide products for trade. In addition, large ranchos like Rancho Petaluma manufactured goods such as blankets, shoes and candles to supply local need and to trade with Native and colonial settlements. A substantial labor force was required to keep the larger ranchos economically afloat, and with the exception of occasional spe-

cialized artisans, California Indians performed virtually all such labor.¹⁸

Most scholars have characterized the large California rancho as a quasi-feudal system of indebted peonage.¹⁹ Native Americans labored on large ranchos to raise and butcher livestock, grow and harvest crops, process raw materials, manufacture durable goods, and build and maintain structures

¹⁸Hackel, “Land, Labor, and Production,” 134; Sánchez, “Rancho Life,” 19; Alan Rosenus, *General M. G. Vallejo and the Advent of the Americans: A Biography* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995), 41.

¹⁹Hubert Howe Bancroft, *California Pastoral* (San Francisco: The History Company, 1888), 347; Edward D. Castillo, “The Impact of Euro-American Exploration and Settlement,” in *Handbook of North American Indians*, ed. Heizer, 105; Cook, *The Conflict*, 302-304, 457-458; 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), 19; David Hornbeck, “Land Tenure and Rancho Expansion in Alta California,” *Journal of Historical Geography* 8.4 (1978): 385; Monroy, *Thrown Among Strangers*, 151; Phillips, *Indians and Intruders*, 107; Rawls, *Indians of California*, 21.

¹⁷Greenwood, “The California Ranchero.”

in exchange for living quarters, material commodities, and food.²⁰ Living quarters might involve a building devoted to worker housing, rooms or floor space in a rancho household, or an informal plot of land. Most California Indians who worked on ranchos before and after mission secularization tended to receive payment, not in money, but in goods such as clothing, blankets, beads, metal tools and alcohol.²¹ Rancheros provisioned most food in the form of cultivated grains and beef, but the rancho focus on livestock made meat a prime commodity.²² Some Native workers in certain regions may have even tended small gardens or herds of their own, a trajectory that signaled a radical departure from their pre-contact subsistence pursuits.²³ In sum, the relationship between Native workers and rancheros in the course of daily labor hinged on materiality. Provisions, foods, stolen goods, exchanged items, work tools and architectural spaces composed the material resources for and constraints of action for all individuals on ranchos.

The rancho labor system mirrored that of the Franciscan missions, despite some of Cook's characterizations to the contrary.²⁴ The similarity tran-

spired despite the criticisms of labor practices that rancheros and padres regularly levied at each other while using the same pool of workers for similar tasks.²⁵ The overall political structure differed between ranchos and missions, but the "reasons for working"—physical enforcement, social coercion, desire for goods or food, lack of alternatives—were comparable and concrete in both settings. Although missionaries based their policies on religious conversion and bodily discipline and rancheros needed able bodies for sustained economic productivity, both institutions relied on labor as the mechanism to deliver the desired results.²⁶ In fact, Sánchez argued forcefully: "In hindsight, of course, it was easier to blame the missionaries and the mission administrators for the abuse of the Indians; it was harder for the Californios to recognize and come to terms with the degree to which their society was dependent on Indian labor and the degree to which all Californios had exploited, abused, and benefited from the Indians."²⁷ Authority and supervision were as widespread and visible in the rancho community as they were in missions, and rancho supervisors employed the same types of labor and social control, with the exception of widespread confinement and sexual monitoring.²⁸

Two points of contrast offered by Cook are worthy of note. First, Native families and groups had more opportunity to co-reside at ranchos

²⁰Cook, *The Conflict*, 304, 458.

²¹William M. Mason, "Alta California during the Mission Period, 1769–1835," *Masterkey* 60.2–3 (1986): 12; Sánchez, "Rancho Life," 25.

²²Cook, *The Conflict*, 458.

²³Monroy, *Thrown Among Strangers*, 150. However, archaeological information from Rancho Petaluma suggests that Native residents did *not* maintain personal gardens. See Silliman, *Lost Laborers*, Chapter 6.

²⁴Cook, *The Conflict*, 302–308. Cook argued that ranchos differed from missions in that (1) no philosophical recognition of producer-product distribution was required because reward for labor effort was concrete and material, (2) no individual initiative was required for expending effort because authority and supervision were compulsory and inflexible, (3) the nature of rancho work was relatively congenial and did not require a serious disruption of traditional divisions or activities of labor, (4) aboriginal living conditions remained unaltered as families and communities resided together on ranchos, and (5) aspects of religious, ritual, sexual, and cultural life were not actively stamped out by colonial authorities as long as the rancho's economic goals were met. The first three do not resonate with what we now know about ranchos and colonialism.

²⁵Monroy, *Thrown Among Strangers*, 116; David J. Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 122–133.

²⁶Stephen W. Silliman, "Theoretical Perspectives on Labor and Colonialism: Reconsidering the California Missions," *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology* 20 (2001): 379–407.

²⁷Sánchez, *Telling Identities*, 185.

²⁸See Robert H. Jackson and Edward Castillo, *Indians, Franciscans, and Spanish Colonization: The Impact of the Mission System on California Indians* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995). Evidence for the use of *alcaldes* comes from a recently translated list of workers at Rancho Petaluma (see Silliman, *Lost Laborers*, for details). Note that Sutter's New Helvetia is an exception to this exception, instituting strict controls on social and sexual relations, as related in Hurtado, *Indian Survival*, 55–71.

than they ever had at missions; second, many but not all *rancheros* expended little effort to alter Native American practices, beliefs, or lifestyles as long as workers performed their rancho jobs.²⁹ For instance, Vallejo claimed that to Native people, he “made no mention of religion, for by principle I am consistently opposed to meddling in religious matters.”³⁰ Both features distinguish ranchos from missions and constitute significant vehicles for cultural persistence in families and communities. Building further on Cook’s work, Monroy contended that although Native American workers participated much like peons in ranchos, the system was seigniorial.³¹ Such a system entailed more subtle and indirect social relations binding California Indian laborers and *rancheros* than those in an actual peonage system. The relations grew out of the Franciscan *padres*’ attempts to control Native American bodies via labor and sexuality, to alter Native American relationships to their cosmology, and to gain access to Native American land and resources.³² As a consequence, Monroy characterized Indian participation on ranchos as “mutual and personal,” rather than debt-based economic dependency.³³

