

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

CIRCUITS OF EMPIRE:

THE CALIFORNIA GOLD RUSH AND THE MAKING OF AMERICA'S PACIFIC

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO

THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

BY

MINYONG LEE

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

JUNE 2018

To My Loving Parents,

Lee Jae Eun and Yim You Kyoung

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements.....	v
Abstract	vii
List of Figures.....	ix
Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1. Colonizing the Pacific: Indigenous Labor and the Settler Colonial Societies in California and Hawaii After 1848	27
1.1. California before 1848: Indians, Kanakas, and Settlers	31
1.2. Anglo-American Settler Colonialism and the Freedom to Move in California.....	38
1.3. The California Gold Rush and (Settler) Colonialism in Hawaii	50
1.4. Indians, Native Hawaiians, and Anglo-American Settlers in California after 1850.....	61
Chapter 2. Coasting along the Golden Shore: Anglos, Chileans, and the Ideas of Race and Development on the Pacific Coast.....	73
2.1. Around-the-Horn Voyages: American Travelers in South America.....	75
2.2. Unexpected Development: American Observers in Chilean Seaports.....	82
2.3. Chilean Response to American Maritime Traffic and California Gold.....	88
2.4. Claiming the Future of California: Chilean Miners in California	95
2.5. A Paradox of Development: A Chilean Understanding of Race and Civilization.....	104
Chapter 3. Imagining Conquest, Engineering Empire: Gold-Rush Transit and U.S. Empire-building on the Isthmus	121
3.1. Visualizing the Isthmus: American Travelers' Narratives of the Transit	126
3.2. Traffic and Transportation as the Civilizing Influence.....	139
3.3. Imagining Wars of Conquest and the Blurred Boundaries of Empire.....	145
3.4. Seeing and Being Seen: Local Understandings of the Gold-Rush Transit	151

Chapter 4. From the Ruins of El Dorado: Filibusters, Fortune Seekers, and Popular Circuits of Empire	163
4.1. Dreaming of a Grander California: A Localized Debate on Territorial Expansion.....	169
4.2. Filibusters, Rumors, and Settler-Driven Expansionism	173
4.3. Searching for a “Second California”: Californians in William Walker’s Nicaragua.....	183
4.4. Ho! For the Fraser River: Californian Transmigration and the Specter of Filibusters.....	191
Chapter 5. The World Steamships Made: Pacific Crossings and California at the Onset of the American Empire, c.1860-1898	208
5.1. Establishing Transpacific Steamship Connections.....	212
5.2. Steamship Company, U.S. Navy, and the Colonization of the Pacific Islands	221
5.3. The Economics of the Transpacific Steam Transport.....	228
5.4. California and the Steamship Connections across the Pacific.....	233
5.5. The Pacific Mail Steamship Company and Chinese Immigration.....	236
5.6. At the Turn of the Century: Steamships and California’s Pacific Connections	250
Epilogue	257
Bibliography.....	263

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

When I first heard the proverbial joke among academics that a good dissertation is a done dissertation, it was not entirely comforting, for there were times that I was not sure my dissertation would ever be done. This dissertation is now done and I hope it contains slightly more than just the quality of being done. As I am finally writing this, perhaps the most fun part of the dissertation, I must risk repeating another cliché and say this dissertation is a co-creation of many individuals who guided, mentored, and encouraged me along the way. First I want to thank my chair, Ramón A. Gutiérrez, who sustained my whole research and writing process through his unyielding support and firm conviction in my abilities. He spent many thankless hours meticulously reading my drafts and gave both far-reaching and detailed advices on how to improve them. Ramón has been a role model not only for historical research and writing but also for how to organize life and manage time. My readers, Matthew Briones and Amy Lippert, offered crucial guidance and mentorship far beyond the capacity of a dissertation committee. Training I received from Julie Saville and Jim Sparrow in U.S. history seminars also proved indispensable throughout my scholarly pursuits. My mentors in college, Professors Bae Youngsoo and Jou Kyung-Chul at Seoul National University, deserve special recognition for teaching me the joys and challenges of being a historian. I would have been a very different scholar without the inspiration and insights I drew from all of them.

Graduate school friends at the University of Chicago were a huge part of my growth as a person and as a scholar. Many of them read various portions of my work and gave thoughtful and constructive comments, and I regret I cannot thank them all individually. I thank all my colleagues in the U.S. History Workshop (née Social History Workshop) for helping me write not only by reading and commenting on my own work but also by sharing theirs and facilitating lively conversations

about a wide range of topics in American history. I particularly appreciate the camaraderie and companionship of Ashley Finigan, Sonia Gomez, Kai Parker, Guy Mount, and Christopher Kindell during our summer writing group. I would also like to express my gratitude for the enduring friendship of So Hye Kim, without whom my eight years in Hyde Park would have been much lonelier and far less entertaining. I will dearly miss our pointless outings and long late-night chats.

My doctoral studies received generous financial support from the Korea Foundation of Advanced Studies. The University of Chicago History Department, Social Sciences Division, and Graduate Council funded my research trips at various points of my dissertation research, as did the Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkeley. The Center for the Study of Race, Politics, and Culture provided not only financial support but also a welcoming community and a safe haven during my last years of dissertation writing. I am also grateful to have received help from numerous archivists and librarians at the Bancroft Library; the California Historical Society, San Francisco, California; the Huntington Library, San Marino, California; the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut; the Newberry Library, Chicago, Illinois; and the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

My family in Korea has been a constant source of love, confidence, and hope during my years in Chicago, regardless of the distance and time difference. My brother Juyong and sister-in-law Jingyung regularly reminded me about the life outside of grad school, while my young niece Howon frequently afforded me welcome distractions from work. The final acknowledgment and the biggest thanks should go to my parents as their due. I would not have chosen the path of a career scholar without unconditional support and encouragement I received from them since a young age. Their love and faith still humbles me. I hope they enjoy this small fruit of their labor.

Chicago, May 2018

ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the maritime transportation networks of California and their impacts on U.S. imperialism in the decades between the U.S.-Mexican War and the Spanish-American War, or from 1848 to 1898. It argues that the discovery of gold in the Sierra Nevada foothills in January 1848 provided a critical boost to American empire-building outside the North American continent. Sea routes to San Francisco carried American gold seekers from the Atlantic coast via ports in the Caribbean, Central and South America, and the islands of the Pacific. Maritime transportation thus created transnational sites of social interactions during the California Gold Rush (1848-c.1860), where mid-century Anglo-Americans formulated, revised, and circulated their ideas about foreign lands and people. The circuits of human movements for the riches in California became a driving force of U.S. overseas expansion, not only by creating a material foundation of imperial expansion in the U.S.-built transportation infrastructure, but also by reinforcing the cultural basis for empire. Anglo-American settlers and travelers reaffirmed and consolidated their understanding of racial superiority and territorial entitlement through their on-the-ground travel experiences and first-hand witness accounts.

The informal, sociocultural production of imperial visions and realities by these private actors helped advance American interests in the Pacific Ocean even after gold fever subsided. Post-rush movements of ex-Californians, through filibustering expeditions against Mexico and Nicaragua and Anglo-American settler migration to Hawaii, Chile, and British Columbia, constantly challenged the boundaries of nation and sustained visions of empire. The Pacific Mail Steamship Company, an undeniable beneficiary of California's growth, operated as an informal agent of colonization in the Pacific from 1867 on, when the inauguration of the company's transpacific shipping route ignited

debates over seizing the islands of the Pacific to build coaling depots. At the same time, steam-powered ocean transport brought a massive number of Chinese immigrants, leading to the immigration control and delimitation of the American nation in the late-nineteenth century. In the end, this study of Gold Rush-induced transnational connections provides a window into the ways in which American people dealt with the problem of mobility and the emergence of empire during the decades leading up to 1898, when the United States became an overseas empire with the annexation of Hawaii and the occupation of the Philippines.

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. An 1849 map of the Gold Regions of California.....	9
Figure 2. <i>Outline History of an Expedition to California</i> (1849), part.....	128
Figure 3. “Adventures of a Gold Hunter,” part, <i>Harper’s Weekly</i> 2 (1858).....	129
Figure 4. Frank Marryat, “Crossing the Isthmus” in <i>Mountains and Molehills</i> (1855).....	154
Figure 5. “Map of the World...Showing the Geographical Relation of New York and the Rest of the Universe,” <i>Harper’s Weekly</i> 12 (1868).....	216
Figure 6. “Commercial and Geographical Relations of New York to Europe and Asia,” <i>Harper’s Weekly</i> 12 (1868).....	218
Figure 7. A Map showing the Routes of the Pacific Mail Steamship Company, c.1875.....	222
Figure 8. “Chinese Emigration to America,” <i>Harper’s Weekly</i> 20 (1876).....	241
Figure 9. “Sunday Service on board a Pacific Mail Steamship,” <i>Harper’s Weekly</i> 21 (1877).....	243
Figure 10. A Cartoon depicting San Francisco Chinatown and Chinese Immigration, ca.1890.....	252

INTRODUCTION

“I do not know what to [w]rite that would interest you,” R. J. Woolsey, a young white man from Connecticut, contemplated as he penned a letter to his parents from San Francisco in 1854. He went on to describe various things he thought might interest them:

The Japan treaty you will hear of before this reaches you. There is a getting up an expedition to go and take Sonora, President Wm. Walker...declares that he is President of the province. Steamboat Men have thrown there [*sic*] stock all in together [*sic*] and formed a combination. It is one of the worst Monopolies in the world.¹

This narration of the events of the summer of 1854 summarizes how international-minded Californians may have envisioned the world around them in the mid-nineteenth century. New commercial opportunities beckoned in East Asia, thanks to Commodore Matthew Perry's show of U.S. naval force against Japan in 1853-54. Equally ambitious “filibusters,” who were American soldiers of fortune with a dream of self-aggrandizement and vague, but persistent belief in Manifest Destiny, were invading lands governed by less than stable states in the Americas. Monopolistic steamship companies had already begun to rouse the public's suspicions only a few years into their shipping operations along the Pacific Coast of North America. That these separate currents were converging in a way that captured a young American man's attention a half-decade after California became American territory suggests the presence of broader transnational networks that crisscrossed the Pacific in which the United States had just begun to play a prominent role.

Unbeknownst to Woolsey, the three events described in his letter also had one thing in common: their connection to the historical development of California's maritime transportation

¹ R. J. Woolsey to his parents, 12 June 1854, R. J. Woolsey Letters to His Parents, Western Americana Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, CT (hereafter BRBM).

networks. The 1854 treaty with the Japanese government not only opened up a new market for U.S. commerce but also secured a regular supply of coal for American steamships, ensuring fuel for fleets of transpacific steamships yet to come. The merger of the “Steamboat Men” probably referred to an arrangement between the Pacific Mail Steamship Company operating the Panama-San Francisco steamers and Cornelius Vanderbilt’s Accessory Transit Company operating the Nicaragua-San Francisco steamers, fixing rates for shipping and passage.² Though this 1854 collusion was not exactly the birth of the mammoth monopoly, the anti-monopoly sentiment Woolsey expressed in the letter certainly foreshadowed how Americans on the West Coast would come to view steamship companies by the end of the nineteenth century. The position of Nicaragua as a significant transport depot induced the notorious filibuster William Walker in 1855 to intervene in and eventually steal the spoils of the Nicaraguan civil war. The political instability Walker caused in Nicaragua quickly destroyed cargo and passenger traffic on the Accessory Transit Company’s Nicaragua to San Francisco route, concentrating the traffic on the Pacific Mail Steamship Company’s Panama route.

This dissertation argues that the discovery of gold in 1848 reconfigured California’s maritime networks and advanced U.S. imperial projects in places accessible through the Pacific Ocean. As Matthew Frye Jacobson has postulated, immigration and imperialism are often two sides of the same coin; both predicated on how the “United States encounters foreign peoples.”³ The California Gold Rush became a crucial juncture for such encounters with “the foreign,” because this rush for riches not only brought diverse people to the new Pacific-Coast territory of the United States, but also transported white Americans through foreign lands and seas on their way to and from California. Following the discovery of gold deposits in the Sierra Nevada foothills in January 1848, maritime

² “Consolidation—Combination,” *Sacramento Daily Union*, 5 October 1854.

³ Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Barbarian Virtues: The United States Encounters Foreign Peoples at Home and Abroad, 1876-1917* (New York: Hill & Wang, 2000).

transportation routes quickly linked the port of San Francisco with the Atlantic coast of the United States via ports in the Caribbean, Central and South America, and at times the islands of the Pacific, forcing American gold seekers to interact with Brazilian, Chilean, and Panamanian local residents before they reached the gold fields. These movements were not merely part of a world-wide migration for the rich; they were also part of expanding imperial networks of the United States. By focusing on the human movements over the established transportation routes, this dissertation emphasizes the role of Anglo-American settlers in creating and consolidating the American Empire. Maritime transportation networks created sites of social interactions, in which mid-century Americans witnessed racial differences, structured their conceptions of cultural hierarchy and definitions of civilization, dreamed of more conquests, and ultimately, reaffirmed their imperial ambitions as a God-given destiny.

The passenger traffic to California's gold fields and the trade networks formed to supply its bursting population complemented and further inspired the contemporaneous interests of U.S. government and capitalists in markets and territories overseas. The acquisition of the Pacific Coast and subsequent fast-track statehood of California hastened government involvement in the expansion into areas across the Pacific Ocean. Various state-sponsored ventures took more Americans across the Pacific, such as Commodore Matthew Perry's military "opening" of Japan, the commercial treaties with Qing China, the 1856 Guano Islands Act, which allowed American sea captains to claim uninhabited islands with proven deposits of the bird excrement used as fertilizer, and the 1867 Alaska Purchase, which defined the final shape of U.S. continental territory.⁴ As these state initiatives originated in Washington, D.C., it may seem that California had little to do with their

⁴ Bruce Cumings, *Dominion from Sea to Sea: Pacific Ascendancy and American Power* (New Haven, Yale University: 2009); John C. Perry, *Facing West: Americans and the Opening of the Pacific* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1994). For imperial connotation of the Guano Act, see Christina Duffy Barnett, "The Edges of Empire and the Limits of Sovereignty: American Guano Islands," *American Quarterly* 57 (2005).

origins or consequences. Yet these government actions were stimulated and reinforced by the growth of California. To fully understand the socioeconomic forces that created the American Empire across the Pacific, let us return to the California Gold Rush.

The California Gold Rush (1848-c.1860) and Maritime Transportation

California's Gold Rush, perhaps the single-most dramatic demographic event in U.S. history, began a few months after James Marshall discovered gold flecks at John Augustus Sutter's saw mill in January 1848. The construction of Sutter's mill on the American River, for which Marshall had initially been employed, was never completed; the site was soon overrun by prospectors from adjacent areas. Many of California's older settlers soon abandoned their occupations to search for gold. A Sacramento correspondent to the *Californian*, the first newspaper published in California, estimated in May 1848 that "in less than a year, there will be at least 3,000 people at work at these mines."⁵ It turned out to be a far too moderate projection. Only three months later, the *Californian* reported that there were "about four thousand white persons, besides a number of Indians," working in the gold fields.⁶ The first wave of the "rush" consisted mostly of settlers in other parts of California, drawing native *californios*, California Indians and early Anglo settlers. "Every seaport as far south as San Diego, and every interior town, and nearly every rancho...to the Mission of San Luis [Obispo], south, has become suddenly drained of human beings," reported the *California Star* in June 1848.⁷ Another few thousand American settlers came down from Oregon. Some Yankees came also from the Sandwich Islands, an old moniker widely used for the Hawaiian Islands in the nineteenth

⁵ The *Californian*, 17 May 1848.

⁶ "The Gold Mine," The *Californian*, 14 August 1848.

⁷ The *California Star*, 10 June 1848.

century, with scores of native Hawaiian workers.

It was but the beginning of the massive population shift that followed, bringing drastic transformations to California and beyond in the next decade. A rush of “forty-niners” earnestly started after President James Polk’s address on December 5, 1848, confirming the abundance of gold in California. In 1849 alone, more than 90,000 immigrants poured in California gold fields; about a half of them traveled over land, and the other half by sea. The pre-1848 non-Indian population of California hovered slightly below 20,000.⁸ The California State Census of 1852 counted a total population of 255,122, which included 171,841 counted as white, 2,206 colored, 54,803 foreign residents, and 31,266 “Indians domesticated.”⁹ The Federal Census of 1850 had only reported a free population of 92,597.¹⁰ This more than doubling of California’s population in two years illustrates the speed of consequent social changes during the early years of the rush.

There is no fixed date historians have agreed upon for the end of the Gold Rush.¹¹ Primary

⁸ Thomas O. Larkin, long-time resident of California who served as American consul during the years preceding the U.S.-Mexican War, calculated in January 1849 that “in January 1847 Alta California contained 16- to 18,000 whites.” T. O. Larkin to F. D. Atherton, 19 January 1849, G. P. Hammond (ed.), *The Larkin Papers: Personal, Business, and Official correspondence of Thomas Oliver Larkin, Merchant and United States Consul in California*, Vol. 8 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962), 103.

⁹ *The Seventh Census of the United States* (Washington, D.C.: Robert Armstrong, Public Printer, 1853), 982. The categorization of the federal census did not reflect the local understandings of race or racial groups. The “white” population listed in the censuses must have included *californios* or old-time California residents of Mexican descent, since the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo after the U.S.-Mexican War granted them the whiteness-based U.S. citizenship.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 969.

¹¹ Despite the general public’s romanticizing tendency, historians have diligently documented the complexities of the California Gold Rush, particularly with its complicated consequences on the politics of race, class, and gender. It is impossible to name all the historical work of import here. For a comprehensive introduction of the California Gold Rush, see Rodman Paul, *California Gold: The Beginning of Mining in the Far West* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1947); Malcolm Rohrbough, *Days of Gold: The California Gold Rush and the American Nation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997). For in-depth studies of the society and culture of California during the Gold Rush, see Brian Roberts, *American Alchemy: The California Gold Rush and Middle-Class Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Susan Lee Johnson, *Roaring Camp: The Social World of the California Gold Rush* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2000). For an overview of gold-rush “immigrants” and ethnic diversity, see Sucheng Chan, “A People of Exceptional Character: Ethnic Diversity, Nativism, and Racism in the California Gold Rush,” *California History* 79: 2 (2000); Kenneth N. Owens (ed.), *Riches for all: The California Gold Rush and the World* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002).

social and economic changes happened within first five years after 1848. From 1849 to 1852, the rapid influx of Anglo-American immigrants from the eastern part of the United States established their socio-economic hegemony in California, through violent clashes with “foreign” miners and by drawing on the power of the state exclusively to their benefits.¹² Spanish-speaking miners from Chile, Peru, and Mexico came to California in the thousands in 1848-1850. They faced Anglo-American xenophobic hostilities and state-sponsored persecution in the form of exclusionary taxes. In April 1850, the newly minted state government of California levied a \$20 per month tax on foreign-born to work their gold claims; the enforcement of this law clearly targeted Chilean, Peruvian, Mexican, and French miners. The first Foreign Miners Tax was repealed in 1851, but the damage was done, since many Chilean and Peruvians had by then left California. The Foreign Miners Tax was reinstated in 1852 at \$4 per month, this time mainly targeting the Chinese. The tax and the burgeoning xenophobia did not seem to deter the Chinese; they came by thousands yearly throughout the 1850s.

It is also during the first five-year period after the gold discovery (1848-1852) that surface gold deposits, or placers as they were commonly called, were sufficient for individual or small groups of inexperienced miners to dig gold by panning, a method that involved digging dirt, washing it in a pan, and thus slowly separating the tiny particles from the dirt. This age of gold digging undertaken by independent miners, which dominates the cultural image of a gold rush, was short-lived and already in sharp decline by the mid-1850s. Between 1849 and 1852, while placer mining

¹² The term “Anglo-American” here indicates the intertwined nature of race and nation in the Manifest Destiny era. The belief in the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon race was the dominant component of nineteenth-century American nationalism. My use of the term “Anglo” includes those of not strictly “Anglo-Saxon” background, such as Irish, who claimed whiteness and U.S. citizenship easier in California than in the East. This decision is to delineate the group of new settlers who gained hegemony of the California society after 1849 from the more expansive racial group of “whites.” In the California-Pacific setting, the term “white” includes upper-class Mexicans, Chileans, as well as other European migrants. Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981); Tomás Almaguer, *Racial Fault Lines: The Historical Origins of White Supremacy in California* (Berkeley: University of California, 1994, 2009).

was still at its peak, quartz mining was introduced. It involved digging a tunnel deeper into a “lode,” finding quartz rocks containing gold and crushing them, and then using mercury and water to separate out the gold. From 1853 on, hydraulic mining, a method using high-pressured water cannons to penetrate and disintegrate large rocks into washable dust, increasingly replaced manual and individual methods of placer mining.¹³ Because of their capital investment needs, the emergence of quartz mining and hydraulic mining meant that mining industry gradually became dominated by larger companies comprised of share-holders, often hiring immigrant workers as a cheaper source of labor.¹⁴ The annual yield of the gold produced in California peaked in 1852 and gradually declined, leveling off at around 45 million dollars per year from 1857 on.¹⁵ In many respects, the “Gold Rush proper” ended by the mid-1850s, even though a steadier flow of immigration continued.

I define the “Gold Rush era” to encompass a little more than a decade from 1848 to 1860, to better reflect how the California Gold Rush became a catalytic event for the transformation of California and its maritime connections. Despite the short and explosive transition that often characterizes American cultural memories about the Gold Rush, its impacts went far beyond gold mining in California. The true magnitude of California’s Gold Rush cannot be understood without addressing its international ramifications. Historians indeed have noted the international nature of the rush to California, but they have mostly focused on immigrant groups and the ethnic diversity they created in California to illustrate its international dimensions.¹⁶

¹³ Rohrbough, *Days of Gold*, 202-203; Andrew C. Isenberg, *Mining California: An Ecological History* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2005), 23-51.

¹⁴ Rohrbough, *Days of Gold*, 200-202; Johnson, *Roaring Camp*, 258-274.

¹⁵ Rohrbough, *Days of Gold*, 206. The annual amount of 45 million dollars per year after 1857 still exceeded the total gold production of the year 1850, attesting to the productivity and longevity of California mining industry. Mining remained dominant in Californian economy during the remaining decades of the nineteenth century.

¹⁶ A few recent exceptions are Malcolm Rohrbough, *Rush to Gold: The French and the California Gold Rush, 1848-1854* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013); Aims McGuiness, *Path of Empire: Panama and the California Gold Rush* (Ithaca: Cornell

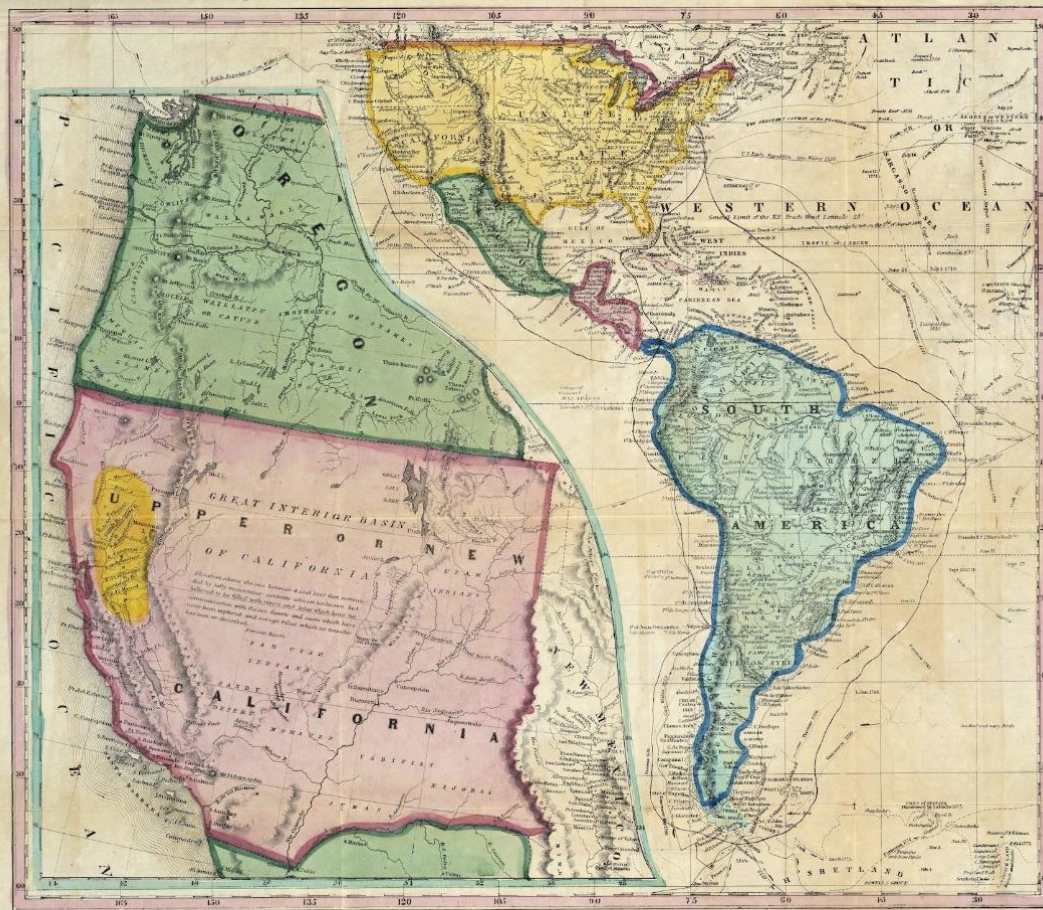
What made the Gold Rush truly international was the emergence of maritime transportation networks throughout and across the Pacific Ocean. Not only did California's gold fields beacon people from all over the world, but the American passenger traffic to and from California depended upon locales outside the United States. American mass migration to the riches from 1849 on resulted in a large-scale passenger traffic traversing foreign territories and international waters. Maritime transportation incorporated places outside the North American continent into the domestic travel circuits of the United States. Conventional wisdom counts three major transportation routes used to reach California: the sailing route around Cape Horn, the steamship route across the Isthmus of Panama, and the overland trail across the plains. While American cultural memory remains largely fixated on the overland trail, the two maritime routes were equally important in actuality. Maps of California's mining region often featured all of North and South Americas in order to include detailed information about these maritime routes (Fig. 1). Forty-niners on ships that sailed around Cape Horn stopped at ports in the Caribbean, Brazil, Chile, and Mexico. The Isthmian route brought Anglo Americans in close contacts with the peoples and cultures of Panama and Nicaragua. Maritime transportation was not only a means to reach California but also a rare opportunity to gather knowledge and form opinions about foreign lands, accessible literally to thousands of Americans, and to an even larger number through letters, journals, and rumors.¹⁷

University Press, 2008); Elizabeth Sinn, *Pacific Crossing: California Gold, Chinese Migration, and the Making of Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2012).

¹⁷ For some of the early maritime histories of the Gold Rush, see James P. Delgado, *To California by Sea: A Maritime History of the California Gold Rush* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1990) and Charles R. Schultz, *Forty-niners' round the Horn* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1999), although these early studies rarely venture into the analysis of sociocultural exchanges during the travels. For works focusing on the foreign traveling experiences of American gold seekers, see Brian Roberts, "'The Greatest and Most Perverted Paradise': The Forty-Niners in Latin America," Kenneth N. Owens (ed.), *Riches for All: The California Gold Rush and the World* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002). See also Roberts, *American Alchemy: The California Gold Rush and Middle-Class Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Albert L. Hurtado, *Intimate Frontiers: Sex, Gender, and Culture in Old California* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1999), Chapter 3 "Crossing the Borders: Sex, Gender, and the Journey to California."

MAP OF THE GOLD REGIONS OF CALIFORNIA.

Showing the Routes via Chagres and Panama, Cape Horn, &c.



IMPORTANT DIRECTIONS

TO PERSONS EMIGRATING TO CALIFORNIA.

ROUTE VIA CHAGRES AND PANAMA.

For the information of those going to California either as Adventurers or Permanent Settlers, it is important that they have some reliable information obtainable, for want of which, the necessary precautions are neglected, which may result in much suffering and disappointment. On account of the great saving of time and distance, this route is chosen by many, and so much so that it is important to know something of the difficulties connected with it. No individual ought to think of engaging in this enterprise, for there will be many circumstances when a friend will be found of essential benefit. It would be well if parties of ten or more should unite who would be devoted, and who would place in each other the confidence which the love of Gold could not destroy. Probably, those who pay their passage and are forced to Chagres, will not find all the accommodations on shipboard to realize their expectations, both from the crowded state of the ship and the fare, and it would be well for all to take in extra supply of money. The Town called Cruces is only a small village of one story houses or rather huts, situated at the mouth of the river of that name, which empties into the Atlantic Ocean, and has a small but secure harbor. The place has a very unhealthy appearance, being situated in the middle of a swamp, and the central value prevailing there would render the scene almost insupportable were it not for logs of wood laid along the shore, for the accommodation of pedestrians. The Climate at this point is very unhealthy—the thermometer ranging from 75 to 85 near the shore—which, with the gradual rains produces bilious remittent and congestive fevers, consequently a short stay is most desirable. The population is about 500. Owing to the great amount of travellers across the Isthmus, no dependence can be placed upon obtaining a proper amount of provisions at Chagres for the journey. Hence, horses, mules, and pack animals are the most desirable to carry. The journey to Panama is made by taking small canoes for a month which has only gone lately to the town of Cruces or Cruces, a distance of about 25 miles, and from there to Panama, about 24 miles by land. The river part of the route formerly cost from one to four dollars (10 dollars each), but when the steamer is there the expense will probably be less. The voyage against waves, rapids, &c. in the vicinity of the river, render walking across most impracticable. Despite the first landing place, in a small village, situated on a small plain on the banks of the river. Cruces

the other landing is a few miles further up, from both of which places are roads leading to Panama, about the same distance, and which take about nine miles from that city. This 24 miles of land route is usually performed on horses or mules, with another mule to carry baggage, and a Mestizo to act as guide. Owing to rains and the face of the country, the progress is slow, as the road is merely a bridle path, and the journey occupies 10 to 15 hours before reaching the city of Panama. Not over 100 to 150 lbs. of baggage can be carried without much extra charge. Panama (in 1848) contained about 7000 inhabitants, but accommodations for travellers are poor, there being only one hotel in the place, and being from ten to four dollars per day. The climate however is much more healthy than at Chagres, but it is dangerous to come out, or live here as it will soon prove fatal to the newcomers. One who leaves early, avoid the sun, keep within doors during the day, refrain from eating fruits, even when ripe, with the exception of oranges, which may be eaten moderately. Do not touch the system, wear flannel next the skin by day and night, avoid aquatic liquors, and it is needless to say, be off the first opportunity. The distance from Panama to San Francisco is about 3400 miles.

ROUTE BY CAPE HORN.

This Route is most acceptable as far as cost and facilities are concerned, but loss of time balances the difference in the price of passage, &c., which varies from one hundred to three hundred dollars according to accommodations. The distance from New York to San Francisco, via Cape Horn is about 12,000 miles, and will occupy nearly five months in making the passage. Notwithstanding this appears to be a long voyage, yet it is, in the present aspect of travel across the Isthmus, and the probable want of vessels from Panama to San Francisco) the shortest route.

ANOTHER ROUTE.

Which is said to be "the cheapest, quickest, and safest" is to take passage is a vessel to New Orlez thence overland to Manchester via Grandrap, Tipton and San Blas; thence either by vessel, or by mule or horse travel by land up the coast. The prevailing danger of being attacked by robbers through Mexico, persons should go in parties of 40 or 50, and may be accompanied in 60 days.

DESCRIPTION OF CALIFORNIA,

OR THE NEW GOLD REGION.

The Gold mines of California were known to have existed in the 16th century, for as early as 1578, about the time Don Phaulx Drake made a voyage to the coast, the Indians were in possession of certain tracts which they knew to be of more than ordinary value, and employed means to deprive the country by crooked means to the Spanish government. The government however, appointed Don Joaquin Salcedo commander of a fleet to explore this region, who made it a valuable report of the country and its mines. The intelligence, however, did not appear to command the attention of the Spanish Court, and its existence was allowed to pass from age to age apparently unnoticed—inserted all this time, it would seem, for discovery by a Yankee merchant, while building a new mill. Already the actors and the scene, which was a happy accident, was in full view to obtain the richest advantages this new field offers.

The geographical position of San Francisco is one of the most desirable in point of commerce, in that no other continent, and no such is destined to be one of the greatest discharging depots in the world.

There is an island about three miles opposite, of about two miles length, between which and the town a good anchorage is afforded for its first discovery, as one of the finest in the world, and is partly owned by that character, even under the narrow view of a mere harbor. But when all the necessary advantages which belong to it—fertile and picturesque dependent country, military and military of climate, connection with the great interior valley of the Sacramento and San Joaquin, its vast resources for ship-building, grain and cattle—then flow of advantages are taken into the account, with its geographical position on the line of communication with Asia, it is not less important for other than a mere harbor, and deserves a particular notice in any account of western California. Its historical position is that of a laborer; its climate is that of southern Italy; settlements upon it for more than half a century attest its fertility; bold shores and mountains give it grandeur; the extent and fertility of its dependent country give it resources for agriculture, commerce, and population. The Bay is separated from the sea by low mountain ranges, and is connected with it by a strait about one mile broad in the narrowest part, and is about 10 miles long from the sea to the bay. It is about 70 miles long and has a coast lining of about 275 miles.

It is divided by straits and projecting points into three separate bays, of which the northern two are called San Pablo and Suisun bays. These two are connected by a strait called Graciosa, about one mile wide and eight or ten fathoms deep. The Suisun is connected with an extensive of the river formed by the junction of the Sacramento and San Joaquin rivers, and thence communicates in connection with the noble valleys of those rivers. The Great Ravine of California is in the Sacramento river, and covers an extent of territory recently estimated from two to six hundred miles in length, north and south, and some sixty east and west. The valley of the Sacramento is probably the most fertile on the Pacific and Gila, as well as the various productions of all kinds, can be at all times obtained with the use of the plough, harrow and hoe in the hands of an industrious man.

The climate of the country has no winter in the valley, but the rainy season and the dry, and is considerably healthy. The rainy season begins in November and continues to the middle of February at the beginning of March; the rest of the year is without rain, but the season from the Sierra Nevada afford all the facilities for irrigation in the heart of July and August. The whole valley abounds with wild cat, horses, deer, sheep, goats, hares, porcupine, water deer, salmon, &c. All the products of the United States, from apples to oranges, from peaches to sugar cane, may be produced in the valley of the Sacramento and San Joaquin rivers.

The places where Gold is found in the greatest abundance at present are on the Sacramento, Feather and Yuba rivers and the American Fork, north and south branches, the Colorado, also in many dry ravines, and indeed on the tops of high hills.

According to the reports of analysts, it is of a superior quality and fineness—and the assay of the U. S. Mint at Philadelphia, prove it to be twenty of one quite as pure as American coin. Much of it has already been sent or brought here, which proves conclusively that the region of California is possessed of vast mines of gold and other metals, which will doubtless enrich the country, and be the means of populating the portion of it, to a degree not heretofore anticipated. Such a California—rich, fertile, most picturesque and beautiful region, for an extent upon the face of the earth. Such is the El Dorado of the gold mine; and such is the great acquisition of the law with Mexico.

Figure 1. An 1849 map of the Gold Regions of California, prominently featuring the two maritime transportation routes with concrete directions for migrants (Source: California State Library, Sacramento, California)

A focus on maritime transportation networks also sheds light on the aftermath of the gold diggings, as disillusioned miners not only traveled *to* California but also *from* California, to the Hawaiian Islands, the Pacific Northwest, South America, or East Asia. The transoceanic networks created by the discovery of gold in California soon was augmented by similar finds around the Pacific, in southeastern Australia (1851), in the Fraser River region of British Columbia (1858), and in New Zealand (1861). The peopling of California further provided incentives for installing faster, more reliable transportation across the Pacific Ocean. With the introduction of a regular steamship route between San Francisco and Hong Kong in 1867, ideas and plans for direct maritime routes to the “China market” that had long seduced American politicians and capitalists met with California’s growth. Transportation links the Gold Rush era to the period beyond to illuminate the creation of the American Pacific, long before the annexation of the Philippines and Hawaii christen the United States as a Pacific Empire.

Migration, Networks, Pacific Connections

To understand maritime transportation networks, one must first acknowledge their temporal and amorphous characteristics. Unlike land transport, which is dependent on the construction of roads, highways, and railroad tracks, maritime transport does not maintain physical forms of connection. Ships sailed between ports when there were profits to be made, either through passenger traffic or trade goods. Maritime transportation networks were therefore a mutable construction that existed only when there were constant and sizable comings and goings in realities. Ocean-going vessels were visible manifestations of existing socio-economic communication between two remote locales. The establishment of regular steamship connections created more or less stable and tangible inter-ports networks that may be akin to railroads, first between San Francisco and

Panama starting in 1848, and later between San Francisco and Yokohama, Hong Kong, Honolulu, and Sydney. Even without more solid connections by steamships, the networks across the ocean were often sustained by constant communication through migration and commerce. This was particularly true of the around-the-Cape Horn traffic of gold-seekers from the eastern seaboard of the United States to San Francisco, but less conspicuous maritime networks also connected Alta California to Honolulu, Hawaii and Valparaíso, Chile before 1848.

In conceptualizing California's maritime connections, this dissertation engages the recent surge of academic interest in "Pacific Worlds."¹⁸ While I do not argue for the timeless existence of a Pacific World, it is still necessary to point out the existence of transnational, transregional connections that linked California to the world across the ocean before the U.S.-Mexican War, in order to better grasp the transformative impact of gold-rush maritime traffic. I maintain that cross-oceanic networks—both east-west and north-south—connected California's early settlers to societies adjacent to the Pacific, the connections manifested in the groups of migrants arriving in the gold fields before forty-niners. In the summer of 1848, an observer counted four distinct ethnic

¹⁸ Matt K. Matsuda, *The Pacific Worlds: A History of Seas, Peoples, and Cultures* (2012) is the first comprehensive work that shows what the "Pacific World" history entails. Matsuda has written an AHR Forum article which succinctly encapsulates the "inside-out" approach to the "Pacific World." See Matsuda, "AHR Forum: The Pacific," *American Historical Review* 111 (2006). One of the most important contributions of the new "Pacific World" studies is the "bottom-up" and "inside-out" approach, represented by the inclusion of Pacific Islanders as significant actors of history. The term "Pacific World," as does any other designation of a transnational regional entity that encompasses a large geographic mass, emphasizes the degree of mobility, accessibility, and fluidity throughout the designated geographic area. The bird-eye view of such transnational connections in the Pacific was not an uncharted territory in historical studies; it had often been referred to by earlier generations of scholars as the "Pacific Rim" or the "American Pacific." The "Pacific Rim" concept, having been originated from public policy or diplomacy circles, has been since criticized by historians for its vagueness and arbitrariness. See Arif Dirlik (ed.), *What is in a Rim? Critical Perspectives on the Pacific Region Idea* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993). For an earlier branch of the Pacific studies predicated on the studies of European empires, see Dennis Flynn, Arturo Giráldez, and James Sobredo, "In Search of Periodization for Pacific History: An Introduction," in *Studies in Pacific History: Economics, Politics and Migration* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2002). The longstanding negligence toward the islands of the Pacific Ocean, especially apparent in the "Rim" studies, partly explains the renewed interests in the Pacific World of this past decade. Yet the notion of an integrated "world," following the model established by the Atlantic World studies, also received its fair share of criticisms. The use of the concept Pacific World often presupposes an integrative oceanic realm with equal degrees of inter-connectedness among the joined localities, to a degree eclipsing other geographically contiguous connections, which is certainly not the case I argue for the California-Hawaii or California-Chile connections.

groups in the gold fields: California Indians, *californios* or Californians of Spanish and Mexican descent, Anglo-American settlers, and native Hawaiians, then called “Sandwich Islanders.”¹⁹ Some also arrived from Chile in 1848, as indicated by a newspaper obituary notifying the death in San Francisco of a Thomas Adams, “late from the gold mines, formerly of Valparaíso,” in August 1848.²⁰ These pre-1849 gold seekers from outside California received the news of gold discovery earlier than Americans, thanks to Mexican California’s mercantile networks.

Prior to 1848, California’s broader transpacific networks were maintained first by Euro-American merchants and missionaries, and by seafaring Pacific Islanders, particularly Hawaiians. Even though the majority of Hawaiian migrants to the Pacific Coast of North America went further north in the employ of the British Hudson Bay Company, a small number of Hawaiians, usually called “Kanakas,” worked alongside California Indians in the ranches of Euro-American traders like John Augustus Sutter.²¹ In relatively isolated, widely dispersed, and thinly populated northern California society before 1848, American settlers often utilized the proximity of the Hawaiian Islands to their benefits, forming mercantile and kinship ties with their fellow American compatriots in Hawaii and seeking additional indigenous workers. Similarly, American merchants based in Valparaíso, Chile, then the major seaport on the southern Pacific coast and the primary port of call for American whalers before 1848, were often in conversation with those in California and Hawaii.

These older maritime networks proved useful in the chaotic years after 1849, when the enduring commercial connections with Hawaii and Chile sustained the rapidly populated California

¹⁹ The *California Star*, 10 June 1848.

²⁰ The *Californian*, 14 August 1848.

²¹ Richard H. Dillon, “Kanaka Colonies in California,” *Pacific Historical Review* 24 (February 1955); Barman and Bruce McIntyre Watson, *Leaving Paradise: Indigenous Hawaiians in the Pacific Northwest, 1787-1898* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2006); Janice K. Duncan, *Minority without a Champion: Kanakas on the Pacific Coast, 1788-1850* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society, 1972).

society. The years between 1848 and 1852, California economy depended on the imports from these two locales.²² The boom economy created by gold linked California to a sphere of global commerce and cultural exchanges that was much closer to home than the eastern part of the United States. Even after the agricultural growth of California's Central Valley made its economy largely self-sufficient in the mid-1850s, the transnational connections created by trade and human migration networks persisted. The continuity of pre-1848 Pacific trade and transport connections in California demonstrate the needs to disengage the developments of the Pacific Coast, at least to a degree, from the "westward expansion" of the United States.

At the same time, California's Gold Rush simultaneously signaled the transformation of these older maritime connections. Generations of scholars have argued that the Pacific Ocean became the next American "frontier" once the continental expansion was complete.²³ This interpretation could be problematic because it perpetuates the mythology of "westward" expansion, tacitly bestowing fatalistic inevitability to U.S. expansion over the North American continent. On the other hand, this was precisely how the American society came to view the Pacific in the aftermath of Americanization of California. California's Pacific connections, predating and independent of U.S. continental expansion, was reimagined to accommodate the empire on its "westward course." California's Pacific connections remained crucial to the state, but they were now placed outside the national boundaries, restructured to fit the needs of the American Empire, California now playing the role of vanguard for U.S. commercial and territorial expansion. Anglo-Americans in California during the 1850s frequently professed a prophetic dream about the state's

²² Sucheng Chan, "A People of Exceptional Character," 51-52.

²³ For example, Arrell Morgan Gibson and John S. Whitehead, *Yankees in Paradise: The Pacific Basin Frontier* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1993); Jean Heffer, *The United States and the Pacific: History of a Frontier*, trans. by W. Donald Wilson (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002).

grandeur. A prosperous future was invariably linked to the vast oceanic sphere of the Pacific. A San Francisco resident wrote to his cousin in 1857, asserting that California had everything necessary to achieve greatness.

California is destined to be one of the largest & most flourishing states in the Union. The western coast of America, the far-off ports of Eastern India, and the intermediate Isles of the Ocean, are fast becoming her dependents, & the day is not far distant when this will be the grand central depot for the interchanging Commerce of the Two Hemispheres.²⁴

These ideas of magnificence met with the realities of human and material connections across the ocean during the Gold Rush era, reinforcing old networks and establishing new connections.

Imperial Republic: Settler Colonialism, Wars of Conquest, American Expansion

This work engages the study of the American Empire in three different ways. First, it recasts the California Gold Rush as a catalytic event that advanced settler colonialism in California as well as in Hawaii. Second, it surveys and analyzes the ways in which Anglo-American gold seekers described, evaluated, and categorized differences among people and lands they witnessed en route to California, thus contributing to an understanding of the cultures of U.S. imperialism. The American gold-rush traffic from coast to coast briefly created a site of sociocultural interactions and cross-border encounters, which eventually reaffirmed Anglo-American hemispheric supremacy. Finally, this dissertation traces the construction of long-distance transportation networks, which facilitated and broadened the scope of imperialist expansion of U.S. capital and government in locales at the “crossroads” of these routes, such as Panama and the Pacific Islands. Establishing U.S. imperial

²⁴ Henry B. Janes to “Dear Cousin,” 26 August 1857, Dwight Plympton Conklin Correspondences, mssHM 74186, Huntington Library, San Marino, CA (hereafter HL).

dominion in the Pacific was predominantly an endeavor carried on by private enterprise before 1848, by merchants, transportation companies, and settler-colonists pursuing their self-interests, or what I call “non-state agents of empire.” During the Gold Rush era, continual and extended human traffic along established transportation routes created circuits of imperial imagination and involvement. Historian William Novak’s observation that “the American state historically has consistently used the private sector to accomplish public objectives” also applies to the American empire.²⁵

The use of such terms as “empire” or “imperialism” in U.S. history before 1898 carries a certain seed for controversy, though it has become almost impossible today to deny the historical existence of an American empire.²⁶ I maintain that the United States was and has always been an empire from its very conception. There is a long list of scholarly endeavors to distinguish the subtle differences between empire, imperialism, colonialism, and colonization, and to decide when and how the United States became an empire. Rather than adding more pages to this list, I use empire as a descriptive term to encompass the various avenues through which the United States exercised dominion over territories and peoples outside its own “national body” in the nineteenth century: territorial expansion over the North American continent and settler colonial subjugation of indigenous people; the military conquest of the northern part of Mexico; individual American citizens’ casual disregard of local sovereignty through filibustering, and more gradual but far more

²⁵ William Novak, “The Myth of the ‘Weak’ American State,” *American Historical Review* 113: 3 (June 2008), 769.

²⁶ Since Amy Kaplan’s influential critique of the “lack of empire” in the American studies, the study of the American Empire expanded to include culture and informal realms of domination. Amy Kaplan, “‘Left Alone with America’: The Absence of Empire in the Study of American Culture,” in Amy Kaplan and Donald E. Pease (eds.), *Cultures of United States Imperialism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993). See Mary A. Renda, *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation & the Culture of U.S. Imperialism, 1915-1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Amy S. Greenberg, *Manifest Manhood and the Antebellum American Empire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Ann Laura Stoler (ed.), *Haunted by Empire* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006). These cultural turn in the empire studies have further enriched the discussion of the “formal” overseas empire. See Laura Briggs, *Reproducing Empire: Race, Sex, Science, and U.S. Imperialism in Puerto Rico* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Paul A. Kramer, *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States, and the Philippines* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

effective infringement of sovereignty in the Kingdom of Hawaii; and capitalist encroachments to establish steam-powered transportation in Panama and later in the Pacific Islands.

The term *settler colonialism* needs some explanation. The study of settler colonialism is a relatively recent academic development, though the realities designated by the term have been the subject of historical studies in areas ranging from indigenous studies to the traditional history of American expansion. Settler colonialism is defined as “a history in which settlers drove indigenous populations from the land in order to construct their own ethnic and religious national communities.”²⁷ The primary difference between colonialism and settler colonialism resides in the primary purpose of the colonizers. In the former, the goal of colonial settlements lies in exploitation of native population and resources; in the latter, the goal is not the exploitation, but elimination of native populations.²⁸ Then the invasive foreign population claims the land as their own. In this regard, settler colonialism also differs from forms of neo-colonialism. Neo-colonial relations are based on forms of colonial exploitation that continues after national independence and putative decolonization.²⁹ U.S. history as a whole, and the history of American California more specifically, are typical examples of settler colonial societies. From 1848 to 1860, the non-Indian population of California rapidly increased fifteen fold, whereas the Indian population decreased by 80 percent, from approximately 150,000 to 30,000.³⁰ In terms of white settlers’ relations to indigenous people,

²⁷ Walter L. Hixson, *American Settler Colonialism: A History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 4.

²⁸ For more on settler colonialist theories, see Lorenzo Veracini, *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010); see also Patrick Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 8:4, 387-409.

²⁹ Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 44. Originally coined as a critique against the postcolonial realities of dependencies in formerly colonized regions in Africa and Latin America, neocolonialism is also linked to the discussions of internal colonialism, often used in the United States to critically situate the black and Latina/o people. Ramón A. Gutiérrez, “Internal Colonialism: An American Theory of Race,” *Du Bois Review: Social Science Research on Race* 1: 2 (2004), 281-295.

the discovery of gold transformed California from a colonial to a settler colonialist regime.

The distinction between settler colonialism and other forms of colonialism was tenuous at best in California during the Gold Rush era. For one, the exploitation of indigenous labor continued in American California and coexisted with wars of extermination against them during the 1850s. Even though the primary way of dealing with ‘the indigenous peoples may have differed, making a fixed distinction between the “colonial” situation under Spanish or Mexican rule and the “settler-colonial” situation under American rule could create a reverse kind of Black Legend. For another, it also eclipses other forms of colonial relationships that Anglo-American settlers established with Mexicans, Panamanians, and native Hawaiians.

I maintain that California after 1848 was a settler colonial society that developed within a much larger imperial network. Rather than employing the language of settler colonialism as a strict framework that fits all and presupposes the elimination of indigenous populations as given, Chapter 1 of this dissertation describes the interconnected development of settler societies in California and Hawaii to showcase the multi-layered colonial situations then present in areas around the Pacific Ocean. Anglo-American settlers on the Pacific Coast and the Hawaiian Islands maintained close ties before 1848. The existing ties put them in conversation following the Gold Rush, precipitating the inclusion of the Hawaiian Islands within the orbit of the American empire. In both California and Hawaii, settler-colonial, colonial, neo-colonial or imperial—when indigenous sovereignty was nominally acknowledged—relationships often coexisted between Anglo-American settlers and their indigenous counterparts.

One significant point to garner from settler colonial theories is the historical agency of *settlers*.

³⁰ Albert Hurtado, “Introduction,” in Robert F. Heizer (ed.), *The Destruction of California Indians* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993), vi.

The power of white settlers had been one of the main tenets of Jeffersonian ideals of the “empire for liberty” and Manifest Destiny expansionism.³¹ This dissertation expands upon this historical understanding of settler colonial agency to analyze what it meant, for regions on the Pacific Slope of the Americas, when tens of thousands of Anglo-Americans passed through their ports in the immediate aftermath of the U.S.-Mexican War. American migration to California, while predominantly a transitory “sojourning” migration, was often construed as an extension of this imagery of settlers carrying on American expansion, both by Anglo Americans themselves and by foreign observers. I document the massive influx of American migrants through various Latin American ports, and the tensions and conflicts they created with local residents beginning in 1849. The American conquest of northern Mexico was still fresh in the memory of these locals, who suddenly found their ports and markets crowded by Anglo-Americans. The actions of Anglo-American settler-migrants did nothing to assuage their misgivings. A focus on these traveling Americans at in-between places along transportation routes helps us contextualize ascendant forms of white supremacy in California within the larger context of the Western Hemisphere.³²

The demographic hegemony of white Anglo-American men, weaned on the antebellum

³¹ John O’Sullivan’s famous utterance that coined the phrase Manifest Destiny stated that it was “fulfillment of our manifest destiny to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions.” John O’Sullivan, *United States Magazine and Democratic Review* 17 (1845), 5. Making of America Collection, Cornell University Library. Historian Walter Nugent described the significance of settler-led expansion in United States empire as the “procreation” of empire. Nugent, *Habits of Empire: A History of American Expansion* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008), xvii.

³² Only recently have scholars begun to look at the hostilities against non-white, non-English-speaking miners during the Gold Rush era as part of a larger development of racial ideologies. For works that views California’s racial politics as an integral part of the antebellum and postbellum U.S. politics over slavery and race, see Stacey L. Smith, *Freedom’s Frontier: California and the Struggle Over Unfree Labor, Emancipation, and Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013); D. Michael Bottoms, *An Aristocracy of Color: Race and Reconstruction in California and the West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2013). Despite their invaluable contribution to the historical literature of race in California, however, incorporating California’s 1850s into a national debate over slavery runs the risk of nationalizing the Far West at the expense of trans-local and transnational connections. Granted, the rapid population influx and the statehood established in California the powerful state apparatus that would countenance white supremacy (Johnson, *Roaring Camp*, 208). But the dominant racial ideologies hardly remained static and were often challenged by different live experiences of the Pacific Coast residents.

ideology of Manifest Destiny with its convictions in civilizational hierarchies and racial superiority, created a lingering ideological impact on California and its grander Pacific connections. Filibustering expeditions into Mexico and Nicaragua in the mid-1850s not only continued the spirit of the war with Mexico but also reflected the demographic and economic changes wrought by the Gold Rush. Many ex-Californian miners, having failed to acquire any fortune, looked for it in adjacent regions, such as Mexico, Hawaii, Nicaragua, and British Columbia. To Mexico and Nicaragua, they went explicitly for conquest. To Hawaii and British Columbia, far less so, but some articulated desires to annex Hawaii and British Columbia.

If these soldiers' and settlers' movements shed light on the contingencies and what-might-have-beens of American empire-building, transportation companies, the other "non-state agent of empire" that facilitated their movements, gradually but irrevocably consolidated an American Empire over the last three decades of the nineteenth century. The final chapter of this dissertation thus moves beyond the Gold Rush, tracing the origins of California's transpacific steamship connections. The Pacific Mail Steamship Company initiated regular service between San Francisco and Hong Kong in 1867, following the federal government's decision to contract a mail steamer service to China in 1865. The confluence of several different factors—government mail subsidies to ensure secure delivery of diplomatic correspondences and fast circulation of commercial information, naval interests in creating a reserve of merchant ocean-going steamships, and commercial interests in East Asia shared by merchants on the Atlantic and the Pacific Coasts—coalesced. Regular steamship connections also brought an unexpected consequence: a soaring number of Chinese immigrants. In 1898, the currents set in motion by the initial human and material movements to California gold fields would meet with the official affirmation of a full-fledged Pacific Empire, with the annexation of Hawaii and the acquisition of the Philippines in 1898.

Methodology I: Transportation and Traffic as Site and Sight

Herein I recast gold-rush maritime transportation as a *site* and a *sight*. Framing transportation as a *site* means viewing transportation routes as more than mere lines on maps; it requires active imagining of how human traffic moved over the routes, of the nature of their contacts and interactions during this process. Due to technological and logistical necessities, American sailing and steaming vessels required frequent stops and, at times, lengthy repair port stops while on their way to California. Continual movement of gold seekers to California often created in-between spaces, where the distinction between the *foreign* and the *domestic* blurred for American travelers, particularly for the three years between 1849 and 1852. Gold-rush transportation across the Isthmus of Panama, moreover, literally was a site of construction; the Panama Railroad was being built at the very moment gold diggers were trying to reach California, to be completed in 1855.

Maritime transport for gold-prospectors also provided *sights*, or opportunities for Americans and foreign nationals to observe each other, thus shaping their ideas about race, mobility, and civilization. Gathered at the harbor of Panama awaiting their steamship connection to San Francisco, one American forty-niner imagined seeing “a nation carrying its intelligence, arts, refinements, and even luxuries—to deposit them at once in a new and barren land.”³³ The construction of an American financed railroad across the Isthmus of Panama provided a sight of progress. Even British-Jamaican Mary Jane Seacole, who was firmly anti-American in all other matters, praised “the men of our age” (notably eluding the mention of specific nation) in subjugating “iron and steam,

³³ Typescript of John Mott-Smith, “Journal of the Adventures in California,” 93. Edward E. Ayer Manuscript Collection, Newberry Library (Chicago, IL).

twin giants” to create a railroad across the rocky land strip.³⁴ A Chilean newspaper in Valparaíso, on viewing the high level of gold-rush traffic passing through their port, lamented Chile’s own lack of immigration. It was a sad sight “for the fate of this Spanish America” that migrants passing through their shores were only there to leave for another part of the world.³⁵

The sights, that is, the natural landscapes, the various societies, and foreign peoples American observed and met along transportation routes to California helped structure their worldviews, affirming and sometimes revising their notions of racial and national superiority, and imperial destiny. California-bound Americans’ apparent interests in describing distant cities and foreign ports were animated by the spirit of Manifest Destiny, often corresponding to simultaneous filibustering expeditions to Mexico or Central America. Anglo-American travelers also witnessed and affirmed the leading role the United States began to play in a slowly expanding global capitalist economy. American capital investments visible in the ports of Central and South America, coupled with the constant passenger traffic, sometimes produced a sense of entitlement over foreign territories among traveling Americans.

Throughout this study, transportation appears as a double-sided inducement of empire. First, the establishment of long-distance transportation routes materialized imperial intervention in the daily lives of people. It mobilized labor fundamentally changing the landscape and demography of the regions affected, as in the cases of West Indian workers who constructed a railroad across the Isthmus of Panama and Chinese sailors and stewards who worked on transpacific steamers. Second, thus-established transportation networks brought American people the *sight* of progress, a source of imperial imagination and affirmation of the imperial realities. At the same time, transportation as a

³⁴ Mary Seacole, *Wonderful Adventures of Mrs. Seacole in Many Lands* (New York: Penguin Books, 2005), 17-18.

³⁵ *El Mercurio*, 2 May 1849, quoted in Roberto Hernandez Cornejo, *Los Chilenos en San Francisco de California, Tomo I* (Valparaíso: San Rafael, 1930), 107-108 (my translation).

process that facilitated the movement of people—the passenger traffic part of the transportation—made the perceptions of difference pronounced and facilitated mass migration of previously little-known groups of people to California, prompting an imperial project of regulating the mobility of people across the ocean.³⁶

Methodology II: Discourse, Rhetoric, and the “Gaze”

In this dissertation, rhetoric and discourses are treated as integral to the construction of society and culture. I analyze the words written by historical actors as reflecting the material and cultural realities of the period. Not only do discourses mirror actual social interactions that were happening at the time, but rhetoric and discourses themselves had power to create material realities. Written words and speeches could influence people’s thoughts and actions, particularly during periods of social instability and economic uncertainties.³⁷ Words circulated both as information with factual façades and as rumors with powerful implications; rumors of fortune, rumors of invasion, rumors of mass influx of undesirable people, reflected and created social realities both in California and in transitory in-between places.

³⁶ Recently, there has been a surge of new academic interests in the migration studies which focus on the transportation part of migrations. For those works focusing on the role of steamship companies in the history of immigration, Yakari Takai, “Navigating Transpacific Passages: Steamship Companies, State Regulators, and Transshipment of Japanese in the Early-Twentieth-Century Pacific Northwest,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 30 (2011); Robert E. Barde, *Immigration at the Golden Gate: Passenger Ships, Exclusion, and Angel Island* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2008). For a more comprehensive take on the role of a steamship company in consolidating British colonialism in New Zealand, see Frances Steel, *Oceania Under Steam: Sea Transport and the Culture of Colonialism, c.1870-1914* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2011). Kornel Chang may also be included in this larger group of Pacific history scholars, as he looks at the Pacific Northwest as the “U.S.-Canadian borderlands” and emphasizes inter-imperial conversation and cooperation in immigration restriction. Kornel Chang, *Pacific Connections: The Making of the U.S.-Canadian Borderlands* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012). See also Chang, “Circulating Race and Empire: Transnational Labor Activism and the Politics of Anti-Asian Agitation in the Anglo-American Pacific World, 1880–1910,” *Journal of American History* 96 (2009).

³⁷ In this regard, I follow the example of Kristin Hoganson, who treats rhetoric as “something that illuminates motivations, convictions, and calculations of what is politically efficacious.” Kristin L. Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 14.

The majority of the primary sources used here come from manuscript and published journals and letters of American gold seekers, published first-hand accounts of foreign observers, and U.S. and international newspapers. U.S.-born settler-migrants who traveled to California in the mid-nineteenth century often collectively exhibited what postcolonial scholar Mary Louise Pratt called “anti-conquest”: “the strategies of representation whereby European bourgeois subjects seek to secure their innocence in the same moment as they assert European hegemony.”³⁸ In this case, they asserted Anglo-American hegemony. By focusing on this “imperial gaze” and rhetorical, cultural, and social construction of an American empire across the networks of gold-rush transportation, this dissertation has Anglo-American gold seekers, once again, as main actors of the story. Still, the discourses that circulated in these public and private pages were far from monolithic. To borrow Michael Omi and Howard Winant’s terms, various “racial projects” were being constructed and flowing along these circuits of empire.³⁹ Non-American voices have been incorporated whenever available as counter-claims and alternative sites of empire.

In sum, this dissertation examines the diverse ways in which the California Gold Rush influenced the imperial visions of the United States in the Pacific, focusing on the sites and sights created by maritime transportation bound for California’s gold fields. California’s Gold Rush created a cross-oceanic sphere in which a collective movement of migrants, travelers, and soldiers solidified the American empire first in concept and later in reality. The circuits of human movements across the ocean advanced the imperial position of the United States through the establishment of a settler colonial society in California and appropriation of foreign resources at the expense of local

³⁸ Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 7.

³⁹ In *Racial Formation in the United States*, Michael Omi and Howard Winant set the cornerstone of how scholars can view the making of race and racism in U.S. society. Racial formation theory suggests that various “racial projects” vie for hegemony to create a dominant perception of racial categories in a certain locale at a certain time period. Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 1994).

sovereignty and autonomy in Hawaii and Panama. This material foundation was matched by a creation of the cultural basis for empire, in assertion of Anglo-American superiority and entitlement, seemingly affirmed by first-hand witness accounts and experiences. This work ultimately highlights the linkage between the history of the American West and of imperialism in the Pacific, and facilitates a deeper understanding of what U.S. sovereignty meant in California and what California meant for the global empowerment of the United States.

Outline of Chapters

Chapter 1, “Colonizing the Pacific: Indigenous Labor and the Settler Colonial Societies in California and Hawaii after 1848,” sets the groundwork for the coming of an American empire in the Pacific by studying the impacts of the California Gold Rush on white settler societies in California and Hawaii. This chapter establishes that California after 1848 was an American settler colony, where a systematic extermination of indigenous population went hand-in-hand with the legally sanctioned exploitation of indigenous labor. The Kingdom of Hawaii in the mid-nineteenth century was a sovereign nation, but its state apparatus and economy came under increasing American influence by the late-1840s. By focusing on two key pieces of legislation enacted respectively in California and in Hawaii in 1850, this chapter illustrates the development of distinctly colonial situations in these two societies. Both pieces of legislation illustrate restriction of indigenous mobility and the exploitation of indigenous labor in the name of paternalistic protection. While the legislators in California and Hawaii were not in direct conversation on enacting these laws, their similar logic and rhetoric suggests a cross-pollination of ideas spurred by the rapid social changes the Gold Rush brought about.

Chapter 2, “Coasting along the Golden Shore: Anglos, Chileans, and the Ideas of Race and

Development on the Pacific Coast,” discusses how the gold seekers’ traffic along the Pacific Coast created a sphere of sociocultural interactions in which Anglo and Chilean prospectors expressed their shared and disparate ideas about race and human development. Anglo-Americans who took the Cape Horn route to California observed the burgeoning commercial world on the Pacific Coast of the Americas. Wealthier Chileans such as Vicente Pérez Rosales, Benjamín Vicuña Mackenna, and Ramón Gil Navarro, who later published accounts of their experiences in California, formulated their own ideas about the politics and commerce of the Pacific Coast, which did not always clash with those U.S.-born gold seekers. Because Chile’s economy and political system appeared more “developed” than those of its neighboring nations, they occupied an ambiguously high racial position in the eyes of Anglo-Americans. Chileans also founded their counter-claims of whiteness on the basis of their development and progress, which paradoxically rendered them vulnerable to the racial ideology of the “Anglo-Saxon race” as superior to the “Latin race.” The overlapping understanding of whiteness and economic development highlights the ideological dimensions of Anglo-American claims to supremacy in the Western Hemisphere.

Chapter 3, “Imagining Conquest, Engineering Empire: Gold-Rush Transit and U.S. Empire-building on the Isthmus,” delves into the “Isthmian transit” across Panama. It discusses how the Gold Rush continued to reinforce Manifest Destiny-era expansionism in Central America, while also creating a fresh impetus for empire by constructing the transisthmian railroad connected to steamship service to California. This chapter focuses on the “imperial gaze” practiced by white middle-class American travelers, arguing that the ways in which they scrutinized the native population and appropriated foreign land constructed an image of the “Isthmus” as accessible yet exotic, virtually colonized by the United States. The construction of the Panama Railroad and the operation of the Pacific Mail Steamship Company initiated a phase of the capitalist expansion

overseas, appropriating foreign lands and fundamentally transforming the landscapes, environments, and demography of the Isthmus.

Chapter 4, “From the Ruins of El Dorado: Filibusters, Fortune Seekers, and Popular Circuits of Empire,” discusses the aftermath transit of disillusioned Anglo Californians. Although most failed miners returned home, some sought to claim a better life through a variety of newly-opened avenues accessible from California’s Pacific Coast. This chapter puts the filibustering expeditions to Mexico and Central America within California’s developing maritime networks and argues that Anglo-American men’s large-scale traffic created and reinforced an emerging vision of a settler empire around the Pacific in the 1850s. Not only did failed gold seekers from California exhibit such expansionist tendencies toward the adjacent and more distant regions, but also the local authorities across the Pacific equated mass migration of Anglo-Californians and filibustering. The conflation between filibusters’ invasion and ex-miners’ outmigration was exacerbated by the concurrent U.S. government’s interests in more territorial acquisitions in the areas receiving these soldiers and settlers from California.

