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# Chicano History: Transcending Cultural Models

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Mainstream U.S. historians tend to ignore Chicano history, apparently considering it the domain of specialists.<sup>1</sup> But

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1. Chicano historiography made impressive strides over the past twenty years. See, among others, the following studies: Pedro Castillo, "The Making of a Mexican Barrio: Los Angeles, 1890-1920" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Santa Barbara, 1979); Albert Camarillo, *Chicanos in a Changing Society* (Cambridge, Mass., 1979); Juan Gómez-Quiñones, "The Origins and Development of the Mexican Working Class in the United States: Laborers and Artisans North of the Río Bravo, 1600-1900," in Elsa C. Frost, ed., *El trabajo y los trabajadores en la historia de México* (Tucson, 1979), 463-505; Richard Griswold del Castillo, *The Los Angeles Barrio, 1850-1890: A Social History* (Berkeley, 1979); Mario García, *Desert Immigrants: The Mexicans of El Paso, 1880-1920* (New Haven, 1981) and García, *Mexican Americans: Leadership, Ideology, and Identity, 1930-1960* (New Haven, 1989); Robert J. Rosenbaum, *Mexicano Resistance in the Southwest* (Austin, 1981); Rodolfo Acuña, *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos* (2nd ed., New York, 1981); Ricardo Romo, *East Los Angeles: A History of a Barrio* (Austin, 1983); Richard Griswold del Castillo, *La Familia: Chicano Families in the Urban Southwest, 1848 to the Present* (Notre Dame, 1984); Antonio Ríos-Bustamante, *Los Angeles: Pueblo and Region* (Los Angeles, 1985); David Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1886* (Austin, 1987); Vicki Ruiz, *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives: Mexican Women, Unionization and the California Food Processing Industry, 1930-1950* (Albuquerque, 1987). See also Carlos Cortés, "Mexicans," in Stephan Thernstrom, Ann Orlov, and Oscar Handlin, eds., *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups* (Cambridge, Mass., 1980), 699; Arnolfo De León, *The Tejano Community, 1836-1900* (Albuquerque, 1982); Albert Camarillo, *Chicanos in California: A History of Mexican Americans in California* (San Francisco, 1984); John R. Chávez, *The Lost Land: The Chicano Image of the Southwest* (Albuquerque, 1984); Arnolfo De León and Kenneth L. Stewart, *Tejanos and the Numbers Game: A Socio-Historical Interpretation from the Federal Censuses, 1850-1900* (Albuquerque, 1989); Thomas E. Sheridan, *Los Tucsonenses: The Mexican Community in Tucson, 1854-1941* (Tucson, 1986).

why should U.S. social historians want to put aside issues as important as the social origins of pragmatism or the Civil War in Kansas and turn their attention to Mexican-American history? In part the answer has to be that it might help, along with other contemporary directions in cultural studies, to break down barriers to historical understanding among the various groups that comprise the United States. More specifically, such study would open up new areas of comparative research by adding to the proposition that "capitalism did not come to every region [of the U.S.] at the same time nor on the same terms."<sup>2</sup> In this article, we are concerned with the second issue.

Important insights might be drawn by comparing the nineteenth century evolution of economic forms in rural New England, the slave South, and the territories acquired from Mexico after 1836. At this time, such a comparison across the United States is still difficult because much Chicano historiography has built upon cultural and culture-conflict models focusing on race and nationality as the basis for social relations and, ultimately, for historical explanation. Clearly, in the post-1848 years in the newly acquired southwestern frontier, Anglo settlers frequently treated the Hispanic population much like they dealt with the native Indian population: as people without rights who were merely obstacles to the acquisition and exploitation of natural resources and land. And, to be sure, the violence of the conquerors was often met with the resistance of the conquered.<sup>3</sup> But these cultural struggles and racial conflicts have become for many Chicano historians the principal basis for understanding Chicano history.

Culture-based explanations tend to minimize the role of economic factors, which are crucial in shaping social and cultural forms and very useful in drawing regional comparisons. Innovative scholarship by Rosalinda González, David Montejano, and Douglas Monroy moves away from culture-based models and

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2. Nan Elizabeth Woodruff, "The Transition to Capitalism in America," review of Christopher Clark, *The Roots of Rural Capitalism: Western Massachusetts, 1780-1860* (Ithaca, N.Y. 1990), in *Reviews in American History*, XX (1992), 173.

3. See Pedro Castillo and Albert Camarillo, eds., *Furia y Muerte: Los Bandidos Chicanos* (Los Angeles, 1973); Rosenbaum, *Mexicano Resistance*, see also Acuña, *Occupied America*, *passim*.

toward an emphasis on economic power and processes.<sup>4</sup> The goal here is to advance and elaborate on some of these ideas about socioeconomic forms in a more systematic manner.<sup>5</sup>

We begin by critically analyzing approaches that describe the history of Chicano-Anglo relations as a story of cultural conflict and racism. Using Marxist taxonomies when appropriate, we seek to emphasize the *systemic* roots of conflict between pre-1848 Spanish-Mexican society and post-1848 Anglo-imposed social economy.<sup>6</sup> The history of the Southwest or, for that matter, the United States should not merely consist of a juxtaposition of cultural views—that is, the Chicano perspective, Anglo perspective, Asian perspective, women's perspective, and so forth. It should also examine the conflictive shared history of a prevalent economic organization of society. This approach can lead to a paradigm of complex and intertwined Anglo and Chicano history, rather than one of separate perspectives.<sup>7</sup>

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4. Rosalinda González, "Distinctions in Western Women's Experience: Ethnicity, Class and Social Change," in Susan Armitage, ed., *The Women's West* (Norman, 1987), 237–252; Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans*; Douglas Monroy, *Thrown among Strangers* (Berkeley, 1990). The question of the direction of Chicano history is the subject of several recent essays. See Alex Saragoza, "The Significance of Recent Chicano-Related Historical Writings: An Appraisal," *Ethnic Affairs*, I (1987), 24–62; Gerald E. Poyo and Gilberto M. Hinojosa, "Spanish Texas and Borderlands Historiography in Transition: Implications for U.S. History," *Journal of American History*, LXXV (1988), 393–416; David J. Weber, "John Francis Bannon and the Historiography of the Spanish Borderlands," *Myth and the History of the Hispanic Southwest Essays* (Albuquerque, 1988), 55–88; Tomás Almaguer, "Ideological Distortions in Recent Chicano Historiography: The Internal Model and Chicano Historical Interpretation," *Aztlán*, XVIII (1987), 7–27.

5. Generally speaking, Chicano historiography developed somewhat separately from the ongoing writing by Borderland scholars and focuses upon the later period. For a detailed evaluation of the vicissitudes and "sociology" of these fields of study, see David J. Weber, "John Francis Bannon and the Historiography of the Spanish Borderlands." See also José Cuello, "Beyond the 'Borderlands' Is the North of Colonial Mexico: A Latin-Americanist Perspective to the Study of the Mexican North and the United States Southwest," in Krityna P. Demaree, ed., *Proceedings of the Pacific Coast Council on Latin American Studies*, IX (1982), 1–24.

