

THE DESERTS IN THE DISTANCE:
SPANISH AND AMERICAN FRONTIERS IN THE 17TH-19TH CENTURY
SOUTHWEST, WITH A FOCUS ON ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS REGARDING
ANGLICIZATION AND INCORPORATION IN THE MID 19TH CENTURY

by

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ABSTRACT

What is the role of perceived environmental factors in settlement, development of civilization, and intercultural interactions? This study seeks to determine how climate, natural resources, and other environmental criteria as historical people understood it from the early 17th century to the mid 19th century influenced the unfolding of events in what we now call the American Southwest. It is anachronistic to say that mankind and technology has overcome environmental influences, and conversely it is deterministic to ascribe too much influence of the physical environment on human history. However, the science of the times coupled with social and cultural backgrounds created systems of discourse as to how the environment operated and influenced the individual and society. These beliefs in and of themselves are vital to better understanding the history in question. Delving into personal narratives, diaries, and other contemporary documents, this study draws out the voices of the people and their intellectual systems to lay out a framework of environmental interpretations and their influences on way of life. Spaniards and Anglo-Americans had unique and occasionally overlapping ideas regarding these dynamics. Often times, people were not aware of the role of such abstract conceptual influences in their lives. On other occasions, however, some actors seem to consciously appropriate environmental discourses for personal, societal, political, or even military objectives. In this sense, not just the environment itself but the network of notions as to how people thought it worked and affected them was pivotal with regard to the wide range of events and relationships that occurred in this place and time, including Spanish expansion and later American takeover. Exploring the way people of different backgrounds perceived their environments and their relationship to it, and how this influenced their lives and relationships with others, can help us better understand our history, and our modernity.

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INTRODUCTION: THE PROBLEMS OF THE PERIPHERY

After navigating with a sea compass through the featureless plains that touched the horizon in every direction, Francisco Coronado stopped to look around the village. It was August 3, 1540 and he was representing the Spanish Crown seeking to extend its territory north of the Rio Grande. In the middle of his journey, Coronado wrote a letter to the King in which he described what he had encountered. He had seen large pastures, many types of plants and crops for food, and an abundance of animals. He had encountered and spoken with healthy, robust natives who were competent and knowledgeable. He had entered well populated, architecturally sound communities integrated into a sophisticated network of trade and cooperative relationships. Despite his time in an amiable climate that clearly could support thriving populations, Coronado knew his mission had failed and he apologized to the King. He was looking for gold and silver, and there was none to be found in the lands he explored. All the wonders and potential of the environment did not matter. "The Seven Cities are seven little villages."¹

The study of the history of relations between people in the nineteenth century American Southwest is a multifaceted issue, comprising two main factors that created such a complicated situation. The first is that the land changed hands several times over the course of the centuries, and the other is that in three eras as part of Spain, Mexico, and the United States respectively, the region in question was a frontier. The Spaniards, Mexicans, and Americans brought with them different social systems and cultural backgrounds. They had different ways of viewing themselves, the objectives of their

civilizations, and their relationships to their surrounding worlds. During transitional periods, the people of the inbound society encountered many questions as to how to interact with the predecessors, how to deal with the communities and changes they had made, and how to pursue their own agendas in the region. Because the territory was situated on the fringes of these societies, certain practices had to be adapted to the unique situation there; a borderland tends to require a different style of life and administration due to its distance from the core and the disparate conditions that abound there. Finally, a major aspect of these divergent conditions is the environment itself. This constitutes physical characteristics such as climate, natural resources, and geography. In addition, the respective civilizations' varying understandings of the environment influenced the ways they approached their settlement patterns and dealings with the peoples of different ancestry already living there. Consequently, culturally motivated judgements as to the nature of the environment and its effects on individuals and civilization influenced the manners in which intercultural interactions, personal relationships, and even major political events within and between civilizations unfolded in this region.

The area that presently constitutes Arizona and New Mexico served as the northern frontier of the Spanish New World Empire from the mid 1500's through the early 1800's. Migrants and settlers of myriad ancestries went there under Spanish direction as explorers, soldiers, missionaries, and settlers. During this time, relations between people and the very paradigms on which they functioned fluctuated. Coronado exemplified one of the primary sets of Spanish motivations for expanding their frontiers. Drawn by fantastical tales and visions of glimmering wealth, they came. The

environments and the native people therein were resources to be exploited for the sake of enriching Spain itself and the high ranking people that represented it. The government had trouble encouraging migration and the populating of settlements, as the middle classes had little to gain from venturing into the New World much less journeying north into the frontier.

Closer observations will reveal the details of how the Spaniards understood the environment and the people therein. They made particular assumptions about the ways their bodies, personalities, and communities interacted with the surrounding world and pursued their agendas accordingly. Those assumptions had substantial consequences for themselves, the environment, and the natives. How to deal with the native populations of the Americas became a very convoluted and contradictory process. The role of natives in the proposed Spanish societies of the Americas and each of their relationships to those environments were a significant factor in policy formation both in the core at at the frontier. While mining and proselytizing were important activities for the Spanish in the New World, some historians have laid too much emphasis on these as being the sole influences of their imperial exercises. Rather, all these factors were interrelated and the administrators made decisions based on what they thought were the complicated dynamics between them all.

Following independence in 1821, Mexicans groaned under the reverberating negative consequences of the Spanish Crown's restrictive policies. The Spanish conception of a successful colonial system constituted mineral extraction and native conversion, fueled by settled agriculture; any kind of more independently minded

community that may have inhibited these objectives was not preferable. Given more time and stability, there is no reason to doubt that Mexico could have effectively developed a strong social and cultural system in the Sonoran region. However the continued political instability in the metropole, constant civil war, and changes of regimes inhibited North Mexicans from focusing their strength towards breaking out of their economic stagnation. By this time the United States already had a significant economic and cultural presence in the now Mexican north. As English colonists, Americans reflected the Anglo-Protestant mentality and constructed their communities and relationships to the land based on the British colonial policy. However, as they continued to develop uniquely American identities, new conceptualizations rose in importance. Notions like Manifest Destiny and an almost Anglo-American Supremacy informed new understandings of ‘taming the wilderness’, utilizing resources, and building a civilization. They had different ideas regarding what to make of the new environments they encountered and how it influenced their social character.

The ways in which they viewed themselves and the people they encountered in their newly acquired territory following the Mexican-American War shaped in part the lived experiences of the people there. Mexicans were forced to find their way through a swamp of mindsets born of old Spanish, contemporary Mexican, and newly arrived American influence.² Americans grossly misinterpreted and misunderstood the struggles of young Mexico. Combined with their own sense of ability and ingenuity, Westward moving Anglos more and more looked at the mildly developed region and “poor” Mexicans, and characterized them as lazy, violent, and incompetent. In this sense, what

was seen as failure to use natural resources and properly engage the environment contributed to a racially based description of a people which played a substantial role in the two's interactions.

Frontier study has been a hotly debated issue since Frederick Jackson Turner presented his thesis in 1893. For over a century now scholars have argued over how the frontier experience differs from that of the core, and what influence the former has on the people who live there. The historiography of the previous half century has sought to dispel the mythos of the frontier as made famous by Turner. This is an important mission, as the frontier thesis is in fact basically incorrect. He argued that American virtues, values, and institutions were derived from the country's "unique" national history with regard to expansion into the western frontier. He argued that "...American development has exhibited not merely advance along a single line, but a return to primitive conditions on a continually advancing frontier line...its continuous touch with primitive society, furnish the forces dominating American character."³ Turner argued for a particular form of contact with nature and a unique style of social and cultural development resulting from the fact that the United States had a frontier and the manner in which it expanded into it during its formative years. Many nations have expanded into a frontier in their early years, and each developed different societies. It is too far a leap to attribute the nature of the United States to any single factor, such as the frontier or the environment. While these things played a role, they were part of a much larger and complex system of interacting and shifting factors.

Nonetheless, while people are cautious of Turner now, there is a general consensus that conditions on the frontier can be relatively different from that of the metropole. While scholars have tended to shy away from this so as to avoid determinism, there is no doubt that to a certain extent it is true. Frontier conditions had consequences for the settlers and institutions there, and whether the mindsets of people shifted in a manner unique to this particular frontier is an important area of study. Thus far, frontier studies have taken mainly economic, political, and legal approaches. These are vital lenses through which to address the issues and worthy of analysis. However, little attention has been given to the environment, especially for fear of being too Turnerian. Scholars are afraid of too closely resembling Turner's suggesting that the environment played such a heavy role in the thinking, behavior, and development of human society; it suggests that it was a one way street, lacking give and take, and lacking control and agency on the part of historical actors. When it is present, arguments often are indirect or contradictory. The role of the environment in frontier society, particularly in conjunction with the previously enumerated themes of study, does require more attention and analysis.

Turner succeeded in highlighting the mindsets of Americans of the time period he was discussing. Hence, regardless of truth or falsehood, the Turnerian framework serves as a useful tool for analyzing the American intellect of the 19th century. Exploring the time and place in question, with the understanding that the historical actors believed that the things Turner later articulated were in fact true and happening to them, is helpful to comprehend their words, actions and motivations. Similar paradigms can be applied to

the Spanish predecessors in the region. The environment itself absolutely played a role in the development of civilizations and mindsets of the people in question. Perhaps more importantly, as previously alluded, people's perceptions and understandings of the environment and its effect on them is an important means by which to analyze the relations and frontier history of the 19th century Southwest as well. In conjunction with cultural, scientific, and medical intellectual frameworks at the time, respective civilizations understood their environments and their relationships to it in specific ways. Often times, then, these paradigms unconsciously affected the way people lived their lives, interacted with others, and operated their communities. On other occasions, historical figures seem to be aware of the environmental discourses and its perceived role in the formation of race and behavior. They proceeded to appropriate these concepts to their private, political, or military ends. Thus to a significant degree the character of the environment and its effects were social constructions. They varied depending on which people were discussing it, what location was in question, what time period it was, and most importantly what the agenda and objectives of the people discussing it were. The shifting understandings and explanations for the role of the environment in civilization was a substantial factor in cultural misunderstandings, ethnocentrism, and expansion during the settlement of the Mojave and Sonoran Deserts by Spaniards and Anglo-Americans, and the relationships between people of different ethnicities over the course of the centuries.

CHAPTER 1: THE SPANISH COLONIAL SYSTEM

Environmental factors played a substantial role in the development of Spanish New World colonial societies. Natural resources have always been one of the vital factors that influence the manner in which a society develops. By the early 1500's, the Spanish *conquistadores* found that much of the South and Central American territories possessed silver, gold, and other valuable metals. History has demonstrated that these resources did not automatically ensure Spain an easy ride to indefinite imperial dominance, but it certainly influenced the society that developed there. Spanish colonization did not take place in a vacuum, but rather within a larger political context involving heavy competition from other European nations on the move. Consequently, the substantial presence of gold and minerals arguably encouraged the Spanish Crown to be substantially involved in the administration of its overseas territory, and to govern its frontiers with military authority and maintain a heavy presence of armed camps.⁴ It is safe to say that the Crown intended to protect its new wealth not only from the prowling eyes of the English, French, and others, but from its own subjects across the ocean.

The Spaniards did not, however, enter the New World with a blank slate and completely open minds, ready to accommodate whatever they found there. Historians David Weber and Jane Rausch argue in *Where Cultures Meet* that centuries of the *reconquista*, reclaiming the Iberian Peninsula from the Moors, influenced the way the former viewed expansion and relationships to others. They suggest that “Spaniards dreamed of the material rewards that might be had from conquering rich Muslim lands of Andalusia, and of spiritual benefits that would accrue from extending the religion of Christ into lands served by the followers of Muhammad.”⁵ Then, the authors continue,

these ideas were applied and modified to Native Americans in the New World.

Furthermore, in his book *The Spanish Frontier in North America*, Weber points out that the Spanish found it providential that the *reconquista* ended in 1492, the same year of the discovery of the New World.⁶ In this sense, the colonization of the Americas was viewed as an extension of the *reconquista*.

The already existing rigid Spanish social hierarchy fit well into this new extractive and exploitative economy in the New World. The king sat at the top of the pyramid and was followed by the Spanish-born *peninsulares*, and so it was easy for governing authorities to grant class entitlement to certain privileged groups. Others, like the mixed blooded *mestizos* who were offspring of Spaniards and Natives, were viewed as inferior beings and enjoyed few privileges. Then there were the natives and African slaves who were compelled to work for others' benefit. Precious metals, a longstanding symbol of wealth and power, served solely to enrich the mother country, and other resources were put towards supporting those ends, rather than benefiting the people and society in the Americas. Furthermore, the Spanish fixation on mining encouraged the new local government to concentrate settlements near potential sources of mineral wealth, which were under sharp supervision by authority figures. It is also noteworthy that the topography of Spain's New World American possessions were laden with mountains, deserts, and jungles, leaving spare pockets that were inhabitable. Thus these factors combined to create a reality of isolation and difficulty of movement by the populace, a defining characteristic of the Spanish New World empire and particularly on the frontiers.⁷

Ever shifting racial and environmental understandings lent themselves to a complex social system. The Spanish colonizers embarked upon a long and complicated series of debates as to the humanity of the native people they encountered and what role they ought to play in the colonial structure the Spanish sought to operate. After failed attempts at enslavement, the Crown instituted the *encomienda*. This was a process wherein high ranking Spaniards received overlordship of a group of natives whom they could put towards physical labor, so long as they properly oversaw their Christianization.⁸ Because *encomenderos* deployed Indian services and collected tribute from them, they could accrue substantial profit and social mobility, thereby widening the gap between social classes.⁹ However, in time the Crown determined that this nearly feudal system was being abused and it would be phased out.

The *encomienda* reinforced separation between the natives and Spaniards, and as it demised the Crown turned to emphasizing its Two Republics System in the New World. The point here was that natives deserved special status as vassals of the king, because of their voluntary submission and acceptance of Christianity. At the same time, however, they were placed in a subordinate political and economic position. Isolating the natives from the Spaniards was key, as this served as an effective means of control and overlordship. This was not realistic in practice, as historian Maria Elena Martinez points out, because the natives needed to travel into the Spanish towns in order to labor and perform services; it did not work with the economy which the Crown intended to develop there.¹⁰ Weber points out a major irony herein, namely that the Spaniards would not be able to Hispanicize Indians if they isolate them from the larger Hispanic community.¹¹

Scholars have illuminated two additional reasons why this was problematic and did not function as well as hoped. The first is that the Spanish failed to account for the eventual existence of people of all kinds of mixed ancestry living in the New World under the Crown's dominion. While race is vaguely present in the previously elucidated issue, it is a central factor here. Much has been written on the racialized caste system that included *creoles*, *mestizos*, *mulattoes*, and others. The primary factor in determining on what level of the hierarchy an individual stood was an investigation into their *limpieza de sangre*, or blood purity. As Maria Elena Martinez points out in her book *Genealogical Fictions*, a bishop in 1647 emphasized the importance of purity of blood because he felt that *mestizos*, *mulattoes*, and others were taking over the indigenous government.¹² This example is telling for several reasons. First, it shows the vulnerability of the Two Republic system being required to function along strict binaries of perceived racial difference and highlights the Spanish lack of foresight with regard to the inevitable mixing of people. Furthermore, at this point in time, the bishop's statement suggests that all people of any kind of mixed ancestry were viewed by the Spanish as inferior; it would not be desirable for mixed blooded people to hold prominent positions in society.