Chapter 5, “The World Steamships Made: Pacific Crossings and California at the Onset of the American Empire, c.1860-1898” focuses on the Pacific Mail Steamship Company’s transpacific steamship business after 1867. The steamship company’s transpacific operation was crucial in extending U.S. naval power over the Pacific, as well as in facilitating Chinese immigration to California during the latter half of the nineteenth century. While the steam-powered large-scale shipping routes across the Pacific laid the infrastructure for the American Empire, transpacific steamships also contributed to the delineation of national boundaries in the United States, as they were increasingly associated with the “polluting” influence of Chinese immigrants toward the end of the nineteenth century.

CHAPTER 1. COLONIZING THE PACIFIC: INDIGENOUS LABOR AND THE SETTLER COLONIAL SOCIETIES IN CALIFORNIA AND HAWAII AFTER 1848

“The admission of California is grateful news to all Americans in the Pacific, and especially do we of the Sandwich Islands rejoice at this approach of our native land.”

-William Little Lee to his childhood friend, Caroline Scott, November 23, 1850¹

“...Come to California, bring 100 Kanakas, 100 spades, shovels, & picks with 100 wooden dishes and bowls...dig, delve and wash...fill your barrels, take into your constitution the ague and fever, bury half of your Kanakas, go back and make your [homage] to John Jacob Astor.”

-Thomas. O. Larkin in San Francisco to Stephen Reynolds in Honolulu, June 3, 1848²

Introduction

This chapter traces California's transformation into an Anglo-American settler colonial society during the Gold Rush era (1848-c.1860). With the discovery of gold in northern California in January 1848, the former backwater country of Mexico's Far North was soon inundated with the massive influx of Anglo-American settlers. Anglo Americans achieved demographic dominance within the first two years of American rule, leading to California's statehood in 1850. Armed with the conviction in their God-given rights to the land, the new settlers began a qualitatively different governance of indigenous population. At the same time, the transformation of California also stimulated a fundamental transformation of another society under American settler colonial influence across the Pacific, the Kingdom of Hawaii.

I argue that the California Gold Rush was a watershed moment that marked the beginning

¹ Quoted in Barbara E. Dunn, “William Little Lee and Catherine Lee, Letters from Hawaii, 1848-1855,” *The Hawaiian Journal of History* 38 (2004), 79.

² George P. Hammond (ed.), *The Larkin Papers: Personal, Business, and Official correspondence of Thomas Oliver Larkin, Merchant and United States Consul in California*, Vol. 7 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960), 292.

of American settler colonial governance in both California and Hawaii. Recasting post-1848 California and Hawaii into the rubric of American settler colonialism highlights the central role of white settlers in American empire-building. Born out of the postcolonial critiques, settler colonialism is a useful theoretical framework to capture the forms of imperial domination that often elude typical designation of colonialism or imperialism, e.g. European colonization of North America or Australia. The theories of settler colonialism reimagine the white settler as a colonial agent, who actively erases indigenous sovereignty and appropriates the lands and resources. Settler colonialism is distinctive from colonialism in the primary purpose of the colonizers: while the latter works to exploit indigenous population and extract surplus value of their labor, the former aims to eliminate the indigenous population, to replace them with white settlers.³ The use of settler colonialist framework enables us to reinterpret the intricate connections of migration, commerce, and kinship that linked American settlers in California and Hawaii within an interconnected colonial space, despite the outward appearance of California being an American state and Hawaii being an independent kingdom.

The theoretical tenet of settler colonialism as explicated above, i.e. foreign elements set out to exterminate and replace the natives, cannot be uncritically applied to California and Hawaii in 1848. For one, Hawaii's situation in the decades following 1848 more clearly mirrored colonialism in a classic sense, a foreign minority exploiting lands, resources, and labor of the natives. Moreover, the realities in California were also multifaceted. There were diverse strands of Anglo-American thoughts regarding how to govern indigenous people of California. Christian and paternalistic understandings of the "mission to civilize" coexisted with fatalistic presumption of native extinction,

³ For these theoretical underpinnings of settler colonialism, see Lorenzo Veracini, *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010); Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," *Journal of Genocide Research* 8:4 (2006), 387-409.

often carried out by settlers' own militia violence. While using the settler colonialist framework to emphasize the settlers' collective will to colonize the lands, this chapter sheds light on the multi-layered colonial situations created as a result of the California Gold Rush.

Tracing the earlier strands of colonial development is not meant to discredit Hawaiian struggles to maintain national independence. The Kingdom of Hawaii was a sovereign nation up until the white planters' coup in 1893; the royal family and Hawaiian commoners fought hard to preserve the nation's sovereignty until and after the annexation to the United States in 1898.⁴ This chapter addresses, nonetheless, colonialism in Hawaii as a *process*, a gradual development that slowly eradicated the Hawaiian nation's potential for self-determination over the course of the second half of the nineteenth century. Based on this understanding of American colonialism in the making, Anglo-American settlers' increasing control over Hawaiian politics and economy and their imperial imagination was a crucial factor in the eventual usurpation of Hawaiian sovereignty. The 1848-1850 land reform and the establishment of sugar plantation economy testified American *haole* influences over the government of Hawaii.⁵ The California Gold Rush provided a crucial impetus in this transition, by creating an export market and presenting the problem of indigenous mobility.

This chapter situates the utilization of indigenous labor at the center of the history of Anglo-American colonization of the Pacific. I contend that a system of labor bondage was implemented in 1850 by the governments of California and Hawaii as a measure of social control on indigenous population, faced with the sudden demographic changes after 1848. California instituted vagrancy

⁴ Noenoe K. Silva, *Aloha Betrayed: Native Hawaiian Struggle to American Colonialism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004); Jonathan Kay Kamakawiwo'ole Osorio, *Dismembering Labui: A History of the Hawaiian Nation to 1887* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002).

⁵ For the significance of the California market in Hawaiian sugar industry, see David M. Pletcher, *The Diplomacy of Involvement: American Economic Expansion across the Pacific, 1784-1900* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2001), 46-48; Ralph S. Kuykendall, *Hawaiian Kingdom, Vol. 1, 1778-1854* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1938), 324.

law in a racially distinctive manner so that California Indians would fall under a harsh rein of punitive bondage. The Kingdom of Hawaii also enacted a similar vagrancy law, in addition to a categorical prohibition of native Hawaiian emigration enacted in 1850. While the system of bondage and servitude was not new, the contexts in which they were enacted effectively constructed a colonial regime that restricted physical and economic mobility of the colonized. In California, where indigenous labor was previously a social and economic necessity for thinly populated settlements, the rapidly expanding demographics after 1849 pushed indigenous labor to the periphery. At the same time, the onslaught of white settlers accompanied by fatal diseases and violence destroyed the autonomous ways of life for California Indians, forcing many to seek work in the Anglo-American settler society. In Hawaii, administrative concerns to keep indigenous population in check, having been swept into the centripetal force of California gold, were fundamentally linked to the interests of sugar plantation economy that received a boost from the growth of California markets. The series of legal restrictions subjected the native Hawaiian population under a plantation labor regime.

The Gold Rush resulted in a redefinition and stricter imposition of boundaries around indigenous peoples in California and Hawaii. California Indians and native Hawaiians, whose labor had previously been the backbone of sparse Euro-American settlements on the Pacific Coast, gradually became one of the racial minorities in a multi-ethnic, multi-racial society. When they refused to conform to the new order of capitalist wage work, it led to their racial characterization as indolent and uncivilized, which gave state authorities further excuses to enforce a system of bonded labor. The unexpected surge of migration following the discovery of gold, as well as the strengthened socioeconomic ties created by the boom, provided for an environment where the Anglo-American dominated governments in California and Hawaii formulated and enforced a policy that would define the treatment of indigenous population for years to come.

A brief note on the organization of the chapter is in order. This chapter first surveys the use of indigenous labor in California before 1848, incorporating the early maritime connections with the Hawaiian Islands and the presence of native Hawaiians on the Pacific Coast. It then introduces how American rule over California brought free labor ideology from the east coast and analyzes the California state's An Act for the Government and Protection of Indians and the establishment of Anglo-American settler colonial government in 1849-1850. In the third section of the chapter, the Hawaiian Kingdom's "An Act to Prohibit Natives from Leaving the Islands" will be compared to the California's settler colonialism.⁶ Each law shared Anglo-American colonizers' desire to curtail indigenous mobility, as well as its outward presentation in the sugar-coated form of paternalism. Lastly, this chapter will conclude with a brief sketch of the post-1850 state of indigenous peoples in California and Hawaii.

1.1. California before 1848: Indians, Kanakas, and Settlers

Indigenous servitude in northern California was part of the larger and more diversified labor system that sustained North American colonial frontiers.⁷ Involuntary servitude in the forms of debt peonage, contract labor, and outright slavery preceded the mass influx of American settlers on the Pacific Coast. Indigenous societies of North America maintained their own forms of slavery. During the Spanish period, Franciscan missionaries systematically exploited Indian labor, insisting that the first step to "civilization" was for them to settle down in permanent villages, working in agriculture

⁶ *The Statutes of California: Passed at the First Session of the Legislature* (San Jose, CA: J. Winchester, State Printer, 1850), Chap. 133, 408-410; "An Act to Prohibit Natives from Leaving the Islands," passed on 2 July 1850, published in the *Polyesian*, 7 September 1850.

⁷ For a recent scholarly discussion of Indian slavery in North America, see Andrés Reséndez, *The Other Slavery: The Uncovered Story of Indian Enslavement in America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2016). For a more California-centered approach, see M. Magliari, "Free Soil, Unfree Labor," *Pacific Historical Review* 73: 3 (August 2004).

and manufacturing. Although the relationship California Indians had with Catholic missions cannot be solely characterized as enslavement, the missions were both religious and economic institutions where labor demands were often met by forcible induction.⁸ The mission system collapsed in the aftermath of the 1821 Mexican independence, with the government-mandated secularization taking effect in 1834. Nevertheless, diverse forms of Indian servitude persisted; ranchos grown out of former mission lands, now owned by Mexican or foreign-born settlers, perpetuated the exploitation of California Indians.⁹

John Augustus Sutter, a Swiss émigré, came to the United States in 1834 after a financial failure in Switzerland. Having tried his fortune trading along the Santa Fe Trail for a while, he moved to Oregon, and then to the Sandwich Islands, whence he sailed to California in 1839.¹⁰ During the 1840s, Sutter became one of the major brokers for Indian labor in northern California. Sutter engaged himself in raiding for young Indian slaves to trade with other California settlers. On July 31, 1845, Sutter wrote to William Leidesdorff, a prominent California merchant of the West Indian origin and U.S. vice-consul at the port of San Francisco, requesting shipment of some cloth to make basic garments, intended “for my boys and girls of the house, about a hundred, who are nearly all in Rags & naked.”¹¹ His concern was hardly for their welfare. “When strangers come here,”

⁸ For more on the Spanish mission system, see 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); Steven W. Hackel, *Children of Coyote, Missionaries of Saint Francis: Indian-Spanish Relations in Colonial California, 1769-1850* (Williamsburg, VA: Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, 2005).

⁹ Reséndez, *The Other Slavery*, 247-251.

¹⁰ For a biographical sketch of John Augustus Sutter, see Albert L. Hurtado, “Empires, Frontiers, Filibusters, and Pioneers: The Transnational World of John Sutter,” *Pacific Historical Review* 77: 1 (2008).

¹¹ John A. Sutter to William Leidesdorff, 31 July 1845, John Augustus Sutter Papers, Box 1, BANC MSS C-B 631, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley (hereafter BL).

he complained, “it looks very bad.”¹² Whether these “strangers” were potential buyers of the gathered Indians, we know not. Sutter’s correspondences thereafter contained references of constant comings and goings of Indians. In April 1846, Sutter again wrote to Leidesdorff, apologizing for the delay in sending “the Indian Girl” he promised and reassuring Leidesdorff to send “eight Indians in about six weeks.”¹³

Sutter’s letters often described the manner of acquiring the said Indian servants. The same day he wrote the above letter to Leidesdorff, Sutter also wrote to Henry D. Fitch, a Massachusetts-born sailor-turned-merchant at the port of San Diego. Apologizing for not being able to send over Indian laborers at the moment, he promised Fitch, “if I can get some when I make the Campagne [*sic*] against the horsethiefs[,] I shall not forget you.”¹⁴ With indigenous ways of life under attack, some California Indians resorted to stealing horses or cattle from the ranches and then trading them with residents of remote inland settlements. The horse stealing often gave Euro-American settlers an excuse to raid Indian villages in retaliation, and to sell or banter the war prisoners and orphans they captured in these attacks. In Sutter’s letter to Fitch, the term *horse-thief* referred to Indians generally rather than those who specifically stole Sutter’s horses. Initiating the pattern of criminalizing an entire racial group with a few examples blown out of proportion, white settlers indiscriminately targeted any and all indigenous people in retaliation when an Indian committed a crime against them, alleged or real. The casual way Sutter promised “young Indians” to his business associate after a campaign suggests that it was a routine occurrence that filled in the needs of Euro-American settlers

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Sutter to Leidesdorff, 17 April 1846, John Augustus Sutter Papers, Box 1, BANC MSS C-B 631, BL.

¹⁴ Sutter to Henry D. Fitch, 17 April 1846; quoted in Harlan Hague and David J. Langum, *Thomas O. Larkin: A Life of Patriotism and Profit in Old California* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990), 49-50, 242 n90. For more on Sutter’s involvement in Indian slave trade, see Reséndez, *The Other Slavery*, 257-58; Albert L. Hurtado, *John Sutter: A Life on the North American Frontier* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006), 152-163.

for labor. Even if it was not the major source of revenues for Sutter, Indian raiding and then selling the captured Indians via his social networks was part of Sutter's business throughout his time in Mexican California.

While Sutter's trade of Indians displayed a form of indigenous slavery that persisted from the Mexican period into American California, slavery and slave trade constituted only part of how settlers procured their labor force in Mexican California. By the last decade of Mexican rule, Euro-American settlers complained about a general shortage of labor in California, especially for domestic and household servants. The traditional source of such labor, mission Indians, suffered severe numeric decline due to epidemics. Some Californian settlers, accordingly, sought labor replacement from across the Pacific Ocean. Along with Indians enslaved or employed in Sutter's ranches, there were a small number of the natives of the Sandwich Islands, commonly called the "Kanakas," a term borrowed from the Hawaiian word meaning the islands' people, *Kanaka Maoli*. Sutter brought ten Kanaka servants with him when he sailed from Honolulu to California in 1839.¹⁵

Despite the small number of the islanders on the Pacific Coast, they represented a larger connection that existed between California and Hawaii prior to the U.S.-Mexican War. Anglo-American settlers in California and Hawaii maintained close ties before 1848 via commerce and kinship.¹⁶ The geographic location of the Hawaiian Islands made Honolulu a central intersection point of transpacific commerce that connected China and the Americas since the early 1800s. From

¹⁵ Hurtado, *John Sutter*, 45.

¹⁶ For pre-1848 maritime connections between the Pacific Coast of North America and the Hawaiian Islands, see Jean Barman and Bruce McIntyre Watson, *Leaving Paradise: Indigenous Hawaiians in the Pacific Northwest, 1787-1898* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2006); Janice K. Duncan, *Minority without a Champion: Kanakas on the Pacific Coast, 1788-1850* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society, 1972); Richard H. Dillon, "Kanaka Colonies in California," *Pacific Historical Review* 24 (1955), 17-23. See also David Iglar, *The Great Ocean: Pacific Words from Captain Cook to the Gold Rush* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); Matt K. Matsuda, *Pacific Worlds: A History of Seas, Peoples, and Cultures* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

the 1820s to the early 1840s, British and American ships carried hide and tallow from Alta California to Honolulu, where they sold the cargo to Hawaii-based merchants or rerouted to South America or New England.¹⁷ According to historian David Igler's calculation, out of 953 vessels that visited Alta California before the Gold Rush, 42% had been from Hawaii.¹⁸ Hawaii was, in terms of the speed of communication and transportation, the closest Anglophone settlement to Americans in Alta California. The voyage between Alta California and the Hawaiian Islands was a relatively quick one by sailing boats, no more than two weeks under normal circumstances. The cognitive proximity becomes clearer when we compare this to the length of travels to get to the other side of the North American continent, two months at minimum and more than four months in average (either by sailing around Cape Horn or crossing the plains).¹⁹

Early labor migrations of Pacific Islanders alleviated the labor shortage of Euro-American settlements around the Pacific. At one point, the Russian American Company reported that among 9,723 residents in its North American settlements, 1,070 were Kanakas.²⁰ Kanaka sailors were also ubiquitous in American whaling and merchant vessels during the 1840s. The Kingdom of Hawaii's Minister of Interior reported in 1846 that "the number of those constantly sailing about the ocean cannot be much less than 3000," a sizable number, considering that there was "perhaps 15,000

¹⁷ For Hawaii's role in the hide and tallow trade between Alta California and New England, see John Ryan Fischer, *Cattle Colonialism: An Environmental History of the Conquest of California and Hawai'i* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 114-116; David J. Weber, *The Mexican Frontier, 1821-1846: The American Southwest Under Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1982), 136-139.

¹⁸ Igler, *The Great Ocean*, 26.

¹⁹ In one instance, an early transpacific traveler from the eastern United States traveled from Boston to San Francisco (via Valparaíso) in 128 days; thence to Honolulu, in only 11 days. John Lord letter to John Kimball, 17 April 1851, BANC MSS 98/25 cz, BL.

²⁰ Janice K. Duncan, *Minority without a Champion: Kanakas on the Pacific Coast, 1788-1850* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society, 1972), 13; Frederick C. Cordes (ed. and trans.), "Letters of A. Rotchev, last Commandant at Fort Ross, and the Resume of the Report of the Russian-American Company for the year 1850-51," *California Historical Quarterly* 39 (1960), 109.

young men of the Hawaiian Islands, between the ages of 15 and 30 years.”²¹ These islanders did not always migrate and work for European settlers out of their own free will; oftentimes, the *aliʻi*, the chiefs governing the common people of Hawaii, were the ones who signed the labor contracts.²² Still, once aboard a sailing ship, far from the traditional governing influence of the *aliʻi*, Hawaiian commoners could have exerted certain leeway in building their own lives on the remote coastal regions. The Hawaiian minister acknowledged in the same report that the number of “those who have left and not returned” was unknown. Some would have died; others settled elsewhere, as did a group of Hawaiians who formed a small community on the coast of California, cohabiting with Indian women.²³

Hawaiians, along with indigenous people of California, formed a readily available labor source pool in pre-1848 California. Californian ranchers and merchants also attempted to procure native Hawaiian labor for domestic purposes. Robert G. Davis, a trader based in Hawaii and brother of a famous Hawaiian-born California settler William Heath Davis, wrote to Thomas O. Larkin, prominent merchant and later U.S. consul at Monterey, in May 1842. Upon Larkin’s request, Davis’s brother William attempted to recruit a pair of “native man and woman” to work in California. Davis informed Larkin that there were plenty of willing Hawaiian men, “but it is difficult to persuade their wives.”²⁴ Instead of a male-female pair, he promised to procure “a good smart boy” for household

²¹ *Ministerial Reports, Read Before His Majesty to the Hawaiian Legislature, Aug 1, 1846* (Honolulu, 1846), 7-8, in a bound volume of *Official report on the existing harbor laws of the Hawaiian Islands* (Honolulu: Government Press, 1845), Huntington Library Rare Book Collection. See also Richard A. Greer, “Wandering Kamaainas: Notes on Hawaiian Emigration before 1848,” *Journal of the West* 6: 2 (April 1967).

²² Hurtado, *John Sutter*, 45.

²³ Richard H. Dillon, “Kanaka Colonies in California,” *Pacific Historical Review* 24 (February 1955); David A. Chang, “Borderlands in a World at Sea: Concow Indians, Native Hawaiians, and South Chinese in Indigenous, Global, and National Spaces,” *The Journal of American History* 98 (2011).

²⁴ Robert G. Davis to Thomas O. Larkin, 27 May 1842, *Larkin Papers* Vol. 1, 226.

management.²⁵ Larkin wrote in 1848 to his friend Stephen Reynolds, a Honolulu merchant, informing him of the gold deposits in California and good-humoredly urging him to “bring one hundred Kanakas” along with necessary equipment, and to get rich, after “bury[ing] half of [those] Kanakas” in the gold diggings.²⁶ These correspondences provide glimpses of how Hawaiians became a familiar source of labor in the eyes of Anglo settlers in California.

It is necessary to note that the dichotomy of free and unfree labor may not be readily applied to California-Pacific settler societies. In Mexican California, diverse labor systems co-existed based on captivity-and-trade (enslavement), patronage, obligation (contract, debt, etc.), barter, or kinship. Early settlers’ imposition of forced servitude notwithstanding, the small Euro-American population and the lack of coordinated colonial governance left substantial room for indigenous autonomy, especially in the interior of central California, home to the Maidu, Miwok, Yokut peoples.²⁷ Economic dependence on indigenous labor and the sparsity of non-Indian settlement allowed for the existence of a substantial “middle ground” in the Central Valley of California, where the indigenous peoples served not only as settlers’ servile workers, but their suppliers, customers, allies, or nobodies.²⁸ The discovery of gold placers in the Sierra Nevada foothills would fundamentally change the social landscapes and indigenous people’s relationship with white intruders.

Free labor ideology was consolidated as a result of regional socioeconomic development in the northeastern United States. Its importation into California forced the dichotomy of free and

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Thomas O. Larkin to Stephen Reynolds, 3 June 1848, *Larkin Papers* Vol. 7, 292.

²⁷ The whole non-Indian population in California was estimated less than 15,000 in the year 1848, whereas the Indian population before the Gold Rush was estimated to be about 70,000-100,000. William Preston, “Serpent in the Garden: Environmental Change in Colonial California,” in Ramón A. Gutiérrez and Richard J. Orsi (eds.), *Contested Eden: California before the Gold Rush* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 278.

²⁸ Albert L. Hurtado, *Indian Survival on the California Frontier* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 121-25.

unfree labor onto different regional and cultural contexts. On the eve of American mass immigration from the eastern United States, J. Quinn Thornton, an abolitionist-leaning lawyer from Missouri who migrated along the Oregon trail in 1846, wrote a short description of the town of San Francisco, in which he included a vague reference to indigenous slavery. He claimed that “Indians, Sandwich Islanders, and negroes” comprised about “one-fifth of the whole population” in 1848 San Francisco, where most of these non-whites were “employed as servants and porters.”²⁹ Going into further details regarding the Indian race, he observed that there were some literate Mission Indians, though such cases were rare. “Some of the Indians are considered by the persons having them, as their property,” he wrote.³⁰ While noting the existence of slavery and slave trade, Thornton was also convinced that those practices would “soon become obsolete,” particularly since “most of the immigrants who came here are educated to respect every human being’s rights.”³¹ His idealistic prediction was misplaced; U.S. sovereignty over California, if anything, solidified their status as a servile, bound race. Yet Thornton’s belief that American rule, and immigrants from the United States, would bring free labor to California also signified a larger transition, in which indigenous labor in bondage would be made a colonial exception in a settler society governed by the ideology of free labor.

1.2. Anglo-American Settler Colonialism and the Freedom to Move in California

In American California, state-building required dealing with both the legacy of Mexican sovereignty over California and the beliefs and social systems imported from the United States. On

²⁹ Jesse Quinn Thornton, *Oregon and California in 1848* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1849), 78-79.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*

the one hand, territorial expansion of the United States invariably touched upon the volatile subject of the extension of black chattel slavery. Whereas the admission of California into the Union as a free state played a significant role in the Compromise of 1850, the question of slavery in California was hardly settled. The discovery of gold further complicated the matter. When southern slave-owners brought their African slaves to the mining region of northern California before and after 1850, they ignited fierce controversy. On the other hand, there was also a matter of “unfree” labor that was neither black nor white, California’s legacy from its Spanish, Mexican, and Pacific past. The question of black immigrants, free or enslaved, came to be associated with the reality of disparate labor regimes and racial caste system existent in California.³² This interlinked discussion became most readily apparent when California readied for statehood, and was particularly a hot topic during the 1849 constitutional convention.

California’s constitutional convention was convened in September 1849, with delegates from 10 separate territorial districts (San Diego, Los Angeles, Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo, Monterey, San Jose, San Francisco, Sonoma, Sacramento, San Joaquin). The Convention was, from the beginning, heavily overshadowed by the power play between early settlers and newcomers, particularly because the discovery of gold had reshaped the population dispersed throughout California. Many of the elected delegates had been early California settlers, including prominent names such as Thomas O. Larkin and John A. Sutter, as well as 8 *californios* or “native delegation” of Mexican Americans from the southern part of California.³³ As the convention took place after the

³² Historians have pointed out the ideology of free labor often became the source of contention between Anglo-Americans and other miners in gold-rush California, as Anglo-Americans accused Latin American system of debt peonage or Chinese contract labor as akin to slavery. Stacy L. Smith, *Freedom’s Frontier: California and the Struggle over Unfree Labor, Emancipation, and Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013); Susan Lee Johnson, *Roaring Camp: The Social World of the California Gold Rush* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2000).

³³ Leonard Pitts, *The Decline of the Californios: A Social History of the Spanish-Speaking Californians, 1846-1890* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), 42-47.

first influx of forty-niners came into northern California gold fields, the newcomers asserted that their numbers be more adequately represented. The first day of debates was solely devoted to the question of whether or not they should allow three more delegates from the mining districts, exceeding the number designated when the interim governor Bennet Riley issued the initial call for the convention in June. Delegates from the mining districts such as San Joaquin and Sacramento argued that they needed to take into account “not less than twenty thousand American citizens were now on the road,” heading toward the Sierra Nevada foothill, to determine the final number of delegates to represent each district.³⁴ W. M. Gwin, a delegate from San Francisco, brazenly stated that they were not making the Constitution “for the native Californians,” but for “the great American population, comprising four-fifths of the population of the country.”³⁵ In the end, several additional members were granted seats at the convention, making the final number of the delegates 48, not the originally assigned 37.

The convention delegates were self-conscious about the enormity of what they were doing. Robert Semple, editor of the first California newspaper *Californian*, remarked in his opening address upon being elected president: “We are now...occupying a position to which all eyes are turned.”³⁶ The metaphorical eyes not only belonged to those from within the nation, but from around the world (mostly Europe). This elated sense that they were creating something greater than a state of the Union was pervasive among the members of the convention, and especially conspicuous in their debates regarding slavery. The convention prohibited the introduction of slavery in California without a single nay vote. “Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, unless for the punishment of

³⁴ J. Ross Browne, *Report of the Debates in the Convention of California, on the Formation of the State Constitution* (Washington, D.C.: J. T. Towers, 1850), 11.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 18.

crimes, shall ever be tolerated in this state,” the adopted section of the constitution read, portending the language of the 13th U.S. Constitutional Amendment of 1865.³⁷

The prohibition of slavery, however, only touched the surface of issues challenging these delegates to regulate the state’s demographics. Right after the proposed ban of slavery was unanimously adopted, Morton M. McCarver, an Oregonian gold seeker and delegate from Sacramento, proposed another section banning the immigration of free blacks. At first, McCarver attempted to include an addendum, “Nor shall the introduction of free negroes, under indentures or otherwise, be allowed,” to the original anti-slavery clause. When the motion failed, McCarver then proposed a new section that required the future state legislature to pass “at its first session...such laws as will effectually prohibit free persons of color from immigrating to and settling in this State, and to effectually prevent the owners of slaves from bringing them into this State for the purpose of setting them free.”³⁸ This attempt to restrict free black mobility on the pretext that it would be a *de facto* continuation of southern slavery elicited lengthy discussions at the convention, where most of the delegates evinced fundamentally skewed views on the correlation between the colored race and unfree labor.

The debate over whether or not to exclude free black immigrants was predicated on a racially exclusive understanding of free labor, combined with a firm conviction that California was to be the promised land for white settlers.³⁹ Oliver M. Wozencraft, native of Ohio and delegate from San Joaquin district, considered the proposal as a natural extension from the abolition clause already

³⁷ Browne, *Report of the Debates*, 43. Similar language can be found in the state constitution of Iowa adopted in 1846 (Article 2, Section 23), which some of the California delegates brought in to their constitutional convention for reference purpose. See “Constitution of 1846,” State Library of Iowa (<http://publications.iowa.gov/17470/>, accessed on 9 January 2017).

³⁸ Browne, *Report of the Debates*, 44.

³⁹ Eric Foner, *Free Labor, Free Soil, Free men: The Ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970, 1995).

adopted by the convention. Wozencraft contended that “if there is one part of the world, possessing advantages over another, where the family of Japhet [whites of European descent] may expect to attain a higher state of perfectability [*sic*]...it is here, in California.”⁴⁰ In his opinion, it was an unspeakable offence to allow white workers to compete against blacks, “the lowest in the scale of the family of man.”⁴¹ Restricting the whole race’s freedom to move in was the only solution to prevent slavish labor from entering the state, “for if they are permitted to come...they will be *brought here*...the capitalists will fill the land with these living laboring machines.”⁴² The migration of persons belonging to the enslaved black race, even if the individual was nominally free, was viewed as forced, mediated, arranged.

Some of the skeptics were concerned about the precedent such an anti-liberal measure would set. Kimball H. Dimmick, San José delegate, believed that excluding a class of immigrants would make for an inauspicious beginning of the new state. “The eyes of the world are turned toward us,” Dimmick proclaimed, echoing Robert Semple’s presidential address at the beginning of the convention.⁴³ California being “the first great republican State on the borders of the Pacific,” Dimmick argued that they needed to “set the example of an enlightened policy to the nations of the Pacific” by adopting “a free and liberal fundamental system of government.”⁴⁴ William E. Shannon, a young Irish lawyer from Sacramento and the author of the anti-slavery clause of the state constitution, also opposed prohibiting free black immigration. He argued that it did not matter what schemes slave owners had in mind, since slaves should become free upon entering California; “free

⁴⁰ Browne, *Report of the Debates*, 49.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.* (emphasis mine).

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 141.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

men of color have just as good a right...to emigrate here as white men.”⁴⁵ Shannon’s egalitarian language still strongly resonated with his colleagues’ equation of blackness and servility, because he went on to assert that there was no reason for Californians not to enjoy “the services of a class of men...regarded as absolutely essential to the comfort and convenience of domestic life.”⁴⁶

The debate surrounding whether or not to exclude free black immigration was also heavily weighted by the visible reality of California gold fields: the presence of wealthier gold speculators who brought hired hands in some form of bondage. John McDougal, a recent immigrant from Ohio and the future governor of California, proposed an amendment to exclude only those who had previously been slaves and “who are brought here under bonds or indentures of servitude.”⁴⁷ This attempt to clarify the matter, however, further muddled the debates, as southern slavery was not the only form of “servitude” that these Anglo Americans feared might corrupt their nascent state. Debt peonage was a common enough custom for many Spanish-speaking gold seekers from Chile and Mexico, whose presence had already provoked xenophobic resentment from Anglo-American miners by the time of the constitutional convention. Henry A. Tefft, a young lawyer who had recently arrived from New York, epitomized the sentiment. He was cautiously in favor of McCarver’s proposition for free black exclusion. His only reservation was that the exclusionary measure should be more widely applied, preventing “the introduction into this country of negroes, peons of Mexico, or any class of that kind...whether they be free or bond.”⁴⁸

The same logic, however, was also used by those who argued against the adoption of the

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 139. For Gwin’s role in drafting the anti-slavery clause, see “Early Political History: The Pioneers who helped frame the first constitution of California,” *San Francisco Call*, 15 September 1895.

⁴⁶ Browne, *Report of the Debates*, 139.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 142.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 144.

anti-black immigration measure at the convention. Dimmick, for example, questioned why free black Americans needed to be excluded, when there were already “natives of the Sandwich Islands, Chilians, and Peruvians, and the lower classes of Mexicans” who had been permitted to come and working in the mines at the moment. In his opinion, the black people were “fully as intelligent as they are, possessed of as much physical energy, and better acquainted with [their] habits and customs,” including speaking in English.⁴⁹ Edward Gilbert, delegate from San Francisco who had come to California as part of U.S. Army during the U.S.-Mexican War, similarly questioned the wisdom of free black exclusion by citing “the miserable natives...from the Sandwich Islands” and “the refuse of population from Chili, Peru, Mexico, and other parts of the world,” most of whom were, in his opinion, “as bad as any of the free negroes of the North, or the worst slaves of the South.”⁵⁰ In the end, McCarver’s proposal was voted down for its potential to disrupt the smooth admission of California into the Union.⁵¹

Though unsuccessful in banning the migration of free blacks, these impassioned defenders of free labor at the convention were the voice of Anglo-American settlers in California. Anglo champions of free labor continued to see various forms of unfree labor coming into California with gold-rush migrants. Sometimes, settlers took it upon themselves to regulate the influx of unfree labor, as evidenced by frequent meetings, resolutions, and violence against the groups of foreign miners who were deemed practitioners of less-than-free labor. Anglo-Americans in California branded Mexican California’s pre-existing labor systems, along with those brought by non-Anglo immigrants, as un-American and foreign. The forms of labor thus marked as foreign, and more

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 141.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 150.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 331-340. See also Smith, *Freedom’s Frontier*, 15-17.

significantly, the people who practiced those foreign unfree forms of labor, should then be purged and excluded.

The freedom to move into California became a particularly contentious topic precisely because the gold diggings represented economic upward mobility of free working people. “Gold is a great equalizer,” a New York commercial journal once commented upon the gold discoveries in California and Australia.⁵² The maxim was also applicable, to a degree, for people of color seeking to uplift themselves in the antebellum United States. There were rare but inspiring examples like ex-slave Alvin Coffey, the only black person listed on the roster of the Society of California Pioneers, who bought his and his family’s freedom by toiling in California gold fields.⁵³ However, while gold did have a democratizing effect, it also became a source of fierce competition and spiteful resentment in the early 1850s, exacerbated by the exclusive nature of American democracy at the time. If the eastern states of the Union had undergone, during the very same period, fierce debates concerning wage labor (“white slavery”) and slave labor, in gold-rush California, where gold placers symbolized the wealth free for all, the distinction of free and unfree labor fell along the division of “American” and “foreign.” “It really seems as though all the big ‘strikes’ are made by niggers and foreigners,” lamented a young Anglo-American miner in his journal in April 1851, reporting a lucky find of \$1,000 by an Irishman the day before and a rumor of a black miner digging out \$7,000 a month prior.⁵⁴ To Anglo-American miners and state authorities, the economic mobility that gold prospecting was making possible for people of color was something that had to be curtailed. The seemingly equal access to wealth brought about violent xenophobia and racial wars in the early

⁵² *Hunt’s Merchant’s Magazine and Commercial Review* 35 (July 1856), 605.

⁵³ Delilah L. Beasley, “Slavery in California,” *Journal of Negro History* 3: 1 (1918); Rudolph M. Lapp, *Blacks in Gold Rush California* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).

⁵⁴ Typescript of Edward Monroe Brown diaries, Vol. 5, 82 (1 April 1851), Western America Collection, BRBM.

1850s, eventually driving out Chilean, Peruvian, and Mexican miners who were deemed as practitioners of unfree labor.⁵⁵

The indigenous people, however, were another matter. While Anglo-American settlers, with the power of the state on their side, sought to exclude blacks, foreigners, and the imported forms of unfree labor from the state, the restriction in freedom of movement and the system of labor bondage came to be utilized as a way to subjugate the indigenous population. In April 1850, the California legislature, in its very first session, passed An Act for the Government and Protection of Indians.⁵⁶ The Act's pretext of "protection," hinting at a paternalistic concern toward the "wards" of the state, belied the precise manners of the "government" contained therein. The Act fully exploited the caveat in the state's constitutional ban of slavery that still condoned involuntary servitude as a form of punishment. Section 20, the last and the lengthiest section of the Act, contained a vagrancy clause that penalized unemployment and loitering. If the authorities concluded that the Indian in question was in fact a vagrant, they were "to hire out such vagrant within 24 hours to the best bidder...for any term not exceeding four months." That any Indian could be made "liable to be arrested *on the complaint of any resident citizen of the country*," just added more potential for abuse.⁵⁷ Vagrancy law was a common feature in the British common law from the early modern period, as well as in other industrializing societies of the nineteenth century. The state of California applied the vagrancy law to its indigenous people ahead of time, as the first vagrancy law in California for "all persons except Digger Indians" was passed five years later in 1855, decreeing for those convicted of

⁵⁵ The clashes between Anglo Americans and Spanish-speaking miners during the early years (1849-52) will be the focus of another chapter. For an eloquent summary view of the agitation and violence against foreign—first Mexican, Chilean, Peruvian, and French, and later Chinese—miners, see Johnson, *Roaring Camp*, Chap. 3, "Mining Gold, Making War."

⁵⁶ [California State Legislature], *The Statutes of California: Passed at the First Session of the Legislature* (San Jose, CA: J. Winchester, State Printer, 1850), Chap. 133, 408-410.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 410 (emphasis mine).

vagrancy to be jailed and put to work for a period “not exceeding ninety days.”⁵⁸ Not only was the penalty for “vagrant” Indians more severe, but as they were to be auctioned to the highest bidder, it had all the appearance of a state-endorsed slave trade. In addition, the 1850 law also stipulated that any Indian convicted of other crimes punishable by fines could be hired out to “any white person [who] give bond for said Indian” (Section 14).

The 1850 Act for the Government and Protection also opened up another avenue for California Indians to fall under virtual enslavement. Section 3 of the Act allowed white men and women to assume guardianship of Indian minors, when a Justice of the Peace was “satisfied that no compulsory means have been used.”⁵⁹ As the law allowed for “family or friends” of the minor in question to represent them, there was a relatively low bar for those who wanted legally to acquire young Indian laborer. The person claiming the guardianship was allowed “to have the care, custody, control, and earnings of such minor, until he or she obtain the age of majority,” which was eighteen for males, fifteen for females. Section 6 of the Act invalidated Indians’ testimony against white men, a law that essentially deprived Indian parents of all legal means to contest claims of a white person over their children. This legislative endorsement consequently created the state-wide slave trade in trafficking abducted or forcibly removed Indian children.⁶⁰ All combined, the 1850 Act read like a department-store style collection of the ways through which white Californians could gain access to indigenous laborer in bondage.

Coming after the long history of Indian servitude during the Spanish and Mexican periods of

⁵⁸ “An Act to Punish Vagrants, Vagabonds, and Dangerous and Suspicious Persons,” 1855 Cal. Stat. ch. 165; quoted in Kimberly Johnson-Dodds, “Early California Laws and Policies related to California Indians” (California Research Bureau: September 2002), 14.

⁵⁹ [California State Legislature], *The Statutes of California*, 408.

⁶⁰ For the consequences of the Act for the Government and Protection of Indians in recreating indigenous slavery in California, see Reséndez, *The Other Slavery*, 264-65; Benjamin Madley, *An American Genocide: The United States and the California Indian Catastrophe, 1846-1873* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 189-97.

governance in California, the California state's reaffirmation and institutionalization of Indian servitude was qualitatively different from the previous forms of bondage in one regard: the system was backed by the state power, a government that stood for the collective will of Anglo-American settlers. The 1850 Act therefore established a system of bondage endorsed by the settler colonial government, in a society that prided itself as the promised land of free labor. As the number of American settlers swelled, California Indians were no longer as indispensable a source of labor as they had once been in the eyes of the colonizers, and more an obstacle to be removed. The institutionalized servitude of the 1850 Act coexisted with the settlers' full-scale encroachment upon the previously unsettled interior part of California, as well as outright campaigns for extermination of California Indians, both by vigilantes and government-sponsored militias, during the 1850s.⁶¹

While the state government and settlers remained the main colonial actors regarding the subjugation of California Indians, there was also an attempt to involve the federal government. In 1851, the federal government appointed three Anglo-Californian commissioners to negotiate treaties with California Indians. This included Oliver Wozencraft, one of the delegates who had advocated for excluding free black people from California at the constitutional convention, and who had voted against Indian enfranchisement. The Indian commissioners negotiated and signed eighteen treaties with more than a hundred indigenous nations in 1851.⁶² The eighteen treaties, however, failed to be ratified in Congress, mainly because California's legislature protested what they saw as too generous concession of the land. Without federal treaties, there was nothing to check land encroachment and expropriation. California Indians were placed at the mercy of the collective will of American settlers,

⁶¹ Benjamin Madley chronicles the rampant Indian killings by Anglo Californians, state and private, in *An American Genocide*. See also Brendan C. Lindsay, *Murder State: California's Native American Genocide: 1846-1873* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2012).

⁶² Vine Deloria, Jr. and Raymond J. DeMallie (eds.), *Documents of American Indian Diplomacy: Treaties, Agreements, and Conventions, 1775-1979* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999), Vol. 1, 801-845, *passim*.

who began to swarm in the mountains and valleys.

At the same time, the Indians also came to be distinguished as “our natives” to those settlers, as the object for paternalistic state protection and the potential source of domesticable labor. One of the Indian commissioners, Colonel Redick McKee, explained the desirability of Indian labor before the Committee on the Indian Reservation in the California State Capitol on March 20, 1852:

I believe the California Indians can be more easily and speedily domesticated and improved...and the experiment is well worth trying. If it succeeds, you have at once in your neighborhood, men and women, to serve as laborers...*already acclimated, naturally mild and docile, willing to work at cheap wages, and in my opinion, superior to any given equal number of Kanakas or Chinese that could be imported*—The latter, when their time is out, or they have made money by working in the mines, go home, taking with them every dollar of their earnings; the former are at home, and freely spend for necessities or dress, every dollar they may earn.⁶³

Colonel McKee’s statement demonstrated that Anglo Californians now separated their “domestic” Indians from transpacific migrants such as Kanakas or Chinese. While McKee’s point echoed a long tradition of colonial thoughts that sought to subjugate Indians by making docile workers out of them, his point also hinted at American California’s preoccupation with sojourning immigrants. Kanakas, now part of the unwanted migrant population in California, also faced a similar restriction of their physical mobility in the Hawaiian Islands. The Gold Rush spurred the regulatory measure for natives in the Kingdom of Hawaii, as the government enacted a series of laws denying their indigenous subjects the freedom to move—coincidentally enough, in the same year as California’s Act for the Government and Protection of Indians.

⁶³ “Address of Col. Redick McKee,” *Daily Alta California*, 25 March 1852 (emphasis mine).

1.3. The California Gold Rush and (Settler) Colonialism in Hawaii

With U.S. sovereignty over the Pacific Coast territory and the influx of Americans to California, the imagined proximity between California and Hawaii seemed closer than ever before. Hawaii had been under the steady influence of American settlers since the 1820s. Protestant missionaries from New England missionized the kingdom in the early 1820s. Christianity became the sole religion of the kingdom's royal family and nobility by the 1840s.⁶⁴ The commercial and agricultural development of California following the Gold Rush reinforced previous transpacific ties and further precipitated the cross-oceanic integration, increasing the sheer volume of traffic and providing the material basis for U.S. military expansion and systematic colonization of the Pacific.

The Kingdom of Hawaii's 1850 Act to Prohibit Natives from Leaving the Islands, at first glance, appeared dissimilar to the Act for the Government and Protection of Indians, in that one prohibits migration to California, while the other regulates free movement within California. The two laws were, however, identical in their intention to control the mobility of the colonized to retain their labor force for the preferred use of the settler-colonizers. In Hawaii, the discovery at Sutter's mill acutely influenced its native population, for whom California was no stranger's country. Between 1848 and 1849, the islands' population decreased by 51.7%.⁶⁵ The steep decline was partly due to the outbreak of epidemics in 1848, which killed at least 10,000 native Hawaiians that year

⁶⁴ Legal anthropologist Sally Engle Merry sees the process of American colonization of Hawaii into two distinct phases: first, the establishment of Christian law, carried out by New England missionaries in the 1820s; then the creation of a legal-political system based on Anglo-American secular laws, beginning in the late 1840s. Sally Engle Merry, *Colonizing Hawaii: The Cultural Power of Law* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000). For more on American colonialism in Hawaii, see also J. Kehaulani Kauanui, *Hawaiian Blood: Colonialism and the Politics of Sovereignty and Indigeneity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008).

⁶⁵ The *Polynesian*, 7 September 1850.

alone and ultimately resulted in the loss of approximately one tenth of the population.⁶⁶ The Hawaiian Census of 1850 counted “82,035 unmixed Hawaiians and 558 part Hawaiians,” roughly three fourths of the population in 1836, when the estimated number of the natives stood a little over 100,000.⁶⁷ Still, the Act to Prohibit Natives from Leaving the Islands attributed the decrease of the kingdom’s population onto the presumably uninformed choices of native Hawaiians: “Whereas,” the preamble read, “many natives have emigrated to California and there died, in great misery, and...it is desirable to prevent such loss to the nation, and such wretchedness to individuals.”⁶⁸ In response to this demographic crisis, the law decreed that “no native subject to the King shall be allowed to emigrate to California, or other foreign country” unless it could be proven that there was an absolute necessity for the person to leave.⁶⁹

Robert C. Wyllie, former Scottish physician who became a close advisor to the Hawaiian royal family during the 1840s, served as King’s Minister of Foreign Affairs from 1845 to 1865. He defended the reasoning behind this anti-emigration legislation in a letter to a friend in Sydney, arguing that the Hawaiian Islands at the time were full of “the victims of self-delusion...not likely to get work or employment here.”⁷⁰ Gold fever was spreading among these people who were vulnerable to make foolhardy decisions. “They ought to be restrained from rushing to their own death and destruction, personal rights notwithstanding,” Wyllie insisted, adding that “nobody can

⁶⁶ For the estimate number of 10,000 deaths, see “Decrease of Polynesian Races,” *The Friend*, 1 March 1849, 20; see also Robert C. Schmitt and Eleanor C. Nordyke, “Death in Hawai’i: The Epidemics of 1848-1849,” *The Hawaiian Journal of History* 35 (2001).

⁶⁷ Schmitt and Nordyke, “Death in Hawai’i,” 11.

⁶⁸ “An Act to Prohibit Natives from Leaving the Islands,” passed on 2 July 1850, published in the *Polynesian*, 7 September 1850.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ Robert C. Wyllie, letter to [?] Smith, 11 July 1850, quoted in David W. Forbes, “An Act to Prohibit Hawaiians from Emigrating to California, ‘where they may die in misery’” (San Francisco: Paul Markham Khan, 1986), BL.

plead a right to suicide.”⁷¹ His conviction that the sad and destructive fate awaited native Hawaiians in California was based, to a certain degree, on first-hand accounts coming from the opposite shores. E. A. Suwerkrop, former Danish Consul at the port of Honolulu who left the islands in the wake of the gold discovery, wrote a letter to Wyllie in late 1848 urging to devise a measure to care for native Hawaiians in California, who were “destitute of means, sick and without medical attendance, dying and without the means of decent sepulture.”⁷² George T. Allan, an officer of the Hudson Bay Company, also informed Wyllie in December 1848 that “many of the poor S. I. [Sandwich Islands] natives have died in California this winter,” advising the Hawaiian government to find ways “to have them attended to.”⁷³

However genuine this paternalistic concern for indigenous health and welfare was, it was clearly not without caveat. The second section of the Act cited two distinct possibilities for native Hawaiians to leave. “Nothing in this Act shall prevent the Governors of Islands,” the section proclaimed, “from granting...permission to native sailors to embark in such foreign ships as may be in distress from want of men to prosecute their voyages, nor shall anything in this Act prevent a family leaving the Islands, from obtaining permission and a passport to take with them such native nurse or domestic servants as they may urgently require.”⁷⁴ In other words, the only possible way for native Hawaiians to leave the islands was to be in the service of foreigners, either in the capacity of domestic servants or sailors. These exemptions written into the Act indicated how much the Kingdom of Hawaii depended on its “foreign” trades and residents at the time, and how native

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² E. A. Suwerkrop letter to R. C. Wyllie, The Foreign Office & Executive File, Hawaii State Archives, quoted in Richard A. Greer, “California Gold—Some Reports to Hawaii,” *Hawaiian Journal of History* 4 (1970), 167.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 168.

⁷⁴ “An Act to Prohibit Natives from Leaving the Islands,” *Polynesian*, 7 September 1850.

Hawaiians were being relegated into a servile status by their own government, as it increasingly came under the control of foreign interests.

The Kingdom of Hawaii's decision to prohibit native emigration corresponded to the American settlers' proposed solution to the population drain: selling lands to foreigners. In 1848, a large contingent of foreign residents also left the kingdom for California, some of them in the company of hired native Hawaiian workers. According to an October 21, 1848 editorial of the *Polynesian*, the Hawaiian government organ almost exclusively controlled by Anglo Americans, more than 300 foreign residents had left Honolulu, markedly depleting the source of revenue for the kingdom. The *Polynesian* used this as an excuse to press for more hospitable treatment of foreigners' property rights. "Had the three hundred men who have left for California held each one hundred acres of land," the editor Charles E. Hitchcock argued, "we question much if many of them would have gone."⁷⁵ Some of the former residents seemed to agree. Theodore Shillaber, a U.S.-born merchant based in Honolulu, was appointed as King's Commissioner to the governor of Alta California to negotiate a treaty of amity and reciprocity in 1848. Once on California soil, Shillaber quickly lost his desire to serve the Hawaiian Kingdom and resigned his commission. In his letter to Robert Wyllie, he castigated the Hawaiian government's mistreatment of its foreign residents. "How unlike the griping policy of the Hawaiian Govt., are the open, liberal, attractive *allurements* of the Republic," Shillaber exclaimed, comparing the (not even established) American rule in California with the kingdom's governance.⁷⁶ Though what "griping policy" Shillaber was sniping at was vague, the fact that he discussed in the same letter the pending impeachment of the Dr. Gerrit Judd, the Hawaiian Minister of Finance who had strenuously opposed foreigners' land ownership, suggests

⁷⁵ "Emigration to California," *The Polynesian*, 21 October 1848.

⁷⁶ Theodore Shillaber to Robert C Wyllie, 21 December 1848, The Foreign Office & Executive File, Hawaii State Archives, quoted in Greer, "Some Reports," 166-67.

that he may have been speaking of the restriction of land sales to foreigners. The state of affairs in the kingdom was about to change. In 1850, a few months before the Act to Prohibit Natives from Leaving the Islands was proclaimed, the Kingdom of Hawaii enacted the Alien Land Ownership Act as a part of the wholesale land reform that had commenced in 1848, opening the door for the foreign-owned plantation economy that developed in the second half of the nineteenth century.⁷⁷

To understand the Hawaiian government's policy toward native emigration, it must be noted that the California Gold Rush commenced as Euro-American colonization of Hawaii reached one of its major turning points: *Ka Mabele*, or the Great Division, of 1848. Prior to this land reform, all Hawaiian lands nominally belonged to the king, though it was more of a guardianship than an ownership according to traditional understanding in the islands. The lands were allocated to local chiefs (*ali'i*), who governed commoners (*maka'ainana*), who together cared for the land in a communal manner.⁷⁸ The *Mabele* of 1848 adopted the Euro-American notion of private land ownership and divided the lands among the king, chiefs, and government, the last portion to be distributed individually to commoner applicants. Afterward, about 23.8% of the islands' lands became the king's property called the Crown lands, which was later sold to large sugar plantations owned by U.S.-born planters, 39.2% was distributed among 245 chiefs, and 37% was apportioned as government lands. Despite stated intentions of the land reform, the proportion of the lands eventually granted to Hawaiian common people was minimal. The process required to file claims for the land was cumbersome and the parcel of land allowed to each commoner was less than three acres in size, hardly sufficient for a family to make a living. When the land division was complete,

⁷⁷ Jon M. Van Dyke, *Who Owns the Crown Lands of Hawai'i?* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2008), 50-51.

⁷⁸ For more information on the Hawaiian system of land holding, *Malama 'Aina* ("caring for the land"), see Van Dyke, *Who Owns the Crown Lands*, 12.

more than two thirds of the Hawaiian lands eventually fell into the hands of foreigners.⁷⁹

News of the gold discovery in California reached the Hawaiian Islands in the summer of 1848, at the very onset of these structural changes.⁸⁰ While the opinions of the islands' elites and foreign residents (many of whom were part of the ruling elites) varied as to the possible ramifications California's sudden growth would have on the kingdom, all seemed to agree that the gold in California signaled a tectonic transformation, for better or for worse.⁸¹ An unidentified former resident of the kingdom, now a proud Californian, wrote a letter in August 1848 to a friend in Hawaii, almost tauntingly questioning the future of the islands:

Hereafter, our letters and papers will come to us direct, in 30 days, from the U.S., instead of being 5 or 6 months around Cape Horn, and *via* the Sandwich Islands; and instead of our merchants sending to Oahu for goods as formerly, the course of things will be reversed—our goods will be imported directly here, from the United States, S. America, China and England, and if the black or white *Kanakas* want goods, they must send us for them... What will then become of Kanakadom?⁸²

In this remark, the anonymous letter writer unwittingly recognized the significance of the maritime connections between California and Hawaii before 1848, that even the around-the-horn traffic had touched upon Hawaii before it went to California. He also predicted a redirection of the trade and transportation away from the islands due to a newly opened steamship route via Panama.

Not all in Hawaii shared such a grim view. California's abrupt growth provided a decisive

⁷⁹ Van Dyke, *Who Owns the Crown Lands*, 30-53, the statistics on 42. See also Jon J. Chinen, *The Great Māhele: Hawaii's Land Division of 1848* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1958).

⁸⁰ The *Polynesian*, 24 June 1848; The *Friend*, 1 August 1848.

⁸¹ For a brief glimpse of the Gold Rush's impacts on the Kingdom of Hawaii, see Sucheng Chan, "A People of Exceptional Character: Ethnic Diversity, Nativism, and Racism in the California Gold Rush," *California History* 79: 2 (2000), 51; Gerald B. Nash, "A Veritable Revolution: The Global Economic Significance of the California Gold Rush," *California History* 77: 4 (Winter 1998/1999), 286.

⁸² The anonymous letter was found in the Foreign Office and Executive File of the Hawaii State Archives, dated 28 December 1848; quoted in Greer, "Some Reports," 160 (emphasis in original).

impetus to the expansion of commercial agriculture in the Hawaiian Islands. The *Polynesian*, in a lengthy article summarizing California affairs after its “yellow [gold] fever” outbreak, concluded: “The effect upon the prosperity of the islands cannot but be good if we pursue the right policy and adopt the right measures.”⁸³ Since California would open an extensive market for Hawaiian consumer goods, it was doubtless that Hawaiian merchants and planters stood to gain enormous profits. The only problem was that their “present limited export” was not yet sufficient to supply the market demands of California. “Shall we sit idle and allow others to outstrip us and secure the market which is now our own,” the editor asked.⁸⁴ The first three years after 1848 indeed witnessed a dramatic trade increase between California and Hawaii. The rapid population increase, without self-sufficient economic structure to support it, created a massive consumer market in California in the early 1850s. The sudden surge of commerce was highly unpredictable and often hyped with speculation, but still provided a necessary incentive in Hawaii’s agricultural sector.⁸⁵ The sugar plantations, for which Hawaii was to be known in the coming century, were still in incipient stage in 1848. The first few experiments of planting sugar canes in the 1830-1840s, some directed by King Kamehameha III himself, had largely failed, which was part of what motivated the structural reform described above. Yet by the time the *Mahela* of 1848-1850 divided the Hawaiian lands and granted foreigners the right to own lands, foreign—mainly American—merchants had begun to take an interest in the Hawaii’s capacity for commercial agriculture.⁸⁶

The Hawaiian Kingdom’s 1850 Act to prohibit native emigration made it clear that law-

⁸³ The *Polynesian*, 15 July 1848, p.3.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ Kuykendall, *The Hawaiian Kingdom, Vol. 1*, 299-305, 319-327.

⁸⁶ Carol A. MacLennan, “Foundations of Sugar’s Power: Early Maui Plantations, 1840-1860,” *The Hawaiian Journal of History* 29 (1995). See also MacLennan, “Hawaii’s Turn to Sugar, 1860-1880,” *The Hawaiian Journal of History* 31 (1997).

makers were preoccupied with the maintenance of plantation economy. The Act's preamble claimed that "the want of labor [was] severely felt, by Planters and other agriculturists, whereby the price of provisions and other produce [had] been unprecedentedly enhanced to the great prejudice of the Islands."⁸⁷ This unexpected candidness regarding the economic rationale for the emigration restriction revealed the labor needs of the sugar plantations to control indigenous workers' mobility. It was Euro-American settler colonialism in Hawaii wielding the state power to create cheap labor supplies out of their indigenous subjects. Native Hawaiians constituted the majority of the labor force for sugar plantations in mid-nineteenth century. Even as some planters began soliciting labor migrants from China and other remote parts of the world as early as 1852, the Hawaiian sugar plantations' relatively small size and slow growth before 1865 kept the immigrant labor force small until the mid-1870s, at which point "about half of all Hawaiian men" worked in sugar plantations over the islands.⁸⁸

Migration for the riches in California caused a brief depletion of labor in Hawaii and a corresponding increase of wages. In a report sent in March 1849 to the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM), Reverend Ephraim Clark, stationed in Honolulu, explained how the "California movement" increased the cost of labor and consequently the expense of living in Hawaii.⁸⁹ He and other missionaries from the islands held high hopes that "it may serve to stimulate the natives to more activity and enterprise in the cultivation of the soil."⁹⁰ Artemas Bishop, another ABCFM missionary stationed in Ewa, Oahu, expressed a similar hope that the Gold

⁸⁷ "An Act to Prohibit Natives from Leaving the Islands," *Polynesian*, 7 September 1850.

⁸⁸ *Report of the Hawaiian Immigration Society* (Honolulu, 1874), 10, 19, quoted in Clarence E. Glick, *Sojourners and Settlers: Chinese migrants in Hawaii* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1980), 6.

⁸⁹ American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, *The Missionary Herald* 46 (1850), 248.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

Rush-induced higher cost of labor would stimulate a much-needed improvement to the “sickly and dying race” of Hawaiians.⁹¹ The increasing cost of labor, in addition to the absolute scarcity of laborers, no doubt prompted sugar planters to seek government regulation of native emigration.

William Little Lee, Chief Justice of the Hawaiian Supreme Court and the primary architect of the 1848 land reform, had a slightly different opinion on the causal relationship between the California Gold Rush and the state of native Hawaiian welfare. A lawyer from New York, Lee played a major role in the complete overhauling of the Kingdom’s legal system since the late 1840s. In a lengthy letter written in March 1849 to his Harvard Law School mentor, Simon Greenleaf, he blamed the California traffic for the epidemics of 1848-49: “The measles and [W]hooping-cough, which were entire strangers to this race, were brought here from California last summer, and they have swept through the land like the besom of destruction.” The epidemics, coinciding with the beginning of Hawaiian gold seekers’ migration to California, appeared to Lee as a sort of prophetic comings of the Anglo-Saxon race that would take over the Hawaiian Islands:

Foreign diseases, and the want of knowledge and energy...are fast wearing upon this and every other branch of the Polynesian race, and I fear that in spite of all the efforts of the missionaries and others for their salvation, they are destined to give place to the white man...the Saxon will ere many years be here in all his might and glory, trampling and crushing under his iron heel the poor remnants of this interesting nation... The mighty wave of emigration that is now rolling over the Rocky Mountains, will soon reach us.⁹²

The self-proclaimed fear of the possible extinction of the “Polynesian race” still did not prevent Lee from authoring “An Act for the Governance of Masters and Servants,” commonly called the Masters and Servants Act of 1850, which dominated the relationship between Hawaiian planters and

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 166.

⁹² William Little Lee to Hon. Simon Greenleaf, 3 March 1849, Hawaiian Miscellany Collection, BL.

laborers, native or immigrant, for years to come.⁹³ Passed on June 21, 1850, the law defined two different types of servants: apprentices and indentured servants. The law, whilst having the standard paternalist protection for servants in place, made it a penal offence for indentured servants and apprentices to leave the employment, with the penalty of extended service double the time absent from work. In the end, the year 1850 witnessed the confluence of a series of events—the final adjustments of Hawaiian land reform making land titles available to foreigners, the Masters and Servants Act legalizing indentured servitude, and finally, the Act to Prohibit Natives from Leaving the Islands—that would create a bonded and largely immobile plantation working class out of the indigenous people in Hawaii.

The California Gold Rush beckoned the Kingdom of Hawaii with a dual-dimensional opportunity. To the commoners, having been largely dispossessed of the lands and traditional way of life, California became a land of opportunities, of economic upward mobility that was quickly disappearing in their homeland. To foreign-born planters and entrepreneurs back in Hawaii, the economic boom of the rush and the surging demands for agricultural products also presented an extraordinary opportunity. The only downside of the rush for Hawaiian planters was that their labor source was being drained at the same time. The Hawaiian government, controlled by an alliance of profit-seeking foreign settlers and the king preoccupied with Western-style development, attempted to aid the latter group in the face of the challenges presented by the well-established reality of indigenous mobility.

A fundamental transformation of Hawaii's economic structure was one of the unforeseen consequences of the gold-induced boom in California. Friedrich Gerstäcker, a German travel writer who briefly sought his fortune in the gold mines of California before traveling to Honolulu in late

⁹³ Edward D. Beechert, *Working in Hawaii: A Labor History* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1985), 40-57.

1850, was convinced that “California has given the death-blow to the simple life of the natives.”⁹⁴ Narrating a brief history of the Hawaiian Islands from the landing of Captain Cook to the arrival of Christian missionaries, he dramatically added, “when the riches of California were discovered...the Sandwich Islanders, as the nearest neighbors, got a full share of all the miraculous changes.”⁹⁵ He did not go into detail regarding “the miraculous changes,” but the final outcome was clear. The rule of the king had been rendered in name only; “missionaries have ruled the country for many years, and Californian gold rules it now,” declared Gerstäcker.⁹⁶

The booming markets in California in 1849-1850 represented the rule of California gold in Hawaii. Sugar exports of Hawaii peaked in 1850 with more than 750,000 pounds, double the amount of exported sugar in 1846.⁹⁷ The export economy staggered in 1851, when U.S. government imposed tariffs over imported sugar at the behest of Louisiana sugar planters. The lure of prosperity with sugar plantation economy was so great that it almost led to the annexation of Hawaii in 1853-1854. Diplomatic correspondences between the Kingdom of Hawaii and the United States reveals that the annexation to the United States loomed as a very real possibility. Details of the annexation treaty was negotiated; the royal family was to receive annuities and Hawaii would gain statehood. Only the death of King Kamehameha III and the new king’s rejection of the treaty prevented the annexation in 1854.⁹⁸ The failure of the annexation movement in 1854 meant that American settler colonial influence was limited in Hawaii; unlike the government solely representing American settlers

⁹⁴ Friedrich Gerstäcker, *Narrative of a Journey Round the World* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1853), 279-80. This was an English translation of the original German publication, *Reisen* (Stuttgart, 1853).

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 280.

⁹⁷ Kuykendall, *The Hawaiian Kingdom, Vol. 1*, 315.

⁹⁸ Pletcher, *Diplomacy of Involvement*, 47.

in California, the government in Hawaii was an alliance between foreign settlers and indigenous elites. Native Hawaiian resistance against American settler colonialism, aided by diplomatic pressures from other imperial powers like the British and French, continued to impede the annexation scheme until Anglo settler-planters overthrew the monarchy in 1893.⁹⁹

Still, expanding American colonial encroachment was perhaps best exemplified by native Hawaiian commoners' protests against being equated with "Indians" of the Americas. As the Hawaiian kingdom experienced the tectonic shift in its economy and politics, Hawaiian commoners resisted the foreign encroachment in a series of petitions during the 1840 and 1850s. Some of these petitions included a direct reference to the fate of North American indigenous peoples, and the ramification of American experience in their everyday interaction with settlers from the United States. "The foreigners despise us," an 1845 petition signed by 52 Hawaiians declared, requesting prohibition of land sales to foreigners—"We hear them revile us to our faces: 'Common Indians.'"¹⁰⁰ In 1854, a petition against the annexation movement announced: "Your hereditary people from the time of your ancestors...refuse to have you consent to join with America, lest you...become as nothing, *like the Indians in America*."¹⁰¹ Ironically, while more foreign visitors, particularly Americans, began to liken native Hawaiians to American Indians, they became a distinctive racial group of "Kanakas" in California, increasingly lumped together with unwanted foreign migrant population.

1.4. Indians, Native Hawaiians, and Anglo-American Settlers in California after 1850

The legislative attempts to control the outbound traffic of native Hawaiians did not

⁹⁹ Kuykendall, *The Hawaiian Kingdom*, Vol. 1, 416-27; Merry, *Colonizing Hawaii*, 89-90.

¹⁰⁰ Legislative Petitions, Archives of Hawaii, quoted in Marshall Sahlins, *Anahulu: Anthropology of History in the Kingdom of Hawaii*, Vol. 1: *Historical Ethnography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 130.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

successfully contain the flow of migrants across the Pacific. The exception the Hawaiian authorities made by allowing native sailors to board foreign vessels may have helped, since the San Francisco harbor was full of deserters from ships touching the port in the early years between 1849 and 1850.¹⁰² The presence of Hawaiians in the mining region had hardly gone unnoticed by Anglo-American miners. Native Hawaiians were called either Sandwich Islanders, South Sea Islanders, or simply Kanakas, which came to be used as a racial category for the whole Pacific Islander population in nineteenth-century America. Anglo Americans without prior knowledge of the Pacific Coast often had difficulty categorizing native Hawaiians and resorted to likening them to familiar racial stereotypes of Indian or negro.¹⁰³ After 1852, however, Kanakas became most commonly associated with Chinese immigrants or “coolies,” sharing the racial stereotype of semi-free labor.

The xenophobic outcries of Anglo-Californians against foreign miners—only those with outwardly distinct racial features—were usually tinged with anti-monopoly sentiments imported from the eastern United States. As early as 1849, Anglo miners’ protests focused on “the sudden and unexpected appearance...of influential men from distant provinces of Mexico, Peru, Chile, the Sandwich Islands &c., with large bands of hired men, who are nominally slaves.”¹⁰⁴ Faced with vehement animosity and violence, most Chilean and Peruvian miners left California gold mines shortly thereafter. After 1852, when the first mass migration of 20,000 Chinese miners arrived in San

¹⁰² An 1850 San Francisco newspaper contained a few reports of “Kanaka sailors” remanded after having attempted to desert from their ships. *Daily Alta California*, 20 August 1850, 12 September 1850.