Although economic and social dependency structured some relations between *rancheros* and Native people, such an interpretation cannot accommodate the variability of Native experiences, coercive force applied by some *rancheros*, and indigenous social agency in joining or resisting rancho labor regimes. That is, rather than relying solely on “dependency” to explain Native participation in ranchos, it is imperative to understand how and why California Indian people

came to ranchos as workers and what kinds of rancho labor organization and life they experienced. We must resist collapsing all California Indians into a homogeneous, faceless work force while envisioning *rancheros* and their family members as individuals. Some workers were ex-mission converts trained in the necessary trades for ranchos; others whom the Spanish called *gentiles* had never undergone missionization and provided unskilled labor. Some Indian people comprised a permanent work force for year-round activities, but most worked on a seasonal basis during peak harvesting or slaughtering times, such as the *matanza* of late summer. Some individuals joined voluntarily, while others labored under physical and economic coercion.

Sorting out the complexity of labor is critical, particularly since labor recruitment and participation were highly variable and often contested by the various parties involved. Incorporating northern California ranchos into the discussion widens the perspective considerably, given the unique yet powerful status of Vallejo’s Rancho Petaluma and Sutter’s New Helvetia in the nineteenth century. To capture the variability of labor recruitment, I have classified Native American entry into California ranchos into five types: (1) legislation, (2) indebtedness, (3) capture by force, (4) military alliance, and (5) social incorporation.³⁴ Only the first and second entries, legislation and indebtedness, might bring about the kind of dependency suggested by Monroy.

First, Native individuals were required by law in southern California’s populous Los Angeles pueblo to be gainfully employed, at least during certain seasons. A law was enacted in 1836 that allowed *regidores*, or council members, to arrest intoxicated Native Americans and turn them over to public works projects, and another in 1844

²⁹Cook, *The Conflict*, 304; see also Hackel, “Land, Labor, and Production” 134.

³⁰Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo, “Recuerdos históricos y personales tocante a la Alta California: Historia política del país, Vol. III,” 1875, in The Bancroft Library, BANC MSS C-D 17, University of California, Berkeley, 10–11.

³¹Monroy, *Thrown Among Strangers*, 100–102, 185.

³²Ibid., 101; Monroy, “The Creation and Re-Creation,” 184.

³³Monroy, *Thrown Among Strangers*, 102.

³⁴For details, see Silliman, *Lost Laborers*, Chapter 5. I have elucidated these mechanisms through a synthesis of secondary sources on the broader regions and a careful reading of primary sources for northern California.

required all California Indians to be employed or to have documentation of dismissal from particular jobs.³⁵ Infractions resulted in individuals having to “work off” their crimes, which insured their availability as laborers. The auctioning to rancheros of imprisoned Native people for temporary labor projects, and the system that led to repeat incarcerations, is well-documented.

Second, many Native American people, especially ex-mission residents, became indebted to rancheros as peon laborers. Mission ex-neophytes often placed their cattle and land, which they had received under the conditions of secularization, in the care of a rancho. Monroy’s analysis focuses mainly on this situation, and it was probably the most common. Many Native people had no interest in private land alongside the old missions or in small herds of cattle, and some may have happily parted with these trappings. More frequently, however, colonists assumed California Indian incompetence with and lack of interest in cattle and land, and they had few qualms with trying to deceive Native people out of their resources.³⁶ The transfer of care meant that Native individuals had to work for a rancho in exchange for food provisions, alcohol, or material goods. Even non-missionized groups became economically dependent on the frontier in northern California and in the growing urban climate of Los Angeles.³⁷

Third, Native American people were physically coerced to join ranchos. Justification for this practice frequently hinged on the punishment of reputed stock thieves or field burners, or at least a scapegoat proxy.³⁸ As Cook noted, “the expanding

economy of the private ranches demanded an increased supply of cheap labor, which was most easily obtained from the adjacent native tribes. Thus punishing stock thieves and capturing farm labor became almost the same in method.”³⁹ Similarly, “after secularization, when the christianizing motive had disappeared, practically all captives were utilized as day labor on the growing ranches.”⁴⁰ Few rancheros may have participated in outright capture of Native people, but the practice seems to have been common on the Northern Frontier of Alta California at places such as Vallejo’s Rancho Petaluma and Sutter’s New Helvetia.⁴¹

Fourth, political or military alliances between rancheros and local Native leaders often generated labor assistance. Such alliances have been documented in northern California for Rancho Petaluma and New Helvetia.⁴² Native leaders and rancheros forged agreements that resulted in labor exchanges for military protection and support against neighboring or rival villages. A number of Native allies were previously missionized groups, but others had remained outside of the mission’s reach. In fact, ex-neophytes who participated in the cattle-for-labor exchange described above may have participated in rancho labor to simultaneously solidify a broader political alliance.

Fifth, individuals may have incorporated rancho settlements into indigenous social rounds as a new material and political resource. That is, a rancho may have become a stopover during certain seasons for California Indians moving to take

³⁵Phillips, “Indians in Los Angeles,” 437–438, 444–446; Monroy, *Thrown Among Strangers*, 185–186.

³⁶Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo is a prime example. See Marian L. Lothrop, “Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo, Defender of the Northern Frontier of California,” (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1926), 86–90; George Tays, “Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo and Sonoma—A biography and a history,” *California Historical Society Quarterly* 16 (1937): 241.

³⁷Hurtado, *Indian Survival*, 69–71; Phillips, “Indians in Los Angeles.”

³⁸Cook, *The Conflict*, 5, 302, 457. See George Simpson, *An Overland Journey Round the World During the Years 1841 and 1842* (Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard, 1847), 195.

³⁹Cook, *The Conflict*, 201.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 223.

⁴¹Tomás Almaguer, *Racial Fault Lines: The Historical Origins of White Supremacy in California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 48; Hackel, “Land, Labor, and Production,” 134; Hurtado, *Indian Survival*, 55–71; Silliman, *Lost Laborers*.