6. Howard Lamar, *The Far Southwest, 1848–1912: A Territorial History* (New Haven, 1966).

7. Rosalinda González provides several examples of integrating Chicana women's household labor and wage labor into the fabric of capitalism and agribusiness in the West. See her "The Chicana in Southwest Labor History, 1900–1975: A Preliminary Bibliographical Analysis," *Critical Perspectives of Third World America*, II (1984), 26–61; "Distinctions in Western Women's Experience: Ethnicity, Class and Social Change," in Armitage, ed., *The Women's West*, 237–251; "Chicanas

Historians who subscribe to the culture-based paradigm ground their perspectives in particular characterizations of pre-Anglo Spanish and subsequent Mexican societies in the Southwest. Some (for example, Albert Camarillo, Pedro Castillo, Richard Griswold del Castillo, Arnoldo De León, and Robert Rosenbaum) describe those societies as pastoral, communal, peasant, traditional, frontier, or hacienda. Other historians who place more emphasis on economic factors (for example, Juan Gómez-Quiñones, David Montejano, and Antonio Ríos-Bustamante) characterize this era as “early capitalist.” All, however, agree that Anglo-American society is capitalist and all use their own characterizations of the period as points of departure for their inquiries. We hope to explore further the nature of these societies from the perspective of social and economic relations.

If the period that began in 1848 is viewed as one in which two distinct socioeconomic formations, one largely precapitalist and quasifeudal and the other predominantly capitalist, collide, the situation looks akin to the North-South conflict in the eastern United States. More than just a “rough and tumble,” racially conscious Anglo society conquering and subduing quaint Mexican pastoralists, the conquest can be viewed also as one step in the economic (capitalist) transformation of the United States from east to west. In other words, as Montejano has pointed out, the Anglo conquest was also a capitalist conquest. Economic change took place on a par with cultural transformation.

In the second half of this article we demonstrate briefly how a perspective grounded in economic power and processes can also be applied to two other themes in Chicano history. The first is the significance of the nineteenth century for Chicano historiography. Some scholars, including Camarillo, Griswold del Castillo, Carlos Cortés, Gómez-Quiñones, and most recently Mario García, find the Anglo conquest of 1848 and the ensuing Spanish, Mexican, and Anglo conflict to be a historical watershed that initiated a continuous nineteenth- and twentieth-

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and Mexican Immigrant Families, 1920–1940: Women’s Subordination and Family Exploitation,” in Joan Jensen and Lois Scharff, eds., *Decades of Discontent* (Westport, Conn., 1983), 59–84.

century Chicano experience. We challenge this assumed continuity. The second theme, and one we find equally problematic, is an emphasis on a common Chicano urban experience. Chicanos have been predominantly urban dwellers only since the 1940s, but scholars too often disregard the origins of socioeconomic structures that underlie the contemporary urban experience.

Our goal, then, is to develop a useful characterization of pre- and postconquest societies. This approach, it is hoped, will help scholars to engage in a comparative analysis of U.S. regional histories; encourage the study of the social, economic, and gender relations among Spanish, Mexican, and Anglo peoples of the American Southwest; and perhaps even contribute to moving Chicano history “from margin to center” in U.S. history discourse.<sup>8</sup>

### **The Character of Southwestern Spanish and Mexican Society**

The transition from Spanish and Mexican rule to U.S. governance in the nineteenth century is critical to Chicano historiography. Most Chicano history scholars argue that the evolving relations between the Spanish-speaking and English-speaking peoples in the post-1848 era can be understood by studying the particular characteristics of these peoples, but they disagree about the characteristics themselves. Two definitions of Spanish/Mexican society have been offered most often. Albert Camarillo provides a succinct example of the first: “Once the subdivision of rancho and public lands had begun, the dominance of the emerging economic system of American capitalism in the once-Mexican region was a foregone conclusion. The process of land loss and displacement of the Mexican *pastoral economy* was fairly complete throughout the Southwest by the 1880s.”<sup>9</sup> In a second view, which also emphasizes economic elements, Spanish/Mexican societies are seen as “early capitalist.” Juan Gómez-Quiñones contends, for example, that the essence of Mexican society was an emerging capitalist order, a transition

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8. Bell Hooks, *Feminist Theory from Margin to Center* (Boston, 1985).

9. Albert Camarillo, “Chicanos in the American City,” in Eugene E. García, Francisco A. Lomeli, and Isidro D. Ortiz, eds., *Chicano Studies: A Multidisciplinary Approach* (New York, 1984), 25.

away from a formal, feudal social order.<sup>10</sup> A decade later David Montejano expressed a similar view: feudalism “is...a misleading description” of the pre-1848 Southwest and the Spanish-Mexican haciendas were “a form of early capitalism.”<sup>11</sup>

Historians utilizing the first approach characterize Spanish/Mexican society less specifically than Anglo-American society. Vague terms—for example, traditional or pastoral—define the former; a more analytic one—namely, capitalism—the latter. The invading society is distinctly described as capitalist in economy, culture, institutions, and behavior. We would expect it either to conflict with opposing social forms or to merge with similar ones. However, the existing categorizations describe Spanish/Mexican society without regard to specific economic structure. We cannot examine a conflict between a society whose economy remains vaguely described (pastoral or traditional) and one with a specifically described (capitalist) economy.

Nor do the terms “pastoral,” “communal,” and “traditional” explain Spanish/Mexican society any more than the terms “technological” and “individualistic” explain Anglo society.<sup>12</sup> Analytic terms should not be used regarding Anglo-America without using the same degree of specificity when referring to Spanish/Mexican society. By default, this dichotomous mode of categorization leads toward a “culture conflict” model for interpreting the Anglo-Mexican encounter because a more sophisticated one based upon conflicting economic systems is unavailable.<sup>13</sup>

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10. He writes: “The economic formations within the Mexican communities of the greater Mexican North in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries can be characterized as early-capitalist, a period of a variety of co-existing economic forms and practices, the predominant tendency being the transition to capitalism.” See Juan Gómez-Quiñones, “Origins and Development of the Mexican Working Class,” 464.

11. Montejano specifically rejects the views of the pre-1848 Southwest as a feudal or even a precapitalist (and merely pastoral) society. See Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans*, 312–313.

12. Robert J. Rosenbaum carefully attempts to define Mexican society by applying the term “peasant.” However, peasants were only one segment of Mexican society in the pre-1848 Southwest. The term is misleading in that it narrowly defines the class nature of Mexican society while at the same time providing too general an interpretive design. See Rosenbaum, *Mexicano Resistance*.

13. Others might argue that “nationalist” impulses led Chicano writers to emphasize a “them vs. us” attitude. See, for example, Saragoza, “Significance of Recent Chicano-Related Historical Writings,” 27.