¹⁰³ The majority of “Kanakas” in North America worked side-by-side with American Indians before 1848, as was the case in Sutter’s New Helvetia settlement or in the Hudson Bay Company’s Pacific Northwest settlement. Dillon, “Kanaka Colonies.” A small number of native Hawaiians, cohabiting with California Indian (Concow) women, formed a kinship-based enclave in the coastal area; U.S. census takers of the 1860s and onward would list these Hawaiians as “black.” Chang, “Borderlands in a World at Sea,” 402. See Barry Alan Joyce, *Shaping of American Ethnography: The Wilkes Exploring Expedition, 1838-1842* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), for how American ethnologists on scientific expeditions operated under the established system of racial categorization and used the “Indian” and “Negro” as primary references for Pacific Islanders.

¹⁰⁴ *Daily Alta California*, 26 July 1849, quoted in Johnson, *Roaring Camp*, 193.

Francisco, large protest meetings in the mining districts railed against the arrival of “degraded coolies of China and the tattooed inhabitants of South Sea Islands, as peons.”¹⁰⁵ In 1852, Anglo miners in Columbia, a mining town located in Tuolumne Country, resolved to exclude “Asiatic and South Sea Islanders” from mining in their district; the resolution similarly blamed “shipowners, capitalists, and merchants” who brought the Chinese and Hawaiian laborers to the mines.¹⁰⁶ Considering that the “Kanakas” had long been part of the transpacific labor force that sustained California before 1848, this branding as “unfree” workers was intertwined with the Hawaiian anti-emigration law of 1850 to curtail mobility of native Hawaiians. Lumped with “Asiatics,” the “South Seas Islanders” were reimagined as a category of intruders, either to be excluded or exploited by Anglo settlers in California.

California Indians posed a different challenge to Anglo settlers than these labor migrants. As Colonel McKee’s distinction in 1851 between domestic Indians and sojourning migrants indicated, Indian presence in the mining region was a given, as they were there before the settlers arrived. Historians have made contrasting claims regarding California Indians during the Gold Rush. Some argue that Anglo-American dominance in California completely destroyed the indigenous population and their ways of life, equating the eventual outcome to genocide.¹⁰⁷ Others, while not denying the catastrophic levels of deaths and dispossession, focus on the adaptability and survival of indigenous peoples.¹⁰⁸ During the early 1850s, these different strands of Anglo-Indian relationships coexisted—extermination, exploitation, and adaptation. A small number of independent Indian miners dug gold

¹⁰⁵ *Steamer Alta*, 16 Apr 1850, 15 May 1850; quoted in Andrew Markus, *Fear and Hatred: Purifying Australia and California, 1850-1901* (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1979), 2.

¹⁰⁶ *Daily Alta California*, 15 May 1852.

¹⁰⁷ Lindsay, *Murder State*; Madley, *American Genocide*.

¹⁰⁸ Hurtado, *Indian Survival on the California Frontier*; Johnson, *Roaring Camp*.

on their own in the Southern Mines, while others worked for white men.¹⁰⁹ Yet the dominance established in 1849 over the state government by Anglo-American settlers, who were quick to kill any Indians in their way, firmly shadowed all modes of interactions.

Indian adaptation to the changing environments of California took diverse forms and shapes: retreating further into the remote country, independent mining in addition to traditional hunting and gathering, or more frequently, working for American settlers. One of the better adapted ones, José Jesús, was widely known as one of the “friendly Indians” to Anglo Californians.¹¹⁰ Former neophyte (mission Indian) from San José, José Jesús was one of the “horse thieves” about whom Sutter had complained in the 1840s. Since 1848, he involved himself in the trading of Indian laborers, and was called “captain” for his participation on the American side during the U.S.-Mexican War.¹¹¹ Edward Monroe Brown, a forty-niner from Rhode Island, described a friendly-yet-detached relationship with “Indians belonging to Captain José Jesús’s Ranch.” Considering José Jesús’s role as a labor contractor, those Indians would likely have been available for hire by miners. In February 1851, Brown recorded that two of José Jesús’s Indians were arrested on murder charges. Brown suspected that the arrested Indians were not real perpetrators of the murder; they were found with the victim’s clothing, but there were no tears in the piece of clothing, even though the victim was stabbed multiple times. “I hope the poor Indians will get justice,” he wrote, “the Indians of that tribe have always been friends to the miners, and they feel very bad about the matter.”¹¹² A week later, Brown reported the death of José Jesús, known as “King of the Indians” to the miners. “Whites [lost] a firm

¹⁰⁹ Johnson, *Roaring Camp*, 220-222.

¹¹⁰ “Indian Expedition,” *Daily Alta California*, 20 February 1851.

¹¹¹ For more information on José Jesús, see Hurtado, *Indian Survival on the California Frontier*, 52, 99, 112.

¹¹² Typescript of Edward Monroe Brown diaries, 77 (21 February 1851 entry), BRBM.

and faithful friend,” he lamented; in his opinion, Captain José Jesús, the trader of Indian servants, was the “one who held the Indians in check, and prevented them from committing outrages which he well knew would provoke the whites to an exterminating and bloody war.”¹¹³ This piece of common sense (in the eyes of a young white man) seems to encapsulate the choices given to indigenous peoples of California after 1849: to work in semi-bondage or face extermination.

Anglo immigrants in the mining region constantly expressed a fear of Indian raids, yet as Brown’s description of José Jesús’s restraining influence indicated, the Indian raids were conversely used as an excuse for American militia violence against Indians. Miners were fully aware of the fact that they were in power. Brown, after recounting an incident of an Indian robbery in November 1850, added a castigating remark against average Indians’ cowardliness: “now the whites are powerful and the redskins know it,” he wrote, “when one [Indian] passes a white man, he will always say, ‘Wallah Wallah,’ which means in English, ‘Good morning,’ ‘Good evening,’ ‘How do you do?’ etc.”¹¹⁴ The firmly established power imbalance enabled Anglo Americans to view Indians more as a curiosity and a servile race than a threat in everyday encounters, even when there was a real possibility of violence. Augustin W. Hale, a New Jersey-born miner in his mid-30s, succinctly displayed this tendency in his chance encounter with Indians in 1850. Hale was one of the earliest Anglo-American forty-niners to sail around Cape Horn to California. He stayed in the mining region longer than most of his compatriots, pursuing various business opportunities from 1849 to 1855 and settling in California after a brief sojourn in Nevada for another mining venture in the Comstock Lode. The tale of his mining ventures was full of reports of killing and stealing allegedly perpetrated

¹¹³ Typescript of Edward Monroe Brown diaries, 100-101 (1 March 1851 entry), BRBM. The *Sacramento Transcript* reported on 21 March 1851: “Two chiefs on the Stanislaus have recently had a quarrel whilst intoxicated, Jose Jesus and Capt. Charley. The former received a stab from the latter, and it is expected he will lead his warriors against the noted Charley, as soon as he recovers from the effects of the wound.”

¹¹⁴ Typescript of Edward Monroe Brown diaries, 23-24 (1 November 1850 entry), BRBM.

by Indians.¹¹⁵ In September 1850, when he mined near present-day Scott Valley, Siskiyou County, he had a memorable encounter with two local Indian sentinels, one of whom addressed Hale “with great vehemence & in a most energetic manner, as if his life depended upon what he was saying,” urging, by hand gesture, for the Anglo American to retreat. “I was much pleased with his style and earnestness,” Hale wrote in his diary, “and would have given much could I have understood him.”¹¹⁶ Worried that his colleagues would come back and shoot them, Hale told them to “vamosé.” Although the encounter ended without bloodshed, Hale’s complete unconcern for his own safety when he was alone facing the Indians spoke volumes about how he regarded the presence of Indians around him. Hale’s strange fascination with Indians even led him to toy with the idea of capturing one to take home. Though his letter mentioning such things did not survive, his sister Eliza replied to him in October 1850, telling him, “I hardly think it will pay you for the trouble and expense of bringing home Indian servants, tho' it would be fun to see them.”¹¹⁷

Indigenous depopulation and systematic dispossession was fast underway as Anglo-American miners flocked into traditional hunting and gathering grounds for Indians of the Sierra Nevada region. Settlers’ outright violence and the spread of diseases caused the decimation of the indigenous population in California from estimated 150,000 before 1848 to 30,000 by 1860.¹¹⁸ In light of this demographic plunge, the estimated number of 10,000 Indians trafficked as a result of the 1850 Act for the Government and Protection of Indians in the roughly same period from 1850

¹¹⁵ Throughout the years 1849-1850, Hale frequently mentioned Indians attacking or stealing from white men. See, for example, his diary entries on 17 October 1849, Box 6, Folder 1; 5 August 1850, 10 August 1850, 24 August 1850, Box 6, Folder 6; 6 September 1850, Box 6, Folder 8, in Augustin W. Hale papers, HL.

¹¹⁶ 1 September 1850 entry, Augustin W. Hale Papers, Box 6, Folder 8, HL.

¹¹⁷ Eliza Hale Paine to Augustin W Hale, 24 October 1850, Augustin W. Hale Papers, Box 20, Folder 8; see also Jane Apostol, “Augustin W. Hale: Hard-Luck Argonaut,” *Southern California Quarterly* 82: 2 (Summer 2000), 153.

¹¹⁸ Madley, *American Genocide*, 3; Hurtado, “Introduction to the Bison Book Edition,” in Robert F. Heizer (ed.), *The Destruction of California Indians* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1974, 1993), v.

to 1863, fully a third of the remaining Indian population in 1860, reveals the true ramification of the system of bondage labor implemented within the settler colonial society.¹¹⁹

Against a backdrop of this dominant tendency of extermination and exploitation, even those increasingly small proportion of California Indians who escaped settler colonial violence and labor bondage found that their independent ways of life became a source of racial stereotyping as indolent and uncivilized. This stereotype in turn reinforced the myth of the “vanishing Indian,” who could not adapt to the changes and progress of civilization, whose place was firmly fixed in the past. This image of Indians as vanishing, as a race destined to fade into history, further justified wars of extermination.¹²⁰ The vicious cycle between the myth of the vanishing Indian and settlers’ real actions of banishing Indians was best exemplified in the speech of California governor Peter H. Burnett in January 1851:

a war of extermination will continue to be waged between the races, until the Indian race becomes extinct. While we cannot anticipate this result but with painful regret, the inevitable destiny of the race is beyond the power of wisdom of man to avert.¹²¹

Often, those Indians who chose not to be subject to the Anglo settlers’ socioeconomic dominance inadvertently helped perpetuate the notion that they would inevitably become extinct, thereby completing the logic of Anglo-American settler colonialism. Faced with little options, California Indians had to either choose conformity to the capitalist economy and work for the settlers, or destitute independence. Carl Grunsky, a German immigrant, observed in July 1850 the changes

¹¹⁹ Heizer, *The Destruction of California Indians*, 219.

¹²⁰ For the myth of the vanishing Indian and its coincidence with the Indian removal, see Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1987), 211-214; Brian W. Dippie, *The Vanishing American: White Attitudes and U.S. Indian Policy* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1991).

¹²¹ Peter H. Burnett, “Governor’s Annual Message to the Legislature, January 7, 1851,” in *Journals of the Senate and Assembly of the State of California* (San Francisco: G. K. Fitch & Co. and V. E. Geiger & Co., State Printers, 1852), 13.

California Indians had to face after the influx of forty-niners. Stipulating that Indians were “a very friendly people unless...provoked,” Grunsky wrote of American unfair treatment against them as well as their subsequently declining numbers. As a result, while “formerly depended upon hunting, fishing and the gathering of acorns,” California Indians were now “beginning to work as laborers in the mines and purchase bread, flour and especially meat.”¹²² This transition to wage labor and market economy was neither smooth nor all-inclusive. Edward Monroe Brown, in April 1851, described how “Two Indians, one with a squaw” came into a store to buy some provisions, together with a bottle of brandy. “They seemed determined to get drunk,” Brown wrote. The Indian woman, “a clean, comely looking one,” was “busy preparing long and slender willows for a water-tight basket...while her lord and master was gloriously and manfully getting drunk.”¹²³ Indian women in California were traditionally tasked with gathering and domestic labor, while men would hunt, fish, and fight war. Gold mining, when incorporated into the independent lives of the California Indians, often fell under the category of gathering, thereby being deemed women’s work. At the same time, the severe decrease of games following the mass intrusion of miners made hunting for a living almost impossible. Some indigenous men replaced hunting with cattle raiding; others chose to discard the gender norms and mine.¹²⁴ The inability of Anglo settlers to understand differing gender norms of indigenous societies, as well as different cultural understandings of the necessity for work, often led to general characterization of Indians as lazy, unmanly, immoral, and incapable.¹²⁵

This racial characteristic of indolence as a sign of non-conformity to the socioeconomic

¹²² Quoted in Charles E. Grunsky, “From Europe to California: Extracts from Letters of Charles Grunsky and His Wife Clotilde, 1844-1853,” *The Quarterly of the Society of California Pioneers*, Vol. X (1933), 19.

¹²³ Typescript of Edward Monroe Brown diaries, 87 (10 April 1851 entry), BRBM.

¹²⁴ For a different gender division of labor among California Indians, see Johnson, *Roaring Camp*, 131-136.

¹²⁵ Tomás Almaguer, *Racial Fault Lines: The Historical Origins of White Supremacy in California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994, 2009), 114-117.

norms of the colonizers also applied to native Hawaiians. As American-born planters established sugar plantation economy on the Hawaiian Islands, native Hawaiians at home were also increasingly characterized as lazy and indolent.¹²⁶ Friedrich Gerstäcker, commenting on the state of Hawaii's sugar plantation labor, urged sugar planters to recruit immigrants for plantation labor. In his opinion, the needs for immigrant labor was imperative in Hawaii in order to compete with "slaveholders of other countries," because "the Indians [native Hawaiians] cannot be depended upon as laborers."¹²⁷ In this regard, the neighboring California's new-found economic growth did not help Hawaii's sugar planters, as the potential immigrant workers would not stay long in Hawaii due to California's proximity.¹²⁸

The proximity between California and Hawaii not only expedited transshipment of migrant laborers; it also affected Anglo settlers' perception of imperial connections between the two societies. "The admission of California is grateful news to all Americans in the Pacific," enthused William Little Lee in 1850; "especially do we of the Sandwich Islands rejoice," he continued, "at this *approach of our native land*."¹²⁹ This telling spatial imagery, that America itself was coming closer to the Americans in Hawaii with California's statehood, epitomizes how the U.S.-born white settlers in Hawaii conceived of the American state on the Pacific Coast. Hawaiian economy's structural shift to sugar plantations materialized this imagined re-orientation eastward of American settler society in Hawaii. The transition to plantation economy set in motion in 1849-1850 did not revert even after a temporary bust of 1851. The annual exports of Hawaiian sugar steadily increased from 1855 and

¹²⁶ For the dominant discourse of native Hawaiian "indolence," see Beechert, *Working in Hawaii*, 38, 41, *passim*.

¹²⁷ Gerstäcker, *Narrative of a Journey*, 282.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 283.

¹²⁹ William Little Lee to Caroline Scott, 23 November 1850; Dunn, "Letters from Hawaii," 79 (emphasis mine).

gained another momentum in the 1860s, with the American Civil War and the disruption of southern sugar exports.¹³⁰ In 1861, the Hawaiian sugar exports marked 2,567,498 pounds, more than thrice of the boom year of 1850. The export-dependent sugar plantations continued to grow and dominate Hawaiian society.

Anglo Californians would often comment upon the Americanization of Hawaii by the end of the 1850s. They often sailed to the Pacific islands, either to find alternative business opportunities, to seek healthful retreats, or simply to travel. Levi Dodge, a California merchant who visited Honolulu to treat his rheumatism, was one such visitor. In November 1860, he penned a letter to his sister from Honolulu. While he liked the pleasant climates, the appearances of native Hawaiians, both the commoners and the royalty, did not impress this Californian. “The natives are a low lived set about like our Indians in California,” he disparaged. Perhaps this likening of the two groups of natives was his way of alluding to the process of Americanization in Hawaii, as he subsequently asserted that “the business & most of the inhabitants of the town are...Americans.”¹³¹ Americans were not only the seeming majority, but also virtual ruling elites of the kingdom. Dodge, having seen the King and Queen at a charity event for the construction of a native hospital, spent most of his letter describing how dark the King’s facial complexion was and how unconventional their appearance was as royalty. “The king is a very smart well educated man,” he added, “but as far as royalty [sic] goes, the name of the King is about all, for everything is controlled & carried on by Americans and English.”¹³² By 1860, Americanization of Hawaii was well under way. In the second

¹³⁰ Pletcher, *Diplomacy of Involvement*, 47-48; Kuykendall, *The Hawaiian Kingdom, Vol. 1*, 315.

¹³¹ Levi Dodge to “Sister Nell [R. Nellie Dodge] & All,” 25 November 1860, Dodge family letters, 1854-1879, WA MSS S-2909 D6641, BRBM. A passenger list with a name “L. W. Dodge,” age 35, who sailed from Honolulu to San Francisco in 1861. See *Hawaii, Passenger Lists, 1843-1898*; Collector General of Customs, Records of Passenger Arrivals and Departures, Series 82, Hawaii State Archives, Honolulu, Hawaii (accessed via Ancestry.com on 28 January 2017).

¹³² *Ibid.*

half of the nineteenth century, the increasing trade, communication, and steamship connection between California and Hawaii would further integrate the two Anglophone settler colonial societies, while indigenous peoples on both shores would become further isolated and confined.

Conclusion

The Anglophone settler societies in California and Hawaii had shared ideas, goods, and personnel through continuous stream of material and literary exchanges prior to 1848. The discovery of gold in the Sierra Nevada foothills affected California and Hawaii differently. One became an Anglo-American settler colony, the other transformed into a plantation society. In both cases, however, indigenous mobility came to be restricted as a result of the Gold Rush. For California Indians, the rapid influx of Anglo-American immigrants signaled a fundamental transformation of power structure that colonized their livelihoods. Unlike those transpacific migrants whose color and “contracted” status as workers led to a specific mixture of exclusion-exploitation, indigenous peoples of California fell under the settler colonialist jurisdiction of the state of California, which actively endorsed extermination policy. With the steady increase of settler population in California, the establishment of long-distance transportation networks, and the expansion of commercial capitalism guaranteeing more frequent voyages across the Pacific, California no longer lacked human resources. The systematic labor bondage imposed in 1850 upon indigenous Californians became more a form of social control than a method of securing labor force. Their unfree status was normalized in the polity which ostensibly adhere to free labor ideals. Indigeneity was substituted for the status of almost disappearing racial minority; and their racialization was focused either on servility or on “indolence” as a form of non-conformity to the colonizers’ ideal.

Meanwhile, in the Kingdom of Hawaii, where formerly the islanders’ ubiquitous presence

around the Pacific had been a source of pride for the trade-dependent government, indigenous mobility suddenly became a problem to be halted due to the dual impact of the Gold Rush on the population drain and the economic boom. In 1849-1850, a brief but enormous boom induced by California's market growth provided a much-needed impetus for Hawaiian sugar plantation industry. In order to maintain the labor force for plantations, the planters—mostly American expatriates—prompted the government to devise legislative solutions to the emigration of native Hawaiians to California, which resulted in the Act to Prohibit Natives from Leaving the Islands in 1850.

Taken together, the confluence in the year 1850 of California's and Hawaii's regulations of indigenous mobility situates the topic of indigenous labor not in the context of U.S. slavery and emancipation but in the context of Euro-American settler colonialism in the Pacific. These two locales' pre- and post-1848 intertwined history highlights that the socioeconomic forces from the United States colonized the Pacific even before 1898, when the U.S. acquired former "overseas colonies" in the Philippines, Guam, Puerto Rico, and Hawaii. Anglo-American settlers functioned as the agents of colonization. It was, in the end, the indirect but substantial impact of the California Gold Rush that precipitated the workings of the American empire in the Pacific.

CHAPTER 2. COASTING ALONG THE GOLDEN SHORE: ANGLOS, CHILEANS, AND THE IDEAS OF RACE AND DEVELOPMENT ON THE PACIFIC COAST

The discoveries in California, and the stimulus given to emigration, is giving a fresh impulse to civilization on the Pacific...which will totally change the aspect of affairs and renovate the whole South American continent.

-Daily Alta California, 25 April 1850, San Francisco

Introduction

This chapter recasts the Pacific Coast of the Americas during the California Gold Rush (1848-c.1860) as a site in which shared understandings of race and civilization circulated across national borders via existing maritime networks. The site for cross-ethnic social interactions and exchange of ideas was first and foremost created by Chilean migrants who went to the mining region of California. Close examination of the records these Chileans left after their experiences in the gold fields illuminates that the Gold Rush of California was more than an event; it became a symbol and an inspiration for those who witnessed the changes of the society. For upper-class Chileans who visited California's gold fields as prospectors and travelers, the realities of California society they saw clashed with the images of American democracy they envisioned and admired. While posing ideological challenges against Anglo-American hegemony in California, these elite Chileans also used their California experiences as a lesson and a mirror image in the pursuits of their own nation's development in the following decades.

At the same time, Anglo Americans also came to Chile, since one of the maritime transportation routes from the eastern United States to California necessitated passing by South American shores. The 1850s was still largely the age of sail, especially in the Pacific. A significant portion of American forty-niners—estimated 16,000—came by way of Cape Horn, completely

circling the Americas. The next year, a slightly more than 11,000 came to the West Coast via this sailing ship route.¹ American merchant ships and whalers had been rounding Cape Horn with regular frequency since the early 1800s; the same merchant ships and whalers accommodated American travelers looking for cheap passage to California after 1849. These around-the-horn voyages created an environment in which Anglo Americans could revisit their sense of racial superiority, while also accumulating different sets of knowledge than they initially had and forming new ideas about race, government, and world order. They carried with them the notion of Anglo-Saxon superiority, particularly set against the Latin race, as recently affirmed in the U.S.-Mexican War.² However, some of the ideological components that constructed their belief in racial superiority also led them to find something different in Chilean seaports, compared to other Latin American ports they visited.

Traveling Americans in Chile and traveling Chileans in California used the similar rhetoric of development based on liberal immigration policy open to white European settlers, a republican form of government, and willingness and capacity to engage with the global trade networks. Anglo-American travelers, upon witnessing Chilean port cities, often commented on the difference between Chile and other Latin American nations and put Chileans in a higher regard than other locals they met on their voyages. This tendency to differentiate among Latin American nationalities also surfaced in California, even as violent xenophobic mobs of Anglo miners were persecuting Spanish-speaking miners indiscriminately. The presence of Chileans in California's gold fields—represented by diverse classes, the upper rung of which firmly identifying themselves as members of

¹ John D. Unruh, Jr., *The Plains Across: The Overland Emigrants and the Trans-Mississippi West, 1840-1860* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1979), 401.

² Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 208-212, *passim*.

the white race—caused a clash of racial ideologies, where different notions of whiteness fought against one another. To be sure, the discourses produced by Chileans and their allies hardly gained purchase in California society during the 1850s. But these discourses represented a larger current of understandings of the world and governance shared by those of European origins on the Pacific Coast, a common hierarchical rendering of world civilizations and development, which would remain the basic tenet of the American Empire beyond the nineteenth century. Upper-class Chileans' acceptance of the same ideological tenets made them logically susceptible to American racial nationalism and fundamentally restrained their criticism of American California.

2.1. Around-the-Horn Voyages: American Travelers in South America

The Cape Horn route to San Francisco usually took more than five months from the east coast of the United States.³ Despite the lengthy voyage and unpredictable risks, the affordable cost and easy and frequent departures from various Atlantic seaports induced many a young man to choose this route instead of the trans-isthmian steamship routes or the overland trail. The travelers then spent long and dreary months on sailing boats, but not without opportunities to visit various seaports of South America. Due to the length of voyages and the limited space within common sailing vessels, most had to stop several times for supply and repair along the way. The popular seaports visited by around-the-horn sailing ships were: Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; Talcahuano, Chile; Valparaíso, Chile; Callao, Peru; Acapulco, Mexico. In these port cities, Anglo Americans heading for California saw and interacted with the local residents, forming an idea about the “Latin race” even prior to their arrival in California.

³ The record of the fastest voyage from New York to San Francisco was 89 days made by the clipper ship *Flying Cloud* in 1851. A. C. W. Bethel, “The Golden Skein: California’s Gold-Rush Transportation Network,” *California History* 77: 4 (Winter 1998/99), 256.

In most the travel narratives, Anglo-American men depicted overlapping themes. They complained about tedious, unchanging sceneries of the ocean, made entertainment out of mundane things such as the crew's work routine or schools of dolphins or fish, and noted daily conditions of the voyages including weather, latitude and longitude, and the number of days at sea. It must have helped that many Anglo gold seekers had read a number of model narratives for long ocean voyages, as there was no dearth of fictional and less fictional accounts of the early "adventurers" at sea.⁴

Young white Americans who rushed for gold often took to romanticizing the landscapes and encounters along their journey, fashioning themselves as adventurers. The romanticizing tendency was most clearly visible after the vessels rounded Cape Horn and went up toward the Juan Fernandez Islands in the South Pacific, near the coast of Chile. The Juan Fernandez Islands—often referred to as the "Robinson Crusoe Island" at the time—was a popular stopping point and a frequent topic in the around-the-horn travelers' narrative. The tale of Robinson Crusoe and the concurrent traffic of American whalers inspired many gold seekers from the United States to refashion their own ocean travels as "adventures." The Juan Fernandez Islands had been colonized by the Chilean government as a penal colony in the early nineteenth century, but the convicts had mostly escaped and the islands' settlement dissolved by the mid-1840s. In January 1846, a sailor named Thomas Atkinson on an American whaler ship wrote that there were "only three persons on the Island, one an English boy from Boston who left an American Whale Ship, and a Portuguese who was sick and put ashore[e]...by an American Whale Ship, and one American."⁵ Atkinson's crew had landed on the island to gather fruits and to hunt games; Atkinson felt "an attachment for it no

⁴ American gold seekers often commented on reading novels like *The Robinson Crusoe*, as well as the published account of the U.S. Exploring Expedition (1838-1842), during their voyages to the Pacific Coast. See, for example, Katherine A. White (ed.), *A Yankee Trader in the Gold Rush: The Letters of Franklin A. Buck* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1930), 44-45.

⁵ Thomas Atkinson Journal, January 1846 entry [s.d.], A Journal of a Sperm Whaling Voyage to the Pacific Ocean in the Ship Potomac, mssHM 68457, HL.

doubt on account of reading Robinson Crusoe” when he was younger, and expressed regret that he could not spend more than two hours on this “most romantic spot on Earth.”⁶

Pretending to be on an adventure frequently led to the militarization of foreign encounters, as if they needed a fictional enemy to defeat or an opportunity to show off their martial prowess. J. Ross Browne, the famed reporter of the California Constitutional Convention of 1849, formed a search company with fellow passengers upon arriving at the Robinson Crusoe Island and set off to explore. At night, they discovered a cave that looked like the place Alexander Selkirk (real-life model for Robinson Crusoe) might have lived. The self-proclaimed explorers decided to take a rest, during which time they hotly debated the “annexation of Juan Fernandez,” one of them crying out “manifest destiny.”⁷ Audacious rhetoric aside, they soon found themselves in an imagined military conflict, when one of them suggested they had better “put out the light” since he had previously seen some Chileans, who he feared might come to attack them when they were asleep.⁸ This imagined threat of being ambushed in addition to the expressed desire to “annex” the island in the South Pacific far from home epitomizes how around-the-horn voyages were construed as a sort of scouting adventures for desirable spots of the world.

Militant adventurous spirits of young white American men also dictated their behaviors in South American ports. As countless American sailing vessels made stops at Latin American seaports on their way to California when the U.S.-Mexican War was barely over, tensions were high in the ports between locals and Anglo-American travelers. Sometimes conflicts escalated, as was the case in Rio de Janeiro in early days of '49. Some American gold seekers expressed their beliefs that the port

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Lisa Fergusson Browne (ed.), *J. Ross Browne: His Letters, Journals, and Writings* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1969), 109.

⁸ *Ibid.*

would have been better off if it had belonged to the United States. One such advocate was Amos S. Pittman, a resident of Long Island who heard the news of gold discovery and immediately joined a small mining company bound for California. On board the *Salem*, a vessel his company purchased to round Cape Horn, Pittman arrived at the port of Rio de Janeiro in May 1849. On June 1, Pittman penned a letter to his mother, describing the city and concluding, “It would be a beautiful city and harbor if the Yankees had it.”⁹ The casual covetous attitudes were not the sole problem Yankees presented for Brazilians—there was also general lawlessness and routine aggression. Edward Monroe Brown, another gold seeker from Providence, Rhode Island, boarded the schooner *Curlew* late in the fall of 1849, to work his way as a sailor to San Francisco. When the vessel stopped at the Island of Santa Catarina, Brazil, Brown echoed Pittman’s sentiment, stating there were “enough Yankees in port now to take the port, town, city and country, and [to] drive every yellow-skinned Brazilian up to the mountains.”¹⁰

According to Brown, there had already been a skirmish to prove Yankee superiority. A few months before their arrival, two of the California-bound Americans died in a fight with local inhabitants, “upon which the Americans armed themselves and drove all the soldiers from the town into the mountains, and took possession of the city.”¹¹ Brown thought that this riot caused the harsh quarantine law to which they were subjected at the time. His description of a conflict possibly referred to an incident directly witnessed by Thomas Jefferson Matteson, a civil engineer from the state of New York who went on board the *George Washington*. Matteson’s ship stopped at the Island of Santa Catarina in April 1849. After about a week in port there, “a row began b[e]tween the

⁹ Amos S. Pittman to his mother, 1 June 1849 on board Ship *Salem*, Amos S. Pittman letters, BRBM.

¹⁰ Typescript of Edward Monroe Brown diaries, 12, BRBM.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

Portegies [*sic*] & Americans,” where two Portuguese and two Americans were killed.¹² The number of American casualty coincided with what Brown mentioned a few months later. If this was the incident that Brown alluded to, the consequence played out quite differently from what he claimed to have happened. Far from being able to drive Brazilian soldiers and take temporary possession of the port, the American travelers were imprisoned by the local authorities, only to be released when the captain of their ship issued a threatening call to arms. Perhaps escaping the local justice this way was enough for visiting Americans to count it as a victory. Or rather, the rumor of a physical clash between locals and American travelers spread to feed on the *zeitgeist* of U.S. expansion—a firm belief in the chosen race of people to conquer the whole continent and more—that guided many a young white man in this period to Cuba, Mexico, or even Canada. The actual consequence or ramification of the conflict was, in this case, immaterial. As Anglo-American men would believe that their military superiority would be undefeatable, any rumor of a physical conflict would automatically be cited as another proof of the said superiority and the possibility of victory.

An aggregated mass of young Americans who were prone to act upon such conviction in their racial superiority must have generated concerns for the local authorities. Daniel S. Gilman from Lowell, Massachusetts reported of the suspicion American travelers garnered on their way around Cape Horn in 1849, writing he “was informed that the Brazilians were somewhat jealous of the motives of so many Americans putting into port.”¹³ Augustin Hale, a forty-niner who was on board the around-the-horn steamer *Pacific*, noted in Rio de Janeiro on March 29, 1849:

¹² Tomas Jefferson Matteson, *The Diary of Thomas Jefferson Matteson, Calaveras pioneer* (San Andreas, CA: Calaveras County Historical Society, 1954), 15 April 1849 entry (page unnumbered). See also Brian Roberts, “‘The Greatest and Most Perverted Paradise’: The Forty-Niners in Latin America,” in Kenneth N. Owens (ed.), *Riches for all: The California Gold Rush and the World* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), 77-78.

¹³ Daniel S. Gilman to his brother, May 2, 1849, Daniel S. Gilman and Moses D. Gilman, Gold Rush Letters, Western Americana Collection, BRBM.

When our California Emigrants first began to arrive in such large numbers, the [Brazilian] soldiers thought we were soldiers in disguise, and would soon rise on them, and they accordingly resigned, and refused to do duty for a couple of days, until the whole subject had been properly explained to them.¹⁴

This statement made it clear that travelers themselves were aware of a potential threat that American gold-rush traffic posed to locals, while also displaying the baseless assumption that Brazilian soldiers would feel helpless and inadequate in the face of American invasion. Hale also reported, somewhat smugly, that when Brazilian authorities attempted to arrest some California-bound Americans for disturbance, other travelers intervened and rescued them “with bare hands” against armed Brazilian soldiers. “Hearing what we had done in Mexico and having ocular demonstration of our prowess here,” he wrote, “they probably thought they had good cause to fear the North Americans, particularly as about two thousands of us were now in the City.”¹⁵ So Hale witnessed in the Brazilian seaport how the locals imagined the invading army of the United States, a fear that originated from the outcome of the U.S.-Mexican War. That the very fear was being reported by Hale, the Anglo-American traveler, also point to his own desire to be thus feared. The boundaries between state-level war of aggression and traveling male citizens’ collective dream of self-aggrandizement all blurred in one vague notion of Anglo-American superiority that manifested in travelers’ habitual disrespecting of local sovereignty.

Adventure and aggression was not the only salient themes in the around-the-horn travel narratives. More often than not, Anglo-American travelers delivered racially charged judgments toward South American countries. One of the conspicuous examples was when they witnessed

¹⁴ Augustin W. Hale Papers, Folder 2, Journal entry of 29 March 1849, HL.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

Brazilian slavery. The large number of black slaves in Brazilian port scenes dominated the travelers' descriptions of the society and landscape. A decade before the Civil War, traveling Americans, mostly white northerners, saw Brazilian slavery as the cause of the society's degeneration. R. J. Whitely, a member of a New Jersey mining company, recounted an encounter with a U.S. Navy lieutenant in Rio, who allegedly said Brazilians lacked "energy sufficient for the undertaking" of setting out to California, while having "no deficiency [*sic*] of it in hunting for black wool and ivory on the coast of Africa."¹⁶ Contrasting "free" American enterprises in California gold mining with the African slave trade, he portrayed the Brazilian society as backward in the progress of humanity.

Despite the outward dislike of slavery among these American men headed to California, the black bodies of Brazilian slaves were frequently treated as a curiosity. To R. J. Whitely, the Brazilian city had "an exceedingly oriental" look—"To a stranger and particularly an American," he wrote in Rio, "almost every object is apt to excite, surprise, and wonder, being so different from what he has been in the habit of observing."¹⁷ What struck him as most peculiar was the daily mode of transportation in the harbor, i.e. being carried bodily by slaves. His description of Rio conveyed a startling visual attraction toward "the Negroes...with their faces tattooed as they were in Africa and for the most part in a state of entire nudity with the exception of a clout hanging from the wastes."¹⁸ In a similarly wondering tone, John N. Stone, passenger on the *Robert Bonne* from New York commented in his journal on April 7, 1849, that the boats to approach the harbor of Rio were rowed by "negroes who seemed *uncommonly black*."¹⁹ Thus objectified black bodies perpetuated what white

¹⁶ Typescript of R. J. Whitely Diary, 17, HL.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 20.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Quoted in John E. Pomfret (ed.), *California Gold Rush Voyages, 1848-1849: Three Original Narratives* (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 1954), 106 (emphasis mine).

American travelers already knew and believed in—that blackness was abnormal, exotic, un-American, and fascinating in a non-human sort of way.

2.2. Unexpected Development: American Observers in Chilean Seaports

Sometimes, however, these young Anglo Americans' observations implied a new understanding, a learned novelty. Curiously, travelers' impressionistic accounts displayed a subtle change when they rounded the Horn and arrived upon Chilean port cities. The Pacific Coast of South America presented a different picture to these American gold seekers from what they saw in Mesoamerica and Brazil. The difference frequently noted by the forty-niners was the lively presence of American and English merchants on the Pacific coast. Robert W. Butterfield, a lawyer from New York, arrived at Valparaíso, Chile in 1852 and noted that the city “appears in many respects like a place at home...neat and orderly.”²⁰ It was not something Butterfield had expected in Chile; he in fact expressed disappointment at the “neatness and regularity” he found upon entering the city. Valparaíso was not as exotic or, to borrow R. J. Whitely's word for Rio, “oriental,” as an American traveler would expect—an expectation that must have stemmed from the port's location in the South Pacific or Latin America, as both geographic variant could have excited romantic imagination of a primitive society to the mind of the white male American traveler.

American travelers observed English-speaking “foreign elements” in the Chilean port cities and often praised an unexpected level of development of this South American republic. It appeared to Butterfield that the modern appearance of the port had something to do with this presence of American and English merchants; his interpretation was that “the Anglo-Saxon sprit and enterprise

²⁰ Robert Butterfield to his mother, 23 August 1852 on board the *North American* nearing San Francisco, Robert W Butterfield letters to Elsie Wyman Butterfield, 1852-1853, mssHM 47858-47862, HL.

has been gradually diffused among the people.”²¹ What Butterfield was witnessing in 1849 was the existence of a “Pacific World” in which his compatriots had been engaged for the better part of the century.²² California and Chile were linked in the orbit of global trades that crisscrossed the Pacific Ocean before 1848, for which New England merchants played a prominent role.²³ The previous mercantile ties enabled Chile, together with Hawaii, to supply much of California’s consumer goods between 1848 and 1852. According to one historian’s estimates, about three-fourths of the flour consumed by California miners in the early 1850s was imported from Chile.²⁴

R. J. Whitely, having arrived in July 1849 at Talcahuano, a port of Concepción, Chile, noted that Americans had been frequenting the port before his arrival. “There is considerable business carried on at this place during the summer,” he wrote in his diary, “it is the favorite resort of American and English whale ships in the Pacific, the port charges being light and provisions plenty and cheap.”²⁵ As he had previously visited Rio de Janeiro and left unimpressed, he employed comparison in describing the residents of the Chilean port of Talcahuano:

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² For scholarly discussions of the “Pacific Worlds,” see David Igler, *The Great Ocean: Pacific Worlds from Captain Cook to the Gold Rush* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); Matt K. Matsuda, “AHR Forum: The Pacific,” *American Historical Review* 111 (2006).

²³ A mercantile career of one Faxon Dean Atherton perhaps best illustrates the close commercial links that connected Chile and California before and after American conquest. Atherton, a native of Boston, settled in Valparaíso, Chile in 1833. After three years’ business in Valparaíso, Atherton went to California in 1836 to engage in the hide-and-tallow trade that connected California with New England capital and the Chinese markets. He married a Chilean woman of Spanish Creole descent in 1839 and settled back in Chile. Seeing the business opportunity from the news of the gold discovery at Sutter’s Mill, Atherton once again headed out to California in 1849. He returned to Chile the next year, maintaining his California business through agents in San Francisco. Atherton was but one of many American and British merchants who settled in Chile and intermarried with upper-class Chilean families, engaged in the transnational business networks. Faxon Dean Atherton, *The California Diary of Faxon Dean Atherton, 1836-1839*, ed. by Doyce B. Nunis (San Francisco: California Historical Society, 1964).

²⁴ Sucheng Chan, “A People of Exceptional Character: Ethnic Diversity, Nativism, and Racism in the California Gold Rush,” *California History* 79:2 (Summer 2000), 52.

²⁵ Typescript of R. J. Whitely Diary, 34, HL.

The inhabitants in comparison with the English or Americans are very indolent but still are far superior to the Portuguese or Brasilians [*sic*] in point of energy and action... They are very polite and hospitable to strangers and particularly so to Americans; they are rather darker complectioned [*sic*] than our countrymen although not very considerably.²⁶

Subtle indecision concerning the Chilean phenotype (“not very considerably” darker than white Americans) and racial characteristics (clearly superior than Brazilians but still “very indolent”) reveals the ambiguity that dominated Anglo-American travelers’ attitudes toward Chileans. This ambiguity largely derived from an understanding of development and racial superiority shared by both American and Chilean elites at the time. Both Anglo-American observers and Chileans in this period regarded the republican form of government and the system of liberal market economies more advanced than the others, which ultimately placed Chileans above other Latin American nationalities in the eyes of Anglo-American observers. Also noteworthy is that few Americans were as quick to dismiss the whole Chilean population as black, negro, or “niggers,” as they were prone to do in Central America and Brazil. The upper-class Chileans also used the nation’s lack of a sizable black population as the basis for their claim to whiteness, which would be contested and ultimately disregarded by Anglo miners in California gold fields. Still, the ambiguity concerning the Chilean racial position as expressed by Whitely would also reappear among Anglo Americans in California.

Not only did American travelers find Chileans to be more agreeable, but they also asserted that Chileans were particularly hospitable toward Americans. Travelers from the United States were received more or less favorably in Chilean seaports in the early months of 1849. They sometimes appear to have expected to be treated well. Charles Ellis, a middle-aged passenger on board the brig *North Bend*, wrote in April 1849 after he visited a local village in southern Patagonia, while the ship

²⁶ Typescript of R. J. Whitely Diary, 34, HL.

was stranded at Port Famine just north of the Strait of Magellan. Likening the inhabitants to American Indians, Ellis remarked that “They appear very friendly (*It should be remembered that they are Chilians [sic]*) and are constantly asking for cigars, tobacco & soap.”²⁷ What did he mean by the casual remark that local Patagonians were friendly to Americans because they were Chileans? A few paragraphs later in his diary, he elaborated it further that the “inhabitants on the coast have a great regard for the Americans, considering them as the great head of republican government.”²⁸

The belief that Chileans, as citizens of a sister republic, held high regard for the American republic permeated through the writings of Anglo-American men at this time. Yankee visitors before 1848 had noted commercial and industrial developments in Chile and similarly voiced Chileans’ affinity toward themselves. For example, Edward Brinley Jr., a young naval officer who served on board the U.S.S. *Preble* of the Pacific Squadron between 1846 and 1850, wrote a letter to his father in 1847 from the port of Valparaíso, commenting on amicable receptions in Chile. “This is a great country for an enterprising man,” he opined, adding that many Americans resided in Valparaíso and were heavily involved in international trades.²⁹ While mostly concerned about business opportunities afforded on the Pacific Coast, Brinley observed that Chileans were “remarkably civil and polite—especially to the Americans of the north...—their sister Republic.”³⁰ Brinley’s favorable judgment on Chile hinged upon the shared republican solidarity with Chileans as well as the presence of American merchants controlling the business sector.

Robert Butterfield, despite having been disappointed at the orderly appearance of Valparaíso,

²⁷ “Journal of a voyage from Boston, Mass. to San Francisco, California in the Brig *North Bend*, Capt. Higgins, by C. H. Ellis, passenger,” in Pomfret, *California Gold Rush Voyages*, 48-49 (emphasis mine).

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Ed Brinley to his father Francis, 25 January 1847 on US Sloop of War *Preble* at Valparaíso, Edward Brinley Papers, mssHM 74023, HL.

³⁰ Ed Brinley to his father Francis, 5 February 1847 (continued from January 25 letter, *Ibid.*).

also spoke highly of Chileans he encountered in the port of Valparaiso. They were, in his opinion, “an industrious, honest, and generally well-informed people.”³¹ The physical descriptions of the people might have also reflected this positive character judgment, as he described the appearance of Chilean men and women in quite a favorable light: “In statu[r]e the men are tall, erect and of a dignified appearance. The women are rather short, thick set and of a brunette complexion. They are pictures of health and vigor, their eyes sparkle with life.”³² To be sure, it did not mean that he found everything in Chile agreeable. That Chilean society was firmly Catholic led him to believe that there was a lot to be desired in terms of people’s morality. The degraded morality was most conspicuous in the sexual promiscuity of the population. In fact, he added at the end of his description of Chilean physiques that “lascivious smiles” were always on the faces of these people, lamenting the state of the “society of Valparaiso...licentious and corrupt.”³³ At this point, Butterfield’s focus shifted from the particular Chilean port city to the whole South American continent, as he asked if “the moral and social regeneration of South America” could be achieved.³⁴ The source of all evils was obvious to this white Anglo-Saxon Protestant man: Roman Catholicism. Many American men maintained a similarly anti-Catholic moral high ground in their general assessments of Latin America during this period.³⁵

The ambivalence Butterfield evinced toward Chilean society—on one hand the people were industrious and well-informed, while on the other were degraded by Catholicism—was indicative of two different strands of forming racial ideas. The former impressions were made with visually

³¹ Robert W. Butterfield letter to his mother, 23 August 1852, mssHM 47858, HL.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ See Roberts, “The Greatest and Most Perverted Paradise.”

observing the place and finding familiar features of economic development in the city. The latter stemmed from what he already thought he knew before the visit, i.e., the lamentable legacy of Spanish colonialism and Catholicism. The knowledge produced by these traveling Americans' eye-witnessing accounts always juggled between conveying their 'authentic' impression and affirming the wide-spread belief of their nation's (or race's) superiority above others in the Western Hemisphere. While it might the latter, pre-conceived notions that mainly dictated these American men's actions toward foreigners in California, the former method of gathering knowledge also accompanied a subtler tendency to diversify categories, to compare and promote one group of people over the others. Both on California-bound voyages and in the mining region, Anglo Americans engaged in the practice comparing the foreign populations, often placing Chileans above other "Latin races."

Beneath the travelers' impressionistic description of relatively whiter or more advanced-looking Chileans was a larger idea of development—a belief in the linear progress of civilization—that shaped the science of race-making in the nineteenth century.³⁶ A race as a subgroup of humanity was commonly linked to a place on the globe. A place of industrialized, sanitized, ordered appearance constituted a racial trait of its residents. The apparently "developed" state of Chilean port cities affected American travelers' judgement regarding racial capacity of Chilean people. Appearance, furthermore, was not merely superficial. It signaled a complete set of policy measures, a capacity of its government to create an environment familiar and acceptable to those "Anglo-Saxon" observers who came to the ports, who regarded themselves at the topmost end of the developmental spectrum of world civilizations. Political stability of the Chilean republic, which in turn opened up the door for economic cosmopolitanism and prosperity, had often set Chile apart to the eyes of many American observers coming to shore.

³⁶ Thomas McCarthy, *Race, Empire, and the Idea of Human Development* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

2.3. Chilean Response to American Maritime Traffic and California Gold

How did the Chileans receive the discovery of gold in California, and more importantly, the sudden increase of maritime traffic through their ports? The news of gold discovery reached Chile earlier than it reached the east coast and had a particularly profound impact in the central region near Santiago, the capital of the republic.³⁷ The estimates of actual Chilean departures for California wildly vary, from a meagre 3,000 to the Chilean writer Roberto Hernandez Cornejo's estimate of 30,000.³⁸ Based on a compilation of available sources and previous historians' works, one historian recently suggested that not less than 8,000 Chileans came to California in the 1848-1853 periods.³⁹ Chilean politicians and the press worried about a potential population drain, especially for that of the *peónes* and *inquilinos*, the classes that constituted the essential work force in Chilean agriculture. The number of gold-seeking migrants who left for California was only part of the impact the Gold Rush had in Chile. California's explosive growth after 1849, as well as the flows of migration that directly touched upon Chilean shores, also provided the fuel for thoughts and debates about the future of the Chilean republic. As Chile in the mid-nineteenth century underwent a series of reform attempts, Chilean liberals often counted the United States among the models for them to emulate.⁴⁰ In addition to the liberal intellectuals' pro-Americanism which was on par with their pro-Enlightenment, pro-British, pro-French tendencies, Chilean port cities on the Pacific Coast had subsisted on maritime trades and had been doing business with sailors on foreign merchant ships

³⁷ Johnson, *Roaring Camp*, 64-65.

³⁸ Roberto Hernandez Cornejo, *Los Chilenos en San Francisco de California, Tomo I* (Valparaíso: San Rafael, 1930), 190.

³⁹ Edward D. Melillo, *Strangers on Familiar Soil: Rediscovering the Chile-California Connection* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 31.

⁴⁰ Simon Collier, *Chile: The Making of a Republic, 1830-1865* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

and whalers for years before the Gold Rush. The increase in the number of ships passing by and stopping over meant increased business opportunities in these ports.

Chilean press used the presence of thousands of young American men in their ports as an inspiring source for their domestic reform agenda. On May 2, 1849, *El Mercurio*, a prominent Valparaíso newspaper with liberal leaning, published an editorial describing the sudden influx of Americans in the port, whose “young beautiful presence” was seen less as a threat to their national security but as a cause for envy, as a signal for the bright future of California.

That multitude of young men of twenty-five years at most...are the new people born of the elements of European civilization...practicing from the first day the representative system and the republican habits and applying most recent scientific inventions to the cultivation and exploitation of virgin land. It is impossible to look at the youth who visit us without a feeling of sadness for the fate of this Spanish America. Emigration only passes on our beaches and goes away the next day as if something rejects this fertile soil.⁴¹

Echoing this envious tone with a bit more guardedness, another Valparaíso newspaper, *El Comercio*, published a less welcoming editorial the very same day. Describing more than 500 U.S. citizens currently at the port as an “invasion” of American democracy, the *El Comercio* editorial also reluctantly acknowledged the power of California-bound settlers:

These immigrants belong to a great nation, whose power consists in the wild energy of her children, who travel the world with complete indifference, and wherever they want to go they carry the flag of the Union.⁴²

Speculating bitterly that these Anglo Americans would look down at Chileans as “some savages who happened to live like civilized men,” *El Comercio* nonetheless conceded that such nationalist

⁴¹ *El Mercurio* (Valparaíso), 2 May 1849, quoted in Hernandez Cornejo, *Los Chilenos*, 107-108 (my translation).

⁴² *El Comercio* (Valparaíso), 2 May 1849, quoted in Hernandez Cornejo, *Los Chilenos*, 108-109 (my translation).

conviction was “the strength of every great nation,” predicting an unrelenting progress of the American nation.⁴³ These two editorials, despite their slightly differing tones, captured the ways in which the California-bound traffic was viewed and interpreted in Chile—as an example, a source for a larger discussion of immigration and a nation’s development. There certainly was a degree of passive resentment against Americans from the north, though it usually accompanied resigned admission that the Anglo Americans had advanced far, maybe farther than their own.

And the secret of such progress was right in front of their metaphorical eyes: immigration. *El Mercurio*’s interpretation of the California traffic—an envious stream of young men reared in “European civilization”—is particularly telling of the nation’s political agenda at the time. Immigration (or lack thereof) had been a constant source of debates among Chilean elites at the time. It was also specifically white European immigration that was sought for. By the time the flow of American settlers passed by their ports, the Chilean government had for years encouraged immigration from Europe, providing free passage and tax exemption for homestead immigrants. An eminent liberal intellectual at the time, José Victorino Lastarria, denounced such practice in a December 1848 letter to *El Mercurio*. While the government accorded the generous privileges to immigrants from Europe, “native Chileans fail to see these opportunities at home,” wrote Victorino Lastarria, which accounted for the “spirit of adventure” that prompted thousands of young Chileans to leave their home for California.⁴⁴ Still, with the mass appearance of California-bound American passengers, the two prominent Valparaíso newspapers reaffirmed their conviction in the power of white settlers to bring progress to the nation.

Whereas Chilean press and authorities were split in their reactions to California-bound

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Quoted in Jay Monaghan, *Chile, Peru, and the California Gold Rush of 1849* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 53.

immigrant traffic, there seemed to be unanimous, if somewhat resentful, agreement that California would progress rapidly, thanks to its newly acquired statehood in the American Union. Foreign observers and participants of the Gold Rush, including the French and Chileans who were often targeted by American miners' xenophobic tendency, saw in California a dazzling array of progress and opportunities. Vicente Pérez Rosales, a Chilean prospector who left Valparaíso in 1849 with a company of servants and hired hands, crossed the Golden Gate in February 1849. Pérez Rosales and his men met another Chilean at the harbor, a sea captain who had come to California a little earlier and who had a tale full of wonders and hope for the newcomers. They all crowded the man, asking if there really was the rumored gold in California. He confirmed that there was a lot of gold, exciting the newcomers. The more experienced Chilean captain further preached to these new arrivals that "this was the land of equality, that here it made no difference whether you were master or servant because in this land aristocrats and commoners were treated the same."⁴⁵ The promise of equality as described here epitomizes what the Chilean gold seekers would have expected in California under American rule, even if it was hardly what Anglo-American state architects of California had in mind.

One of the grounds on which the United States prided itself and was lauded by foreign observers was open immigration. Pérez Rosales told another story of an American harbormaster, who, upon boarding the ship that transported the Chileans to San Francisco, would not even look at their passports or documents, and acted as if being presented with the stamped documents was "the gravest possible insult to the Stars and Stripes."⁴⁶ The Yankee harbormaster allegedly said that asking for travel permits from immigrants amounted to "highway robbery and stupid tyranny" and they

⁴⁵ Edwin A. Beilharz and Carlos U. López (trans. and eds.), *We were 49ers!: Chilean Accounts of the California Gold Rush* (Pasadena, CA: Ward Ritchie Press, 1976), 16-18; Vicente Pérez Rosales, *Times Gone By: Memoirs of a Man of Action*, trans. by John H.R. Polt (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 226.

⁴⁶ Pérez Rosales, *Times Gone By*, 228.

would not “put up with it here.”⁴⁷ This story certainly had a dramatically exaggerated flair, yet it also testified to the source of appeal (and later tension) for foreign immigrants in American California. The Chilean readers were supposed to interpret this episode as evidence of what the United States represented as a nation—of open access and equal opportunity. Pro-American feelings among Chilean prospectors did not simply die down with the harsh reality of discrimination, violence, and exclusion they experienced in the mining region—precisely because the pro-Americanism was not about concrete dealings of the United States, but rather about ideological interpretation of what the American Union stood for in the mid-nineteenth century Americas.

The general admiration for American institutions coexisted with topical animosity against the United States. Concerns about U.S. imperialism had steadily grown in Chile over the course of the 1840s, culminating in the U.S.-Mexican War.⁴⁸ If American aggression against Mexico had preoccupied elite Chileans, the reports coming back from California as Chilean gold prospectors reached the mines further incited uneasiness and resentment among the public. In 1849-1850, Anglo-American miners who became the majority of California population collectively staged a series of attacks on Spanish-speaking miners in various mining counties and consequently drove most Latin American miners out. The persecution was carried on not only by bigoted individuals but also by the state government, since the California state began to levy a prohibitive amount of taxes on foreign miners in 1850.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* Another version of translation has a humorous quip about the Stamp Act and the American Revolution in the same passage. Beilharz and López, *We were 49ers!* 19-20. Beilharz and López, unfortunately, did not provide bibliographic details of the version they used for translation. Since Pérez Rosales published his California diaries in various forms of short articles before the publication of his memoir (*Times Gone By*), it is possible that he once included the bit about the Stamp Act and later deleted it from the memoir.

⁴⁸ Collier, *Making of a Republic*, 185-86.

⁴⁹ Susan Lee Johnson has pointed out that the “anti-Indian, anti-foreign, anti-black” state’s back-up was the primary reason for Anglo miners’ ultimate victories in interracial conflicts. Johnson, *Roaring Camp*, 187, 208.

Just as American travelers had begun to crowd in Chilean seaports on their way to California in 1849, the rumors of anti-Chilean riots in California traveled back to Chile and affected the relationships between travelers and locals. Daniel S. Gilman recorded what tales were circulating in the Chilean ports in April 1849. Having “heard nothing from California” in the previous ports of stop, Gilman first received news of California in Talcahuano, Chile, that there were “still plenty of the root of all evils to be had,” that “all was quiet on the mines,” and that foreigners were “forbid[den from] entering the mines,” which was causing much trouble.⁵⁰ Who was making what kind of trouble, he did not mention. Gilman nonetheless had little hassle while he was roaming in the Chilean streets. He was “treated with the greatest civility,” and in fact “amused by the frequent salutation of California” that several locals gave him. “They appear to use the word California as a sort of salutation giving us to understand that they were aware of our Country and our business,” he concluded.⁵¹ Gilman left Chile with an impression of affable hospitality and his own favorable judgment toward Chileans.

However, some American forty-niners noted deteriorating reputation of the United States in Chilean port cities in the later months, as the tales of Chilean miners being forcibly banished from the mines were widely in circulation. Josiah Foster Flagg, a Philadelphia resident in his early 20s, wrote in September 1849 from Valparaíso: “It seems that some Chilians went up to the ‘mines’ & planting the flag of Chili, went to work, the Yankees pulled it down & drove the ‘independent diggers’ home.”⁵² Flagg, by putting the quotation marks on the words “independent diggers,” perhaps alluded to the popular Anglo-Californian belief that Chilean miners were all unfree workers

⁵⁰ Daniel S. Gilman to his brother, 9 May 1849, Gold Rush Letters, Western Americana Collection, BRBM.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² Typescript of Josiah Foster Flagg, Voyage to California (manuscript journal), 62, BRBM.

digging for a handful of masters. As these evicted miners arrived back in Valparaíso, Flagg noted, the atmosphere surrounding the interactions between locals and American travelers changed:

whereas formerly the name of American was sufficient to command an excess of hospitality, now we are received with frequent cries of ‘americano mucho malo!’ accompanied with drawing the hand across the throat, indicative of the murderous disposition of the Americans in California.⁵³

The local hatred against American travelers and the cutthroat hand gesture, which could have meant either accusation as Flagg surmised or a threat, suggest that certain grass-roots anti-American feelings had begun to circulate in the Chilean ports.

The San Francisco newspaper *Daily Alta California* reported in January 1850 of the “false” rumor spreading in Chile, citing a Valparaíso newspaper dated October 1, 1849 as a source. Following the presumably false story of “a large body of Chilians [*sic*]...attacked and murdered by the Americans,” the newspaper announced that the Chilean government requested protection of a British Admiral for Chileans in California.⁵⁴ Considering the roughly three-month period that was needed for the words to travel between San Francisco and Valparaíso, it is likely the newspaper article of October 1 referred to the July 1849 attack on the Chilean settlement in San Francisco. A band of American outlaws ravaged the Chilean settlement of *chilecito*, or Little Chile, in San Francisco on July 15, 1849. Chileans were a visible minority that became a convenient target for the gang, dubbed “the Hounds,” that was causing general lawlessness in the city. Pérez Rosales contemptuously described the group as “composed of vagrants, gamblers, and drunks united in the

⁵³ In response, Flagg bragged that he “showed up” two Chilean oarsmen by imitating the gesture he had seen and saying “americano californé, mucho bueno!” *Ibid.*, 62-63.

⁵⁴ *Daily Alta California*, 2 January 1850. The British Admiral, the newspaper added, could not promise more than the safe passage back for the citizens of Chile.

fellowship of crime and under the motto of *We always get our way*.”⁵⁵ According the *Daily Alta California*’s own report in August 1849, the July attack resulted in several casualties, including two “mortally wounded,” two young men named Rinaldo and Ignacio Alegria.⁵⁶

This attack in San Francisco was merely the beginning. The following year, several armed skirmishes occurred between Anglo-American miners and Chilean and other foreign miners. December of 1849 witnessed a series of attacks targeting foreign miners in the Calaveras Country; the resulting armed confrontations were collectively called the “Chilean Wars.”⁵⁷ *El Mercurio* of Valparaíso reported the conflicts between Anglo Americans and Chilenos in California in early 1850 without reprinting the source from California, for it was “written with visible partiality,” adding that there had been some incidents at the port of Valparaíso, where “some Americans were abused in retaliation to the complaints brought by some Chileans from California.”⁵⁸

2.4. Claiming the Future of California: Chilean Miners in California

Despite the American popular image about the term “forty-niners,” the population influx until the middle of 1849 was not dominated by white Anglo-American miners. Due to the sheer geographic proximity alone, Chilean and Mexican prospectors arrived in California before the mass migration from the eastern U.S. began. They worked with a more cosmopolitan bunch of Anglo Americans who were already conversant with the region, due to their earlier emigration and business

⁵⁵ Pérez Rosales, *Times Gone By*, 272 (emphasis in original).

⁵⁶ *Weekly Alta California*, Steamer ed., 2 August 1849.

⁵⁷ For a detailed contemporary record of the “Chilean wars,” see Ramón Gil Navarro, *The Gold Rush Diary of Ramón Gil Navarro*, ed. and trans. by María del Carmen Ferreyra and David S. Leher (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 28-80. See also Johnson, *Roaring Camp*, 196-208.

⁵⁸ Quoted in Hernandez Cornejo, *Los Chilenos*, 186 (my translation).

involvements.⁵⁹ A Chilean migrant who landed in San Francisco on January 23, 1849 reported back home in February that there were three thousand inhabitants in San Francisco at the time, while he had not yet seen the arrival of rumored “twenty thousand North Americans.”⁶⁰ The *Polynesian*, an English-language newspaper in Hawaii that closely followed the affairs in California, reprinted *Daily Alta California*’s estimation made in July 1849 of the number of immigrants for the first half of that year. According to its calculation, of the 15,000 immigrants who entered California since the start of 1849, 6,000 were Mexicans, 2,000 Chileans, and 5,000 Americans, with various other nationalities making up the rest. “It will thus be seen,” the newspaper article concluded, “that a preponderance of the emigration thus far is foreign.”⁶¹

The early preponderance of foreigners in the gold diggings provoked Anglo-American xenophobic reactions, at times even before the Anglo-American gold seekers arrived in California. J. Ross Browne was outraged when he heard in the Peruvian port of Callao that “Thousands of the worst population of Peru and Chile” were heading for San Francisco with the intention of “swearing allegiance to the United States.”⁶² What was wrong if they were to become loyal citizens of the country, rather than digging up all the gold and returning to their original home? According to Browne, it was “monstrous” to accept Peruvians into the national community, because he firmly

⁵⁹ Monaghan, *Chile, Peru, and the California Gold Rush*, 23-24, 61. Monaghan also notes that the first departures from Chile after the news of gold discovery were mostly of those with English surnames, suggesting that they were American or English merchants who had settled in Chile prior to the Gold Rush.

⁶⁰ Quoted in Hernandez Cornejo, *Los Chilenos*, 88. Hernandez Cornejo, an early-twentieth-century Chilean historian (a *conservador* of the Severin Library, Valparaíso), compiled and transcribed manuscript correspondences of Chileans in the California Gold Rush. While neither the identity of this letter writer nor the validity of the source is known today, the letters appear to be corroborating other contemporary sources, and thus will be included here as authentic source of the Chilean voice. See also Beilharz and López, *We Were 49ers!*, 212.

⁶¹ The *Polynesian* (Honolulu), 28 July 1849.

⁶² J. Ross Browne to his wife Lucy, 5 June 1849; Lina Fergusson Browne (ed.), *J Ross Browne: His Letters, Journals, and Writings* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1969), 112.

believed in “the splendid destiny of the Anglo-Saxons.” “They are absorbing,” Browne wrote, “overhauling all other races. Their destiny is supremacy.”⁶³ Somewhat contrary to this metaphoric assertion, he believed California needed to exclude other races, rather than allowing the Anglo-Saxon race to “absorb” or “overhaul” them, in order to demonstrate the destined supremacy.

Chileans in the California mining camps imported their own understandings about what rights they had, to which segment of humanity they belonged, and whose contributions led to the growth of Californian society. Xenophobic violence in northern California in the formative years of 1849-1851 disproportionately targeted Spanish-speaking miners from Mexico, Chile, and Peru, whose early arrivals and previous mining experiences led them to claim better gold diggings and often better results overall.⁶⁴ While the fickle and quickly declining mining prospects partly explain the virulent xenophobia and violence, the conflicts in the gold fields were also resonant of the larger ideological clashes concerning a society’s development and racial order. Upper-class Chileans criticized the nativist hostilities of Anglo-Californians and interpreted larger implications of the California Gold Rush and the future of American California based on their own worldview.

In 1850, the new State of California passed a law requiring all foreign miners to pay \$20 a month for a mining license, a prohibitive cost that effectively banished most Chilean, Peruvian, or Mexicans from the mines. This was the first installment of Foreign Miners Tax (FMT); it was repealed in 1851 and reinstated in 1852 for a more reasonable amount of \$4, targeting the increasing number of Chinese miners. Coupled with the general ill feeling against “foreign” nationals in the mining region and the lack of proper authorities, the FMT further became another tool for private

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ Monaghan, *Chile, Peru, and the California Gold Rush*, 243. See also Karen Clay and Randall Jones, “Migrating to Riches? Evidence from the California Gold Rush,” *The Journal of Economic History* 68: 4 (December 2008), for foreign miners’ general success in California gold fields.

persecution. In August 1850, the *Sacramento Transcript* reported of an arbitrary enforcement of the FMT. According to an anonymous tip, an American miner, having failed in digging gold, played a trick against some French miners “extracting several thousand dollars...by representing himself as a collector of foreign taxes.”⁶⁵ This combination of state- and individual-level anti-foreigner measures, in turn, created an environment where American and non-American actors clashed not only over material interests, but also over ideological understandings of the California Gold Rush.⁶⁶

Foreign miners’ protests against the FMT uncovered ideological tensions within American California. Not quite fully appreciated in these early conflicts is that the actions were taken by both sides, as much by Chilean, Mexican, French miners as their Anglo-American counterparts. In May 1850, about 5,000 Mexican, Chilean, and French miners gathered outside the town of Sonora. While these miners primarily objected to the prohibitive level of the tax, a certain belief in the “republican institution” was also involved in the opposition.⁶⁷ William Perkins, a self-proclaimed hispanophile merchant in gold-rush California, wrote a letter under the pseudonym “Leo” to the editors of the *Stockton Times* on May 10, 1850, reporting the events and fervently arguing against the FMT. In his correspondence, Perkins translated a memorial written by “a very respectable portion of the foreign population of Sonora” to the Governor of California on the Foreign Miners Tax. While conceding the state’s right to enforce citizenship-based taxation, the memorial nonetheless argued that “it is altogether *contrary to the institutions of the free Republic* of the United States, to make such a difference as

⁶⁵ *Sacramento Transcript*, transcribing the *San Francisco Picayune*, 30 August 1850.

⁶⁶ Recent scholarship concerning the French in gold-rush California reconfigured the inter-ethnic conflicts as an ideological clash with regard to the wealth of the world. Karen S. Wilson, “Seeking America in America: The French in the California Gold Rush,” *Southern California Quarterly* 95: 2 (2013).