⁴²William Heath Davis, *Seventy-Five Years in California, 1831–1906* (San Francisco: John Howell, 1929), 135–136; Hurtado, *Indian Survival*, 48–49; Phillips, *Indians and Intruders*, 121–124; Nellie Van de Grift Sánchez, translator, “Isadora Filomena: My Years with Chief Solano [1874],” *Touring Topics* 22 (1930): 39.

advantage of different gathering or hunting areas, trade opportunities, access to material goods, and social interactions. In cases such as New Helvetia, some individuals worked seasonally in exchange for trade goods. Men often substituted rancho farming for hunting, while Native American women may have continued more traditional practices.⁴³ Although difficult to document, this process reveals the active ways that some Native individuals perhaps could manipulate colonial settlements to their own benefit.

Given these facets of labor recruitment, California Indian responses to or experiences of the rancho would have been highly variable. Experiences would have cleaved along lines of age, gender, social status, group affiliation, labor duty, and method of entry into the labor force. Some Native individuals participated by choice, some had their material resources seized through deception, and others were dragged there in the wake of a burned-out village and murdered family. The complexities of rancho recruitment, worker treatment, indigenous choices and agency, and the labor "agreement" call for a more nuanced and sensitive interpretation of indigenous participation. Native American practices at ranchos must be seen as intentional acts in novel circumstances, even though the form and content of these practices may have been rigidly bounded. Historians have often failed to come to terms with this, despite Phillips' admonition almost 30 years ago: "Seldom has the historian viewed them as anything more than passive spectators of their own destruction, doing nothing to solve the problems created by invading white men and thereby playing only an insignificant role in the historical process."⁴⁴ Anthropologists and historians need to account for Native intentions and strategies in joining or leaving ranchos, and they need to recognize efforts of Native workers to mold their lives within rancho regimes.

⁴³Hurtado, *Indian Survival*, 69.

⁴⁴Phillips, *Chiefs and Challengers*, 4.

As a result, a number of questions can be posed. What comprised daily life for Native individuals on ranchos? How did rancho labor control daily lives of indigenous workers, and how did individuals manipulate this labor? What impact did labor have on identity and social relationships? With few exceptions, scholars have not posed, much less answered, these questions.⁴⁵ A reason for the paucity of answers relates to the perceived lack of data. Many have noted that indigenous people seem to "disappear from the documentary record" in the post-secularization period of Mexican California.⁴⁶ While undoubtedly true compared to the wealth of written records generated by mission padres, colonial administrators, and literate visitors during the heyday of mission life, the lack of information richness on rancho life is a matter of perspective. Even if a wealth of such documents existed (and they appear not to for many ranchos), the nuances of Native life and labor will never be available through a sole reliance on the written words of rancho owners and European visitors. Archival sources must be juxtaposed with archaeological information since only the latter can access the greater range of California Indian experiences and provide a check to documentary sources. Even though archaeological data are frequently biased by preservation conditions and can be ambiguous in their meaning, they provide a view of past lives of indigenous people that does not include the misrepresentations possible in authored texts or the inherently non-Native perspective that permeates documents written by literate colonists and administrators. These material remains represent actual lived experiences of Indian people.

ARCHAEOLOGY OF RANCHO PETALUMA

Archaeologists have studied California's ranchos for years, from the earliest ones in southern

⁴⁵For exceptions, see Hurtado, *Indian Survival*; Silliman, "Agency, Practical Politics"; Silliman, *Lost Laborers*.

⁴⁶Costello and Hornbeck, "Alta California," 320.



Figure 3. Photograph of extant portion of Petaluma Adobe, 1997.
 Photo by author.

California to longstanding establishments that stretched well into the American period of post-1850 California. The process began as early as the late 1950s with excavations at the Hugo Reid Adobe by William and Edith Wallace and has continued sporadically through a variety of cultural resource management projects at famous sites such as Estudillo Adobe, Rancho Los Cerritos, Bandini-Cota Adobe, Aros-Serrano Adobe, and Ontiveros Adobe (see Figure 2).⁴⁷ Most archaeo-

logical or resource management projects on ranchos have focused their attention on the lives and houses of rancheros themselves, but often the researchers have acknowledged the participation of Native American workers. Native material culture has turned up in excavations, providing

⁴⁷For Hugo Reid, see William J. Wallace and Edith Taylor Wallace, "Indian Artifacts from the Hugo Reid Adobe," *Lasca Leaves* 8.4 (1958): 74-80; for Aros-Serrano Adobe, see Jay D. Frierman, "Southern California Brown Ware," in *Historical and Archaeological Investigation at the Aros-Serrano Adobe, Prado Basin*, eds. Roberta S. Greenwood, John M. Foster, and Anne Q. Duffield. Submitted to U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Los Angeles (Pacific Palisades, CA: Greenwood and Associates, 1987), 79-85; Roberta S. Greenwood, John M. Foster, and Anne Q. Duffield, *Historical and Archaeological Investigation at the*

Aros-Serrano Adobe, Prado Basin. Submitted to U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Los Angeles (Pacific Palisades, CA: Greenwood and Associates, 1987); for Bandini-Cota Adobe, see Roberta S. Greenwood, Jay D. Frierman, and John M. Foster, *The Bandini-Cota Adobe, Prado Dam, Riverside County, California*. Submitted to U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Los Angeles (Pacific Palisades, CA: Greenwood and Associates, 1983); for Estudillo Adobe, see John M. Foster, Gwendolyn R. Romani, R. Paul Hampson, A. George Toren, and Daniel G. Landis, *Data Recovery Investigations in the Domenigoni and Diamond Valleys*. Submitted to Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, Los Angeles (Pacific Palisades, CA: Greenwood and Associates, 1996); for Rancho Los Cerritos, see Evans, "California's Indian Pottery"; for Ontiveros Adobe, see Frierman, *Ontiveros Adobe*.

another clue to their historical presence. Depending on the regional setting, these items include locally-produced earthenware ceramics (often known as “Brown Ware”), stone tools and associated manufacturing debris, shell and glass beads, soapstone vessels, groundstones, and non-indigenous material such as glass modified into projectile points and other indigenous forms.⁴⁸ Although rarely found in contexts that could be identified as anything other than rancho family or “mixed” deposits, they hinted that archaeologists could access Native aspects of rancho life outside of archives.