Historians using the second approach—defining the pre-1848 Southwest as “early capitalist”—cite as evidence the existence of wage labor<sup>14</sup> and the “capitalist” character of the hacienda or rancho. The problem with this evidence is that it is not altogether convincing. Several studies, for example, demonstrate the widespread presence of debt-peonage, hardly the stuff of free labor. Gilberto Hinojosa’s study of Laredo, Texas, reveals that “the indebted poor fled Laredo rather than submit to a peonage system which amounted to slavery. The frequency of calls for assistance in returning runaways suggests both the widespread use of peonage and the extensive escape from it.”<sup>15</sup> Conversely, solid documentation for the prevalence of wage labor does not appear in the relevant literature. There is, for example, no entry for “wage labor” in the index of David J. Weber’s *Mexican Frontier*, the most thorough study of the 1821–1848 period.<sup>16</sup>

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14. Gómez-Quiñones notes that the landless sector “worked for wages in principle; these were sometimes real, more often fictional. Wage labor worked alongside indentured labor and even slave labor.” He also states that the “majority of landless mestizos were laborers or *medieros* (sharecroppers). Persons were paid in subsistence, shares, goods, and small wages.” See Gómez-Quiñones, “Origins and Development of the Mexican Working Class,” 481, 501.

15. Gilberto M. Hinojosa, *A Borderlands Town in Transition: Laredo, 1755–1870* (College Station, Tex., 1983), 41. David Weber notes that in New Mexico the practice of debt-peonage was widespread, even more so in the Mexican than in the Spanish period (Weber, *Mexican Frontier, 1821–1846* [Albuquerque, 1982], 211–212). Cleland found the same in southern California, where the Indians were “the chief labor supply.... They lived and worked under a form of peonage similar in some respects to that so long in effect in Mexico....” (See Robert Glass Cleland, *The Cattle on a Thousand Hills* [San Marino, 1951], 81.) Gómez-Quiñones elaborates: “As ranchos developed [Indians] were hired out to the rancheros for a fee to the missions to do similar work on the ranchos as for the missions. None or little payment went to the laborers.... At most they received clothes, blankets, cheap trinkets and nearly always living quarters and food. Much of this they produced through their work.” (See Gómez-Quiñones, “Origins and Development of the Mexican Working Class,” 474.)

16. Antonio Ríos-Bustamante makes the most cogent argument for capitalist development in the pre-Anglo Southwest, specifically, Albuquerque, New Mexico; however, his own data contradict his position. Bustamante found that 48.5 percent of the laborers were handicraftsmen and 23.8 percent were peasants; only 13.1 percent were day laborers. As he points out, even these day laborers often owned land and were “paid in produce.” The description strongly resembles those of European villages at the height of the period generally known as feudalism. See Antonio J. Ríos-Bustamante, “New Mexico in the Eighteenth Century: Life, Labor and Trade in the Villa de San Felipe de Albuquerque, 1706–1790,” *Aztlán*, VII (1976), 357–389.

The descriptions of life in the Southwest prior to the Anglo conquest strongly suggest precapitalist (if not outright feudal) relations. California Indians, working as servants or laborers, were greatly exploited by the landowners and lived at the bottom of the class hierarchy. New Mexico consisted primarily of minifundia farming communities in which poverty-stricken subsistence villagers were forced into sharecropping and servitude by the *latifundistas*, the dominant economic, political, and social actors. The *latifundistas* used extraeconomic coercion to exploit labor.

The idea that a Mexican “working class” existed before 1848 may arise from the appearance of monetary compensation for labor services. However, the existence of money payment does not, in itself, create a capitalist, free wage-labor system. Serfs and peasants at various times in precapitalist societies received monetary compensation. These labor forms generally were temporary, such as in periods of labor scarcity. The general practice was payment in kind or in labor services. Debt peonage, like money payment, can exist side-by-side with free peasantry, bound peasantry, and slavery.

Furthermore, a typical California rancho cannot be characterized as an “early capitalist” enterprise. None of the servants, laborers, or artisans working on the Mariano Vallejo, Bernardo Yorba, or Julian Chaves properties received a wage. Some were forced into labor through military raids. The Hacienda de los Yorbas (near present-day Santa Ana, California) was representative of the working California *rancho*:

The tradesmen and people employed about the [fifty-room] house were: Four wool-combers, two tanners, one butter and cheeseman who directed every day the milking of from fifty to sixty cows, one harness maker, two shoemakers, one jeweler, one plasterer, one carpenter, one mayordomo, two errand boys, one sheep herder, one cook, one baker, two washerwomen, one woman to iron, four sewing women, one dressmaker, two gardeners, a schoolmaster, and a man to make the wine.... More than a hundred lesser employees were maintained on the ranch. The Indian peons lived in a little village of their own.... Ten steers a month were slaughtered to supply the hacienda.<sup>17</sup>

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17. Cleland, *Cattle on a Thousand Hills*, 74. Señora Vallejo, wife of Don Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo, recalled that, in their northern California hacienda, each of her sixteen children had a personal servant; she herself had two. In addition,

Generally, ranches and villages in California, New Mexico, and Texas provided for most of the needs of the residents, both laborers and landowners. They functioned largely as self-subsistence units. Although some of the products of the hacienda—primarily hides and tallow and, later, livestock—were exported, landholders used the proceeds to satisfy their taste for luxury, not to accumulate capital.<sup>18</sup> In New Mexico, small landowners and communal village farmers performed their own labor, had no servants, and often sharecropped for the larger owners. Within the large, small, and communal landholding system, labor remained relatively unspecialized. On the large landholdings, owners extracted wealth through the labor of their *peones*; in the communal villages, families eked out a marginal existence by their own labor and generally relied on payment in kind for labor services outside the village.

Those who see “early capitalism” as dominant in the Mexican Southwest claim that the pre-1848 and post-1848 Spanish borderlands societies differ not in quality but in quantity. From this perspective, linear change characterizes the historical process after 1848: a less-developed, early capitalist Spanish southwestern society merged with a higher stage of that same type of society characterized as U.S. capitalist. This merger is considered a “modernization process.”

Modernization theory, as applied in Chicano history, depends largely upon a view of the hacienda as a commercial institution and, therefore, capitalist.<sup>19</sup> There has been a long

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twenty-seven other women ground corn, served in the kitchen, washed clothes, sewed, and spun: a total of forty-five servants in the master's house (*ibid.*, 43). In New Mexico, the raiding party was employed to acquire servants from Navajos, Utes, or Apaches. Amado Chaves reminisced in 1927 that “many of the rich people who did not have the nerve to go into campaigns would buy Indian girls.” Weber, *Mexican Frontier*, 212.

