Textes et contextes
ISSN : 1961-991X
: Université Bourgogne Europe

9 | 2014
Le Temps guérit toutes les blessures : la résistance à l'autorité de l'Histoire dans les concepts de nation et de nationalisme

Mixed Messages and Conflicting Loyalties: Reevaluating the Californio Community of San Diego during the Mexican-American War (1846-1848)

Messages contradictoires et loyautés conflictuelles : réévaluation de la communauté californienne de San Diego pendant la guerre américano-mexicaine (1846-1848)

01 December 2014.

Jeffrey Swartwood

http://preo.ube.fr/textesetcontextes/index.php?id=1127

Mixed Messages and Conflicting Loyalties: Reevaluating the Californio Community of San Diego during the Mexican-American War (1846-1848)

Messages contradictoires et loyautés conflictuelles : réévaluation de la communauté californienne de San Diego pendant la guerre américano-mexicaine (1846-1848)

Textes et contextes

01 December 2014.

9 | 2014
Le Temps guérit toutes les blessures : la résistance à l'autorité de l'Histoire dans les concepts de nation et de nationalisme

Jeffrey Swartwood

http://preo.ube.fr/textesetcontextes/index.php?id=1127

---

1 Carey McWilliams, in his canonic look at the borderlands *North From Mexico*, describes how "California was engulfed by a tidal wave of Anglo-American immigration" that progressively overwhelmed and erased the Californio heritage in spite of heroic but doomed resistance from "The Californios" during the Mexican-American War of 1846-1848 (1968: 87-92). This depiction, which finds echo in the writings of historians and social theorists ranging from Herbert Bolton to Mario Barrera,[1] reproduces a common idea of a bi-national conflict

among two peoples who, at least on the surface, appear to be largely homogenous in their national identities.

2 Implicitly, however, this construction leaves many unanswered questions. Who, for example, were the Californios, and to what extent was Californio culture and community actually homogeneous throughout the geographically vast American Southwest? When referring to the Californios, do we actually have in mind the Mexican nationals at the time of the conflict? Or, are we designating a cultural group that began to define itself as such under the Spanish period of governance? If so, are we speaking of a nation within a nation, and what would happen if that nation had, in fact, turned upon itself in fratricidal division in the context of the Mexican-American War?

3 In order to explore these questions, this article intends to challenge this reductive construction through the examination of the realities and representations of the Californio community of San Diego. As such it is the study of the conflict within the Hispanic Californio community of San Diego during the Mexican-American War of 1846-1848, and the manner in which the complex realities of mixed allegiances have been reduced, or even forgotten, in the depiction of a national conflict between the U.S. and Mexico.

4 Not only does such an examination reveal that the local Californio population formed a diverse community that was in many ways unique along the border, but it also reveals a community that was deeply divided on the question of national attachment. Rather than the unified front of resistance often portrayed, we find internal division and conflicting layers of loyalty involving personal relationships, economics, and political ideals. Of particular interest is the manner in which local constructions are made, challenged, unmade and mended as part of this process and how such observations can be applied to the current situation in the borderlands. Are there parallels to be drawn between the emergence of a San Diegan Californio identity prior to the mid-19th century and that of a Chicano or Hispanic identity in the early 21st? And how does the weight of history, viewed through a particular lens and with a particular perspective, affect the latter constructions? To what extent is the remembrance of the Mexican-American War an example of the “awareness of being imbedded in secular, serial time, with all its implications of continuity,

yet of 'forgetting' the experience of this continuity?" (Anderson 1991:203)

5 Paradoxically, the canonic reductive view of this divisive conflict appears to suit both of the major cultural actors in the region – as it has been repeated by both the Anglo-American and Hispanic communities since shortly after the war itself came to an end. As such, it fits neatly into the traditional approach of an American "Self" expanding against a series of plural "Others" throughout the 19th century – from the Spanish to the Native Americans to the Mexican State. But also that of a contemporary voice in the American Southwest, that claiming a common history and identity within the Hispanic communities: "la Raza," a term coined by José Vasconcelos in 1925 and which forms an important notion among contemporary writers and thinkers including Gloria Anzaldúa.

6 The purpose of this article is thus to confront the historical record with this vision of a polarized national and social conflict. Further, the aim is to consider the role of perspective in the historical narrative and how the remembrance of the Californio community and the Mexican-American War may influence regional models of national identity construction. And finally, this work serves as a base from which to analyze the contemporary border dynamics and communities, seeking local patterns of continuity within complex social constructs.

1. Contextualization: Californios as an insular community with a unique, regional culture

7 The Californio community in San Diego at the opening of hostilities in 1846 was much more diverse – ethnically, nationally, and linguistically – than is perhaps suggested by the simple appellation Mexican. While indeed part of the Mexican national territory since independence from Spain in 1821, the small port town of San Diego harbored a highly diverse and fluid population with substantial contacts outside of the formerly Spanish colonial sphere. A notable aspect of this cosmopolitanism in the form of strong connections with Hawaii has been

made famous by Richard Henry Dana's 1832 *Two Years Before the Mast*, though academic studies of the communities described therein are surprisingly rare.