Between 1996 and 2001, a multi-year archaeological project in northern California sought to rectify the gap by delving into Rancho Petaluma and its associated Petaluma Adobe (Figure 3). The project was conducted by UC-Berkeley in consultation with the Federated Indians of Graton Ranchería (Coast Miwok) and the California Department of Parks and Recreation. During this time, an archaeological research team discovered and studied the first deposits on a California rancho that could be reliably associated with Native Americans living and working on site.⁴⁹ Rancho Petaluma, located in modern Sonoma County, was an ideal place to begin an explicit search for Native American workers since the State of California had protected the land around the Petaluma Adobe for over five decades, as had the Native Sons of the Golden West for another forty years prior (Figure 4). In addition, the rancho had been founded and operated by one of the most prominent military and political figures in early

nineteenth century California: Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo (Figure 5). Perhaps most importantly, thousands of California Indian people had worked Rancho Petaluma’s fields, herds, workrooms and kitchen in the 1830s and 1840s.

The details of Vallejo’s biography and events in the North Bay are the subject of many works, so I only summarize a few highlights here to contextualize the archaeological discussion.⁵⁰ Vallejo received the Rancho Petaluma land grant in 1834, following on the heels of full secularization of Mission San Francisco Solano. Vallejo played a pivotal role in secularizing this mission, as well as the one at nearby San Rafael. He was awarded Rancho Petaluma in part to repay his services to the California regional government and in part to block further expansion of Russians inland from the coast. Vallejo had served as military commander at El Presidio de San Francisco for five years prior, and in 1835 he transferred his military headquarters to Sonoma, the pueblo formed upon the dissolution of Mission San Francisco Solano. Military relocation in 1835 marked the beginning of ten years of significant armed conflict between Vallejo—alongside his brother Salvador, his Native partner Chief Solano of the Suisun Patwin, and California Indian allies—and numerous Native groups outside the immediate reach of Mission San Francisco Solano.⁵¹

Although Vallejo resided in Sonoma with his family, he maintained Rancho Petaluma west of the pueblo as a major economic and residential center for his *mayordomo* (overseer), a handful of artisans, and hundreds of California Indian work-

⁴⁸For example, Frierman, *Ontiveros Adobe*, 75–84; Roberta S. Greenwood, John M. Foster, and Anne Q. Duffield, *Historical and Archaeological Study of the Yorba-Slaughter Adobe, San Bernardino County*. Submitted to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Los Angeles District (Pacific Palisades, CA: Greenwood and Associates, 1988), 129; Wallace and Wallace, “Indian Artifacts,” 80.

⁴⁹Stephen W. Silliman, “Colonial Worlds, Indigenous Practices: The Archaeology of Labor on a 19th-Century California Rancho” (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2000); Silliman, *Lost Laborers*.

⁵⁰Myrtle M. McKittrick, *Vallejo: Son of California* (Portland: Binfords & Mort, 1944); Rosenus, *General M. G. Vallejo*; Tays, “Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo” (1937); George Tays, “Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo and Sonoma—A Biography and a History,” *California Historical Society Quarterly* 17 (1938): 50–73, 141–167, 219–242; Lothrop, “Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo.” See detailed summary in Silliman, *Lost Laborers*, Chapter 3.

⁵¹Marian L. Lothrop, “The Indian Campaigns of General M. G. Vallejo,” *Quarterly of the Society of California Pioneers* 9.3 (1932): 161–205.



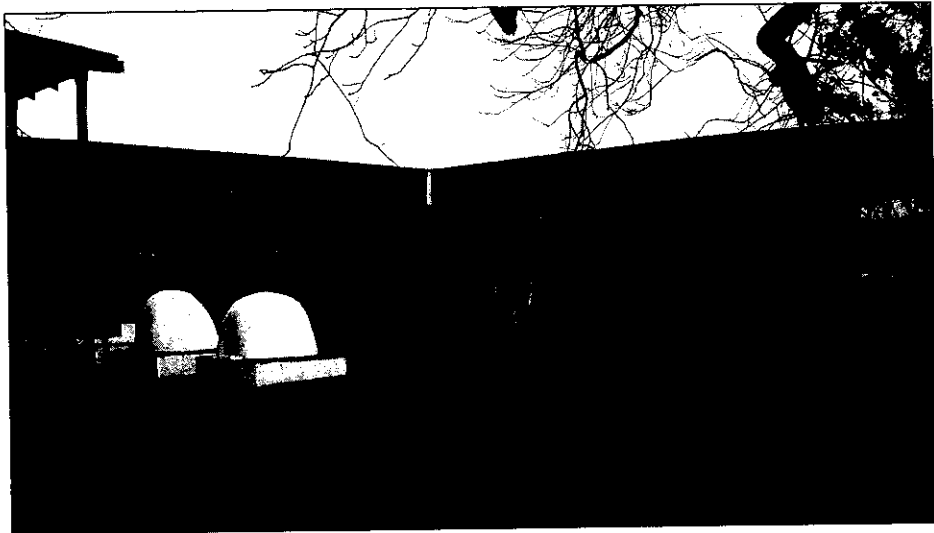
Figure 4. Photograph of extant portion of Petaluma Adobe, 1934.
*Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division,
 Historic American Buildings Survey, HABS,CAL, 49-PET,V,1-1.*



Figure 5. General M. G. Vallejo portrait
 Gelatin silver print, late 1800s
*Museum of the American West Collection,
 Autry National Center.*

ers. The centerpiece of the 66,000-acre rancho was the Petaluma Adobe, a large, two-story, Monterey-style building that covered approximately 3600 square meters surrounding an open quadrangle, or plaza (Figure 6). The adobe building housed the overseer, Vallejo family members and guests when in residence, and some artisans, but its main purpose was to provide work and store rooms for the vast quantities of hides, tallow, grains, vegetables, dried beef, and manufactured

Figure 6. Photograph of Petaluma Adobe, revealing the extant western half, 1997. Photo by author.



goods produced annually on the rancho.⁵² The production and maintenance of these economic elements structured the life of rancho workers.