18. Lynn I. Perrigo, *Texas and Our Spanish Southwest* (Dallas, 1960), 80–83.

19. Not all southwestern haciendas—or ranchos—meet this definition. Robert Glass Cleland compared the southern California ranchos with the English manor, noting that “each ranch was virtually a self-sustaining economic unit” (Cleland, *Cattle on a Thousand Hills*, 42–43). Sheridan notes that the haciendas in and around Tucson were “geared towards subsistence rather than commercial exploitation and expansion” (Sheridan, *Los Tucsonenses*, 14). Nancie L. González's study of New Mexico attests to the self-subsistence character of production in villages (although surplus was often traded): “The small northern Spanish villages were relatively isolated...from each other, and each one formed an almost self-sufficient unit, both

debate over the nature of the hacienda in Mexico and Latin America. The predominant attitude twenty-five years ago was that the hacienda was a feudal or quasifeudal institution. In the last two and a half decades, this approach, which was largely based upon Marxist approaches developed by Francois Chevalier and utilized by Woodrow Borah, came under strong attack from non-Marxists, particularly U.S. scholars trained in a functionalist tradition. They substituted eclecticism and empirical historicism for Marxist concepts and methods.<sup>20</sup> The question of the nature of the hacienda became part of a larger debate over the character of Latin American society. In general, the non-Marxists shifted the crucial test for the character of the institution from the manner of extracting surplus labor at the hacienda (relations of production) to whether the products of that institution entered the world labor market (relations of exchange).

While these debates helped clarify concepts and approaches, they did not, in our estimation, undermine the evidence for the hacienda being an essentially noncapitalist enterprise. The influential Mexican historian Enrique Semo aptly described the economic essence of the hacienda by saying that it produced for the market during a period of world market booms and returned to being a self-sufficient enterprise during contractions of the world economy.<sup>21</sup> This prodigious feat is something a capitalist enterprise cannot do.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, so far as social relations between laborers and owners of the haciendas are concerned, twenty-five years of detailed investigations have demonstrated that many forms of labor relations, besides debt peonage, could be found at the hacienda, including share-

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in terms of economy and social structure" (Nancie L. González, *The Spanish-Americans of New Mexico* [Albuquerque, 1967], 38–39). Robert J. Rosenbaum corroborates the findings of Sheridan, Cleland, and González: "Most mexicanos engaged in subsistence agriculture solidly rooted in the traditions and social relationships of their village or land grant.... Producing a surplus for market was very low on their list of priorities." Rosenbaum, *Mexicano Resistance*, 11.

20. See Eric Van Young, "Mexican Rural History since Chevalier: The Historiography of the Colonial Hacienda," *Latin American Research Review*, XVIII (1983), 12.

21. Enrique Semo, *Historia del capitalismo en México: Los orígenes, 1521–1763* (México, D.F., 1973).

22. During periods of crisis, capitalist enterprises may, among other things, go bankrupt, close, disappear, get sold, or get absorbed, but they do not, chameleon-like, become self-sufficient English manors.

cropping, renting, service tenantry, and temporary wage labor. This is a far cry from a prevalence of capital/labor relations.<sup>23</sup>

Modernization theory, as well as “world-systems” theory, assumes that the essence of capitalism lies not in the social relations, property patterns, ideology, and political institutions of a society, but, rather, in the existence of commercial relations. Immanuel Wallerstein’s world-systems approach has been justly criticized for making international commercial relations among countries the key to determining if a society were capitalist and for failing to address local, regional, and national influences on social structure.<sup>24</sup> Consequently, the claim that the Southwest was “early capitalist” stands upon the evidence of connections with international markets. If one accepts the “international trade equals capitalism” argument, then the possibility for historical analysis of specific economic forms collapses. Long-distance trade and production for distant markets exist in nearly all human societies. Is history, to paraphrase Marx, the record of only *one* socioeconomic form—capitalism? Modernization theory *ipso facto* obviates the question, “Was the Southwest in the Spanish/Mexican period precapitalist, quasifeudal, or capitalist?” In this view, the relations among Mission Indians, Pueblo Indians, Mexicans, Plains Indians, and Anglo-Americans are reduced to a relationship among different levels of capitalist society.

Despite differences in approach, most Chicano history scholars emphasize cultural conflict as the major theme in Chicano history. The first approach does this by default because conquering and conquered societies are defined in a way that precludes discussion of systemic economic conflict. In the second and significantly more complex approach, economic conflict is belittled by stipulating economic differences only of degree between the two societies. In our view, the use of vague economic categories has caused Chicano historians, almost by default, to emphasize conflict based upon cultural or racial models even as they sometimes mention economic factors and utilize Marxist

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23. Van Young, “Mexican Rural History,” 24. This situation is quite typical of precapitalist societies. Wage-labor, sharecropping, and other arrangements were known during Roman times.

24. The critiques are numerous, but see especially Eric Wolf, *Europe and the People without History* (Berkeley, 1981) and Peter Worsley, *Three Worlds of Culture and World Development* (Chicago, 1984).

rhetoric. Admittedly, every work in Chicano history cannot be wholly arranged into our scheme. A very important example is Ramón Gutiérrez's award-winning work on Spanish-Pueblo and gender relations in colonial New Mexico which we cannot neatly place in the two groups above.<sup>25</sup> While Gutiérrez mentions the prevalence and, in fact, the increase of servile forms of labor in New Mexico towards the end of the eighteenth century, he focuses on gender systems and sexual practices as indicative of relations of domination and key to the construction, mediation, and defense of cultural identity. In his view, the Hispano-Anglo conflict can be seen primarily as a form of culture clash that can be explained without significant reference to systemic economic conflict.<sup>26</sup>

Our purpose is not to develop water-tight classification schemes. Such an effort would be not only doomed from the start given diversity within Chicano historiography but also of limited value in and of itself. We now turn to drawing on currents present in some of these works to suggest what we think would be a stronger analytic framework for examining Chicano economic and social history.

### On Relationships of Production

Categories of political economy devised by Marx, with appropriate temporal and spatial specificity, reveal that pre-1848 Spanish-Mexican society derived from Spain's social structure in the New World. That is, the social heritage of the southwestern Spanish/Mexican era derived from hierarchical and inherited class relations characteristic of the Spanish social order.<sup>27</sup> This is not to say, however, that the pre-1848 New World social formations replicated Spanish social relations exactly and had no history of their own. The New World manifested numerous variations due to climate, topography, demography, and so forth, much as, in Spain itself, the large *dehesas* of Andalucía differed

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25. One of his principal aims, Gutiérrez explains, was not to be delimited by existing historiography but, rather, to initiate a "new dialogue." Ramón Gutiérrez, in a session devoted to his book, *When Jesus Came the Corn Mothers Went Away*, at the annual meeting of the Pacific Coast Branch of the American Historical Association, Corvallis, Oregon, Aug. 14, 1992.