8 Remaining focused on the Californio community, a few figures will suffice to provide an image of San Diego's population during the Mexican period of governance. Overall, the population of the core urban area fluctuated greatly between 1821 and 1846, from a low in the latter 1830's and early 1840's of as few as tens of individuals to as many as 600 in a peak in 1831. It is worth insisting on the fact that exact figures are difficult to obtain, with discrepancies between sources that may be the result of personal impressions linked with ideological affiliations, temporary micro-fluctuations or absences, or differing accounting methods. A notable exception from the portrait just described, for example, is the Native American population not directly assimilated into that of the Mexican pueblo, which remains the focus of this article. In the search to accurately quantify the population, we encounter contradicting examples. For instance, William E. Smythe gives San Diego's 1842 population as alternately "only five men at San Diego, three of whom were foreigners," and de Mofra lists only "a few soldiers and one officer" at the destitute presidio (1908: 128). These representations contrast with Bishop García Diego y Moreno's account of his roughly contemporary visit (1841 versus 1842) cited by historian Lucy L. Killea, mentioning "less than 150 inhabitants of whom ten were foreigners" (1966).[2] Here we see not only a discrepancy in the overall population but also in the number of foreigners. Depending on which figures we accept, the overall population in the core settlement varies at times between a mere handful and a group of several hundred, with a proportion of foreign residents that ranges from 15% (Diego y Moreno) to an astounding 60% (de Moya). In order to compensate for these extremes, our figures are based on comparisons between period accounts and contemporary studies, and thus may represent an average for any given temporal point. The importance of recognizing the low population and cosmopolitan nature of the community lies in the recognition that the current population of around three million inhabitants is almost entirely the result of latter waves of immigration, which may influence the remembrance of how past events is undertaken.

9 Before evaluating this influence however, it should be noted that behind these base figures lies a rich and complex set of local social dynamics that must be taken into account when attempting to understand the divergent positions of the community in the ensuing hostilities. The phenomenon of "caste drift", for example, is particularly noteworthy in San Diego, as it represents the capacity of the community to fully integrate members of different national or ethnic origins into the local social paradigms including the Californio elite. The figure who perhaps best illustrates this mechanism at work locally is that of Pío Pico, a native of the region and the last governor of Mexican California. Pío Pico was born at the San Gabriel mission outside the town of Los Angeles in 1801, the son of garrison soldier José María Pico from Sonora and María Jacinta de la Bastida. His high level of personal ambition led to a series of political appointments and offices, culminating in his position as governor of California in 1832 [3] and 1845 (Smythe 1908: 92). A forceful and calculating leader, he was instrumental in several revolts that opposed Southern Californians against either Northern Californian factions or representatives of the central government in Mexico. This subversive stance in regards to the Mexican government was to partially condition the budding regional identity that would later make it easier for the United States to impose their governance on a population that was strongly divided on the subject of Mexican domination (Salomon 2010: 23-44).

10 While Pío Pico's political heritage is particularly rich in the evolution of California, it is his lineage and social ascendancy that are here the focus of our study. In an apparent continuation of his father's upward mobility, Pío Pico was able to enter the highest levels of local Californio society through his family's marriage alliances with the Carillo, Ortega and Alvarado families - a fact that is attributed to San Diego's "small and isolated population" (Salomon 2010: 30) and then by his own marrying of María Ignacia Alvarado in 1834. His acceptance into a notable San Diego family is remarkable when placed in the broader social context of codified Mexican society or through the filter of traditionalist Spanish colonial values seeking to respect aristocratic norms. It appears more logical, however, when viewed through the filter of local culture in which "by 1830 a small group of military families that forged ties through marriage and compadrazgo [4] (godfathering) had managed to take complete control over territorial politics"

(Salomon 2010: 30). We can infer from this quotation that the defense of local social and economic interests results in the local modification of behavioral codes.

11 Our contention is supported by historian Carlos Salomon's own reflections on Pío Pico's integration and ascent in the local community. His work reflects upon the conditions that were prevalent in Southern California, making the region a case in point and possibly an exception in the whole of the United States. He stresses Pío Pico's lineage and points to the ingrained racism that could have hampered his integration into any group of regional social elites, had it occurred in another region of New Spain:

> In many areas of New Spain a man of Pico's racially mixed heritage had few options to advance himself. A rigid racial hierarchy existed throughout colonial Latin American society. The caste system insured that Spaniards and their American born children held the highest social rank in society. But the atmosphere in California was much different, and the rigidity of racial purity was not as important there. This fact helps explain how California's prime location became a meeting place for intersecting cultures. (2010:14-15)

12 As Carlos Salomon argues here, rigidity seems to have been absent from the Southern California region unlike the social conditions found in Texas or Florida [5] for example. His description thus confirms that "caste drift" was an established mechanism in local culture, if we take the case of Pío Pico as an archetype or example of such a phenomenon. Here, Ernest Gellner's distinct notions of "state" versus "nation" referring to the contrast between local and nationalistic cultures (1983: 7-11) appear to be applicable, as the local society formed characteristics of its own, which were at times in direct contradiction with the normative values of the Mexican State: social hierarchy, obedience to the central government and loyalty to the nation-state. We therefore subscribe to Solomon's position that San Diego was specially situated, both geographically and culturally, to become not only a place where cultures met, but also where they intersected to create new hybrid forms. This characteristic of social and ethnic mixity, devoid of apparent racism, and of fluidity characterized by the ability to cross social lines, was to prove to be a determining element

in the forging of a composite regional identity which would later be at odds with itself.