The natives were not passive victims onto whom the Spanish imposed their will. David Weber pointed out that the natives "...determined when and how they would cooperate with Christians."¹³ They had plenty of coercive and manipulative ability themselves, so as to assert their own interests and gain something out of their relationships with the Spanish. This theme has also been addressed with regard to *limpieza de sangre*. Scholars have come to agree that the Spanish racial system was not

so rigid after all, but shifted depending on place, time, and individual. This is because, from a modern point of view, “race” is a social construction and changes depending on who is in power and whose interests are at stake. For example, Peter Vilella expanded on Martinez’ history by discussing the roles some natives played in adapting *limpieza* to their own interests. In his article “Pure & Noble Indians”, Vilella recounts the story of a Nahua Indian who was granted Old Christian status because he made a convincing argument that he was of pure blood because his ancestors had accepted Christianity willingly and without any hesitation when the original *conquistadores* arrived in the New World.¹⁴ He was saying, then, that there was no inferiority or heathenism in his family line and they were basically the New World version of the Iberian Old Christians. This was a particularly unique case, because the actions of the man in question essentially created a brand new category of *limpieza de sangre*. The fact that this is even possible is very telling with regard to the malleability of the Spanish racial caste system.

The Spanish system was not only malleable but fluid; there are many instances of people moving up or down the ladder based on claims of purity and nobility derived from numerous contexts. Finding ways to be labeled as pure blooded would confer social benefits to those people. Vilella details how some natives pointed to social markers like good habits and honorable professions in order to acquire the label of pure as well. This, though, is an inversion of the claim; they were highlighting privileges they already had in order to be labeled as pure.¹⁵ It would seem that having *sangre limpia* was an end in itself occasionally, as it would sufficiently seat a person in good standing in Spanish society. Vilella is sure to point out that in light of actions of this nature, “...many other people

were left more vulnerable to charges of impurity.”¹⁶ Inevitably, those seeking higher status tended to throw others under the bus in order to do so; they needed to distance themselves from those with less desirable labels, thereby creating new social stratifications in society. Villella also points out that if both Spaniards and Indians were considered pure, then their *mestizo* offspring could not be automatically impure.¹⁷ Hence as subjects made claims and shifted the meanings of particular racial labels, other corresponding and inevitably interrelated racial designations were redefined as well. This furthers the argument that the racial caste system was negotiable and rooted in specific social contexts.

The second functional reason why the Two Republic system did not work is that there were many different types of natives, who had different lifestyles. This is particularly important for understanding the frontier. In the simplest of terms, they were either settled and agricultural or migrating and hunters. From the Spanish perspective, they respectively were Pueblo or wild. Given this dichotomy, Spaniards primarily targeted settled natives as subjects of Hispanicization. This could be because settled natives relied on their crops for their sustenance and way of life, and so the Spanish held in their power a huge bargaining chip.¹⁸ Destroying native fields and farms could be a powerful tool of blackmail and coercion. In addition, farm yields were required resources to maintain the colonies in the Americas; Spain could easily apply to settled natives its coercive system of exploitation of personnel and environment, so that they could direct their own energies more fully towards mining. Furthermore, Europeans in general tended to view settled agriculture as the activity of civilized people; the Spaniards may have

assumed that traveling hunter Indians were more barbaric and hence incapable of being Christianized and Hispanicized.

The settled-wild Indians dichotomy with relation to the core and periphery is worth exploring. Spanish conquest of the Americas took a foothold in Central America, relatively centrally oriented with reference to the geography of the Americas, and radiated outward from there. However this is not the only factor that constitutes the formation of the core. Rather, the nature of the societies therein played a substantial role in the manner in which the Spaniards sought to rule the region. Notably the Aztecs, as well as many other civilizations the Spaniards initially encountered, were settled communities practicing agriculture and containing urban populations. This construction translated well into the Spanish idea of how to live in one's environment, and more practically speaking, provided them with all the necessary tools for effective administration. As the missionaries and soldiers pushed farther into the North, while there were still to be found settled agricultural native communities such as Opatas and Pimas, the Spaniards more and more often found semi-nomadic, more raid-and-plunder oriented tribes like the Apache and Comanche. It was therefore more difficult for the Spaniards to operate their Two Republics system in the manner they initially planned because there was little about the natives in this region that fit into their ideal. This situation was a contributing factor to life and conditions on the Spanish Northern Frontier being different from that of the core.

The differences between hunter and farmer natives surely had to do with culture and custom, as well as to a certain extent environment and available resources. However,

the manners in which the Spanish viewed these differences has thus far been addressed with regard to politics and economics. Wild Indians, they would say, had no place in the settled and coercive social system the Spanish sought to build in the New World. Also, as hunters they could not as effectively contribute goods that farmers or craftspeople could which would benefit the Spanish New World economy, missions, and forts. However, little has been said with regard to what the Spanish thought caused these differences in the first place. It seems that they also understood this dichotomy through a racial lens. They seem to have assumed there were inherent physical, mental, and behavioral differences between Pueblo and wild Indians, and as a result the latter were incapable of being civilized. Hence the Indian Republic of the Spanish Empire was selective, one of exclusion, violence, occasionally bordering on genocide, and dependent on a multitude of factors including racial ones.

CHAPTER 2: THE SPANISH NORTHERN FRONTIER

David Weber has described frontiers “...as zones rather than lines, where the cultures of invader and invaded contend with one another and with their physical environment to produce a dynamic that is unique to that place.”¹⁹ Later in his book *The Spanish Frontier in North America*, he states “That Englishmen and Frenchmen came to rely less on Indian labor than Spaniards may have more to do with American opportunities than attitudes and institutions Europeans brought with them.”²⁰ Later still, he states that European colonizers “...transformed the environment more than it transformed them, and built societies that owed more to the inheritance of the Old World

than the experience of the New World.”²¹ The third statement is anti-deterministic, saying that people’s decisions, informed by their social systems in which they were raised, informed to a large degree the lifestyles and institutions they set up in the Northern frontier. However, the first two statements suggest that the frontier experience is unique. Imagined geographically, one can then picture the core as culturally and institutionally Spanish, the frontier to the North as variably mixed Spanish and native, and the unclaimed regions to the East and North of it as native. Yet based on the previous discussion, it seems that the cultures of the invader and invaded contended with one another all over the Spanish colonial empire, not just on the frontier.

The Spanish had specific plans as to how to incorporate and administer their new territories as they pushed into the frontier, yet contradictory ways of pursuing those plans and with mixed results. They expanded based on inexact understandings of the geography and environment, resulting in a haphazard and inefficient system. They wanted to mine, but also to Christianize natives. These things could be done at the same time, but required them to disassociate the natives from their own cultures and ways of life. While natives had a vital place in the Spanish vision, it was a subservient one not intended to promote individual thought, action, or manners of life that later arrivals, such as Anglo Americans, would view as inherent. Consequently, life on the Spanish frontier was determined by particular institutions intended to facilitate these objectives. Christian missions and military installations abounded, resulting in a substantial role by officials in dictating life for all parties involved. While mining and agriculture influenced the actions of the Spanish and incorporated natives, on many occasions their lack of action with regard to

environmental factors had consequences for the environment itself, their society, and how their descendants would be viewed, interacted with, and fated to be incorporated by the expanding United States.

The testimonies of missionary and explorer Father Eusebio Francisco Kino shed light on the Spanish mindset and objectives at the time. While traversing New Spain from 1687-1710, he explained in a letter to another priest that Sir Francis Drake made an error in reading water currents, and had assumed that the Gulf of California continued on straight to the Bering Sea. Consequently, Drake contributed to a conjecture of the time that California was an island.²² For a time nobody questioned those reports, including people from rival nations of England, such as Spain. But when some nearby Native Americans presented Kino with pearls and particular blue shells which could not have come from across the strait, he surmised that California must be connected by land and he set out to find a navigable pathway.²³ If Drake had explored the California coast, then the British in general must be nearby. If the land contained potential mineral wealth, it was vital for the Spanish to set out and claim it before the British could plant their own flag. Kino did in fact find the path, but the Spanish hold on California would not be strengthened until a series of more successful missions by Father Junipero Serra in the 1760's.

A notable reason why Kino discovered the peninsular nature of California at such a late date is because of the inefficiency and self defeating character of the Spanish exploratory and expansionist style. Unlike Anglo-Americans later, who often cited migration as the defining factor by which a nation may lay claim to a land, Spaniards

delineated their territory based on the progress of their explorers. It was as early as 1539 that one of Hernan Cortes' men, Francisco de Ulloa discovered that Baja California was actually a peninsula.²⁴ However, Weber explains, because Spain was so secretive and possessive of its territories, possibly due to the precious metals therein, they did not often or efficiently publish geographic information. Resultantly, over and over again discoveries were forgotten and people would make the same wrong assumptions. Then, new explorers would pursue the same routes and find the same things. Kino seems to be the final discoverer of California's connection to the mainland. In addition, because Spain did not circulate information regarding its discoveries, especially among the other European powers, it handicapped itself based on its own policy of laying claim to a region based on its discovery.²⁵ Representatives of other nations, like Drake for England, could pass through and plant their own flag if they wished. Thus Spain's expansionist policy was slow and vulnerable to competitors' activity.

“Myth is such an integral part of the conception of the West. People think about it in terms of myth. Always have...”²⁶ The writer N. Scott Momaday was referring to pioneer Anglo-Americans of the 1800's with this statement, but it was just as relevant to the Spanish explorers and missionaries expanding their frontier boundaries a century earlier. Father Juan Nentvig, in his 1764 descriptions of Sonora, referenced a corporal who asserted that he and the military escort accompanying one Father Sedelmagi in Yuma in 1748 were presented by natives with silver nuggets the size of acorns.²⁷ Though Nentvig also casually described two headed eagles, it is important to remember that the mindset at the time was very different and such tales were readily believable. Francisco

Coronado's entire exploratory mission in 1540, for example, was to find seven cities of gold, the existence of which everybody was convinced.

There were other kinds of myths that attracted Spanish officials and served to expand boundaries as well. In his descriptions of the topography of the *Pimeria*, Kino's assumptions about the character of the land led him to conjecture that "...it will be possible to open a way and a shorter water route to Spain."²⁸ What he referred to in this statement was the Strait of Anian, believed to be an all water route from the area straight across the continent. Needless to say, it does not exist. However, in the process of searching for it, Kino and others established settlements and missions and furthered the boundaries of New Spain. Kino's hopes for a water passage across the continent is reflective of the Crown's desires to establish a network of trade and commerce in the New World; it would be an avenue by which the Spanish government could put all that gold and silver to material profit.

The priest suggested naming what would become known as the Sonoran Desert *Nueva Navarra*, after the region of Navarra in Europe which recently had contributed to a tentative unity between France and Spain. Kino ascribed value to the physical geographic location of *La Pimeria Alta*; it would be situated at the center of seven proposed 'new kingdoms' corresponding to regions including Baja California, Alta California, and New Mexico.²⁹ The missionary felt that incorporating and controlling *La Pimeria* would provide the keystone to a united and effectively controlled trading network. Again, the prospective set up and running of this proposed system would be the product of heavy handed outright government regulation.

Eighteenth and nineteenth century medical and scientific understanding tied very closely together the human body and the surrounding environment. While deciding where to settle, missionaries and settlers also took into account a series of complicated environmental attributes that they believed to operate in certain ways. Father Nentvig included in his descriptions of Sonora a statement that the Oposura Valley was not so narrow and hence “...affords much more comfort, allowing its inhabitants to breathe and enjoy more sunlight”. He continued later that “Sonora’s climate in general is healthful, not only for Creoles but for natives as well...[the cause of adverse health effects is]...not the climate or the air but the impurity of the water, for all the streams come from swamps and flow through shady, wooded ravines.”³⁰ Scientifically speaking, these conclusions are relatively incorrect. However, Conevery Bolton Valencius’ book *The Health of the Country* explains how such notions, drawn from contemporary understandings of medicine and the perceived relationship between one’s body and the environment, played a large role in dictating the routes migrants took and the locations in which they settled.³¹ Therefore, the lack of accuracy is inconsequential; because these were characteristics the people truly believed were aspects of their lived experiences in the environment, they planned expansion and settlement accordingly. While Valencius’ book details the lives of American settlers, unquestionably her ideas can apply just as significantly to the Spaniards.

Perceptions of the effects of the environment did not just manifest themselves in personal descriptions and individual actions, but operated on the larger political scene as well. They shifted over time depending on the social discourse and objectives on the

table. A good example of this is the concept of colonial degeneration. Martinez addressed it in *Genealogical Fictions*, as the belief that the American climate, environment, and skies make people lazy, unstable, superstitious, and prone to vice; they become effeminate and dark like the Indians.³² That being the case, it was believed that environment had a distinct role in racial formation and development of associated behavioral characteristics. However, this dialogue was instigated in a specific social context, namely in order to maintain Iberian migration to the New World, and was tied into *creole* dissatisfaction with the governmental system of the time. On the other hand, many missionaries described the environment of the Northern frontier as very welcoming. Kino explained that in *La Pimeria Alta* people thrived, were robust, and strong. Furthermore, he stated that the climate there was similar to that of Spain, and so Spanish people would do well to come and live there.³³ This is a stark contrast to prior descriptions of the same region, but one can see that Kino had a different agenda than the Spanish *creoles* in Central Mexico.

The consequences of the perceived roles of the environment varied. The ideas that Juan Nentvig discusses were medical ones involving isolated pockets and regarding concern for people's health; they were relatively harmless. The concept of colonial degeneration, on the other hand, is a large scale politically motivated one that could have consequences for an entire region and whole groups of people. When environmental misconceptions unconsciously popped up with regard to picking sites for sparse settlements, they tended to result simply in people going to one area and not another.

However when they were consciously appropriated in order to promote an agenda or aspirations, conflict could ensue and people could suffer.