A thousand or more California Indians lived and worked on the rancho during the 1830s and 1840s, having entered Vallejo's work force through four of the five methods described earlier: indebtedness after mission secularization, imprisonment after capture during military raids, allegiance through deals struck between Vallejo and Native leaders, and seasonal participation on a voluntary basis to seek goods and food.⁵³ Native workers originated from several broad linguistic territories in northern California, including Coast Miwok, Southern Patwin, Southern Pomo, and Wappo, but archival and archaeological information has yet to pinpoint the specific demographic proportions. Gender and previous mission experience structured the division of rancho labor, with "Christianized" Natives given supervisory or trusted positions.⁵⁴

Documents written by Vallejo himself, local

residents such as Salvador Vallejo, and visitors like George Simpson provide cursory glimpses of California Indian life on Vallejo's operation.⁵⁵ Observations made by Sánchez in her analysis of Californio texts ring true for virtually all non-indigenous writings in nineteenth century California: "Although Indians as the social 'other' of the Californios are a constant construct throughout these testimonials, there is little in these texts about Indian society itself, except in relation to Californio society. Their spaces, their social organization, are largely absent in these narratives."⁵⁶ In oftentimes unacknowledged ways, archaeology can frequently fill such absences. Archaeological information not only reveals what documents do not, but also accesses a realm of material life that documents often cannot. Yet, archaeological studies must focus on an appropriate scope and scale, as illustrated by the Petaluma Adobe itself.

⁵²William M. Boggs, "An Interesting Letter Regarding 'The Old Adobe', 1907, Courtesy of Robert A. Poppe," *The Northern Crown* 5.5 (February, 1913); Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo, *The Old Adobe. A Letter from General M. G. Vallejo* [1889, to N. L. Denman] (San Francisco: Duncan H. Olmstead, 1941).

⁵³For details, see Silliman, *Lost Laborers*.

⁵⁴Davis, *Seventy-Five Years*, 135–136.

⁵⁵Simpson, *An Overland Journey*; Vallejo, "Historia"; Vallejo, *The Old Adobe*; Salvador Vallejo, "Notas históricas sobre California: Sonoma, California," 1874, in The Bancroft Library, BANC MSS C-D 22, University of California, Berkeley. Also see Erwin G. Gudde, transl., "Edward Vischer's First Visit to California," *California Historical Society Quarterly* 19.3 (1940): 6–8; Zephyrin Engelhardt, *The Missions and Missionaries of California, Volume IV: Upper California* (San Francisco: The James H. Barry Company, 1915).

⁵⁶Sánchez, *Telling Identities*, 179.

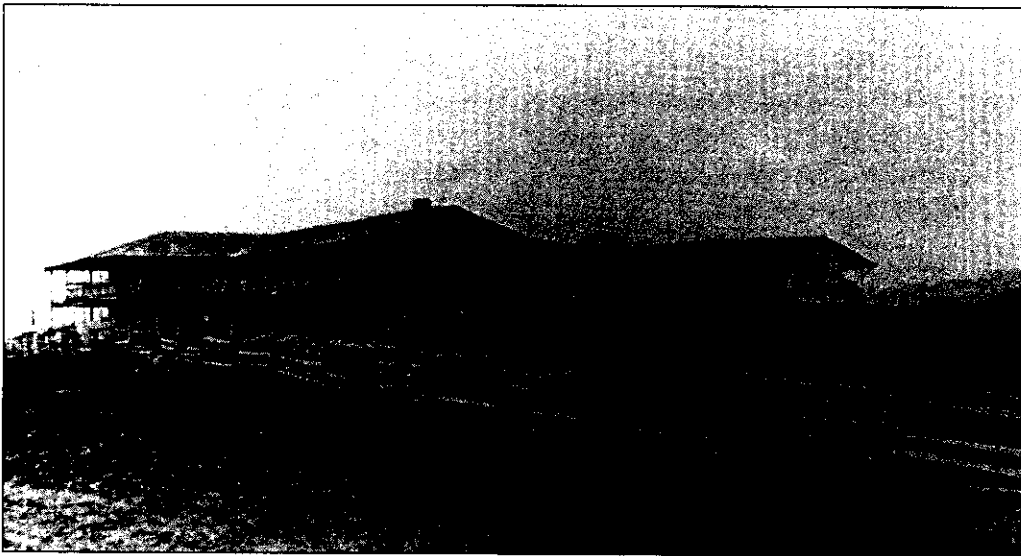


Figure 7. Photograph of Petaluma Adobe showing the crumbling eastern half, circa 1870s. Reproduced by permission of the California Department of Parks and Recreation.

Although the Petaluma Adobe structure stands prominently as a historical landmark, it only obliquely tells the stories of Native Americans living and working on the rancho (Figure 7). It certainly materializes significant Indian labor, but it reveals little about the people who worked its interior spaces and surrounding fields. The main reason stems from the fact that the numerous Native workers resided in locations outside the main adobe building, perhaps in nearby dormitories, adjacent villages, or distant herding camps. As a result, excavations into and around the Petaluma Adobe itself have revealed only hazy glimpses of California Indian life, despite uncovering significant information about the construction history and spatial layout of the building.⁵⁷ Fortunately, the

⁵⁷John S. Clemmer, *The Corrals at Vallejo's Petaluma Adobe State Historical Monument*. (Report on file, California Department of Parks and Recreation, State Archaeological Collections Research Facility, West Sacramento, 1961); Charles L. Gebhardt, *Historic Archaeology at Vallejo's Petaluma Adobe State Historical Monument*. (Report on file, California Department of Parks and Recreation, State Archaeological Collections Research Facility, West Sacramento, 1962); Stephen W. Silliman, *Beneath Historic Floors: Archaeological Investigations of the*

project summarized here identified material remains of residential life from a worker living area just across the stream from the Petaluma Adobe (Figure 8). The archaeological deposits in the excavated area reveal previously unknown features of rancho worker life, and full exposition of these details can be found elsewhere.⁵⁸ Suffice it to say here that the site deposits are

replete with discarded remains from meals, tool use, clothing and ornamentation. The lack of structural evidence, aside from nails, may suggest that the living quarters were ephemeral and more likely to have been traditional thatched homes rather than adobe or plank construction.⁵⁹ Other living areas, such as herding camps, have yet to be identified or studied.