⁶⁷ William Perkins, *Three Years in California: William Perkins’ Journal of Life at Sonora, 1849-1852*, intro. & ed. by Dale L. Morgan & James R. Scobie (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1964), 154-56.

amounts in reality to *a prohibition of labor*.”⁶⁸ The group of foreign merchants who penned this memorial relied on the rhetoric of “republican institutions” in order to present their right to be in California and to work in the mines. Republicanism, from its early modern European configuration, presupposed political community of independent, well-informed individuals, governed by virtuous leaders.⁶⁹ Securing economic independence was the foremost precondition for “virtues” and the right to political participation in a republic. The California Gold Rush was often portrayed by contemporaries as the ultimate representation of such free, self-employed individuals—a myth shared by some of the non-Anglo participants of the rush. The equal access to wealth in the gold diggings enticed many Chileans of lesser means. A Chilean consul at San Francisco reported in 1851 that the “inferior classes of the Chilean population” constituted the majority of Chilean migration to California.⁷⁰ Chilean writers studied here also favorably commented on the egalitarian prospect that California symbolized, despite their upper-class backgrounds.

The year 1848 witnessed, along with the end of the U.S.-Mexican War and the gold discovery in California, a string of revolutionary uprisings in Europe. Although the latter developments of the 1848 Revolutions espoused socialist inspirations, the crux of the 1848 had been liberal republicanism. European ideas about liberty, republic, and progress of the humanity reached

⁶⁸ Perkins, *Three years*, Appendix, 398-99 (emphasis mine).

⁶⁹ There are such diverse and complex ideological underpinnings of “republicanism,” even within the contexts of U.S. history, that it is impossible to incorporate them fully in this chapter, nor is it necessary, since the focus here is the rhetorical use of republicanism. Many of those who uttered the term “republican” in mid-nineteenth-century California would have had in mind only the very basic understanding of the term; that it was antithetical to monarchy, oligarchy, or despotism, and that economic independence was a basic precondition for political freedom. It was also commonplace to pair “republican” with the term “liberal,” even though liberalism and republicanism were often pitted against by political philosophers of the later periods. For an in-depth study of American variation of “democratic republicanism” during the revolutionary era, see Gordon Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1969). See also Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 38-39 and *passim*.

⁷⁰ Records of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, National Archives of Chile, Vol. 73 (September 2, 1851); quoted in Fernando Purcell, “Becoming Dark: The Chilean Experience in California, 1848-1870,” in *How the U.S. Racializes Latinos: White Hegemony and Its Consequences* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 54.

across the ocean and stimulated growing liberal factions in Chile. Some of the Chileans who came to California in the early 1850s were directly involved in the liberal faction of the mid-nineteenth-century Chilean ideological split.⁷¹

Republican ideals had long been the cornerstone of U.S. expansionism. The Jeffersonian dream of an “Empire of Liberty,” ever-expanding union of the “sister-republics” in the Western Hemisphere, carried an inherent justification of the continental subjugation unfolded in the course of the nineteenth century.⁷² The capacity to adopt and sustain stable republican government, furthermore, became the standard with which the American public judged a certain nation or race. This way of judgment sometimes led to an ambiguous position regarding South American people in the nineteenth century, who were, through their long struggles for independence from the Spanish Empire, adopted and even personified republican ideals of the period, just as the United States had done half a century prior. Sometimes Latin American revolutionaries, in their struggles to achieve independence, statehood, or more liberal government, looked toward the United States with a sense of admiration and fraternity. This republican solidarity, on rhetorical but no less culturally powerful level, complicates the picture of mid-nineteenth century American expansion and empire.⁷³

Chilean observers portrayed the Anglo-American exclusivism against Spanish-speaking

⁷¹ For the impact of Europe’s 1848 on Chile, see Cristián Gazmuri, “The Chilean Girondins and Their Time,” introduction to Benjamin Vicuña Mackenna, *The Girondins of Chile: Reminiscences of an Eyewitness*, trans. by John H. R. Polt (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); James A. Woods, *The Society of Equality: Popular Republicanism and Democracy in Santiago de Chile, 1818-1851* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2011).

⁷² For more on this, see Richard H. Immerman, *Empire for Liberty: A History of American Imperialism from Benjamin Franklin to Paul Wolfowitz* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010); Aziz Rana, *The Two Faces of American Freedom* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010). For an inherently imperialist tendency of the Western liberal philosophy, see Uday Singh Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire: A Study in Nineteenth-Century British Liberal Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

⁷³ Rafe Blaufarb, “The Western Question: The Geopolitics of Latin Am Independence,” *American Historical Review* 112 (2007); Rodrigo Lazo, *Writing to Cuba: Filibustering and Cuban Exiles in the United States* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005); see also Kristin L. Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

miners as American renunciation of their self-proclaimed ideals of freedom and republican camaraderie. “There is no other tyranny or arbitrariness as great as that carried out by this nation of free and republican people,” wrote Ramón Gil Navarro on July 25, 1849, upon hearing the news of a rich mining claim being forcefully taken over by Americans, dispossessing Mexican miners who had originally discovered it.⁷⁴ Navarro was a well-educated man in his early twenties when he arrived in San Francisco. Native of Catamarca, Argentina, he had been exiled in Chile during a political strife against Juan Manuel de Rosas in 1845. The young Argentinian-Chilean sailed from Concepción, Chile in February 1849 as a director of a company that consisted of thirty miners, arriving into the harbor of San Francisco on April 30, 1849. To Ramón Gil Navarro, American forsaking of its representative ideals was succinctly displayed on the first Fourth of July he experienced in California. Earlier in June 1849, Navarro had recorded several instances of Americans killing and robbing Mexican or Chilean miners. On July 1, 1849, Navarro picked up a rumor that “Using the pretext that the 4th of July is Independence Day for the United States, great riots have been prepared...to rally people to the cry of extermination and death for all Chileans, Mexicans, and Peruvians.”⁷⁵ The Fourth-of-July threat turned out to be a false alarm, even though there indeed was an attack on the San Francisco Chilean settlement within the same month. Navarro nonetheless seemed deeply affected by this symbolic date, as he wrote on July 4th the next year that it was “the anniversary of North American independence, and also *the anniversary of the crimes perpetrated by the Americans in California last year.*”⁷⁶ It did not matter that the previous year, that specific date had passed by without the rumored attack; to him, the rumor of an organized raid on the Fourth of July was the best

⁷⁴ Navarro, *The Gold Rush Diary*, 36.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 131 (emphasis mine).

example of America's broken promise. Though he carefully did not dismiss the whole ideal represented by American democracy, he lamented that "a good North American" would have to bear the shameful burden of "belong[ing] to the same nation as the bandits of San Francisco."⁷⁷

In addition to the xenophobic mob, the Foreign Miners Tax also stood for an antithesis of both liberal principles of laissez-faire and republican rhetoric of freedom. Chilean migrants, as well as their Anglo allies, based their arguments on the shared principles or, at the very least, shared *rhetoric* of liberal republicanism. On principle, the FMT hinged upon a protectionist urge, while many old and new residents on the Pacific Coast believed that the free trade of goods and labor was the future of California and the world. Local newspapers in California, which generally allied themselves with mercantile interests of the state, often commented on the restrictive immigration measures such as the FMT as unjust and detrimental to the development of the new state. During the period when the first FMT was in effect (1850-1851), some Californians opposed the tax on the ground that it is against the liberal tenets of the United States. The *Daily Alta California* rejoiced when the first installment of FMT was repealed, projecting that it would bring the better population from Chile or Mexico back to the country. In March 1851, the newspaper's editors wrote:

We know of many persons abroad who are only awaiting the repeal of this law to come among us. In Chile three thousand are ready and near the point of departure... Three thousand Mexican or Chilian [sic] miners will put more dust into circulation in this State than ten thousand of our own countrymen, who come here merely to obtain all they can, keep all they get, and carry away the whole of it if possible.⁷⁸

Curiously, this editorial put gold-seeking Americans in the place of *sojourners*, a notion that would later most frequently apply to Chinese and other Asian immigrants. The editorial's sympathetic

⁷⁷ Navarro, *The Gold Rush Diary*, 131.

⁷⁸ *Daily Alta California*, 15 March 1851.

expression suggests an ideological split regarding immigration policy within Californian society, a split that would become a lot more conspicuous along the class line in the future.

In contrast to Anglo-American miners' exclusionary claims, Chileans accredited the extraordinary growth of 1850s California to diverse ethno-racial backgrounds. Benjamín Vicuña Mackenna, a Chilean young man from a wealthy progressive family, came to California in 1852 after he was exiled for a failed revolution attempt in 1851, in which a faction of Chilean liberals tried to overthrow the Conservative regime of Manuel Montt. Later to become a prominent public figure as diplomat and prolific historian of the Republic of Chile, Vicuña Mackenna left a religiously kept journal during his exile, traveling around the Americas and Europe, and published it in 1856 in Santiago with the title *Páginas de Mi Diario Durante Tres Años de Viajes* (Pages from my diary during three years of travels). He understood the foundation of California society as cosmopolitan diversity rooted in its multi-ethnic population:

Chinese with belted black pantaloons and blue blouses, with pigtails down to their knees; a Mexican with his sarape or blanket; the Chilean in his poncho; a Parisian in his smock; an Irishman with torn coat and crushed felt hat; and the Yankee, lord of all, in his red flannel shirt, heavy boots, and trousers with waist-belt. These were the men who in four years had improvised a state and rebuilt the city of San Francisco three times from its ashes.⁷⁹

Another wealthy Chilean prospector, Vicente Pérez Rosales, concurred. "It would be a great error, as well as an injustice," he wrote in his memoir, "to attribute the phenomenon of this transformation solely to the influence of the Anglo-Saxon race."⁸⁰ He believed it was "the product of the individual contributions of the most daring and enterprising elements of the superior strata of

⁷⁹ Benjamín Vicuña Mackenna, *Páginas de Mi Diario Durante Tres Años de Viajes* (Santiago: Imprenta del Ferrocarril, 1856), 4-5 (my translation); see also Beilharz and López, *We Were 49ers!*, 95-96.

⁸⁰ Pérez Rosales, *Times Gone By*, 211.

every other human race,” which naturally included Chileans such as himself.⁸¹

2.5. A Paradox of Development: A Chilean Understanding of Race and Civilization

Even though the early interethnic conflicts or “racial wars” primarily concerned the material interests over gold diggings, it also involved a larger contestation surrounding citizenship, racial categorization, and the boundaries of a national community. The powerful image of the United States as the beacon of liberty, as the “nation of immigrants” with a wide-open door, continued to shape the perception and response of non-U.S. born migrants, especially those who considered themselves a part of the same European family of the human race. Pérez Rosales recounted an early attempt by Chilean migrants and their American friends to have the Chileans “declare [to become] citizens of the United States,” even if the citizenship claim was “more jeered than honored” outside their immediate domicile.⁸² Such declarations of intent, if indeed done in order to avoid persecution as “foreigners,” were probably not legally binding, since the Naturalization Act of 1790 stipulated that the claimant for citizenship had to live in the United States for two years before they took the first step to become a naturalized citizen.

The more pertinent reason, however, that Chilean gold seekers’ declarations of intent would have been ridiculed probably had to do with another stipulation of the Naturalization Act—where it limited the prospective citizens to “free white persons.” This racial qualification’s vagueness fed the exclusivist tendency of the society, as who qualified as “white” continually fluctuated in the United States.⁸³ Many on the eastern seaboard of the United States would have doubted in the 1840s Irish

⁸¹ Pérez Rosales, *Times Gone By*, 211.

⁸² Pérez Rosales, *Times Gone By*, 271-72.

⁸³ Ian Haney Lopez, *White by Law: The Legal Construction of Race* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 1-7.

or Jewish immigrants were white enough to become a citizen. The polyglot society in California, which had only recently been the territory of Mexico, resulted in a different social understanding of the “free white person” clause.⁸⁴ The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, concluding the U.S.-Mexican War in 1848, conferred citizenship—and the “whiteness” it carried—to residents in the former Mexican provinces. A few of the wealthier Mexicans even assumed political leadership positions in California, such as Andrés Pico, who first became the state assemblyman and then senator. As the initial economic power of Mexican American *rancheros* waned, and more working-class Mexicans migrated to California, the racial position of Mexican Americans in California declined. The nominal citizenship conferred to them still held on paper, if not in practice.⁸⁵

Chilean presence in the mines further complicated the on-going process of defining the boundary of whiteness in California. Even though the wide-spread assumption and reality of racial mixing in the former Spanish colonies led many Yankee immigrants to express doubts about the whiteness of Mexicans, and by extension, all the Spanish-speaking population, Chile was often distinguished from other Spanish American countries even in the mining region. Heinrich Schliemann, the famed German archeologist who tried his fortune in gold mining in the years between 1850 and 1852, testified to differential perception when he described the diverse nationalities of Spanish-speaking migrants in California:

The mexicans are a lazy and false class of people without the least education... The new granadians are of the same character (& habits) as the mexicans whereas the Peruvians and Chilians are a good natured very industrious race of people, particularly

⁸⁴ Reginald Horsman has explained the regional difference in racial formations when he explained the ambiguity of the notion “Anglo-Saxon” in North America; an Irish, the despised “Celtic race” in New York, could claim the status of Anglo-Saxon in California. Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, 4.

⁸⁵ For the initially conceded, yet gradually undermined, “whiteness” of Mexican Americans in California, see Tomas Almaguer, *Racial Fault Lines: The Historical Origins of White Supremacy in California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), Chapter 2, “The True Significance of the Word ‘White.’”

the latter who are celebrated for their great assiduity, perseverance and gentlemanly behaviour. Alas! The Chilians are the only nation which has derived great profit by their independence from Spain.⁸⁶

Some Anglo-Californians also differentiated Chile from other Latin American countries. Early American merchants who were active on the Pacific Coast often made comparison among Latin American nations, favoring Chile over others. Thomas O. Larkin perhaps best surmised their attitude toward Chile when he said in an 1853 letter to Faxon Dean Atherton that Chile was the “very best of the Spanish [South American] Republic,” though in his opinion still not fit for permanent settlement.⁸⁷ This relatively high regard for Chileans, while not completely positive and always in flux, was frequently echoed by Anglo-American newcomers who came to California after 1849. William Perkins, a merchant who was generally sympathetic toward Spanish-speaking foreign migrants, exhibited an understanding of whiteness that would include the Irish, “even the humblest of our white citizens,” while firmly distinguishing Mexicans or “Spaniards” from whites.⁸⁸ Yet the perceived non-whiteness of the “Spanish race” did not prevent him from lauding Chileans in comparison to Mexicans and *californios*. In 1851, he criticized the general ignorance regarding the Spanish-speaking people pervasive among his fellow Americans and offered his opinionated description of South American nationalities. According to his categorization, at the top of the pyramid was the Argentinian, few in number in California. The reason Chileans were placed second was that migrants from Chile were “much more of a mixed character” due to its open access to the Pacific Ocean, which allowed for diverse types of immigrants to come. Despite his concerns about

⁸⁶ Wout Arentzen and Christo Thanos (eds.), *Schliemann and the California Gold Rush: The 1850-1852 American Travel Journal of Heinrich Schliemann* (Leiden: Sidestone Press, 2014), 170 (capitalization and spelling kept as is in original).

⁸⁷ T. O. Larkin to F. D. Atherton, 14 January 1853; reproduced in Doyce B. Nunis, Jr. (ed.), “Six New Larkin Letters,” *Southern California Quarterly* 49: 1 (March 1967), 85.

⁸⁸ Perkins, *Three Years*, 164, 167-8.

less savory characters, Perkins opined that Chileans in general were “infinitely more enterprising than any other of the Spanish Republics of South America”—the lower-class Chileans were “sturdy miners,” while the “better classes” were astute merchants. In his opinion, “Chilenos and Argentinos...[would] form a highly desirable immigration” in California.⁸⁹

As the nineteenth century proceeded, the republican form of government or the capacity to participate in republican institutions became increasingly contingent upon race, more firmly entrenched as a “scientific” concept. Although social Darwinism had not yet materialized in full force, the mid-nineteenth century saw its basic workings. No matter what early republican thinkers had in mind, by the mid-nineteenth century, the capability to manage republican institutions was firmly linked with a specific race—the “Anglo-Saxon race” in the U.S., or somewhat broader but equally elusive definition of the “white race” in South American republics.

Chileans strenuously identified themselves as members of the white race and the only developed nation in Latin America, particularly among the other Spanish-speaking nationalities represented in California. Benjamín Vicuña Mackenna, who witnessed Anglo-Californians’ racially charged nativism in the 1850s, published an English-language guide to the Republic of Chile in 1883. In the promotional guidebook, Vicuña Mackenna argued that Chile, “in distinction from Peru, Bolivia, and almost all the other South American countries,” had “the inestimable benefit of having a homogeneous and almost single race.”⁹⁰ Implicitly distinguishing Chile’s situation from what he must have seen in the United States, he added, “Neither the African, the Sandwich Islander, nor the Chinaman, has ever become acclimated here.”⁹¹ As for the racial composition of the Chilean

⁸⁹ Perkins, *Three Years*, 222-23.

⁹⁰ Vicuña Mackenna, *Chile* (Philadelphia: Times Printing House, 1883), 18.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

population, he describe a two-tiered racial structure. There were “the white race of pure Spanish blood, or a mixture of this and other European races,” and “the Creole or native mixed race, having a third to a fourth of Spanish blood.”⁹² Earlier in 1855, Vicuña Mackenna had insisted that there were no “people of color” in Chile, but “only one race united and homogeneous,” in a pamphlet published in France, when he was touring Europe in the three-year journey he began by coming to California.⁹³ Trying to assuage those potential immigrants from Europe that moving to Chile would not besmirch the blood of their children, he emphasized that Chileans never “mixed with the unfortunate African blood.”⁹⁴

While Ramón Gil Navarro, the Argentinian-Chilean, would not have agreed with Vicuña Mackenna’s claim that Chile was the only South American country that was purely white, he certainly agreed that the American notion of whiteness was too narrow to accommodate the realities of South American migrants. On February 24, 1850, Navarro wrote in his journal of a conversation he had with some Americans. Relaying their opinions that “the only South Americans of the white race...were from Argentina and that all the rest were Negroes, or copper-skinned and beardless,” Navarro added that most Americans seemed to think the same.⁹⁵ He did not elaborate further on this casual mention of American racial categorization, though his disagreement was clearly implied. Suggestive in the same vein was that some of the upper-class Chileans in California often resorted to “passing” as French in the face of hostility against Chileans.⁹⁶ This was a strange choice of tactics,

⁹² *Ibid.*, 18-19.

⁹³ Vicuña Mackenna, *Le Chili considéré sous le rapport de son agriculture et de l’émigration européenne* (Paris, 1855), viii (my translation).

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 43.

⁹⁵ Navarro, *The Gold Rush Diary*, 96.

⁹⁶ Both Ramón Gil Navarro and Vicente Pérez Rosales recalled having pretended to be Frenchmen when interacting with a group of Anglo Americans. Pérez Rosales, *Times Gone By*, 260, 283; Navarro, *The Gold Rush Diary*, 85.

considering that French immigrants also generally became the targets of discrimination and eviction attempts in the mines. Acting French was their way of demonstrating their high level of education, at the same time emphasizing a different version of whiteness, which was contingent upon the ancestry tracing back to Europe. Even though the French, as a group of foreigners, were targeted by xenophobic mobs, their whiteness was less questioned—or so the Chileans believed.

This dissonance derived from the confluence of different racial caste systems in California's gold fields, due to the coexistence of people of European descent from different nationalities in the early 1850s. In Anglo-dominated California, Chileans became racialized subjects. In the face of economic competition, Anglo Americans recreated Spanish-speaking miners as racial others and targeted them for contestation over gold diggings. At the same time, Chileans also shared a conviction in a racial hierarchy that put whiteness at the top. As the Chilean claim to whiteness was based on the shared origin from the European civilization and the shared idea of development, it did not seem completely groundless to their American counterparts, as traveling Americans' perception at the Chilean ports indicated. As the concept of race was never fixed across time and space, the different understandings of race came together in California during the Gold Rush, where diverse populations from different parts of the world gathered in a very short span of time. The different understandings, different *racial projects* would clash with and then influence each other.⁹⁷

Upper-class Chileans, while resenting the treatment they and their compatriots received in California, also participated in the same thought process that reduced them to the lesser race in California, projecting their own beliefs of superiority toward Indians, Mexicans, and Chinese they saw in California. Chile, or any part of former Spanish America, had its own race problems from within and own racial hierarchy with people of European descent on top, even though people like

⁹⁷ Michael Omi & Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 55-56.

Vicuña Mackenna attempted to downplay this by proclaiming Chile a racially homogenous nation. Intellectuals in Chile, similar to their northern counterparts, contemplated on the meanings of race on the nation's development or the findings of the popular racial science. They believed the general divisions of the human race, and even adhered to the belief that a certain race is more apt to progress further.

Chileans were receptive to the idea that there were separate races even within people of European descent. They were part of the "Latin race," against which mid-century Americans consolidated their identity as the Anglo-Saxon race.⁹⁸ Identification as the Latin race came with the exceptionalism that Chile was advancing far ahead of other members of the Latin race. Chileans in California often differentiated themselves from *californios*, old-time California residents of Mexican descent. Ramón Gil Navarro's comment upon seeing local women in California, for example, cannot be easily distinguished from an Anglo-American man's account. In 1849, he described two local customers, who were either Mexican or California Indian. "They are the first really native women I have seen so far in this country," he wrote, "I have never met more horrible looking women in my life."⁹⁹ His subsequent description of these women displayed a firmly objectifying, colonizing, white male gaze shared by Anglo-American immigrants. With a detailed portrayal of the women's hair, "thick and stiff as a horses tail," and dresses, "little more than a sack," Navarro asserted that they were rather more "civilized" than others: "others go around completely naked, just like their men," he added.¹⁰⁰

Chilean writers also adopted the same manner of historicizing the U.S. conquest of

⁹⁸ Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, 208-212.

⁹⁹ Navarro, *The Gold Rush Diary*, 17-18.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

California as Anglo Americans at the time. Spanish and Mexican rule of California was deemed the cause of society's degeneration and stagnation. In a letter written to a friend in May 1849, one unnamed Chilean migrant wrote that California was a rich country, which had been "so backward only because it was in the hands of the Spaniards."¹⁰¹ Pérez Rosales shared the same opinion. "The preconceptions we had formed of this city of San Francisco were certainly not favorable," wrote Pérez Rosales in his diary upon his arrival on February 18, 1849. He confessed that his prejudice was due to the fact "that it had belonged to Spain and Mexico and had gained worldwide attention only the year before."¹⁰² Pérez Rosales, however, found himself surprised as his vessel neared the bay of San Francisco; not only was the city bustling with commercial activities from comings and goings of the sailing ships of various nationalities, but the port was also now guarded by a "North American warship of three decks, with three corvettes and a transport to make up the squadron."¹⁰³ The presence of the U.S. warship—the visual manifestation of the American power over the region—appeared linked to Pérez Rosales's appreciation of the busy, burgeoning city. Pérez Rosales's first impression of San Francisco endorsed U.S. conquest of California as the harbinger of progress, to the degree that had been unthinkable under Spanish-Mexican rule. Whereas the seeming backwardness attributed to early California settlers' Spanish heritage would have only strengthened conviction in racial inferiority of the whole Latin race in the minds of Anglo-American conquerors, the Chilean observers did not have problems castigating the old system of Mexican California while not embracing the same baggage themselves, despite their shared Spanish colonial heritage.

The upper-class Chileans openly scoffed at native customs in California, with a clear

¹⁰¹ Hernandez Cornejo, *Los Chilenos*, 106. Quoted from the translation in Beilharz and López, *We Were 49ers!*, 214.

¹⁰² Quoted in Beilharz and López, *We Were 49ers!*, 16-18.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

understanding of racial connotation found in the critique. Pérez Rosales, protesting against the rampant Yankee ridicule and dismissal of Chileans, stated that “the Chileans had to be at the least a Hottentot or at best something very much like the timid & abased Californios” in the eyes of Anglo Californians.¹⁰⁴ Being lumped together through Anglo-American xenophobic persecution might have led to stronger sentiments of pan-ethnic solidarity after the initial encounters, but the differentiating and patronizing attitudes also persisted.¹⁰⁵ In fact, sometimes the co-struggle in the mining region transformed into a heroic narrative, in which Chilean miners became the defender of all Spanish-speaking people, taking the brave and manly actions that Mexican Californians could not do. Pérez Rosales would record in his memoir an encounter with a group of local *californios* and their collective admiration of Chilean migrants: “For Californians, a Chilean veteran of the diggings was the symbol of personal security, the scarecrow to ward off the outrages of the Yankee.”¹⁰⁶ With the cognitive distance from people of Mexican descent, the Chilean asserted his masculine prowess both against Yankee attackers and Mexican Californians who were victimized by Anglo Americans.

By framing Mexican degeneration in racial terms, however, Chileans often found themselves in a predicament of having to acknowledge Anglo superiority over the Latin race. Vicuña Mackenna, describing the Mexican society during his travel, argued that the “proximity to the American Union” had been a “great calamity” of Mexico. Insisting that Mexico should have tried to become a friend or “disciple” of the United States, he ominously added, “if it were possible for the Latin race to ever

¹⁰⁴ Pérez Rosales, *Times Gone By*, 272.

¹⁰⁵ For an argument favoring the pan-ethnic solidarity formation, see Purcell, “Becoming Dark.”

¹⁰⁶ Pérez Rosales, *Times Gone By*, 286-87.

come to terms with the people of the North.”¹⁰⁷ Vicuña Mackenna thus reframed the U.S.-Mexican War as a conflict between the Latin and (implied) Anglo-Saxon races. Affairs in California were also interpreted as a continuation of the conflicts between the Anglo and the Latin races. Pedro Felix Vicuña, the father of Benjamín Vicuña Mackenna, wrote a series of articles for *El Mercurio* in May 1850, envisioning what would happen once the California gold craze died down. Once the gold deposits were depleted, he predicted that agriculture would take over the economy of California, “destined to become the center of an active commerce with Asia and the rest of the Union, once an open and clear road is installed on land for the communication between them.”¹⁰⁸ His conclusion was not unlike prophetic dreams that contemporary Anglo-American expansionist rhetoric frequently invoked, even though it was stated from a Latin American point of view:

As political power, California is a flag raised by the Anglo race to invade the Hispanic race in the name of freedom. By the means of industry and wealth, rather than the arms, its triumphant march will reach Panamá.¹⁰⁹

Such constant racial comparisons further constricted Chileans’ ability to evade racial categorization and characterization that inevitably placed their own race beneath Anglo Americans. As Chilean intellectuals in the mid-nineteenth century tried to divine the fate of South America, they often resorted to lamenting the lack of energy of the Latin race; equating the thriving capitalist economy and liberal religious toleration in the United States with the “Anglo-British genius.”¹¹⁰ Benjamín

¹⁰⁷ Vicuña Mackenna, *Pajinas*, 28 (my translation). He also tried to racially distinguish Mexicans from Chileans, by asserting that the Indian population outnumbered the whites six to one in Mexico, contributing to its “degeneration to a mass of ungovernable population.”

¹⁰⁸ Pedro Felix Vicuña, “Considerations about Alta California,” *El Mercurio*, 8 May 1850; quoted in Hernandez Cornejo, *Los Chilenos*, 192 (my translation).

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ Collier, *The Making of a Republic*, 183-88.

Vicuña Mackenna could not hide his grudging admiration for the Anglo-Saxon race when traveling the United States, though his was tinged with a concern for its expansionist penchant: “the mercantile spirit of the Saxon race...will make this country the scourge of the earth, until someday a new Rome destroys this proud Carthage of the modern age.”¹¹¹

Tracing the origin of the region’s progress to the American conquest and acknowledging the particular strengths of the Anglo-Saxon race did not mean that they endorsed American popular belief that Anglo Americans was exclusively entitled to the wealth and resources of the region. On the contrary, these foreign observers welcomed the American conquest of California precisely because U.S. sovereignty supposedly meant the antithesis of restriction and exclusivism that symbolized Spanish-Mexican rule, which was also precisely the direction of reform that they wanted to happen in their own nation. Pérez Rosales, concluding his published diary of the California experience, surmised the expectations of the “foreigners” in the California Gold Rush thus:

They had come to a land where, it was said, the generous immigration laws had removed the word stranger from the vocabulary... To raw and empty California their imports and industry ought to have been as beneficial and as welcome as gifts from heaven. But, needless to say, they were not viewed in that light. Foreigners had to conclude that either North Americans had changed their nature in California or it was a lie to say immigrants got a fraternal welcome on the Atlantic coast.¹¹²

Whereas Pérez Rosales, as well as thousands of Chileans, discovered the American promise of open door largely fictitious, Americans on the Pacific Coast still held onto the notion that openness to immigration was the key to the development of a nation or a civilization. According to their rhetoric, the one who should open doors to immigrants was not California, but Chile and the

¹¹¹ Vicuña Mackenna, *Páginas I* (1936 ed.), 247; quoted in Collier, *The Making of a Republic*, 185.

¹¹² Vicente Pérez Rosales, “Afterthoughts,” as appeared in Beilharz and López, *We Were 49ers!*, 95 (emphasis mine).

rest of South America. The *Daily Alta California* reprinted on April 25, 1850 an article from the *Panama Echo*, an English-language newspaper published in Panama. The Anglo-American editor opined that, even though the Latin American nations proclaimed independence from the Spanish Empire and adopted “a system of Republican government, modelled...after the institutions of the United States,” they failed to overcome the lethargy and indolence that were inherent or at least habitual in the people. Yet the situation was changing, thanks to California’s Gold Rush:

Already has Panama, Lima, Valparaiso...felt and experienced the revivifying influence of this transition state. *Population from the United States and Europe must rapidly augment and fill up the immense savannas and plains* which offer to the husbandman large grains for his labor and industry... Let the interior of Chili, Equador, Bolivia, Peru, New Grenada, Guatemala, and Mexico, be developed...with a prosperous and wealthy population.¹¹³

According to the *Daily Alta California*, then was the time to “put the ball of emigration, improvement and civilization in motion.”¹¹⁴ Equating white settlers’ immigration with civilization and progress, the San Francisco newspaper alluded to a possibility open for American emigrants, as a sort of next step from California. A similar expectation for the joint progress of the Pacific coastal region of the Americas could also be found in the contemporary Chilean press. *El Comercio* of Valparaíso echoed the prediction of the English newspaper by asserting that newly invigorated coastal traffic will bring “civilization to the Pacific.”¹¹⁵ Both American and Chilean newspapers shared the idea of development that predicated upon white European immigration. Vague rhetoric it may have been, the notion that an increasing number of white European settlers would affect the development of the region persisted both in Chile and in California. In California, several Anglo-American

¹¹³ “South America,” *Daily Alta California*, 25 April 1850 (emphasis mine).

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ Monaghan, *Chile, Peru, and the California Gold Rush*, 44-48 (the quote is from page 48).

entrepreneurs like Henry Meiggs, who fled California after a fraudulent business dealing in 1854 to become a railroad baron in Chile and Peru in the 1870s, continued to send ostensible proofs of American civilizing projects on the southern part of the Pacific Coast.¹¹⁶

The progress of civilization on the Pacific Coast was exemplified materially by increasing lines of steam-powered transportation and metaphysically by liberal immigration policy. In 1853, a local newspaper in Valparaíso, Chile, published an article titled “Ocean Steamers in Chile,” which forcefully argued for the necessity of a steamer connecting the north and south of Chilean coast. The Chilean newspaper expressed hopes that the steam connection would bring “industrial civilization” to the remote, underpopulated region of the southern cone and eradicate the “savagery” that troubled Chilean authorities.¹¹⁷ The *Daily Alta California* translated this article into English and published it with a lengthy commentary on May 25, 1853. “The Chileans are beginning to discover the secret,” the editorial commended, “that they can become powerful only by immigration, and that to attract immigrants their Government must be liberal.”¹¹⁸ Advising Chileans that the best possible groups of colonists were “Germans, English and Americans,” the *Alta* editorial emphasized that Chile needed to move away from Catholicism to attract these colonists. Since the Chilean newspaper briefly acknowledged the importance of religious freedom, the editors in San Francisco concluded Chile’s prospect to have such immigration happen was higher than other Latin American countries.

The belief that regular and stable facilitation of transport would encourage immigration of white settlers, and it would be the ultimate path for a civilizational development, remained strong in

¹¹⁶ For the South American career of Henry Meiggs, see Melillo, *Strangers on Familiar Soil*, 118-132.

¹¹⁷ Cited in *Daily Alta California*, 25 May 1853. The *Alta* stipulated that the original Spanish article appeared in a Valparaíso newspaper called the *Diario*, though I could not verify this specific publication in Valparaíso at the time.

¹¹⁸ *Daily Alta California*, 25 May 1853.

Chile for the rest of the nineteenth century.¹¹⁹ While populating the country through settler immigration was always considered a liberal argument, immigration envisioned by Chilean elites was inherently selective as it was in California. Perhaps one of the most influential ideological exchanges that derived from Chilean-California interaction may have been Chileans “witnessing” the consequence of Chinese immigration in California. Vicuña Mackenna, after visiting California, formulated a firmly anti-Chinese labor stance, writing in 1856 that the Chinese were “a miserable race, incapable of services other than the domestic works.”¹²⁰ Claiming that the Chinese immigration, “while contained [in California] by law, has overrun our shores and those of Perú,” Vicuña Mackenna cited California as an example to follow.¹²¹ His statement was somewhat dissociated from realities. Although several pieces of state legislation, including the second installment of FMT, indeed targeted the Chinese in 1850s California, they had not contained Chinese immigration. Nor were there a meaningful number of Chinese immigrants coming into Chile or Peru in 1856.¹²² Still, this remark indicates continuing ideological convergences. Vicuña Mackenna employed the same free labor-oriented argument used by Anglo miners against Chileans in California that semi-free contract labor was akin to slavery, and that a certain immigrant group associated with unfree labor had to be excluded.¹²³

Vicuña Mackenna had been the Secretary General of the *Sociedad Nacional de Agricultura* in

¹¹⁹ According to Chilean historian Simon Collier, immigration and education was two fundamental goals of Chilean liberals in the nineteenth century. Collier, *The Making of a Republic*, 115.

¹²⁰ Vicuña Mackenna, *Pajinas* (1856), 9 (my translation).

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² Chinese immigration to Peru is well-documented, but evidence suggests the presence of any meaningful number of Chinese immigrants in both Peru and Chile started in the 1870s.

¹²³ For the Chilean, Mexican, Peruvian migrants’ racialization as “unfree” laborers, see Stacey L. Smith, *Freedom’s Frontier*, Chapter 3, “Hired Serfs and Contract Slaves.”

Santiago in 1851. The Society, established in 1838 as an interest group for Chilean agriculture, later concerned itself with the republic's policy making regarding the recruitment of agriculture workers. At the height of the hemispheric outcries against the importation of Chinese laborers, the Society recommended a government publication titled *Immigración Asiática*.¹²⁴ It was a report written in 1880 by Francisco Segundo Casanueva, a former Chilean consulate official in San Francisco, who claimed intimate knowledge regarding Chinese immigration, having lived around the Chinese communities in California for more than two decades. This pamphlet was but one example of how the shared concerns over racial purity, liberal European immigration, and economic development of the nation of the 1850s continued in the forms of exchanging ideas and discourses along the Pacific Coast. The pamphlet's content adopted many of the similar arguments from anti-Chinese pamphlets published in California during the 1870s-80s. It attributed the problem of the Chinese to isolation and continued ignorance of the Chinese Empire, contrasting the Chinese with the Japanese race, who wisely accepted the "open door" attempts of Commodore Matthew Perry in 1854 and had become an enterprising, learning, and developing nation ever since.

The tactic Casanueva adopted in differentiating "Asiatic" peoples according to their willingness to trade with the Western world and to their adaptation to Euro-American technology and rules of conduct was a familiar one. Chilean writers three decades earlier had used the very same tactic themselves to contend with their share of prejudice in the white Anglo-Saxon-dominated society of California. While this branch of racial ideologies that linked political and economic development of a nation with racial characteristics of its people did gain some purchase among Anglo American commentators, it was not sufficient for Chileans to evade racial persecutions in the

¹²⁴ Francisco Segundo Casanueva, *Immigración Asiática: Informe sobre si conviene a Chile La Inmigración de Los Chinos* (Santiago de Chile: Imprenta Nacional, 1880). A microfilm of this publication is housed in the Beincke Library, Yale University.

gold diggings. The Chileans' success, as well as failure, consisted in the fact that they chose to adopt the same developmental logic used by their own persecutors.

Conclusion

American and Chilean migration for riches in 1849-1850 created a site, both in California and in Chile, where the ideas and discourses were formulated and exchanged about the white race, Anglo-American supremacy, and political and economic developments of the Western Hemisphere as a whole. Anglo-American discourses about Chileans, produced in the Chilean ports as well as in the California gold fields, proved that race was more than skin color or blood—that it was associated with the forms of government and the systems of labor. Each race was, moreover, associated with a certain part of the globe. Racialization of Chileans in northern California could not be completely dissociated from what Anglo Americans saw in Chile, just as what Chilean prospectors observed of Anglo miners in California could not be entirely separated from their own ideas about the American republic. The very reason that Chile was seen different to the eyes of Anglo-American observers was the same as Chileans found the United States as the leading republican government of the world—the shared vision of development, which in real social debates took the form of republican government, liberal immigration policy, and whiteness of the population as derived from European ancestry. The hierarchy of race and nation—defined by the degree of development a certain race or nation accomplished in political and economic realms—would soon be universally imposed and adopted in the coming age of empire.

The Chilean patrons in California based their own self-assertion of equality (with white Americans) and superiority (against *californios*, Indians, and different racial others) on their own status as the civilized, the colonizer, and the white—the latter interpreted in their own society as not being

mixed with blacks. White Chileans, themselves the colonizers still fighting a war of subjugation against the indigenous peoples in the southern part of their territory, accepted the hierarchical worldview and the doctrine of civilization, even when it sometimes put their “Latin race” in an inferior position to the Anglo-Saxon Americans. Chileans’ self-identification as members of the white race and resentment against being relegated less than white signified that gold-rush California was not only a contested ground for gold, but also for dominant racial projects. Moreover, it was also a peculiar sort of showroom, especially to liberal-minded Chileans who came to California and went back to Chile to become active in politics. Chilean prospectors of the Gold Rush, once they returned to Chile, put to words what they gleaned from the American experiences, invariably describing the hardships and betrayals of American democracy, yet also exhorting the readers to find examples out of California and Californians for the future paths of Chile. The discourses concerning the desirability of immigrants and what constituted the “white” or “better race” circulated through the channels established by California gold and continued to affect the political and economic developments along the coast, long after the rush faded.

CHAPTER 3. IMAGINING CONQUEST, ENGINEERING EMPIRE: GOLD-RUSH TRANSIT AND U.S. EMPIRE-BUILDING ON THE ISTHMUS

“Such a forced march of civilization the world never saw before. It was a nation carrying its intelligence, arts, refinements, and even luxuries—to deposit them at once in a new and barren land...Gold—the only thing producing perpetual motion. And gold was now carrying in its train more benefits ever found before then—even all the benefits of population and civilization. California was to be a land peopled in a day.”

-John Mott-Smith, upon witnessing California-bound traffic in Panama, in 1849¹

“It seemed as if nature had determined to throw every conceivable obstacle in the way of those who should seek to join the two great oceans of the world...It was reserved for the men of our age to accomplish what so many had died in attempting, and iron and steam, twin giants, subdued to man’s will, have put a girdle over rocks and rivers, so that travellers can glide...over the once terrible Isthmus of Darien...”

-Mary Seacole, *Wonderful Adventures of Mrs. Seacole in Many Lands* (1857)²

Introduction

In 1915, the Panama-Pacific International Exposition (PPIE) in San Francisco celebrated the world historical significance of the Panama Canal. The Canal would “annihilate distance, wipe out the width of two continents...and bind Europe, the Americas, and Asia into one brotherhood,” declared the official catalogue of the exposition.³ Inaugurated in 1914, the Canal was hailed as one of the United States’ greatest contributions to the world, an exalted combination of modern technology and the centuries-long dream of a “passage to India.”⁴ A miniature exhibit of the Canal presented

¹ Typescript of John Mott-Smith, “Journal of the Adventures in California,” 93. Edward E. Ayer Manuscript Collection, Newberry Library, Chicago.

² Mary Seacole, *Wonderful Adventures of Mrs. Seacole in Many Lands* (New York: Penguin Books, 2005), 17-18.

³ *Panama-Pacific International Exposition, Popular Information* (San Francisco, 1915), [p.2 (page unnumbered)].

⁴ For the construction of the Panama Canal and its implications for turn-of-the-century U.S. Empire, see Julie Greene, *The Canal Builders: Making America’s Empire at the Panama Canal* (New York: Penguin Books, 2009); Alexander Missal,

American fairgoers with the ultimate conquest of nature. The Central American scenery thus reproduced was devoid of human presence. Ernst Hallen's official photography of the Canal Zone did depict engineers and visitors from the United States, including the famous 1906 portrait of Theodore Roosevelt working a steam shovel, as well as dark-skinned workers and local residents in Panama. Neither the workers nor the locals, however, were given names or individuality in the caption.⁵ Looking at these photographic images of gigantic technological contraptions and nameless West Indian migrant workers, one would have had a hard time to envision the Canal Zone as anything more than an empty, barren land that had been waiting for the arrival of the United States. Promoters of the project presented the sanitized images of Panama in order to make the Panama Canal look the part as a quintessentially American achievement. American fairgoers in 1915 visited the miniature Canal Zone in San Francisco's fairground, without having to meet those people whose lives were directly affected by the Canal construction.

In an artificial lake created for the Panama Canal submerged the town of Gorgona, located about thirty miles inland from the Atlantic Ocean. It was a symbolic erasure of the past, as Gorgona had once been an essential stopping point for American participants in the California Gold Rush. A fairly large number of Americans during the 1850s, unlike the turn-of-the-century fairgoers, had to actually step onto the land in order to travel to the California gold fields. The experience of seeing the Isthmus then drastically differed from what turn-of-the-century Americans would have seen and imagined, for the travelers expended days, sometimes weeks or months, in moving across the land strip and waiting for steamships to pick them up. In theory, crossing the Isthmus was by far the

Seaway to the Future: American Social Visions and the Construction of the Panama Canal (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009).

⁵ For Ernest Hallen's official photography, see Frederic Jennings Haskin, *The Panama Canal* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1914). All illustrations of the book were reproduced from Hallen's photographs. For a visual analysis of Hallen's Panama Canal photography, see Missal, *Seaway to the Future*, Chapter 3.

fastest way to get to California from the Atlantic seaboard. The route was operated by the U.S. Mail and the Pacific Mail Steamship Companies on each side of the North American continent. The Panama route was also arguably the safest among the three possible routes from the eastern United States to California. The overland trail crossed still-unknown territory marked by the continual threat of Indian raids. The sailing route around Cape Horn took over five months via unpredictable seas, especially near Antarctica. Supposedly shorter and more efficient than the other options, the journey across the Isthmus of Panama still required close contacts with locals. It was particularly true before 1855, when the completed Panama Railroad shortened the duration of the Isthmian crossing. The contacts could become prolonged if the steamers got delayed or lost, which was a frequent occurrence in this early stage of their Pacific-coast navigation. In fact, the usual waiting period in Panama for a steamer was closer to weeks than days in the first few years of the route's operation. The first half of the 1850s saw a continuous stream of travelers from the United States crossing the Isthmus to and from California, constantly keeping a certain number of Americans on the land. The Isthmus became an addendum of California for those opportunistic fortune-seekers from Europe and the United States during the Gold Rush era (1848-c.1860).⁶

The California Gold Rush helped construct an American Empire in Central America, in ways perhaps unforeseen by both Americans and Panamanians at the time. The U.S.-aided independence of the Republic of Panama in 1903 and the subsequent construction of the Panama Canal only marked a continuation of the affairs first set in motion during the 1850s. It was an

⁶ The experiences of gold seekers in transit have seldom been the focus of historical studies. For a few works that address the travelers' accounts on their way to California and analyze gendered and sexualized expansionist desire, see Brian Roberts, "The Greatest and Most Perverted Paradise," in Kenneth N. Owens (ed.), *Riches for All: The California Gold Rush and the World* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002); Albert L. Hurtado, *Intimate Frontiers: Sex, Gender, and Culture in Old California* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1999), Chapter 3. Latin American historian Aims McGuinness delves into the transit route in Panama during the California Gold Rush, with an emphasis on its impact on the political history of Panama and Latin America. McGuinness, *Path of Empire: Panama and the California Gold Rush* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008).

empire that was created, on the one hand, in the realm of imagination, reinforced through white American travelers' lived experience in the Isthmus. The infrastructure that made crossing of the Isthmus possible, on the other hand, was also the product of capitalist expansion of the United States—the transportation of people and goods, both necessitated and facilitated by the government-backed expansion of capital, created a *de facto* imperial presence in the Isthmus. It was, in other words, through a combined effect of the individual practices of the “imperial gaze” and corporate capital's expansion that the empire made its presence in the Isthmus.⁷

The creation of the Panama route—the establishment of the Pacific Mail Steamship Company (PMSC) and the construction of the Panama Railroad—signaled a new age of U.S. foreign investment and inter-American transport, based on much older formation of transregional commercial networks. Panama's geographic importance had already been proven by its participation in the Spanish Empire's colonial networks that connected the Pacific side of the empire to the metropole across the Atlantic since the mid-sixteenth century. The city of Panama on the Pacific and Cartagena on the Atlantic side were major seaports for the transfer of the remittances from the Manila Galleon trade, the orbit of which encompassed the Philippines, China, and the Viceroyalties of Peru and New Spain. With the independence of the Spanish American colonies, Panama's role as a crucial node in the empire dissolved; yet the dream of becoming the center of global commerce by exploiting its peculiar geographical position remained a powerful one among the region's ruling

⁷ For the concept of the “imperial gaze,” see Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 1992). “The Isthmus” spoken of in this chapter more often than not indicates the Isthmus of Panama. There were largely three Isthmian routes to cross from the Atlantic to the Pacific side of the Americas during the time of the Gold Rush: one via Mexico (Isthmus of Tehuantepec), another via Nicaragua, and lastly via Panama, which was then part of the Republic of New Granada. In some instances, the “Isthmus” in this chapter would also encompass all three candidates for trans-isthmian transit. This is in no way to disregard particular local historical developments, but rather to reflect how the mid-nineteenth century U.S. public viewed the Central American region.

class.⁸ The Gold Rush indeed transformed Panama into a major transportation hub, though not exactly in the ways the Panamanians hoped. It changed the entire direction of Panama's economy, effectively enfolding it into the flow of coast-to-coast domestic economy of the United States.⁹

The influx of Americans in the Isthmus created tension between locals and foreigners from the beginning. The U.S. conquest of northern Mexico was still fresh in the memory of many in Latin America, who suddenly found their ports and markets crowded by Anglo Americans. The actions of Anglo-American travelers themselves often laid bare the fact that the United States just wrested a third of Mexico's territory as a result of the U.S.-Mexican War. The timing of the Gold Rush could not have been more opportune for aggressive expansionists in the United States, to whom the recent military victory over Mexico presented both a vindication and inducement for more territorial ambitions. Central America, or the "Isthmus," had been a popular destination for Manifest Destiny expansionists and commercially astute statesmen even before the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, though the early interests had been mostly commercial and geopolitical.¹⁰ It was by and large a continuation of the centuries-long Euro-American dream for the "passage to India"—or equally elusive, for the "China trade."¹¹ The Mallarino-Bidlack Treaty, signed in 1846 between the Republic

⁸ McGuiness, *Path of Empire*, 20 and *passim*.

⁹ Michael L. Conniff, *Panama and the United States: The End of the Alliance*, 3rd ed. (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2012), 24.

¹⁰ For post-1848 American interests in Central America, see Amy S. Greenberg, *Manifest Manhood and the Antebellum American Empire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005). Also, there had been diplomatic concerns regarding the competition with other European powers over the Isthmus even in the early 1840s. Especially in 1843, securing U.S. interests against the presumed British influence was the main topic of the U.S. chargé d'affaires' correspondence from Colombia. See William R. Manning (ed.), *Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States: Inter-American Affairs, 1831–1860. Vol. 5* (1935), 600-603.

¹¹ This ambition was best exemplified in Thomas Jefferson's remarks on the desirability and practicality of a canal in Panama. See Thomas Jefferson to M. Le Roy De L'Academie Des Sciences, 13 November 1786; Thomas Jefferson to William Carmichael, 27 May 1788; The Project Gutenberg EBook of *Memoir, Correspondence, And Miscellanies, From The Papers Of Thomas Jefferson*, by Thomas Jefferson (<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/16782/16782-h/16782-h.htm>, accessed on 9 March 2016).

of New Granada and the United States, granted the latter the right of way for the Isthmus of Panama, in exchange for the promise of military protection in case of foreign invasion. President James K. Polk, presenting the treaty to the Senate for ratification, emphasized the long-held desire on the part of the U.S. to utilize the Isthmus transit, for the “vast advantages to our commerce which would result from such a communication, not only with the west coast of America, but with Asia and the islands of the Pacific.”¹² The contract for mail steamer services to commute to the Oregon Territory through the Isthmus was first signed in November 1847, only weeks before the discovery of gold in California. The large-scale maritime traffic that began in 1849 created a fresh and popular vision of empire in the United States, in which the Isthmus of Panama, scarcely known to ordinary Americans before the Gold Rush, loomed large.

3.1. Visualizing the Isthmus: American Travelers’ Narratives of the Transit

Before 1855, when the completed Panama Railroad shortened the length of the trip to less than four hours, crossing the Isthmus took at least several days. From 1849 to 1855, a traveler from the eastern United States would first land on the Atlantic side at the town of Chagres, the eastern terminus of the Panama route, where the Chagres river afforded them to travel by boat or canoe; the river would take them about 30 miles west to the towns of Gorgona or Cruces, depending on the seasonal rainfalls. From that point, they started a trip across the land on foot or on mule back. Various types of service work that facilitated this journey—accommodations for sleeping, eating, and transport—all depended on the labor of native Panamanians and West Indian immigrants; their presence was vital for Americans to travel in the Isthmus, which in turn became a site of interracial proximity and interaction.

¹² The American Presidency Project (<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=67954>, accessed on 10 February 2016).

After President Polk's official acknowledgement of the discovery of gold in California in 1849, a legion of gold speculators amassed in Panama, eager to get on steamships bound for San Francisco. The unexpected increase of traffic across the Isthmus briefly created a situation where a lot of Americans were frustrated by the lack of transportation, and resentful of what they imagined as stolen opportunities. It was here in Panama that General Persifor F. Smith declared that all "foreigners" should be banned from California gold mines. He and other U.S. citizens had been waiting for a PMSC steamer, only to learn that the steamship *California* was already filled with miners from Chile and Peru.¹³ A satirical cartoon published in New York in 1849, *Outline History of an Expedition to California*, provides a glimpse of the chronic traffic congestion on the Isthmus.¹⁴ The cartoon lampooned the whole "Gold Fever," depicting all gold-seeking travelers in an unflattering light and the diggings as the devil's playground. At the same time, the cartoon also described how the people who chose the Panama route continued to wait for a steamer to arrive, long after those who traveled overland or sailed around Cape Horn had returned to the eastern states (Fig. 2). While targeting the gold fever in general, the cartoon therefore represented the Panama route as a broken promise, an unrealized highway across the continent even though it had been promoted as the fastest route to the West Coast. This exaggerated portrait of the Isthmian route contained a modicum of truth in it, as a lot of forty-niners reported a severe shortage of vessels at the other end of the Isthmian route to transport them to California.¹⁵

¹³ Sucheng Chan, "A People of Exceptional Character: Ethnic Diversity, Nativism, and Racism in the California Gold Rush," *California History* 79 (2000), 58; McGuinness, *Path of Empire*, 34-35.

¹⁴ *Outline History of an Expedition to California, designed and engraved by XOX* (New York: H. Long & Bros., 1849), Beinecke Library Online Collection, Yale University.

¹⁵ See, for example, James P. Jones and William Warren Rogers, "Across the Isthmus in 1850: The Journey of Daniel A. Horn," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 41: 4 (1961), 545. Horn wrote that "many [Americans] do not get away for 8 or 10 weeks and then perhaps, sell their tickets at a sacrifice on steamers...and buy tickets on other steamers at enormous prices or go on sailing vessels with the prospect of being at sea 75 to 90 days."

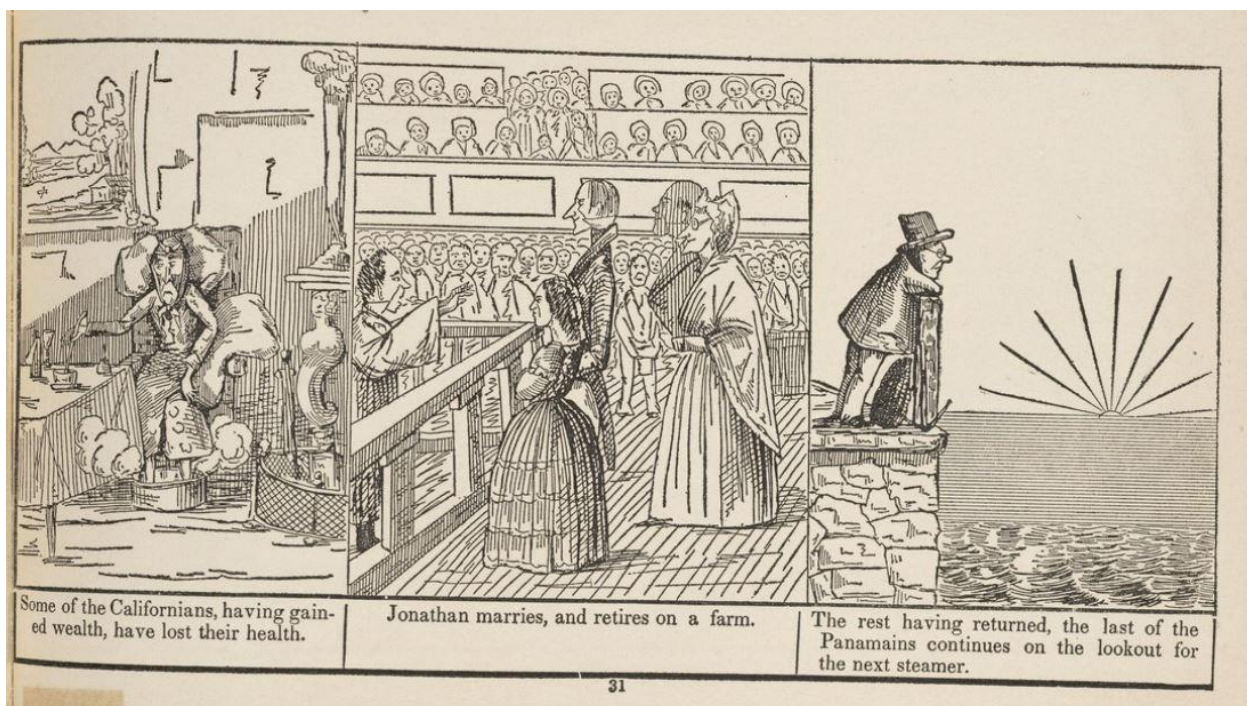
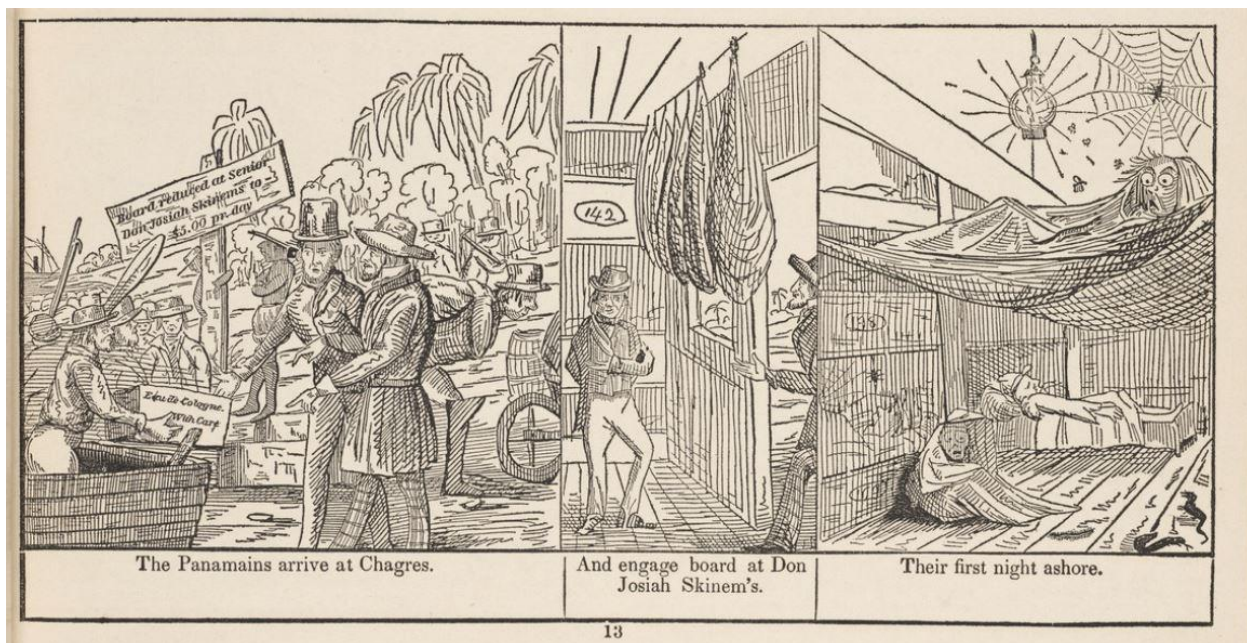


Figure 2. Outline History of an Expedition to California (1849), part (Source: Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library)



Figure 3. "Adventures of a Gold Hunter," part, Harper's Weekly 2 (1858)

The lack of prompt transfer service left many Americans in an unfamiliar and inhospitable place in close proximity to people they generally despised as racial inferiors. "Adventures of a Gold Hunter," a cartoon published in *Harper's Weekly* in July 1858, depicted a fictional character named Jolly Green, Esq. in his journey across the Isthmus of Panama (Fig. 3). When he arrived at Chagres, he was "waylaid by naked niggers, and baggage disappear[ed]," only to "[recover] baggage after paying \$50 over the actual value thereof."¹⁶ This caricature described the native Panamanians' service labor as if it were some sort of an assault upon the person served. In the cartoon, the local service workers appeared as shadow-like sketches, the only distinctive markers being their near-naked black body. This reference to locals' "assaults" on American passengers in Panama was not uncommon in

¹⁶ *Harper's Weekly* Vol. 2, 24 July 1858, 480.

actual travelers' narratives, though it was narrated with a less humorous undertone.

The trans-Isthmian journeys often required crossing the normative boundaries of gender, race, and class of middle-class white Americans. Physical contacts between natives and travelers were in part necessitated by the poor infrastructure at the port of Panama. There was no wharf at the harbor. Steamers had to anchor miles from the shore, reached only by small rowing boats, which in turn could be accessed either by wading into the water or being carried by native porters. The few white women who crossed the Isthmus during the Gold Rush often remarked in a scandalized way on their unusual (and unwelcome by their middle-class morals) proximity to non-white males. Sarah Brooks, who crossed the Isthmus in 1852 with her daughter, described what happened on the shores of Panama in an alarmingly scandalous tone:

...without a warning, I was grabbed from behind. One black arm was around my waist, another under my knees, and I was lifted up and carried straight out into the water. I wanted to scream.”¹⁷

This description almost reads like a victim's account of sexual violence, attesting to the complexities in which the Isthmus was placed as an interracial space—while the mode of transportation certainly offended the white middle-class female sensitivity, the fact that Brooks recounted the event in such a manner without worrying about the potential stigma cast against her virtue suggests that the public perception of gold-rush Panama allowed for such boundary transgressions.

In fact, white Americans treated the presence of native Panamanians and West Indian immigrants as a spectacle accompanying their short trip across the Isthmus. Crossing the Isthmus via Nicaragua, Daniel Hale Haskell confessed that his only available pastime was “watching

¹⁷ Quoted in JoAnn Levy, *They Saw the Elephant: Women in the California Gold Rush* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990), 47.

natives.”¹⁸ A young woman named Mary E. Clark who traveled to California via Panama in 1859 provided a graphic description of the scene right after the arrival of her steamer on the Atlantic side of the Isthmus: “Swarthy natives and coal-black Jamaica niggers rush on board rattling away their gibberish with a fluency that would once eclipse the Abseynian politeness of our ‘auld Irish gentleman.””¹⁹ Later she went on to depict the “picturesque groups” she encountered on the streets of Aspinwall: “gay young belles with their yellow bandannas coral necklaces and bracelets, sauntering day in their flowing flowers,” “grey-haired old ladies in calico skirts...sitting in the door of their huts,” and “staid matrons in slip-shod shoes carrying astride the hips a naked piccaninny.”²⁰ These vivid imageries of the native women of Panama, diverse in class and age, signified the transformation of the Isthmus into a visual attraction.

Sometimes the travelers’ descriptions of the native residents of the Isthmus were almost ethnographic, revealing little about the local residents and much more about the observers themselves. Quite contrary to an old adage, “seeing is believing,” it appears that believing was seeing in the case of the American travelers’ impressions of Panama’s local population, as they wrote down the things they expected to see. The information contained in their amateur ethnographic attempts more or less served as a balance sheet showing both the desirable and detestable traits of Central America and its peoples. One of the themes that constantly attracted the travelers’ gaze was the state of native religion, as part of the region’s Spanish heritage. The native population’s devout Catholicism featured significantly in the travelers’ analyses. In 1849, Mary Jane Megquier wrote in detail to her daughter at home about the religious custom of the country. She, too, expended much

¹⁸ Daniel Hale Haskell, Journal (manuscript), 1 November 1851, Edward E. Ayer Manuscript Collection, Newberry Library, Chicago, IL.

¹⁹ Mary E. Clark Journal, 24 May 1859 entry, Western Americana Collection, BRBM.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

effort in visually describing the people going to the Mass, “looking very neat and well-dressed, they have long black hair braided, or curled, in their neck, no covering on their heads, wear light muslins, and lace shawls.”²¹ But this visually attractive description accompanied the castigation against Catholic priests, who were purported to “keep the natives in complete subjection”—so much so, Megquier concluded, that native Panamanians were “but very little above the brutes.”²² These amateur ethnographic attempts in Central American travelogues showed how certain knowledge about foreign lands and people was produced and circulated. The body of thus amassed information replaced the realities of the Isthmus in U.S. culture, in a way similar to what Edward Said observed in the European studies of the “Orient.”²³

The circulation of geographic and ethnographic “knowledge,” however incomplete or incorrect it was, abounded from the beginning of the Gold Rush, especially through unofficial and private channels. Apart from the local and national newspapers from the States, white American travelers in Panama also began to publish English-language newspapers there, shortly after the beginning of the gold-rush transit in 1849. The first editor of the *Panama Star*, J. B. Bidleman, wrote in the first issue of the newspaper on February 24, 1849, that the purpose of the publication was “to relieve the tedium of our, perhaps protracted stay in this, to us strange land, surrounded by the people, institutions, and language so dissimilar to our own.”²⁴ This issue contained the proclamation

²¹ Letter from Mary Jane Megquier to Angeline Louise Megquier Gilson, 24 March 1849, reproduced in Megquier, *Apron Full of Gold: The Letters of Mary Jane Megquier from San Francisco, 1849-1856* (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 1949), ed. by Robert Glass Cleveland, 10-11.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Random House Inc., 1978). In *Orientalism*, Said confines the process of such transformation of “idea” into “reality” to the academic realm, stressing the role of “authority” as the key in the creation of an amorphous “Orient.” Yet his later discussion of “culture” indicates how the scope of his original argument can be broadened. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Knopf, 1993), xi-xii.

²⁴ “To our American Friends in Panama,” *The Panama Star*, 24 February 1849, 1. The *Star* was published weekly, though its editors changed quite often as they were usually recruited from sojourners waiting for a steamer for San Francisco.

of Gen. Smith barring non-citizens from the California's mines, and implicitly, from the steamers bound for California. News of ship arrivals, stories of returnees from California, and the latest account of crossing the Isthmus filled the tabloid. An unnamed contributor of the latter genre confessed to being "agreeably disappointed" by his experience, because he "had pictured to [him]self a much more terrible affair."²⁵ This confession of pleasant disappointment perhaps indicates that the Isthmian crossing was as a rule expected to be horrible, as a sort of fictional obstacle for American "adventurers" to overcome to reach the gold mines, as many of the contemporary gold-rush travelers fashioned themselves to be.

The *Panama Star* also urged fellow travelers to write about their own experiences to those back home, "to be circulated among other friends coming to the Isthmus."²⁶ The information contained in early forty-niners' journals and letters appears to have spread through such private circulation, as well as through the rumors, newspapers, and the "guidebooks for gold regions," a new print genre created immediately following the rush. California-bound Americans often compared their experience with what they had already heard or read. Augustus Campbell, a doctor from New York, summarily described the discrepancy between popular descriptions and his own experience. "How very different are the sensations experienced by different persons while looking at the same objects," he mused; he had read several descriptions of the Chagres River voyage, all of which made him think of "a sort of Spanish inquisition through which if a person passed he barely escaped with his life."²⁷ Contrary to what he had read, he found himself enjoying the warm climate and the scenery. The proliferation of such conflicting accounts of experiences in the Isthmus,

²⁵ "Crossing the Isthmus," *The Panama Star*, 24 February 1849, 3.

²⁶ "The Isthmus Route," *The Panama Star*, 18 August 1849.