26. Ramón Gutiérrez, *When Jesus Came, the Corn Mothers Went Away* (Stanford, Calif., 1991), 325–327.

27. Perrigo, *Texas and Our Spanish Southwest*, 33–34, 44–45, 79–81.

from the small peasant holdings of the Cantabrian range during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

After the conquest of New Mexico, first the *encomiendas* and later the *repartimientos* formed the basis of colonial production. As an institution, the *encomienda* dates back to the colonization of Castile during the retreat of the Moors.<sup>28</sup> Its appearance in New Mexico reflects the traditional assignments granted to a Spanish conqueror—in this case, to some of Oñate's top soldiers—that included supervision of Indian subjects required to perform labor for the benefit of the *encomendero*.<sup>29</sup> Additionally, large land grants were given to the more prominent Spaniards. Through the *encomiendas*, the Pueblo villages contributed an annual tribute in kind to the leading colonists, usually consisting of maize and cotton blankets. In New Mexico, the tribute accruing from the *encomienda* did not amount to much. The *repartimiento*—or apportionment of coerced labor required from the Indian population living near an *encomienda*—was utilized to the fullest extent by the settlers living on ranches.<sup>30</sup>

Were these class distinctions softened by interaction and a reciprocal spirit?<sup>31</sup> In precapitalist societies, the need to cooperate against the forces of nature and the geographical isolation (and lack of transportation) encouraged a paternalism in which the lord cared for his vassals and serfs. This aspect of precapitalist society was reinforced by religious tenets that rationalized the lord/vassal relationship. From a romantic point of view, the nature of class relations in precapitalist societies can be favorably compared to the atomization and competitive mentality prevalent in a fully developed capitalist society. Social historical analysis, however, should look not only at the daily examples of benevolence or lack thereof, but also at a society's long-term development and at the opportunities of vassals to free themselves from

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28. Robert S. Chamberlain, *Castilian Background of the Repartimiento-Encomienda* (Washington, D.C., 1939).

29. See James Lockhart, "Encomienda and Hacienda: The Evolution of the Great Estate in the Spanish Indies," *Hispanic American Historical Review*, XLIX (1969), 411–429, for a discussion of the juridical, and the practical, relationship between *encomiendas* and land ownership.

30. George I. Sánchez, *Forgotten People: A Study of New Mexicans* (Albuquerque, 1949), chap. 1.

31. Camarillo, *Chicanos in a Changing Society*, 12, 13.

coerced servitude. In precapitalist situations, then, "benevolence" may be viewed as an instrument for maintaining domination rather than as a characteristic of a virtuous older order.

Additional cases in point were the missions and ranchos of California. California missionaries confronted a different situation than those in New Mexico. In New Mexico, as in large parts of Mexico and South America, the Indian population was concentrated in relatively large native towns and villages where the missionaries took the faith to the residents. In California where the Indians were scattered in hundreds of small hamlets, the Spaniards brought many of them into specially created mission settlements and, despite some examples of "benevolence," subjected them to forced labor that resembled slavery in all but name.<sup>32</sup> That system came to an end in the 1830s with secularization and the rapid transformation of mission and other lands into privately held ranchos. The size and number of these ranchos and the social relations they engendered predominated for several decades. As already noted, the rancho in many ways resembled the medieval English manor in its self-sufficiency. Although there were exports of hides and tallow, those exports satisfied the luxury needs of the rancheros and did not lead to the accumulation of capital.

The absence of capitalism is also apparent in Arizona and Texas. Arizona was settled as early as 1696, when Father Eusebio Kino founded a number of missions including San Xavier del Bac, near present-day Tucson. By the end of his work, around 1712, twenty-five years of quiet were shattered by the discovery of silver in Arizona. After this brief mining boom, Arizona's economy was dominated by livestock production at the missions and the few haciendas. From the mid-eighteenth century onward, warring Indians made maintenance of this frontier next to impossible. With Mexican independence and the disappearance of the presidios, the area was abandoned from 1822 to 1862.<sup>33</sup>

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32. Varden Fuller, "The Supply of Agricultural Labor as a Factor in the Evolution of Farm Organization in California," in Senate Committee on Education and Labor, *Hearings on Agricultural Labor in California*, 67 Cong. (1940), part 54.

33. Odie R. Faulk, "The Presidio: Fortress or Farce?" *Journal of the West*, VIII (1969), 21-28. For a contrasting view, see James Officer, *Hispanic Arizona, 1536-1856* (Tucson, 1987).

The case of Texas was at once different and similar. The settlements were small and dispersed mostly around San Antonio, La Bahia, and Nacogdoches. The recent work by Gerald Poyo and Gilberto Hinojosa, while not focused on the issue at hand, provides what seems like a check list for the lack of capitalist characteristics: absence of laborers, lack of markets for products, backward agricultural technology, and local “elites” concentrating on raising cattle in an extensive manner, much like the Californios.<sup>34</sup> Montejano’s detailed description of Texas border social relations supports a similar conclusion.<sup>35</sup> The population of Texas barely reached 4,000 at the end of the eighteenth century. In the lower Rio Grande Valley (where the way of life was quite similar to that of early California), a “few large Mexican landowners lived an idle and lordly existence based on a system of peonage.”<sup>36</sup> Already by 1830, Anglo-Americans outnumbered Mexicans by ten to one. They included some farmers, the harbingers of a new social system; many held slaves, planted cotton, and sold it. In Texas, then, two sets of relations—precapitalist and slavery—existed side-by-side.

### On Relations of Exchange

Commodity production—that is, organized production of goods for sale in the marketplace, a primary objective of the capitalist system—was nearly absent in the Mexican Southwest. To be sure, there were trade contacts with the outside. Despite centuries of isolation, the Spanish/Mexican Southwest maintained an array of commercial ties with surrounding economies, but this trade cannot be considered capitalistic.<sup>37</sup> As Douglas Monroy has observed about California, “the trade of the Cal-

34. Poyo and Hinojosa, “Spanish Texas and Borderlands.”

35. According to Montejano:

At the time of independence in 1836 and annexation in 1848, one finds a landed Mexican elite, an ambitious Anglo mercantile clique, a class of independent but impoverished Mexican rancheros, and an indebted working class of Mexican peones. The new Anglo elite was generally Mexicanized and frequently intermarried or became *compadres* (“god-relatives”) with landowning Mexican families. As one Texas scholar described the situation, the Anglo cattle barons established an “economic, social, and political feudalism” that was “natural” and not necessarily resented by those who submitted to it [O. Douglas Weeks, “The Texas-Mexican and the Politics of South Texas,” *American Political Science Review*, XXIV (1930), 610.] Annexation had merely changed the complexion of the landowning elite. (Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans*, 8)

36. McWilliams, *North from Mexico*, 85.

37. Before the Spanish *entrada* into New Mexico during the 1600s, trade had

ifornia coast in the early nineteenth century may well have been a part of the world market, but the territory was not capitalist—the market did not mediate between persons or things.”<sup>38</sup>

In a conception of capitalism as a historically specific pattern of production, ownership of the means of production (in this case, land) separates the laborer from the capitalist. Labor power becomes a commodity which is purchased and utilized to produce other commodities. Commodity production on the basis of a wage-labor class constitutes the distinguishing feature of capitalism. Those scholars whom we are critiquing here use the term “capitalism,” as Elizabeth-Fox Genovese has observed, “in a general, heuristic fashion to apply to concentration of wealth, participation in commerce, the presence of banks, and the quest for incomes.”<sup>39</sup> Such use reflects ahistorical attributes of all or most economic activity and, therefore, tends to “conflate all historical experience.”<sup>40</sup>

As in the case of some localities in classical antiquity and in medieval Western Europe, the intensification of commerce in the Southwest from 1831 to 1848 was not conducive to the development of local industry and manufacturing or to the growth of towns and handicraft industries.<sup>41</sup> One historian has noted that in New Mexico the landed oligarchy engaging in trade “became merchants as well as feudal lords.”<sup>42</sup> Much of the revenue gained through trade was used to purchase luxury goods, manufactured items, and land. Consequently, the influx of revenue had little appreciable impact on the redistribution

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already taken place among earlier groups of regional settlers. In his first expedition, Coronado observed the existence of commerce between the Plains Indians and the Pueblos. The Plains Indians, skillful tanners of buffalo and deer hides, exchanged these goods on a regular basis for Pueblo corn, cloth, and pottery.