13 That Pío Pico's identity was largely locally forged can be inferred from Salomon's careful description of an 1831 uprising to oust the Mexican-appointed Governor Manuel Victoria [6] who had moved the capital from San Diego to Monterey. This revolutionary act, based on the *Plan de San Diego* drafted on November 29, 1831, decried the central government's lack of local recognition and representation, and sought to separate civil from military authority within the Californias. Among other San Diego notables engaged in this action, both social and military, were Juan Bandini and Abel Stearns. While the full political and military implications of this rebellion are beyond the scope of this work, we would like to focus here on two aspects of the action. That Pico should enter into armed rebellion against the central government is already indicative of his stronger association with local, rather than national, concerns and authority. His sense of local loyalty appears to overcome any national affiliation that he may have felt. [7] The second aspect is to be gleaned from the language that was used in describing the affair, which is quite revealing. In Juan María Osio's account of a battle waged between Victoria's troops and an expedition from San Diego that occurred near Los Angeles, he refers to the San Diegan contingent as "*Californios*" while referring to Victoria's Mexican regulars as "*mazatecos*." [8] This distinction was also repeated by Pico and in the *Testimonio* of Angustia de la Guerra (Beebe and Senkewicz 2004: 227). This is not simply a way of differentiating the opposing forces, whose affiliation was already understood in context. Here, rather, a clear distinction appears to be made between an "us" and "them" based largely on geographic origin. This is not, of course, indicative of a uniquely San Diegan identity construction, as the "local" Californios extended as far north as the Monterey area. However, the particularly isolated geographic and political environment of San Diego during Pico's youth certainly influenced his cultural view of local self-determination and thus the role of the Californio elite in opposition to the national government. As Carlos Solomon puts it, having lightened the yoke of the central government and appointed Pico provisional governor in 1832, "these tightly related individuals could now continue their plans for California" (2010: 41). This instance is but one example from Pío Pico's colorful political

career; later events prior to 1846 would show him increasingly aligning himself with a distinctly Southern California faction, which clearly distinguished itself from the Californios of Central California in a tightening of political and social identity circles. Elements in the above brief case study of Pío Pico allow us to see that not only was the appellation "Mexican" in fact indicative of a multitude of origins, but that a local allegiance appears to supersede the national identity.

14 Within the focus of the social inclusion and mobility within the Californio class in San Diego, it is worthwhile to mention that other examples are to be found involving different origins, the figures of Juan Bandini and Abel Stearns being but two. Bandini emigrated from Peru and was quickly integrated into Mexican Californio society, while Stearns arrived from the northeastern United States, having transited through Mexico where he became a Mexican citizen. The facility with which this community opened itself – a characteristic largely established during the Spanish period in which sheer lack of numbers and remoteness made this a desirable social survival mechanism – is an important one. As such it is frequently referred to in both contemporary narratives (Dana 136, 151) and historical analysis (Mason 1978: 409-411). [9] For at the time of conflict, the community confronted with invasion by the United States might best be seen as a largely autonomous, locally-focused group whose ties to the Mexican central government, through years of official semi-abandonment and a unique set of local social paradigms, were tenuous at best (Swartwood 2014:198-203). The importance of a strong local culture of mixed origins will be revisited in our discussion of the remembrance policies associated with the conflict.

2. The Mexican-American War in San Diego, conflicts and continuities

15 At the onset of hostilities in 1846, the community in Mexican San Diego appears to have been divided over the possibilities represented by the conflict itself and by the potential annexation of the region by the United States. In part, divergent perspectives can be attributed to the diversity of the population itself, which can be divided into three

primary groups during this period: the Native American communities, those in the tallow-and-hide trade settlement at Las Playas, and the San Diegan Californio community that is the primary focus of this article.

16 Within these groups, a wide range of responses to the conflict can be observed. For example, a certain segment of the Native American population, dissatisfied with the treatment of the local Indian communities under Mexican rule in spite of constitutional assurances of equality, conceived of the conflict itself as an opportunity to free themselves from the yokes of servitude and exclusion.[10] It has also been suggested that the Native American community imagined that their treatment would improve under United States governance, a scenario that was not historically borne out. Certain other San Diegan Native Americans clearly aligned themselves with the Mexican Californio forces, either due to their assimilation into the social systems governing that society, out of loyalty to individual figures within the Californio community, or in the hope that recognition of their behavior would allow them to better integrate into the Mexican social structure. This latter scenario would be in continuation of the paradigms of inclusion demonstrated in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Between these two positions appears to lie the majority of the Native American population, which avoided direct implication in the conflict itself, while perhaps enjoying the decrease in control asserted by the Californio class, especially the landowners.

17 The second group which should be mentioned is the community located at Las Playas on the bay, a few miles from the San Diego Pueblo. While this group varied in population with the fluctuations of trade, it appears that certain members formed a lasting part of the San Diego community. Tied to the Californio community through both casual commerce and the vested interests of ship owners such as Abel Sterns and trader Juan Bandini, they were an integral part of the regional population. Historical accounts such as the *testimonio* of Juana Machado even provide evidence that this population served as the defensive backbone of the community during the Native American uprisings of the 1830's (Beebe and Senkewicz 2006: 137). Despite the historic ties with Mexican San Diego, however, the maritime community at Las Playas appears to have taken very little part in the active fighting, though providing material support to those sympathizing

with the United States. Notably, the ships often represented a safe haven for Californio families accused of treacherous alignment with the U.S. cause.

18 The core Californio community itself provides a rich field for the analysis of the complexities of national loyalties and behaviors during the armed conflict between 1846 and 1848. The Mexican-American War differs greatly from the war for Mexican independence in that while California in general, and San Diego in particular, was largely indifferent to the struggle for Mexican independence from Spain and the ensuing adoption of Mexican nationality, the local community was largely split on the subject of annexation by the United States. Examples in the historical record are numerous, and early San Diego commentators such as William Heath Davis (1909: 205-224) and William Ellsworth Smythe (1908: 220-27), both allot significant amounts of text to the occupation of San Diego, with details of Californio families either supporting or resisting the United States presence. The range of involvement covers the full spectrum from active support of the U.S. troops by the Bandini family, which provided equipment and housing (Walsh 2011:34-38), to active military resistance among the Picos,[11] with other families aligning themselves at varying points within this spectrum. In between these two extremes, historian Richard Griswold Del Castillo recounts an excerpt from Doña Felipa Osuna's *testimonio* that is of interest to our exploration of the conflicting identities generated by the U.S.-Mexican War.