²⁷ Augustus Campbell letter to his mother, 7 April 1849, reproduced in "Crossing the Isthmus of Panama, 1849: The Letters of Dr. Augustus Campbell," ed. by Colin Campbell, *California History* 78:4 (Winter 1999/2000), 232.

published or privately circulated *en masse*, must have created a sense of familiarity toward the region, if not knowledge *per se*. A popular image of the Isthmus emerged as *foreign, exotic, different*, yet *within reach*, easily visible to the American public.

Making the Isthmus a potential destination for U.S. expansion was a two-fold project. First, the land needed to be seen as desirable, and then an American take-over needed to occur and be justified. The desirability of the Isthmus had been written on the proverbial map for generations of U.S. statesmen—the Gold Rush only confirmed the long-held belief of many that the Central American transit route was vital for U.S. commercial interests. Yet American gold seekers crossing the Isthmus found another way to envision Central America as desirable. Natural beauty and resources of the land rarely escaped the notice of the travelers. They frequently measured the area's agricultural capacity, most times without supporting evidence. Augustus Campbell, for example, compared the land with what he saw back at home: "The land, from the appearance of the vegetation, must be very good...some patches of Indian corn...looked much better than any I ever saw at home."²⁸ Moses J. Barnard, a former Texas Ranger back from the recent war with Mexico, arrived in the city of Panama in 1850 and assessed the fertility of the land. Based only on the tropical fruits he saw on the markets, he went on to note what kind of other crops would be cultivable on the "extremely fertile" soil of the Isthmus: "Oranges and Limes, cocoanuts, and other tropical fruits produced in abundance. The land well calculated for raising cotton, rice, indigo."²⁹ The possible crops he mentioned were mostly plantation crops grown in the southern United States. Although Barnard did not explicitly mention the expansion of plantation slavery, the link was there. The cognitive link also manifested itself when other Yankee travelers, consciously or not, lumped Central

²⁸ Augustus Campbell to his mother, 7 April 1849, in Campbell, "The Letters of Dr. Augustus Campbell," 232.

²⁹ Moses J. Barnard, *Voyage to California* (manuscript journal), [page unnumbered], BRBM.

American natives together with black slaves of the U.S. South, frequently using the word “nigger” in referring to local residents of Panama.

In fact, the justification for potential conquest usually came from popular racial discourses and Enlightenment rhetoric of civilization and progress. Anglo Americans in the Isthmus paid particular attention to the racial composition of the native population. They often used familiar racial categories such as “negro” and “Indian” to describe the local residents of the Isthmus, although there was still another distinction to be made based on nationality, which seemed to determine the degree of “civilization” people lived in. Daniel A. Horn, a southerner who crossed the Isthmus via Panama in 1850, commented upon the native population’s racial characteristics, stating that their appearance was “not as respectable as *our* Negroes.”³⁰ This short remark categorized the natives of Panama into the same racial group as black Americans—specifically, those enslaved in his native state of South Carolina—and yet distinguished them by citing less “respectable” traits of Central Americans such as dress, abode, and manners. It bespoke a developmentalist mindset, which presupposed a linear progress of humanity from the state of savagery to civilization—each state defined according to the historical development of Western Europe.

Most Americans drew attention to the visual evidence that attested to the “barbarity” of native Panamanians, especially their nakedness. “The citizens of Chagres are a very rude, innocent, and uncultivated people...One American lady would absolutely wear more clothes than would supply the women of the whole town,” noted the *Panama Star* in 1849.³¹ An unidentified gold seeker named John, in a letter to his aunt, described the children of the Isthmus as “perfectly naked, not a rag till eight, ten or twelve years old.” He then added a slight distinction between “the natives of the

³⁰ Jones and Rogers, “Across the Isthmus in 1850: The Journey of Daniel A. Horn,” 535 (emphasis mine).

³¹ “Chagres—The Peculiarities of its Inhabitants,” *The Panama Star*, 10 November 1849, 3.

Isthmus who live in small bamboo houses” and those who “associate and form a village or town,” who “dress more”—the distinction, however, failed to prevent him from dismissing the whole population as “but a half barbarous people, indolent and ignorant.”³² This wholesale dismissal was partially because ‘John’ viewed Panama not as a society with class and racial distinctions of its own, but rather as a place occupied by a body of “mixed-race” people: “They are a mixture of Indian and African, and partake of the habits of each race,” he disparaged.³³

Intermingling of different races on the Isthmus was a constant source of both vexation and fascination for the travelers from the United States. The presence of white Americans added to the “mix,” the reactions to interracial commingling became further complicated. Some gold-rush travelers hinted at the sexual connotation of interracial encounters on the road. When Thomas Ely Buchanan wrote his wife a letter from Panama to assure her of his safe arrival on land in 1853, he jokingly informed her that the first night he arrived on the Isthmus, he slept “at Gorgona in an Indian’s Bed, not with his wife, however.”³⁴ Whether he was telling the truth or not, the fact that he felt the need to add that last bit in a letter to his wife suggests that the practice of white travelers “sleeping with Indians” was commonplace enough. Latin America in general, and Central America in particular, was often depicted as a female body sexually desirable and readily available to white male desire from the north.³⁵ Accordingly, the female population of Central America attracted far more attention from both male and female American travelers than their male counterparts, and was sometimes blamed for the racial amalgamation in the Isthmus. John Mott-Smith haughtily observed

³² "John," letter to "my dear aunt," 12 April 1850, mssHM 73059, HL.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Thomas Ely Buchanan to his wife, 29 April 1853, Thomas Ely Buchanan Letters, Western Americana Collection, BRBM.

³⁵ For a more detailed discussion of the feminized, sexualized image of Central America, see Greenberg, *Manifest Manhood*, Chapter 2 “An American Central America: Boosters, Travelers, and the Persistence of Manifest Destiny.”

in Panama that a “negro woman does not claim any father for the children, but she will boast with pride if she has a white child.”³⁶ The gold-rush traffic certainly attracted other business-minded groups than prospective miners, including prostitutes catering to sexual desire of the male travelers. Mary Jane Seacole, famed Jamaican hotelier in Panama during the time of the Gold Rush, hinted at the presence of a troop of prostitutes who followed travelers around along the trans-Isthmian journey. The Jamaican woman was consistent in her contempt toward the gold seekers traveling through Panama, yet she found their “female companions” even “coarser,” stating “they travelled backwards and forwards across the Isthmus, hanging on to the foolish gold-finders.”³⁷

The racial mixture of local populations was one of the things most frequently noted by the American travelers. Sometimes, observation led white Americans to an awareness that they were in a foreign land with a completely different racial caste system. “The town [of Chagres] is a native village of some 200 houses,” Henry Carter, a forty-niner from Pennsylvania in his mid-forties, recorded in his journal in 1849, “by native is meant that mixture of negro Indian-Spanish [*sic*] which constitutes the larger portion of people of New Grenada [*sic*].”³⁸ Despite this blanket categorization of New Granadians as a “mixed race” people, Carter went a bit farther than most of his compatriots in describing the system of racial differentiation in Central America at the time: “[the people here] are classed as negro, sambo, a cross of Negro & Indian, and the Quartroon[,] a mixture of the latter with the Spaniards.”³⁹ The words *sambo* or *quartroon* [quadroon] would also appear in American media throughout the nineteenth century, sometimes correctly referring to a person of the Spanish-

³⁶ Mott-Smith, “Journal of the Adventures,” 105.

³⁷ Seacole, *Wonderful adventures*, 40.

³⁸ Typescript of Henry Carter, *Voyage to California by way of Panama*, 1849-1850, 2, BRBM.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

American multiracial origin but more often as a racial slur against black people.⁴⁰ Clearly, Carter gained from his traveling experience a piece of new knowledge about the world and eager to express it in writing, when he described specific definitions of these racial terms. Thus-acquired knowledge was superficial at best; Carter was not entirely accurate in explaining the meanings of the words, since *quartroun*, as the prefix suggested, meant a person with a quarter of black blood.

Still more significant was how American gold seekers processed and utilized the newly acquired knowledge. Some considered the racial composition of the country as a proof that it was beyond redemption. “Panama is one of the most dirty, nasty and heart sickening places that ever fell to the lot of man to step in,” uttered one disgruntled traveler named A. Thorndike in 1851. He went as far as to question why God would “let such a place exist.”⁴¹ For some of the critics, even the boom brought by the gold-rush traffic was not sufficient to alter the surefire decline of the region. “It is possible that the transit of Americans through here may arrest the decay of this city,” conceded Henry Carter. Carter, however, was more of the opinion that “nothing short of complete transplantation of people will do.”⁴² Though he did not specify which people would transplant the natives in the Isthmus, his next remark probably pointed to the direction his thoughts were going: “They certainly must open their eyes when the first train comes in on the new railway,” he warned. How would Americans coming on board the trains be able to replace those who then occupied the Isthmus? Carter’s concluding commentary sounded ominously like an argument for genocide: “I

⁴⁰ For a historical explanation of the word *sambo*, see J. Michael Martinez, *A Long Dark Night: Race in America from Jim Crow to World War II* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 199-200; for a full-scale analysis of an American popular cultural stereotype of “sambo” that proliferated in minstrel shows since the late-nineteenth century, see Joseph Boskin, *Sambo: The Rise and Demise of an American Jester* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986). See also “quadroon, n. and adj.” and “sambo, n.1”, OED Online, Oxford University Press, June 2017 (<http://www.oed.com/>, accessed on 17 September 2017).

⁴¹ A. Thorndike to Captain [I?] Snow, 13 July 1851, Beinecke Gold Rush Collection, Folder 28, BRBM.

⁴² Carter, “Voyage to California,” 12-13.

sometimes think...that lives useless to others and derogatory to themselves might be *properly and profitably terminated*.”⁴³ But to whose profit?

3.2. Traffic and Transportation as the Civilizing Influence

The Isthmus during the Gold Rush became a curious sort of limbo where Californians (the term used in the 1850s to designate those Americans from the eastern states who went to or came back from California) asserted their sense of entitlement to the newly conquered land on the Pacific Coast, and asserted it in the foreign land in-between U.S. territory. In 1849, American passengers frequently held protest meetings in Panama, because the promised steamers on the Pacific side of the Isthmus had failed to arrive on time and in sufficient quantity. Though the meetings invariably targeted the greed and incompetence of steamship agents and ship captains, also evident was the desire to appropriate, to “Americanize,” the locale itself. The emphasis was on how “different” the general conduct of officials was from that in the United States. Implicit in this criticism was the notion that the difference was unacceptable. Sometimes the travelers went a step further and entertained the notion that they might have the right to conquer or govern the Isthmus. Frequent employment of the proprietary rhetoric and the actions that matched such rhetoric bespoke underlying continuity from Manifest Destiny expansionism of the previous decade. And yet it was more. With the construction of the railroad across the Isthmus and recurring schemes of canal building, Central American soil also provided an ideal ground for the making of a “New Empire.”⁴⁴

The gold-rush transit embodied a combination of territorial conquest and capitalist expansion.

⁴³ Carter, “Voyage to California,” 13 (emphasis mine).

⁴⁴ I use the term “New Empire” here in a sense Walter LaFeber uses it in his classic study of U.S. expansionism, *The New Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansion, 1860-1898* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1963), even though the case of the Isthmus blurs the distinction between the “old” and “new” empires.

The consolidated presence of U.S. corporate interests in the form of the railroad, as well as constant traffic of American passengers, differentiated the Isthmus from other Latin American locales targeted by U.S. expansionism. The gold-rush transportation business was supposed to bring “progress” and “civilization” to the Isthmus. The San Francisco newspaper *Daily Alta California* proclaimed as much in 1850: “The city of Panama, and the population of the Isthmus, are now in a way of prosperity, caused by the prodigious emigration towards California, and by the liberality of the laws accorded to the Isthmus.”⁴⁵ Whereas the prospect for a canal either in Nicaragua or Panama continued to attract enthusiastic European and North American capitalists, the railroad crossing the Isthmus of Panama seemed to briefly triumph over elusive canal projects during the 1850s. The construction work for the Panama Railroad began in 1850, and by the summer of 1851, trains were moving people along for a part of their trans-isthmian journey.

Rhetoric of “enterprise” and “energy” was particularly salient in the making of an imagined American empire in Central America, since the railroad construction through the Isthmus of Panama was to be the ultimate proof of the supposed Yankee enterprise. “What will the swarthy natives of this peaceful Isthmus say,” asked the *Panama Star* in 1849, “when they see him coming—puffing, steaming, whizzing, and with lightning speed lifting his burthen at Lemon Bay and laying it down at Panama in two or three short hours?”⁴⁶ The “he” referred to in that question was the Panama Railroad, which had existed only in concept at the time of this editorial. “In a country going to staves, like this Isthmus,” the *Panama Star* continued, it “require[d] a mighty effort to stay the progress of decay, and reverse the order of things.”⁴⁷ With the railroad construction, the “mighty

⁴⁵ *Daily Alta California*, 25 April 1850.

⁴⁶ “The Iron Horse,” *The Panama Star*, 4 August 1849.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

effort” of bringing civilization to the Isthmus fell into the hands of Americans, whose influence had already removed “cobwebs...from the old, dilapidating town of Panama.”⁴⁸ The railroad company’s own promotional pamphlet published in 1867 concurred, but also made it clear that the railroad was only the beginning. The Panama Railroad, then going into the second decade of its operation, now presented its passengers a safe view of “a swamp and jungle, the dense impenetrable forest” from the train windows. The remaining question was whether “through North American energy and industry, any portion of [the jungles and forests] should be reclaimed and brought under cultivation.”⁴⁹ The railroad, therefore, was viewed both an embodiment of American-made progress and an opening that could usher in more civilizing projects from North America.

The Panama Railroad construction also created a separate avenue for immigrants to come into the Isthmus for purposes other than just passing through. There had been earlier attempts to recruit a labor force from the United States. The California fever, and the relatively higher cost of the Isthmian route to California, seemed to have helped the recruiting attempts. In 1849, a young man named J. E. Clark from St. Louis saw an advertisement seeking “one thousand able-bodied” railroad workers, with a paid ticket to the Isthmus and a promise of the opportunity to go on to California. “Deeming that a golden opportunity in a double sense,” Clark departed for Panama.⁵⁰ Clark’s account presented conflicting themes concerning the experience. On one hand, he denounced the general working condition on the railway construction, poor food and the lack of clothing, where scorching sun and an endemic disease called “Isthmus fever” took a high death toll

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Pacific Mail Steamship Company (PMSC), *A Sketch of the Route to California, China and Japan, via the Isthmus of Panama* (New York: A. Roman & Co., 1867), 62.

⁵⁰ J. E. Clark, “From St. Louis to San Francisco in 1850,” *The Historical Society of Southern California [Annual Publication]* I, No. 5 (1890); reprinted with commentary by Mary C. Greenfield, in *Southern California Quarterly* 95: 4 (2013), 383.

among the railroad workers. On the other hand, Clark also followed the standards of American travel narratives in Central America, describing its beautiful scenery or the exotic animals that workers guarded as “pets.” The American railroad workers frequently camped with travelers coming to and from California, enjoying their tales of “ladies crossing the mountains astride a lazy donkey” or “the voyage in a champan with a black, naked pilot and bowsman,” which Clark found “ridiculously amusing” and “much to the few pleasures” to be had on the work site.⁵¹ In the end, however, the experiment with white American labor failed in Panama. Many, including Clark, attributed the failure to the climate that debilitated the white people. “Out of one thousand men who left the eastern shores under the one-hundred-day contract, nine-tenth left their bones on the Isthmus,” asserted Clark.⁵² The actual construction work depended largely on West Indian migrant workers, mostly from Jamaica and Barbados, as would the Panama Canal construction a half-century later.⁵³

The completion of the trans-isthmian railway in 1855 was hailed as a triumph of American enterprise and technology over nature. The narratives surrounding the Panama Railroad often portrayed the Isthmus as a barren land with nothing to offer. “The Isthmus did not supply a single resource necessary for the undertaking,” an author employed by the railroad company wrote.⁵⁴ The United States provided the capital and “enterprise,” whereas laborer came from “distant parts of the world,” from Jamaica, from India and China, and from Ireland.⁵⁵ At the same time, the conditions of

⁵¹ Clark, “From St. Louis to San Francisco in 1850,” 388.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 390.

⁵³ For the immigrant workers from the West Indies in the construction of the Panama Railroad (and later the Canal), see Velma Newton, *The Silver Men: West Indian Labour Migration to Panama, 1850-1914* (Kingston, Jamaica: Institute of Social and Economic Research, University of the West Indies, 1984).

⁵⁴ Robert Tome, *Panama in 1855* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1855), 112.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 112-113.

the railroad construction apparently illustrated unsuitability of the Isthmian climes. Among the multi-ethnic labor force, only “the African” and “the Cooly [East Indian]” laborers proved efficient.⁵⁶

The construction of the railroad provided a sight of non-white railroad workers in the tropical climate as a spectacle to entertain the passengers during their four-hour ride. Upon the completion of the railroad in 1855, the Panama Railroad Company organized a promotional excursion for investors in New York. The account of the visit described the scenery on the road alongside the rails, including the non-white workers who worked on the rail:

We caught a rapid glance of the Carthaginian native laborers of the yellow mixed blood of the Spaniard, Negro, and Indian, cutting down with their machetas the wild banana...The sturdy Jamaica Negroes in throngs were plying the pick & the spade, in company with the turbaned, lithe-limbed Coolies, who were lending an indolent hand, and an occasional Chinese, who might be seen loitering lazily by the roadside.⁵⁷

The dismissal of the Isthmus as inhospitable and undesirable region is all the more visible after the completion of the Panama Railroad.⁵⁸ Post-railroad travelogues displayed a far more detached and uninterested tone, and often did away with any detailed description of Panamanian society. In November 1859, Phebe Hayes Lincoln simply wrote that “the scenery is interesting, but not pleasant.”⁵⁹ Albert Lilienthal, a Cincinnati-born Jew who went to San Francisco in the spring of 1878, wrote about the railroad construction instead of the land itself while in Panama, surmising how the

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 119-121.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 80-81.

⁵⁸ Historian Wolfgang Schivelbusch has articulated that the railroad could transform the visual experience of travelers and their perception of space in *The Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986); for a similar argument applied to the case of the Panama Railroad, see McGuinness, *Path of Empire*, 123-24.

⁵⁹ Quoted in Edgar C. Smith, “They Went by way of Panama,” *The California Territorial Quarterly* 69 (2007), 11; William Simpson Lincoln, *Our Kin: Descendants of Joshua Lincoln and Elizabeth Seekins Lincoln of Taunton, Massachusetts* (Olympia, Wash.: The Olympia news, 1942), 27.

railroad transformed the land into a highway for the commercial world.⁶⁰

Whereas North American travelers increasingly traversed the Isthmus quickly, without prolonged contact with either the non-white local residents or the tropical climate, the Isthmus nonetheless appeared more “American” with the presence of the railroad built and maintained by U.S. capital. The more railroad officials and U.S. promoters lionized the “Americanizing” aspect of the venture, the more cause for concern it became for the government of New Granada. The ambivalence of the region’s sovereign government toward the American-built railroad crossing their territory became evident in 1865, when the Republic of Colombia debated the ratification of a new treaty with the Panama Railroad. José Leonardo Calancha, the then-president of the state of Panama, voiced his worry over U.S. influence: “...the North American influence will be so much increased that the native element will in the end be uprooted and exterminated, leaving the Isthmus entirely under the control of the people of the United States of North America.” An author employed by the Panama Railroad criticized Calancha’s short-sightedness, sarcastically exclaiming, “what a horrible thing it would be if Panama should become ‘North-Americanized.’”⁶¹

Coinciding with the railroad construction, an administrative reform of the Republic of New Granada in 1855 separated Panama from the central government. Four former provinces of the republic, Arzuero, Chiriqui, Panama, and Veraguas, now formed a state of Panama. James B. Bowlin, U.S. minister resident in Colombia, wrote to William L. Marcy in 1855 regarding this territorial reorganization. The new state of Panama, in Bowlin’s opinion, “Geographically more properly pertain[ed] to North, than South America.” Bowlin added that, with the possibility of a future construction of a ship canal, the Isthmus of Panama became too important for Americans to let go

⁶⁰ Albert Lilienthal, “From Ocean to Ocean in 1878,” reproduced in *Western States Jewish Historical Quarterly* 14 (1982), 281.

⁶¹ PMSC, *A Sketch of the Route to California, China, and Japan*, 61-62.

of. His observation foresaw a period of more direct U.S. influence: “It is true the character of the population holds out no bright prospect at the present; but [Panama] possesses a Territory and occupies a position more likely to invite *a better population*, than any other portion of the Republic [of New Granada], and is therefore, likely, sooner to eradicate the evil common to the whole Country.”⁶² Thus Bowlin echoed the popular sentiments among Anglo-American gold-rush travelers that the influx of Americans could indeed “civilize” the Isthmus. For some Americans passing through, the doubtless certainty of their transformative power even provided a legitimate ground for staging a revolt against the sitting government.

3.3. Imagining Wars of Conquest and the Blurred Boundaries of Empire

Commercial and industrial ventures went only so far as general evidence of the “enterprise” of the “Anglo-American race.”⁶³ U.S. gold seekers’ individual narratives of crossing the Isthmus often evoked the desire of conquest. Even in a day-to-day setting, as Anglo Americans merely passed through Panama on their way to California, they envisioned taking over the country by force. The region was often imagined as defenseless and requiring little force to take over. Isaac Read, who visited Chagres on his way to California in November 1851, expressed such a sentiment with a sense of racial superiority. Prior to his arrival at the Isthmian port-town, Read had already written about his discomfort regarding the close contact with non-white people on board. He complained about the steamer *Ohio*’s meals being “well-seasoned with dirt and Negro sweat.” Considering that U.S. merchant vessels’ waiter or cook positions were customarily occupied by black Americans in the first

⁶² Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence*, 700-701 (emphasis mine).

⁶³ On U.S. imperialism predicated upon the notion of the “Anglo-Saxon” or “Anglo-American” race, see Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981); see also Paul A. Kramer, “Empires, Exceptions, and Anglo-Saxons: Race and Rule between the British and U.S. Empires, 1880-1910,” *The Journal of American History* 88: 4 (2002).

half of the nineteenth century, the remark was an off-handed critique against the amenities and services on board the steamships, coupled with commonplace racial disdain. His understanding of racial superiority was further confirmed when he landed at Chagres on November 20. Here he encountered an imagined dichotomy of civilization and savagery, even though his journey was impossible without the assistance of local natives. The scoffing attitude continued throughout his journey, until he reached the village of Gatun, where he observed “miserable huts” and inferior forms of entertainment available there. As if in afterthought, he commented upon the potential defense capacity of the natives against an imaginary attack from Americans: “Here also is a guard house with a few native soldiers in it. Four well-armed Yankees would drive 50 of them.”⁶⁴

Military prowess, or rather the lack thereof in the people of Latin America, was a popular theme for observation among American men crossing the Isthmian soil. Often remarked was Panama’s once-glorious history as Spain’s colony and the contrast it provided to the currently neglected towns in ruins, especially the old decaying fortresses. Travelers entering the town of Chagres often commented on Fort San Lorenzo, without actually naming it, which had been established in the late 1500s but abandoned as a military fort at least a century prior to their visits. It was one of the few historic tourist sites available in Chagres. Many Yankee travelers visited the fort, if only to pass time in between traveling arrangements. Their impressions of the fort were invariably negative. P. V. Fox, who found Chagres to be “a small place with nothing of interest,” only made note of “an old fort on the east side of the river in a state of decay.”⁶⁵ Augustus Campbell, who told his mother that he “enjoyed [his] visit to it very much,” still made disparaging remarks: “The

⁶⁴ George Willis Read, “The Chagres River Route to California in 1851,” *California Historical Society Quarterly* 8: 1 (1929), 11. This kind of comparison of martial skills and ability can often be found in other gold seekers’ accounts passing through other parts of Latin America, even from those rounding Cape Horn.

⁶⁵ P. V. Fox, *Voyage to California by way of Panama* (manuscript journal), Western Americana Collection, BRBM.

carriages of the cannons are all rotted down, and the whole looks as if time had laid his heavy hand upon it.”⁶⁶ Possibly the ruined state of the fort was the exact point of its tourist appeal.

The interests in the Isthmus shown by American gold-seekers coincided with actual filibustering expeditions carried out in the Caribbean and Central America. Even before William Walker briefly seized control of Nicaragua in the fall of 1855, California-bound Americans often expressed sympathy toward filibusters or contemplated the possibility of military aggression. Moses J. Barnard, a veteran of the U.S.-Mexican War, described in his reminiscences how he had attempted to participate in a “revolution” while in transit to California in 1851.⁶⁷ The “revolution,” according to Barnard, appeared to have been a small-scale conspiracy, aided by a British sea captain who promised a shipment of weaponry. Barnard was recruited to take charge of the midnight raid on the fortress, which had been the symbol of Panamanian military ineptitude for many Yankee travelers; the conspirators were to simultaneously seize the houses of the civil authorities by force. They then planned to proclaim a “Republic of Colombia,” its government to be “organized of a well-regulated constitution formed by Spanish, French, and Americans.” The conspirators allegedly included many influential men in Panama, such as an ex-general under Simon Bolivar’s command, a doctor “well known to the American whites,” and a former senator.

Although there is little record substantiating the existence of this particular unrealized conspiracy, Barnard’s brief summary of the scheme resonated with what Thomas M. Foote, then U.S. Chargé d’Affaires at Bogotá, described in his diplomatic dispatch to Washington, D.C., in April 1850. In a letter to Secretary of State John Clayton, Foote reported a plot to “form a new Republic that shall embrace the State of Nicaragua and Costa Rica in Central America, the Province of

⁶⁶ Campbell, “The Letters of Dr. Augustus Campbell,” 230.

⁶⁷ Barnard, *Voyage to California*, [page unnumbered], BRBM.

Isthmus, and all that portion of New Granada lying west of the Magdalena river...with the seat of government at Panamá.”⁶⁸ Foote had reason to believe that many “gentlemen of the highest consideration” actively supported this plan. According to Foote, the Gold Rush of California had created such an atmosphere in Panama as to make it easier to pursue an independent course of action. Foote noted that:

The Northwestern portion of the Republic, especially the Province of Panamá has received a new impulse in consequence of the unprecedented emigration to California and the attention that has been given to the Isthmus as a great route of commerce. Vague, but magnificent ideas of future prosperity and grandeur float in the minds of the people of that quarter, and they imagine that, if they could constitute themselves the independent State, all these ideas would be promptly realised.⁶⁹

While Foote attempted to attribute the political instability in Central America to racial and regional characteristics of the “Hispano-American race,” foreign elements nevertheless played a crucial role in conceiving and executing plans of revolts. Just as William Walker exploited political factions in Nicaragua for his own ascendancy to power, the unstable political affairs of the Republic of New Granada stimulated American travelers’ military ambitions in Panama. The justification given by Barnard for rebelling against the central government of New Granada was similar to those used to justify the “revolution” of Texas a decade earlier. He argued that Panama was “isolated from the parent government and no care is taken of her with the exception of demanding the tax.” Barnard, a known veteran of the recent war, was approached by the conspirators and offered a colonel’s commission during his waiting period for the steamer *Columbus*. He and his friend, a Mr. Hollister, initiated a negotiation with a British captain of the ship *John Brewer*, “an Indiaman from London,” for

⁶⁸ Thomas M. Foote to John M. Clayton, 12 April 1850; quoted in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence*, 658-60.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

a cargo of arms. The captain promised to Barnard “200 muskets, 100 sabres, 4,000 rounds ball cartridge.”⁷⁰ However, the night before the execution of their secret plan, the British captain informed them that the British Consul got wind of the conspiracy, had alerted the authorities, prohibiting the captain from supplying the conspirators. Without arms, they did not attempt to proceed further. As if nothing had happened, Barnard embarked on the next steamer for the land of gold. Still, he did not leave without a parting shot:

[T]he time is not distant when a voice will go forth and be heard from the Golden shores of California to frozen regions of Cape Horn, a voice of Conquest... Let us throw the robe of civilization over this benighted people, give them happy education, mechanic arts, political regeneration—let the land burst forth with the honest toil of the farmer, let a Great Republic rear its head a child of purity, instantly starting into manhood... A Republic free for all.⁷¹

Though Barnard’s local “revolution” turned out to be not much of an invasion or a rebellion, the government of New Granada remained vigilant regarding the possibility of U.S.-aided rebellion in Panama. In June 1852, Yelberton P. King, U.S. Chargé d’Affaires, wrote to U.S. Secretary of State Daniel Webster that the Secretary for Foreign Affairs of New Granada had inquired about “the character and destination of certain troops which recently crossed the Isthmus.”⁷² Despite not having previously known about the movement of troops, King assured the Colombians that the troops were headed to California for Indian wars. The uneasiness could partly be explained by continued violence perpetrated by U.S. nationals, both by bandits and by the “Isthmus Guard” led

⁷⁰ On June 13, 1851, British barque *John Brewer*, Captain Brown, from London, England, arrived in San Francisco via Panama, having stopped at El Realejo, Nicaragua and Astapha [Ixtapa], Mexico. It had cargo of “Mustard, felt, blankets, rum, preserved meats, nails, ironmongery, trunks, bricks, lime juice, powder and assorted goods.” *Daily Alta California*, 14 June 1851.

⁷¹ Barnard, *Voyage to California*, [page unnumbered], BRBM.

⁷² Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence*, 675-676.

by Randolph “Ran” Runnels from Texas, another veteran of the U.S.-Mexican War.⁷³

Ran Runnels formed the Isthmus Guard in 1854 to enforce private justice on the Isthmus of Panama. The Panama Railroad Company employed Runnels for policing the railroad against highway robberies.⁷⁴ The California press at the time framed his work as a selfless act to insure people’s safety: “The energetic expressman, Ran Runnels, had established a guard of men along the mule route for the protection of person and property,” reported the *Daily Alta California*, adding that “a number of suspicious individuals” had already been arrested.⁷⁵ It is unclear whether Runnels’ “arrests” were legal, or his operation was sanctioned at all by the local authorities. Contemporary historian Hubert Howe Bancroft implied that Runnels’ work was the result of a failure of the Panamanian authorities to curb crimes on the Isthmus and asserted the governor of Panama “unhesitatingly acquiesced in the arrangement,” praising Runnels’s efficiency and orderliness—“without scandal or noise, he captured one by one the banditti that infested the roads.”⁷⁶ The Isthmus Guard, much like the San Francisco’s Vigilance Committees, was a self-serving brand of frontier justice, even going so far as to act as police forces within the borders of a foreign country, in clear violation of popular sovereignty. Runnels was one of many private citizens of the United States

⁷³ Even though many American travelers attempted to point fingers at the natives for highway robbery, there is also some circumstantial evidence that some of the prospective or disillusioned Californian miners turned bandits on the road. For one, *The Derienni: or, Land Pirates of Isthmus* (New Orleans: A. R. Orton, 1853) is a contemporary, largely fictional, account of a famous bandit gang called “Derienni,” the chief of which is described as a “full-blooded Yankee.” While it is possible that the fiction with Yankee bandits as protagonists was also the result of a cultural assumption that only American men can be portrayed with virile characters, this description of a “Yankee pirate” on the Isthmus provides an interesting contrast to the cultural invention of banditry primarily as the crimes of Mexicans and Indians in California gold fields. For Ran Runnels and his “Isthmus Guard,” see Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of Central America, Vol. III: 1801-1887* (San Francisco, 1887), 518-19.

⁷⁴ Tome, *Panama in 1855*, 122-123.

⁷⁵ “From Panama,” *Daily Alta California*, 1 September 1854.

⁷⁶ Bancroft, *History of Central America III*, 519 n38.

who carried out a work of empire-building while in pursuit of individual gains and grandeur.⁷⁷ These were non-state agents of empire, like the mid-century filibusters who set out to invade foreign countries with which the government of the United States was not officially at war. Though the plot to overthrow the Colombian government and to establish a separate republic in Panama did not come to fruition until 1903, the constant friction caused by concentrated foreign population that was presumptive enough to enforce their own laws sometimes escalated into armed skirmishes between locals and travelers.

3.4. Seeing and Being Seen: Local Understandings of the Gold-Rush Transit

However much transient Americans wanted Central American soil to be a convenient extension of U.S. territory or a barren land just waiting to be conquered, the region's diverse and active population defied an easy categorization into a wilderness. As the travelers expressed their disdain and superior attitudes toward the natives, some of them also recognized that the act of seeing and judging was not solely theirs in the Isthmus. John Mott-Smith noted a parallel between his own action at home and the natives' attitude toward him: "I have often been amused with witnessing the arrivals and movements of the German and Irish emigrants on our shores—and now I was myself become the source of amusements. We made odd emigrants—nor were we a whit behind in strangeness and oddities those I had laughed at so often."⁷⁸ Mary Jane Megquier complained that her race and gender made her a sort of "curiosity" to the natives on the road: "a white lady was such a rare sight they were coming in to see me until we found we could get no

⁷⁷ Ran Runnels was later appointed U.S. Consul to San Juan del Sur, Nicaragua, after William Walker had been ousted from the country. The notice of this appointment can be found in *Panama Star & Herald*, 19 April 1859.

⁷⁸ Mott-Smith, "Journal of the Adventures," 98.

sleep.”⁷⁹ Mary Ballou recounted a similarly unsettling experience of *being seen* in 1851, describing a night during her journey, “The monkies [*sic*] were howling, the Nighthawks were singing, the Natives were watching.”⁸⁰ “The natives were astonished,” A. C. Joseph Wilson, a West Virginian man in his 20s, noted on his way to California via Nicaragua in June 1850, “they crowded the streets as if we were a parcel of Monkeys or something else.”⁸¹ That these white Americans were so discomfited by being a spectacle for the natives reveals the power that resided in the act of seeing. While the Anglo-American travelers gazed the natives, collecting evidence of presumed racial inferiority and affirming imperial destiny of the Anglo-American race, local residents of the Isthmus gazed back, attempting to interpret and exploit the massive traffic of foreigners. The realities on the road, the necessity to interact with and depend on locals in order to successfully travel, created a fissure in Anglo-American assertions of power over the Isthmus.

Perhaps emblematic of this unsettled power relationship was a lithographic painting entitled “Crossing the Isthmus,” drawn by a British artist named Francis “Frank” S. Marryat (Fig. 4). Marryat, son of famed British naval officer and writer Frederick Marryat, first crossed the Isthmus of Panama in April 1850 on his way from England to California. He compiled his impressions on the road and at the gold mines into a memoir filled with his own drawings, titled *Mountains and Molebills, or Recollections of a Burnt Journal*.⁸² According to this journal, Marryat crossed the Isthmus at least three times. He briefly came to New York in the spring of 1852 and went back to California that same year with his wife, only to cut his stay short due to the yellow fever he contracted in his third

⁷⁹ Mary Jane Megquier to J. M. Benjamin, or “friend Milton,” May 14, 1849, in *Apron Full of Gold*, 19-22.

⁸⁰ Quoted in Levy, *They saw the Elephant*, 34.

⁸¹ A. C. Joseph Wilson Memorandum Book, 3 June 1850 entry, BL.

⁸² Francis Samuel Marryat, *Mountains and Molebills, or Recollections of a Burnt Journal* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1855).

Isthmian crossing. In depicting the Isthmus, his British nationality only nominally separated him from American travelers. He, too, commented upon the “indolence” of the “Central American race” and prophesied that the railroad construction would pave ways for the American flag to float in Panama in the near future.⁸³ Still, he was also discomfited by the natives’ unexpected worldliness and his own incompetence as a stranger in a strange land. In the very beginning of his narrative, he lamented how the state of affairs changed in the Isthmus, that “now the civilized traveler, instead of kicking the naked aborigine into his canoe, or out of it as his humour prompts, has to bargain with a ‘padrone,’ as he calls himself,” whereas the natives would have been satisfied with “a few dollars for a week’s work” before the gold-rush transit hit Panama.⁸⁴

Marryat’s “Crossing the Isthmus,” the last of several accompanying illustrations of his published journal, was a humorous portrayal of a scene on the road, where California-bound foreign gold seekers and local service workers were depicted in various shapes in an exotic but nondescript natural setting (Fig. 4). Prospective gold miners with Panama hats appeared in this painting either dazed from falling off a mule’s back, having difficulties steering the mules to the right direction, or having fallen into the water. Most notable is that on the bottom right corner, riding on the back of local porters, were two male travelers, their sizes disproportionately small. It is possible that these two figures were meant to represent children, as a lone female traveler was riding alongside. Yet in all of Marryat’s descriptions of his traveling experiences, there was no mention of children accompanying any of the passengers, even though he mentioned a couple of wives accompanying their husbands. If these two figures were meant to represent ordinary adult travelers, their strange smallness may well represent Marryat’s feeling of discomfiture and disempowerment.

⁸³ Marryat, *Mountains and Molehills*, 16-17.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.



Figure 4. Frank Marryat, "Crossing the Isthmus" (1855) in *Mountains and Molehills, or Recollections of a Burnt Journal* (Courtesy of the Special Collections Research Center, The University of Chicago)

Far from one-sided, the power relationship between local residents and travelers were actively contested by the locals themselves. Panama's local residents saw both opportunities for business and the threats of foreign encroachment in the American gold-seeking migration; they attempted to reap maximum profits from the former while defending their sovereignty against the latter. They often found the attitudes of their North American clientele offensive and problematic. Though the words of lower-class Panamanians scarcely got recorded, their reactions to Anglo-American condescension were reported through some non-American commentators. Among them was Mary Jane Seacole, an immigrant from Jamaica and a nurse-trained hotelier in Cruces. Seacole,

later to be christened as the “black Nightingale” for her participation as a nurse during the Crimean War, briefly kept a hotel catering to gold-rush travelers in Panama from 1851 to 1854.

Seacole’s autobiography contained a different lived experience on the Isthmus during the Gold Rush era from what could be found in white Americans’ travelogues, while also exhibiting a similar objectifying gaze of an outsider who considered herself to be superior to the natives. Seacole, a self-identified “yellow doctress from Jamaica,” distinguished her racial identity from “negro” or “black,” and made clear that she was proud of her multi-racial (“Scottish” and “creole”) identity. Her pride sometimes became a source of tension with her white American clients. One incident recorded in her autobiography is a toast made by a well-meaning white man, who lamented “Aunty Seacole” having dark skin and expressed a wish to “bleach” her. Seacole rose to denounce such slight against her racial status, saying “if [her skin] had been as dark as any nigger’s, [she] should have been just as happy and as useful, and as much respected by those whose respect I value.”⁸⁵ At the same time, however, her peculiar position as a middle-class British subject also enabled Seacole to express a derisive attitude not unlike that of American travelers toward the “Spanish-Indian blood,” such as the New Granadian soldiers, who she deemed to be “a dirty, cowardly, indolent set.”⁸⁶ As a learned woman and a British subject, Seacole saw the world through a civilization-savage dichotomy, showing contempt to the Latin American republic that held nominal sovereignty over the region: “The weak sway of the New Granada Republic, despised by lawless men, and respected by none, is powerless to control the refuse of every nation which meet together upon its soil,” Seacole wrote.⁸⁷

Still far more sympathetic towards the natives than average American travelers, Seacole as a

⁸⁵ Seacole, *Wonderful adventures*, 48-49.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 18.

local resident identified herself against Anglo Americans. She was able to convey some segment of the local responses, testifying how American travelers' presence was blamed by the locals for bringing diseases to Panama.⁸⁸ She also identified "a strong prejudice against all Americans" the New Granadian citizens held, which in her opinion was well-founded. Seacole herself was a fierce critic of white American travelers, lampooning the discomfiture they appeared to feel when they had to socialize with people of color. As they often expressed the said discomfort "in stronger ways than by sour looks and rude words," Seacole felt herself justified in having "a little prejudice against our cousins across the Atlantic."⁸⁹

The first and foremost reason for anti-American feelings on the Isthmus was, according to Seacole, the fact that "many of the negroes, fugitive from the Southern States, had sought refuge in this and the other States of Central America." Though some freed or runaway slaves could have ended up in Central America, there is little evidence to back up Seacole's assertion that ex-slaves were present in any significant number in Panama. Nevertheless, Seacole went so far as to assert that the runaway slaves constituted a higher rank of the Panama society. They were even more respected by the people of the Isthmus than "native rulers," argued Seacole.⁹⁰ The sympathy toward "negro slaves" from the southern U.S., as well as her critique of slavery and the allegedly respectable status of runaway slaves, had a lot to do with her identification as a British subject, as she often contrasted the British anti-slavery position with the Americans' general attitude toward the descendants of slaves. Given the time of her publication in 1857, it is entirely possible that she was refashioning her narrative to fit into British abolitionist rhetoric. Yet she was also aware that among Anglo Americans,

⁸⁸ Seacole, *Wonderful Adventures*, 29.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 20-21.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 51.

her skin color rendered her as holding a position similar to the native Panamanians. Seacole herself had skin “a few shades of deeper brown,” which was the evidence of certain relationships “to those poor mortals whom you [Britain] once held enslaved, and whose bodies America still owns.”⁹¹ While Seacole, in extolling the potential of black people, might have caricatured the native population of the Isthmus (and in a way black people, too), her attempt to reevaluate the enslaved race in the U.S. can be seen as a counter-argument to the American public perception that linked servility and the dark skin, a linkage commonly made by American travelers in the Isthmian crossings.

Seacole also attributed anti-American prejudice on the Isthmus to the “quarrelsome, bullying habits” of the white Americans. Gold-rush travelers, according to Seacole, were “of the lowest sorts, many of whom have since fertilised Cuban and Nicaraguan soil”—pointing toward the contemporary American filibusters’ private military incursions into Cuba and Central America.⁹² Not as vitriolic critics as Seacole, other non-American emigrants heading for California also noted how American travelers’ deplorable conducts produced a hostile atmosphere on the Isthmus. German prospector Carl Grunsky, who later anglicized his name as Charles, wrote to his family in the spring of 1849 about the meticulous precautions he took to cross the Isthmus. The reasons for such precautions were more than just customary. He attributed some of the needs for such precaution to the doings of people from the U.S.: “many Americans of the rougher class, in large part from the slave states...have treated the natives with very little consideration,” Grunsky accused, “disregarding the fact that they, too, are citizens of a free republic.”⁹³ In his opinion, the “ill feelings” against Americans were due in most part to the American travelers’ treatment of local residents almost as if

⁹¹ Seacole, *Wonderful Adventures*, 20-21.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 51. More in-depth discussion of filibustering will follow in Chapter 4.

⁹³ Charles E. Grunsky, “From Europe to California: Extracts from Letters of Charles Grunsky and His Wife Clotilde, 1844-1853,” *The Quarterly of the Society of California Pioneers*, Vol. X (1933), 12.

they are slaves. With this general assessment of the situation, he also reported how a passing American had recently murdered a native in Gorgona. “The native’s entire family were bent on revenge,” wrote Grunsky.

The inter-ethnic tension that had been apparent to Grunsky grew as the gold-rush transit through Panama continued and erupted into a full-scale riot in April 1856. In a street altercation that soon acquired historical significance, a Yankee traveler named Jack Oliver picked up a piece of watermelon from the fruit stand owned by a local vendor, José Manuel Luna. Oliver took a bite and threw it away, without paying Luna for the watermelon. Luna demanded payment, allegedly saying, “here we are not in the United States.” Oliver pulled out his gun, and Luna his knife, which quickly led to a full-blown fight between American travelers and local residents. Later, in culmination of the conflict, the Panamanian militia attacked the railway station, resulting in several casualties among the American passengers waiting there.⁹⁴ The so-called “War of Watermelon,” or *El Incidente de la Tajada de Sandía*, thus crystalized the tensions borne out of the peculiar state under which the Isthmus was placed. The boundary between the foreign and the domestic was blurry for both American travelers and local residents, providing a sense of false contiguity and the desire for conquest to the former and inciting resentment and righteous anger from the latter.⁹⁵

The 1856 incident’s bloody outcome also created an atmosphere for more direct threats to Panamanian sovereignty to develop. California newspapers closely followed the aftermath of the riot. “No disturbance of any kind has occurred on the Isthmus since the 15th of April,” reported the *Daily Alta California*. “The perpetrators of the outrages are all much alarmed at what they have committed,

⁹⁴ The report of the number of deaths varied; some reports said 18, others 15. The *Sacramento Daily Union* named 9 people who died in the riot, but added that there were “various others, whose names have not been ascertained.” *Sacramento Daily Union*, 3 May 1856.

⁹⁵ For a more detailed discussion of the incident, see Mercedes Chen Daley, “The Watermelon Riot: Cultural Encounters in Panama City, April 15, 1856,” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 70: 1 (1990).

and are in constant dread of the punishment...certain to be inflicted upon them by the U.S. Government,” the editorial suggested.⁹⁶ The United States Navy landed in the city of Panama immediately after the incident, and stayed there for three days, but there was no attempt at military retaliation. The U.S. government sought remuneration from the New Granadian government for damages.⁹⁷ Initially, the United States demanded partial sovereignty over the Isthmus as part of the compensation, while the president of the Panama Railroad wanted the Isthmus to become a neutral territory jointly protected by the “great maritime powers of the world.”⁹⁸ In the end, the Republic of New Granada agreed to pay U.S. government \$412,393,95 for damages in 1857.⁹⁹

The polarized political atmosphere in the mid-1850s around slavery and William Walker’s filibustering War in Nicaragua influenced the ways in which the eastern U.S. press interpreted the incident. The *New York Tribune*, for example, denounced the “provocation” on the part of Americans involved in the escalation of the conflict: “Nobody who reads the testimony with the least care and candor can doubt...that the attacks made upon the hotels and the railroad stations... were drawn upon those buildings by shots fired from them.”¹⁰⁰ According to the *Tribune*, the only surprising thing in the recent collision was that it had not happened sooner, for “letting loose every week in the streets of Panama large bands of armed strangers, some of them drunk, and a large part of them puffed up with an insolent conceit as to their own superiority as compared with the natives”

⁹⁶ Daily *Alta California*, 2 June 1856.

⁹⁷ Conniff, *Panama and the United States*, 38.

⁹⁸ Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence*, Vol. 5, 399-403 n1; McGuiness, *Path of Empire*, 157.

⁹⁹ Helen Delpar, “Watermelon War, 1856,” in Thomas M. Leonard (ed.), *Encyclopedia of U.S.-Latin American Relations* (Thousand Oaks, CA: CQ Press, 2012), 952.

¹⁰⁰ *New York Daily Tribune*, 19 May 1856.

was a surefire way to provoke a conflict.¹⁰¹ The aftermath of the incident also suggests that sometimes militant expansionism could have adversely affected the potential of empire by turning public opinion against violent intervention and redirecting the resource and capitalist ambition inwards, i.e. within the established national borders. Right after the incident, California newspapers unanimously reported that disruptions of the Isthmian routes, not only in Panama but also in Nicaragua due to William Walker's filibustering war, created "a much better feeling in behalf of the Pacific Railroad"—even though the Transcontinental Railroad was still incipient in its design.¹⁰²

While some commentators argued for establishing an alternative route of transportation to California, many others dreamed of revenge and forceful taking of the Isthmus, once the news of the interethnic violence reached Californian ports. Roughly a month later, the *Sacramento Daily Union* reported of the "Panama Riot Fever." "There was a rumor in circulation," the correspondent reported, "that between one and two hundred armed men would take passage in the steamer Golden Gate to Panama."¹⁰³ The rumor proved to be just that. At a public meeting held in San Francisco on May 6, 1856, some of those gathered strongly expressed their indignation over the incident in Panama, with a few choice words such as "blowing Panama to h__l," or "taking possession of the Isthmus."¹⁰⁴ But the occasion was more an impromptu meeting of the frustrated rather than any real call for action. "There was no evidence that an organized body had left on the steamer of Monday," reported the *Sacramento Union*, the day after the meeting.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² *Sacramento Daily Union*, 4 June 1856. Similarly-worded projection that the Transcontinental Railroad would get a boost from the violent incident in Panama can be found elsewhere. "The passage of the Pacific Railroad Bill is regarded as beyond a reasonable doubt, since the Panama Riot," wrote *Marysville Daily Herald*, 10 July 1856.

¹⁰³ "Panama Riot Fever in San Francisco," *Sacramento Daily Union*, 7 May 1856; see also McGuiness, *Path of Empire*, 155-57, for a summary of the reactions in California and the United States.

¹⁰⁴ *Daily Alta California*, 8 May 1856.

Though not materialized in action, the rumor of an expedition planned to avenge the riot speaks to the broader historical development concerning not only the Isthmus and Central America, but the mid-century American Empire itself. The power of rumor was, in fact, what originally fueled the incident on April 15, 1856. The local militia was called in after the initial altercation on the street, fed by the rumor of a steamer's recent arrival with William Walker's army, intent on taking the Isthmus of Panama by force.¹⁰⁵ For local Central American people, the rumor represented a more palpable manifestation of U.S. encroachment than the railroad or the arrogance of traveling Americans. Walker and other filibusters were the most visible examples of the fact that the antebellum U.S. Empire was much predicated upon private citizens' actions. The gold-rush transit, by passing through the regions that had either been previously targeted by U.S. expansionism or had become a next available target, revived American imaginings of conquest, while also creating a human resource pool that would supply for various private armies departing from San Francisco for the very purpose of conquest. Filibustering expeditions during the 1850s would become one of the next promising "adventures" available for disillusioned young white men in California gold fields. The discontent and disorder in gold-rush California not only fueled the actual filibustering expeditions to Mexico, Cuba, and Nicaragua, but also fed "rumors" of similar ventures to other parts of the world, such as Panama or Hawaii.¹⁰⁶ The imagined contiguity between California and the Isthmus due to regular steamer connections helped create an atmosphere that invited the actual and imagined invasions of foreign lands.

¹⁰⁵ See McGuiness, *Path of Empire*, 114, 124-26.

¹⁰⁶ For the rumor of filibustering expeditions planned for Hawaii, see Andrew F. Rolle, "California Filibustering and the Hawaiian Kingdom," *Pacific Historical Review* 19 (1950).

Conclusion

The mid-nineteenth-century U.S. interest in the Isthmus was the result of twin ambitions for territorial and commercial expansion. The California Gold Rush fueled both, as the traffic across the Isthmus of Panama not only introduced tens of thousands of Americans from the United States to the lure of conquering the tropics, but necessitated corporate investment and state intervention to facilitate transportation via the Isthmus. As a result, the travelers passing through the Isthmus in the 1850s witnessed double-faced workings of the American empire, corporate and militant. The visual vindication of conquest and empire further enabled them to practice the “imperial gaze” themselves, assessing, categorizing, and judging the native population of the Isthmus through their preset understandings of the world. And yet, the burgeoning gold-rush economy in Panama was also based on the existence of a multi-racial society, many of its old and new members from outside the United States actively participating in the transportation and travel industry. The sense of entitlement expressed by travelers from the U.S. created tension within this diverse society, once exploding in bloodshed during the so-called “Watermelon War” of 1856. The incident was but one example of the countercurrent to U.S. Empire enfolding the Isthmus. And the similar assertion and counter-assertion of rights would echo in California and the Pacific, along the new transportation and traveling networks the rush created.

CHAPTER 4. FROM THE RUINS OF EL DORADO: FILIBUSTERS, FORTUNE SEEKERS, AND POPULAR CIRCUITS OF EMPIRE

“The countries are most beautiful; very productive, healthy to those acclimated (though rather enervating). In fact, were it populated with a different race, [it] would be one of garden-spots of the world, added to which its great mineral wealth will one day make it almost a second California.”

-Flavel Belcher, in an 1856 letter to his father written from San Juan del Sur, Nicaragua ¹

“The news from the mines [on the Frazer River] is now encouraging, and four thousand miners have gone to work to build their houses and homes and commence preparing for the winter... The only thing we now need is a large hardy overland emigration, and soon we will build up in the north-west a second California.”

-A *New York Herald* correspondent from Victoria, Vancouver’s Island, October 28, 1858²

Introduction

Flavel Belcher was a man in his early thirties when he embarked on a journey to the gold country with his brother. Belcher arrived from New Orleans in San Francisco, California sometime before September 1851, when he resided near the Cosumnes River in Sacramento County working as a store-owner, at times panning for gold for a bit of extra earnings. As a local trader with Indians, Belcher served as a witness to the treaty signed on September 18, 1851 between the U.S. Indian commissioner and representatives of California Indians near the Cosumnes River.³ Despite having been a party to a treaty that would have removed the indigenous people to a reservation, he certainly

¹ Flavel Belcher to his father Joseph, 30 June 1856 (emphasis in original), Flavel Belcher Letters, 1851-1857, BANC MSS C-B 524, BL.

² Reproduced in the London *Watchman*, 22 December 1858.

³ “Treaty with the Cu-Lu, Yas-si, Loc-Lum-Ne, and Wo-pum-nes,” in Vine Deloria Jr. and Raymond J. DeMallie (eds.), *Documents of American Indian Diplomacy: Treaties, Agreements, and Conventions, 1775-1979* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999), Vol. 1, 832-33.

envisioned his own living condition in California as cohabiting with the Indians, far from the luxuries of civilization. Several days after he signed the treaty, Belcher wrote to his father that he was “still living among the Indians” and would remain so for at least three or four more years.⁴ Even though he was not “making any money, but [was] living on hope,” he expressed a belief that he would be able to sell his store for \$10,000 once the Indian treaty was ratified. He expected no trouble in that regard—a false optimism, as it turned out. Belcher also confessed having developed a particular fondness for the frontier life and was genuinely reluctant to sell out and leave California. He even asked for another family member to join him there, as he wanted to expand his business and trust-worthy partners were scarce.

Though his stay in California did not last long, Belcher’s later life clearly bespoke his penchant for the wandering, world-trotting life. What Flavel Belcher did in the years between 1851 and 1856 remains unclear. A passenger manifest showed an arrival in New York from Aspinwall, Panama on June 13, 1853, that listed F. P. Belcher, age 36, identified as a “trader.”⁵ If this was the same F. Belcher who had worked as an Indian trader in California in 1851, he returned to the east coast in 1853 only to leave soon after. By the time he wrote again to his father in 1856, he had tried another mining venture—this time for copper—in Costa Rica, failed, and relocated to Nicaragua. In his June 1856 letter written from San Juan del Sur, Nicaragua, Belcher related to his father what was happening in Central America at the time: the filibustering war of William Walker against the allied Central American countries.⁶ Belcher would then join Walker’s army in 1857 as an officer, adding

⁴ Flavel Belcher to his father Joseph, 26 September 1851, BL.

⁵ Ship manifest of the *Illinois*, 13 June 1853; New York, Passenger Lists, 1820-1957 (accessed via Ancestry.com on 15 March 2017).

⁶ Flavel Belcher to his father Joseph, 30 June 1856, BL.

himself to the large group of ex-Californian miners who went on to Central America pursuing the aggrandizement of themselves and the Anglo-American race.

Flavel Belcher's trajectory showcases how an Anglo-American gold-rush immigrant in 1850s California envisioned his chances in the world around him. First a trader and occasional miner in California, his pursuit of possible sources of wealth led him to Costa Rica, and circumstances then pushed him to Nicaragua, where he joined a mercenary invading army of Americans trying to assume control of that part of Central America. His story was not a unique one. Belcher was one of the thousands of young Californians who, upon finding little wealth or success in California, sought to find a "second California" on foreign soil. Some of the dissatisfied but not quite fully disillusioned miners went to other mining regions in Australia, New Zealand, British Columbia, and Nevada and Colorado, where new discoveries of precious metal deposits were announced in a quick succession in the 1850s. Others decided to "see the world," as if they were on a grand tour of some sorts, at least in spirit. Edward Monroe Brown, a young man who had worked his way up to California as a sailor in 1849, debated in a journal sent to his brother in August 1850 whether he should work his way back home as a steward of a sailing ship. "If I do so," he mused, "I shall ship in a vessel bound to China or some part of the East Indies, and so go round the Cape of Good Hope. I have a great desire to visit the section of the world."⁷ The romanticized notion of adventure coupled with a wild speculative desire for wealth, which had initially governed many a young American man's journey to California, also influenced their post-mining paths. A small but significant number of former miners in the budding urban areas of northern California joined filibustering armies headed to Mexico or

⁷ Typescript of Edward Monroe Brown diaries, Folder 7 (1850-51), 20, BRBM. It was a common practice for Californian miners to send their daily journals home in place of letters.

Central America to expropriate foreign lands over the course of the 1850s.⁸ In the aftermath of the U.S.-Mexico War came the heyday of filibustering, or military expeditions against foreign countries with which the United States was not officially at war, by organized groups of private individuals with varying degrees of commitment to advancing American imperial dominion.

California after the rush became a major recruiting ground of filibusters, though filibusters occupied only a small segment of the whole out-going population from California.⁹ Those who came to California in the 1850s, particularly between 1849 and 1852, were largely sojourners. The Census data of California recorded a population increase of almost 400% from 1850 to 1860.¹⁰ Historians have argued that this increase did not capture the whole dimension of the state's population shift—that the population of California had reached half a million at one point during the early 1850s before it settled around 370,000 in 1860, after the out-migration of sojourners.¹¹ Simply put, at least about a hundred and thirty thousand immigrants came to California and left again before 1860; in reality, the number of out-migrations would have been higher, as the static census data could not

⁸ Mid-nineteenth century filibustering expeditions had traditionally been associated with Manifest Destiny expansionism or southern slavery extension conspiracy. For early comprehensive studies of filibustering, see Robert E. May, *The Southern Dream of a Caribbean Empire, 1854-1861* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1973); Charles H. Brown, *Agents of Manifest Destiny: The Lives and Times of the Filibusters* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980). More recently, historians focus on the impact of urbanization and the crisis of masculinity that fueled sociocultural desires for military actions. See Robert E. May, *Manifest Destiny's Underworld: Filibustering in Antebellum America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Amy S. Greenberg, *Manifest Manhood and the Antebellum American Empire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005). For Cuban exiles' attempt to promote filibustering within the United States, see Rodrigo Lazo, *Writing to Cuba: Filibustering and Cuban Exiles in the United States* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005). Most recently, historian Walter Johnson reintroduced filibustering into the larger history of sectional conflicts over slavery. Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013).

⁹ For the role of the California Gold Rush in creating a human resource pool for filibustering, see May, *Manifest Destiny's Underworld*, 100-101.

¹⁰ California's population rose from roughly 90,000 in 1850 to the 1860 total population of 379,994. *The Seventh Census of the United States* (Washington, D.C.: Robert Armstrong, Public Printer, 1853), 969; *Population of the United States in 1860* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1864), 27.

¹¹ For this "scholarly consensus," see Kenneth Owens, *Gold Rush Saints: California Mormons and the Great Rush for Riches* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004), 299 n1. Owens also adds that a larger portion of those leaving California chose maritime transportation options than those coming to California.

capture all comings and goings over the years. There is no available data to determine how many of these out-migrants went back home, and how many to other locales. The number of filibustering participants from California was negligible within the whole out-migrating population. Small individual expeditions were often carried out by a few scores of men. The total number who went to Nicaragua to join William Walker's army in 1856-1857, perhaps the single-most successful filibustering venture, did not exceed 2,000.¹²

This chapter deals less with filibustering as an independent phenomenon than with its implications in the contexts of Anglo settlers' large-scale out-migration from California. It adds on to the traditional narratives of filibustering by incorporating the locales to which unsuccessful Californian miners often relocated *en masse*, and which subsequently became rumored or imagined targets of filibustering: Hawaii and British Columbia. Together with Mexico and Nicaragua, where Californian filibusters indeed landed, Hawaii and British Columbia also attracted groups of ex-Californians embarking upon another fortune-seeking adventure in the 1850s. The early 1850s witnessed a constant scare in the Kingdom of Hawaii's diplomatic circles concerning filibusters or "adventurers" from California. In British Columbia, following the discovery of gold in the Fraser River valley in 1858, about 30,000 Californian miners' sojourn produced concerns about American encroachment among British authorities. Two particular incidents justified such concerns: the Californian miners' vigilante war against the Fraser River Indians in the summer of 1858, and a small-scale civil disturbance called the "McGowan's War" in the winter of 1858-1859. Anglo Californians' rush to British Columbia was also part of the filibustering circuits of mercenaries and *desperados*; those returning from Nicaragua's filibustering war in 1857 headed out to this remote

¹² One contemporary observer in 1857 estimated the number of men in Walker's Nicaragua army as 2,518, which included hundreds of reinforcements that arrived from other parts of the United States. May, *Manifest Destiny's Underworld*, 49.

British colony in 1858, creating a direct linkage of personnel and militant culture between the two regions. In the era of the actual filibusters, some of whom ex-miners from California, the specter of the U.S. empire shadowed the trails Anglo-Californian ex-miners traveled.

At the same time, studying Hawaii and British Columbia together with filibusters in Mexico and Nicaragua also illuminates the confluence of official state and popular initiatives for U.S. expansion. Hawaii and British Columbia also attracted U.S. government's interests for more territorial acquisitions in the 1850s, either independent of or in conjunction with Anglo-Californian post-rush transmigrations.¹³ In Hawaii, the U.S. government's long-held interests in the crossroad of the Pacific led to a diplomatic negotiation for annexation between the kingdom and the United States in 1853-1854, during which period a fervent annexationist movement among Anglo-American settlers in Hawaii and California was often dubbed as "filibustering" by Hawaiian and American commentators alike. In British Columbia, where the 1846 treaty between Britain and the United States had only recently settled the boundary disputes in the Pacific Northwest, the gold rush of Anglo-Californian miners in 1858 rekindled the federal government's interests in the region.

Previous histories of filibustering often pitted filibusters against government, focusing on the question of whether or not their activities helped U.S. government's expansionist agenda. In this chapter, I put in a third category of actors beside the government and filibusters: Anglo-American settlers, who went to the domains of foreign governments without explicit intentions of taking over, yet often interpreted their own movement as a progress of the nation. The post-rush circuitry of California miners, involving both illicit acts of violence against foreign countries and less illicit transmigrations for overseas reaches, reveals a complex relationship between private citizens' actions

¹³ I use the term "transmigration" to designate the secondary migration of gold-rush immigrants using California as a stepping stone, whether they were leaving after a brief sojourn in the gold fields or with intent to come back to California after a brief sojourn in geographically adjacent areas.

and the state-driven expansionist agenda. Their movements made it clear that the mid-nineteenth-century American empire had yet undefined territorial boundaries. California's geographic proximity to Hawaii and British Columbia stimulated imperial imagination of Anglo settlers for them to contemplate a grander future for California and the American nation. Together with those who did participate in the filibustering armies to Mexico or Nicaragua, these out-migrating Anglo-Californians explored the possibilities of expansion afforded by their own settlements.

4.1. Dreaming of a Grander California: A Localized Debate on Territorial Expansion

Anglo-American settlers' penchant for territorial expansion received a new stimulus when they reached California and saw the possibilities afforded by its geographic location. The expansionist mentality among those who gathered at the 1849 California Constitutional Convention manifested itself in a short but heated debate around the state's potential extension of its boundary. One of the sections proposed for Article 6 of the state's constitution on "Miscellaneous Provisions" read: "The Legislature shall have power to extend this Constitution, and the jurisdiction of this State, over any territory acquired by compact with any State, or with the United States, the same being done with the consent of the United States."¹⁴ The section sounded innocuous, with its legalistic language emphasizing the consent of all parties involved. But it still provoked furious disagreements on the convention's floor about whether or not the state legislature *could* have such power to extend its boundary lines and about *which part of the globe* might necessitate this clause.

In the ensuing discussion, some Anglo Californians professed desires to incorporate the Hawaiian Islands and, to a lesser degree, the Oregon territory into the state's boundary. William M.

¹⁴ J. Ross Browne, *Report of the Debates in the Convention of California, on the Formation of the State Constitution* (Washington, D.C.: J. T. Towers, 1850), 376.

Steuart, a middle-aged lawyer from Maryland representing San Francisco, supported the proposal. He opined that the provision might prove “very important” to the state of California, considering that the U.S. Congress was then “gravely agitated [by] the propriety of annexing the Canadas and Cuba.” In addition to these two possible territorial acquisitions being contemplated in Washington, D.C., Steuart was convinced that California had its own territorial addition awaiting from across the Pacific: “Probably the extent of California will be such,” he asserted, “as to call upon us in a short time to take under our protecting wing the Sandwich Islands.”¹⁵ Even though the Sandwich Islands, as the Hawaiian Islands were then called, formed an independent kingdom recognized as such by the United States, Steuart was not alone in deeming the islands a readily incorporable territory. Lansford W. Hastings, a delegate from Sacramento, was also in favor of the constitutional guarantee of an extendable state boundary for the very same reason that California might one day have to “annex the Sandwich Islands or Oregon,” since the current territory of the state would soon be insufficient “for the immense population pouring in here.”¹⁶

It was not uncommon in this period for proposed new American states to claim larger territorial boundaries than those acknowledged in treaties. Texas, for example, had conflicts over its boundary with Mexico and with the Territory of New Mexico. Whether this signified frontier imperialism or the ambiguity of national borders during the mid-nineteenth century, the practice of claiming more lands was not exactly unknown in the American West. It was also quite a routine practice of mid-century U.S. expansionists to mention the potential annexation of Hawaii. Worth noting in California’s case is that the territorial imagination of the state’s architects often incorporated not only those contiguous territories of Oregon and Lower California, but the islands

¹⁵ Browne, *Report of the Debates*, 377.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

in the Pacific into an extendable state territory—in fact, Hawaii was most prominently cited by more than one delegate to the state’s constitutional convention as the best candidate if California were to extend its territorial boundaries. This imagined contiguity extending over the ocean signified a local variant of U.S. expansionism, adapted to California’s own geographic location and established trading networks. Granted, the idea of oceanic contiguity was not shared by everyone, as evidenced by Morton McCarver, a Sacramento delegate and an ex-Oregonian settler. McCarver questioned the ambitious notion that the state of California might be able to expand its jurisdiction across the Pacific. He scoffed at the overly grandiose imagination of his fellow delegates, sarcastically asking, “Who knows but we may have a resolution presented to annex China? If the Congress of the United States and California will assent to it, the Chinese may enjoy the benefit of...having our Constitution extended over them.”¹⁷ To him, California annexing Hawaii was as absurd as California annexing China—whether the common denominator was the racial ‘unfitness’ of the population there or the natural obstacle of the Pacific Ocean.