* * * *

What consequences did the frontier have for people's constructions and perceptions of themselves and of others in the Spanish colonial era? Alistair Hennessy argued in his book *The Frontier in Latin American History* that Latin American countries are frontier societies lacking a frontier myth.³⁴ He is of the opinion that Hispanics did not associate the frontiers with the personal and national renewal vital to national formation and heritage as articulated by Turner. Settlers did not head out there in consequence of the pioneer spirit, seeking fortune and independence. Rather, they often went under government direction with the objective of establishing missions and military garrisons, or *presidios*. It is in this manner that the Spanish frontier "line" advanced. Hennessy mentions that the Church, Crown, and settlers all had different interests in the natives.³⁵ He adds nuance to the concept of frontier by explaining that there are many different types, depending on the objectives in the particular region. In the case of New Spain, the primary foci were missions, silver mining, base metal mining, and cattle ranching.³⁶ Therefore the natives whom the Spaniards would encounter here would serve particular roles in attempting to fulfill these objectives. In addition, regardless of the location of any particular frontier, the Spanish intended to construct it as a buffer zone in defense of the core; in New Spain and elsewhere, the military had a palpable presence and the natives there had particular relationships to it.

With regard to the missions, one can already see a system of racial exclusion; the frontier too sought participation in the Republic by Pueblo Indians, while the wild ones were the barbaric enemies of the Church and of the state. Michael F. Logan asserted in *Desert Cities* that because of the harsh lifestyle, relative isolation and difficulty of access to resources and supplies from the interior, life on the frontier depended much more on community and mutual participation and aid.³⁷ One can therefore argue that the Two Republics system did not really exist in practice on the Spanish northern frontier. Silvio Zavala, the author of the essay “The Frontiers of Hispanic America” in *Where Cultures Meet*, would agree with Logan. He correlates “physiocratic leanings on localism” with “the distinguishing natural and historical character of the northern provinces...”³⁸ He went on to argue that as the movement for Mexican independence developed, republicans viewed the northern regions as the embodiments of liberal principles and liberty. However, this essay is from the 1950’s and Zavala may represent an older school of thought, more influenced by Turner. One might counter by proposing that even if the Northern Frontier epitomized liberty, it might have resulted not from the unique nature and character there but from its distance and isolation from the core at Mexico City, who was at a loss to politically control and socially and culturally influence conditions there. Nonetheless, if the people living there at that time believed that they were different and unique, especially with regard to environmental influences, and this played a role in how the Mexican war for independence unfolded, then it is certainly worth noting.

Just because Spaniards and natives lived more closely does not mean that they lived harmoniously and with equality. Rather, the natives were compelled to labor for the

purposes of maintaining the missions. Agricultural yields were put towards food supplies, and crafts went into clothing and other sundry necessities. The Spanish still viewed the natives as inferior. David Weber referenced Herbert Bolton's statement that the missions were designed to protect the Indians, unlike the Americans who sought to destroy them. However, Weber argues, the missions "...sought to preserve the lives of the Indians, not the Indian way of life."³⁹ This is an important distinction, as it points to Spanish perceptions of cultural and racial superiority on the frontier.

The method by which the Spanish government intended to extract minerals and carry out trade was through native labor. Historian Henry F. Dobyns explained that even though the missions were primarily intended to save heathen souls, they were also a unique institution that intended "...to prepare natives to be tribute paying Christian subjects of the Crown in one decade."⁴⁰ Clearly this endeavor met with resistance, as the missionary Father Kino mentioned in his writings a *Royal Cedula* of 1686 which decreed that "...all new converts that during the first 20 years of their reduction they will not be required to give tribute or to serve on estates or in the mines, since this is one of the reasons why they refuse to be converted."⁴¹ Regardless, the Spanish social hierarchy and the interrelated exploitative motivations resulting from their fixation on natural resources are evident in the proclamation and in Dobyns' analysis. The Crown viewed the natives, having a different skin color and ethnic background, as inferior beings who ought to serve the interests of the higher ranking classes; they fit right into the lower end of the social hierarchy. The *Cedula* substituted "conversion" with "reduction"; Kino and nearly every Spanish missionary throughout the colonization period seemed to refer to converted

natives as “reduced”. This was a specifically defined term; in her book *Wandering Peoples*, Cynthia Radding defined *reducción* as when “...populations of numerous small hamlets were concentrated in nuclear towns which controlled sufficient cropland to support a compact community”.⁴² The word choice seems to imply a degree of subordination and inferiority. The Crown and its religious representatives in New Spain viewed natives in the same way that they viewed lower class Spanish settlers: as servants in one form or another to the upper classes. The fact that the *Royal Cedula* mentions natives serving on estates suggests that some were put towards domestic work for wealthy *peninsulares*. Father Kino related that some Indians complained to him that they did not want to be Christian because the Fathers required so much of their labor and crop sowing for churches that there was no opportunity for them to sow for themselves.⁴³ Therefore, the missionaries seem to have caused natives grievances in addition to the ones regarding requirements to pay tribute and mine, as addressed in the *Cedula*. Any agricultural work the natives practiced prior to Spanish arrival now was redirected so as to be put towards the benefit of the missions, the Crown, and maintaining the Spanish presence on the continent. Accordingly the Spanish viewed the environment as one to be exploited, not developed. The natural resources were there for the taking, and the human resources were there to do their bidding. Kino summed up this particular letter by asserting that “With these means and with these new conversions it will be possible to trade by sea and land with other nearby and remote provinces, nations, and kingdoms”.⁴⁴

The “means” Kino referred to were stock raising and subsistence agriculture, which were the other key aspects of the economy. Though the Spanish viewed the natives

as inferior and as subjects, they still wanted them to exude a Western and Christian style; the missions not only converted natives but sought to teach them Western and Spanish culture and lifestyle. One of the most important components was settled agriculture, long perceived by most Europeans as being indicative of a productive society. Prior to Spanish settlement, some local tribes such as the Pimas practiced what Dobyns calls “transhumance”, a regular seasonal movement that enabled them to better exploit resources, especially water.⁴⁵ The first inference one can make from this tradition is the commonly stated belief that Native Americans were more in tune with the natural world and had an intimate understanding of how it operated and how best to harness it. On the other hand, Europeans were more ignorant of natural processes and applied homogenous practices to unique localities which did not work as effectively as they hoped. While this might be partly the case, it is also important to remember that settling the natives would serve as an effective means of surveillance and control; it was the military aspect of the Spanish frontier institutions at work. Dobyns asserts that “the Spanish New World empire was built upon a food producing native agrarian base; settled natives were a magnet for the Spanish as they could lead to new frontiers, mines, stock ranches, and commerce”.⁴⁶ Controlling the natives enabled the Spanish to control access to and the yield from the resources.

The Spanish even admitted that control was an objective, while attempting to justify it as being in the interest of the natives. A *Royal Order for the Province of Nueva Galicia* in 1570 stated that “...because the Indian inhabitants...are not gathered into towns where they may have political government...many difficulties arise in their conversion

and indoctrination, and they are not taught to live under the control and ordered system conducive to their salvation and welfare".⁴⁷ The *Order* points out that settling the natives into an agricultural lifestyle is not enough; therein, their farms must be intertwined into a larger administrative system that the Spanish can fully oversee. This may have been the Indian half of the Two Republics in its early workings. Obviously the different native tribes had perfectly functional social and political systems by which they lived before the Spanish arrived and imparted their own administration. Furthermore, the *Order* asserted that the control and order the Spanish hoped to impart was intended for the salvation and welfare of the Indians. This certainly was to an extent believed to be true at the time, but in addition it is a means of defending the Spanish policies and treatment of the natives which were in large intended to serve their own ends. In his scathing account of Spanish colonial activity in the New World, Bartolome de las Casas put it most powerfully how absurd he saw it to be that:

...all nations...living peaceably and quietly in their hereditary native country, should be impos'd upon...without any precedent instruction to Confess and Acknowledge the true God, and subject themselves to a King, whom they never saw, or heard mention'd before; and whose Messengers behav'd themselves toward them with such Inhumanity and Cruelty...which is certainly a most foppish and absurd way of proceeding...⁴⁸

This was the Black Legend in the making. Throughout the following centuries, many European nations would specifically condemn the Spanish for their treatment of Native Americans as being particularly harsh, brutal, and inhumane. There were many downsides to the Spanish colonial system, but it was not outright or entirely evil. Furthermore, the other European nations involved in imperial activities in the New World were not free of guilt or improper treatment of the natives whom they encountered. An

American in the 19th century would later comment on the inappropriate treatment of natives by the Spanish and their missions, immediately after describing in an ethnocentric and intolerant manner how he hoped white Americans would bring the light of civilization to the dark lands inhabited by Indians in the West.

The missionaries were the primary means by which Spain advanced its boundaries into North America. Kino was one of the most significant examples, exploring and working in the Sonoran Desert, known as *La Pimeria Alta*, from 1687-1710. The Spanish kept environmental criteria in mind when selecting sites. Father Kino founded a mission at *San Xavier del Bac* in southern Arizona where “The fields and lands for sowing were so extensive and supplied with so many irrigation ditches running along the ground that they were sufficient for another city like Mexico”.⁴⁹ In the process of establishing an agrarian society in the desert, Spaniards had to overcome many roadblocks. Father Juan Nentvig described how many rivers in the region were really streams that fizzled out; people in some towns had trouble accessing drinking water much less irrigating their crops.⁵⁰ For this reason, the natives spent much time before the Spanish ever arrived building irrigation ditches and sinking wells. Just as Dobyns’ asserted that natives were a “magnet” for Spaniards, the editor of Kino’s memoirs, Herbert Bolton, echoes the notion with a statement that missionaries always chose the most fertile spots in which to situate their missions because, in addition to their own agrarian needs, they wanted to be near the potential converts of Indian villages, which were already at fertile spots.⁵¹ Other modern descriptions of the area suggest that “the Indian village of *Bac* may have relied on a subsurface rock barrier, which could have

increased the low water flow, bringing the underflow to the surface at this point".⁵²

Clearly there are many physical factors which the Spanish took into consideration when determining where to situate a settlement.

* * * *

The Spanish settlement patterns in the Mojave-Sonoran Desert were physically represented by their series of forts, or *presidios*. This is no surprise considering the Crown used high ranking government officials and soldiers to expand the borders of the frontier. The *presidios* served to protect the missions and Pueblo Indians from hostile natives such as the Apache but in so doing added another dynamic to the frontier experience. If the settled natives who were the subjects of the missions' interests were viewed as inferior and fit to provide for the Spanish, than the wild natives who were the subject of the *presidio* soldiers wrath were certainly viewed as hopelessly uncivilized and subjects of warfare. The Spanish northern frontier is unique for its heavily militarized status. In the late 18th century, officials began an all out offensive against the hostile Apache in *La Pimeria Alta*, which was virtually a race war. Again, though, it is too simplistic to state that the Spanish viewed the Apache as a separate and lower race deserving of extermination. There were cases of allied Apache too; some of them did in fact settle and take to agriculture and interaction with the Spanish settlers.

Laura E. Gomez made a case for the fluidity of the Spanish racial system on the frontier in her book *Manifest Destinies*, in saying that "...people could easily challenge and come to be seen as civilized in the context of a generally uncivilized, Indian dominated frontier."⁵³ However in the Spanish era there seem to be fewer cases of people

claiming *limpieza de sangre* on the frontier than in the interior. This would require further investigation, as Gomez does not provide examples after making this statement.

Nonetheless, her argument has validity given that Apaches could soften the harsh Spanish racial perceptions of them by modifying their behavior and participating in Spanish frontier society. However, they probably never claimed *limpieza de sangre* themselves. The Spanish racial system, flexible throughout time and space, experienced a rendition unique to the location that was the Northern frontier.

In the wake of tensions with England and ongoing hostility with Apache tribes, the King of Spain dispatched the Marques de Rubi to undertake a military inspection of the frontier between 1766-68. The Marques concluded that Spanish forces were spread too thinly and ought to consolidate so as to make better use of productive land. This recommendation initiated a series of military reforms carried out by Inspector of the Interior Provinces Hugh O’Conor, an Irishman whom the Spanish employed, who established an arc of *presidios* from the Gulf of California to the Gulf of Mexico, thereby delineating a formal boundary of the frontier.⁵⁴ During this process, a *presidio* at the village of Tubac was moved north to Tucson in 1775, marking the northernmost point of permanent Spanish reach in North America.

The fixed and defensible nature of the *presidios* exemplified the localized character of the Spanish frontier system. In her study of Southwest urban landscapes, Nina Veregge suggests that “The ‘far Northern Frontier of New Spain’ (1598-1821) was characterized by extreme distance and isolation from the center, little or no movement, and conflict at the edge. Strong frontier institutions (*missiones* and *presidios*) acted as

something of a counter-weight to these difficulties.”⁵⁵ Rather, they exacerbated it.

Veregge suggests an environmental situation in which the isolated and difficult conditions already existed and the Spanish decided to implement missions and forts to combat them.

However, those institutions were Spanish policy all along; they moved North with the intention of establishing missions and *presidios*, which they deemed to be the most suitable means of interacting with the kinds of people and societies they were told they would find there. However, these institutions would not necessarily be compatible with the environments there, and most importantly the Spaniards overlooked the fact that the missions and *presidios* would inhibit the natives from exercising their complex relationships to their surrounding environments. In many cases, the natives’ way of life depended on their ability to perform certain actions in a certain ways with regard to their land. Dobyns’ transhumance is a good example. Furthermore, William Preston explains in “Serpent in the Garden”, that natives were a “keystone species” of their ecosystem.⁵⁶ His paper details how native lifestyles and actions including planting, harvesting, and burning, had altered the environment in a way that their role in it had become vital to its balance and health; they exploited the land, but did not degrade it the way later Europeans did. Removing the natives from the picture by binding them to Spanish-run farms inflicted massive damage to the ecosystems.

Ultimately, these systems served to make more challenging the development of society there because they embodied Spain’s desire for heavy governmental and military supervision over people who are not allowed to move about much. When a bishop named Tamaron described New Mexico in 1760, he expressed his opinion that a particular town

named *Tome* could be the best settlement in the kingdom because of its extensive lands and ease of running irrigation ditches.⁵⁷ The problem, though, was that particular spots were deemed suitable but no thought was given as to the development of the region as a whole. Tamaron went on to explain that in order to get there, it “...cost me a night’s sojourn in the country three leagues from El Paso, which I did not like at all, because it is a very dangerous region...there are no settlements en route...”⁵⁸ Movement between oases of settlement was difficult and dangerous, and served to stifle effective integration into the political and social system. Although these things may not have necessarily been the Crown’s primary objectives in the region, Anglo-Americans later to arrive viewed those social and environmental situations in a very negative and derogatory light, with consequences to their interactions with Mexicans and to American policy towards Mexico. Missions and *presidios* were not an inevitable pair of institutions given the environmental circumstances; the Americans who would arrive later applied a very different frontier policy to the same region with very different results.