> Doña Felipa remembered that she was still living at Mission San Luis Rey in the summer of 1846 when General Frémont and the American troops arrived looking for the Californio leaders whom they desired to capture. The Americans questioned her as to where her husband was and who else was at the mission. As it happened Don María Matias Moreno, the secretary to the California government, was staying with the Marron family at the time. When the Americans appeared, Doña Felipa decided to disguise him as a sick cousin and succeeded in fooling the Americans who left without him. As soon as they had departed, Don Matias, who had recognized his good friend Don Santiago Argüello riding with the Americans, sent a messenger to catch up with Argüello to tell him to return so he could join him (Beebe and Senkewicz 2006: 145-64).

19 If we place this quotation into context with the actions of Bandini and Pico, the interwoven nature of complex group and individual dynamics becomes apparent. Bandini, personally interested in the economic possibilities tied to trade expansion and linked to Abel Stearns through his marriage to Juan's daughter Dolores (Walsh 2011: 31-32), sided with the United States in spite of his close relations to Pío Pico. Smythe notes that "in 1845-46 he was Governor Pico's secretary and supported his administration" (1908: 164). Andrés Pico, on the other hand, tied by blood to his brother, and probably expecting to benefit more from his largess [12] than from the Americans, actively fought on the Mexican side. The case of Don María Matias Moreno apparently falls at a point in between these two scenarios. Close to Governor Pico, he initially sided with the Mexican forces, only to change alliance due to the unexpected appearance of a close friend, Don Santiago Arguello, amongst the American troops. In this transitional phase, then, we can observe a continuation of the local nation construct in which Moreno choses political sides based on the presence of a fellow San Diegan friend, regardless of the nationalist association. Andrés Pico appears to represent the defense of a nationalist positioning in order to maintain his own extended family group's status and potential wealth, even if that meant confrontation with others from his own community. And Juan Bandini expresses the same dynamic, but inversed to favor United States rather than Mexican interests. The latter two scenarios present us with the introduction of new identity constructs that co-exist with the earlier models and, in moments of crisis, may supersede them. In terms of Mancur Olson's system of group dynamics, the perceived available benefit from strict membership in the group within Californio San Diego is threatened, causing fragmentation in a phenomenon of "exclusive collective good" (1971: 38). In other words, one's identification with a particular group is suspended in favor of that with another in response to a perceived individual benefit. One may argue that by acting collectively, San Diego Californios might have had a greater effect on the struggle for California and certainly developed a more cohesive community, with mutual benefit for its members. This speculative scenario, however, does not correspond to either the historical reality or Olson's model, in which, especially during a transitional phase, "each individual in a group may place a different value upon the collective

good" (1971: 22). Rather, it is the individual good that appears to triumph.

20 This apparent supremacy of the perceived individual good could potentially challenge the notion of a common culture or that of a local-national construct. In attempting to understand this conflict, we have turned our attention to subtleties in Ernest Gellner's overall national mechanics and to Edward T. Hall's reflections on "action chains" in his seminal work *Beyond Culture* (1976: 141-42). Within *Nations and Nationalism*, as we have noted, mutual systems of symbols and recognition constitute a local culture and identity (Gellner 1983: 7, 52-55). Within this broad spectrum of identification and behavior, however, according to the author, it is not reasonable to expect perfectly consistent or common behavior due to the multiple parameters and situational contexts. Specifically referring to a situation of emerging nation-state constructs, he states that "there is no need to assume any conscious long-term calculation of interest on anyone's part" (Gellner 1983: 61). According to this reading, we may accept the three scenarios of overt support, changing support and resistance to the United States' invasion not as a cultural breakdown, but rather as situational responses to changing contextual elements by individuals. A complement to this analysis may be found in Edward Hall's writings. Within a given culture, he asserts, choices are not only influenced by common identifiers but also by individual "action chains" or sequences of actions leading to a desired outcome.[13] Within the Californio cultural construct, one could briefly break down the relative actions of Juan Bandini, Pío Pico, and María Matias Moreno as follows.

21 Juan Bandini was, at the outbreak of hostilities in 1846, involved in the process of expanding his commercial activity in a context of Southern Californian development. Politically active, Juan Bandini had challenged the Mexican central government in 1831 as well as during the period 1836-38.[14] A native of Peru and a naturalized Mexican citizen, his support for the American troops appears to be an extension of his discontentment with the central government, which caused the Californios "to be neglected, and often to be sadly misgoverned" (Barrows 1899: 245). Rather than an act of treachery against Mexico, Bandini's adherence to the cause of the United States can be seen rather as a situationally dependent loyalty to his adopted San Diego, which he appears to have thought would benefit under United States gov-

ernance. The fact that he maintained cordial social relations with the inner circle of the Californio elite regardless of which nationalist stance they adopted during the conflict would seem to support that his dominant identity remained locally, rather than nation-state, based.

22 Pío Pico, involved in restructuring California's governance from the inside as governor is directly correlated with the Mexican nation-state upon which that action chain is dependent (Salomon 2010: Chapters 4-5). In order to continue to benefit from the office of governor and the reforms which allowed him to amass a personal fortune, Pico had but little choice in supporting the Mexican cause in the specific context of the years 1846-47. Earlier, prior to his appropriation of former mission lands under the secularization laws, he may have found greater commercial benefit in siding with those favoring annexation. Of course, this theorizing does not imply that Pío Pico did not have nationalist sentiments for Mexico or that he was not opposed to the invasion of California by the United States for other reasons. However, consciously enacted or not, the perspective of an action chain appears to correspond to the broader scale of Pico's identity as a San Diegan Californio first and foremost. Two principal factors support this. First, he did not hesitate to enter into armed revolution against Mexico on several occasions and even flirted with annexation by Great Britain (Salomon 2010: 96-97). Second, in spite of his professed love for the *patria chica* of Mexico, and the fact that he owned properties there, Pío Pico returned to San Diego and adopted United States citizenship, virtually immediately following the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848 (Salomon 2010: 108-109).