Winfield S. Sherwood, a delegate from Sacramento who had practiced law in New York before he joined the first wave of the Gold Rush, perhaps most palpably embodied the remaining spirit of Manifest Destiny in California when he spoke in favor of the state constitutional guarantee for territorial extension, with more Mexican territory in mind. He claimed there was no reason for California to relinquish the right to “annex a portion of the territory south of us by consent of the people.” “Being citizens of the western coast,” Sherwood continued, “it becomes us, if possible, to extend our power... I hope [in forty years] to see the whole coast populated, and a vast empire on it, so that our power on the east and west will be the greatest in the world.”¹⁸ A period-typical

¹⁷ Browne, *Report of the Debates*, 377.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

hyperbolic assertion of expansionist desire though it was, Sherwood's justification was also primarily geographic. Insisting upon California's advantageous position in further expanding the dominion of the United States, Sherwood was relying on a particular geographic imagination derived from his residence in California, having arrived in a flock of Anglo Americans in the wake of the completed continental conquest of the United States.

Even as the participants revealed the particularly enticing visions from local Californian perspectives, both expansionist and anti-expansionist rhetoric in the California state constitutional convention also banked on a whole reservoir of arguments surrounding the extension of slavery, mirroring the national political division regarding territorial expansion. Charles Tyler Botts, a native of Virginia who was elected a convention delegate from Monterey, opposed the constitutional guarantee for the state boundary extension, with a clearly racial understanding of the American empire that would come in handy for later-day anti-imperialists. Since this debate was happening on October 5, 1849, a month into the convention, Botts questioned the measure against what was already fixed into the state constitution, particularly the political rights exclusive to the state's white residents: "After fixing the right of suffrage, excluding negroes and the descendants of negroes, you introduce a clause by which you may extend this Constitution to the Sandwich Islands, and make citizens of the Kanakas."¹⁹ Perhaps this racial argument prevailed in the end, though at first it was not sufficient to sway the majority. The proposed section was approved when it was initially put to a vote. Yet the controversial nature of the proposal still disturbed a significant portion of the delegates so much that one of the delegates requested a reconsideration of the matter. Three days later, the section was brought up again and was eventually voted down by 16 to 24.²⁰

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 403.

This debate at California's Constitutional Convention revealed the localized imagination of Anglo Americans in California for next possible destinations for the Manifest Destiny bandwagon. The casual mentions of annexing the Kingdom of Hawaii or even China, even though the latter was intended as a counter-argument to the prevalent expansionist sentiment, corresponded to the ways in which American newcomers in California interpreted the state's long-standing Pacific connections. The proximity to the Pacific stimulated imagination of many in California, easing the way for some of these Anglo Americans to embark on the quest for more territory overseas; the access to ocean, moreover, provided waterways to transport filibusters to Latin American sea ports.

4.2. Filibusters, Rumors, and Settler-Driven Expansionism

The California Gold Rush fueled filibustering expeditions after 1850 by creating a large pool of young men dissatisfied with their mining outcomes and eager to try their fortunes in other adventures. The sense of entitlement, the notion of "destiny" that carried out U.S. continental expansion was still in full swing in California. The belief that the Anglo-Saxon or white race was superior than the "Latin" or "mongrel" race was only strengthened by the sights Anglo-American miners noted first-hand during their transit and in California, and incited violence in the mines against Spanish-speaking miners in 1849-51. The newly acquired knowledge and expanded connections to other parts of the world, such as Hawaii and China, also enabled some Anglo Californians to envision a transpacific American empire. Anglo Californians of the mid-century were, consciously or not, the vanguard of American aggressive expansionist schemes brewing in the period.

Filibustering was not the exclusive domain of Americans. The term *filibuster*, the origin of which can be traced back to *freebooter* or pirate, can be viewed as a continuation of a long-standing tradition of piracy. Akin to the activities of European privateers and pirates from the sixteenth

century, the actions of filibusters were not completely independent of national agenda, but individuals of particular nationalities could set aside their loyalties in the name of profits. There were Mexican, Venezuelan, and French filibusters in North America over the course of the nineteenth-century.²¹ Still, most foot soldiers were recruited from cities in the United States, whatever the nationality of the leaders. For example, Venezuelan expatriate and filibuster, Narciso López, was hailed as a romantic hero in New York in 1850-51. Many young American men boarded ships in New York to join his crusade against Spanish rule in Cuba. Exiled Cuban writers in U.S. cities published newspapers and pamphlets calling for volunteers to fight this war against Spain. In the aftermath of the 1848 revolutions in Europe, young revolutionaries and political dissidents fled to the Americas, many heading to California's gold fields—some of whom, upon failure to dig as much gold as they anticipated, also turned to filibustering in Mexico.²²

A confluence of several different factors accelerated the proliferation of filibustering from the United States in the 1850s. There certainly was a “pull” factor, namely the unstable political situations in the former and current Spanish colonies, with an independence movement in Cuba and a civil war in Nicaragua. Nineteenth-century republican cosmopolitanism certainly played a role, as both liberal intellectuals in Latin America and filibuster-sympathizers in the U.S. relied on the rhetoric of republican solidarity. But the explosion of filibustering in the aftermath of the U.S.-Mexican War was undoubtedly the result of “push” factors within U.S. society and culture. Historians have noted that it was not merely an anomaly perpetrated by the few. Actual expeditions

²¹ Some contemporaries even included Italian general Giuseppe Garibaldi in the ranks of nineteenth-century filibusters. May, *Manifest Destiny's Underworld*, 61.

²² French filibusters in the 1850s were ex-Californians who organized armies out of the predominantly Anglo-American mining population and launched an attack on adjacent Mexican soil. C. Gilbert Storm, *Reconnaissance in Sonora: Charles D. Poston's 1854 Exploration of Mexico and the Gadsden Purchase* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2015), 37-38. See also Joseph A. Stout, *Schemers and Dreamers: Filibustering in Mexico, 1848-1921* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 2002).

were certainly organized by a few charismatic ringleaders and propagandists, but it was also a phenomenon of the mid-century urban public spheres, where an increasing number of young men were facing a crisis of masculinity in capitalist society. U.S. expansionist rhetoric of destined superiority and the chance for these young men to prove their military prowess created a place for filibustering within mid-nineteenth century U.S. urban mass culture.²³ The frequency with which articles about filibusters appeared in the press was striking compared to their small numbers. Stories of famous filibusters were closely followed by daily newspapers across the country, discussed in magazines of various sorts, and reproduced as novels and plays.²⁴

William Walker was perhaps the most notorious filibuster, and his career contributed a great deal in creating the image of filibusters as *American* outlaws. Born in 1824 in Nashville, Tennessee, Walker came to California in 1850, at the height of the gold fever. He first established himself as a newspaper editor in San Francisco, then as a lawyer in Marysville. From 1851 to 1852, California's former quartermaster Joseph C. Morehead and French expatriates Charles de Pindray and Gaston Raousset-Boulbon led three separate filibustering expeditions to northern Mexico from California. At first they sought to colonize part of Sonora by ostensibly seeking a land grant from the Mexican government, but when rejected, all quickly turned to taking it by force. All of these efforts were widely publicized in California.²⁵ Walker's ambitions must have been fueled by these ex-Californians' so-called adventures. On October 15, 1853, William Walker and his band of mercenaries sailed from San Francisco to La Paz, Mexico. After landing and capturing the town in early November, Walker promptly declared himself president of the Republic of Lower California. The imagined republic

²³ May, *Manifest Destiny's Underworld*, 104-105, 111-113; Greenberg, *Manifest Manhood*; Greenberg, "Pirates, Patriots, and Public Meetings: Antebellum Expansionism and Urban Culture," *The Journal of Urban History* 31 (2005).

²⁴ May, *Manifest Destiny's Underworld*, 78.

²⁵ Stout, *Schemers and Dreamers*, 24-33.

soon relocated its headquarters further inland at Ensenada and changed its name into the Republic of Sonora. This “invasion” was a small, irregular affair. The initial number of men Walker had when he landed at La Paz was less than fifty. His co-conspirator, Henry P. Watkins, brought reinforcements with perhaps as many as 200 men, but most soldiers soon deserted for lack of resources, tired of continued skirmishes with the Mexican army. When Walker gave up marching to Sonora and crossed the border to surrender to the U.S. army in May 1854, the number of his men had decreased to about thirty. He was tried in San Diego for the violation of the Neutrality Act, but was easily acquitted by the jury.

The language of contemporary commentators made it clear that a misguided conviction in racial superiority was a crucial factor for Anglo-American men to invest in a wildly precarious venture like filibustering. Witnessing William Walker’s 1853 scheme, Charles W. Drury, a San Francisco resident who would later become a vice consul in Fiji, firmly expressed his belief that Walker’s conquest of Sonora was unstoppable. He pointed to the psychological backgrounds of the filibusters to explain their actions; it was “the natural result of the roving and uneasy disposition of the Americans” coupled with “the spirit of acquisition” toward foreign lands.²⁶ At the same time, Drury, as many Californians believed at the time, spoke highly of the alleged mineral wealth in Sonora, speculating it had the potential to create another rush. The only obstacle was the Apache Indians, whose raids prevented Mexicans from freely mining the precious metal. As this conflict with Indians could be resolved by military intervention of Americans, Drury supposed that “many of the Sonorians will hale [*sic*] the Maricans [*sic*] with open arms.”²⁷ This misguided belief that the locals would welcome American soldiers of fortune was shared even among some prominent people

²⁶ Charles Drury to “Dear Brother,” 15 December 1853, Charles W. Drury letters, mssHM 75088-75089, HL.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

in political and diplomatic circles. John Forsyth, appointed U.S. Minister to Mexico in 1856, claimed that Mexicans, “again on the verge of political revolution,” *wanted* U.S. intervention.²⁸

The general assessment in California of Walker’s campaign after its defeat was that it had been a quixotic venture. Charles Edward Rand, a merchant who owned a store in San Francisco, wrote in May 16, 1854 of the return of “the notorious Col. Walker (Filibuster) & his remnant of a republic, vis. 33 men.”²⁹ The filibusters had arrived on board the steamship *Northerner* with their captors the previous evening. Rand noticed that one of the marching filibusters was someone he had known before in San Francisco: “one who very mysteriously disappeared from the city some time ago, owing us 149 dollars. It seems that he invested the amount in Filibuster stock and...it had fallen below par, as the poor fellow had no vest cravat on & only one shoe.”³⁰ Whereas the passing remark made it clear that Rand held no sympathy for his past debtor or for the whole filibuster business, the language he used to deride those who joined this short filibustering scheme—investing in “Filibuster stock” that “had fallen below par”—may point to the truth of many rank-and-file filibusters’ motives. Filibustering was partly a product of the speculative or even gambling nature of migration during the time of the Gold Rush. Going out to invade a foreign country was only an extension of what many Anglo-American miners did in the first place coming to California.

Geographical proximity, in addition to the lingering hostilities from the war of the previous decade, made Mexico the prime target of American filibusters from California. Several Californians also interpreted California’s location on the Pacific Coast as a justifiable cause to seek annexation of Hawaii. In the very same letter of December 1853 that described Walker’s Sonora expedition,

²⁸ Quoted in Stout, *Schemers and Dreamers*, 43.

²⁹ Charles Rand to his parents, 16 May 1854, Charles Edward Rand Papers, BRBM.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

Charles Drury also divined the annexation of Hawaii. The interest in Hawaii was agricultural, racist, and geopolitical all at once. Drury first asserted that the Sandwich Islands had good soil and climate, but “Kannackers [sic]...lack energy and enterprise” to make full use of the lands.³¹ Yet the more crucial trait for this Californian man than Hawaii’s agricultural potential was its geographic locations, as it was not only a rendezvous point of American whalers but a “halfway house between [California] and China.”³² Drury was not the only Californian who expressed such interests at the time. The *Sacramento Daily Union*, the leading newspaper in the mining region of northern California, editorialized in late 1853: “there can be little doubt among those who are watching the ‘manifest destiny’ of the times, that the question of the annexation of the Sandwich Islands to the American Union is one which will present itself for solution at no distant day.”³³ Admittedly, the idea to annex the Kingdom of Hawaii at this particular moment originated in Washington, D.C. Secretary of State William Marcy made the official proposal to the kingdom in 1853.³⁴ Yet the *Sacramento Daily Union*’s editorial also shed light on the Californian variety of expansionist approach to Hawaii, as it asserted that even before annexation, the island kingdom would become “completely *Americanized by emigration from the Pacific coast*.”³⁵ Expansionist rhetoric targeting Hawaii in the early 1850s, in fact, displayed the curious conflation between filibusters and settler-colonists from California.

There is ample evidence that Hawaiian government officials feared the possible Californian

³¹ Charles Drury letter to “Dear Brother,” 15 December 1853, HL. “Kannackers” is a common misspelling of *Kanakas*, a term used to signify native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders in nineteenth-century America. It derived from native Hawaiian language *Kanaka Maoli*, meaning people.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ “Annexation of the Sandwich Islands,” *Sacramento Daily Union*, 27 December 1853.

³⁴ Ralph Simpson Kuykendall, *The Hawaiian Kingdom, Vol. 1: 1778-1854, Foundation and Transformation* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1938), 422.

³⁵ “Annexation of the Sandwich Islands,” *Sacramento Daily Union*, 27 December 1853 (emphasis mine).

filibuster invasion, if little proof of an actual scheme to invade Hawaii from San Francisco. The rapid peopling of California after the gold discovery concerned Hawaiian authorities from early on. Starting in 1849, intermittent rumors circulated of filibustering expeditions from California to take over the Kingdom of Hawaii.³⁶ In 1851, Samuel Brannan, one of the most successful entrepreneurs in northern California at the time, sailed with a group of some thirty Californians to the kingdom on board the ship *Game Cock*. Brannan allegedly wanted to negotiate with the king for a land grant to settle a group of colonists. On October 15, the San Francisco *Daily Evening Picayune* reported what was apparently a rampant rumor: that this excursion was being made “for the purpose...of revolutionizing the government of his Kanaka majesty,” exaggerating the number of passengers to 160.³⁷ The *Sacramento Daily Union*, citing the San Francisco newspaper, further amplified the number on board the ship, reporting on October 17 that 170 colonists embarked for the Sandwich Islands. The *Daily Union* also informed its readers that 700 colonists had already gone to sea for a similar purpose, and 300 more were preparing to go “settle together, swear allegiance and promulgate the principles of free government, use all their influence to form a State, and as a natural result annex themselves to this confederacy.”³⁸ A strangely apt prediction of the series of events to come in half a century, the report made it clear that the character of the voyage was not military, though it still used the term *filibuster* and compared it to Narciso López’s Cuban expedition, which had departed the U.S. three months earlier. “The Californian Fillibusters may yet figure as extensively in the territory of Kamehameha as their namesakes who are now *en route* for ‘the Havana,’” the article concluded.³⁹

³⁶ Andrew F. Rolle, “California Filibustering and the Hawaiian Kingdom,” *Pacific Historical Review* 19: 3 (1950).

³⁷ *Daily Evening Picayune*, 15 October 1851; quoted from Greenberg, *Manifest Manhood*, 233.

³⁸ “The Cuban Fillibusters Outdone,” *Sacramento Daily Union*, 17 October 1851.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

According to the *Sacramento Daily Union*, many powerful men in San Francisco and Sacramento were supporting Brannan's plan.

Whether or not Brannan really contemplated colonizing the island kingdom and annexing it into the United States, it was certainly how both the Californian public and the Hawaiian government received the news of his voyage. The Hawaiian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Robert C. Wyllie, responded by devising a defense plan. In a letter written on November 11, 1851 to his friend Elisha Allen who was visiting California at the time, Wyllie claimed that the six islands' able-bodied men numbered 5,050, four-fifths of them drawn from three major islands: Hawaii, Maui, and Oahu.⁴⁰ Wyllie simultaneously expressed doubts concerning the loyalty of these native soldiers to the chiefs or to the king, which might explain his constant vigilance.⁴¹ Sam Brannan's group of travelers caused no major trouble in Honolulu other than the port-typical brawls and rackets, and he returned to San Francisco in January 1852 without much to report back. Still, King Kamehameha III lamented in his 1852 speech at the opening of the legislature that "the peace of my kingdom has been threatened with an invasion of private adventurers from California."⁴² Wyllie continued to harbor anxiety about large numbers of travelers from California, especially in 1853-54, when the annexation of Hawaii was being widely speculated by the U.S. press.⁴³

The case of Hawaii encapsulated the complexity surrounding the correlations between official U.S. government initiatives of territorial acquisition and filibustering or other private American citizens' ventures. Citing the 1851 *Game Cock* scare in Hawaii, historians have argued that

⁴⁰ Wyllie to Elisha Allen, 11 November 1851; quoted in Rolle, "California Filibustering and Hawaii," 255.

⁴¹ Wyllie to William Little Lee, 5 November 1851; quoted in Greenberg, *Manifest Manhood*, 235.

⁴² Robert Colfax Lydecker, *Roster, Legislature of Hawaii, 1841-1918: Constitutions of Monarchy and Republic, Speeches of Sovereigns and Presidents* (Honolulu, 1918), 33.

⁴³ Kuykendall, *The Hawaiian Kingdom Vol. 1*, 385.

this filibustering threat may have forestalled Hawaii's annexation to the United States in the mid-1850s.⁴⁴ Some contemporary Americans shared the misgivings against filibusters. Luther Severance, U.S. Commissioner to Hawaii from 1850 to 1853, wrote in his dispatch to the State Department in February 1853, "If they [the filibusters] desire to effect annexation to the U.S., they could not pursue a worse policy."⁴⁵ On the eve of the *Game Cock's* arrival, however, Wyllie sought to enlist help from foreign warships, including American. After the threat of filibustering died down, the Hawaiian government pursued a military reinforcement with the help of Captain Gardner of U.S. Navy.⁴⁶ Seeking military assistance of the United States against possible filibustering invasion by U.S. citizens made it clear that the Hawaiian officials distinguished actions of U.S. government from those of individual Americans. When talks of annexation first began to circulate between the Kingdom and the United States in 1851, the King and his advisers considered the annexation—in the form of American protectorate—as one of the possible options for the islands' defense, chiefly against the French naval blockade of Honolulu in 1849.⁴⁷

The distinction between American filibustering and American annexation was certainly an uneasy one in Hawaii, because of the presence of American-born settlers in Hawaii who vocally supported annexation to the United States in 1853-54. To some contemporary observers, American settlers' annexationist movement in Hawaii was not entirely distinguishable from American filibusters' actions elsewhere. Certain people in both Hawaiian and Californian societies saw it as just another filibustering attempt under a different guise. David Gregg, who succeeded Luther Severance

⁴⁴ May, "Manifest Destiny's Filibusters," 146-8, 168; Greenberg, *Manifest Manhood*, 242.

⁴⁵ Quoted in Rolle, "California Filibustering and Hawaii," 261.

⁴⁶ Kamehameha III also mentions this in his speech quoted above. Lydecker, *Roaster, Legislature of Hawaii*, 33.

⁴⁷ Kuykendall, *The Hawaiian Kingdom Vol. 1*, 400-404, *passim*. The sudden death of King Kamehameha III in December 1854 and the succeeding monarch's opposition to the annexation rendered the matter moot.

in 1853 as U.S. Commissioner stationed in Honolulu and led annexation negotiations with the Hawaiian king, wrote on November 12, 1854: “a group of filibusters from California, in concert with three hundred American residents, were ready to demand signatures of a treaty of annexation as the only alternative to the overthrow of the dynasty and the plundering of Honolulu.”⁴⁸

At some point during these annexation debates, the term filibuster expanded to include foreign (American) settlers in Hawaii who wanted immediate annexation to the United States in the 1850s. In 1853, a group of Honolulu residents staged a lengthy and vehement protest against the Hawaiian Minister of Finance, Gerrit Judd, and Second Minister of Public Instruction, Richard Armstrong, both former Protestant missionaries who became the King’s advisers. They were ultimately forced out of their offices in 1853. San Francisco’s leading newspaper, the *Daily Alta California* interpreted the protests as less about the alleged corruption of the ministers and more as a movement against the monarchy itself.⁴⁹ In September 1853, one Hawaiian resident, using the penname “Justicia,” sent a letter to the editors of the *Daily Alta California*, which attempted to vindicate the current government of the kingdom and the former missionaries who were allegedly controlling the government.⁵⁰ The proponents of the Hawaiian annexation to the United States were using the protests as an excuse to argue that the corruption of missionaries and the economic depression of the kingdom justified U.S. intervention. “Justicia” attributed the Hawaii’s staggering economy to a temporary decline in exports, resulting from California’s increasing agricultural self-sufficiency and heavy American tariffs. The anonymous writer then criticized “the *fillibusters* [sic] resident at the islands” who used the economic depression as an excuse “to censure and vilify the

⁴⁸ Quoted in Brown, *Agents of Manifest Destiny*, 164.

⁴⁹ *Daily Alta California*, 11 September 1853.

⁵⁰ “Justicia,” letter to the editors, *Daily Alta California*, 18 September 1853.

government.”⁵¹ These “filibusters,” in the writer’s opinion, worked for their own personal gains, “than from a desire to guard the interests of the Kanaka race, or from their love of good government or the spread of Democratic principles.”⁵² In the very same issue that carried *Justicia*’s letter, the *Daily Alta California* also published an editorial more critical of the missionaries’ character, and in extension, the current government of the kingdom. “It has now become certain that the Sandwich Islands must be annexed to the United States at no very distant day,” the editorial asserted, claiming that the current protest might be the final straw to topple the Hawaiian government. If that happened, “but a few months will pass before the stars and stripes will wave over the Sandwich Islands,” the editors triumphantly predicted, thereby implicating the residents’ protest—filibustering, according to “*Justicia*”—directly to the official annexation by the United States.⁵³ As if in an afterthought, the editorial then cautioned that “This event must be brought about by the legitimate course of events, and not by filibustering.”⁵⁴ But if those settlers in Hawaii who would eventually bring Stars and Stripes were Anglo Americans, what difference was there between filibustering and their actions? The mixed signal contained within this editorial was characteristic of the ambivalence toward the methods of territorial acquisition in regard to the Hawaiian Islands.

4.3. Searching for a “Second California”: Californians in William Walker’s Nicaragua

If the fear of Californian filibusters in Hawaii during the early 1850s was the combined result of the kingdom’s vulnerable independence and the rising reputation of general lawlessness and

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Daily Alta California*, 18 September 1853.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

acquisitiveness in American California, the real filibustering expeditions that continued from the mid-1850s painted Anglo Californian's already unruly reputation into a more threateningly aggressive hue. Walker's "Republic of Lower California" was not the last filibustering venture in Mexico, nor was Mexico Walker's last destination. Charles Rand, the San Francisco merchant who had witnessed one of his debtors returning as a routed filibuster, described another Walker filibustering scheme on February 20, 1857, this time looking at a group of Californian outcasts heading for Nicaragua: "There goes down to Walker's aid by the *Sierra Nevada* today, about six hundred recruits, who were enlisted out of the thousands in the mines now doing nothing," he observed, adding that respectable Californians were "glad...to get rid of them, tho' they will have 'a hard row to hoe.'"⁵⁵ What Rand witnessed was a volunteer reinforcement for the ongoing war in Nicaragua that had started in 1855, when the Liberal Party invited William Walker to lead their army against the conservative establishment. With a critical victory in October 1855, when Walker's army captured the city of Granada and the conservatives were forced to sign a peace treaty with the Liberal Party, Walker assumed control of the Nicaraguan government, installing himself as the commander-in-chief and Patricio Rivas as president.

The Nicaraguan Liberal Party's alliance with Walker ended by mid-summer of 1856. By then Walker had installed himself as the President of Nicaragua. To maintain the presidency, he recruited reinforcements in the United States to fight a war with the allied forces of Central American countries. It was a losing battle, partly because Walker not only alienated the Central American nations but also the American business mogul Cornelius Vanderbilt, by expropriating his Accessory Transit Company. With Vanderbilt's financial support, Costa Rica intervened in the war in March 1856. Even as Walker's hold on Nicaragua was falling apart, newly recruited soldiers continued to

⁵⁵ Charles E. Rand Letters, 20 February 1857, BRBM.

arrive from across the United States, lured by the prospect of 250 acres of land after discharge. David Deaderick, who published in 1859 his reminiscence of the filibustering experience with Walker in Nicaragua under a pseudonym, described that Walker promised the recruited soldiers \$25 per month salary for their military service and free passage to Nicaragua.⁵⁶ Day laborers in San Francisco then earned 3 dollars a day, so the monthly pay would not have been the appealing aspect of the recruitment offer. But the 250 acres of land was, considering that the 1862 Homestead Act granted 160 acres to each adult settler.⁵⁷ One filibuster recounted the frenzy Walker's recruitment caused in the gold fields of northern California in February 1857: "Placerville, Coloma, and other mountain towns, were literally illuminated with flaming posters, bearing, in mammoth type, the eye-catching motto, 'Ho, for the sunny south!'"⁵⁸ According to a correspondent for the *San Francisco Bulletin*, by December 1856 Walker had amassed about 1,400 men, though the number included those in hospitals and untrained recruits, who were scattered throughout Nicaragua.⁵⁹

Flavel Belcher, the Indian trader-turned-filibuster we met at the beginning of this chapter, was still not directly associated with Walker's army at this point. His motive for going to Nicaragua had not been to join Walker's army there. As Costa Rica entered a war with Nicaragua under Walker's regime in May 1856, the Costa Rican authorities ordered Belcher to leave the country. He went to Nicaragua hoping he could find a U.S. warship that would provide appropriate protection. He then promptly assured his father that he "avoided mixing [himself] up with either party...as [he]

⁵⁶ "The Experience of Samuel Absalom, Filibuster," *The Atlantic Monthly* (December 1859). For the identification of the author as David Deaderick, see Greenberg, *Manifest Manhood*, 136 n5.

⁵⁷ The daily wage of day laborers as listed in "Rates of Labor in San Francisco," *Daily Alta California*, 3 January 1855.

⁵⁸ William Frank Stewart, *Last of Fillibusters, or, Recollections of the Siege of Rivas* (Sacramento: H. Shipley, 1857), 7; quoted in Greenberg, *Manifest Manhood*, 137 n6.

⁵⁹ *The Bulletin* article reproduced in the *Sacramento Daily Union*, 22 December 1856.

prefer a peaceful commercial life.”⁶⁰ Despite his disavowal, he appeared overtly sympathetic with Walker’s cause. He wrote in June 1856 to his father, “I can only be American, with my sympathies entirely on their side when I know the treachery, rascality of the whole mixed race of Spaniards in these countries.”⁶¹ His was a clearly racial and nationalist understanding of the filibustering war in Nicaragua. Praising the region’s beauty and resources, Belcher was convinced that “were it populated with a different race; [it] would be one of garden-spots of the world, added to which its great mineral wealth will one day make it almost a second California.”⁶² Similarly rosy portrayals of Nicaragua abounded in the press around 1856, given the U.S. government’s diplomatic recognition of Walker’s regime and the promoters’ extravagant publicization about the opportunities that awaited settlers in Nicaragua.⁶³ In Belcher’s case, his previous experiences led him to liken Nicaragua to California; his subtly expressed desire to find a “second California” connected Belcher’s place in Nicaragua to the aftermath of the Gold Rush. It was the racial transplantation that would ultimately transform Nicaragua into another California. Would Belcher have also envisioned his previous move to California as transforming the state’s Indian country into a “garden spot of the world”? It might have briefly appeared plausible in the eyes of Belcher or other contemporary witnesses that the settlements of white colonists would “Americanize” Nicaragua. Following Walker’s seeming success at creating a “stable government” in this crucial location in Central America, the number of emigrants traveling to Nicaragua from the United States briefly increased, including women. Walker’s policy of making English the official language of the government, as well as creating a land

⁶⁰ Flavel Belcher to his father Joseph, 30 June 1856, BL.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² *Ibid.* (emphasis in original).

⁶³ May, *Manifest Destiny’s Underworld*, 195, 205.

registration system modeled after the American one, also gave the newcomers the illusion of precipitating the Americanization of Nicaragua.⁶⁴

Belcher was deeply convinced that “the Americans, or the white race are to govern the destinies of this Central American country.”⁶⁵ Perhaps guided by this belief in racial destiny, Belcher eventually joined Walker’s filibustering army. When he wrote home again in November 1857, it was to notify his father of his enlistment. Walker had offered him a position of first lieutenant, and Belcher apparently could not resist the position, despite his previous determination. “I know you will be surprised at my joining the army,” Belcher admitted to his father apologetically, “but under the circumstances I could not think of doing differently.”⁶⁶ The sense of inevitability he felt may have been the result of Walker’s desperate situation, because Walker and his followers were on retreat when Belcher wrote this letter. Or it was a change of heart of someone who could “only be American,” under the influence of fellow Americans’ belligerent spirits around him.

In his November 1857 letter informing his family of his enlistment, Belcher struck a slightly different tone from the racial understanding of the conflict he had professed the year before. After Guatemala and El Salvador joined forces with Costa Rica in September 1856, Walker’s prospect of retaining any semblance of control over Nicaragua drastically declined. Walker surrendered himself to U.S. naval commander Charles Davis in May 1857, temporarily returning to the United States. Yet his purpose for returning was to recruit more soldiers, for which he was put on trial for the violation of the neutrality laws in New Orleans circuit court. In November 1857, Walker’s new recruits landed at San Juan del Norte, on the Atlantic side of Nicaragua, only to be arrested again by the U.S. Navy.

⁶⁴ May, *Manifest Destiny’s Underworld*, 196-99.

⁶⁵ Flavel Belcher to his father Joseph, 30 June 1856, Flavel Belcher Letters, BL.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 27 November 1857.

In a letter written from Leaf's Island in the San Juan River, Belcher described Nicaragua's current situation as in "a state of revolution" and relayed a report that Nicaraguans were awaiting on the coast of Lake Nicaragua the arrival of filibusters to oust Costa Rican army; Belcher predicted "a bloodless victory" once they proceeded that far to join forces with Nicaraguans.⁶⁷ In this Belcher completely misread the situation, since by the time he wrote this letter, Nicaraguan forces had abandoned Walker and joined Costa Ricans and other Central American nations to repel the invaders from the United States. The apparent solidarity with the revolutionary cause also clashes with what Belcher wrote in his last letter about the racial and national superiority of the white race and Americans. This change of tone suggests that once he decided to join the filibusters, he felt the needs to justify what Walker was doing in Nicaragua in a more politically advisable term.

For someone who initially hesitated joining Walker's army, Belcher's fate became quite closely entangled with his commander's. After Walker was ousted as Nicaragua's President by the Costa Rican Army in 1857, Belcher was put on trial with Walker and his lieutenants at the U.S. Circuit Court of New Orleans.⁶⁸ The jury was mostly sympathetic to Walker, as was the case in most filibusters' trials. The trial ended with a hung jury and the prosecution gave up pursuing the case further. After Walker's defeat and trial in 1857, Belcher's fate is again unclear. He may have gone back to Nicaragua, as Walker repeatedly tried in vain to reclaim his former position of power until his death before Honduran firing squad in 1860. It appears unlikely, however, considering his initial reluctance to join Walker's army. Belcher, a merchant by profession, could have gone back to California as he had implied in one of his earlier letters, or to his family in New York. Wherever he

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ "The United States vs. William Walker, Frank P. Anderson, Dudley McMichael, John S. West and Flavel Belcher," RG 21, Eastern District of Louisiana, New Orleans, Circuit Court General Cases—NA Southwest Region; see May, *Manifest Destiny's Underworld*, 345 n47.

may have gone, the paths that led Belcher from northern California to the trial in New Orleans were shaped by the confluence of mercantile circuits, opportunism and a taste for adventure, and a firmly established sense of collective self-importance as a member of the Anglo-American race.

Hundreds of Anglo Californians who went to Nicaragua did not consciously or actively work to extend U.S. territory, but participated in the pursuit of Manifest Destiny outside U.S. borders in search of personal gains, armed with a vague notion of racial and national superiority. Poor and desperate men in California were drawn to filibustering for monetary gain coupled with something grander. Thomas Anderson, another ex-Californian who joined Walker's army, was on the desperate side of the spectrum of filibuster soldiers—those under destitute conditions who went to Nicaragua seeking fortunes and a desire to prove themselves. From the frequent spelling errors in his writing, Anderson appears less educated than Belcher. Anderson first arrived in California in 1849 as a deck hand aboard the Pacific Mail steamship *California*. When the steamship reached San Francisco, he abandoned his job and headed for the mines, like many other sailors at the time. He first went to the Tuolumne (misspelled "Thollama" in his letters) River area, and then to Sonora to mine gold for at least three and a half years. Life in the mining region of northern California at first agreed with Anderson, as he wrote in 1850 that it was "a first-rate country" where "a man never need be without money. If he will work at all for if he wants 3 or 4 dolors [sic], all he [h]as to do is to go to the river and wash out a few pans of dirt."⁶⁹ But the era of panning, i.e. relatively easy placer mining that did not require particular skills or capital, was already fading by the time he wrote this.⁷⁰

Although there is little clue as to Anderson's conditions or motives when he enlisted William Walker's army in Nicaragua in 1856, it is reasonable to presume he was either disappointed or

⁶⁹ Thomas Anderson, Letters to His Family, 17 February 1850, BANC MSS 68/163 c, BL.

⁷⁰ Malcolm Rohrbough, *Days of Gold: The California Gold Rush and the American Nation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 200-203.

desperate enough to leave the gold fields in California. What is striking in this foot soldier's letter of April 1856, written after "having just returned safe and sound from the Battlefield," is how his descriptions of the battle mingled with a discussion of his future plans, unrelated though they were to Nicaragua or Walker.⁷¹ Anderson had just fought at the Battle of Rivas, a southwestern city on the coast of Lake Nicaragua, that took place on April 11, 1856 between the Costa Rican military and Walker's army. Anderson painstakingly described the event, claiming a landslide victory, boasting that they had killed 600 of the 2,000 Costa Rican soldiers while only 70 to 80 out of 550 filibusters were dead or wounded. He concluded the paragraph with a promise that he would tell more detailed stories once he got back home, "as thear [*sic*] is a very good prospect of our get[t]ing off when our time is out." Perhaps a statement of desire rather than fact, he predicted that it would "not take long" to "clear the Costa Rican army out of the country," though he had no idea what he himself would do once the war was over. California was still the place to return to, if only because his earlier residence there provided for networks of acquaintances. "I am at present not worth a cent," Anderson confessed, "but I have [a] friend in California that has plenty of money and will do anything in the world for me."⁷² It is unknown whether this soldier of fortune indeed went back to northern California after his service under William Walker, but Anderson's letter indicates that at least for some foot soldiers, filibustering expeditions in foreign territory were not far removed from other more day-to-day practices.

In the minds of young Anglo-Californian men in the 1850s, fighting an informal war against a foreign country could be a mere extension of their initial migration to California, another sojourn to try their fortunes. "It was not to sold[i]er all togather [*sic*] that I com[e] to this country," he wrote,

⁷¹ Thomas Anderson, Letters to His Family, 16 April 1856, BANC MSS 68/163 c, BL.

⁷² *Ibid.*

“though I don’t care what I turn my hand to I *gain more information of the world every day*.”⁷³ The Californian and Nicaraguan experiences were, for him, world-learning adventures that also involved opportunities to better himself. This kind of casual border crossing is perhaps one more indication that California in the 1850s lacked the presence of strong state presence to govern settlers—filibustering was, on a grass-roots level, another branch of the privatized violence and lawlessness that pervaded the American West, as were banditry and vigilantism. And yet it was the most *international* form of such violence and outlawry, and as such, its impacts were also international. The American outlaws fundamentally shaped how the foreign governments and people saw the mass movement of young American men, especially in the regions connected to the recent territorial additions of the United States.

4.4. Ho! For the Fraser River: Californian Transmigration and the Specter of Filibusters

For would-be rank and file filibusters from California, geographic connections mattered, both in terms of distance and transportation. Most filibustering activities originating from California headed to the contiguous Mexican territory in Sonora and Lower California or to Nicaragua via established steamship connections. William Walker used the sea route to transport his volunteer army to Lower California, proving once more that the ocean functioned as a connecting, not dividing, force for these Californian fortune seekers. As we have seen at the 1849 California State Constitutional Convention, some Americans did not imagine the Pacific Ocean as a natural obstacle that disrupted contiguity. Instead, the ocean sometimes provided ready access to people envisioning their own post-rush paths as fundamentally tied to the expanding dominion of the United States. Successive gold discoveries in the Anglophone settler colonies of the Pacific Ocean basin also

⁷³ *Ibid.* (emphasis mine).

helped construct these connections. After California, gold was found in southeastern Australia in 1851, in the Fraser River area of the Pacific Northwest in 1857, and in Collingwood, New Zealand in 1857. Many fortune seekers went from California to these other gold fields during the late 1850s, causing transoceanic circulation of mining techniques and connecting the remote mining regions in California, Australia, New Zealand, and British Columbia into the same circuit of migration.⁷⁴

In 1858, the present-day western Canada welcomed the news of gold discoveries and the subsequent influx of immigrants. The First Nations of western Canada had long been aware of gold deposits in their land and in fact mined gold to trade with European colonists since the early nineteenth century. California's preceding rush for gold and its subsequent "bust" created a fresh impetus and ready pool of immigrants to seek more easily accessible gold deposits. This pushed the mining frontier outward from California and led to a "rediscovery" of gold in late 1857 by an American prospector named Hill, near the Fraser River Valley in New Caledonia, as British Columbia was called before 1858. Enthusiastic reports of these new gold mines in California newspapers created a secondary rush from San Francisco to British Columbia. From April to August, 81 ships departed from San Francisco with 12,760 paid passengers headed for the Strait of Juan de Fuca.⁷⁵ The actual number of departures is estimated to be larger, as there were also stow-away passengers on board these ships. Including those who migrated overland, more than 30,000 miners

⁷⁴ Historian Philip Ross May has dubbed this constantly moving mining population the "Pacific Men." Philip Ross May, "Gold Rushes of the Pacific Borderlands: A Comparative Survey," in *Provincial Perspectives: Essays in Honour of W. J. Gardner* (Christchurch, NZ: Whitcoulls Ltd., 1980), 100. See also George Fetherling, *The Gold Crusades: A Social History of Gold Rushes, 1849-1929* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997); Jeremy Mouat, "After California: Later Gold Rushes of the Pacific Basin," in *Riches for All: The Californian Gold Rush and the World*, ed. By Kenneth N. Owens (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002).

⁷⁵ Robert E. Ficken, *Unsettled Boundaries: Fraser Gold and the British-American Northwest* (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 2003), 48.

came to the Fraser River in the spring of 1858.⁷⁶ As the majority of these immigrants came from California, British authorities north of the border feared a possible filibuster invasion from the U.S. during the Fraser River gold rush of 1858.

British Columbia, like Nicaragua, provided a new outlet for desperate fortune seekers from California, where rapid urbanization and state-wide agricultural development had begun to erase the remnants of the earlier gold mining. Mining was still a large part of California's economy, but by 1858 when gold was discovered at the Fraser River, California's placers or the alluvial gold was mostly depleted.⁷⁷ By then the focus had shifted to hydraulic mining, using highly pressurized water to get to the gold layers deeply embedded in rocks. This required larger capital investment and a more concentrated labor force. Those miners who sought '49-style gold prospecting with less capital and more independence, therefore, sought a second California in more recently discovered gold fields. In this, the history of British Columbia was closely entangled with California as it had its own gold rush toward the late 1850s, although it was much smaller and less international in scale. In 1858, the news of gold discovery in the Fraser River valley created an excitement on the Pacific Coast that lasted for several months.

In addition, California's exponential agricultural growth and accompanying commercial development transformed San Francisco into one of the liveliest urban centers on the Pacific, sending its superfluous population onto the less developed parts of the world such as British Columbia. Conrad Kohrs, a Danish immigrant who had gained U.S. citizenship in 1856 and

⁷⁶ Patrick K. Brown, "Fraser River Gold Rush of 1858," Gordon Morris Bakken & Alexandra Kindell (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Immigration and Migration in the American West, Vol. 1*, (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Ltd., 2006), 243.

⁷⁷ William Downie, a Scottish Californian immigrant who left for the Fraser River in 1858, recounted in a memoir published in 1893 how individual miners who did not want to work for others kept headed north to find more surface gold. Downie, *Hunting for Gold: Reminiscences of Personal Experience and Research in the Early Days of the Pacific Coast from Alaska to Panama* (San Francisco: California Publishing Co., 1893).

migrated to California in 1857 to satisfy his “natural restlessness...stimulated by the wandering and roving life [he] had led,” soon joined the rush to the Fraser River mines in 1858. He was unsuccessful there and came back to San Francisco after a short stint. Upon his return, he recounted how life in British Columbia made him look uncivilized to San Francisco’s residents: “We were a suspicious-looking crowd; dirty, unshaven, hair long... Knowing that most of the miners on the Frazer River had been living on clams, the hoodlums called ‘clams’ ‘clams’ and followed up town.”⁷⁸ This episode was emblematic of how Anglo Californians perceived British Columbia—a thinly populated land full of Indians and far from refined civilization.

San Francisco newspapers printed article after article during the summer of 1858 detailing the wealth of the Fraser River mines, political and social conditions in British Columbia, and the possibility of extending American dominion to the remote British colony by transplanting Californian there. The excitement San Francisco residents evinced over the Fraser River gold mines in 1858 worried the British colonial authorities, not least because the mines were right above the forty-ninth parallel, which had become the boundary between the United States and the British possessions on the Pacific Coast in 1846. New Caledonia was a remote colonial frontier without direct government control and with a negligible settler population. When the gold rush began in 1858, the area was not even yet formally a British colony. Trading rights in the area were exclusively chartered in 1670 to the Hudson Bay Company (HBC), which established a lasting alliance with local indigenous people and engaged in a global fur trading business since the late-seventeenth century. The chief factor of the HBC at the time, James Douglas, was also the governor of Vancouver Island, a formal crown colony since 1849. He soon became the first governor of British Columbia, officially inaugurated as a crown colony in November 1858.

⁷⁸ Conrad Kohrs, *Autobiography of Conrad Kohrs* (typed manuscript), 23, BRBM.

The establishment of the crown colony of British Columbia was probably the result of the gold discovery and the imagined Californian threat. When the rush for the Fraser River first began in San Francisco, a correspondent of the *London Daily News* wrote in August 1858 that the movement of Californians to the British possessions in the Pacific Northwest would prove to be “a great misfortune,” because the “remote and somewhat inaccessible territory” of the Pacific Northwest was now peopled “in a manner which no friend of order and good government can desire.”⁷⁹ The stream of migrants coming out from California meant to this British observer “a horde of adventurers...of the worst habits and worst antecedents, averse to ordinary labour, greedy of sudden gains, and impatient to the last degree of legal restraint.”⁸⁰ Though the *London Daily News* correspondent did not explicitly mention the threat of filibustering activities, the article nonetheless hinted at the possibility that Californian preponderance within the demographics might result in a full-blown conflict between the British and American governments over the territory.

There were valid reasons for the British Canadians to worry. For a few months into the summer of 1858, the presumed abundance of gold in the Fraser River Valley right above the recently settled boundary line ignited the interests of expansionists in California. Californian newspapers broadcasted the news of Fraser River gold with uncensored expansionist rhetoric. The *San Francisco Bulletin* sent a correspondent to Victoria, publishing article-after-article about the new gold country in June 1858. This correspondent opined that Americans would soon “provoke a crisis” against the British in the Fraser river region, staging “a sort of independent California fight which will [then] involve the two nations.”⁸¹ “Depend upon it,” he added, “if Vancouver Island once falls into

⁷⁹ *The London Daily News*, 4 August 1858.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ “The Fraser Exodus and its Ultimate Results,” *San Francisco Bulletin*, 21 June 1858.

American hands it will stay there.”⁸² The Californian fortune seekers in 1858 often invoked the phrase “Fifty-four forty or Fight,” a slogan for aggressive U.S. expansionists who wanted to push the northwestern boundary between the U.S and British North America up to 54° 40" N, instead of the 49th parallel agreed in the 1846 treaty.

The fact that most miners from California migrated north as a military-style large company further troubled the British authorities. Moreover, the Fraser River gold rush of 1858 coincided with a series of Indian wars waged by American settlers and the U.S. Army in the Washington territory.⁸³ The miners emigrating overland from California frequently reported “Indian troubles” along the way, leading many Americans to suspect that the Hudson Bay Company was conspiring against them with Indians.⁸⁴ It was a popular belief that had widely circulated during the war between American settlers of the Washington territory and the “northern Indians” since 1856. Newspapers fanned the flames by reporting, often falsely, massacres perpetrated by the Indians. In California, where the miners’ contempt against “Digger Indians” was pretty well accepted by all newcomers from 1849 on, the press and public embellished the hostile nature of “northern Indians” as the perils of the overland trail to the Fraser River gold fields.

American hostility toward Indians and distrust of British rule led ex-Californian miners to launch their own Indian war against the Fraser River Valley’s native people in August 1858. The “Fraser Canyon War,” as it came to be called by historians, was mostly an American affair, with a few British colonists working as translators. According to one embellished account of the incident

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ Daniel P. Marshall, "No Parallel: American Settler-Soldiers at War with the Nlaka'pamux of the Canadian West," *Parallel Destinies: Canadian-American Relations West of the Rockies*, ed. by John Findlay and Ken Coates (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002), 41-51.

⁸⁴ Marshall, “No Parallel,” 44; see also Ficken, *Unsettled Boundaries*, 105.

published much later, the catalyst for the war was the death of an immigrant German woman, who went up river with her husband despite the warnings of white miners regarding Indian threats. A few days later, “the body of the woman was seen floating down the stream in a nude state; she, however, had her head on her shoulders. It was reported that the Indians had stripped her of all her clothing, and then formed a ring and danced around her.”⁸⁵ Rumors similar to this highly fictionalized story circulated widely in Californian and British Columbian newspapers of the headless corpses of white miners floating down the river in the summer of 1858.⁸⁶ Most reports of massacred miners turned out to be false, but not in time to prevent a war of extermination against the native peoples on the Fraser River. Two militia armies were formed, the New York Pike Guard and Whatcom Guard, led by a self-proclaimed “Captain” Snyder from San Francisco. Snyder and his company of miners marched up the river, engaging in the skirmishes and extortions, though the exact number of the deaths during their 10-day march is not known. This show of force was clearly in violation of the British sovereignty of the region, yet Governor Douglass curiously did not react.⁸⁷

While the Fraser Canyon War had clear parallels with California’s wars of extermination against Indians and left a far more lasting impact on the region’s history, another incident that happened in that winter was more closely linked to the “filibustering stock” of Californians: the so-called “Ned McGowan’s War.”⁸⁸ Edward “Ned” McGowan was an infamous California outlaw, who

⁸⁵ Edward McGowan, “Reminiscences: Unpublished Incidents in the Life of the ‘Ubiquitous,’” *Argonaut* 2: 21 (June 1878), 10.

⁸⁶ Marshall, “No Parallel,” 53-61. British Columbian historians tell a different story of a raped Nlaka’pamux woman and the subsequent revenge killings. Ficken, *Unsettled Boundaries*, 106.

⁸⁷ Marshall, “No Parallel,” 62-63.

⁸⁸ Ficken, *Unsettled Boundaries*, 126-129; Heather Davis-Fisch, “Enacting Civility Through Comic Opera; or, Nation, Race, and Ned McGowan’s War,” *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies* 16: 1 (2016), 18-27. For a more narrative-focused account of the incident, see Donald J. Hauka, *McGowan’s War: The Birth of Modern British Columbia on the Fraser River Gold Fields* (Vancouver: New Star Books, 2004).

had been a fugitive since 1856 when the San Francisco Vigilance Committee of 1856 targeted him for the alleged complicity in the murder of James King of William. He came to British Columbia after two years of flight, during which time he acquired the nickname “the Ubiquitous” by California newspapers.⁸⁹ “McGowan’s War” was a civil disturbance perpetrated by Anglo-Californian miners in the Fraser River gold fields during the winter of 1858-59. “War” is clearly a misnomer, as the incident was rather a violent dispute between two groups of miners, each group then involving the local magistrates of Fort Yale and Hill’s Bar, the former being the long-standing British colonial settlement in the region and the latter a mining town established by Californian immigrants.

The origin of the dispute was interracial socialization. Among those who left California for the Fraser River, non-white migrants occupied a significant proportion. More than 400 black Californians, and an equally or more sizable number of Chinese Californians, migrated to British Columbia in the early months of the rush, encouraged by the British Colony’s reputation for being more tolerant toward non-white population.⁹⁰ Their migration also meant that Anglo-Californian miners would continue their assertion of racial superiority in British Columbia. Around Christmas holidays in 1858, two American miners from Hill’s Bar, both friends of McGowan, attacked an African-American barber named Isaac Dixon at Fort Yale. Although not much is known about the assaulted African-American man or other miners of color in British Columbia at the time, it is probable this clash was not an isolated incident. McGowan’s own description of this incident read: “the negroes piled themselves into the room, and commenced dancing with some young squaws;

⁸⁹ “‘Judge’ Ned McGowan,” *Sacramento Daily Union*, 9 December 1893. For a more detailed biographical sketch of McGowan, see Hauka, *McGowan’s War*, 49-73.

⁹⁰ In Jun 1858, the *Daily Alta California* reported a planned “exodus” of “ten thousand Chinamen” from the state to the Fraser River. Considering that the size of total migrations to British Columbia fell around thirty thousand, it must have been a highly exaggerated number; the number may very well have exceed a thousand, when one compares the relative size of Chinese population with black Californian population at the time. “The Chinese Exodus,” *Daily Alta California*, 28 June 1858. See also Ficken, *Unsettled Boundaries*, 44.

they would not go peaceably, and they were made to go forcibly.”⁹¹ That the “negroes” joining the dance in which white Americans were present became a source of the violence, ultimately causing collective defiance against local authority, reminds us that part of the American outlawry in foreign lands was about the clash of different racial understandings. It also indicates white American desire to exploit female sexuality abroad; all the more significant is the fact that the women in question were non-white “squaws,” and the white American assaulters still felt the need to police their fraternization with African Americans. Local females were seen here as resources to be exploited, just as gold deposits, often in competition against other groups of miners.

Yale’s justice of peace, P. B. Whannell, attempted to apprehend the assaulters while protecting Dixon. The assaulters escaped and retreated to Hill’s Bar, where dozens of American miners, including McGowan, gathered in support of them. The Americans at Hill’s Bar involved another justice of peace, Perrier, and requested a hearing in an “unbiased” setting. Perrier issued a warrant for Dixon to appear for a hearing at Hill’s Bar, but Whannell refused and instead arrested the messenger. The enraged Hill’s Bar men, led by McGowan, attacked the jail, freed the prisoners, and “arrested” Whannell—who was then tried and fined by Perrier, British magistrate at Hill’s Bar, for contempt of court.

The resolution of the incident ultimately required intervention from colonial government officials with military escort. After being freed, the humiliated magistrate Whannell promptly requested assistance from the colonial government, inviting Matthew Begbie, the first Supreme Court judge of the colony, and Richard C. Moody, the lieutenant-governor newly appointed with the establishment of the crown colony. McGowan later claimed that Whannell had “exaggerated” the actual situation “that the Americans had taken these two points on the river [Fort Yale and Hill’s

⁹¹ McGowan, “Reminiscences: Unpublished Incidents in the Life of the ‘Ubiquitous,’” *Argonaut* 2: 21 (June 1878), 10.

Bar].”⁹² Lieutenant-Governor Moody, in a letter to Arthur Blackwood, his personal friend and the head of the North America Department in London’s Colonial Office, described how he found Whannell’s missives “so alarming and so urgent in their nature” that he promptly led a group of the Royal Engineers and volunteer soldiers to Fort Yale—though he clearly did not see the situation as dire as an American occupation; “The notorious Ned McGowan...at the head of a band of Yankee Rowdies defying the law!” he proclaimed somewhat comically.⁹³ Of course, this casual dismissal was only possible after the fact. Moody’s own description of the events leading up to his arrival at Hill’s Bar belied a certain amount of apprehension: “Their numbers were considerable, among them Military men who had served under General Scott in the Mexican War, all armed & knowing how to use their arms.”⁹⁴

McGowan could not help boasting that he had in fact anticipated the worst scenario involving a war between two nations that would finally bring British Columbia into the hands of the United States. While waiting for the arrival of Begbie and Moody, McGowan recalled himself putting a stop to an attempted duel between two of his men. “I said to them,” McGowan narrated, “‘in a few days you will have an enemy to fight’—meaning the British soldiers.” In anticipation of the possible military collision with the British troops, they had devised a plan to take over Fort Yale:

and then go down the river and capture Fort Hope (they were only trading posts called forts), and retreat with one plunder across the country into Washington Territory—only twenty miles distant. This would, we supposed, *bring on the fight and put an end to the long agony and public clamor—through the press of the country—that our boundary line must be ‘fifty-four forty or fight.’*⁹⁵

⁹² McGowan, “Reminiscences,” *Argonaut* 2: 22 (June 1878), 10.

⁹³ Willard E. Ireland, “First Impressions: Letter of Colonel Richard Clement Moody, R.E., to Arthur Blackwood, February 1, 1859,” *British Columbia Historical Quarterly* 15 (1951), 95.

⁹⁴ Ireland, “First Impressions,” 98.

⁹⁵ McGowan, “Reminiscences,” *Argonaut* 2: 22 (June 1878), 10 (emphasis mine).

This reminiscence, published two decades later in a popular weekly newspaper, may very well have contained some embellishment or downplay of actual ex-Californian outlaws' thoughts and actions in the winter of 1858. Yet the plan was eerily similar to what the Californian filibusters had tried, albeit unsuccessfully, in the contiguous territory of Mexico earlier in the decade—march, plunder, retreat to U.S. territory to go under the protection of U.S. government and military. The fact that he emphasized the short distance separating British Columbia from the Washington Territory also demonstrates how the cognitive geographic proximity worked in the minds of Californians contemplating extralegal undertakings. Banking on the reservoir of the larger currents of U.S. expansionism in recent years—"fifty-four forty or fight"—McGowan and his band of ex-Californian outlaws attempted to pivot their own personal crimes and violence into the national narrative of territorial expansion.

Though the "McGowan's War" was in the end resolved by arguments in court (the perpetrators of the disturbance were heavily fined, but walked out relatively unscathed), it was only a snippet of the disorders that arose out of the country overrun by Anglo-Californian miners. Colonel Moody, the British lieutenant governor, expressed his concern at the closing of his lengthy letter describing the state of affairs of British Columbia: "It will be an American Country before long, if not neutralized by the presence of many Englishmen coming out at once."⁹⁶ He was not only commenting on McGowan and that particular disturbance; there were "many riotous Americans from across the frontier," in another British fort, Fort Langley, as well as the growing settlement or "smuggling town" with military fortification right across the border.⁹⁷ The U.S. government's

⁹⁶ Ireland, "First Impressions," 103.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 96, 105-106.

apparent interests in the region did not help the matter. When the news of gold found in the British Northwestern territory reached Washington, D.C., then-Secretary of State Lewis Cass sent a special agent, John Nugent, to Fort Victoria in Vancouver Island to assess the situation. In his November 1858 report, Nugent freely admitted that “The Americans...were in sufficient force any time within the first six months to make successful any movement on their part towards the seizure of the colonies,” even though he made sure to note that “they entered the country with no marauding propensities.”⁹⁸ Nugent not only inspected the conditions of American immigrants, but assessed the land itself, concluding that it hardly merited “any effort on the part of the American government or the American people towards their immediate acquisition.” Yet he still left open the door for “their ultimate accession to the American possessions on the Pacific coast.”⁹⁹

Perhaps Nugent’s hidden intent in appraising the colony’s resources tipped the British off, as Governor Douglass received an anonymous tip regarding the special agent Nugent’s “subversive” purpose. The governor reported to the Colonial Office in January 1859, warning that “the British Government would be but nominal” if the American influence was left unchecked. Claiming that Nugent could control “at least a hundred thousand Americans,” the exaggerated number perhaps incorporating those American settlers in adjacent U.S. territory, Governor Douglass grimly predicted that “the united strength and voice of the Americans would...gradually assimilate [the laws of the land] to their own views and interest.”¹⁰⁰ Nugent was certainly very straightforward in establishing

⁹⁸ *Vancouver’s Island and British Columbia: Message from the President of the United States communicating the Report of the Special Agent*, 35th Congress, 2nd Session, House of Representatives, Ex. Doc. No. 111 (1859), 15; part of Nugent’s report was also quoted in Reginald C. Stuart, *United States Expansionism and British North America, 1775-1871* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 231.

⁹⁹ *Vancouver’s Island and British Columbia: Message from the President of the United States communicating the Report of the Special Agent...*, 35th Congress, 2nd Session, House of Representatives, Ex. Doc. No. 111 (1859), 15.

¹⁰⁰ Quoted in Robie L. Reid, “John Nugent: The Impertinent Envoy,” *British Columbia Historical Quarterly* 13 (January 1944), 69.

U.S. government presence in British Columbia, though his concerns aligned more with addressing American miners' supposed mistreatment by the British colonial government. Curiously, he quoted a dispatch of Secretary of State Lewis Cass to the U.S. minister *in Nicaragua*, to confirm emphatically that the U.S. government guaranteed the rights of U.S. citizens abroad. The cited dispatch made it known that in those parts of the world without "well-defined and established laws," U.S. government intervention was actively called upon.¹⁰¹ This state department's policy toward foreign territories with unstable governments, originally coined in relation to Nicaragua during the days of William Walker's filibustering war, was an apt addendum in British Columbia, considering that some of the former Nicaraguan filibusters headed north after returning to California.

Twenty years later, Ned McGowan recalled that when he first arrived in the harbor of Victoria on July 3, 1858, on board were "several...who were Gen. William Walker's Nicaragua heroes."¹⁰² This included "Major" Tom Dolan, who would later rejoin Walker in his last attempt in Honduras to conquer Central American territory and lived to tell the tales of Walker's last moment.¹⁰³ It appears, from fragmentary evidence, that Dolan had a short stint in the Pacific Northwest between Walker's initial rout from Nicaragua in 1857 and his re-invasion of Honduras in 1860.¹⁰⁴ This may also help explain the presence of "Nicaragua Bar" on the Fraser River during the 1858 gold rush. Place names of the British Columbia mining region provide a mark of California miners' blatant disregard of national boundaries. Though it was customary that mining companies, often small cooperatives that were ethnically segregated, use ethnically distinguishable names such as

¹⁰¹ *Vancouver's Island and British Columbia: Message from the President of the United States communicating the Report of the Special Agent...*, 35th Congress, 2nd Session, House of Representatives, Ex. Doc. No. 111 (1859), 13.

¹⁰² McGowan, "Reminiscences," *Argonaut* 2: 19 (May 1878), 10.

¹⁰³ "The Last of Walker's Expedition," *New York Daily Herald*, 16 September 1860; "The Capture and Death of Walker," *Sacramento Daily Union*, 16 October 1860.

¹⁰⁴ Ireland, "First Impressions," 98 n42.

“German Bar,” “American Bar,” “Mormon Bar,” or “Kanaka Bar” when first staking the claim, the southern part of the Fraser River bore overtly American nationalistic place names such as “Eagle,” “Union,” or even “Fifty-four Forty Bar.”¹⁰⁵ In the case of Nicaragua Bar, while it is entirely possible that the miners who claimed this ‘bar’ were indeed Nicaraguans, it appears far more likely that this was the product of Americans returning from Nicaragua. These chronological and personal connections put the Fraser River Valley of the late 1850s in the same magnetic field that encompassed Hawaii, Mexico, and Nicaragua, where actual and rumored filibusters flowed in and out from northern California.

The Fraser River excitement in San Francisco was short-lived. Its gold mines were soon reported to be “humbugs,” mostly because the miners from California could not get accustomed to the climate and geography. Many Californians left British Columbia by the end of 1858, with a desperation and hurriedness likened by some to “a routed army.”¹⁰⁶ Even though a stream of immigrants from California persisted, the Californian predominance of the 1858 gold mines would soon disappear. New gold discoveries into the interior of British Columbia invited a more stable flow of immigration from across the Atlantic and the Pacific.

Yet the legacy of the Fraser River gold rush and the problem of flexible boundaries would briefly resurface in the wake of the Alaska purchase in 1867, when British Columbia experienced a short bout of its own “annexationist movement.” A small number of non-British residents sent a petition for annexation to the President of the United States in November 1869. Among the forty-

¹⁰⁵ Hubert Howe Bancroft, *The History of British Columbia* (San Francisco: The History Company, 1887), 441. Historian Dan Marshall argues that these place names were also the erasure of indigenous claims to the land. See Marshall, “Mapping the New El Dorado: The Fraser River Gold Rush and the Appropriation of Native Space,” in *New Histories of Old: Changing Perspectives on Canada's Native Pasts*, ed. by Ted Binnema and Susan Neylan (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2007).

¹⁰⁶ Quoted in Ficken, *Unsettled Boundaries*, 104.

three signatories were five ex-Californians who came to British Columbia in 1858.¹⁰⁷ A minority opinion that did not even make it to the official diplomatic channels between the British Empire and the United States, this episode proved a lingering legacy of the two intertwined gold rushes and a postscript of Anglo-Californian aggressions in British Columbia in the late 1850s.

Conclusion

The *Oxford English Dictionary* contains an 1853 usage of the term *filibuster* that could be the origin of its current meaning as a congressional obstruction: “I saw my friend...filibustering, as I thought, against the United States” (*Congressional Globe* 4 Jan. 1853 194/1). As the change in the term’s definition signifies, filibustering expeditions mostly ceased during the U.S. Civil War and then were only rarely contemplated, such as in the cases of “filibustering” to free Cuba in the 1880-90s. Mid-nineteenth-century filibustering left an indelible legacy in creating an image of U.S. imperial aggression in the Western Hemisphere. If the number of people who joined actual filibustering expeditions was merely a few thousand in total, the resonances of their actions went way beyond the numbers, both on the antebellum urban culture and on the perception of American settler aggressions in the neighboring countries.

In California, filibustering was often associated with other adventurous venues for out-migration, such as moving to a Pacific island country to settle or heading out to another gold rush. For some, mining gold in California, filibustering in Nicaragua, and mining gold and inciting violence in British Columbia were not neatly distinguishable paths to wealth and grandeur. Even when their primary loyalty was to gold and to the elevation of the self, those who went to Hawaii, Mexico, Nicaragua, or British Columbia in the aftermath of the Gold Rush often equated their own

¹⁰⁷ Ireland, “The Annexation Petition of 1869,” *British Columbia Historical Quarterly* 4 (October 1940), 267-288.

search of fortunes with something larger than individual movement. The discovery of gold in California brought the expansionist fervor to the West Coast, along with hundreds of thousands young Americans who were bred with the belief of Anglo-Saxon racial superiority and the destined expansion of the United States. They in turn provided a ready recruiting pool for grand-standing schemers like William Walker in Nicaragua, while also influencing the ways in which fortune-seeking Californians' transmigration was interpreted by the local authorities in nearby regions.

Coupled with the actual filibustering expeditions of the same Californian stock, Anglo-Californian transmigration during the 1850s were often viewed as "invasion"—providing an inverse of the metaphor often used against non-white immigrants by white xenophobes throughout the nineteenth- and twentieth centuries. If Anglo Californians went in search of "a second California" in Nicaragua or British Columbia, the reputation of California's social disorder and the miners' penchant to exact vigilante violence forewarned the authorities of other Pacific-adjacent regions against replicating "another California." To a degree, the security concerns against American filibusters and the policing concerns for lawless settlers merged in places like Hawaii, Mexico, and British Columbia. Sometimes the ambiguous word "adventurers" was used by the local authorities to describe the movements of ex-Californian miners and filibusters, perhaps indicating that the lawless, xenophobic, and violence-prone reputation of California gold miners and the war-mongering private armies carrying the banner of destined U.S. expansion were not really separated in their minds.

What made this pool of filibusters and outlaws from the United States more threatening to its potential targets were the U.S. government's concurrent interests in those regions, which granted tacit approval, or at times active encouragement, to the actions of its private citizens. Filibusters' activities in a way paralleled the U.S. government's continued interests in expanding the nation's territorial dominion. While filibusters from California made disruptions in northern Mexico, the U.S.

government succeeded in wresting more Mexican territory in the 1853 Gadsden Purchase. In Hawaii, the “filibuster scare” of 1851 was followed by U.S. government’s negotiation for the annexation. In 1858, when gold was discovered in the remote British colony on the Pacific Northwest, California’s transplanted mining population invited the federal government’s attention in the territory north of its border, intensifying the British concerns for the colony’s preservation. The blurred distinction between the state’s and the settlers’ actions played a critical role in the conflation between filibustering and U.S. Empire in the antebellum era. In the mid-nineteenth century, countless U.S. citizens with a dream of wealth and glory thus appointed themselves as private agents of U.S. empire-building.