MATERIAL CULTURE AND CULTURAL PRACTICES AT RANCHO PETALUMA

I offer only a summary of findings related to material culture, and I use these as an opening to consider daily lived experience for Native people since the artifacts reveal complex mixtures of indigenous and colonial items. Having been found side-by-side in archaeological deposits, these artifacts reveal the multifaceted way that California Indians struggled with rancho labor, social identities, and personal relationships in the nineteenth century. For the sake of space, I forego

Petaluma Adobe Seismic Retrofit Project. Submitted to California Department of Parks and Recreation, State Archaeological Collections Research Facility, West Sacramento (Berkeley, CA: Archaeological Research Facility, 1999); Adan E. Treganza, *Archaeological Investigation of the Vallejo Adobe, Petaluma Adobe State Park Historical Monument*. (Report on file, California Department of Parks and Recreation, State Archaeological Collections Research Facility, West Sacramento, 1958).

⁵⁸Silliman, *Lost Laborers*.

⁵⁹Silliman, "Colonial Worlds," 145–146.



Figure 8. Photograph of archaeological site at the Petaluma Adobe State Historic Park, 2004. *Photo by author.*

discussion of the food remains, even though those provide unparalleled information about provisioning practices of grains and meat, lack of personal gardens for Native workers, use of both wild plants and cultigens, consumption of wild game and livestock, fishing, mollusk gathering, labor scheduling and changes to the local landscape.⁶⁰

Stone tools and their associated manufacturing debris comprised one of the largest quantities of recovered artifacts, numbering over 2,500. Including both chipped and ground stone implements, these objects spoke of direct connections between rancho workers and their precontact tool traditions and social landscape. The material

evidence indicated that Native people at Rancho Petaluma used a variety of raw materials such as obsidian and chert, worked rock material at the site to produce both on-the-spot flake tools and formal bifacial tools (e.g., arrow points), and obtained their stone resources—obsidian in particular—from a number of geological sources quite removed from the rancho property.⁶¹ The projectile points demonstrated aspects of hunting, the flake tools suggested a range of cutting and scraping tasks, and the ground stones illuminated a continued reliance on mortar-and-pestle and some grindingstone-and-milling-slab tech-

⁶⁰Silliman, "Colonial Worlds," 263–328; Silliman, *Lost Laborers*, chapter 6.

⁶¹Silliman, "Using a Rock"; Stephen W. Silliman, "Obsidian Studies and the Archaeology of Nineteenth-Century Western North America," *Journal of Field Archaeology*, in press.



Figure 9. Photograph of select obsidian projectile points found during excavation. Photo by author.

nology (Figure 9). The latter artifacts are of local origin and not the kind transported from Mexico and often found in colonial California sites.⁶² The stone tools demonstrate not just adherence to traditional practices of technology and food preparation, but active attempts to render those practices meaningful and persistent in changed times and difficult circumstances. Stone tools were made and used despite the availability of metal implements.

Glass artifacts were also numerous. Deriving almost exclusively from bottles, these glass fragments pointed to a variety of consumption practices related to alcohol, condiments, and medicines. Alcohol bottles predominated, and these may evidence the common *ranchero* practice of providing alcohol (*aguardiente* in southern California) to Native workers as “payment.” Nothing close to a complete bottle was ever

⁶²Barbara Voss, “Culture Contact and Colonial Practices: Archaeological Traces of Daily Life in Early San Francisco,” *Boletín: The Journal of the California Mission Studies Association* 20.1 (2003): 70.

recovered, meaning that the roughly 3,300 pieces are small, although often diagnostic of bottle type. Interestingly, a small quantity of these glass bottle shards show evidence of intentional modification in Native hands. No formal tools hand-chipped from glass were discovered, but a few glass pieces exhibit evidence of having been sharpened and used. The pattern contrasts with other Native-occupied sites in nineteenth century California—such as Colony Ross, Mission Santa Cruz, and Mission San Antonio—where California Indian residents used bottle and window glass as a raw material for tool production.⁶³ The fact that Native workers at Petaluma did not make formal tools out of glass when they clearly desired and made such items out of rock denotes the material significance retained by the stone sources and the social significance of the trade and access required to obtain them.

Native workers also used beads for embroidery and bodily decoration, given the more than 1,300 glass beads found at the site. Rather than indicating trade per se as their common name, “trade beads,” tends to convey, the beads relate more to labor payments. Approximately two-thirds of the glass beads are white, a pattern that distinguishes this site from other Native-occupied sites from the early nineteenth century at Franciscan missions or at the Russian colony of Ross where percentages of white beads are balanced by larger

⁶³Rebecca S. Allen, *Native Americans at Mission Santa Cruz, 1791–1834: Interpreting the Archaeological Record*. Perspectives in California Archaeology, Volume 5. (Los Angeles: Institute of Archaeology, University of California, Los Angeles, 1998); Robert L. Hoover and Julia Costello, eds., *Excavations at Mission San Antonio 1976–1978* (Los Angeles: Institute of Archaeology, University of California, 1985); Lightfoot, Martínez, and Schiff, “Daily Practices”; Stephen W. Silliman, “European Origins and Native Destinations: Historical artifacts from the Native Alaskan Village and Fort Ross Beach Sites,” in *The Archaeology and Ethnohistory of Fort Ross, Volume 2: The Native Alaskan Neighborhood, A Multiethnic Community at Colony Ross*, eds. Kent Lightfoot, Ann Schiff, and Thomas Wake. Contributions of the Archaeological Research Facility 55. (Berkeley: University of California, 1997), Figure 7.10.

proportions of black, red, or blue beads.⁶⁴ These latter colors do occur at Petaluma, but together they comprise less than one-third of the collection. Clearly, white beads were preferred by Native workers, rancho supervisors, or both. One possible explanation for the pattern is that the large number of white glass beads relates directly and inversely to the small number—two to be exact—of white clamshell disk beads. Perhaps color denoted the value of these beads, resulting in the diminution of clamshell disk bead production or trade with the substitution of glass. On the other hand, perhaps the large number of white glass beads indicates their lack of importance and inconsequential discard, while the only two shellfish beads indicate the efforts made by workers to not lose such valued Native products.