23 María Matias Moreno presents us with yet another variation on this theme of the apparent conflict between an action chain and local identity. Initially siding with the Mexican position as we saw in the *testimonio* of Doña Felipa Osuna, he then changed sides upon seeing that a friend was riding with "the enemy." If we consider that the particular action chain being valorized was that of his friendship with Don Santiago Argüello—a reasonable assumption based upon the cultural context of San Diego at the time in which personal loyalty was a strong cultural identifier—then his action has nothing of the "conscious long-term calculation" of political allegiance to either side

(Gellner 1983: 61). The friendship in this immediate situational context overrides that of his role as secretary to the governor in a display of local loyalty and affective ties.

24 The above examples are not intended to represent the definitive reading of various behaviors displayed by San Diegans during the transition from Mexican to United States governance, but rather one possible reading of them. Our examination of this specific instance is intended to convey the complex social mechanisms at work behind the simple notion of national opposition, especially as it was portrayed in the years following the war itself. In the increasingly politicized debates about borderland policies and inequalities, it may be tempting to see conflict and rupture as the defining characteristics of the interaction between Mexican and Anglo during this period. However, there are elements that appear instead to document a seemingly paradoxical situation in which the fratricidal division of the Californio community in San Diego during the war actually represents the continuity of local culture and a collective identity that transcends the change of governance following the signing of the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848, albeit not unscathed.

3. Patterns of remembrance, or patterns of forgetfulness

25 Having established that the realities of the engagement of San Diego's Californio community involve a complex range of regional cultural specificities and individual motivations, it is interesting to confront these realities with the common depiction of a bi-national struggle in which the Californios were simply overwhelmed by the encroaching Anglo-Americans. Indeed, this depiction finds its roots during the conflict itself, for example in the many letters drafted by Pío Pico. In his correspondence with the Mexican government, and with other prominent Californios, Pico's writings are full of expressions of nationalist sentiment. This appears consistent with his positioning during the conflict, though one can perhaps question the sincerity of such sentiment from a man who had himself consistently fought against Mexican national interests in California and gone so far as to consider annexation or protectorate status by the British (Solomon 2010: 100).

26 While the rhetorical positions taken during the conflict are of interest, our study in this section revolves around the creation of a remembrance mechanism in the years following the war itself. For if period chroniclers noted the divergence of the Californio community on the matter of US annexation, subsequent writers appear to have increasingly consolidated the local Californio identity in spite of the fratricidal conflict.

27 An element to be considered in this switch is the imposition of a border that redefined the local "Self" and the "Other" in terms of national identity constructs between the United States and Mexico, north and south. This line, both a political reality and a social symbol, encouraged the incorporation of the local Californios into the new system, a mechanism that we see most clearly documented among the regional elite. This new inclusion allowed those on the northern side of the international border to initially operate as a collective whole in a region still sparsely populated, in spite of differences. As such, and despite the known facts of which families had supported one side or the other, it allowed Californio families of both political heritages to prosper. This is apparent even in the waning stages of the conflict, when the family of Felipa Osuna was allowed by the pro-Mexican Californio commander of San Diego to return to the pueblo despite her husband's alleged association with the American forces. She notes in her *testimonio* that "The commodore responded and told him that he could come back and so could anyone else for that matter. Everyone would be welcomed and no one would be harmed" (Beebe and Senkewicz 2006: 137-138). By shortly after the resolution of conflict, the leading Californio families were once again interacting with one another on both social and commercial levels, and even Pío and Andrés Pico both returned to their holdings in American San Diego in 1848 after a brief stay in Mexico for Pío (Salomon 2010: 108). This return revealed his "deep love of his fatherland" over that of his nominal Mexican nationality, which had perhaps also suffered due to Santa Anna's refusal to provide aid to California during the war or to acknowledge Pico's service (Salomon 2010: 107-8). The marriage links of the Couts and Estudillo families offer another example of how even newly arrived Anglo-Americans were ready to marry into the prominent Californio families and were readily accepted by them. In certain families, this mixity was to prove lasting – a mixed heritage that

would lead to the development of a lasting legacy of mixed identity constructs in language and architecture, for example.

28 And yet, this inclusive mechanism was to prove short lived in some ways. As early as the 1860's, in the wake of massive immigration from the eastern United States which upset the demographic balance and brought an intensified and reductive vision of the Mexican "Other," the rhetorical representations and definitions of the collective "We" began to change. From the San Diegan Californio perspective, in the mid to latter 19th century, the dramatic changes in lifestyle, the wholesale appropriation of lands on the most flimsy legal premises, and the (at least on certain social levels) exclusion of Hispanic Californios led to a growing sense of resentment and an increasing sense of nostalgia. Thus we begin to see in the writings of even such supporters as Juan Bandini or William Heath Davis the notion that the region (as seen through the filter of their personal experience and fortune) was better off before annexation by the United States. Perhaps one of the most visible demonstrations of this shift can be found in the writings of Maria Ruiz de Burton, who penned *The Squatter and the Don* in 1885 following the loss of much of her land holdings in San Diego. What is particularly telling about the example of Ruiz de Burton is that in the initial phases of the conflict, she chose to side with the United States, married a US Army officer, and adopted citizenship. Only later, in the wake of the land loss and financial difficulties, did she definitely consider herself as a Mexican Californio – realigning herself with those who had resisted. This position was mirrored by those on the other side of the land acquisition problems, who saw the seizure of territory from any Californio – even those who had served the United States' cause – as a form of just retribution against a defeated enemy. Here we can clearly see the embryonic stages of the homogenization of the Californio identity in the San Diego region.