The heavy governmental and military presence in the Spanish New World which discouraged movement reigned in Kino’s *Pimeria Alta*, as settlers and natives were compelled to live within the walls of or just outside the *presidios*. There, under close supervision by priests and officers, they would cater to the soldiers’ needs and dedicate nearly all of their efforts at raising livestock and crops for the sake of the mother country. But there were other furnishings that a settlement needed besides soldiers and crops. Supplies like clothing, kitchenware and household items, church ornaments, and other sundries needed to be delivered from the port of Vera Cruz in Mexico. The long journey

north to the frontier could only be accomplished via a rough patchwork of roads, making deliveries lengthy and arduous. Items often accrued additional taxes along the way, making them pricey upon arrival.⁵⁹ On the frontier, assumptions about how to deal with the local environment combined with the Spanish social system to create communities that struggled far more than they should have.

At the core in Mexico City, there was commerce and bureaucracy, which enabled for education and employment, as well as social activities, medical services, and cultural life.⁶⁰ There were factories and production of products, and skilled people to produce them. The high population, easier access to resources, and productive governmental involvement helped facilitate the relative prosperity of the city. Silvia Marina Arrom discusses these things with regard to gender issues in her book *The Women of Mexico City*. She explains that the Count of Compomanes, advisor to Charles III, argued that poor women should engage in industry to strengthen the economy in Spain. This led to the 1775 Discourse on the Popular Education of Artisans, which decreed that women professionally take up “sedentary trades” in order to free up men for arduous tasks like mining and agriculture. This would also help the economy by enabling for more familial purchasing power.⁶¹ In 1799 the decree was extended to Spain’s New World possessions.

Arrom argues that these measures had unintended progressive consequences for women’s status in colonial New Spain. The new roles for women and their increased influence on society led to more respect for them. They also became more actively involved in politics and society, lobbying, taking up roles in public affairs and the Mexican Revolution itself, and working for social reforms. As Arrom puts it, “Mexican

women organized at the behest of a financially strapped government that did not originally set out to recruit them.”⁶² Nonetheless, an opportunity for agency appeared and they seized it. These results were consequences of the conditions of the core that enabled for them. On the frontier, there was no such social sophistication to allow for women’s advancement. There, due to lagging economics and less governmental initiative, gender roles were more traditional and opportunities were slim.

In the Spanish years of *Presidio San Augustin del Tucson* 1775-1821, there was little to no local industry. As Dobyns has pointed out, the alliance between the church and military nobility paralyzed any development of a middle class during imperial times.⁶³ At the *Presidio Tucson*, the Spanish population consisted almost completely of clergy and soldiers. The people who tended the crops and animals were either natives allied with the Spanish, particularly Opatas and Pimas, or the soldiers’ families. *Presidio* commanders’ powers included the ability to make land grants within the jurisdiction of the fort available to Spanish civilians who might want to take them, a practice intended to foster Spanish settlement.⁶⁴ However there was little incentive for anyone from farther south in Mexico to go up there and settle if they were not warriors. The Spanish fixation on precious metals and simple subsistence farming overseen by pushy priests, and war ready soldiers who were deemed the sole beneficiaries of imperial efforts there effectively incapacitated Tucson, and Northern New Spain in general, limiting its ability to become self sufficient and a permanent site of civilization in the new environment.

The lack of industry did not go unnoticed at the time. The *Real Consulado* was a questionnaire sent out by the Crown intended to evaluate the financial situations of New

Spanish settlements. In 1804, *presidio* captain Jose de Zuñiga reported on behalf of Tucson. The officer first noted that the only major roads in the area connected the *presidio* with the nearby *San Xavier del Bac* mission. Other than that there were only some light trails for driving cattle.⁶⁵ There were no bridges or inns in the area either. These descriptions highlight the lack of movement and isolated character of the Spanish frontier. Zuñiga also explained that in the area there was no gold, silver, iron, tin, lead, copper, nor marble. Instead, the populace engaged in animal slaughtering and soap making. If the expansion and maintenance of the frontier was rooted in mining but there was none to be found in the area, how could the community prosper? The Spanish frontier constantly undermined itself with a precious metals fixation and thus did not tap other aspects of the environment and was not more adaptable to varying locations and conditions. At the end of the report, Zuñiga offered his analysis. "Tucson desperately needs a leather tanner & dresser, a tailor, and a shoemaker...These shops would not only offer the soldiers and settlers custom made articles, but would also serve as schools for apprentices of these same trades."⁶⁶ Zuñiga recognized that Tucson was not prospering and needed other activity. He understood that if it could not extract minerals, and was barely making ends meet as it was on subsistence farming, it needed to produce something or somehow be more effectively integrated into trading networks. Instead, the Spanish Crown viewed *presidios* like Tucson as military installations to control potentially peaceful natives and fight hostile ones while serving as a protective buffer to the more developed interior, rather than points out of which they could develop communities and civilization.

What are the characteristics of a developed community or civilization? These things are subjective; progress is not linear and there are plenty of ways for a place to be successful, especially depending on their objectives. Southwestern historian Thomas Sheridan lends much credit to the northbound migrants in his book *Los Tucsonenses*, in saying that “Unlike the Anglos who would follow them eight decades later, these troopers and their families [from *Presidio Tubac*] understood exactly what life was going to be like when they rode into the Tucson Basin in 1776....Sonorans colonized the Sonoran Desert as desert dwellers themselves.”⁶⁷ They knew the kind of lifestyle awaiting them and what the Crown’s objectives in the region were; at maintaining a Spanish presence in these distant lands and offering warfare to the Apache, the frontier settlers were undoubtedly successful. Rather, the Americans who arrived later had different standards for community life and different ideas as to what kinds of town appearances and resident occupations constitute a prospering locale. They measured the Spanish descendants by their own standards. Michael Logan made a similar statement in his book: “Anglos failed to recognize that locals had long since come to understand that producing large surpluses would only encourage the Apache to come and take it; they maintained an appearance of poverty.”⁶⁸ While it might be a bit of a leap to suggest that the Spaniards and Mexicans intentionally let themselves languish for fear of the Apaches, certainly the Americans failed to recognize that the South westerners had different cultural values and standards.

CHAPTER 3: THE ANGLO-AMERICAN INTELLECTUAL FRAMEWORK

On the other side of the American continent, the environment that was the destination of English migrants differed significantly. These travelers also brought with them very different customs, cultural heritages, and social objectives; accordingly the Anglo society that developed there turned out quite different from that of the Spanish. In the early stages of colonization, recent arrivals clung to their British heritage in the new and bewildering locale; the ideas they applied to the land and their communities immediately set them on a divergent course of civilization from the direction in which the Spanish hoped to go. Over time the tangent widened exponentially, as the English colonists became Americans. Their Anglo past remained in certain forms, while combining with new ideas drawn from their specific experiences and contributing to alternative ideas as to their place in the New World. This set of identities and their perceived and actual relationships to the environment were crucial to the manners in which the young United States developed, expanded, and interacted with other peoples on the continent.

Even though new arrivals from Britain carried Crown charters and often built small fortified sites, there was never a heavy-handed military presence in what would become the thirteen American colonies. One might attribute this to the lack of gold and other precious metals in the area. Rather, William C. Davis has explained, the colonists started farms from the very beginning and developed an attachment to the ethos of working ones land.⁶⁹ Davis attributed the overflow of a middle class population explosion back in England as one of the causes of the British emigration to the New World. This immediately set the prospective communities on a different course from that which the

Spanish pursued, as women and children were among the English who first landed on the coasts of New England; certain manners of engaging the environment, such as agriculture, are more suitable for communities built around families than are activities like mining. Furthermore, English colonists did not encounter the same kinds of massive, urbanized native civilizations as did the Spanish; but smaller agricultural communities. This also may have impacted the ways in which the colonists understood their relationship to the land and to the natives themselves.

The topography that the British migrants encountered in the American northeast was radically different from those which the Spanish settlers inhabited in Central and South America. Although for some time the English colonists were confined to the coast, and even after American independence the Appalachian Mountains posed a significant barrier to expansion, the land was mostly composed of more navigable deciduous forests that provided readily accessible sustenance for communities. Temperate climates and fewer geographic impediments, as opposed to the extremely arid deserts and impassably dense jungles with which the Spanish dealt, allowed for more human mobility; the path into the West and down to the Mojave-Sonoran Desert would be a much more freely flowing one when Americans eventually set out there.

People's manners of seeing the land and their beliefs as to how it affected the individual and society were the product of particular social and religious mindsets. Anders Stephanson's insightful analysis *Manifest Destiny* begins with these assertions that Western European migrants viewed the New World colonies as separate from the corrupt world that was Europe. However, Stephanson elaborates on this notion with an

opinion that this perspective tied into the religious setting of the time. English Protestants figured themselves to be on an Exodus; a mission to find a new paradise and create civilization anew.⁷⁰ In the wake of the revelations of the Protestant Reformation, and the seemingly non-coincidental discovery of the New World at nearly the same time, people such as the Puritans felt that the new lands equated to new opportunities for civilization by separating from the old ways of the Old World. Stephanson maintains that while the Spanish and Portuguese viewed colonization as a sacred enterprise, in terms of spreading the light of Christianity to newly discovered peoples, “English Puritans viewed the land itself as sacred, or ‘sacred to be’; the march through the wilderness to the destination is itself prophetic and revelatory.”⁷¹ The first point to draw from this statement is the state-centered versus individual/community driven means of expansion and settlement. The missions exemplified the sacred enterprise of Spanish colonization, a government sponsored and militarily backed endeavor, involving clergy and soldiers. The English method involved persons and groups out on their own seeking answers for themselves. Along with them might be some soldiers, but Stephanson is likely thinking about the middle classes. More importantly, these differing religious and social mindsets affected how the settlers viewed the land and how they felt it influenced them. While both Spaniards and Anglos placed a lot of importance on settled agriculture as being a civilized activity, the Puritans and others of northeastern North America were distinct in their additionally feeling that this work was transcendental. Therefore, Anglos felt that there were tangible individual and social rewards and consequences for engaging with agriculture.

Early America as a land of opportunity is in part a myth. In his highly influential *A People's History of the United States*, Howard Zinn reveals that many early immigrants to the colonies were "...part of a large underclass of miserably poor whites who came to the North American colonies from European cities whose governments were anxious to be rid of them."⁷² Commercial and capital motivations in the Old World led to enclosure movements and served to deteriorate the lives of people there; one can conclude that in large early migration to North America was motivated more by "push" than "pull" factors. Furthermore, once they arrived, conditions did not automatically improve. Zinn provides horrifying details as to the nature of indentured servitude, likening it to slavery with its physical abuse, excessive toil, dehumanization, and even the selling and purchasing of workers at auction.⁷³ Life expectancy for indentured servants was short, and often upon release from their duties they did not find prosperity, retaining a tenant status. Ultimately, early North America to a certain degree was not so different from the Spanish colonies, with regard to substantial class divisions and uneven distribution of wealth. Zinn insightfully concludes that "The colonies, it seems, were societies of contending classes- a fact obscured by the emphasis...on the external struggle against England, the unity of colonists in the Revolution."⁷⁴

The real and perceived motivations for European migration to North America were largely reconciled by the clever and brilliant rhetoric of the founding fathers in their revolutionary rhetoric. In a 1772 speech, a doctor and active patriot named Joseph Warren addressed the "push" factors and recast them in a pro-revolutionary tone. He explained that

...the first settlers of this country, they saw with grief the daring outrages committed on the free Constitution of their native land...chose rather to quit their fair possessions and seek another habitation in a distant clime. When they came to this new world...they cultivated the then barren soil by their incessant labor, and defended their dear-bought possession with the fortitude of the Christian and the bravery of the hero.⁷⁵

He ascribes agency to the early migrants, overlooking the fact that sometimes they were actively expelled. His words cast Europe as a decaying society and the colonies as a place where the people could exercise their virtues. Furthermore, here is one of many examples of associating working the land with honor, morality, and American values. Class struggles are overlooked, as Warren homogenizes colonists into a single group. Finally, as was so common, the labor and place of natives in the land has been written out and the colonists have ascribed full credit to themselves for taming the wilderness.

Additional founding fathers applied these notions to further enhance their national individuality and justify splitting off from England. Benjamin Franklin wrote in an article that “Those remote [North American] provinces have perhaps been acquired, purchased, or conquered, at the *sole expense* of the settlers, or their ancestors, without the aid of the mother country”⁷⁶ (emphasis original). Franklin also credits a massive amount of agency to the colonists, suggesting that every aspect of society on the Eastern seaboard was constructed by the them alone, disassociating England from any role in their development, thereby reducing their perceived necessity in the administration and overall existence of the colonies. While this was intended for the specific political objective of justifying the impending revolution, it nonetheless contributed to a discourse involving

American identity and self perception. Furthermore, it is worth noting a disparity from the perceived and actual role of the Spanish government in the mothering of its colonies.

Mining versus farming has come up on several occasions. Alexander Hamilton wrote in “The Continentalist” that “...where nature has so richly impregnated the bowels of the earth...they require the care and attention of government to bring them to a perfection...All the precious metals should absolutely be the property of the Federal Government...”⁷⁷ There seems to be transnational agreement that mining of precious metals is not an individual enterprise and require heavy governmental involvement; Hamilton may have been supportive of Spain’s style of administration, given their objectives. Nonetheless, this was not something with which the early United States needed to concern itself as there were no precious metals to be found within the territory of that time. Because the farming communities of the North American Atlantic coast required much less governmental oversight by the mother country than the highly securitized precious metal mines of the Spanish New World, Anglo settlers began to develop a very do-it-yourself attitude coupled with a sense of independence as they crafted a new national identity.

Revolutionary rhetoric resonated after the war with regard to the compatibility of the American environment with the American people. In “The Federalist No. II”, John Jay observed how the lands of the continent were bountiful, contained good quality soil, and were navigable by way of numerous rivers. He continued by suggesting that the American people were particularly suited to this environment, when he said that

Providence has been pleased to give this one connected country to one united people; a people descended from the same ancestors, speaking the same language,

professing the same religion, attached to the same principles of government, very similar in their manners and customs, and who...have nobly established general liberty and Independence⁷⁸

At the forefront of this statement is the fact that the newly designated United States citizens do in fact belong in this land; the revolution was an advisable course of action. Just the same as Warren, Jay identified Americans as a single ethnic group. Over the following century, being considered American would come to require specific criteria in the eyes of the government and certain American people. Within the immediate context of “The Federalist”, the purpose of such statements was in justification of the colonies’ splitting from England and in support of the manufacture of a new identity.