38. Monroy, *Thrown among Strangers*, 101.

39. Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household* (Chapel Hill, 1988), 53.

40. *Ibid.*

41. The development of commercial capital has been erroneously associated with unremitting progress. Trade and commercial capital can also make their appearance among economically undeveloped, nomadic peoples—as evidenced by the Southwest before the Spanish invasion. In the case of the Southwest, manufacturing or industrial development did not occur as a direct result of increased commercial activity. Weber makes this specific observation in *Mexican Frontier*, 144.

42. Max Moorhead, cited in Weber, *Mexican Frontier*, 210.

of land, division of labor, and technology in production. In fact, during the Mexican era, when trade expanded in New Mexico and California, class distinctions hardened, large land grants multiplied, and peonage increased.<sup>43</sup> Moreover, by 1846, foreigners dominated in artisan production, leading a contemporary to remark that, in spite of the high volume of trade in hide and tallow, “there are no capitalists in California.”<sup>44</sup> It is difficult, if not impossible, to paint the *rancheros* as capitalists. Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo, the “proud oligarch of Sonoma,”<sup>45</sup> had his own private militia to guard his vast estate and forty-seven servants to tend to his wife and children.

### Periodization: The Key in the Nineteenth Century?

How was the pre-1848 socioeconomic formation in the Southwest finally broken? What was the social significance of the Mexican-American War? The answers to these questions are paradoxically both simple and complex: simple, in that within a few years, a different social organization of production prevailed in the southwestern economy; complex, in that (with regional and chronological differences) a variety of social mechanisms and individual agents simultaneously influenced this change. In some areas, it is clear that economic forces—specifically, differences in the methods governing the economic organization of production—were the principal determinants of social change. In other areas (or at other times), purely economic factors are obscured, and legal (and/or extraeconomic) forms of coercion predominate. This situation is not surprising if the process is, as we assert, one of social revolution. It is certainly more difficult to identify and to ascertain the impact of social forces in an epoch of upheaval and rapid flux than in an era of stability.<sup>46</sup>

The notion that Chicano history begins with the conquest

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43. Weber, *Mexican Frontier*, 209–212; Gutiérrez, *When Jesus Came*, 325–327.

44. Weber, *Mexican Frontier*, 146.

45. *Ibid.*, 211.

46. One can identify two major contributors to historical change in the Southwest between 1821 and 1880: the development of commodity circulation and the effects of usury capital. We have already discussed the development of commodity circulation as a weakening element. Usury capital as one example of a process that characterized the conflict between these two social economies is described in Raúl A. Fernández, *The United States-Mexico Border: A Politico-Economic Profile* (Notre Dame, 1977).

of 1848 is a common thread running through a majority of works in Chicano history.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, Chicano historians nearly unanimously emphasize a continuity of Chicano history from that point to the present, with cultural conflict between Anglos and Mexicans being the explanatory center of the discourse. Typically these same historians apply concepts that inadequately identify significant differences between nineteenth- and twentieth-century Chicano history, just as they tend to leave vague the nature of the economic conflict between conqueror and conquered in the mid-nineteenth century. On the other hand, a shared “cultural” trait—for example, being Spanish-surnamed or Spanish-speaking—provides *prima facie* evidence for continuity between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The conquest of 1848 appears to be the key event that subordinated Mexicans and thus represents the beginning of Chicanos as a discrete population in the United States—the “Conquered Generation,” in García’s terms.<sup>48</sup> Later immigrants entered a society that had institutionalized the separate and subordinated status of Mexicans. This view is most clearly advanced by Albert Camarillo: “The history of the Chicano people as an ethnic minority in the United States was forged primarily from a set of nineteenth-century experiences.”<sup>49</sup> “The key to reconstructing the history of Chicano society in Southern California,” he continues, “is understanding the major developments of the half-century after the Mexican War.”<sup>50</sup> He calls scholars’ tendency to consider the nineteenth century fairly unimportant a “long-held but untenable” view. In sum, the

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47. Weber correctly points out that the bulk of Chicano history focuses on Mexican Americans in the border region since the Mexican-American War (Weber, “John Francis Bannon,” 69). We note these important exceptions: Gutiérrez, *When Jesus Came*, Hinojosa, *Borderlands Town in Transition*; and Monroy, *Thrown among Strangers*.

48. García, *Desert Immigrants*. The fullest development of this notion is the “internal colony” model best represented in the works of sociologists Alfredo Mirandé, *The Chicano Experience: An Alternative Perspective* (Notre Dame, 1985); Mario Barrera, *Race and Class in the Southwest: A Theory of Racial Inequality* (Notre Dame, 1979); and Chávez, *The Lost Land*. For an early critique, see Gilbert G. González, “A Critique of the Internal Colony Model,” *Latin American Perspectives*, V (1974), 154–161.

49. Camarillo, *Chicanos in a Changing Society*, 2.

50. *Ibid.*, 3.

nineteenth- and twentieth-century Chicano experience seems fundamentally more continuous than discontinuous.<sup>51</sup> The “importance of the nineteenth century for understanding the twentieth-century Chicano experience” has emerged as “self-evident to historians,” according to David J. Weber.<sup>52</sup> We question that assumption. The argument can be made for northern New Mexico, where twentieth-century Mexican immigration played a less significant role, and it may perhaps be extended to other subregions, but not persuasively to the region as a whole.

The question of when Chicano history begins is intertwined with another sharply debated issue: Do Chicanos constitute another immigrant ethnic group (similar to the Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, Germans, Jews, and others) or are they a “nationally” self-conscious, “conquered,” indigenous population who were dispossessed of their land as were the American Indians? How are Chicanos similar to and different from other non-dominant peoples? Are Chicanos unique?<sup>53</sup>

The conventional view that the contemporary Chicano experience derives from social relations established after the 1848 conquest and that the nineteenth century is thus “key” to understanding Chicano history rests upon the assumption that today’s Chicanos share certain characteristics with those of the past: possessors of a distinct culture and victims of racial prejudice that has led to life in segregated barrios, stereotyped behavior, violence, and subordinate social and occupational status. Camarillo and Griswold del Castillo, for example, see the barrios of today as originating in the conquest; De León contends that Mexican culture in the Southwest transcends the Mexican and Anglo-American periods; and Gómez-Quiñones argues that the history of the Chicano working class can be traced to the seventeenth century. Carlos Cortés summarizes the perspective: “Mexican Americans began as an annexed regional minority and continued so throughout the nineteenth century.