29 To understand the subsequent evolution of this mechanism, we must look at two principal themes: the massive immigration to the border zone from the eastern regions of the United States, and the subsequent immigration to the same area of Mexican nationals. In both cases, in the latter 19th century, the War of 1846-1848 had left an indelible mark upon the construction of national identity. On the northern side of the border, a victory gave an additional impetuous to the consolidation of national culture in spite of regional and ethnic

differences. On the southern side, a similar phenomenon occurred, one which was dramatically increased in the years following the Mexican Revolution (1910-20), when the perceived need for a reconciliatory national identity construction was perceived as an absolute priority, to be fed by the inception of a national school system. The ensuing emphasis on a shared cultural identity served as a counterpoint to the fact that, geographically and ethnically diverse: "Mexico has always been an artificial creation as a nation-state" (McLynn 2000: 12). In the years following 1848, and especially after the turn of the 20th century, Mexican immigrants to the region brought with them this increasingly developed sense of national identity and a sense of loss concerning the formerly Mexican territory of California. These elements appear to have a correlation in the lack of a public remembrance of the splits that occurred within the original Mexican inhabitants of that same territory. In this way, to use a phrase from historians Brian Haley and Larry Wilcoxon, "the historical memory long considered crucial to cultural identity is balanced by a historical imagination"(1995: 433).

30 And of course, the realities of disparities in income, education and other indicators such as property ownership that reveal a gap between the Anglo-American and Hispanic-American communities exemplify a very real heritage of discrimination. Facing what was certainly an increasingly hostile socio-economic environment based on the criteria of ethno-national origins, the Hispanic Californio community, enlarged to include new Hispanic immigrants, could certainly find a unified voice and perception of their shared cultural past to be a unifying and reassuring element. Just as the region's early Californio residents adopted an interpretation of "Spanish" that suited their community's identity and organizational needs, the term Californio along with its national – at times nationalist – Mexican associations has subsequently undergone a similar process. Conveniently homogenized, a sculpted version of the past allows the construction of "an imagined political community" (Anderson 1991:6) as a response to social and economic factors that often disfavor the Latino community.

31 The extent to which the inter-communal conflict in San Diego has been ignored or downplayed can be demonstrated by regarding a number of sources. In the scope of more general borderlands studies, the individual variances in community reactions to the War of 1846-

1848 can be understood as the sheer length of the border and variety of scenarios defies individual studies. Works that appear to follow this pattern range from Bolton's 1921 *The Spanish Borderlands* to Robert Miller's 1968 *Mexico: A History*. In this latter work, while focusing on the "psychological blow that shattered the nation's honor and dignity" (1968: 229), the author also points out the interior turmoil that marked the contemporary Mexican State. Nowhere is it suggested, however, that the northern regions, including San Diego, may have themselves sought annexation by the United States as a reaction to such turmoil.

32 Perhaps more surprising is the lack of specificity in such works as *Conquests and Historical Identities in California: 1769 to 1936*, published by Lisbeth Haas in 1995. While the general trends of the United States' regional conquest are mentioned at various points in the work, the region of San Diego is mentioned only once (1995: 76) and the nature of the conflict in the fledgling city not mentioned at all.

33 The lack of remembrance of the "divided house" of the Californio community is not limited to historical works. Peter Skerry discusses this element at length in his 1993 work *Mexican Americans: The Ambivalent Minority*. In sum, he presents the idea that in order to gain political power and social equality, the Mexican-American community, through the political leadership and Chicano movement, has positioned itself as an oppressed, even colonized, minority, applying contemporary inequalities to the historic past. In order to preserve such a position, a homogenization of that past, including the dismissal of internal conflicts, becomes a desirable characteristic. A perceived loss of this sense of collective dispossession would, according to this line of thought, potentially lead to a loss in political power in contemporary society.

34 Thus when the issue of the internal conflict is evoked, it is often provided in such a way as to leave the perception of unity among Hispanic residents intact. An excellent example of this is to be found in the Chicano history pages of the San Diego State University Website. Providing an excellent general historical introduction to San Diego's Hispanic community, the site nonetheless provides mixed messages that tend to erase the period conflict. While acknowledging that "As was true elsewhere in California, the Mexican elite was divided over

whether or not to accept the American military rule," the statement is qualified by the devotional ties of intermarriage with "Americans" and then balanced by the following depiction.

> On the other hand, the Mexican Californios felt a love of their patria chica, their homeland, and were fearful of what these foreigners would do to them and their families. Very few had abstract political loyalties to the Mexican government but most had a strong identity as Mexicans based in their language and culture (Chapter 4.1).

35 What is not made clear is that many of the "Americans" to which the Californio families had married their daughters were, by the time of conflict in 1846, also Mexican citizens. Such individuals include Abel Stearns or William Heath Davis. In the case of Davis, this would be doubly erroneous as he was born in the Kingdom of Hawaii to parents of mixed American and Hawaiian heritage. Not mentioned at all is the fact that many of San Diego's Hispanic Mexican citizens were also "foreigners," having immigrated from elsewhere in the Spanish colonial or Mexican domains. The point here is not to split historical hairs regarding the exact make-up of the community, but rather to focus on the tendency to reduce the subtleties and realities of the inter-community conflict. This homogenization can be seen in the use of a supporting quotation in the introduction to Chapter 4, "after 1848 Mexicans became, in the words of Juan Sequin, the mayor of San Antonio, foreigners in their native land," a quotatoin that may have a greater reality in contemporary San Antonio than in the San Diego of the mid-19th century.