A promotional brochure from the 1760’s encouraging Scots to migrate to South Carolina explained that as landowners in Scotland made life intolerable for Highlander folk, they ought to seek refuge in a “happier land, on hospitable shore, where freedom reigns,” and where they could reap the produce of their own labor and industry.⁷⁹ By way of the environment and people’s choices as to how to use it, America was already being cast as a land of opportunity for oneself in society, where people could come and seek what was rightfully due to them. These efforts ties back to the difference in natural resources; Spain did not encourage individual migration because they intended to oversee the mining process and apply the rewards of exploiting the environment to the Crown, not to the people. Hence Spanish New World settlers never associated the land in their Northern Frontier with opportunity. Even though American colonists certainly exchanged goods with England, made infamous in the form of the Triangle Trade, much of the work that one did in this sector of the New World was for one’s own benefit. The writer Hector

St. John de Crevecoeur echoed this sentiment and anticipated Turner's conclusions when he wrote in 1782 "[migrants], urged by a variety of motives, here they came. They withered in Europe, but transplanted in the US and flourished. The lands confer on them the title of freemen".⁸⁰

Perhaps one of the reasons why the colonists felt that they derived freedom from working their land was because they had to work it; unlike the Spanish, they did not utilize native labor. Rather, as Philip Deloria stated in *Playing Indian*, "American social and political policy towards Natives was a 200 year back and forth between assimilation and destruction".⁸¹ For the most part, English colonists did not seek to build a society that included both whites and Indians the way the Spanish envisioned the Two Republic system. There seems to have been much more of a discrepancy between the way colonists viewed themselves as civilized and natives as savage "others". Perhaps this was partly because the natives they encountered consisted of smaller, more tribal groups rather than urbanized empires. Early interactions between Anglos and Indians were tense and often involved small wars, and once the late colonists and Early Republic became strong enough, they proceeded to appropriate land for themselves and push Indians out. This began happening early, as Zinn explains that colonial officials monopolized "...the good land on the eastern seaboard, [forcing] landless whites to move westward to the frontier, there to encounter the Indians and to be a buffer for the seaboard rich against Indian troubles..."⁸² Herein lies another dynamic of American expansion, by way of class conflict and Indians being caught in the middle and specifically targeted.

As the United States strengthened, its stance towards the Indians increasingly leaned in the direction of exclusion. Half hearted attempts were made at assimilating them, most famously the Cherokee. However, ultimately they waged all out war with the intention of destroying the Indians or herding them into reservations, notably by Andrew Jackson as well as the post-Civil War Plains Wars. As Zinn put it, “The Indians would not be ‘forced’ to go West, but if they chose to stay they would have to abide by state laws, which destroyed their tribal and personal rights and made them subjects to endless harassment and invasion by white settlers coveting their land”.⁸³ This system sounds somewhat like the Spanish missions, but certainly a less genuine attempt to make them a part of society. Some people, such as Thomas Jefferson, did truly want to make them a part of the United States in some form or another, but the general consensus was not so tolerant.

Native American influence on United States history cannot be underplayed, especially with regard to conscious and unconscious development of American identity. The main argument of Deloria’s book is that the members of the Boston Tea Party dressed up as Mohawks not to hide their identities, but appropriated a complex intellectual system of contrasting identities so as to justify to themselves their actions and disassociate themselves from the English. Their perceptions of the wildness of Indians allowed for them in their minds to resist social and political orders and the hierarchies of the state.⁸⁴ Hence early Americans found certain desirable qualities in their native neighbors, and particularly in the revolutionary context, ones that were useful to them in asserting their own identities. As Deloria explained, there were multiple ways of viewing

the natives, depending on the observer's motivations and the context; savage Indians define the boundaries of civilization, while noble Indians allow for a critique of European social decadence.⁸⁵ The unique social context of the American Revolution and the quest for a new identity, while retaining elements of the prior one, does not correlate to the situation in the Spanish New World Empire; this could have played a role in the different ways that Anglos and Spaniards viewed natives. Furthermore, the subsequent modes of operation of the Early Republic were relatively different from Spanish dominion; Americans liked to think of themselves as on the move and virtuous; as James Oliver Robertson articulated in *American Myth, American Reality*, "For the whites, the nomadic life of many of the Indian peoples was the primary characteristic of the savage independence of all Indians- just as mobility was the primary characteristic of the American."⁸⁶ While the Spaniards viewed the mobility and transhumance of some native groups as undesirable, the Anglo-Americans seem to have viewed certain aspects of the environment and groups' relationships to it differently and consequently declared that there was respectability to be found in this attitude towards the land. Thus there were certain traits about the Indians which Anglos found admirable and in certain ways sought to emulate.

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In the years of the expanding Early Republic, myth was just as central to American perceptions of the western environment as it was to the Spanish in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The Lewis & Clark Expedition of 1804-1806 was an American case of top down effort to establish a presence in distant lands. The Corps of

Discovery, as it was often called at the time, was a military expedition complete with enlisted armed soldiers who intended to document the geography and make contact with Native American tribes along the way. Just as Father Kino alluded to the Strait of Anian, the primary objective of the Lewis & Clark Expedition was to find the fabled Northwest Passage, the very same all water route. Americans presumed it to be connected to the Missouri River, leading across the continent to the Pacific Ocean. This would be the lifeblood of Thomas Jefferson's empire of commerce, offering the United States a geographic advantage over Europeans in trade with Asia. Furs trapped in the West, for example, could be shipped directly to Asia arriving more quickly, in better condition, and at cheaper prices than British furs from the same region which were shipped around Cape Horn at the southern tip of South America back to London to be stamped for tax, and then shipped around the Cape of Good Hope at the southern tip of Africa onward to Asia. Furthermore, as Stephen Ambrose details, Jefferson hoped to find that that the northern tributaries of the Missouri River extended deep into Western Canada, an area rich in fur, thereby making that bountiful region US property.⁸⁷ In these cases the United States used what they assumed the geography to be, which was basically based on myth, while making plans to legitimize territorial claims and further commercial interests.

Ambrose used the phrase "imaginary geography" to describe the assumptions and misinterpretations that Jefferson and Lewis made about the land before them. A British fur trader named Alexander Mackenzie wrote in his 1801 travel memoir *Voyages from Montreal* that "the way to the Pacific lay open and easy."⁸⁸ The president and his secretary took great liberties with this statement, consequently assuming that the Rocky

Mountains were similar in height and width to the Appalachians, and hence not too difficult to pass through. Similarly, Jefferson reckoned that the way to the source of the Missouri River was the same thing as the shortest route across the continent.⁸⁹ The environmental factors allowed the route from the Atlantic coast westward to be more conducive to migration than the route from South America northward. However, high ranking Americans, just like high ranking Spaniards, put too much faith in assumptions and planned too far ahead, misunderstanding the true character of the lands until they laid eyes upon them.

Both Kino and Jefferson turned to Enlightenment rhetoric to console themselves when facing geographic reality. The priest wrote that by way of his and others' explorations, "...will be removed the great errors and falsehoods imposed on us by those who have delineated this North America with feigned things...we shall be able to make true drawings and cosmographic maps of all these new lands and nations..."⁹⁰ He hoped to correct errors and imagined geographies, even when those were some of the main factors which led him out there in the first place. He ultimately concluded that it was wisest to deal with what was scientifically accurate and not chase ghosts. Similarly, Ambrose quotes the British explorer Captain George Vancouver who said that "The ardor of the present age is to discover and delineate the true geography of the Earth".⁹¹ The historian continues with an assertion that Jefferson would have agreed with this sentiment, and accepted the non-existence of the Northwest Passage because that was the reality. Both of these intelligent men applied such justifying logic and stoicism only after succumbing to fanciful mythologies in the first place.

Aside from naive optimism and misread sources, there is another reason why Jefferson may have succumbed to these imaginary geographies. His thought process reflected that of the era by optimistically envisioning the West as a healthy flowing system, which could be utilized for commercial purposes, and did not dwell much on the potential for blockages. In her groundbreaking book *The Health of the Country*, Conevery Bolton Valencius argued that “Descriptions of ‘the health of the country’ come from the common sense of another time...[when the] functioning of the human body was believed to be linked to the surrounding world.”⁹² Valencius draws from a plethora of personal letters between migrants and their relatives back home to weave together an argument that people believed that they were affected by a complicated series of relationships between the human body and aspects of the environment. The dominant Western European rhetoric in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries on the internal functioning of the body, which informed both English and Spanish thought, conceptualized it as a conglomeration of flowing forces. Hippocrates’ four humors had to stay in balance in order for a person to be healthy. As people incorporated the four elements, (earth, wind, fire, and air) and the four fundamental attributes (hot, cold, wet, dry), Valencius explains, “...a theory of health based on maintaining the balance of a small number of bodily essences by regulating certain basic human functions proved both useful and reassuring to a people grappling with bewildering change.”⁹³ This concept helped settlers regulate their habits in a new environment; as the seasons were understood to be pervasive forces, for example, springtime could increase the flow of juices in one’s body.⁹⁴ For this reason,

if a person needed to be bled, the doctor would do so with greater liberality than in the winter in order to put the forces back in balance.

Forces and flows manifested themselves in peoples' understandings of waterways too; being "low" with illness or "raised" to good health correlates to the flow and tides of rivers.⁹⁵ More importantly, a river that flowed would be viewed as healthful, as would the properly flowing forces inside the body. Too much flow was as bad as overactive flow in the body, though, as in this case it could lead to floods and destruction of crops and buildings. On the other hand, settlers said that a blockage in a river is as bad as one in the body. Dr. Benjamin Rush's favorite prescription, eponymously named Rush Pills, were basically a powerful laxative employed in hopes that purges could unclog a blockage, assuming that was in fact the cause of the ailment, and resume a flow. As Thomas Jefferson saw a well circulating Missouri River, he had no reason to doubt that it continued on as such and the country that lay beyond the horizon was healthy.

Water could affect human health, as it was understood based on 19th century medical practices. People were always on the lookout for "good running water," as it was fresh, potable, and purified the blood.⁹⁶ Although the logic still holds that it is smart to drink fresh water, the assumption that it would help maintain a good flow of pervasive forces within the body has been debunked. Father Nentvig thought that the water in Sonora was unhealthy because it came from swampy and shaded areas. Miasmas were felt to originate in swamps, where water was stagnant, warm, and grimy. It is certainly not wise to drink from such a pool, but to assume that an entire river system was unhealthy because it passed through shade was a product of the times.

Western Europeans conceptualized open and bright places as healthful, while dark and claustrophobic places were dangerous to one's health. This attitude correlates to Nentvig's descriptions of the Oposura Valley and how its openness allowed residents to breathe better. Valencius describes complicated factors to weigh with regard to air; cool air was good and invigorating but not too cold otherwise it would stagnate the blood. Similarly, air that was too hot or lacking in breezes and motion could be poisonous. Valencius clarifies that airs were thought to be *of* a region, and carry its essence with them.⁹⁷ A healthful area had particular airs, and a person living there would become healthful as a result. Nentvig seemed to think that the Oposura Valley had a healthful character to it, and that prospective settlers would physically prosper. Similarly, an American merchant named Josiah Gregg set out in 1831 on the Santa Fe Trail because he had been ill and his doctors advised him "...to take a trip across the prairies, and, in change of air and habits which such an adventure would involve, to seek the health which their science had failed to bestow."⁹⁸ Gregg was optimistic, explaining that "The prairies have, in fact, become very celebrated for their sanitive effects...Most chronic diseases...are often radically cured; owing, no doubt, to the peculiarities of diet, and the regular exercise incident to the prairie life, as well as the purity of the atmosphere of those elevated unembarrassed regions."⁹⁹ Gregg's testimony demonstrates the belief that a change of pace and exposure to different airs could be curative.

One of the most famous personal narrative writers of the time, Richard Henry Dana Jr, wrote in *Two Years Before the Mast* that he decided on "...a two or three years' voyage, which I had undertaken from a determination to cure, if possible, by an entire

change of life, and by a long absence from books, with a plenty of hard work, plain food, and open air, a weakness of the eyes, which had obliged me to give up my studies, and which no medical aid seemed likely to remedy.”¹⁰⁰ Similar to Gregg, Dana explains that a change of pace is good for the body. Gregg, though, specifically attributes the curative effects of the prairies and a specific environment. Dana, while enumerating the exact same changes, i.e. food, activity, and open air as beneficial, does not downright say that it can be found in a particular environment. Rather, he will experience them throughout his voyage. In this sense, one can conclude that Dana is under the impression that act of traveling itself can be curative. John Russell Bartlett, the head of the Boundary Commission sent to survey the new border following the Mexican American War, voiced a similar opinion. He noted in his records that “It was invariably the case that we all enjoyed better health when...on our march than when shut up in quarters...An active, moving life in the open air always brings with it a good appetite and sound sleep, and is the surest antidote to, or rather preventive of, disease.”¹⁰¹ If this is the case, it does not seem to appear anywhere in respective Spanish sentiments.

Western Europeans also thought of themselves, like airs and other factors, as being *of* a particular area, and so westbound migrants often felt that they were endangering themselves by intruding into a region in which they did not belong. Despite Dana’s assertions, many migrants felt that the body must go through a series of “acclimation” stages in order to become seasoned to the new environment.¹⁰² In actuality, this “acclimation” was usually a bout with malaria, but settlers did not realize this as mosquito vectors had yet to be discovered. Consequently Anglos often migrated in stages,

stopping somewhere for a year or so in order to adjust before moving on. Father Kino optimistically described *La Pimeria* as being “...of a climate so good that it is very similar to the best of Europe, to that of Castilla, to that of Andalucia...because most of the North America is in the same degrees of...latitude as Europe itself...”¹⁰³ Kino was scientifically correct in declaring that environments at the same latitude will be similar at different points around the Earth. More importantly, this statement suggests that he felt Spanish migrants would do well living in the area because they would belong there; they are already *of* a similar environment and hence could easily transplant themselves. Valencius gives examples of American migration patterns being determined by a sense of belonging when she quotes one Dr. Daniel Drake. The physician recommended to people bound for Ohio that the ones from New England and New York should arrive in the fall, people from rural areas should seek higher elevations, and town folk should go to the eastern and northern parts.¹⁰⁴ These are all manifestations of contemporary people associating themselves with environmental criteria and selecting what they believe to be a compatible route and destination. Perhaps because North American colonists of either Spanish or English heritage are both descendants of the same ancient Greco-Roman cultural traditions including Hippocratic standards of medical practice which pervaded the classical world, they shared these understandings of the environment and its relationship to the body.