CHAPTER 5. THE WORLD STEAMSHIPS MADE: PACIFIC CROSSINGS AND CALIFORNIA AT THE ONSET OF THE AMERICAN EMPIRE, c.1860-1898

*Facing west from California's shores,
Inquiring, tireless, seeking what is yet unfound,
I, a child, very old, over waves, towards the house of maternity, the land
of migrations, look afar,
Look off the shores of my Western sea, the circle almost circled;
For starting westward from Hindustan, from the vales of Kashmere,
From Asia, from the north, from the God, the sage, and the hero,
From the south, from the flowery peninsulas and the spice islands,
Long having wander'd since, round the earth having wander'd,
Now I face home again, very pleas'd and joyous,
(But where is what I started for so long ago?
And why is it yet unfound?)*

-Walt Whitman, "Facing West from California's Shores"(1867)¹

Introduction

"Steam! Steam! For China and Japan," exclaimed the newspaper advertisements for the new Pacific Mail Steamship Company (PMSC) route across the Pacific on the eve of 1867, in a way reminiscent of the "Gold! Gold in California!" cries during the early days of the Gold Rush.² In the years between 1848 and 1869, the prevalence of sea transport to California had opened up a new avenue with which to imagine an empire, most notably in Central American "transit zones," but also in the coastal Pacific. In January 1867, the monopolistic PMSC, itself an undeniable beneficiary of the California Gold Rush, launched its first transpacific voyage after two decades of the coastal service, enabling multi-directional ocean crossings aided by fossil-fueled steam power. This was a

¹ Reproduced online in the Walt Whitman Archive (<https://whitmanarchive.org/published/LG/1867/poems/14>, accessed on 31 January 2018). As part of the cluster titled "Children of Adam," the poem exemplifies one of the ways in which mid-nineteenth-century Americans considered the Pacific Ocean—a meeting place of the old and new civilizations, as the United States stood for the New World and the vanguard of the civilizational development.

² See, for example, *Daily Alta California*, 8 December 1866, p.4.

leap made by a large corporation that accumulated its wealth primarily from the growth of California and the constant traffic between the two sides of the North American continent since 1848. “The first of January, 1867, is an important day for the City of San Francisco,” proclaimed the PMSC-published pamphlet in the wake of the regular transpacific services, “equally so with the day that first announced the discovery of gold.”³ Indeed, transpacific steam transport was in many ways similar to the Gold Rush—much fanfare was made when it first started, only a small portion of people benefitted from the lofty promises made, but it eventually contributed to extending American influence in the Pacific Ocean.

This final chapter departs from the Gold Rush era (1848-c.1860) of the previous chapters, and broadens the scope into the era of the “new empire” (1860-1898), as historian Walter LaFeber described U.S. imperialism after the Civil War.⁴ Previous chapters have shown that establishing gold-rush transportation networks not only created an inroad for U.S.-based capital to control foreign lands and resources, but also provided a site for cross-cultural encounters when coupled with continual passenger traffic. By the early 1860s, gold fever was now a thing of the past, but the economic interests stirred through the period continued to influence people living along the Pacific Coast of the United States. Mining became an industry for which a large number of Chinese immigrants continued to cross the Pacific. As the construction of the Transcontinental Railroad began, the Pacific Mail Steamship Company faced a decline in its business connecting the Atlantic and the Pacific coasts. In turn, it sought a new avenue for profits by launching regular mail steamer service to China via Japan underwritten by the American government. The steamship company’s post-1867 business expansion reveals both the continuity and transformation of the oceanic

³ Pacific Mail Steamship Company, *A Sketch of the Route to California, China and Japan, via the Isthmus of Panama* (San Francisco: A. Roman & Co., 1867), 90.

⁴ Walter LaFeber, *The New Empire: An Interpretation of U.S. Expansion* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1963, 2nd ed. 1998).

transport networks established in the Gold Rush era.

This chapter reinterprets the Pacific Mail Steamship Company as an informal agent of empire-building in the Pacific. Maritime transportation reveals the full extent of U.S. engagement in the Pacific Ocean basin before the United States officially crowned itself as an overseas colonial empire. American imperial dominance in the Pacific Ocean—in the forms of control over commercial networks, missionary settlements to civilize and proselytize, and eventually military occupation—was long in the making before 1898. The year 1898 serves as an end point of this story, because it marked a culmination of the processes described in this chapter. In 1898, the United States became a publicly acknowledged empire in the Pacific, when it annexed Hawaii and gained sovereignty over the Philippines and Guam as a result of the Spanish-American and the Philippine-American War. 1898 was also the year that the PMSC officially became part of U.S. immigration control, when it constructed a detention shed at the harbor of San Francisco to help enforce the government's restrictive immigration policy.⁵

Establishing steamship connections across the Pacific was more about expectations than about actual demands. Long-standing commercial interests in East Asia had initially propelled the ideas of laying steamship connections across the Pacific. In the three decades following the company's first transpacific steam voyage in 1867, the PMSC and the U.S. government worked in tandem to extend and reinforce the steamship networks crisscrossing the Pacific, bolstered by the grand rhetoric of the "China trade," somewhat religious belief in the natural geographical benefits of the Pacific Coast, and the naval rivalry with the British power around the globe. The established steamship routes did not instantly fulfill the high expectations for thriving transpacific commerce and global shipping industry. The sail still dominated shipping tonnage even in 1898, when the total

⁵ Robert Barde, "High Times on the Pacific: Commentary," *Southern California Quarterly* 94: 4 (2012), 482.

tonnage of cargo transported by steamships failed to surpass the tonnage shipped by sail.⁶ Still, commercial steamships crossing the Pacific gave the U.S. Navy more legitimate pretext for colonizing the islands of the Pacific: in the decade following 1867, two future navy bases, Pearl Harbor and Midway, were acquired by the United States.

Technological advances in transportation also changed the shape of transpacific migration and social perception about oceanic connections. Pacific crossings were no longer long, tedious journeys that invited reimagining them as daring adventures. Instead, oceanic travel became a much more standardized consumer experience, which created a fundamentally classed and racialized experience. Steamships, like railroads, were segregated primarily by class. The transpacific steamships' steerage space, however, was racialized to the extent it was commonly called the "Asiatic Steerage" by the late-nineteenth century. Its symbolic and real impacts were felt disproportionately on the Pacific Coast. The steamers' passenger capacity brought a larger number of labor immigrants to the western shores of the Americas. The physical forms and visual images of transpacific steamships, as well as the steamship company's profit-oriented approach toward Chinese immigration, influenced public perceptions and cultural representation of the Chinese. As the Chinese immigrant traffic was one of the few revenue-producing options for transpacific steamers, the PMSC viewed the Chinese as interchangeable with cargo; such attitudes, in turn, confirmed and reinforced the racialization of Asians as cheap dispensable labor; as individuals outside the political community.⁷

⁶ *Report of the Commissioner of Navigation to the Secretary of Treasury*, 55th Cong., 3rd Sess., House of Representatives Document No. 14 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1898), 11. According to this report, the Bureau of Navigation had predicted that 1898 would be the year in which the steam tonnage finally surpassed the tonnage of sailing ships; this prediction did not materialize because the government transferred 62,000 tons of merchant steam vessels for its own use during the Spanish-American War.

⁷ Most scholarly works on the Pacific Mail Steamship Company focus either on the business historical aspects or the technological specifics. The difficulty in writing the social history of steamships arose mostly out of the fact that little

Transpacific steam transport connected disparate parts of the globe, but at the same time deepened the delineation of national boundaries. The PMSC steamships that connected the Far East and the Far West represented both the rising American power in the Pacific and the greedy capital that was “polluting” the nation by bringing to America’s shores “unassimilable” aliens in bulk. This double-sided representation was not a paradox borne of its own. Rather, the long-distance transportation networks in the Pacific Ocean exemplified the paradox of the American nation that would also be transferred to the American empire. The promises of liberty and prosperity, for which the United States ostensibly stood, were accompanied by exclusionary participation in its polity. The global reach of American capital and naval power led to a racial stratification of the world’s regions and peoples, resulting in the justification of imperial domination and the exclusionary immigration policy. As the Pacific Ocean became increasingly accessible to American commerce and travels over the last three decades of the nineteenth century, the human movements furnishing the oceanic sphere were increasingly stratified by global capitalism.

5.1. Establishing Transpacific Steamship Connections

The Pacific Mail Steamship Company was founded in April 1848 to connect American settlements on the Pacific Coast to the eastern United States. A Congressional Act of March 3, 1847, asked the Secretary of the Navy to contract the services of ocean mail steamers from New York to

records were left of the steamship voyages until well into the twentieth century, least of all about steerage passages. The bulk of the PMSC records also disappeared due to the 1915 San Francisco Earthquake. Robert E. Barde’s *Immigration at the Golden Gate: Passenger Ships, Exclusion, and Angel Island* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2008) is one of the few immigration histories that genuinely tackle on the role of steamships, and understandably focuses on the twentieth century. Frances Steel’s *Oceania Under Steam* is also one of the few monographs on a steamship company that go beyond the business history to touch upon social interactions within and cultural representation of the steamships. Steel, *Oceania Under Steam: Sea Transport and the Cultures of Colonialism, c.1880-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011). For a similarly sociocultural analysis with a focus on one particular steamship, see Mary C. Greenfield, “Benevolent Desires and Dark Dominations: The Pacific Mail Steamship Company’s SS *City of Peking* and the United States in the Pacific 1874–1910,” *Southern California Quarterly* 94: 4 (2012).

Chagres on the Atlantic side of the Isthmus of Panama, and from the city of Panama on the Pacific side to the coast of Oregon.⁸ The Pacific side of this business contract was eventually granted to William Henry Aspinwall, partner of the prominent New York mercantile firm Howland & Aspinwall. The primary purpose of the original mail contract was to connect the newly established Oregon territory and Panama. For monthly service of mail transportation, the PMSC would receive \$199,000 per year.⁹ The California Gold Rush, however, redirected the company's steamers to San Francisco from the very beginning of its operation. PMSC steamers carried mails and passengers between San Francisco and Panama twice a month during the 1850s, and every ten days from 1860 to 1871. After the original mail contract expired in 1859, the company withdrew entirely from services north of San Francisco, instead focusing on the coastal trades in California, Mexico, and Central America. The exponential growth of the PMSC after 1848 made it the sole candidate for transpacific steamship business, when the Congress asked the Postmaster General in February 1865 to contract mail steamer service between San Francisco and "some port or ports in the Chinese empire, touching at Honolulu, in the Sandwich Islands, and one or more ports in Japan, by means of a monthly line of first-class American sea-going steamships."¹⁰ Having secured this government contract, the Pacific Mail Steamship Company sent its first transpacific steamship *Colorado* to China in January 1867.

Transpacific steam transport was, at first, the product of an ambition, rather than a necessity. American interests in the Pacific and its exalted dream of controlling the "China trade" originates in the country's revolutionary period. The first American merchant ship *Empress of China* sailed for the

⁸ "An Act providing for the Building and Equipment of Four Naval Steamships," 9 *U.S. Stat. at Large* 188.

⁹ John Haskell Kemble, "The Panama Route to the Pacific Coast, 1848-1869," *Pacific Historical Review* 7: 1 (1938), 3-13.

¹⁰ "An Act to authorize the Establishment of Ocean Mail-Steamship Service between the United States and China," 13 *U.S. Stat. at Large* 430.

Celestial Empire in 1794.¹¹ American whalers and merchant ships were rounding the South American continent into the Pacific long before the United States acquired the Pacific Coast territory. During the 1840s, the idea that the government needed to subsidize private shipping companies to ensure safe and fast circulation of mail and mercantile information gained purchase.¹² As the navies of the great powers began to utilize steam engines in their warships, commercial ocean-going steamships were also counted as an extension of the nation's naval power, available to be converted for military purpose in times of war. The early interests in the steamship route across the Pacific in Washington, D.C. were born out of this complex mixture of commercial and military designs.

Talks of creating transpacific steamboat mail routes with governmental support circulated as early as 1848. The Treaty of Wangxia in 1844 opened an official diplomatic channel between China and the U.S., raising high hopes for a market expansion for the sale of U.S. manufactured goods. The China markets appeared within closer reach with the American settlements in Oregon and the acquisition of the Pacific Coast territory from the U.S.-Mexican War. Merely a year after the contract was signed in 1847 for mail steamers connecting Panama and the Oregon territory, Georgia Congressman T. Butler King submitted a report to the Congress on behalf of the Committee on Naval Affairs, urging the extension of the soon-to-be established mail steamer network to China.¹³ As this report was prepared before the discovery of gold in California became public knowledge on the east coast, King cited the “rapid settlement of the Oregon territory” and protection of whale

¹¹ John Kuo-Wei Tchen, *New York Before Chinatown: Orientalism and the Shaping of American Culture, 1776-1882* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 22 and *passim*.

¹² Peter A. Shulman, *Coal and Empire: The Birth of Energy Security in Industrial America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2015), 15-16.

¹³ T. Butler King, *Steam Communication with China, and the Sandwich Islands*, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., Report No. 596 (May 4, 1848).

fisheries in the Pacific as the primary justification. But the first and foremost rationale for the steamship route across the Pacific was the ambiguous prospect of China markets. “These steps in territorial dominion and steam navigation [on the Pacific Coast],” King argued, “place us in a position to extend our view across the bosom of that broad ocean to the shores of Japan and China.”¹⁴ Based on a chart of navigation drawn by Lieutenant Matthew F. Maury of U.S. Navy, the proposed route would connect a Californian port—San Diego or Monterrey—and the Chinese ports of Canton and Shanghai in a “great circle,” coasting along the northern rim of the Pacific. The discovery of gold in California would change the departure and destination points in the actual steamship connections that materialized in two decades, since San Francisco and Hong Kong both rose out of the Gold Rush as the major ports of embarkation.¹⁵ Despite the difference in the proposed routes, however, the arguments and sentiments contained in King’s congressional report remained powerful and were reiterated by the later generations of politicians and capitalists.

The early architects of the transpacific steamship route clearly viewed the steamships not only as a potential source of the nation’s wealth but also as a civilizing influence. In a letter written in January 1848 to King, Lieutenant Maury described a grand transformation that would surely happen with regular transportation across the ocean: “The islander will cease to go naked, the Chinaman will give up his chop sticks...the moment...they can exchange the productions of their climate and labor for that which is more pleasing to the taste and fancy.”¹⁶ In Maury’s opinion, inclusion into America’s global market economy would naturally ‘westernize’ the cultural habits of the people across the Pacific. He doubted that the Chinese would continue to subsist on rice once

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 1.

¹⁵ For the impact of the California Gold Rush in the development of Hong Kong, see Elizabeth Sinn, *Pacific Crossing: California Gold, Chinese Migration, and the Making of Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2013).

¹⁶ Appendix to King, *Steam Communication to China*, 33.

they could obtain meat and bread from the United States, thereby disregarding any previous Chinese dealings with “the West.” Even though the “Orient” or the “Far East” had been in contact with European and American merchants for centuries, the naval officer’s America-centric understanding indicated that transpacific commerce would fundamentally change Chinese ways of life. The United States would, by Maury’s projection, “soon be offering from its western shores...many other items of commerce, which, by constant and familiar intercourse with our people, they will soon *learn to want and be taught to buy.*”¹⁷ With this fantasy, Maury became one of the early advocates for an imperialist project of indoctrinating non-western populations as consumers. He was certainly not alone in dreaming of the Chinese markets wide open for the sale of American goods. This belief in the transformative impact of commerce and the understanding of steamship connections as a civilizing project continued into the 1860s, when the steamship service to China came into existence.

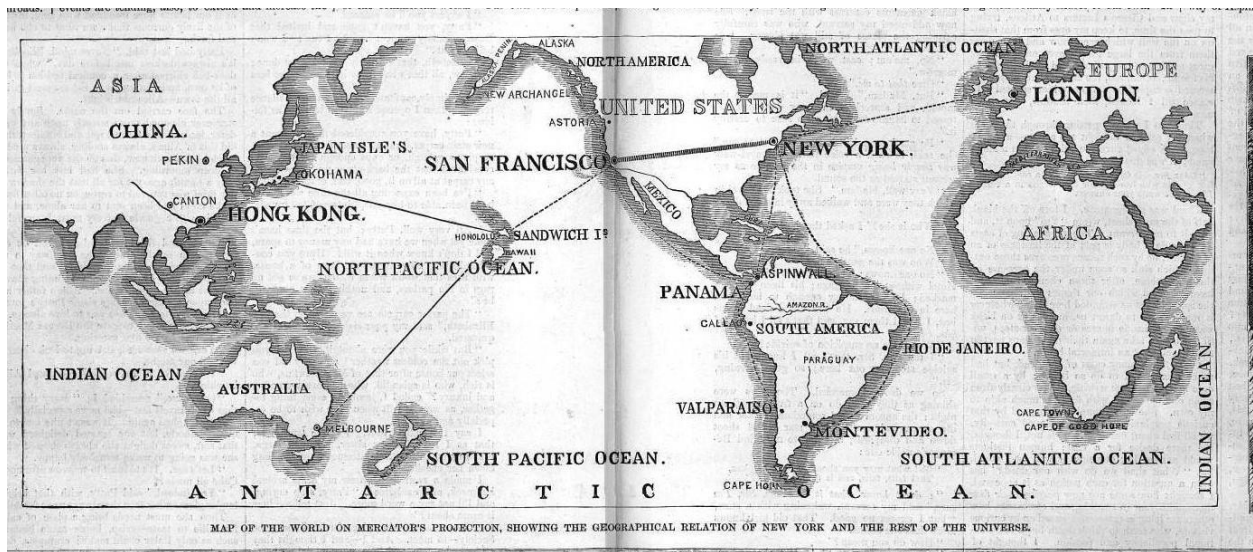


Figure 5. “Map of the World...Showing the Geographical Relation of New York and the Rest of the Universe,” Harper's Weekly 12 (1868)

A world map printed in *Harper's Weekly* (Fig. 5), with a celebratory remark upon the signing

¹⁷ *Ibid.* (emphasis mine)

of the Burlingame Treaty with China in 1868, placed New York and San Francisco at the center of the imagined world-wide commercial network, connected with a thick line representing the Transcontinental Railroad.¹⁸ Deliberately obfuscating the geographical fact that Europe and Asia were connected through the unseen part of the world, the map imagined the United States as the commercial center of the world, with London on the one end and China on the other. It reflected eastern U.S. mercantile interests that had been striving to refashion the purpose of the steamship route via Panama. The PMSC's Panama route, previously used as the primary mailing and shipping route between the two coasts of the United States, was struggling to find new profit avenues in the face of the anticipated shifts in mail and passenger traffic, due to the imminent completion of a railroad across the continent. With the transpacific steamship services that began a year before, the 1868 *Harper's Weekly* map presented the Panama route and the Transcontinental Railroad less as competitors for U.S. domestic traffic than as ultimate connections that would place North America in the middle of global commercial traffic between Asia and Europe.

¹⁸ *Harper's Weekly* 12 (30 May 1868), 344-345.

Panama and in the United States, exemplified the advancement of civilization, spearheaded by American capital. Though the PMSC steamships connecting Hong Kong with the railroads in North and Central America were conspicuously absent in these depicted scenes, their role as the vanguard of American civilization was also well acknowledged at the time. William Seward, having gone on a grand world tour after he left the office of Secretary of State, wrote in January 1871 from Hong Kong that the line of PMSC steamers was “a development of enterprise which, though noiseless, is extending American name and influence in the East.”¹⁹

“Commercial and Geographical Relations of New York” illustrated the global networks of commerce located in the Pacific Ocean from the perspective of New York’s mercantile and industrial capitalists. “Our own vast empire is rapidly increasing in population and developing in wealth, natural commerce, manufactures, and agriculture,” the accompanying article declared.²⁰ The map and the statement demonstrated how mercantile elites imagined the next step of the United States as a continental nation. With the Transcontinental Railroad and steamship lines, the distance between New York and Hong Kong would be reduced to 26 days, making the trans-American rail the preferred shipping route for global commerce. The article predicted that soon the “whole Pacific coast” would come under American rule.

The aspirations displayed in the 1868 map (Fig. 5) undoubtedly drove the installment of transpacific steamship connections. Yet the map’s simplified lines also made it clear that the interests in the Pacific expressed there was largely intellectual, chiefly represented by the imagined profits the connection would generate. The accompanying article even evinced a form of Republican idealism

¹⁹ Olive Risley Seward (ed.), *William H. Seward’s Travels around the World* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1876), 276. Ostensibly this book takes the form of Olive Risley, an “adoptive daughter” of Seward, re-creating William Seward’s travel journal into a third-person narrative. It is unclear whose voice really went into writing the quoted remark; I will presume that William Seward was the author, as Olive Risley maintained she was merely an editor of his notes.

²⁰ “Commercial Relations of New York,” *Harper’s Weekly* 12 (30 May 1868), 344-345.

from the Reconstruction era toward transpacific immigration, celebrating how the number of immigrants from China and India to the American Pacific Coast rivaled the number of European immigrants on the east coast. The immigrants were doubly auspicious because Chinese laborers building the Transcontinental Railroad was “bringing their country nearer to our own.”²¹ This idealized, conceptual understanding of transpacific connections would soon be vehemently challenged in California.

The PMSC’s regular steamship connections across the Pacific did not magically transform world commerce as some of the early American visionaries had hoped. Trade with East Asia in the second half of the nineteenth century was of negligible importance to the U.S. economy.²² The allure of Pacific commerce, of new consumers and luxury goods from China and Japan, proved to be more illusory than real, just as California gold had been for many mid-century fortune seekers. In 1887, even after two decades of regular transpacific steamship connections, the U.S. economy still revolved around European markets. Exports to the United Kingdom comprised about a half of all U.S. exports. China and Japan ranked the eighth and tenth respectively in U.S. imports in 1887, though imports from those two countries constituted less than 3% of the U.S. total, while imports from the United Kingdom amounted to 23.8%, Germany 11.6%, the West Indies 10.1%.²³ The American shipping industry as a whole did not receive much of a boost from the transpacific steamship routes. According to an 1898 report of the U.S. Commissioner of Navigation, American trade heavily depended on foreign vessels at the end of the nineteenth century. Only 7% of the trade

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Thomas R. Cox, “The Passage to India Revisited: Asian Trade and the Development of the Far West, 1850-1900,” in John Alexander Carroll (ed.), *Reflections of Western Histories* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1967).

²³ United States Bureau of the Census, *Foreign Commerce and Navigation of the United States* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1887), LVII.

with ports located further than 1,500 miles from American ports were carried by American vessels. Transpacific steamships transported a total of 853,216 tons in 1898 to the West Coast of the United States, or “barely 4 per cent of the steam tonnage entered and cleared in the United States from Europe.”²⁴ This relative unimportance of the Pacific commerce would continue into the coming century, even as other side-effects of the transpacific connections consolidated an American empire in the Pacific.

5.2. Steamship Company, U.S. Navy, and the Colonization of the Pacific Islands

Even if the transpacific steamship operations did not immediately bring about the dreamed-of commercial empire in East Asia, the installation of the steamship routes still precipitated U.S. involvement in the Pacific. During the second half of the nineteenth century, the United States pursued expansion of its commercial and geopolitical influences in the Pacific Ocean, establishing transportation and communication networks to challenge the British naval dominance, making territorial acquisitions whenever possible. The islands in the Pacific were sought as mercantile and missionary destinations and strategic coaling stations for American steamships. Though marveled as the pinnacle of the contemporary technology, the steam engine in the nineteenth century was unreliable. Steamships crossing the Pacific needed places for emergency repairs and coal supplies. The search for a naval depot in the Pacific was a joint effort by U.S. Navy and the steamship company, at times with diplomatic interventions from the United States government. These combined mercantile and military concerns directed U.S. interests to Hawaii, Midway Island, and Samoa—all now part of the United States. The Pacific Mail Steamship Company, being the most

²⁴ *Report of the Commissioner of Navigation to the Secretary of Treasury*, 55th Cong., 3rd Sess., House of Representatives Document No. 14 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1898), 29.

frequent movers across the Pacific, became a surrogate for U.S. naval power and an agent of the American empire-building in the Pacific.



Figure 7. A Map showing the Routes of the Pacific Mail Steamship Company, c.1875 (Courtesy of the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley)

Once the PMSC steamships connected San Francisco to Yokohama and Hong Kong, the company expanded its business to other transpacific routes. The company pamphlet describing its history, routes, and rates, likely published in the late 1870s, included a map of the world titled “Routes of the Pacific Mail Steamship Company” (Fig. 7).²⁵ On this map, hand-painted red lines depicted three primary legs of the PMSC’s business from 1875 to 1885: the original Panama line, the China line established in 1867, and the Australia line, which began in 1875 when the company

²⁵ Appendix to PMSC, *Pacific Mail* (New York: M. Thalnessueger Stationer, [187-?]). Bancroft Library Pamphlet Collection, University of California, Berkeley.

secured mail subsidies from the governments of Australia and New Zealand. The Panama line that connected San Francisco and Panama was by then operated in two different ways, the express connection between Panama, San Francisco, and the Pacific Northwest and the coastal service stopping at various smaller ports in Mexico, Central America, and southern California (Fig. 7). The Australia line went from San Francisco to Sydney and Melbourne, stopping at Honolulu, Fiji, and New Zealand. This line did not prove profitable enough to renew the contract after ten years.²⁶ In 1896, the China line steamers began to make a regular stop at Honolulu, possibly to make up for the loss of profits from Chinese immigration. The final major extension of the PMSC transpacific line came in 1914, to Manila via Yokohama.²⁷

Considering the close connection that the Hawaiian Islands maintained with the Pacific Coast of the United States, as well as increasing American geopolitical interest in the islands, it is not surprising that talk of steamship connection and a naval base in Honolulu started early. The PMSC negotiated a grant of port lots in Honolulu as early as in 1852. Their request for a spot on the Honolulu's waterfront was granted by the Hawaiian government, but the PMSC did not deliver the promised steamship line between San Francisco and Honolulu in the 1850s. Although the 1865 Congressional Act establishing the mail steamship route across the Pacific specified the said route include Honolulu in its itinerary, the actual PMSC operation of the China line still did not include Honolulu in the first three decades. It may have been due to the fact that trade between California and Hawaii had long been dominated by fast clipper ships. Various "Packet Lines" and "Regular Dispatch Lines" were advertised for Honolulu, and sometimes all the way to Hong Kong, in the

²⁶ John Curtis Perry, *Facing West: Americans and the Opening of the Pacific* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1994), 143.

²⁷ John Haskell Kemble, "A Hundred Years of the Pacific Mail," *The American Neptune* X (1950), 131-138; Henry B. Williams, "Pacific Mail Steamship Co.," Transcript of Interview with Hubert Howe Bancroft (1883), BANC MSS C-E 154, BL.

very same advertisement columns of California newspapers notifying the dates of departure of PMSC steamships. The mail steamer service between San Francisco and Honolulu was first carried out by the California, Oregon, and Mexico Steamship Company, a small shipping firm that usually operated along the Pacific Coast of North America.²⁸ This separate business operation between San Francisco and Honolulu may have indicated the particularly close ties between California and Hawaii—or Hawaii’s early incorporation into the orbit of California’s coastal economy.

Even though the PMSC steamships were slow to make Honolulu their regular stop, this did not mean that the Hawaiian Islands were left out of the larger American transpacific networks in the 1870s. In 1865, American Minister at Honolulu, James McBride, advised U.S. government to make Hawaii “a permanent naval rendezvous; and to keep constantly, at least one first class vessel of war here, and better two,” adding that it would also benefit “California and China line of Steamers.”²⁹ In 1875, a reciprocal treaty between the U.S. and the Kingdom of Hawaii leased Pearl Harbor for the use of U.S. Navy, although the actual naval base was not built for another thirty years.³⁰

Other, smaller and less inhabited islands in the Pacific—the Bonin Islands and Midway Island—also gained attention as the coaling stations while transpacific steamship connections were contemplated and initiated. Those interested in these islands always cited commercial steamships and steam-powered naval warships together. From the moment the steam route across the Pacific began to be discussed in the late 1840s, how and where to find fuel and do repairs for the steamships was a persistent question for American politicians, diplomats, and naval officers.

²⁸ Ralph S. Kuykendall, *The Hawaiian Kingdom, Vol. 2: 1854-1874, Twenty Critical Years* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1953), 18-19.

²⁹ McBride to William Seward, no. 54, 12 August 1865, U.S. State Department Dispatches, Hawaii, Vol. XI; quoted in Kuykendall, *The Hawaiian Kingdom Vol. 2*, 207.

³⁰ Bruce Cumings, *Dominion from Sea to Sea*, 186-187.

Securing a stable supply of coal was one of the main concerns for American officials in drafting the 1854 treaty with Japan. Commodore Matthew Perry's expedition struggled to find stable coal supplies as his squadron took a long sea route, rounding the Cape of Good Hope and crossing the Indian Ocean to East Asia.³¹ He had pre-arranged to receive separate coal shipments from New York along the way, but also had to find a source in Southeast Asia. Returning across the Pacific after the signing of the 1854 treaty, the Perry expedition made the first American steam-powered circumnavigation of the globe.

With the idea of transpacific mail steamers already in the air, Perry too was keenly interested in the logistical support necessary for such transpacific voyages. After his much-publicized return, Perry appeared in 1856 before the American Geographical and Statistical Society to deliver an impassioned address advocating the needs for mail steamers across the Pacific. Having waxed poetic about the commercial steamship companies as "pioneers of Ocean Steam Navigation," Perry argued that "ocean steamers and clipper ships could be brought into useful and immediate service [in times of war] hastily armed and sent to sea, to protect our merchant marine."³² In his opinion, every ocean-going steamship of sufficient size contributed "indirectly to our naval strength and to the extension of commerce," more significantly so in the Pacific Ocean, where the United States "might secure and maintain the naval superiority" due to geographic proximity and the absence of existing competition.³³ To gain the upper-hand as the maritime power in the Pacific, Perry proposed colonization of the Bonin Islands, or what are now the Ogasawara Islands located about 1,000 km south of Tokyo, as the coaling station for transpacific steamships and naval vessels.

³¹ Shulman, *Coal and Empire*, 86.

³² Matthew Perry, *A Paper by Commodore M. C. Perry, U.S.N., Read before the American Geographical and Statistical Society, at a Meeting held March 6th, 1856* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1856), 4-5.

³³ *Ibid.*, 5.

“Colonies are almost as necessary to a commercial nation, as are the ships which transport...the commodities,” opined Perry, in support of colonizing an island group that was located on the opposite side of the Pacific Ocean.³⁴ As a self-proclaimed “believer in the doctrine of the ‘manifest destiny’ of this great nation,” Matthew Perry had, in fact, already invested in land on the Bonin Islands, having purchased a waterfront lot in Port Lloyd, Peel Island (one of the Bonin island group) from Nathaniel Savory, one of the few white settlers of the islands.³⁵ Savory was a Massachusetts native who emigrated from the Hawaiian Islands under the instruction of the British consul Richard Charlton at Oahu, together with four other settlers.³⁶ Samuel Wells Williams, an American missionary to China who accompanied Perry as a translator, believed this might become a potential source of contention between the British and Americans. In his opinion, the United States did not need to colonize the islands, only to recognize British sovereignty and get port rights, letting the steamship company manage the depot, preferably without taxation.³⁷

The Bonin Islands, despite the attempts of Matthew Perry and Nathaniel Savory, were not officially claimed by the U.S. government, though it remained as a popular stopping point for American whalers in the next decades. The U.S. Navy after the Civil War continued the search for an ideal island for a naval depot, which eventually gave the United States its first Pacific island territory at Midway Island, thus named precisely because “they are about midway in the route of the

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 26.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 12.

³⁶ Samuel Wells Williams, *Journal of a Trip to Japan with Commodore Perry* (manuscript), journal entry on 14 June 1853, Samuel Wells Williams Family Papers (MS 547), Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library. After Japan colonized the Bonin Islands in 1875, the story of Nathaniel Savory and his descendants was published in a newly nationalist light in post-WWII America. See Gilbert Cant, “Home to Chichi Jima: A Yankee Trader’s descendant welcomes U.S. Flag,” *Life*, 24 June 1946.

³⁷ Williams, *Journal*, 14 June 1853.

Pacific Mail steamers running between San Francisco and Japan.”³⁸ Midway Island had at first been claimed in 1859 by a sea captain named H. C. Brooks under the U.S. Guano Island Act of 1856, which stipulated that any American citizen could claim ownership of an uninhabited island, rock, or key on international waters if they found guano deposits.³⁹ In 1867, the U.S. Navy officially claimed the islet and surveyed it for the creation of a coaling depot. Congress appropriated \$50,000 for the survey and sent the USS *Saginan* in 1870 to broaden the entrance to the harbor; though it finished the job before getting shipwrecked on a nearby island for months, the *Saginan*’s expedition to Midway was largely publicized as a failure in California.

Once Midway was claimed as American territory, California newspapers tended to cast the Pacific Mail Steamship Company in the role of the colonizing agent of the island. Reporting the failure of the *Saginan* expedition in 1871, the *Daily Alta California* criticized the misinformation that led the steamship company “to believe that, by expenditure of a reasonable sum, a good harbor could be made at Midway Island.”⁴⁰ In this rendition of events, the primary purpose of the *Saginan*’s surveying expedition was to aid the PMSC steamships running between San Francisco and Hong Kong. It is unclear if or how the company attempted to build a coaling station at Midway. No evidence for a concrete building project exists, other than brief reports of the company’s steamships passing by near Midway Island in one of their regular voyages. The *Daily Alta California* reported on March 19, 1871 the arrival in San Francisco of the PMSC steamship *Japan*, carrying several important

³⁸ “Our Flag in the Pacific,” *San Francisco Daily Evening Bulletin*, 8 August 1868; for more on the acquisition of the Midway Islands, see Cumings, *Dominion from Sea to Sea*, 86-87.

³⁹ Guano, or bird excrement that had been popular as agricultural fertilizer, was a highly sought-for product in the nineteenth century. After the 1856 Guano Islands Act, a number of islands in the Caribbean and the Pacific were claimed by U.S. citizens, with or without sufficient proof of guano deposits. Some of them still remain as unincorporated U.S. territories. Christina Duffy Burnett, “The Edges of Empire and the Limits of Sovereignty: American Guano Islands,” *American Quarterly* 57 (2005): 779-803. See also Gregory T. Cushman, *Guano and the Opening of the Pacific World: A Global Ecological History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

⁴⁰ “The Shipwreck: Midway and Ocean Island,” *Daily Alta California*, 8 February 1871.

Japanese officials and students, likely along with Chinese steerage passengers, though the latter were not mentioned. After the notice of its arrival and customary search for smuggled goods, the newspaper described the *Japan*'s brief stop-over at Midway Island. "A boat was lowered and rowed toward the shore," the description read, "but it was found impossible to land on account of the heavy breakers extending across the mouth of the harbor. No sign of life was noticed."⁴¹ No matter how genuinely the PMSC attempted to build the Midway Island coaling station, it never materialized and was soon all but forgotten by the public. About two decades later, in 1895, the *San Francisco Call* described Midway "uninhabited except by seabirds and sand crabs."⁴² Explaining how it had once been considered a candidate for a coaling station, the article recounted the PMSC's colonization effort in a somewhat haphazard way: "having taken possession by landing a few tons of coal on one of these tiny dots of land showing itself above the ocean."⁴³ According to the *Call*, Midway Island as a coaling station simply "lost favor" among the company's official. Perhaps it was the financial strains from the mid-1870s, when the PMSC lost its government subsidy amid scandals surrounding the company's bribery charge, that affected their decision not to pursue the mid-ocean depot.

5.3. The Economics of the Transpacific Steam Transport

Establishing regular service of mail steamers was at first conceived more for the nebulous idea of American national interests rather than the pre-existence of profitable traffic. Did faster and more stable transportation create or augment trade with Asia, as envisioned by early advocates? In the pre-steamship era of Pacific crossings, the existing transport connections did increase

⁴¹ "Arrival of the Steamer 'Japan'," *Daily Alta California*, 19 March 1871.

⁴² "On a Mid-Ocean Island: Shipwreck of Captain F. D. Walker with his family and crew," *San Francisco Call*, 26 February 1895.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

commercial transactions. During the Gold Rush era, sailing ships brought goods and people to California with little return cargo to be procured there. California's economy was then heavily import-based and was hard-pressed to sustain its own population's needs until the mid-1850s. Still, American merchant ships transporting goods for the California consumer market did not simply return to New York and Boston the way they came. Historian Thomas Berry estimates that approximately 22.1% of the vessels leaving San Francisco in 1847-54 went to Australia or the Pacific Islands as their next port of call, while 20.8% headed to South American seaports; 11.7% went to Asia and Africa.⁴⁴ When the PMSC began to make regular calls in 1867 to Chinese and Japanese seaports under their government mail contract, the steamships also needed to find profitable trade items to make their already-established transportation routes as lucrative as possible.

Having operated the San Francisco-Panama route for two decades, the primary incentive for the PMSC to launch transpacific service in 1867 was the looming competition they expected from the Transcontinental Railroad, which followed in 1869. "The Company is subjected to a very close and energetic competition on their principal route," the PMSC president reported in 1868, "with a prospect of a large diversion of their traffic to the [Transcontinental] Railroad, on the completion of that enterprise."⁴⁵ He admitted that the profitability of the transpacific steamships was unverified at that point, though the negative impact of the Transcontinental Railroad certainly was realized soon. After the company's China line was inaugurated in 1867, the annual passenger traffic between New York and San Francisco via Panama briefly soared. The number of passengers crossing the Isthmus of Panama had constantly been around 20,000 since the 1850s, but jumped to 38,680 in 1868 alone.

⁴⁴ Thomas S. Berry, *Early California: Gold, Prices, Trade* (Richmond, VA: The Bostwick Press, 1984), 123. Berry compiled the statistics from the marine journals of the *Prices Current* and the *Alta California*, which admittedly does not constitute an exhaustive list of departures during the period. It is still probable that the rough proportions for each destination remained the same.

⁴⁵ "Pacific Mail": *A Review of The Report of the President* [New York?: 1868?], 2.

In 1869, it dropped to approximately 12,000, when the Central and Union Pacific Railroads met at the Promontory Point.⁴⁶

The Pacific Mail Steamship Company's initial years of operation were heavily dependent on the government subsidies, first receiving \$500,000 annually, then double the amount from 1872 to 1876. Companies engaged in long-distance transportation and communication often received government subsidies, but the PMSC's soon became the source of controversy. In 1872, when the Congress debated the Post Office Appropriation bill that increased PMSC's subsidy to a million dollars per year, *Harper's Weekly* summarized the nature of the opposition. The pro-subsidy faction alleged that it was a small price to pay for "an opportunity of commanding the trade of the East upon the Pacific."⁴⁷ The opposing side argued that subsidies were "in themselves unjust, and...merely fine names bestowed upon appropriations of the public money to private greed."⁴⁸ The subsidy bill passed, granting PMSC \$1,000,000 a year for ten more years.

Scant two years later, however, the PMSC became embroiled in a scandal that involved its government subsidy. In 1874, the company was accused of bribing members of Congress to secure this large amount. Congress investigated the claim and eventually canceled all government subsidies to the PMSC in 1876.⁴⁹ Despite the company's continuous attempts to regain their government support, they were unsuccessful for another decade and a half. The Ocean Mail Act of 1891 reestablished the government subsidy for steamship companies that transported U.S. mail to foreign

⁴⁶ For the statistics of annual passenger traffic, see Kemble, *The Panama Route, 1848-1869* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1943), Appendix II, "Passengers by the Isthmian Routes, 1848-1869," 254.

⁴⁷ "Two Views," *Harper's Weekly*, 6 April 1872, 267.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Perry, *Facing West*, 143.

ports and continued to subsidize international mail steamers until 1928.⁵⁰ During the period without direct government support, the Pacific Mail Steamship Company struggled to exist due to financial mismanagement, corruption, and up-and-coming competitors in the transpacific shipping business. The biggest competitor for the steamship route between San Francisco, China, and Japan was the Occidental and Oriental Steamship Company (O&O), established in 1874, and owned by the Central and Union Pacific Railroad.⁵¹ Still, this competition should not be exaggerated. Over the course of the second half of the nineteenth century, the two American steamship companies in the transpacific business cooperated in setting rates and timetables, eventually merging the management of their Hong Kong offices in 1882. The railroad titan Collis P. Huntington became the president of the PMSC in 1893, and the company was put under the direct control of the Southern Pacific Railroad between 1900 and 1915.⁵²

The real competition for PMSC's transpacific business was not the O&O, but the British. British steamships had been moving people and cargo between the British Isles, India, and China since the 1840s. The Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company (P&O) had created a steam navigation route around the globe, aided by British government subsidies.⁵³ The year the PMSC began its transpacific operation was also the year the Suez Canal opened. The direction of global commerce veered toward London via Suez, both from the Far East and U.S. East. The PMSC and American mercantile elites tried to redirect world trade to the transpacific and trans-American

⁵⁰ "An Act to Provide for Ocean Mail Service between the United States and Foreign Ports, and to Promote Commerce," 26 U.S. Stat. at Large 830. See also U.S. Congress [Committee on Agriculture], *Government Subsidy Historical Review: A Summary of the Use of Subsidies to Advance the Aims and Purposes of Government* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1972), 31.

⁵¹ John Haskell Kemble, "The Transpacific Railroads, 1869-1915," *Pacific Historical Review* 18: 3 (1949), 331-343.

⁵² Kemble, "Transpacific Railroads," 337.

⁵³ For the relationships between P&O and the British Empire, see Freda Harcourt, *Flagships of Imperialism: The P&O Company and the Politics of Empire from Its Origins to 1867* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2006).

routes, as depicted in the 1868 *Harper's Weekly* world map (Fig. 5). U.S. government backed this effort, both for economic gains and to challenge British naval superiority. Yet the ambition to dominate the world's shipping business fell short in reality. U.S. shipping industry, considered great during the "era of clippers," never recovered after the Civil War.⁵⁴

It was therefore serendipitous for the PMSC that 1867 was also the year when the former U.S. ambassador to China, Anson Burlingame, began negotiating on behalf of the Chinese government with U.S. Secretary of State William Seward for a new commercial treaty between the two nations. China and the U.S. signed a renewed treaty of peace and amity in 1868, opening a decade of free flow of emigration from China to the United States. The Burlingame-Seward Treaty of 1868 acknowledged the "inherent and inalienable right of man to change his home and allegiance" and the "mutual advantage of free migration and emigration."⁵⁵ It also guaranteed the Chinese in the United States the same "privileges, immunities, and exemptions" as the most favored nation.⁵⁶ With this nominal protection of U.S. government and, more importantly, the permission for emigration granted by the Chinese imperial government, the number of Chinese immigrants coming to the United States soared over the next decade.⁵⁷ This immigrant traffic gave the PMSC a steadier, far more profitable source of revenue for the next several decades.

⁵⁴ Perry, *Facing West*, 113-117.

⁵⁵ Chinese American Society, *The Rocky Road to Liberty: A Documented History of Chinese Immigration and Exclusion* (Saratoga, CA: Javvin Press, 2010), 152.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ During the twelve-year period between 1855-1866, the number of Chinese immigrants entering the United States was approximately 4,585 per year, whereas the same twelve-year period between 1867-1878, it was 17,451 per year. See "Table Ad136-148: Immigrants, by country of last residence-Asia: 1820-1997," *Historical Statistics of the United States, Millennial Edition Online*, edited by Susan B. Carter, Scott Sigmund Gartner, Michael R. Haines, Alan L. Olmstead, Richard Sutch, and Gavin Wright, © Cambridge University Press 2006 (accessed on 5 February 2018 via <http://hsus.cambridge.org.proxy.uchicago.edu/HSUSWeb/table/showtablepdf.do?id=Ad136-148>)

5.4. California and the Steamship Connections across the Pacific

If California's admission to the Union embellished the already existing desire of U.S. politicians and capitalists to extend transpacific communication, California after the Civil War faced transit across the Pacific with far more ambivalence. After 1848, California's Pacific connections were reimagined as part of the larger narrative of U.S. westward expansion. Politicians, entrepreneurs, and writers began to describe American forays into the Pacific in terms of the continental conquest, the acquisition of the Pacific Coast territory as a necessary step toward dominating the commerce and traffic in the Pacific. Subsequent territorial acquisitions of Alaska (1867) and Hawaii (1898) confirmed the popular understanding of the nation's history as moving westward—an understanding shared by many Anglo-American settlers in California. The importance of transpacific commerce was more palpably felt throughout the Pacific Coast's burgeoning economy. "San Francisco has become the solidly built metropolis of the Pacific," a California newspaper lauded in 1860, with a self-congratulatory acknowledgement of the port's regional primacy: "All the islands of the Pacific depend upon San Francisco for their supplies, and all the ports on this side of the continent, from Sitka to Valparaíso, acknowledge the same city as their commercial emporium."⁵⁸ Still more significant in the prosperity of San Francisco, the article added, was the trade it dispatched to China, Japan, and Southeast Asia.

By 1860, California had transformed itself into an export economy with its rapid advance of wheat production in the Central Valley. Before 1848, cattle grazing was the dominant business in California; San Francisco was a small harbor where whalers or fur trading ships occasionally anchored. The port became a booming urban center with skeletons of abandoned ships functioning as its extended waterfront after 1849, receiving not only immigrants from all over the world but also

⁵⁸ "Pacific Commerce," *Marysville Daily Appeal*, 29 December 1860.

tons of imported basic consumer goods. People with capital and a shrewd sense of business began investing in agriculture even while the gold mines appeared to be the only economic activity in northern California. California agriculture experienced a rapid expansion by 1852, thanks in part to the cheap labor provided by Native Americans.⁵⁹ With the growth of California's economy, the port of San Francisco also grew. The population of San Francisco increased from less than half a thousand in 1848, to more than 30,000 in 1852, and jumped to 56,802 in 1860.⁶⁰ San Francisco's growth was further accelerated as the United States entered into earnest competition with other global powers for the markets in Asia.

When the Pacific Mail Steamship Company first began its transpacific operations, it claimed that the port of San Francisco was still "in the infancy of its importance," that the new transpacific steamship route was destined to bring about the growth of the city and California agriculture by providing them with regular and stable connection to the China market.⁶¹ The markets in China were integral in the transformation of California into a producing and exporting economy, especially in fueling its agricultural growth. Flour was the most prominent commercial item exported to China. While most of California's wheat exports went to Britain and Europe, and then to the eastern United States, China and Japan were the primary buyers of California flour. From 1868 to 1872, for example, China and Japan ranked consistently higher than any other destination in the amount of flour barrels shipped from California.⁶² Moreover, the flour sold to China and Japan were of a

⁵⁹ James Gerber, "The Gold Rush Origins of California's Wheat Economy," *América Latina en la Historia Económica* 34 (2010).

⁶⁰ *Population of the United States in 1860* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1864), 31.

⁶¹ PMSC, *A Sketch of the Route to California, China and Japan*, 89-90.

⁶² California State Agricultural Society, *Transactions of the California State Agricultural Society during the year 1878* (Sacramento: State Office, 1879), 149-150. Even though California's flour exports to Europe briefly spiked in the period between 1873 and 1877 to exceed the exports to East Asia, the Asian markets were far more consistent in buying California flour throughout the decade.

different grade from what was sold to European markets, thus making the trade with East Asia complementary to the trade with Europe.⁶³ The dominance of the Chinese market in California flour exports continued into the 1890s. In the 1893-1894 fiscal year, China bought more than half of all exported California flour.⁶⁴ Since the 1860s, wheat growing had been the leading production sector of California's economy; the prominence of the Chinese market in this derivative product of wheat may well prove the importance of transpacific commerce in the state, apart from the whole nation.

Perhaps in an inverse acknowledgement of California's disproportionate reliance on the China trade, the *North China Herald*, the official journal for the British consular service in Shanghai, reframed U.S. expansion into the Pacific as distinctly *Californian* in 1869. In a commentary about the Alaska purchase and its possible outcomes, the movement further westward into Russian America was hailed as the product of "the irrepressible Yankee, or rather his Californian descendant."⁶⁵ The British editor in China plainly understood the Alaska Purchase as an extension of California's growth. The foreseeable impact of such continual westward movement, according to this editorial, would be extensive, combined with San Francisco's advance as an international port:

It will be only in the natural course of things...the cession of Alaska should be followed by the cession, voluntary or coerced, of the whole of North-Eastern Asia. The Californians...are likely to cross over into Asiatic Russia and settle there, turning the Amour valley and the fertile wastes of Manchuria into a new Far West.⁶⁶

This baseless assertion of California's character could have been a lingering imprint of its outlaw

⁶³ Cox, "The Passage to India," 90-91.

⁶⁴ California State Agricultural Society, *Transactions of the California State Agricultural Society during the year 1894* (Sacramento: State Office, 1895), 195.

⁶⁵ "The Russians in Asia," *The North China Herald and Market Report*, 10 July 1869.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

past, invoked to explain the continuity of American expansion. Thus reimagined, California's role was the vanguard of U.S. expansion across the Pacific. The Pacific Mail Steamship Company, by connecting California and China, made an inverse reality of this imagery. Instead of Californians occupying Northeastern Asia and building a new Far West, Asian migrants came into California, transplanting Asia in the Far West.

5.5. The Pacific Mail Steamship Company and Chinese Immigration

If the transpacific steamship connection was instrumental in the development of the Pacific Coast, it was more for the traffic *from* China than *to* China. The emigration of southern Chinese that started in the 1840s was a product of several different factors, local and global.⁶⁷ Compelled to leave by economic necessity and political turmoil, the Chinese began to come to the United States en masse for the first time during the Gold Rush. From 1850 to 1860, roughly 41,000 Chinese came to the Pacific Coast. The number rose to 64,301 the next decade, encouraged by the prospect of work in the construction of railroads. After the Burlingame Treaty of 1868 and the PMSC's launch of transpacific steamships, the number of Chinese immigrants who came in during the decade from 1870-1880 shot up to 123,201, to drop again the next decade to roughly 60,000 with the Chinese Exclusion of 1882.⁶⁸ It is impossible to determine to what extent the available steamship passage aided the massive influx of Chinese immigrants to North America after 1867. Would it have been possible for mining or railroad companies to hire as many Chinese laborers as they did, had there not been the steerage space to transport more than a thousand immigrants at once? Considering the

⁶⁷ Sucheng Chan, *This Bittersweet Soil: The Chinese in California Agriculture, 1860-1910* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 7-26; Madeline Y. Hsu, *Dreaming of Gold, Dreaming of Home: Transnationalism and Migration Between the United States and South China, 1882-1943* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 2-3, 18-25, *passim*.

⁶⁸ Bill Ong Hing, *Making and Remaking Asian America through Immigration Policy, 1850-1990* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 48 table 3.

much larger scale of the coolie and slave trades that depended on sailing ships, it may still have been possible—yet the steamships were the primary carriers of Chinese immigrants to the United States once the steamship connections were initiated, and they were central in the public discourse and representation of Chinese immigration in California.⁶⁹

The transition from sail boats to steamships transformed ocean voyages into more industrialized and depersonalized experiences. Steamship companies also created a bifurcated setting for ocean travel. First-class cabin passage was highly luxurious, reserved for merchants, missionaries, military officers, U.S. and foreign government officials, and wealthy leisure travelers. Steerage passengers crossing the Pacific, the first and foremost source of profits for the PMSC, were considered interchangeable with cargo. This understanding of steerage passengers as just another form of commercial goods eventually led to the creation of the “Asiatic Steerage”—a mobile racialized space equivalent to ethnic enclaves created in land. It variably served as a visual and spatial manifestation of the utter un-assimilability of the Chinese, a curiosity for American observers, and a carved-out space for migrants to exert a degree of restricted autonomy.

The steerage space on early transpacific steam voyages rarely becomes an object of comment, partly because there are few first-hand accounts reporting its conditions before 1900. The term *steerage* referred to the space between the main deck and the cargo hold, and on different vessels could mean different travel conditions.⁷⁰ The PMSC’s ships had a huge capacity for steerage passengers, its transpacific operation fundamentally predicated on the traffic of Chinese immigrants

⁶⁹ Asian American historians have recently begun to acknowledge the role of steamship company agents and entrepreneurs in the history of Chinese and Japanese immigration. Kornel Chang, *Pacific Connections: The Making of the U.S.-Canadian Borderlands* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012); Yukari Takai, “Steamship Companies, State Regulators, and Transshipment of Japanese in the Early-Twentieth-Century Pacific Northwest,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 30: 3 (2011).

⁷⁰ For a comprehensive overview of the steerage migration, see Barde, “Asiatic Steerage: Ship Travel and Asian Mass Migration,” in *Immigration at the Golden Gate*, 82-142.

to and from California. The *City of Peking*, the company's signature steamship launched in 1874, could carry 129 cabin passengers and 1,500 in steerage.⁷¹ Although the *City of Peking* and its twin, the *City of Tokio*, were a newer and larger addition to the PMSC fleet, the older set of steamers—the *China*, the *Japan*, and the *Great Republic*—were also larger in tonnage than the other steamships of the day, capable of transporting more than a thousand steerage passengers per trip.⁷²

The differentiation between “European” and “Asiatic” steerages was observed as early as the 1870s. According to a pamphlet published by the company sometime during the 1870s, the one-way fare between San Francisco to Hong Kong was \$300 for first cabin, \$100 for “Europe[a]n Steerage,” and \$56 for “Chinese & Japanese Steerage.”⁷³ Whereas the usual class segregation was in place, the earlier division of European and Asian steerage passengers shows the prominence of Asian migration business as well as the early development of racialized spatial setting. By the end of the century, the company rule clearly stipulated that “the Asiatic Steerage is for the sole use of Asiatics, and cannot be occupied by, nor rate applied to, any other persons.”⁷⁴ There is no evidence of any other types of racial segregation in place. Sometime between 1897 and 1913, the “European steerage” was renamed to “intermediate steerage,” to accommodate either those less well-to-do white passengers or more well-to-do Asian passengers.⁷⁵ This change suggests a diversification of the

⁷¹ “The City of Peking,” *Daily Alta California*, 28 January 1875.

⁷² Kemble, “Side-Wheelers across the Pacific,” *The American Neptune* 2: 1 (1942), 7-9. In April 1873, for example, the *China* arrived in San Francisco with 1248 Chinese (and “two Europeans”) in steerage. “Arrival of the *China*,” *Daily Alta California*, 4 April 1873.

⁷³ PMSC, *Pacific Mail*, [page unnumbered].

⁷⁴ PMSC, *Eleven Thousand Miles East and West via Pacific Mail Steamship Company* (San Francisco: [s.n.], 1897), “General Information,” [p.4] (page unnumbered).

⁷⁵ An 1897 table of rates published by the company still showed the “European steerage,” but a PMSC passenger in 1913 described a Chinese merchant in the “intermediate steerage.” PMSC, *Eleven Thousand Miles East and West*, [p.3] (page unnumbered); Lewis R. Freeman, “Flashlights in an Asiatic Steerage,” *Overland Monthly and Out West Magazine* 62 (1913), 31.

PMSC passenger base—and by extension, of Pacific crossers—perhaps as a result of American colonization of the Philippines.

The steerage of the PMSC steamships was the cheapest accommodation for the lowest rates. When William Seward went on a trip around the world, boarding the PMSC steamship *China* in San Francisco on September 1, 1870, there were 60 cabin passengers and 500 steerage passengers on board, the latter all Chinese. These steerage passengers paid “less than half price” and slept on the floor at night, “knowing no use of beds.”⁷⁶ It is unclear if all earlier PMSC steamships had no berth in steerage, or if this was merely Seward’s misunderstanding. If it was the former, later descriptions of the steerage space in the *City of Peking* indicates that the conditions of the Asiatic steerage changed over time. Li Gui, a Chinese official who came to the United States as part of the Chinese delegation to attend the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia in May of 1876, boarded the *City of Peking* for San Francisco as a first-class passenger. One day on board (as per the tradition of an upper-class traveler touring the lower-class abode for fun) he visited the steerage. “Here, too, everyone has a bunk,” he observed, “all of which are stacked on several levels.”⁷⁷ The steerage passengers, slightly above a hundred in number, were either gambling, singing and playing musical instruments, or “smoking opium behind cloth curtains.”⁷⁸

Li Gui also reported on the crew’s organization. The captain and the ship’s officers, thirty-one in number, were all Americans. There were 106 Chinese sailors and attendants, comprised of 38

⁷⁶ Seward, *Travels around the World*, 31-32.

⁷⁷ Charles Desnoyers (ed. and trans.), *A Journey to the East: Li Gui’s A New Account of a Trip around the Globe* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004), 261.

⁷⁸ Desnoyers, *A Journey to the East*, 258-261. This was a heavily reduced number of immigrants, since it was not uncommon for the PMSC steamers to arrive with more than a thousand of steerage passengers. Li Gui himself was curious at the reduction of immigration and inquired the passengers; it turned out that people in Hong Kong heard via telegram of the anti-Asian agitation in California (attributed solely to the Irish by Li Gui), and feared uncertain prospects of the future. Those still going informed Li Gui that they were desperate and had no other choice.

stokers, another 38 deckhands, 20 stewards, 9 cooks, and one “chief petty officer,” who probably managed the Chinese crew and mediated American officers and Chinese sailors.⁷⁹ The PMSC used Chinese labor from the very start of its transpacific voyages. PMSC’s president Allan McLane went on a tour of inspection in the China line’s inaugural year and decided that the use of Chinese sailors and waiters would be a cost-effective measure. In 1868, PMSC steamship captains recruited their crews as they reached Hong Kong.⁸⁰

“Asiatic steerage” was a segregated and racialized space, a spatial manifestation of the segregation and racism the Chinese would face in U.S. society. Its visual representation epitomized their migration as cheap labor. To be sure, steerage migration in general featured heavily in the visual representation of emigrant ships in the nineteenth century. Various depictions of Atlantic crossings focused on peasants and working-class European emigrants cooped up in the dark and untidied steerage, often putting the plights of immigrants in a sympathetic light.⁸¹ Pictorial images of the Chinese migration in the PMSC steerage, such as the two printed in *Harper’s Weekly* in 1876 and in 1877 (Figs. 8-9), may very well fit into this artistic tradition.⁸² Dynamic facial expressions with identifiable individual characteristics and diverse variation of attire or activities among the depicted Chinese may suggest that this image was intended to be a realistic representation of the emigrant ship and could be differentiated with racially targeted satires from the same period. The article titled “Chinese Immigration” accompanied a scene of Chinese immigrants eating meals on board the

⁷⁹ Desnoyers, *A Journey to the East*, 259.

⁸⁰ Kemble, “Side-Wheelers,” 27-28; there is also an 1868 photograph of the steamship saloon that shows a Chinese steward (31 plate 7). See also Greenfield, “SS City of Peking.”

⁸¹ See, for example, “Emigration to Sydney,” *Illustrated London News* [London, England] 13 April 1844 (accessed via web on 11 February 2018).

⁸² “Chinese Emigration to America—On Board the Pacific Mail Steamship *Alaska*,” *Harper’s Weekly* 20 (20 May 1876), 408-409; “Sunday Service on board a Pacific Mail Steamship,” *Harper’s Weekly* 21 (16 June 1877), 461.

Alaska. It was a pro-Chinese immigration commentary, describing the Chinese as the perfect race for cheap and servile labor: “he is an eminently economical institution. His habits, his tastes, his pleasures, even his vices, are cheap.”⁸³ The diet on board was simple yet abundant; most Chinese immigrants depicted are holding a bowl of something, while the only type of food in the scene appears to be noodle or rice in a basket on the bottom left, together with broth in the steaming basin at the center (Fig. 8). Paired with the essentialist assessment of the “cheap” Chinese character, the visual and textual description of PMSC’s steerage could have seemed befittingly ‘Asiatic.’

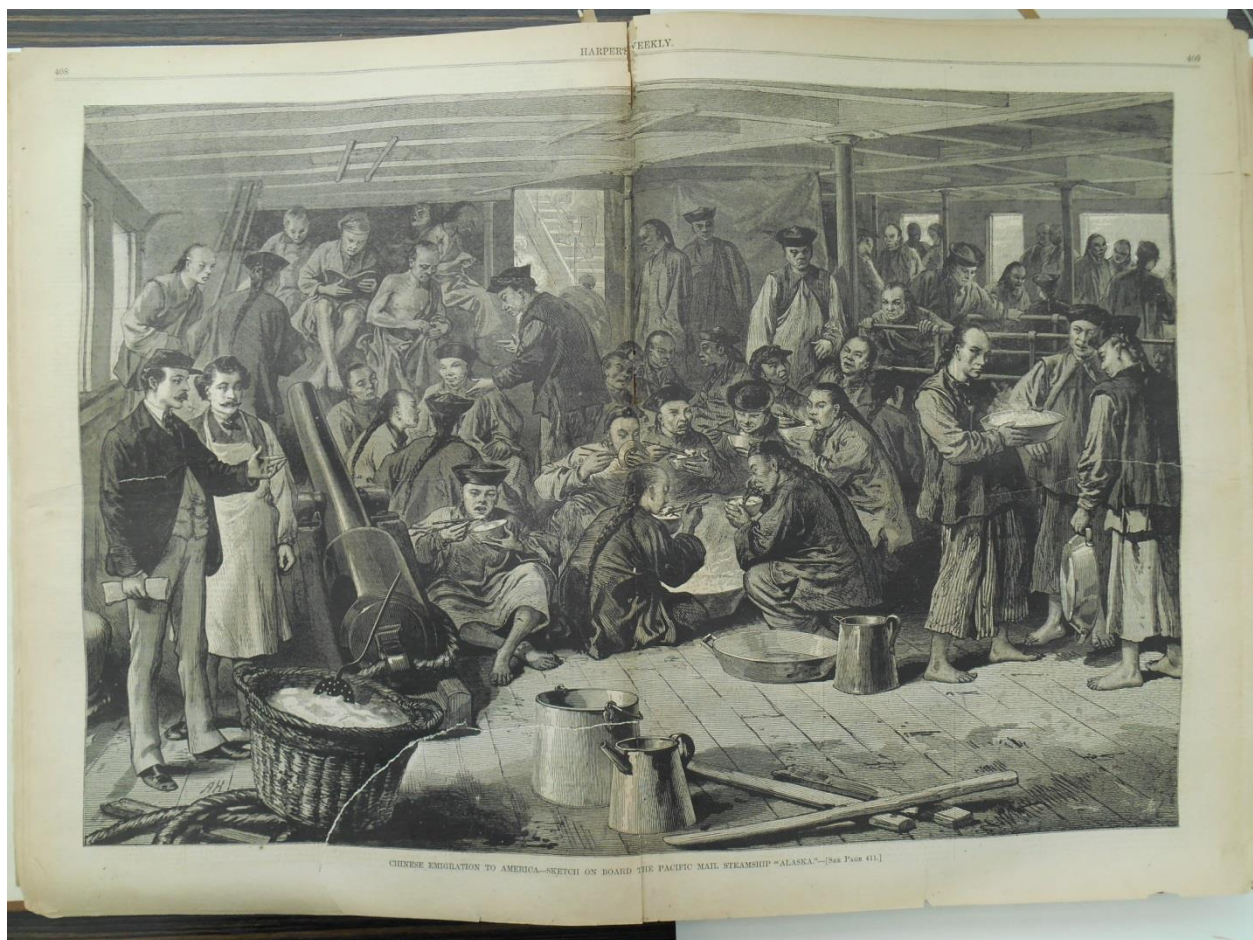


Figure 8. “Chinese Emigration to America,” Harper's Weekly 20 (1876)

Another sketch titled “Sunday Service on board a Pacific Mail Steamship,” published in

⁸³ “Chinese Immigration,” *Harper's Weekly* 20 (20 May 1876), 411.

Harper's Weekly a year later, presented a neutral or positive attitude toward the Chinese (Fig. 9). The image depicts an idyllic Sunday in steerage. The accompanying article emphasized the authenticity of the scene, claiming that it was drawn "by our artist on board one of the Pacific Mail steam-ships that ply between San Francisco and the various ports of Japan."⁸⁴ Explaining that every ocean-going steamships had at least one cleric on board and that religious services were held regularly at sea, the *Harper's Weekly* article added: "As a rule, passengers are glad to attend, either from devotion or because the service is a welcome variation of the monotony of life at sea."⁸⁵ The Chinese passengers in the image indeed look bored, one in the background smoking (likely) opium, but without moral indignation intended by the artist (Fig. 9). On the bottom right corner, a woman holding a baby creates an impression of immigration by an assiduous family, peaceable and intending to settle.

In both of these *Harper's Weekly* illustrations depicting Asiatic steerage, a cannon is prominently displayed in the space occupied by Chinese immigrants. The cannon itself is not a surprising object to find below deck, as steamships and sailing ships used to fire a cannon to celebrate their arrival, departure, or encounters with other ships. Yet it is worth noting that cannons are not a usual fixture in other depictions of steerage. If the claim of realism was true and the cannons *were* present when the artists witnessed the scenes, it may suggest that the quarters occupied by the Chinese migrants was a space typically not intended for passengers; that there were no separate spaces for meals or for religious services.