California Indian people on this rancho adorned themselves with more than glass beads. They used incised bird bone tubes for bodily adornment (Figure 10). In addition, a large, polished mammal bone tube might have been used for personal adornment or as a ritual object for curing. To complement these products crafted by indigenous techniques, Native people also had access to manufactured clothing of various sorts. Metal hasps, copper alloy buttons, bone and ceramic buttons, and metal buckles suggest that such attire made its way into Native hands through labor payment of new or, more likely, second-hand articles.

To complement the metal buttons, hasps, and buckles, a range of other metal artifacts entered the Native material repertoire at Rancho Petaluma. Fragments of pails and kettles point to

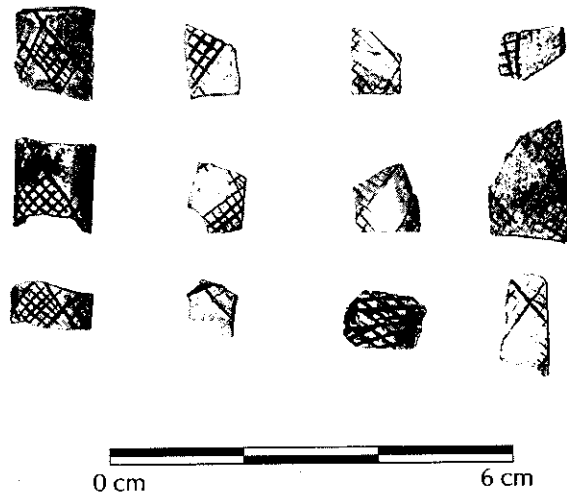


Figure 10. Photograph of incised bird bone tube fragments found during excavation. Photo by author.

the use of metal containers, files and rasps reveal tool use, and flatware indicates some interest in eating or serving utensils. About 500 nails of various shapes, sizes, and composition littered the site's deposits. Firearm parts and ammunition, particularly lead shot, hint at the use of some guns by Native workers. All of these reveal the availability of metal in the daily lives of Native residents and workers, rendering the stone tools mentioned above all the more notable as active materializations of Native cultural life and perhaps identity.

Finally, a handful of sewing items such as scissors and thimbles may have had critical importance (Figure 11). Although assigned by the supervisors to sewing and weaving tasks, Native women found sewing items useful in their own houses and seemed to have actively associated with their labor duty when they returned home at the end of a work day. That is, they may have used the sewing items to symbolize aspects of new identities. In contrast, not a single metal hatchet or knife (other than one piece of tableware) was found, despite the rancho's and male workers'

⁶⁴Lester A. Ross, "Analysis of Glass Beads from Santa Inés Mission," in *Santa Inés Mission Excavations: 1986-1988*, ed. Julia Costello (Salinas, CA: Coyote Press, 1989), 149-161; Lester A. Ross, "Glass and Ceramic Trade Beads from the Native Alaskan Neighborhood," in *The Archaeology and Ethnohistory of Fort Ross*, eds. Lightfoot, Schiff and Wake, Figure 8.12; Allen, *Native Americans at Mission Santa Cruz*, Tables 7.2, 7.3; Clement W. Meighan, "Trade Beads," in *Excavations at Mission San Antonio*, eds. Hoover and Costello, 56-63.

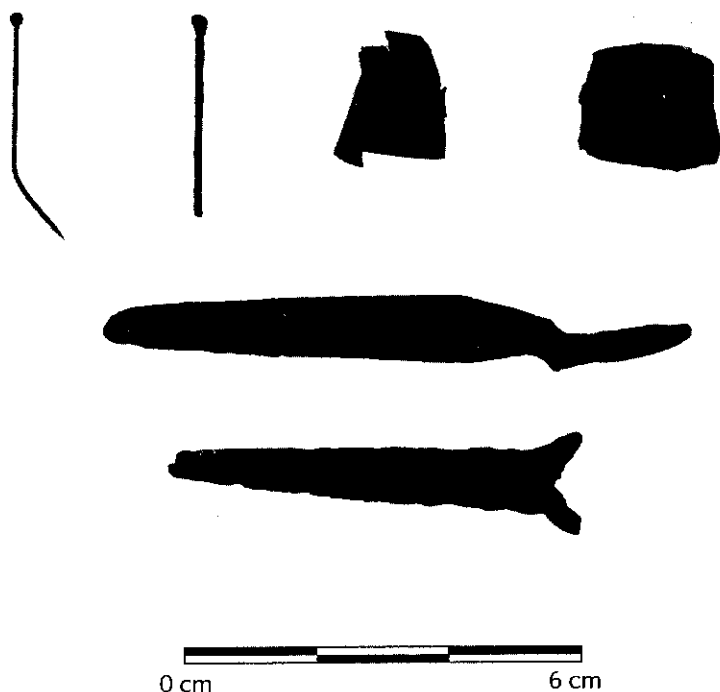


Figure 11. Photograph of needle, pin, thimbles, and scissors found during excavation. *Photo by author.*

focus on livestock butchery. Men did not introduce these tools into the residential sphere, either because Vallejo's site managers tightly controlled these implements or because indigenous men simply had no desire to bring the symbols of labor into their domestic relationships. The pattern clearly contradicts the common misconception that Native Americans readily adopted metal tools when they gained access to them.⁶⁵ Instead, the technological and practical response is contextual, gendered, and closely related to labor relations.

Although not as numerous as metal or glass, pottery sherds were recovered in the Native living area. As with glass, not a single complete vessel was discovered or could be reconstructed from the small fragments, a pattern reaffirming the

⁶⁵Silliman, "Agency, Practical Politics," Silliman, "Using a Rock."

prominence of refuse deposits. Numbering less than 400 pieces, these ceramics represented British and American earthenware, Asian and European stoneware and Asian porcelain. They revealed no modification as raw material, so Native Americans living in this area may have used these as whole ceramic vessels, albeit in very limited quantities. According to the available archaeological and historical records, Native workers at Rancho Petaluma did not manufacture earthenware pottery, unlike their contemporaries in southern California. This comes as little surprise since ceramic production was not part of the precontact material practices of California Indians in this area and since Vallejo was not interested in siphoning off rancho labor for producing goods that he could easily purchase in the burgeoning San Francisco area. Based on the archaeological evidence, Native people on the rancho had no access to the popular Alta California ceramics known as galera (lead-glazed) and majolica (tin-glazed), stemming from the likely absence of these wares even in Vallejo's own dining room. The timing, distance from Mexico, and proximity to a growing market in Yerba Buena (San Francisco) weighed against these wares making it to Petaluma. Although not truly ceramics, tobacco pipes made of fired clay were also used by Native people on-site, as represented by a handful of stem and bowl fragments.