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The missionary aspect that defined the Spanish system was absent in the Lewis & Clark Expedition, however Thomas Jefferson did hope that Indians could be civilized and

brought into the American body politic. He assumed, Stephen Ambrose suggests, that the savage behavior of Indians was a consequence of the environment in which they lived.¹⁰⁵ Even though racial discourse would dictate that Americans viewed natives as lesser peoples, Jefferson nonetheless intended to make them citizens, not lower class laborers as in the Spanish system. Valencius has suggested that "...efforts in the 19th century to knit together environmental observations of specific areas into an overarching whole were inextricably linked with the project of making American the lands they chronicled."¹⁰⁶ Perhaps, then, the president thought that once the US had a more solid presence out West and had tamed nature to American standards, the natives' character would change to match the environment and they would more easily assimilate into American influence. Gregg seems to have shared this sentiment when he said that he "...looks forward...to the day when the Indian title to the land shall be extinguished, and flourishing white settlements dispel the gloom which at present prevails over this uninhabited region."¹⁰⁷ Similar to people's thoughts regarding reasons to go to war with Mexico, the fact that people clearly lived there was not so important as the fact that they were not making proper use of the land; it was not technically 'inhabited' unless white people with their familiar lifestyles came and made it a civilized place. Aside from the Protestant rhetoric that Stephanson has described, Gregg's statement also touches on Valencius' argument wherein he associates gloom with the uncivilized natives and the 'light' of civilization, conceptualized as healthy, with white settlers.

Gregg not only had negative opinions of natives, but of the Spanish as well. He articulated his support for the Black Legend, criticizing how the missionaries preached

“...the gospel at the point of a bayonet, and administered baptism by force of arms, compelling them to acknowledge the ‘apostolic Roman Catholic faith’, of which they had not the slightest idea”.¹⁰⁸ He goes on to showcase his knowledge and literary analysis, asserting that

Cervantes, who wrote his *Don Quixote* about this time, no doubt intended to make a hint at this cruel spirit of religious bigotry, by making his hero command his captives to acknowledge the superiority of his Dulcinea’s beauty over that of all others; and when they protest that they have never seen her, he declares, that “the importance consists in this- that without seeing her, you have it to believe, confess, affirm, swear and defend.”

These statements are singularly similar to those of Bartolome de las Casas with regard to how unreasonable the logic and operations of the missions. Gregg, however, fails to make any comments on the official American stances towards the natives and their own often violent and unjust treatment of them.

The perceived relationship between race, way of life, and environment fluctuated temperamentally. The journalist David Dary cited in his book *The Oregon Trail* the diaries of Harriett Sherrill Ward, a California bound emigrant from Wisconsin. She wrote that “Nebraska is a miserable, unpleasant place indeed, and can never be inhabited except by Red Men.” When the weather cleared a few days later, Dary fills in, she wrote that “the soil is fine and it will be inhabited by a civilized race of beings in time.”¹⁰⁹ Ward suggests that presumably poor land and climate is suitable for lower races like natives, but white people could not survive there. This is different from Gregg and others’ suggestions that the arrival of whites would change the health of the land. Then, in her second statement, one can extrapolate her belief that lower races such as natives can and do live in healthful environments. This is more in line with Gregg, as her assertion that

the civilized race of whites would make productive use of the land upon arrival and settlement.

Just as Kino hoped his new conversions would contribute to the Spanish Crown's ability to foster widespread trade, Jefferson had similar plans with regard to making use of Native Americans as vehicles for commerce. In 1808 William Clark co-founded with a Spaniard named Manuel Lisa the Missouri Fur Company. Dary elucidated that they found it easier to trap and skin beaver themselves than to trade with Indians, who moved around and were not full time trappers.¹¹⁰ In so doing, this endeavor contributed to the rise of the "mountain man" an iconic figure of the American West as an independent, resourceful, adventurous spirit that inspired a wide array of rhetoric and perceived values with regard to life on the frontier and man's relationship to the natural world.

One of Meriwether Lewis' objectives in his Expedition was to persuade Indians to accept American traders and agree on sites for trading posts.¹¹¹ In this way, he hoped, the United States could seize domination of the fur trade from the British. Resembling how Kino felt pressured to venture into California to secure claim to its bounty before the British or Russians could, so too Jefferson was compelled to move into control of vast tracts of land so that the US and not European competitors would plant the flag over potential natural resources. Then, in 1811, John Jacob Astor established a trading post for his Pacific Fur Co. at the mouth of the Columbia River, making official the US claim to the area.¹¹²

Despite the collapse of the international fur trade in 1839, Americans found ways to move into and justify their place in new lands such as the Oregon Territory. Dary

relates how one Dr. Elijah White was secretly given funds to promote “Oregon fever” by sending back East news that Americans could successfully farm in the Oregon Country.¹¹³ This is a fascinating point for several reasons. First, it is evident that the government was involved in American Westward migration, and it did not all happen by individual initiative. It is clear, though, that this was still the image they attempted to promote at the time. Similar work would be done by other people for similar purposes, a notable example being John Sutter in California, whose mill would be the site of the initial discovery of gold on the West coast. The second point of interest is that Dr. White specifically discussed American’s ability to farm in order to draw them to Oregon; he appealed to the ingrained Protestant ethic of working the land. This also may have been a calculated measure to entice families out West, instead of single men. Perhaps this was the case because of the third point of interest, which is that the US government was afraid that if more American settlers did not arrive there, the British and Canadians would be the majority and the lands would belong to them.¹¹⁴ This exemplifies the contemporary American understanding of the rules of, and justification for, territorial expansion.

The United States conveniently leaned on the inexorable flow of civilians as a justification for expansion of governmental reach. Supporters of Manifest Destiny, historian John S.D. Eisenhower has argued, “...had assumed that the flood of Americans into California would, as in Texas, draw that section inevitably into the Union.”¹¹⁵ This follows the logic that American people who choose to establish themselves on their own accord, occasionally outside their legal rights, would eventually make the environment American and hence it ought to be a part of the United States and administered by the US

government. In his 1845 inaugural address, President James K. Polk stated that “Our title to the country of Oregon is clear and unquestionable and already are our people preparing to perfect that title by occupying it with their wives and children.”¹¹⁶ He finished up his speech with continued justification that since Americans were already out there, the government was obliged to extend so as to govern them.

What Polk obviously did not point out was the fact that Americans were out there in the first place, and even developing a sense that it was their land to go to even before that, was manufactured. A good example of this is an excerpt from a letter sent from the Oregon Trail by Matthew C. Field, assistant editor of the New Orleans Picayune. He wrote that “They [the pioneers] had with them their wives and children... They were going...to traverse a wild and desolate region, and take possession of a far corner of *their country*, destined to prove a new and strong arm of a mighty nation”¹¹⁷ (emphasis added). Field included the family aspect of Americans heading West, but more importantly already labeled the Northwest as belonging to Americans, though at that time nobody had an official claim to it. This was certainly an early rendition of Manifest Destiny. Spaniards, on the other hand, never felt entitled to unclaimed lands; after they roughly delineated their territory in consequence of their explorers passing through, they just pushed as far into those areas as they were able.

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There is a dichotomy between the Spanish tendency to find a place in the landscape, establish it as the center and expand outward from there as opposed to the common process among Americans to envision the landscape abstractly before ever

getting there.¹¹⁸ Because subsistence agriculture was a main element of the Spanish frontier economy, they would look closely at the local environment when selecting a site for a mission or *presidio*. On the other hand, the process of speculation formed one of the primary means by which Americans headed west. The Land Ordinance of 1785 involved mapping basically unknown territory into rectangular segments; it was pre-divided for prospective immigrant arrivals. The Homestead Act in 1862 would operate on a similar basis. Additionally, both programs were particularly amenable to families heading West together. In doing so, Americans paid little attention to the geographic realities such as what each section could yield based on its environmental characteristics. In contrast to the seemingly immobile nature of a *presidio* itself and the people therein, this process encouraged changes in land ownership, exemplifying the social and physical mobility in the American frontier; unsuccessful land patches and even whole towns could be discarded.¹¹⁹ The flexibility and adaptability therein may have made the expansion of the American frontier more efficient and successful as it could constantly shift and accommodate so as to make use of whichever environmental regions and consumer markers were most productive at a particular time.

Choices of agricultural crops also played a role in differing patterns of dividing up land. Tobacco, one of the most common agricultural crops on the eastern seaboard, sapped nutrients from the soil very quickly. In addition, the planters made poor use of their land, letting their animals graze about unrestrained, did not fertilize, and barely rotated their crops.¹²⁰ Consequently the Tidewater planters constantly sought to acquire new land, often bought on credit, resulting in a common practice of speculation. Ambrose

quotes Thomas Jefferson's assertion that "It [results] from our having such quantities of land to waste as we please. In Europe the object is to make the most of their land, labor being abundant; here it is to make the most of our labor, land being abundant."¹²¹

Ambrose contrasts this seemingly Anglo-American tradition with the practices of German immigrants, who did not receive large grants from the English Crown and focused on small plots of land over the course of generations. Clearly, then, even within the United States different cultures had different traditions which affected how they engaged nature's bounty. Ultimately, Spanish subsistence agriculture put faith in staying put and eking out a living while the market driven attitude towards American agriculture like tobacco dictated moving whithersoever profit may lie.

What seems truly to separate the process of Spanish expansion from that of the United States is that in the case of the latter, people came first and then the government followed. This was at least the rhetoric that they appropriated at the time. David Duncan has argued that "The nation didn't send settlers out; they [the settlers] brought the US with them."¹²² This dynamic speaks to the perceived individual nature of American expansion, who sought to make the lands they found their own. Valencius' suggested that pioneers Americanized new lands with explanations of their health effects. That is, pioneers desired to make foreign and confusing landscapes familiar to them and their lifestyle understandings. This would enable them, they felt, to effectively operate an American society there. David Weber quotes a Mexican historian Carlos J Sierra who wrote in the 20th century that "the guides or pioneers of the so-called American West were spies in our territory and dealers in furs and arms-many of them were constant

instigators of attacks on Mexican towns and villages.”¹²³ Sierra seems to feel that Americans were involved in subversive activity and as an entirety set themselves at odds with Mexicans. This is unfair; although Americans were involved in weapons dealing with natives, they did not necessarily represent the US government and its imperialist interests but were pursuing their own agendas. Nonetheless, Sierra’s reasoning may be reflective of the conflicted feelings that Mexicans of the time had towards the ever encroaching Americans.

CHAPTER 4: SOUTHWESTERN BOUND ANGLO-AMERICAN IMPERIALISM

Americans brought their environmentally inspired ideas, identities, and understandings into new lands, and passed judgements on others based on those standards. They failed to recognize that the Mexicans whom they encountered and the Spaniards before them had different bases for civilization and life, and relationships to the environment there. Their conscious and unconscious understandings of the environment and how they interacted with it heavily influenced the ways in which they expanded West and how they dealt with the residents therein. When the cultures’ ideas were similar, they were often overlooked. When they were different, they were brought to the forefront as tools of American political expansion and cultural domination. Real and perceived Anglo-American comprehensions of environmental factors, previously underrepresented in the historiography of 19th century expansion, were a vital fulcrum on which intercultural interactions hinged and turned.

Unlike the Spanish, in the decades of the Early American Republic trapping and the fur trade would be a major vehicle for expansion, and there were more examples of individuals who ventured out on their own accord and with their own profit in mind while in search of furs, as opposed to representatives of the government with orders to designate sources of wealth for the rulers. Furthermore, Americans were interested in furs not just because the government hoped to expand by way of it, but because of what Fred Gowans describes as the Carriage Trade, wherein rich people rode around in their carriages and whatever they were wearing set the fashion trends.¹²⁴ This serves as a major difference between the Spanish and the US: American consumer society played a substantial role in expansion and quest for resources because of a strong relationship to markets. Although others such as the Russians and English and even the newly independent Mexicans were involved as well, the Americans provided the largest demand for furs and buffalo hides; American trappers, initially with aid from natives, served as the largest group to provide them.

American merchants discovered that the rivers of the Mexican Northern Rockies in the 1820's supported fur bearing animals, which Mexican frontiersmen did not bother to exploit because they had no market outlets for them.¹²⁵ Since the beaver populations of eastern North America and Canada were already becoming endangered, trappers poured into the region in order to tap the new reservoir. In this way, faunal characteristics of the environment drew American migrants and provided a motive for expansion in a way that the previous Spanish occupants of the region never considered for themselves. Although they too had plans for commerce and trade, it was restricted to within the Spanish

domains, and myopically concentrated on mineral resources. The only animals Spaniards valued were ones for livestock and transportation.

Because the Spanish discouraged individual initiative and closed off trade with foreigners during the years of their reign in the New World, they put their Northern Frontier at a disadvantage by the time Americans arrived there in the 1820's. US merchants had access to foreign markets, control of capital, and means of transportation.¹²⁶ As they moved into the region, they found locals very interested in trading with them, providing more of an impetus for migration. Gregg noticed the isolated character of the descendants of the Spanish frontier when he and his caravan arrived in Santa Fe. He observed that "The arrival of a caravan at Santa Fe changes the aspect of the place at once. Instead of the idleness and stagnation which its streets exhibited before, one now sees everywhere the bustle, noise, and activity of a lively market town."¹²⁷ The openness and enthusiasm with which Mexican frontier folk seem to have embraced American traders suggests that many common people viewed with relative discontent the society they had been enduring up to that point, and looked at new markets and goods as an indicator of advancement for themselves.

A woman named Carmen Lucero, who was a child when the United States took over Tucson, provides a good example of these mindsets. She reminisced years later that "I have often heard my mother say that the coming of the Americans...was a Godsend to Tucson, for the Indians had killed off many of the Mexicans and the poor were being ground down by the rich."¹²⁸ Her statement suggests that the Mexican government was doing a poor job at keeping the Apache at bay, who were subsequently choking off the

locals' abilities to improve their situation; Lucero's mother expressed hope that the United States' military capacity would be more effective at protecting them. Furthermore, she alluded to a class struggle which she hoped would be alleviated by the introduction of this new Anglo dynamic. Lucero herself, though, described how "Life at the *presidio* was very simple...There was no such thing as anyone hiring a man for pay. If a man needed help his neighbors went out and helped."¹²⁹ Carmen seems to disagree with her mother, suggesting that things were just fine in Tucson. Things were simple, but that does not mean bad. Furthermore, her image of communal participation and cooperation contradicts in part her mother's opinions regarding the suffering of the poor on account of the rich.