⁸⁴ "Sunday Service at Sea," *Harper's Weekly* 21 (16 June 1877), 462. This drawing was attributed to Felix Regamey, a French artist known for his role in the artistic current of *japonisme* who in fact traveled to Japan in 1877.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

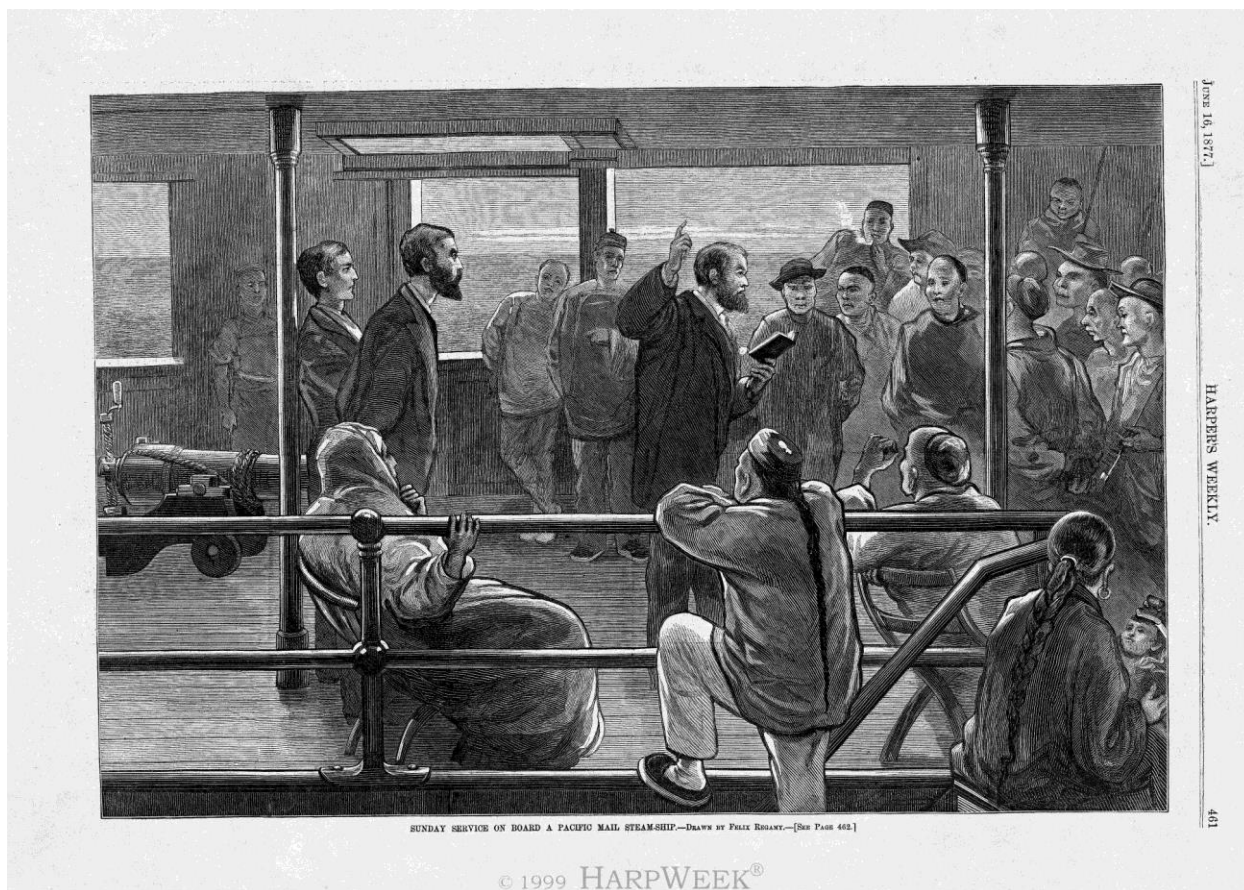


Figure 9. "Sunday Service on board a Pacific Mail Steamship," Harper's Weekly 21 (1877)

The PMSC's Asiatic steerage was built with large Chinese passenger traffic in both directions in mind. The shipping firm's interests in the transpacific commerce often rendered Chinese migrants as nothing more than human cargo, even though the real conditions of their labor migration were not to be conflated with slave or coolie trades. William Seward, for example, observed the type of goods the U.S. traded with Japan and China during his travel in 1871: "Mexican silver dollars, manufactured goods, agricultural machines, carriages, furniture, flour, butter, fruits, drugs, and patent medicines...go in exchange for teas, silks, rice, and Chinese emigrants."⁸⁶ Interchangeable as they were with teas, silks, and rice as imported products, Chinese migrants were nevertheless the

⁸⁶ Seward, *Travels around the World*, 276.

highest paying cargo.

“Chinese pay the steamer better than tea,” Fred E. Foster, a PMSC agent in Yokohama, Japan, put it bluntly in 1878.⁸⁷ Foster was a mercantile agent from Massachusetts, active in southern China since the early 1860s. According to his U.S. passport, he was 37 years old in 1878, a native Bostonian of medium height (5’6), brown hair, blue eyes, high forehead and round chin.⁸⁸ He started working as an independent commercial agent in Shanghai around 1863, and was later appointed General Agent for the China line of the Pacific Mail Steamship Company. He worked first from Yokohama, Japan (1878-1879), and later from the British colony of Hong Kong (1881-1882).

As a general agent of the China line, Foster managed the western end of the transpacific business, collecting shipments and Asian migrants to make sure that the company’s steamships were full on return. As Seward had concisely put it a few years earlier, the usual return cargo procured from Japan and China was tea, silk, and Chinese emigrants. In 1878-1879 Foster wrote regular reports from Yokohama to David S. Babcock, then president of the PMSC, summarizing the state of business in East Asian ports and projecting the size of season’s tea harvest, the quality of silk worm production, and the possible number of emigrants. In October 1878, Foster estimated the total tea cargo tonnage that year at 23,400 tons, then added that this estimate was based on the assumption that there might be only 250 Chinese passengers per each steamer. The projection was “merely based upon the probable number...while affairs in California remain as at present,” he explained.⁸⁹ If a larger number of Chinese should want passage, he mused, “we could always accept

⁸⁷ Fred E. Foster letter to David S. Babcock, 3 October 1878, Letter Book vol. 2, p.28, Fred E. Foster Collection, mssHM 80571-80574, HL.

⁸⁸ National Archives and Records Administration (NARA); Washington D.C.; NARA Series: Passport Applications, 1795-1905; Roll #: 98; Volume #: Roll 098 - 22 Jul 1861-26 Aug 1861 (accessed via Ancestry.com on 20 July 2017).

⁸⁹ Foster to Babcock, 3 October 1878, Fred E. Foster Letter Book vol. 2, p.28, HL.

them at the sacrifice of tea space, and we should of course have to do so.”⁹⁰ Then he presented a basic economic comparison: one Chinese passenger occupied 40 square feet for \$50, whereas the 40 square feet or 2.5 tons of tea, shipped at 3¢ per pound, made \$67.50, an amount to be equally divided by the steamship company and the Transcontinental Railroad.⁹¹ This calculation was emblematic of the company’s attitude toward Chinese immigration. For the same space—forty square feet—the steerage passenger paid \$16.25 more than Japanese tea. Furthermore, there was no competition for Chinese passenger traffic, unlike tea or silk cargo which could easily be transported on British steamships via the Suez Canal. The more Chinese passengers they transported each trip, the more profits the PMSC made.

The anti-Chinese movements in California and the resulting drop of immigrants moving to the U.S. was thus a real business concern. When Foster became the steamship company agent in Japan, the first of a series of anti-immigration legislations, the Page Law (1875), was already put in place. Even without legal exclusion, American xenophobia was functioning as a deterrent for Chinese emigrants. The Pacific Mail Steamship Company saw a decline in the number of steerage passengers, although not enough to be in the red. The number of Chinese migrants headed to San Francisco in 1878 dropped by 2,000 from the previous year, yet the company still saw a net profit of \$228,000 for its transpacific steamers (\$828,000 earnings and \$600,000 expenses).⁹² Foster’s regular reports were filled with descriptions of his efforts to procure the Chinese ‘cargo,’ constantly

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ Luxury goods such as tea and silk were more often than not shipped to the east coast or Europe, which required a transshipment from San Francisco to New York. As the Pacific Mail had the Panama line and a business agreement with the Panama Railroad, there had been a conflict of interests in the beginning of the transpacific operation against the Transcontinental Railroad. The conflict was resolved in 1875 when the two corporations agreed to divide the profit of the “through” shipments—i.e. the cargo transported from the Far East to New York via the Central and Union Pacific—by half. See Kemble, “Transpacific Railroads,” 335.

⁹² Foster to Babcock, 25 November 1878, Fred E. Foster Letter Book vol. 2, p.81; Foster to Babcock, 8 January 1879, Fred E. Foster Letter Book vol. 2, p.121.

corresponding with the PMSC agent in Hong Kong and Chinese labor recruiters. In February 1879, in concert with the Hong Kong agent, he arranged transportation of 200 Chinese migrants to Honolulu via San Francisco, for \$60 per person—the second voyage from San Francisco to Honolulu to be either steam or sail with an extra charge of \$10.⁹³ This convoluted passage was arranged because the British colonial government in Hong Kong prohibited direct migration to Hawaii, due to a history of harsh treatment of Chinese workers on Hawaiian sugar plantations.⁹⁴

Despite various attempts to procure more Chinese passengers, the PMSC decided in 1879 to reduce the capacity of steerage passengers on its vessels. This preemptive change vexed the company's local agents in East Asia, as in the years leading up to Chinese Exclusion, the number of steerage passengers wanting to immigrate briefly surged, with some 40,000 Chinese coming to the United States immigrants in the year 1882.⁹⁵ In 1879, U.S. Congress tried to prohibit Chinese immigration by passing the "Fifteen Passenger Bill," which limited the number of allowed Chinese passengers to fifteen per each ship docking at U.S. ports. The bill was vetoed by President Hayes on the ground that it abrogated diplomatic agreements between two nations.⁹⁶ Perhaps buoyed by this veto, more than 900 Chinese immigrants sought passage on a PMSC steamship in March 1879. "To adapt the steamer to what appeared to be a permanent diminution of the Chinese passenger traffic," Foster lamented, "and then to have that business resume its former proportions just after the

⁹³ Foster to [?] Smith, 29 January 1879, Fred E. Foster Letter Book, vol. 2, p.174; Foster to Babcock, 14 February 1879, Fred E. Foster Letter Book, vol. 2, p. 183.

⁹⁴ Foster to Smith, 17 February 1879, Fred E. Foster Letter Book, vol. 2, p.191.

⁹⁵ "Immigrants, by country of last residence – Asia: 1820–1997," *Historical Statistics of the United States, Millennial Edition Online*.

⁹⁶ Charles J. McClain, *In Search of Equality: The Chinese Struggle against Discrimination in Nineteenth-Century America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 147-148.

alterations were completed...”⁹⁷ It was perhaps an astute economic move on the part of management, for the shift to immigration restriction was already in motion. Based on the failure of the Fifteen Passenger Bill, those who opposed Chinese immigration first acted to renegotiate diplomatic agreements with the Chinese Empire. The Angell Treaty, which allowed the United States to suspend the immigration of Chinese laborers, was ratified by the U.S. Senate in 1881, and the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 followed soon after.

The profit-seeking practices of the steamship company did not completely collide with the remonstrance from the white labor and xenophobic agitators demanding that Chinese immigration be curtailed. When the Chinese Exclusion bill was introduced in U.S. Congress, Foster wrote in his regular report to the PMSC president on May 12, 1882, outlining his own approach to Chinese exclusion. He firmly believed that the Chinese Exclusion bill introduced in Congress was a grave mistake, “at any rate in its present form.”⁹⁸ Curiously, he did not object to immigration restriction itself. On the contrary, he simply doubted that the proposed bill would be effective in limiting the number of the Chinese in California:

The bill will give rise to innumerable complications, and will prove a very clumsy machine to handle. *A tonnage limitation is the only practical way of dealing with immigration*, and such a measure would have avoided the question of the Chinaman’s status—i.e. whether he is a laborer (or coolie), a skilled laborer, or a merchant.⁹⁹

Foster’s uniquely ambivalent position toward Chinese Exclusion could have been a logical consequence of his pragmatic and impersonal understanding of Chinese immigrants simply as more

⁹⁷ Foster to Smith, 26 March 1879, Fred E. Foster Letter Book vol. 2, p.225.

⁹⁸ Fred E. Foster Letter Book vol. 3, p.159.

⁹⁹ Fred E. Foster Letter Book vol. 3, p.159 (emphasis mine).

profitable cargo. His thinking anticipated the more comprehensive immigration restrictions that followed in 1924 when the national quota system was established. For now, however, the creation of a class of Chinese immigrant exempt from exclusion gave the company some breathing room. Though Foster admitted that the company's business would be "seriously affected by the loss of the Chinese emigrants," he was still confident that the company's large-capacity transpacific steamships could run profitably, as the company, in his calculation, "might reasonably count on a total of 300 [steerage passengers] by each steamer in future."¹⁰⁰ The loopholes in the Chinese Exclusion Act allowed a continuous stream of Chinese to and from California.¹⁰¹ New groups of Asian immigrants followed using the same Asiatic steerage, sharing the same mobile space and suffering from the same racial characterization attached to the space.

In July 1882, the Pacific Mail and the Occidental & Oriental Steamship Company merged its Hong Kong office, presumably because of the reduced passenger traffic. Moreover, the PMSC started to use its separate legs of business—the China and Panama lines—to transport Chinese migrants to non-U.S. Pacific ports. Captain John M. Cavarly, a long-time PMSC employee, alluded to the company's involvement in Chinese migration to Mexico in the late 1880s, when he commandeered the SS *Colima*. The *Colima* ran between San Francisco and Panama, stopping at various ports in Mexico and Central America. While anchored near La Libertad, El Salvador in March 1887, he wrote a letter to his family complaining the hot weather there, adding, "on the next voyage down with Coolies we don't stop here, stopping at Acapulco only."¹⁰² Toward the end of the

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ For a history of post-1882 Chinese immigration, see Erika Lee, *At America's Gates: Chinese Immigration during the Exclusion Era, 1882-1943* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

¹⁰² John M. Cavarly letter to his family, 11 March 1887, Kathryn Hulme Papers, Box 20, Folder 526, American Literature Collection, BRBM.

nineteenth century, destinations for the transpacific migrants expanded to Mexico, Peru, and Hawaii; as were the number of companies transporting them. In addition to the PMSC and the O&O, the Canadian Pacific Railroad (CPR) and the Tokyo Kisen Kaisha (TKK) began their transpacific steamship operation in the 1890s. As late-comers, their business modeled after the PMSC, including the creation of an Asiatic Steerage section on their boats.

By the early twentieth-century, the “Asiatic Steerage” became a sort of tourist attraction that some white American cabin passengers eagerly visited. In 1904, the PMSC built two new ocean-going steamships for its transpacific line, the *Mongolia* and the *Manchuria*, still with a sizable steerage traffic in mind. According to a report by the American Society of Naval Engineers, the *Mongolia* could accommodate 1,300 Chinese steerage passengers in a space “available for cargo when not so occupied.”¹⁰³ A writer and amateur photographer named Lewis Freeman described this steerage space in 1913, in a short essay published in the *Overland Monthly*, together with several photographic images he took on board a PMSC steamship. “The profits in trans-oceanic steamer business, if profits there are, are derived principally from freight,” Freeman maintained; passengers generally required too much space that it was “usually impossible to charge a fare that will make the carrying of them commercially profitable.”¹⁰⁴ What did make passenger traffic profitable was:

[W]hen the travel is heavy, third class or steerage passengers are often carried at a profit...while [the steerage passenger] may pay but a third or a quarter of a first-class passenger, does not occupy more than from a tenth to a fiftieth of the room necessary for the former. In other words, *the nearer a passenger can be reduced to the condition of freight*, the less room he can be restricted to for eating, sleeping, and getting fresh air, the more chance there is of his being profitable.”¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ American Society of Naval Engineers, *Journal of the American Society of Naval Engineers* 16 (Washington D.C.: R. Beresford, 1904), 238.

¹⁰⁴ Lewis R. Freeman, “Flashlights in an Asiatic Steerage,” 23.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.* (emphasis mine).

As if in direct conversation with Fred E. Foster, Freeman viewed the steerage passengers as people reduced to immobile cargo. In his opinion, the transpacific steerage was “nearer to the ‘freight ideal’ than on any other run.”¹⁰⁶ Freeman’s own photographs betrayed that statement. In a photograph titled “American custom officers searching the steerage,” an officer was posed next to three-tiered bunks with three steerage passengers, two male and one female.¹⁰⁷ The photographs of “Japanese playing cards on shipboard,” “Opium smoker cleaning a pipe,” “Returning Japanese students in the ‘intermediate’ steerage,” and “One of the beauties of the steerage,” certainly depicted the scenes in which a casual American observer would have looked and confirmed their racially stereotyped understanding of transpacific migrants.¹⁰⁸ Still, these photographic images undeniably captured the segments of human lives on board the transpacific steamships.

5.6. At the Turn of the Century: Steamships and California’s Pacific Connections

From the 1870s on, the PMSC had become the prime target of organized white labor and the popular press in California for the perceived crime of bringing cheap Chinese labor into the state. When the lobbying scandal of 1874 reopened a Congressional debate over the PMSC government subsidy, the California legislature passed a resolution opposing further subsidies, citing as one of the reasons, “Pacific Mail Company’s steamers are engaged in importing Chinese coolies to this state, and moreover said steamers are almost wholly manned by said class of Mongolians, to

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 25.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 27-28.

almost the entire exclusion of free white labor.”¹⁰⁹ The hatred against the PMSC was certainly part of the larger conflict between capital and labor, but in California, the steamship company represented something more than a greedy corporation. One Los Angeles newspaper summed it up in an editorial regarding Congressional proceedings about the subsidies in 1875. Indignant that the California delegation in Congress favored the PMSC subsidy over subsidizing the Texas Pacific Railway, the editor berated the folly of “the pagan subsidy,” asserting that the PMSC would spend the money “in bringing Chinamen and Chinawomen from Hong Kong to San Francisco,” whereas the railroad would “open up and populate a broad and rich section of the country, and *pour a heavy immigration of honest, respectable, industrious, Christian, white men and women along the Pacific coast.*”¹¹⁰ In other words, the railroad symbolized an integrated nation, with white European immigrants from its east coast. Steamships, in contrast, signified the foreign, or “pagan,” influence. Oceanic transportation to California after the 1860s was now deemed external to the national body politic of the United States. The transpacific steamship connections that depended on Chinese immigration for their profits confirmed and exacerbated such re-imagination of oceanic connections.

Anti-Chinese agitation in California traces back to the early 1850s, when white miners used to drive the Chinese out of better claims. After the Civil War, Reconstruction-era struggles for racial equality and the supremacy of free labor ideology further complicated the conditions in which Chinese immigrants were received in California.¹¹¹ The “Chinese Question” became a common

¹⁰⁹ “Resolution of the Legislature of California, requesting Congress to oppose any further subsidy to the Pacific Mail Steamship Company,” 43rd Cong., 1st Sess., Misc. Doc. No. 213 (March 1874).

¹¹⁰ “The Vagaries of Statesmen,” *Los Angeles Herald*, 27 February 1875 (emphasis mine).

¹¹¹ Stacey L. Smith, *Freedom’s Frontier: California and the Struggle over Unfree Labor, Emancipation, and Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 206-230; D. Michael Bottoms, *An Aristocracy of Color: Race and Reconstruction in California and the West, 1850-1890* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2013); Moon-Ho Jung, *Coolies and Cane: Race, Labor, and Sugar in the Age of Emancipation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006).

phrase in newspapers, pamphlets, public meetings, and political speeches by the early 1870s.¹¹²



Figure 10. A Cartoon depicting San Francisco Chinatown and Chinese Immigration, ca. 1890 (Courtesy of the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley)

A cartoon created around 1890 (Fig. 10) provides a glimpse of the ways in which some of the white American public in California envisioned Chinese immigration at the end of the nineteenth century. San Francisco Chinatown was depicted as being incessantly populated by thick lines of immigrants from both north and south, or from the right and the left as the viewers' perspective

¹¹² Chan, *This Bittersweet Soil*, 41.

looks westward across the Pacific Ocean. The twin flows of Chinese immigrants are connected to the twin lines of steamships, each operated by the Pacific Mail Steamship Company on U.S. side and the Canadian Pacific Steamship Company on Canadian side. Near the vanishing point, “China” appears in the form of a nefarious-looking pigtailed head, rising out of the ocean as a crude substitute for the sun. The lone non-Chinese being in this pictorial image is a black cat named “Public Opinion” on the bottom right corner, its hackles raised yet seemingly helpless and isolated. Chinese immigration is visualized here as an invasive and overpowering image of Chinatown and a long train of steam-powered Pacific crossings.

Although neither the artists’ identity nor the publication information is known, the details within the image indicate that this cartoon was published and circulated sometime between 1888 and 1892. The flag in the middle of the drawing reads “Harrison & Morton—Protection,” targeting President Benjamin Harrison and his vice president Levi P. Morton, who won the presidential election in 1888 with a strong protectionist platform. Intended as a rebuttal against the perceived hypocrisy of the “protectionist” Republican administration, the two extra flags on either side of the image link U.S. and Canadian steamship companies with influential Republican politicians. Vice president Morton, who was a New York-based banker before he was elected into the office, had briefly served as a director of the Canadian Pacific in 1886.¹¹³ The Canadian Pacific began its first steamship operation between Vancouver and Hong Kong in 1887, and secured the British governmental subsidy for regular monthly service in 1889.¹¹⁴ This cartoon suggests that steamship companies were viewed as the root of the “Chinese problem” in the post-exclusion era, a period of rising tension between white labor activism and capital.

¹¹³ Harold A. Innis, *A History of the Canadian Pacific Railway* (London: P. S. King & Son, Ltd., 1923), 274.

¹¹⁴ Kemble, “Transpacific Railroads,” 338.

Despite the cartoon's sensationalized satire to criticize Chinese mass immigration, the composition of the image is curious in that the port of San Francisco itself resembles the stem of a ship, sailing into the Pacific Ocean toward the Orient—as if once again confirming California's previously imagined role as the vanguard of U.S. expansion into the Pacific. It is perhaps symbolic of the realities that, by “facing west from the California's shore,” as the quintessentially American poet Walt Whitman once said, American people were facing the hard fact that they were not the only agents crossing the Pacific—that the cross-oceanic mobility was multidirectional, more so with the standardized steamship transportation carrying commodified migrant populations.

In 1898, the previously established transpacific routes paid off for U.S. empire-building. Commodore George Dewey's Asiatic Squadron received reinforcements from across the Pacific before the Battle of the Manila Bay. The PMSC's *City of Peking*, celebrating its 100th run across the Pacific in January 1898, was conscripted by the U.S. Army to transport troops to the Philippines.¹¹⁵ Together with the company's involvement in the Spanish-Philippine-American War, 1898 also witnessed the construction of a detention shed in San Francisco harbor by the Pacific Mail Steamship Company. Thus the steamship company, which had facilitated both the transportation and the racialization of Chinese immigrants as nameless and faceless numbers of cheap dispensable labor, became part of the exclusionary immigration law enforcement. The company was to be fined \$500 for each immigrant escaping the detention. In an 1898 *San Francisco Call* article describing the new detention shed, a customs' inspector allegedly claimed that they “treat a Chinaman just as if he was a chest of tea, or a box of opium.”¹¹⁶ As chests of tea or boxes of opium, keeping Chinese passengers safe in the detention shed became the responsibility of the steamship company.

¹¹⁵ Greenfield, “SS City of Peking,” 471-474; “The 100th Voyage of the City of Peking,” *North China Herald and Supreme Court & Consular Gazette*, 21 January 1898. See also Barde, “High Times on the Pacific.”

¹¹⁶ *San Francisco Call*, 6 November 1898; quoted in Barde, *Immigration at the Golden Gate*, 62-63.

Conclusion

The steamships' transpacific voyages symbolized the complex relationships between transportation, transnational connections, and empire-building. The "idea" of Pacific connections, of a "highway" across the vastest ocean on the globe, had long been in the lexicon of American policy makers and enterprising elites. The early projects and incursions of American steamships, naval and mercantile, were rooted in the east coast-centered desires and capital; the Pacific Mail Steamship Company and its transpacific business was conceived in the high hopes of American prosperity and dominance in the ocean. Thus established transportation networks fell short of creating real profits from market expansion. To make up for the lack of hoped-for commercial profits, the PMSC came to depend on transpacific migration using its steerage space, often interchangeable with the cargo space. The conditions of these steerage migrations confirmed and reinforced the racialized characteristic of transpacific migrants as cheap disposable labor.

Transpacific human movements aided by the regular steamship connections helped define the American nation in the Gilded Age. Oceanic transportation during the Gold Rush was part of both national and international connections in California. The PMSC steamships were often imagined as operating within a national space. In 1849 Panama, prospective miners from the eastern United States were outraged when the SS *California* came to shore filled with non-Americans. In the two decades that followed, the PMSC steamships transported American citizens from coast to coast, and facilitated mail exchanges between separated families and friends; the connection with the nation's politics and economy depended largely on the PMSC mail steamer connection in California. Three decades after the beginning of the coastal operation, the steamships of the same company became a powerful symbol of "foreign" elements entering California. The changing understanding

of oceanic connections soon divided public opinion on the West Coast, while the U.S. Navy and the PMSC were simultaneously creating the basis of American Empire in the Pacific.

Oceanic transportation networks provided a site in which corporate, mercantile, geopolitical, military interests in the Pacific converged; upon which the diverse identities of immigrants, migrants, settlers, and natives were formed. The creation and utilization of the cross-oceanic transportation enabled larger scale human encounters and interactions, at once expanding boundaries and setting them, bringing people together and making the contrasts stand out. Through these trans-local, trans-regional, cross-cultural interactions enabled through maritime transport to San Francisco, California emerged as a global, multiracial, nativist society in the half-century after the Gold Rush.

EPILOGUE

In October 1891, the American Navy cruiser *USS Baltimore* docked at the port of Valparaíso, Chile. The captain granted shore leave to his sailors, which was not a particularly wise move given the anti-American feelings of Chileans at the time. Earlier that year, during the Chilean civil war between President José Manuel Balmaceda and the insurgent Congress, the United States intervened to support the president by blocking the shipment of arms for the rebels. The Chilean ship *Itata* left the port of San Diego with a cargo of rifles despite U.S. government's sanctions, and was subsequently chased, captured, and brought back to California by the U.S. Navy. The 1891 Chilean civil war ended with a rebel victory. Less than a month later, some crew members of the *USS Baltimore* got into a fight in Valparaíso with local residents. Two American sailors died. Several more were wounded. The Chilean police subsequently jailed 36 Americans. Even though Chilean authorities tried to downplay the incident as one of the “frequent brawls in the sea-port town,” the United States almost went to war with Chile over the incident. The hostility was only appeased when the Chilean government promised an indemnity of \$75,000 for the families of dead sailors. This “Baltimore Incident” is often neglected in general histories of the United States and remains on the margins of U.S. naval history, although one historian claims that it chilled U.S.-Chilean relations for at least two decades.¹

Soon after the Baltimore Incident, the *Los Angeles Herald* traced the origin of this Chilean anti-Americanism to the Gold Rush and not to its civil war. In an article published soon after the incident, a southern California newspaper ran a story of one Ramón Estudillo, “a native Californian”

¹ Thomas M. Leonard (ed.), *United States-Latin American Relations, 1850-1903: Establishing a Relationship* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1999), 187-189, the direct quote on 187. See also David J. Silbey, *A War of Frontier and Empire: The Philippine-American War, 1899-1902* (New York: Hill & Wang, 2007), 25-26.

who allegedly understood the Chilean situation better on account of shared “Spanish blood.” Estudillo claimed that “Chileans have hated Americans since the days of ’49.”² He asserted that an intense “race hostility” persisted in Chile ever since American miners robbed, murdered, and eventually drove Chilean miners out of California during the Gold Rush. Could this have been a glimpse of the persisting transnational resonances of the California Gold Rush? It certainly attests to the fact that some Californians retained a long memory of the state’s past Pacific connections and the bitter and unstable transnational relations they created. Aside from this imagined continuity from mid-century Chilean miners’ resentment to the Chilean anti-Americanism of the 1890s, the Baltimore Incident also followed a pattern that developed in the Gold Rush era, when the tensions arising from a fear of American encroachment often led to disturbances and violent clashes between locals and Americans. As we saw in Chapter 3, in 1856 Panama, the War of Watermelon crystalized the accumulated tension caused by the half decade of the Anglo-American passengers’ seeking transit. This time in Chile, those involved in the fight were not California-bound travelers but enlisted U.S. Navy sailors, embodying the growing American maritime presence on the Pacific Coast. While the aftermath of the War of Watermelon met with a raucous call for revenge among Anglo-Californian agitators, the Baltimore Incident led to the brink of a war between Chile and the United States, even though both conflicts were eventually resolved with financial settlements. Situated within the continuing patterns of personal-level aggressions corresponding to the larger national tensions between the U.S. and Latin America, the Baltimore Incident also epitomized the changes wrought over the decades since 1848, particularly in the display of U.S. naval power on the Pacific Coast of the Americas.

The Pacific Squadron of the U.S. Navy grew numerically during the U.S.-Mexican War

² “The Feud an Old One,” *Los Angeles Times*, 2 November 1891; “Chilean Bitterness,” *Los Angeles Times*, 2 February 1896.

(1846-1848), was further strengthened with the addition of armed steamships in the last three decades of the nineteenth century, and began to protect American interests aggressively in the Western Hemisphere. The *USS Baltimore* continued its cruise in the Pacific after the shore fight in Valparaíso, and went on to join Commodore George Dewey's Asiatic Squadron during the Spanish-American War in 1898.³ Tellingly, the modifier "Pacific" of the Pacific Squadron only signified the coastal slope of the Americas during this period, while the western half of the ocean was cruised by the "Asiatic" Squadron. These names would remain so until 1907, when the Asiatic and Pacific squadrons were merged into the Pacific Fleet with the colonial acquisition on western Pacific waters.⁴ The merger of the two separate naval squadrons may have symbolically pointed to the completion of an American sphere of influence encompassing the whole Pacific Ocean, which gradually developed in the decades following 1848. The idea of the American Pacific—extending from the Pacific Coast to the alluring markets in China—was finally matched with the realities of American dominion stretching over the vast Pacific Ocean in 1898. The construction of the Panama Canal, which began in the aftermath of American annexation of the Philippines and was opened in 1914, further reinforced the global networks of American maritime power, manifested in the forms of naval and merchant steamships crossing two oceans.

This dissertation has surveyed the impacts of maritime transportation on American empire-building in the Pacific during the Gold Rush era, emphasizing its lingering legacies on the period beyond. By the end of the nineteenth century, when the annexation of Hawaii and the Philippines completed the reality of an American Empire, the maps of the Pacific Ocean often depicted crisscrossing lines of shipping routes to show the geopolitical importance of the islands newly

³ Silbey, *A War of Frontier and Conquest*, 37.

⁴ Bruce Cumings, *Dominion from Sea to Sea: Pacific Ascendancy and American Power* (New Haven: Yale University, 2009), 187.

annexed. The annexation of the insular territories in the Pacific in 1898 was not the new beginning of an American Empire, but the continuation of the currents and events that had been in process since the California Gold Rush.

The transformation of California and of the Pacific World following the Gold Rush exemplifies the necessity to rethink fundamentally the periodization of U.S. imperialism. The rigid distinction between the continental expansion and the overseas expansion has been somewhat weakened over the past two decades within the burgeoning historiography of the American Empire. Yet the separation between the “old” and “new” empires is still widely perpetuated in American history. The transnational and global story told in this dissertation about California’s Gold Rush, often misleadingly described as a quintessentially American event, helps bridge the deep-rooted fissure between the historiographies of the American West and of the American Empire. Mid-nineteenth century witnessed a seamless coexistence and mutual reinforcement of continental territorial conquest and overseas expansion, partially aided by the previous connections established by the Spanish Empire between the Pacific Coast of the Americas and the western Pacific. Incorporating these previous transpacific connections also revises the “westward” orientation in the history of U.S. expansion, since California’s development in the 1850s not only revolved around the north-south axis of the Americas but also was augmented by the “eastering” influences from across the Pacific Ocean.

The discovery of gold and resulting influx of Anglo-American settler population redirected the flow of trade and immigration to California and reorganized pre-existing transnational connections within the Pacific Ocean. The consequences of such reorientation expedited the process of Americanization not only in California but also in Hawaii, setting a settler colonialist machine in motion in both regions and strengthening the socioeconomic ties between the two. At

the same time, American gold-seeking migrants affirmed and expanded their vision of empire on their way to California, as U.S.-based steamship companies claimed the land and resources on the Isthmus for the domestic use of the developing American nation. The Pacific Mail Steamship Company, born of the federal government's mail contract to the Oregon territory, grew rapidly into a large corporation controlling the flow of goods and people to and from California, creating sites in-between the foreign and domestic spaces along its Isthmian steamship route. In Panama, capitalist inroads at the expense of the local sovereignty went hand in hand with Anglo-American travelers' enduring propagation of Manifest Destiny, once again demonstrating the continuity between empires of old and new, between commercial and territorial expansionism. Americans in California further circulated experimental schemes and dreams of territorial aggrandizement through filibustering in adjacent places with newly-found independence and nascent government control, notably in Nicaragua and British Columbia in the late-1850s.

The expansion of the Pacific Mail Steamship Company in 1867 led to a legion of merchant steam vessels crossing the Pacific Ocean, commercially integrating the oceanic sphere and building up U.S. naval power. The meaning of maritime transportation to California's settler society changed over time as a result of this global expansion of maritime transportation. During the Gold Rush, "steamer days" were often widely publicized and even celebrated in San Francisco. Mail steamships departed every two weeks for the Atlantic Coast via Panama, connecting the population on the West Coast with the nation's political and economic centers on the East Coast and beyond. During the half-century following the discovery of gold, American people and government consolidated the nation, making the republic transcontinental in shape and scope. While the *sight* of steamships crossing the Pacific remained a powerful imagery of the American Empire, the *sites* created within and around this newly expanding maritime transportation system—namely, the steamships' "Asiatic

steerage” and the Pacific-Coast ports crowded by Chinese immigrants—increasingly became a source of fierce controversy over who belonged in the American nation.

For the first century of its existence, the United States had prided itself as an “empire for liberty,” an ever-expanding republic consisting of free and independent settler-immigrants. This democratic vision of empire resonated so strongly in American society and culture that the United States had little justification to exclude the residents of conquered Mexican territory from its political community in 1848, when the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo formally granted U.S. citizenship to the former residents of Mexico’s far north. The inherent tension between the “empire for liberty” and an exclusively white, Anglo-Saxon dominated society, however, became increasingly unmanageable as the territorial expanse of the nation-as-empire grew larger. The tension between the desire for more territorial annexation and the animosity against disparate, unassimilable population also accompanied California-bound maritime traffic. Gold-rush transportation through those in-between places outside North America enabled extraterritorial assertion of supremacy by American citizens, signaling a new avenue for the American public to approach the topic of empire. By the late-nineteenth century, the boundary between the “nation” and the “empire” came to be clearly demarcated and made conspicuous in the following century through a series of “Insular Cases” that excluded U.S. colonial subjects from the national community and defined the “unincorporated territory.” After a half-century of extending American dominion from sea to sea, California’s maritime transportation transformed itself into an imperial apparatus outside the nation’s borders.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Archives

Bancroft Library, University of California-Berkeley, Berkeley, CA (BL)

Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, CT (BRBM)

California Historical Society, San Francisco, CA

Huntington Library, 1151 Oxford Road, San Marino, CA (HL)

Library of Congress, Washington, DC

National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD

Newberry Library, Chicago, IL

Selected Archival Materials

Barnard, Moses J. Voyage to California (manuscript journal). Western America Collection, BRBM.

Belcher, Flavel. Letters, 1851-1857. BANC MSS C-B 524, BL.

Brown, Edward Monroe. Diaries, 1849-1851 (typescript). Western Americana Collection, BRBM.

Butterfield, Robert W. Letters to Elsie Wyman Butterfield, 1852-1853. mssHM 47858-47862, HL.

Carter, Henry. Voyage to California by way of Panama, 1849-1850 (typescript). Western Americana Collection, BRBM.

Drury, Charles W. Letters, 1853. mssHM 75088-75089, HL.

Foster, Fred E. Collection, 1863-1892. mssHM 80571-80574, HL.

Gilman, Daniel S. and Moses D. Gilman. Gold Rush Letters. Western Americana Collection, BRBM.

Hale, Augustin W. Papers, 1775-1909. mssHale papers, HL.

Haskell, Daniel Hale. Journal (manuscript). Edward E. Ayer Manuscript Collection, Newberry Library, Chicago.

Mott-Smith, John. Journal of the Adventures in California (typescript). Edward E. Ayer Manuscript Collection, Newberry Library, Chicago.

Pittman, Amos S. Letters. Western Americana Collection, BRBM.

Rand, Charles Edward. Letters, 1852-1857. Western Americana Collection, BRBM.

Whitely, R. J. Diary, 1849-1877. mssHM 68599-68601, HL.

Newspapers and Periodicals

The *Atlantic Monthly* (Boston)

The *Californian* (Monterey)

The *Daily Alta California* (San Francisco)

The *Friend* (Honolulu, Hawaii)

The *Harper's Weekly* (New York)

The *Los Angeles Herald*

The *Los Angeles Times*

The *New York Daily Herald*

The *New York Times*

The *North China Herald* (Shanghai, China)

The *Panama Star* (Panama, New Granada)

The *Polynesian* (Honolulu, Hawaii)

The *Sacramento Daily Union*

The *Sacramento Transcript*

The *San Francisco Bulletin*

The *San Francisco Call*

Government Publications

United States Congress. 1847. "An Act providing for the Building and Equipment of Four Naval Steamships." 9 *U.S. Stat. at Large* 188.

United States Congress. 1865. "An Act to authorize the Establishment of Ocean Mail-Steamship Service between the United States and China." 13 *U.S. Stat. at Large* 430.

_____. 1874. "Resolution of the Legislature of California, requesting Congress to oppose any further subsidy to the Pacific Mail Steamship Company." 43rd Cong., 1st Sess., Misc. Doc. No. 213.

_____. 1891. "An Act to Provide for Ocean Mail Service between the United States and Foreign Ports, and to Promote Commerce." 26 *U.S. Stat. at Large* 830.

_____. 1898. *Report of the Commissioner of Navigation to the Secretary of Treasury*. 55th Cong., 3rd Sess., House of Representatives Document No. 14. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office.

_____. Committee of Naval Affairs. 1848. *Steam Communication with China, and the Sandwich Islands*. 30th Cong., 1st Sess., Report No. 596.

_____. Committee on Agriculture. 1972. *Government Subsidy Historical Review: A Summary of the Use of Subsidies to Advance the Aims and Purposes of Government*. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office.

United States Census Office. 1853. *The Seventh Census of the United States*. Washington, D.C.: Robert Armstrong, Public Printer.

_____. 1864. *Population of the United States in 1860*. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office.

United States Bureau of the Census. 1887. *Foreign Commerce and Navigation of the United States*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office.

Published Materials

Almaguer, Tomás. 1994, 2009. *Racial Fault Lines: The Historical Origins of White Supremacy in California*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Apostol, Jane. 2000. "Augustin W. Hale: Hard-Luck Argonaut." *Southern California Quarterly* 82: 2, pp.145-168.

Arentzen, Wout and Christo Thanos, eds. 2014. *Schliemann and the California Gold Rush: The 1850-1852 American Travel Journal of Heinrich Schliemann*. Leiden: Sidestone Press.

Atherton, Faxon Dean. 1964. *The California Diary of Faxon Dean Atherton, 1836-1839*. Ed. by Doyce B. Nunis, San Francisco: California Historical Society.

Bancroft, Hubert Howe. 1887. *History of Central America, Vol. III: 1801-1887*. San Francisco: The

History Company.

Bancroft, Hubert Howe. 1887. *History of British Columbia*. San Francisco: The History Company.

Barde, Robert E. 2008. *Immigration at the Golden Gate: Passenger Ships, Exclusion, and Angel Island*. Westport, CT: Praeger.

_____. 2012. "High Times on the Pacific." *Southern California Quarterly* 94: 4, pp.479-483.

Barman, Jean and Bruce McIntyre Watson. 2006. *Leaving Paradise: Indigenous Hawaiians in the Pacific Northwest, 1787-1898*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

Barnett, Christina Duffy. 2005. "The Edges of Empire and the Limits of Sovereignty: American Guano Islands." *American Quarterly* 57: 3, pp.779-803.

Beechert, Edward D. 1985. *Working in Hawaii: A Labor History*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

Beilharz, Edwin A. and Carlos U. López, eds. 1976. *We were 49ers!: Chilean Accounts of the California Gold Rush*. Pasadena, CA: Ward Ritchie Press.

Beasley, Delilah L. 1918. "Slavery in California." *Journal of Negro History* 3: 1, pp.33-44.

Berry, Thomas S. 1984. *Early California: Gold, Prices, Trade*. Richmond, VA: The Bostwick Press.

Bethel, A. C. W. 1999. "The Golden Skein: California's Gold-Rush Transportation Network." In James J. Rawls and Richard J. Orsi, eds., *Golden State: Mining and Economic Development in Gold Rush California*, Berkeley: University of California Press, pp.250-275.

Blaufarb, Rafe. 2007. "The Western Question: The Geopolitics of Latin Am Independence." *American Historical Review* 112, pp.742-763.

Bottoms, D. Michael. 2013. *An Aristocracy of Color: Race and Reconstruction in California and the West, 1850-1890*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.

Briggs, Laura. 2002. *Reproducing Empire: Race, Sex, Science, and U.S. Imperialism in Puerto Rico*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Brown, Charles H. 1980. *Agents of Manifest Destiny: The Lives and Times of the Filibusters*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Browne, J. Ross. 1850. *Report of the Debates in the Convention of California, on the Formation of the State Constitution*. Washington, D.C.: J. T. Towers.

Browne, Lisa Fergusson, ed. 1969. *J. Ross Browne: His Letters, Journals, and Writings*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.

- Burnett, Peter H. 1852. "Governor's Annual Message to the Legislature, January 7, 1851." In *Journals of the Senate and Assembly of the State of California*. San Francisco: G. K. Fitch & Co. and V. E. Geiger & Co., State Printers.
- California State Agricultural Society. 1879. *Transactions of the California State Agricultural Society during the year 1878*. Sacramento: State Office.
- _____. 1895. *Transactions of the California State Agricultural Society during the year 1894*. Sacramento: State Office.
- [California State Legislature]. 1850. *The Statutes of California: Passed at the First Session of the Legislature*. San Jose, CA: J. Winchester, State Printer.
- Campbell, Colin D., ed. 1999/2000. "Crossing the Isthmus of Panama, 1849: The Letters of Dr. Augustus Campbell." *California History* 78: 4, pp.226-237.
- Casanueva, Francisco Segundo. 1880. *Immigración Asiática: Informe sobre si conviene a Chile La Inmigración de Los Chinos*. Santiago de Chile: Imprenta Nacional, 1880).
- Chan, Sucheng. 1986. *This Bittersweet Soil: The Chinese in California Agriculture, 1860-1910*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- _____. 2000. "A People of Exceptional Character: Ethnic Diversity, Nativism, and Racism in the California Gold Rush." *California History* 79: 2, pp.44-85.
- Chang, David A. 2011. "Borderlands in a World at Sea: Concow Indians, Native Hawaiians, and South Chinese in Indigenous, Global, and National Spaces." *The Journal of American History* 98, pp.384-403.
- Chang, Kornel. 2009. "Circulating Race and Empire: Transnational Labor Activism and the Politics of Anti-Asian Agitation in the Anglo-American Pacific World, 1880–1910." *Journal of American History* 96, pp.678-701.
- _____. 2012. *Pacific Connections: The Making of the U.S.-Canadian Borderlands*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Chinen, Jon J. 1958. *The Great Mabel: Hawaii's Land Division of 1848*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
- Chinese American Society. 2010. *The Rocky Road to Liberty: A Documented History of Chinese Immigration and Exclusion*. Saratoga, CA: Javvin Press, 2010.
- Clark, J. E. 1890. "From St. Louis to San Francisco in 1850," *The Historical Society of Southern California, Los Angeles* 1: 5, pp.27-32.
- Clay, Karen and Randall Jones. 2006. "Migrating to Riches? Evidence from the California Gold Rush." *The Journal of Economic History* 68: 4, pp.997-1027.

- Collier, Simon. 2003. *Chile: The Making of a Republic, 1830-1865*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Conniff, Michael L. 2012. *Panama and the United States: The End of the Alliance*, 3rd ed. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press.
- Cooper, Frederick. 2005. *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Cordes, Frederick C., ed. and trans. 1960. "Letters of A. Rotchev, last Commandant at Fort Ross, and the Resume of the Report of the Russian-American Company for the year 1850-51." *California Historical Quarterly* 39, pp.97-115.
- Cox, Thomas R. 1967. "The Passage to India Revisited: Asian Trade and the Development of the Far West, 1850-1900." In John Alexander Carroll, ed., *Reflections of Western Histories*, Tucson: University of Arizona Press.
- Cummings, Bruce. 2009. *Dominion from Sea to Sea: Pacific Ascendancy and American Power*. New Haven: Yale University.
- Cushman, Gregory T. 2013. *Guano and the Opening of the Pacific World: A Global Ecological History*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Daley, Mercedes Chen. 1990. "The Watermelon Riot: Cultural Encounters in Panama City, April 15, 1856." *Hispanic American Historical Review* 70: 1.
- Delgado, James P. 1990. *To California by Sea: A Maritime History of the California Gold Rush*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press.
- Deloria, Vine Jr. and Raymond J. DeMallie, eds. 1999. *Documents of American Indian Diplomacy: Treaties, Agreements, and Conventions, 1775-1979*, 2 vols. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Desnoyers, Charles, ed. and trans. 2004. *A Journey to the East: Li Gui's A New Account of a Trip around the Globe*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Dillon, Richard H. 1955. "Kanaka Colonies in California." *Pacific Historical Review* 24, pp.17-23.
- Dippie, Brian W. 1991. *The Vanishing American: White Attitudes and U.S. Indian Policy*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas.
- Dirlik, Arif, ed. 1993. *What is in a Rim? Critical Perspectives on the Pacific Region Idea*. Boulder, Co.: Westview Press.
- Downie, William. 1893. *Hunting for Gold: Reminiscences of Personal Experience and Research in the Early Days of the Pacific Coast from Alaska to Panama*. San Francisco: California Publishing Co.

- Duncan, Janice K. 1972. *Minority without a Champion: Kanakas on the Pacific Coast, 1788-1850*. Portland: Oregon Historical Society.
- Dunn, Barbara E. 2004. "William Little Lee and Catherine Lee, Letters from Hawaii, 1848-1855." *The Hawaiian Journal of History* 38, pp.59-88.
- Fetherling, George. 1997. *The Gold Crusades: A Social History of Gold Rushes, 1849-1929*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Ficken, Robert E. 2003. *Unsettled Boundaries: Fraser Gold and the British-American Northwest*. Pullman: Washington State University Press.
- Fischer, John Ryan. 2015. *Cattle Colonialism: An Environmental History of the Conquest of California and Hawai'i*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Flynn, Dennis, Arturo Giráldez, and James Sobredo. 2002. "In Search of Periodization for Pacific History: An Introduction." In *Studies in Pacific History: Economics, Politics and Migration*, Farnham, UK: Ashgate.
- Foner, Eric. 1970, 1995. *Free Labor, Free Soil, Free men: The Ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Forbes, David W. 1986. "An Act to Prohibit Hawaiians from Emigrating to California, 'where they may die in misery.'" San Francisco: Paul Markham Khan.
- Freeman, Lewis R. 1913. "Flashlights in an Asiatic Steerage." *Overland Monthly and Out West Magazine* 62: 1, pp.23-32.
- Gazmuri, Cristián. 2003. "The Chilean Girondins and Their Time." In Benjamin Vicuña Mackenna, *The Girondins of Chile: Reminiscences of an Eyewitness*, trans. by John H. R. Polt, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Gerber, James. 2010. "The Gold Rush Origins of California's Wheat Economy." *América Latina en la Historia Económica* 34, pp.37-63.
- Gerstäcker, Friedrich. 1853. *Narrative of a Journey Round the World*. New York: Harper & Bros.
- Gibson, Arrell Morgan and John S. Whitehead. 1993. *Yankees in Paradise: The Pacific Basin Frontier*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.
- Glick, Clarence E. 1980. *Sojourners and Settlers: Chinese migrants in Hawaii*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
- Greenberg, Amy S. 2005. *Manifest Manhood and the Antebellum American Empire*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

- _____. 2005. "Pirates, Patriots, and Public Meetings: Antebellum Expansionism and Urban Culture." *The Journal of Urban History* 31, pp.634-650.
- Greenfield, Mary C. 2012. "Benevolent Desires and Dark Dominations: The Pacific Mail Steamship Company's SS *City of Peking* and the United States in the Pacific 1874-1910." *Southern California Quarterly* 94: 4, pp.423-478.
- Greer, Richard A. 1970. "California Gold—Some Reports to Hawaii." *Hawaiian Journal of History* 4, pp.157-173.
- Grunsky, Charles E and Clotilde Grunsky. 1933. "From Europe to California: Extracts from Letters of Charles Grunsky and His Wife Clotilde, 1844-1853," *The Quarterly of the Society of California Pioneers*, Vol. X.
- Gutiérrez, Ramón A. 2004. "Internal Colonialism: An American Theory of Race," *Du Bois Review: Social Science Research on Race* 1: 2, pp.281-295.
- Hackel, Steven W. 2005. *Children of Coyote, Missionaries of Saint Francis: Indian-Spanish Relations in Colonial California, 1769-1850*. Williamsburg, VA: Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture.
- Hague, Harlan and David J. Langum. 1990. *Thomas O. Larkin: A Life of Patriotism and Profit in Old California*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Hammond, George P., ed. 1960. *The Larkin Papers: Personal, Business, and Official correspondence of Thomas Oliver Larkin, Merchant and United States Consul in California*, Vol. 7. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960.
- Harcourt, Freda. 2006. *Flagships of Imperialism: The P&O Company and the Politics of Empire from Its Origins to 1867*. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press.
- Haskin, Frederic Jennings. 1914. *The Panama Canal*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday, Page & Co.
- Heffer, Jean. 2002. *The United States and the Pacific: History of a Frontier*. Trans. by W. Donald Wilson, Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Heizer, Robert F., ed. 1974, 1993. *The Destruction of California Indians*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Hernandez Cornejo, Roberto. 1930. *Los Chilenos en San Francisco de California, Tomo I*. Valparaíso: San Rafael.
- Hing, Bill Ong. 1993. *Making and Remaking Asian America through Immigration Policy, 1850-1990*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Hixson, Walter L. *American Settler Colonialism: A History*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

- Hoganson, Kristin L. 1998. *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Horsman, Reginald. 1981. *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Hsu, Madeline Y. 2000. *Dreaming of Gold, Dreaming of Home: Transnationalism and Migration Between the United States and South China, 1882-1943*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Hurtado, Albert L. 1988. *Indian Survival on the California Frontier*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- _____. 1999. *Intimate Frontiers: Sex, Gender, and Culture in Old California*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.
- _____. 2006. *John Sutter: A Life on the North American Frontier*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.
- _____. 2008. "Empires, Frontiers, Filibusters, and Pioneers: The Transnational World of John Sutter." *Pacific Historical Review* 77: 1, pp.
- Igler, David. 2013. *The Great Ocean: Pacific Words from Captain Cook to the Gold Rush* (New York: Oxford University Press).
- Immerman, Richard H. 2010. *Empire for Liberty: A History of American Imperialism from Benjamin Franklin to Paul Wolfowitz*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Innis, Harold A. 1923. *A History of the Canadian Pacific Railway*. London: P. S. King & Son, Ltd.
- Ireland, Willard E. 1940. "The Annexation Petition of 1869." *British Columbia Historical Quarterly* 4, pp.267-288.
- _____. 1951. "First Impressions: Letter of Colonel Richard Clement Moody, R.E., to Arthur Blackwood, February 1, 1859." *British Columbia Historical Quarterly* 15, pp.85-108.
- Isenberg, Andrew C. 2005. *Mining California: An Ecological History*. New York: Hill and Wang.
- Jackson, Robert H. and Edward Castillo. 1995. *Indians, Franciscans, and Spanish Colonization: The Impact of the Mission System on California Indians*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.
- Jacobson, Matthew Frye. 2000. *Barbarian Virtues: The United States Encounters Foreign Peoples at Home and Abroad, 1876-1917*. New York: Hill & Wang.
- Johnson, Susan Lee. 2000. *Roaring Camp: The Social World of the California Gold Rush* (New York: W. W. Norton).
- Johnson, Walter. 2013. *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

- Johnson-Dodds, Kimberly. 2002. "Early California Laws and Policies related to California Indians." Sacramento: California Research Bureau.
- Jones, James P. and William Warren Rogers. 1961. "Across the Isthmus in 1850: The Journey of Daniel A. Horn." *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 41: 4, pp.533-554.
- Joyce, Barry Alan. 2001. *Shaping of American Ethnography: The Wilkes Exploring Expedition, 1838-1842*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Jung, Moon-Ho. 2006. *Coolies and Cane: Race, Labor, and Sugar in the Age of Emancipation*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Kaplan, Amy. 1993. "'Left Alone with America': The Absence of Empire in the Study of American Culture." In Amy Kaplan and Donald E. Pease, eds., *Cultures of United States Imperialism*, Durham: Duke University Press, pp.3-21.
- Kauanui, J. Kehaulani. 2008. *Hawaiian Blood: Colonialism and the Politics of Sovereignty and Indigeneity*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Kemble, John Haskell. 1938. "The Panama Route to the Pacific Coast, 1848-1869." *Pacific Historical Review* 7: 1, pp. 1-13.
- _____. 1942. "Side-Wheelers across the Pacific," *The American Neptune* 2: 1, pp.5-38.
- _____. 1943. *The Panama Route, 1848-1869*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- _____. 1949. "The Gold Rush by Panama, 1848-1851." *Pacific Historical Review* 18: 1, pp.45-56.
- _____. 1949. "The Transpacific Railroads, 1869-1915." *Pacific Historical Review* 18: 3, pp.331-343.
- _____. 1950. "A Hundred Years of the Pacific Mail." *The American Neptune* 10, pp.123-143.
- Kramer, Paul A. 2002. "Empires, Exceptions, and Anglo-Saxons: Race and Rule between the British and U.S. Empires, 1880-1910." *The Journal of American History* 88: 4.
- _____. 2006. *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States, and the Philippines*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Kuykendall, Ralph Simpson. 1938. *The Hawaiian Kingdom, Vol. 1: 1778-1854, Foundation and Transformation*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
- _____. 1953. *The Hawaiian Kingdom, Vol. 2: 1854-1874, Twenty Critical Years*. (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1953), 18-19.

- LaFeber, Walter. 1963, 1998. *The New Empire: An Interpretation of U.S. Expansion*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Lapp, Rudolph M. 1995. *Blacks in Gold Rush California*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Lazo, Rodrigo. 2005. *Writing to Cuba: Filibustering and Cuban Exiles in the United States*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Lee, Erika. 2003. *At America's Gates: Chinese Immigration during the Exclusion Era, 1882-1943*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Leonard, Thomas M., ed. 1999. *United States-Latin American Relations, 1850-1903: Establishing a Relationship*. Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press.
- Levy, JoAnn. 1990. *They Saw the Elephant: Women in the California Gold Rush*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Lilienthal, Albert. 1982. "From Ocean to Ocean in 1878," *Western States Jewish Historical Quarterly* 14.
- Lindsay, Brendan C. 2012. *Murder State: California's Native American Genocide: 1846-1873*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Limerick, Patricia Nelson. 1987. *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West*. New York: W. W. Norton.
- Lopez, Ian Haney. 2006. *White by Law: The Legal Construction of Race*. New York: New York University Press.
- Madley, Benjamin. 2016. *An American Genocide: The United States and the California Indian Catastrophe, 1846-1873*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016.
- Magliari, M. 2004. "Free Soil, Unfree Labor." *Pacific Historical Review* 73: 3, pp.349-390.
- Manning, William R., ed. 1935. *Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States: Inter-American Affairs, 1831-1860, Vol. 5, Chile and Columbia*. Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.
- Markus, Andrew. 1979. *Fear and Hatred: Purifying Australia and California, 1850-1901*. Sydney: Hale & Iremonger.
- Marryat, Francis S. 1855. *Mountains and Molehills, or Recollections of a Burnt Journal*. London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans.
- Marshall, Daniel P. 2002. "No Parallel: American Settler-Soldiers at War with the Nlaka'pamux of the Canadian West." In John Findlay and Ken Coates, eds. *Parallel Destinies: Canadian-American Relations West of the Rockies*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, pp.31-79.

- _____. 2007. "Mapping the New El Dorado: The Fraser River Gold Rush and the Appropriation of Native Space." In Ted Binnema and Susan Neylan, eds. *New Histories of Old: Changing Perspectives on Canada's Native Pasts*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, pp.119-144.
- Matsuda, Matt K. 2006. "AHR Forum: The Pacific." *American Historical Review* 111, pp.758-780.
- _____. 2012. *Pacific Worlds: A History of Seas, Peoples, and Cultures*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Matteson, Tomas Jefferson. 1954. *The Diary of Thomas Jefferson Matteson, Calaveras pioneer*. San Andreas, CA: Calaveras County Historical Society.
- May, Philip Ross. 1980. "Gold Rushes of the Pacific Borderlands: A Comparative Survey." In *Provincial Perspectives: Essays in Honour of W. J. Gardner*, Christchurch, NZ: Whitcoulls Ltd., pp.91-105.
- May, Robert E. 1973. *The Southern Dream of a Caribbean Empire, 1854-1861*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press.
- _____. 2002. *Manifest Destiny's Underworld: Filibustering in Antebellum America*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- McCarthy, Thomas. 2009. *Race, Empire, and the Idea of Human Development*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- McClain, Charles J. 1994. *In Search of Equality: The Chinese Struggle against Discrimination in Nineteenth-Century America*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- McGowan, Edward. 1878. "Reminiscences: Unpublished Incidents in the Life of the 'Ubiquitous'." *Argonaut* (San Francisco), Vol. 2.
- McGuiness, Aims. 2008. *Path of Empire: Panama and the California Gold Rush*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Megquier, Mary Jane. 1949. *Apron Full of Gold: The Letters of Mary Jane Megquier from San Francisco, 1849-1856*. Ed. by Robert Glass Cleveland, San Marino, CA: Huntington Library.
- Mehta, Uday Singh. 1999. *Liberalism and Empire: A Study in Nineteenth-Century British Liberal Thought*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Melillo, Edward D. 2015. *Strangers on Familiar Soil: Rediscovering the Chile-California Connection*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Merry, Sally Engle. 2000. *Colonizing Hawaii: The Cultural Power of Law*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

- Missal, Alexander. 2009. *Seaway to the Future: American Social Visions and the Construction of the Panama Canal*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Monaghan, Jay. 1973. *Chile, Peru, and the California Gold Rush of 1849*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Moore, Sarah J. 2013. *Empire on Display: San Francisco's Panama-Pacific International Exposition of 1915*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Mouat, Jeremy. 2002. "After California: Later Gold Rushes of the Pacific Basin." In Kenneth N. Owens, ed. *Riches for All: The Californian Gold Rush and the World*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, pp.264-295.
- Nash, Gerald B. 1999. "A Veritable Revolution: The Global Economic Significance of the California Gold Rush." In James J. Rawls and Richard J. Orsi, eds., *Golden State: Mining and Economic Development in Gold Rush California*, Berkeley: University of California Press, pp.276-292.
- Navarro, Ramón Gil. 2000. *The Gold Rush Diary of Ramón Gil Navarro*. Ed. and trans. by María del Carmen Ferreyra and David S. Leher, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Novak, William. 2008. "The Myth of the 'Weak' American State," *American Historical Review* 113, pp.752-772.
- Nugent, Walter. 2008. *Habits of Empire: A History of American Expansion*. New York: Knopf.
- Nunis, Doyce B. Jr., ed. 1967. "Six New Larkin Letters." *Southern California Quarterly* 49: 1, pp.65-103.
- Omi, Michael and Howard Winant. 1994. *Racial Formation in the United States*. New York: Routledge.
- Osorio, Jonathan Kay Kamakawiwo'ole. 2002. *Dismembering Lahui: A History of the Hawaiian Nation to 1887*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
- Owens, Kenneth N., ed. 2002. *Riches for All: The California Gold Rush and the World*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Paul, Rodman. 1947. *California Gold: The Beginning of Mining in the Far West*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Pacific Mail Steamship Company. 1867. *A Sketch of the Route to California, China and Japan, via the Isthmus of Panama*. New York: A. Roman & Co.
- _____. [187-?]. *Pacific Mail*. New York: M. Thalmessueger Stationer. 16pp.
- _____. 1897. *Eleven Thousand Miles East and West via Pacific Mail Steamship Company*. San Francisco: [s.n.].

- "Pacific mail": a review of *The report of the president*. [New York?], [1868?]. 36pp. Sabin Americana. Gale, Cengage Learning. University of Chicago Libraries. 04 May 2017.
- Pérez Rosales, Vicente. 2003. *Times Gone By: Memoirs of a Man of Action*. Trans. by John H. R. Polt, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Perkins, William. 1964. *Three Years in California: William Perkins' Journal of Life at Sonora, 1849-1852*. Ed. by Dale L. Morgan and James R. Scobie, Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Perry, John C. 1994. *Facing West: Americans and the Opening of the Pacific*. Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Perry, Matthew. 1856. *A Paper by Commodore M. C. Perry, U.S.N., Read before the American Geographical and Statistical Society, at a Meeting held March 6th, 1856*. New York: D. Appleton & Co.
- Pitts, Leonard. 1970. *The Decline of the Californios: A Social History of the Spanish-Speaking Californians, 1846-1890*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Pletcher, David M. 2001. *The Diplomacy of Involvement: American Economic Expansion across the Pacific, 1784-1900*. Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press.
- Pomfret, John E. 1954. *California Gold Rush Voyages, 1848-1849: Three Original Narratives*. San Marino, CA: Huntington Library.
- Pratt, Mary Louise. 1992. *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. New York: Routledge.
- Preston, William. 1998. "Serpent in the Garden: Environmental Change in Colonial California." In Gutiérrez, Ramón A. and Richard J. Orsi, eds. *Contested Eden: California before the Gold Rush*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Purcell, Fernando. 2015. "Becoming Dark: The Chilean Experience in California, 1848-1870." In José A. Cobas, Jorge Duany, and Joe R. Feagin, eds. *How the U.S. Racializes Latinos: White Hegemony and Its Consequences*, New York: Routledge, pp.54-67.
- Rana, Aziz. 2010. *The Two Faces of American Freedom*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Read, George Willis. 1929. "The Chagres River Route to California in 1851." *California Historical Society Quarterly* 8: 1, pp.3-16.
- Renda, Mary A. 2001. *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation & the Culture of U.S. Imperialism, 1915-1940*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Reséndez, Andrés. 2016. *The Other Slavery: The Uncovered Story of Indian Enslavement in America*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Roberts, Brian. 2000. *American Alchemy: The California Gold Rush and Middle-Class Culture*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

- _____. 2002. "The Greatest and Most Perverted Paradise: The Forty-Niners in Latin America." In Kenneth N. Owens. ed., *Riches for all: The California Gold Rush and the World*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, pp.71-89.
- Rohrbough, Malcolm. 1997. *Days of Gold: The California Gold Rush and the American Nation*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- _____. 2013. *Rush to Gold: The French and the California Gold Rush, 1848-1854*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Sahlins, Marshall. 1992. *Anahulu: Anthropology of History in the Kingdom of Hawaii, Vol. 1: Historical Ethnography*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Said, Edward. 1978. *Orientalism*. New York: Random House Inc.
- _____. 1993. *Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Knopf.
- Schmitt, Robert C. and Eleanor C. Nordyke. 2001. "Death in Hawai'i: The Epidemics of 1848-1849." *The Hawaiian Journal of History* 35, pp.1-13.
- Schultz, Charles R. 1999. *Forty-niners 'round the Horn*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press.
- Seacole, Mary. 2005. *Wonderful Adventures of Mrs. Seacole in Many Lands*. Edited and introduced by Sarah Salih, New York: Penguin Books.
- Seward, Olive Risley, ed. 1876. *William H. Seward's Travels around the World*. New York: D. Appleton & Co.
- Shulman, Peter A. 2015. *Coal and Empire: The Birth of Energy Security in Industrial America*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Silva, Noenoe K. *Aloha Betrayed: Native Hawaiian Struggle to American Colonialism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2004.
- Sinn, Elizabeth. 2012. *Pacific Crossing: California Gold, Chinese Migration, and the Making of Hong Kong*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.
- Smith, Edgar C. 2007. "They Went By Way of Panama." *The California Territorial Quarterly* 69, pp.4-13.
- Smith, Stacy L. 2013. *Freedom's Frontier: California and the Struggle over Unfree Labor, Emancipation, and Reconstruction*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Steel, Frances. 2011. *Oceania Under Steam: Sea Transport and the Culture of Colonialism, c.1870-1914*. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press.
- Stoler, Ann Laura, ed. 2006. *Haunted by Empire*. Durham: Duke University Press.

- Storm, C. Gilbert. 2015. *Reconnaissance in Sonora: Charles D. Poston's 1854 Exploration of Mexico and the Gadsden Purchase*. Tuscon: University of Arizona Press.
- Stout, Joseph A. 2002. *Schemers and Dreamers: Filibustering in Mexico, 1848-1921*. Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press.
- Stuart, Reginald C. 1988. *United States Expansionism and British North America, 1775-1871*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina.
- Takai, Yakari. 2011. "Navigating Transpacific Passages: Steamship Companies, State Regulators, and Transshipment of Japanese in the Early-Twentieth-Century Pacific Northwest," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 30, pp.7-34.
- Tchen, John Kuo-Wei. 1999. *New York Before Chinatown: Orientalism and the Shaping of American Culture, 1776-1882*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Thornton, Jesse Quinn. 1849. *Oregon and California in 1848*. New York: Harper & Bros.
- Tome, Robert. 1855. *Panama in 1855*. New York: Harper & Bros.
- Unruh, John D. Jr. 1979. *The Plains Across: The Overland Emigrants and the Trans-Mississippi West, 1840-1860*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Van Dyke, Jon M. 2008. *Who Owns the Crown Lands of Hawai'i?* Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Veracini, Lorenzo. 2010. *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview*. London: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Vicuña Mackenna, Benjamín. 1856. *Páginas de Mi Diario Durante Tres Años de Viajes*. Santiago: Imprenta del Ferrocarril.
- _____. 1883. *Chile*. Philadelphia: Times Printing House.
- _____. 2003. *The Girondins of Chile: Reminiscences of an Eyewitness*. Trans. by John H. R. Polt, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Weber, David J. 1982. *The Mexican Frontier, 1821-1846: The American Southwest Under Mexico*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.
- White, Katherine A. ed. 1930. *A Yankee Trader in the Gold Rush: The Letters of Franklin A. Buck*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Wilson, Karen S. 2013. "Seeking America in America: The French in the California Gold Rush." *Southern California Quarterly* 95: 2, pp.105-140.
- Wolfe, Patrick. 2006. "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native." *Journal of Genocide Research* 8:4, pp.387-409.

Wood, Gordon S. 1969. *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787*. New York: W. W. Norton.

Woods, James A. 2011. *The Society of Equality: Popular Republicanism and Democracy in Santiago de Chile, 1818-1851*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.