In sum, the material culture indicates a creative mixture of introduced and traditional elements for Native people on the colonial rancho. Side by side in the Rancho Petaluma archaeological deposits, fish bones and glass beads, obsidian arrow points and metal scissors, charred acorns and machine-cut iron nails, incised bird bone tubes and mass-produced stoneware were found. These findings offer physical evidence of everyday practices of cooking, doing chores, wearing ornaments, maintaining structures, and discarding trash, but they also speak to cultural, technological, and social realms. In these spaces of daily life,

California Indian people negotiated their place in the nineteenth century colonial world of the rancho. Although living under duress, Native Americans on this rancho used material culture in active efforts to make their way through a rigid and harsh colonial world. Similarly, the “introduced” and “traditional” artifacts should not be tabulated side-by-side to create an index of acculturation because this process denies the complex nuances of individual struggles with identity and practice. Instead, the items must be contextualized with one another and with the insights gleaned from archival sources to access the realities of lived experience for California Indian people. When incorporating new things or ignoring old ones, Native people on Rancho Petaluma were not trying to become Californio or European in the nineteenth century nor were they trying to discard tradition; they were redefining what it meant to be Indian.

CONCLUSION

This article has served to outline briefly a labor framework for studying California Indian people on nineteenth century ranchos and to provide a summary of archaeological and historical research at Rancho Petaluma as an example of that approach. Labor defined a core experience of Native people on Rancho Petaluma, as it did on many other ranchos along the western half of Alta California, and we have little hope of coming to terms with Native life in these colonial settings without foregrounding it in research. The implications for California mission studies are also clear, not only with respect to labor, but also in terms of diachronic perspective. Many ranchos succeeded the missions after secularization, and Native people frequently left the dismantled religious institutions to work for rancheros. Studying ranchos offers a longer-term perspective to mission studies by exploring what happened next in the story of Native American culture change and continuity, an element recognized by Roberta Greenwood fif-

teen years ago.⁶⁶ Archaeological mission studies provide a solid template for comparing the effects of colonial labor, material goods, food availability and social control on Native populations.⁶⁷ The Rancho Petaluma case suggests that scholars and the general public are mistaken when they claim that the end of the missions meant the end of structure and culture for California Indians along the colonized coast and nearby interior, for the material culture tells a different story of persistence. Many of the material practices and items noted for Rancho Petaluma parallel those in earlier Native mission households—continued use of stone tools, adoption of ceramic and glass items for various purposes including raw material, and the incorporation of domesticated crops and livestock into the diet without the full replacement of native species.

Considering social agency in rancho studies is also crucial. Ranchos harbored complex situations for laborer, overseer, and rancho family members alike, and the settings need to be respected for this complexity. Respect for the voices and struggles of Californios and Mexican-Californians, many whose words were suppressed in the aftermath of the United States occupation of California, has been reasserted in recent publications.⁶⁸ I

⁶⁶Greenwood, “The California Ranchero,” 463.

⁶⁷For example: Allen, *Native Americans*; Julia Costello, *Santa Inés Mission Excavations, 1986–1988*; Julia Costello, “Variability and Economic Change in the California Missions: An Historical and Archaeological Case Study,” (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Santa Barbara, 1990); James Deetz, “Archaeological Investigations at La Purísima Mission,” *UCLA Archaeological Survey Annual Report* 5 (1963): 163–208; Paul Farnsworth, “The Economics of Acculturation in the Spanish Missions of Alta California,” in *Research in Economic Anthropology, Volume 11*, ed. Barry Isaac (Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, 1989), 217–249; Paul Farnsworth, “Missions, Indians, and Cultural Continuity,” *Historical Archaeology* 26.1 (1992): 22–36; Glenn J. Farris, *Archaeological Testing in the Neophyte Family Housing Area at Mission San Juan Bautista, California* (Report on file, California Department of Parks and Recreation, State Archaeological Collections Research Facility, West Sacramento, 1991); Hoover and Costello, eds. *Excavations at Mission San Antonio*.

⁶⁸Genaro Padilla, *My History, Not Yours: The Formation of Mexican American Autobiography* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993); Sánchez, *Telling Identities*.

seek only to extend that un-silencing to California Indians. Some workers participated willingly in ranchos while others fought vigorously to escape them. To achieve historical accuracy and to interpret a plurality of past experiences, we need to recognize that both situations involve people making active choices and making do. Typically, Native Americans in California are seen as active players in history only when they resisted violently or landed in archives as named individuals, but these two situations capture only part of the story. The latter forms of resistance—stealing horses, battling colonial militias—often generate the most public attention, but they were frequently not the chief ways that indigenous people resisted, or sought their own way through colonial worlds. We need to acknowledge as much social agency in those individuals who sought a place in the colonial world as with those who resisted it outright.⁶⁹

To achieve these broad goals, research must be a collaborative effort between archaeologists, historians, and Indian descendent communities. We need to combine the insights of archival sources with the material grounding of archaeological data, and we need to compare the documentary account of past activities with the actual remains produced from doing them. My hope is that the Petaluma Adobe case will succeed as just such a case. Using only one of these resources hinders our ability to see the past in its broadest scope or to piece together its most specific manifestations. Similarly, researchers must recognize that Native American communities hold stories about these

⁶⁹Hackel, "Land, Labor, and Production," 124; see also notions of "passive resistance" in Jackson and Castillo, *Indians, Franciscans*.

colonial pasts and may or may not see value in our resurrecting them through archives and dirt. It behooves us to find out and to involve them in our research endeavors. As William Mason poignantly reminded us, "When we remember the blissful era of the ranchos, often romanticized, we must remember what it cost the Indians of California."⁷⁰

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⁷⁰Mason, "Alta California's Colonial," 177.