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Anglos in North America felt that working the land was indicative of a productive society, and working the land productively gave them the right to that land. Although this belief is similar to the Spanish efforts to create settled native agricultural communities, contemporary Americans ascribed more political meaning to it. In the final years of its occupation of *La Pimeria* and Northern New Spain which ended in 1821, the dying Spanish New World Empire began encouraging Americans to migrate into their territory, and the brand new Mexican Republic that replaced Spanish rule in the North in that year followed suit. When Mexico won its independence from Spain, they were faced with many decisions as to how to administer the northern frontier, now under their control. David Weber's book *The Mexican Frontier, 1821-1846* analyzes this time and place insightfully, and the author mainly takes an economic perspective. He states, for example, that Mexico continued the Spanish policy of trading and exchanging gifts with natives as

“...elements of an enlightened Indian policy.”¹³⁰ One can infer that Mexico faced similar challenges to economic growth as did their Spanish predecessors. However, the racial situation and social views thereof had changed drastically since three hundred years prior. Now, the mixed ancestry Mexicans were the rulers; natives still seem to occupy a lower position in society. Weber does not devote much attention to this issue, instead presenting a social hierarchy more determinant on class, as Mexican nobles and elites, though theoretically of the same racial make up as their lower income brethren, occupy a higher position in Mexican society. The nobles-commoners relationship may not have been so distinct initially, as Weber would agree with Laura Gomez when he said that “In the Spanish era, harsh frontier conditions resulted in less defined social distinctions than in Central Mexico.”¹³¹ However, he adds that these distinctions would become more tangible once capital became more common in the region.

The Mexican government figured that because their lands were so sparsely populated, they were underdeveloped and vulnerable to Apache raids. Accordingly, Mexican officials concluded that “Skilled and industrious foreigners would promote economic growth, improve society, and increase the manpower available for defense. Foreigners with capital and managerial skills seemed essential to replace the...Spaniards who had left Mexico...in the decade following independence.”¹³² What is vital to remember when analyzing this series of statements is that the environmental conditions of New Spain and Mexico did not directly create a society that was stagnant or unproductive while that of New England created an industrious and skilled group of people. Rather, it was human choices regarding in what manners they ought to engage

and benefit from the environment and its resources. It was the government's and military's presence or absence and behavior that determined to what degree human potential could be fulfilled. The Mexicans found themselves in dire straits because the previous Spanish rulers did not properly manage human-environmental interactions.

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The Mexican general Jose Maria Tornel Y Mendevil woefully stated that “The loss of Texas will inevitably result in the loss of New Mexico and the Californias. Little by little our territory will be absorbed...”¹³³Tornel knew that Texas had served as a buffer zone against American expansion, insofar as where migrants settled. Once Texas became part of the Union, he knew, American settlers would arrive in great quantities in the New Mexico territory and eventually the US government would follow. In 1821, Stephen Austin settled the first legal American colony in Mexican Texas. A large Anglo population germinated there over the next 15 years, developing its own identity ethnically separate from the Mexican *tejanos*. As participants in a largely non interventionist “American” lifestyle, they also tended to oppose most ideas embodied by the authority and centralized nature of Mexico City, a vestige of the old Spanish practice of palpable governmental presence. Finally, they possessed something of a superiority complex that led them to believe that any civilization that was in Texas at that time was their own doing as a result of their ways of engaging the environment.

Critical feelings towards peoples of other cultures worked both ways. Jose Maria Sanchez, a member of the Mexican Boundary Commission in 1827 recorded in his diary that “...They [the Americans] are in general, in my opinion, lazy people of vicious

character...they usually entrust [agricultural cultivation] to their negro slaves, whom they treat with considerable harshness".¹³⁴ In this case, the Mexican's criticism of Americans as lazy stemmed from the latter's social and cultural systems, whereas often Americans' criticisms of Mexicans were due to misconceived environmental and racial influences. A letter written by the head of the Commission, General Mier Y Teran to President Guadalupe Victoria in 1828 complicates this matter. Therein, he was surprisingly critical of his own countrymen, explaining that the Mexican influence proportionately diminished across Texas, due to inferior population numbers and inferiority of the Mexican populations themselves, who were very poor and very ignorant.¹³⁵ Unlike most Anglos at the time, however, the general seems to have a better grasp on the causes of Mexicans' struggles. The inferiority, he elucidated, is not a genetic trait but a consequence of problems with the system. He pointed out that the American educational system was very effective, whereas Mexicans "...not only do not have sufficient means to establish schools, but they are not of the type that take any thought for the improvement of its public institutions or the betterment of its degraded condition."¹³⁶ While Mier Y Teran recognized governmental failings, he still felt like the people should be able and willing to do something about it. Perhaps these differences in his feelings were because of class status; Teran was born to a well off family in Mexico City and was a college graduate. With regard to Americans, Teran also said "...most of them own at least one or two slaves."¹³⁷ He does not comment on the issue further, and unlike Sanchez, did not condone the Anglo-American race for the policy. He does go on to say, however, that he does not want slavery legalized in the land. The general's papers contributed to the Law

of April 6, 1830, which advocated for resisting American immigration by calling for more from Mexicans and Europeans, as well as disallowed the importation of any additional slaves into Texas.¹³⁸

In time, Anglos circulated The Texas Creation Myth which can be surmised as:

1) Texas was a wasteland before Anglos arrived because Mexicans could not repel the savages 2) Mexico invited Americans to redeem Texas and protect Northern Mexico from attack 3) Americans quickly accomplished both.¹³⁹ By the mid 1830's, there was a strong sentiment among white Texans that they had a right to that land because they had utilized it properly and were a more productive society than the Mexicans had been. This old English Puritan notion remained common in rhetoric of expansion and land acquisition after the American Revolution, particularly with regard to forcing natives out; Texans rebelled in 1835, and the same arguments cropped up again ten years later.

In the Mexican-American War which began in 1846, people in the United States said that Mexicans were slothful and not using their land properly; therefore the US should take possession of it so it would not fall by the wayside. John S. D. Eisenhower explains that "...the American public grew progressively more antagonistic toward...Mexicans, [who] came to be considered less than 'civilized' people, undeserving of rights generally accorded to Europeans."¹⁴⁰ It is interesting that Americans seem to have recognized their own European heritage, by way of the English, and not that of Mexicans, by way of the Spanish. More importantly, Eisenhower recognizes the importance of prior political and social decisions within an environmental framework. He states that "Mexico's weakness stemmed from nearly three centuries of autocratic

Spanish rule and from its own devastating war of independence...”¹⁴¹ This is in contrast to what the American public seemed to label as racial inferiority. Brian Delay has argued that these notions were spurred on by Mexico’s inability to control the Apache raiders, explaining that “Glimpses of what they came to see as a race war between [Mexican] mongrel degenerates and Indian savages left many Americans feeling entitled, even manifestly destined, to possess and redeem the region themselves.”¹⁴² Both the Texas Revolution and the Mexican War and the real or perceived environmental factors therein were both cases of Americans appropriating environmentally motivated explanations for the characteristics of people and the conditions of their societies, thereby adding justification to their imperialist and expansionist actions. Their understandings of the environment’s influences seem to be unconscious and a product of the times, as Valencius has argued, but their application of that rhetoric to political objectives seems intentional.

The concept of travel with regard to health in human-environmental interactions, as articulated by Gregg, Dana, and Bartlett, was also used for strategic military purposes within the Mexican War.. In his biography of President James K. Polk, Walter R. Borneman relates an anecdote appropriate to the discussion at hand. He explains that in attempts to legitimize their claims to California and assert control there, the US government ordered one Commodore Stockton to seize San Francisco, blockade Monterey, and grab as much territory as possible if a state of war between the United States and Mexico were to occur.¹⁴³ This, of course, was at a point when war was nearly inevitable anyway. In order to solidify these plans, Borneman continues, Polk commissioned a marine named Archibald Gillespie as a secret agent to deliver the plans

to a prominent California politician named Thomas Larkin because it would take Stockton a long time to sail around Cape Horn. Gillespie was required to cross through Mexican territory at the Isthmus of Tehuantepec; if stopped, his alibi was that he was a Boston trader undertaking a journey for his health.¹⁴⁴ Borneman is sure to point out the foolishness of this cover, for the blatant reason that it is absurd to seek one's health in the fever-ridden jungles through which he would pass! Furthermore, as previously asserted, the concept of actual travel for one's health does not seem to have been a widely held belief among Spaniards and Mexicans. Consequently, American ethnocentrism with regard to environmental factors appeared in practice during the tense relationship before and during the war. If caught, Gillespie's cover would undoubtedly have been blown because the United States either assumed that the health of traveling was a real thing, or at least that other people would also consider it as an aspect of the nature-society relationship.

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Anglo-Americans tended to overlook the social, political, and historic causes of Mexico's struggles. Rather, they attributed the situation to racial inferiority. When Richard Henry Dana was in California, he stated that "Nothing but the character of the people prevents Monterey from becoming a large town."¹⁴⁵ With rich soil, a good climate, plentiful water, and a harbor, he observed, conditions were ripe for prosperity. He hints that under Anglo-American control, the place would develop and prosper. Statements like this appear constantly in the writings of American travelers in the West and Southwest.

One of the most notable writers on the time and place was John Russell Bartlett. He traveled with the Boundary Commission from central Texas across the Southwest, up into Northern California and all the way back, all the while recording what he saw and thought over the course of the two year period. One of his primary mission objectives was to determine if it was suitable to build a railroad there.¹⁴⁶ Like Dana, Bartlett's descriptions of Mexican towns often portray them as underdeveloped or even in ruins. With reference to Goliad, he said that "The whole town is in ruins, and presents a scene of desolation, which to an American is at once novel and interesting."¹⁴⁷ Later, at San Antonio, he communicated that the initial pleasing impressions of the city gave way once he entered. "...making one's way among the filthy buildings of the Mexican suburbs to the plaza...[observing] the mix of old Spanish buildings and new American ones...[the old ones] seem lost and out of place in the company of their smart looking neighbors."¹⁴⁸ He depicts a scene with Spanish buildings that may have been nice once, but the Mexicans let them fall into ruin, while building poor quality buildings of their own, in contrast to the sleek and modern American buildings there.

Bartlett proceeded to tie the architectural characteristics of the city to racial attributes, stating that

Mexican indolence cannot stand by the side of the energy and industry of Americans and Europeans;...the newcomers are rapidly elbowing the old settlers to one side. Some Mexicans have the good sense to fall in with the spirit of progress, but the majority draw back before it, and live in the outskirts of town in the primitive style of their forefathers.¹⁴⁹

The notion that whites represent progress is subjective, of course. What "progress" even means is subjective as well. Bartlett's ethnocentric statement suggest that the American/

European way of life is the proper one, and anybody who lives otherwise is wrong, backward, and inferior.

Bartlett's racial sentiments regarding Mexicans are tricky, though. At El Paso, he attended a dinner with members of the US military as well as local elites. The party was "Mexican style", with a great variety of dishes and entertainment that would have been credible on the Atlantic too, he said.¹⁵⁰ Therefore, perhaps it is more of a class issue; elite Mexicans have the means and refinement to properly interact with Americans, while the lower classes of Mexicans are mongrels and uncivilized.

What, in Bartlett's mind, would account for the difference between Mexican elites and commoners? As the Boundary Commission moved farther west, Bartlett stated that "Long before Plymouth Rock was consecrated...the country of the buffalo was visited...and the Gila and Colorado Rivers, which in our day are attracting so much interest as novelties, were passed again and again by the energetic and persevering Spaniard."¹⁵¹ Bartlett diverged from the common rhetoric that the area was a 'virgin wilderness', instead recognizing that other people had been there before. He compliments the cutting edge action and success of the Spanish and their efforts in these land before him. Of course, though, he does not recognize the much older presence of natives.

Bartlett's interest in ruins and recognition of prior Spanish activity go hand in hand for American expansionist and developmental purposes. In his book *Fugitive Landscapes*, Samuel Truett cites a Bourbon law which stated that mines left to decay become property of nearby communities.¹⁵² Thus, he explains, lost villages and mines might mean lost riches. For the Boundary Commission and US government

representatives, their interests and keys to opportunity were not virgin soil but squandered space.¹⁵³ Hence it is somewhat peculiar that they were so critical of “Mexican indolence” and improper use of the environment; one would think they would be happy to see such conditions because it would work to their own advantage. Perhaps this was the point; Bartlett and others constantly noted decaying Mexican communities not simply to jump at opportunities to criticize them, but, as he thought of his *Narrative* as a guide for future American travelers, intended to have records of locations in which to subsequently seek lost riches.

Having asserted his feelings towards Spaniards and Mexican elites, Bartlett clarified his understanding of the situation:

There are a few respectable Old Spanish families at El Paso, who possess much intelligence, as well as that elegance and dignity of manner which characterized their ancestors...A vast gulf exists between those Castilians and the masses, who are a mixed breed, possessing none of the virtues of their European ancestors, but all the vices...the Indian physiognomy is indelibly stamped upon them...¹⁵⁴

Bartlett attributes what he perceives to be negative characteristics of Mexicans to their racial hybridity. He feels that the noble and pure blood of their white Castilian ancestors has been diluted by mixture with natives over the course of centuries. The way he phrases his observations, one might say that he recognizes the European ancestors had vices; is he saying, then, that the racial mixture of Mexicans has brought it out more and they cannot control themselves, while purer Castilians are able to keep it under wraps? Or is he saying that Castilians are pure virtue while Mexicans are pure vice? This difference can suggest different understandings of the consequences of racial mixture.

The Weekly Arizonian newspaper, based in Tubac, Arizona, suggested a similar racial dynamic. In an 1859 article entitled “Condition of Mexico”, it explained that “In Mexico...of its seven or eight millions of population, about one million only are white, the rest being Indian or mixed breeds; and these Mexican Spaniards have not succeeded, like the French Canadians, in preserving the spirit which they brought across the seas.”¹⁵⁵ The newspaper suggests that the white Castilians are admirable people, but once they mixed with natives they became inferior and incapable of self government, and lost the virtues of their ancestors. However, the article does not specify what it means by “French Canadians”; if it means white French people currently living in Canada, then this is comparable to the whites of Spanish descent living in Mexico. Yet if “French Canadians” includes French people who mixed with natives, then the assertion is incredibly contradictory; it is unknown in what ways the writers and editors of the newspaper conceptualize racial mixture and the role of skin color in behavioral and social degeneration.

In the second volume of his *Personal Narrative*, Bartlett offers an explanation for Hispanic racial characteristics exemplified by the difference between Californian and Mexican girls. He asserts that Californians are more Castilian like, having grace, light skin, and elegant use of language. He feels that this occurs for two reasons: the first is that a superior class of colonizers came to California because of the greater length and cost of the journey, and proceeded not to mix very much with the natives. Secondly, he theorized that “The climate, unlike that of Mexico, is healthy and invigorating; while the humid atmosphere of the coast gives a fairness and brilliancy to the complexion unknown

to the dry and burning plains of Mexico.”¹⁵⁶ His first reason is a class and racially motivated one, comparable to his previously elucidated ruminations. The Castilian characteristics of Spanish people are admirable, and so long as they do not mix with the natives their quality will not degrade. The second reason delves further into the issue, offering an environmentally motivated analysis of racial formation and human nature. He feels that the characteristics of the environments literally play a role in the appearance and behavior of the people who live in California versus Mexico.