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51. Saragoza, “The Significance of Recent Chicano-Related Historical Writings,” 29.

52. David J. Weber, “The New Chicano Urban History,” *History Teacher*, XVI (1983), 226.

53. Joan Moore and Harry Pachon argue that the Spanish- and Mexican-origin population of the Southwest has a unique history. See their *Hispanics in the United States* (Engelwood Cliffs, N.J., 1985).

They are still concentrated heavily in the Southwest...<sup>54</sup> Thus, the Chicanos' "conquered" legacy distinguishes them from other minorities such as the Chinese and Japanese (especially in the nineteenth century), and parallels the involuntary origins of African-Americans and American Indians.

If one focuses on issues of economic development, however, important differences emerge between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Our examination of the record suggests the existence of two separate epochs and populations in the history of Spanish-speakers in the Southwest,<sup>55</sup> a perspective that supports Almaguer's recent claim that "a major discontinuity exists between the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Chicano experiences."<sup>56</sup> Of primary importance is the fact that, with the exception of New Mexico and southern Colorado, the small number of Mexicans annexed as a result of the conquest was inconsequential when compared to the much larger number of late nineteenth- and twentieth-century Mexican migrants to the region. Second, the parallels between the nineteenth-century Chicano experience and the experiences of other nonwhite minorities are striking. Mexicans suffered segregation, violence (such as lynching), and exploitation, but so too did the "non-conquered" Chinese, Japanese, Filipinos, and Asian Indians, among others.<sup>57</sup> Third, the massive economic transformations of the Southwest created a great demand for cheap, unskilled labor, which was met by unprecedented migration from Mexico beginning around the turn of the century.

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54. Carlos Cortés, "Mexicans," in Stephan Thernstrom, Ann Orlov, and Oscar Handlin, eds., *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups* (Cambridge, Mass., 1980), 699.

55. We note in passing that, in this age when terms of self-reference have acquired paramount importance, the term "Chicano" itself developed as a self-referent by working-class, immigrant Mexicans in the twentieth century (Camarillo, *Chicanos in a Changing Society*, x-xi). Also, old settlers and new arrivals considered each other to be culturally different.

56. Almaguer, "Ideological Distortions in Recent Chicano Historiography," 23.

57. We do not suggest that the experiences of these groups are identical. For example, the Asian experience was unique in that Asians were the only group to suffer total exclusion (1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, 1917 Barred Zone Act, and 1920 Immigration Act), as well as other legislative barriers imposed by American society. We argue, in contrast, that Chicano history has tended to examine the distinctiveness of the Chicano population at the expense of similarities it shares with other subordinated groups in the twentieth-century Southwest.

Certainly, the pattern of regional development in the United States greatly affected Chicano history. The growth of southern California in particular became intimately related with demographic shifts in the Chicano population. The extraordinary development of the western half of the Southwest region—a result of mass migration—came with the growth of California agriculture and southern California industry, both of which would have been impossible without massive water projects.<sup>58</sup> Carey McWilliams noted economist Paul S. Taylor's trenchant 1927 observation: "Irrigation equals Mexicans."<sup>59</sup> Additionally, the recent regional development of the Southwest has depended on massive east-to-west U.S. migration and on migrants from Asia, many of whom shared a common experience with those Mexican immigrants laboring for agribusiness.

There were frequent violent struggles between precapitalist Mexican and capitalist Anglo societies after 1848, but by 1900 they had faded as a new, integrated economic order arose. The 15,000 Mexican citizens living outside of New Mexico at the time of the conquest either accommodated to the new society or were overwhelmed by Mexican migrants. The conquered group lacked sufficient numbers to have a significant impact in the Anglo era. Moreover, once they had lost their lands by the late nineteenth century, they suffered further significant cultural disintegration. Except in New Mexico and southern Colorado, Mexican migrants introduced a completely new period in the history of the Spanish-speaking people in the Southwest, including Texas where the break with Mexico had come earlier in 1836.<sup>60</sup>

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58. This growth cannot, of course, be limited to the utilization of the Colorado River. California's Central Valley and State Water projects and other western water projects are an integral part of the picture. Marc Reisner, *Cadillac Desert: The American West and Its Disappearing Water* (New York, 1986); Johannes Hemmlun, *Water Development and Water Planning in the Southwestern United States* (Denmark, 1969); Charles W. Howe and K. William Easter, *Interbasin Transfers of Water* (Baltimore, 1971); Norris Hundley, jr., *The Great Thirst: Californians and Water, 1770s-1990s* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1992).

59. McWilliams, *North from Mexico*, 162.

60. The argument for discontinuity is not new. Moses Rischin, "Continuity and Discontinuities in Spanish-Speaking California," in Charles Wollenberg, ed., *Ethnic Conflict in California* (Los Angeles, 1970), 43-60, and Arthur F. Corwin, "Mexican-American History: An Assessment," *Pacific Historical Review* XLII (1973), 270-273, made the argument nearly twenty years ago. Their views, however, were marred by an "assimilationist" approach. Chicano historians threw out the proverbial "baby with the bathwater" by ignoring their views in their entirety.

Migration in the twentieth century altered the character of the southwestern Mexican community. By the 1920s, the Spanish-speaking population had grown dramatically, older settlements had expanded and many new ones had appeared, and Mexican labor had become of fundamental importance in economic development. There were other changes as well. Earlier Anglo-Mexican social relations had turned on the conflict between two distinct socioeconomic formations, while twentieth-century social relations centered upon the internal class conflicts inherent to corporate capitalism. The economic issues affecting Anglo-Mexican social relations had shifted from conflicting systems of production to class relations within the same system. Likewise, the political conflicts shifted from land issues in the nineteenth century to working-class concerns in the twentieth. As Montejano has demonstrated, these conflictive relations are expressed in the racial and ethnic dimensions of the contemporary Southwest.<sup>61</sup> The Mexican community, as we know it today, developed in this new atmosphere of corporate capitalism, a twentieth-century phenomenon.

We hope that a focus on these economic changes leads historians to reexamine Chicano history's dominant periodization to date, which assumes a fundamental continuity between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. That "group history" view, based upon racial conflict and shared language, obscures broader and more fundamental themes based on economic transformations and their social consequences.