4. Conclusion

36 To quote Mario Barrera, there is a need to revisit the historical conception of the borderlands through a renewed multi-disciplinary evaluation of local social history and structures "enabling us to see the persistence of patterns as well as changes over time" (1979: 3). An imperative part of such an evaluation certainly involves an examination of the significant contributions of the region's Hispanic settlers and recognition of the motivations and acts of American conquest. But such an evaluation must also include the manner in which those Hispanic settlers and their descendants are perceived and represen-

ted both in local-nation constructs (Gellner) and in nation-state constructs. [15]

37 Into the present day, the repeated depictions of the Mexican-American War as a conflict between unified States, and especially the lack of portrayal of the inter-communal divergences, could be subject to this reexamination process. In a border region that is becoming increasingly cosmopolitan, it is perhaps conceivable that the very mixity or heterogeneity exemplified by the Californio community could serve as a both a symbolic and practical tool for binding the two dominant cultures of the border zone through the demonstration of a historical precedent of inclusion. For there are strong parallels between the historical and contemporary identity constructions. In both instances one can witness attempts to consolidate local communities through inclusion, in response to challenging environmental situations. The same logic, extended, could serve to bind a greater community through a change in perspective of historical remembrance.

38 But in the polarized political and cultural field of the contemporary Southwest, this may be difficult. As would the visitation of the collective national definitions of "Us" and "Them" that typically define the border discourse in mainstream American conceptions of national identity: If "They" were in fact fighting for "Us," how is "Their" exclusion justified? And what are the implications of transforming, at least on this reduced regional scale, the United States victory from a national to a local one, for at least part of the Californio population? What if the San Diegan Californios who fought alongside American troops saw the victory as a successful revolution against Mexico rather than a conquest by the United States? This position could represent an alignment, at least symbolically speaking, with the revolutionary ideology of the Founding Fathers on the distant East Coast. This perspective, while offering a bridge between regional communities and histories, also poses serious questions as to the identitary constitutions of those same communities. The social or political acceptability of such a revision is questionable. One challenge that thus appears to emerge is that of simultaneously deconstructing a historical narrative while reconstructing another; valorizing the historical figures and communities involved as well as those contempor-

ary communities whose very social and political identities are currently drawn from a particular vision of the past.

Bibliography

Alvarez, R. R. (1995). "The Mexican-US Border: The Making of an Anthropological Borderlands." *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 24, 447-470.

Anderson, B. (1991). *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism.* New York: Verso.

Anzaldua, G. (1987). *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza.* San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books.

Baker, P. (1969). "The Bandini Family." *The Journal of San Diego History*, 15(1).

Barrera, M. (1979). *Race and Class in the Southwest: A Theory of Racial Inequity.* Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.

Barrows, H. (1899). "Juan Bandini." *The Annual Publication of the Historical Society of Southern California*, 4 (3), 243-146.

Beebe, R. M., & Senkewicz, R. M. (2006). *Testimonios: Early California through the Eyes of Women, 1815 - 1848.* Berkeley: Heyday Books.

Bolton, H. E. (1921). *The Spanish Borderlands: A Chronicle of Old Florida and the Southwest.* New Haven: Yale University Press.

Dana, R. H. (1964). *Two Years Before the Mast: A Personal Narrative of Life at Sea.* New York: Penguin Books.

Davis, W. H. (1967). *Seventy Five Years in California: Recollections and Remarks by One Who Visited These Shores in 1831, and Except When Absent on Business Was a Resident from 1838 until the End of a Long Life in 1909.* San Francisco: John Howell Books.

Department of Chicano Studies, San Diego State University. (2011, November 7). *San Diego's Mexican Community, 1850-1910.* Retrieved 2012, from San Diego State University Department of Chicano Studies: http://aztlan.sdsu.edu/chicanohistory/chapter05/c05s05.html

Gellner, E. (1983). *Nations and Nationalism.* Ithica New York: Cornell University Press.

Griswold del Castillo, R. (2003). "The U.S.-Mexican War in San Diego, 1846-1847." *The Journal of San Diego History*, 49(1).

Haas, L. (1995). *Conquests and Historical Identities in California, 1769-1936.* Berkeley : University of California Press.

Haley, B. D., & Wilcoxon, L. R. (2005). "How Spaniards Became Chumas and Other Tales of Ethnogenesis." *American Anthropologist*, 107 (3), 432-445.

Hall, S. (1998). "Notes on Deconstructing the Popular." In J. Storey, *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader* (pp. 422-453). Athens: University of Georgia Press.

Killea, L. L. (1966). "The Political History of a Mexican Pueblo: San Diego From 1821-1845 - Part II." *The Journal of San Diego History*, 12 (4).

Mason, B. (1978). "The Garrisons of San Diego Presidio: 1770-1794." *The Journal of San Diego History*, 24(4), 409-411.

McLynn, F. (2000). *Villa and Zapata: A History of the Mexican Revolution.* New York: Carol & Graft.

Olson, M. (1971). *The Logic of Collective Action.* Boston: Harvard University Press.

Ruiz de Burton, M. A. (1997). *The Squatter and the Don.* Huston: Alta Publica Press.

Salomon, C. M. (2010). *Pio Pico: The Last Governor of Mexican California.* Normon: University of Oklahoma Press.

Skerry, P. (1993). *Mexican Americans: The Ambivalent Minority.* New York: The Free Press.