In addition to genuinely feeling that these things were true, it is possible that Bartlett had political motivations for making such statements. American migration was at an all time high, the gold rush had already peaked, and Bartlett was on a government sanctioned mission, writing a diary that he knew would be widely disseminated and read. Perhaps he was selling California as an ideal location for migrating Americans to select. Prior accounts, such as that of Richard Henry Dana, had piqued interest in the West Coast and California life. Bartlett may have been expounding this situation by suggesting that in addition to an appealing lifestyle in California, it was also very suitable for the white, refined Americans who might consider heading out that way. Thus, by appropriating environmental rhetoric, the United States could further solidify its claim to the region as more and more Americans came to settle there.

This is very similar sounding in structure to what Eusebio Kino said two centuries earlier in order to entice Spanish settlers to move into the northern frontier. However, they said opposite things about the area in question. Kino discussed at length the desirable climate and environmental qualities of *La Pimeria* and said that people would

do well to go there; that was the political agenda at the time. Two centuries later, the United States' agenda was to get people to go to California; Bartlett said that the Southwest and Mexico, or what the Spanish had called *La Pimeria*, was actually an undesirable climate. Rather, they should go to California. Would white Americans degenerate into inferior, darker skinned, lazy and coarse peoples similar to the Mexicans if they moved into the Southwest, mirroring the Spanish idea of colonial degeneration? Bartlett does not explicitly say so. Nonetheless, he explicates theories on where migrating Americans do and do not belong.

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Although the population at *Presidio Tucson* expanded in the 1820's, it never grew into a village but retained its fort characteristics, because of the Apache threats and subsequent choking off of economic development.¹⁵⁷ Though the site itself did not develop much, it nonetheless lay at a strategic geographic location that turned it into a trading crossroads. Tucson marked a point of embarkation on a lowland passage to San Diego and the markets of California, essentially an extension of the Santa Fe Trail.¹⁵⁸ David Weber explains that *presidio* Captain Jose Romero reopened some old Spanish trails between 1823-1826, which would later be expanded upon by American merchants. On its way to fight the California campaign of the Mexican-American War in 1846, a detachment of General Kearney's army stopped in Tucson, occupying it for a few days and drawing on its supplies. Thomas Sheridan quotes Lt. Colonel Philip St. George Cooke of the Mormon Battalion, who said that "We come not to make war against Sonora, and still less to destroy an unimportant outpost of defense against Indians".¹⁵⁹

This statement highlights the lack of importance they placed on the actual town and the people therein. The general area was valued as a way for migrants to reach California, and so eventually Tucson would become an important location. The battalion continued on to the West Coast via the open trails blazed by the civilians that came before them. However, Southern Arizona would not be included in the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo at war's end. Then, the California Gold Rush intensified tremendously the use of the level, all weather routes there by American migrants and so in 1853 the Gadsen Purchase incorporated Tucson and its surrounding area into the United States.¹⁶⁰ Just the same as its birth, Tucson's fate was decided by gold.

The Anglos who chose to settle in Tucson did prosper, but "...because they learned how to coexist with their Mexican neighbors..."¹⁶¹ The white population there at that time was largely tolerant of the Mexican residents, as Sheridan, continues, the culture and language stayed Sonoran for the next few decades. A notable Anglo migrant to Tucson was Pickney Randolph Tully. Establishing a freighting company with a Mexican elite named Estevan Ochoa, Tully was quite the philanthropist. His firm was dedicated to extending trusts to farmers, stockmen, and miners in order to aid the development of those arenas.¹⁶² He was adamant about assisting the poor populations, and is noted for his contributions to the school system there. With reference to his installations of windmills for irrigation purposes, as well as his growing of cotton, the newspaper *Arizona Weekly Star* explained that he was "Showing what might be done in Southern Arizona in the raising of cotton, if proper attention were given to it."¹⁶³ This statement is representative of the larger Anglo view of the Mexicans, insofar as their inability to work the land

properly, while the more industrious white Americans could. However, it is unlikely that Tully would have supported this position. Though his own voice is absent in this particular archival file, the information present suggests that he was among the more tolerant settlers in the region. While a businessman seeking profit, Tully did not limit his markets to Anglos; he welcomed Mexican business. This is particularly true considering his business partner was a Mexican man. One must be cautious not to be deceived by the voices of history that have survived for us, which may skew the reality or represent only one frame of mind as opposed to bring across the complexity of relationships then.

Unfortunately it was for the most part only with regard to personal relationships that Anglo-Mexican society was so tolerant and progressive. Sheridan asserts that the larger American-Mexican relations were not so good, as “US entrepreneurs with imperialistic visions considered the International Border as little more than a temporary restraint upon their ambitions”, and viewed Mexican people as a work force to be exploited or an impediment to be removed¹⁶⁴. The Weekly Arizonian newspaper criticized James Buchanan in an 1859 article entitled “No Troops for Sonora”, wherein the President refused to send soldiers to take possession of the territories of Chihuahua and Sonora. The newspaper asserted that “The Territory of Arizona never can be fully opened to settlement, and her immense mineral resources amply developed, without a port on the Gulf of California”.¹⁶⁵ The paper paints a picture of settlement only consisting of Anglos, ignoring the presence of settled Mexicans in the territories in question. It further asserts that the land therein is not fully developed, and hence the Mexicans ought to be pushed out of the way so that proper settlement and environmental exploitation can take place.

The newspaper often took an expansionist stance, presenting many articles on its interest in the regions to the South and West and why. A few weeks later, the paper produced the article “Sonora and its Resources”, declaring that it was “...destined sooner or later to be American territory...with industry and thrift, it could sustain a population equal to that of all Mexico.”¹⁶⁶ Aside from the allusions to Manifest Destiny and the typical discussion of American industry and productivity, the article also offers an explanation for the racial and behavioral characteristics of Mexicans based on a perceived environmental issue. It surmises that “Food for man and beast was so easily procured that the descendants of the early settlers sunk into effeminacy long before the breaking out of the great Apache war of the last century”.¹⁶⁷ As opposed to John Russell Bartlett’s thoughts, wherein climate and sunlight affect the human body, the newspaper attributes it to natural resources. An abundance of accessible food supplies meant that the Mexicans did not have to work hard or exert themselves and so they became lazy and inferior as a race. The Anglo conceptualization of working one’s land in order to earn a respectable place in society is evident here. Furthermore, the newspaper clearly had a different agenda from Bartlett. The Boundary Commissioner explained the pleasantness of the climate with regard to race, so as to entice migrants. The Weekly Arizonian, on the other hand, emphasized the advisability of governmental expansion into Mexican territory because of the resources it has to offer.

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Just as Weber takes an economic approach to exploring shifting racial contexts in the Mexican period, Gomez prefers a legal and political one. She argues that the the

United States' victory in the Mexican-American War marked the start of Mexican people being thought of as a racial group.¹⁶⁸ Furthermore, she references one Shelly Streeb, who said that "The US-Mexican War provided pro-war patriotism which united Euro-Americans of diverse ethnic backgrounds, incorporating marginalized whites into a racialized national polity, especially in relation to Mexico."¹⁶⁹ In this sense, the military policy of the United States contributed to a reorientation of racial perceptions in the US, wherein the diversity of both Americans and Hispanics was simplified into a binary of superior whites and inferior Mexicans.

The American racial mindset, viewing mixture itself as inferior, seemed to strive to operate as if it did not exist. Gomez details how Americans at earlier stages were undecided as to where in their own racial hierarchy Mexicans would fit. People could not decide whether they were really Indians, as indicated by their ancestry; or black, in consequence of their color, customs, and overall depravity; which is more cultural.¹⁷⁰ They could not recognize the diversity of ancestral combinations and this affected the way they administered the region and the people therein.

Gomez explains that Americans setting their sights on the region intended to co-opt Mexican elites so as to give them better control.¹⁷¹ The manner in which they accomplished this, she continues, was to enable them to claim white status. This would theoretically open the door to them for various social privileges, much as how subjects of the Spanish colonial empire would claim *limpieza de sangre* in order to improve their position. However, there is a difference between being pure blooded and being white. First of all, there does not seem to be much of a religious motivation in this context.

Second, being white was perceived as an outright racial characteristic, while having purity of blood had a number of criteria and markers. Hence the factors that constitute “race” once again were redefined. More importantly, though, claiming whiteness under American jurisdiction was a legal process, not one of blood or inheritance. Regardless, the Mexican elites were compelled to disassociate themselves from the Mexican commoners, similar to how claims of *limpieza* during the Spanish era resulted in some people being more vulnerable to debilitating social labels. Furthermore, Gomez points out that in attempt to sow more seeds of discord and consequently better assert their own control, Americans attempted to drive a wedge between Mexicans and Pueblo Indians.¹⁷² This also operated on a myopic racial view; Americans viewed Mexican commoners as a single group, and Pueblo Indians as another, sharply definable, group.

One final racial issue worth noting as addressed by Gomez is role of Manifest Destiny and the looming Civil War on attitudes towards blacks in the Southwest. She explains that the Westward expanding US borders and the intensifying debates as to which new states would be admitted as free states and which as slave states manifested itself in the Southwest in an egregious manner. Mexico itself officially abolished slavery in 1820, and many Mexicans embraced an anti-slavery stance. However, Hispanic residents of the American Southwest began to distance themselves from blacks, who were at the bottom of the American racial order.¹⁷³ The motivation, Gomez argues, in imparting restrictions on free black and eventually switching to a pro-slavery stance was the hope that the territory of New Mexico would consequently be granted statehood, and the legal and political rights therein. Thus in disassociating themselves from blacks,

Mexican Americans in a way claimed whiteness.¹⁷⁴ Again, this falls into the American racial binary. Also, like that of the Spanish, the American racial hierarchy was clearly fluid and malleable.

Gomez argues that both Spaniards and Americans brought with them a system of inequality grounded in racial difference and white supremacy.¹⁷⁵ For Americans, blacks occupied the lowest rung. For the Spanish, that may have been the case in certain locations and time periods, but in the case of the Northern frontier at the bottom of the ladder sat wild Indians. In many cases, people were able to navigate the hierarchy, especially considering how its organization and definitions changed over time. Mexicans in the middle had to play different games and disassociate themselves with different people in order to reach the same objective of upward mobility and to be labeled as white during the two systems' reigns. The manners in which these racial relations played out during this time period seems to be somewhat unique to the fact that it was a frontier in all the cases.

CONCLUSION: "THE FRONTIER HAS CLOSED"

Environment is a touchy theme when dealing with frontier histories. As previously elucidated, asserting its role in the course of events tends to be contradictory. Weber himself made statements to both ends in the same book, and Hennessy had different things to say about it. The extent to which the environment influences people, their actions, and the communities they set up in a frontier setting is a subject that has

been given treatment, but in light of Turner has been somewhat sidestepped. However, this is not the only way to go about the analysis.

The environment in what Spaniards called the North, and Americans call the Southwest had much to offer. During their years of domination there, the two groups brought to the table very different religious, cultural, and economic backgrounds to create very different societies. The Spanish government took the initiative in expansion, seeking precious metals and converts to mine them. They focused on directing nature's bounty towards increasing the wealth of the Crown and dignitaries and did not give too much care towards establishing robust societies on their frontiers. The Americans were not necessarily better, just different. They too exploited and degraded the environment, but with alternate objectives. It was mainly the people and groups of people pursuing their own interests that formed the articulated basis of American expansion in the Southwest. More adaptability on their part, though, ultimately meant that American society would endure as the dominant culture there. Mining did become an incentive for migration on their part too, but it was one aspect of a complex system that individuals ascribed to their character. Still, Anglo-Americans and Spaniards shared a common heritage and understood those environments in manners more similar than they realized.

Key to understanding human-environmental interactions is not just how one affects the other, but the mindset of the people with regard to nature. For modern scholars, Turner's contribution should not be the suggestion that the frontier environment had so drastic an effect on social and national formation, but the fact that his opinions can now be contextualized. Turner assertions are reflective of pioneer mindsets. Regardless of

the extent to which one actually affected the other, people at the time truly believed that this was the case and that different climates and natural features affected their bodies in particular ways. More importantly, if “race” is a social construction subject to change based on time, place, and people, then the role of environment is too. Considering the beliefs of the people at a given time, the ways in which they thought an environment affected them could play a substantial role in racial, social, and political relationships in society.

How those dynamics played out had similarities and differences in each era, and had varying consequences for the environment, the people, and for their relationships with peoples of different cultures. The Spanish settlement patterns, agricultural and mining activities, and relationships with natives was in part driven by how they thought the environment and its climate were affecting them. The objectives of their civilization, hinging partially on the manners in which they thought the climate and natural resources operated, developed accordingly. Their Mexican descendants faced many challenges left over from the Spanish colonial system while seeking their own identity. The arrival of Anglo-Americans shifted the dynamics of the place radically. Americans also had culturally specific ideas as to how the environment worked and what were proper ways in which to interact with it. This also had consequences for their relationships with natives, but manifested itself in not so subtle ways when communication with residents of the Southwest became more common. Contemporary peoples unintentionally and intentionally ascribed environmental characteristics a role in their identities, lifestyles,

values, and politics, with consequences towards their societies and interactions with others.

It was 1835, and George Bancroft prepared to speak. As one of the main American historians of the time, he had been invited to address Williams College in Massachusetts. “The best government rests on the people and not on the few, on persons and not on property, on the free development of public opinion and not on authority...”¹⁷⁶ He spoke to the students about the sanctity of individuality and public happiness. Everyone was thinking it: this is Jacksonian Democracy at its most eloquent. The president in office at the time who lent his name to this style of government had been encouraging more rights and freedoms for the average white man. That is, the true American citizens. At any rate, after 60 years of independence and Westward expansion these ideas had become commonplace among Americans as exemplifying their national character and civil enlightenment. The newness of the environments they encountered provided the scenarios, Bancroft believed, in which “The absence of the prejudices of the old world leaves us here the opportunity of consulting independent truth...”¹⁷⁷ The speaker knew his audience was riveted. He knew they agreed with him. This is who they were, and this is what their wonderful environment did to them. He knew that these ideas justified their society, which they had been spreading across the continent. He knew the history of the continent, and for what reasons varying people seem to have been attracted to different environments. He knew that Texas was on the verge of rebellion from a weak Mexico whose Spanish predecessor had been incompetent. He summed up what he felt American identity to be by saying that “It is not by vast armies, by immense natural

resources, by accumulations of treasure, that the greatest results in modern civilization have been accomplished...All the great and noble institutions of the world have come from popular efforts."¹⁷⁸

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