Smythe, W. E. (1908). *History of San Diego, 1542-1908: An Account of the Rise and Progress of the Pioneer Settlement on the Pacific Coast of the United States, Volume 1.* San Diego: History Co.

Swartwood, J. (2015). Contested Territories: Mixed Identity Constructs and Hybrid Culture in San Diego, California (1770-1920). Pessac: MSHA.

Walsh, V. A. (2011). "The Casa and The Don: Juan Bandidi's Quest for Homeland in Early San Diego." *The Journal of San Diego History*, 57 (1).

---

1 Both important authors in their calls, implicit or explicit, to reevaluate historical remembrance and presentation.

2 Lucy Killea published selections from her Master's thesis, *The Political History of A Mexican Pueblo from 1825 to 1845*, in the *Journal of San Diego History* (1966). This exerpt is found in Part II, Chapter 6, published in the *Journal of San Diego History*, 12 (4), http://www.sandiegohistory.org/journal/66october/political.htm.

3 Pío Pico was designated governor by the members of the revolutionary group to which he belonged after ousting Governor Victoria. While he retained the title, it should be noted that he was never appointed by the central government in Mexico or elected locally. This service was short-lived, with Pico resigning after contestations (Salomon 2010:41-42).

4 The implication of *compadrazgo* goes beyond a title; it is the basis for a "system of obligation and mutual respect" that linked Californio families through extended, symbolic kinship ties (Haas 1995: 73).

5 The broader scope of comparison is beyond the frame of this work, but chronology, economics and distance play important roles in the Spanish

colonies. The colony at San Diego was among the latest of the American colonies to be established, during the marked decline of the Spanish colonial empire. Not only were resources more limited for development, but the extreme distances involved made timely communication impossible. Further, with short-term economic returns seen as unlikely, the Spanish motivation to seriously develop the region appears to have been slight. Colonies in Florida or even Texas were settled earlier, during a period of expansion rather than contraction, and were geographically easier to reach. These factors lead to closer social and administrative ties with the mother country.

6 The figure of Manuel Victoria (? – 1833) remains obscure to us. Period sources indicate that ethnically he was a mestizo of mixed Spanish and Native American ancestry, but his date of birth is not precisely recorded.

7 It should be recalled that Pío Pico had at this point been a Mexican citizen for ten years, following the passive switch of regional control from Spain to Mexico in 1821. While this does not imply that he failed to embrace certain aspects of this new national construct, it does provide a sense of the extent to which he may have related to his Mexican identity at this point in the historical record.

8 The term "*mazatecos*" refers to soldiers from the *Mazatlán* garrison who were part of the force that accompanied Governor Victoria from Mexico (Salomon 2010: 40).

9 See Bill Mason's discussion of the necessity to incorporate persons outside the usual Spanish colonial social constructs (Mason 1978: 409-11).

10 A full discussion of the Native American communities of the region is outside the scope of this analysis, but it is important to note that communities in 1846 represented a mix of traditional bands and groups constituted under the mission system in which groups of diverse origins and cultural and linguistic heritages were brought together. The level of Hispanic cultural assimilation appears to have a correlation to both physical proximity and inclusion within this system dating from the earliest days of Spanish colonization.

11 Pío Pico's brother, Andrés, led the Mexican troops to victory at the Battle of San Pasqual. See Griswold Del Castillo (2003). Interestingly, while Andres lacked Pío's level of political involvement prior to the U.S.-Mexican War, he was successfully integrated into the United States administration in California after 1848. Expanding his land holdings, he was elected to the California

State Assembly in 1851 and later to the California State Senate in 1860 (Harrington 1860). Also see: Pourcade, Ch. 7 "Prominent Spanish Families": Pico, Andrés.

12 Keeping in mind Pío Pico's distribution of offices and land grants during his second governorship (Salomon 2010: 88-92).

13 The event involved as an outcome might be as banal as making breakfast, or as complicated as being elected president of the United States. Intrinsically, multiple action chains exist simultaneously, at times in partial or temporary conflict (Hall 1998: 141).

14 "Juan Bandini," San Diego Historical Society archives, Biographical Information, File "B."

15 Of additional interest is the largely horizontal nature of both period and contemporary local-nation constructs. Extremely cash-poor, the San Diego population was largely defined by perceived belonging and value to the community and not by "traditional" economic class structures. Similarly, the insistence on ethnic or national origin in the Chicano discourse avoids contentious economic issues within the community in favor of those factors that provide social and political unity across economic classes.

English

An important element in the identity constructs of both sides of the border, the Mexican-American War of 1846-1848 is often depicted exclusively through a nationalist perspective, with strong associations of victor and vanquished. This article explores how the Californio community in San Diego was divided during this conflict with active support given to both nations involved. While such a division can be examined and understood in a local context, it poses problems for the national discourses surrounding the acquisition of California by the United States. We wish then to focus on this fratricidal rift that has largely disappeared from the public remembrance of this period, including its effects on past and present identity constructions.

Français

Un élément important dans l'évolution des identités des deux côtés de la frontière, la guerre entre les Etats-Unis et le Mexique (1846-1848) est presque exclusivement représentée dans une perspective nationaliste, associée au positionnement de vainqueur et de vaincu. Cet article propose une analyse de la communauté californio de San Diego et sa profonde division concernant l'annexion de la région par les Etats-Unis. Cet article cherche donc à revisiter cette division fratricide, élément essentiel dans les constructions identitaires du passé ainsi que dans le présent, qui a largement disparue de la mémoire collective de ce conflit.

Jeffrey Swartwood
Maître de conférences, CLIMAS (EA4196) [Université de Bordeaux Montaigne], Ecole Polytechnique - Université de Saclay, Département Langues et Cultures, Route de Saclay, 91128 Palaiseau