### **The Urban Emphasis: A Reappraisal**

Besides calling for a rethinking of the periodization of Chicano history, we also suggest a reappraisal of the emphasis on the urban experiences of Chicanos. In a review of three major books in Chicano history by Albert Camarillo, Mario García, and Richard Griswold del Castillo, David J. Weber notes that "all three try to link their work to the mainstream of social and urban history while still focusing on the particularity of the Mexican American experience." Moreover, these scholars have "established the importance of the city as the crucible of change

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61. Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans*, passim.

in Chicano society and culture, and have provided a valuable corrective to the notion of Chicanos as an essentially rural people.<sup>62</sup> Ricardo Romo, while acknowledging that “Chicanos have not always lived in urban areas,” nonetheless contends that “since 1609, at least, when their Spanish-Mexican ancestors founded the pueblo of Santa Fe, they have contributed to and have been a part of the urbanization process in the Southwest.” Griswold del Castillo concurs, adding that “[d]uring Spanish colonial times probably a larger proportion of the region’s population lived in pueblos, towns, and cities than did the population in other areas of the United States.”<sup>63</sup> Thus, historians have tended to view Chicano history since the Spanish era as a branch of urban history. An immediate problem with this view is that it labels as “urban” even small population centers, such as Tucson in 1850. Such practice blurs the distinction between “urban” and “rural” to the point where it virtually disappears.

Another consideration here is that pre-1848 southwestern towns and pueblos can hardly be classed with contemporary industrial urban centers on the East Coast, the more so because precapitalist population centers differ significantly from cities and towns in a capitalistic social economy. Moreover, fully seventy percent of the southwestern population lived in rural areas at the turn of the century. It is doubtful that Chicanos were more urbanized at that time than the general population. As late as the 1930s, urban Chicanos made up only half of the Chicano population.<sup>64</sup> “Until the 1960s,” states Martín Sánchez Jankowski, “Chicanos lived primarily in rural areas or were members of small

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62. Weber, “The New Chicano History,” 224.

63. Ricardo Romo, “The Urbanization of Southwestern Chicanos in the Early Twentieth Century,” in Ricardo Romo and Raymund Paredes, eds., *New Directions in Chicano Scholarship* (La Jolla, Calif., 1977), 183; Richard Griswold del Castillo, “Quantitative History in the American Southwest: A Survey and Critique,” *Western Historical Quarterly*, XV (1984), 408.

64. One extensive analysis of the 1910, 1920, and 1930 censuses found that, in 1930, “in the states west of the Mississippi, the average of the percent of Mexicans in urban communities, by states, is 36 percent” and, further, that the “distribution of Mexicans in western United States, in the principal region which they occupy, is largely rural.” However, in the midwestern states (states east of the Mississippi), the Mexican community is largely urban, with 61 percent living in such areas. See Elizabeth Broadbent, “The Distribution of Mexican Population in the United States” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1941), 61.

or medium sized communities. During the 1960s and 1970s Chicanos became more urban...."<sup>65</sup>

As a consequence of the emphasis upon so-called "urban" life, Chicano historiography has focused primarily on industrial, blue-collar labor and neglected rural and semiurban Chicano communities like the citrus picker villages of southern California.<sup>66</sup> Carey McWilliams, one of the few historians to recognize the rural character of such communities, has observed: "This citrus belt complex of peoples, institutions, and relationships has no parallel in rural life in America and nothing quite like it exists elsewhere in California. It is neither town nor country, neither rural nor urban. It is a world of its own."<sup>67</sup>

Attention to the economic developments that engendered these communities would reveal, especially by the early 1900s when commodity production in large-scale agriculture, mining, and transportation was assuming economic predominance, a variety of community forms shaped by the industries that fostered them. Labor camps reflected the needs of railroad, mining, agricultural, stock-raising, lumbering, and other industrial enterprises. For example, Arizona mining towns, which employed considerable Mexican labor beginning in the late nineteenth century, differed in character from sharecropping communities of Texas, and from cities with a large commercial/industrial character like Los Angeles. Many communities existed only briefly, disappearing when a mine was exhausted, a track completed, or orchards subdivided. The Mexican community, affected by the demand for its labor power, settled according to the pattern of economic activity.

Rural citrus communities in southern California, as revealed in recent research by Gilbert G. González, tended to be permanent, remaining as barrios today in spite of the suburban sprawl that has engulfed them. This permanence reflected the citrus growers themselves who were stable, year-round employers. Thus,

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65. Martín Sánchez Jankowski, *City Bound Urban Life and Political Attitudes among Chicano Youth* (Albuquerque, 1986), 4.

66. César Chávez and his rural union movement have been all but ignored by this urban history. Richard Griswold del Castillo and Richard García try to close the gap in *César Chávez: A Biography* (Norman, forthcoming).

67. Carey McWilliams, *Southern California: An Island on the Land* (New York, 1946), 207.

some labor camps were clearly defined, permanent, stable, and well-structured Mexican villages. Such camps existed not only in the southern California citrus belt, but also in migrant agricultural areas (especially in sugar beet fields), and in mining, railroad, and construction regions as well. On the other hand, those camps consisting of laborers under the contract system, which structured family labor in agriculture, were transitory and labor was unorganized (except in beet work).

Some camps were essentially company towns, owing their existence to a single company or grower association. *Colonias*, or barrios, in the copper towns of Arizona, the Goodyear cotton-town of Litchfield, Arizona, the beet-fields of California and Colorado, the steel mills of Indiana, and the citrus-grower association camps of southern California were part of a larger pattern of company towns in the West, the Midwest, and the South. There were significant variations among these communities. For example, the sugar beet company towns in Ventura County, California, had a decidedly different atmosphere than the towns of the South Platte Valley, Colorado. Even within southern California, the citrus company towns varied, some experiencing heavy-handed paternalistic intervention into daily life, others a hands-off policy by growers, and still others something in between.<sup>68</sup>

The great variety among camps led to significant differences in gender and family relations.<sup>69</sup> For example, employment and/or educational opportunities available to women and children varied with the organization of labor in particular enterprises. These, in turn, affected family, culture, and, ultimately, community. In the regions where family labor was widespread, the

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68. The research of Gilbert González indicates that the citrus picker community of southern California deviated significantly from the urban, blue-collar pattern. Many have viewed southern California barrios as parts of large, urban complexes. This may be true today, but it was not so during the height of the citrus industry. At about 1940, some 36,000 Mexican pickers and packers were employed by the 242 or so grower associations in California, principally in the southern part. About 75,000 to 100,000 Mexicans dwelled in the camps, some of which had been in existence since 1910.

69. Nancy Hewitt presents a powerful argument for studying women within the context of the social and material circumstances of their communities in "Beyond the Search for Sisterhood: American Women's History in the 1980s," *Social History*, X (1985), 299-321.

independence of women as economic actors was sharply curtailed in comparison to their urban counterparts. Where family labor was largely absent, as in the citrus industry, it was because such labor was of little significance in maintaining production. In the citrus industry, this permitted women to be widely employed in the packinghouses where they earned wages equal to those of their male counterparts, the pickers. This distinguished female employment in citrus from that of migrant family labor in such activities as cotton production. Women packers developed a sense of self-worth based upon their individual labor and talents that was all but impossible for women who worked as part of a family unit. In the latter system, the male head of household nearly always received the wages directly from the employer or labor contractor. Thus, women engaged in family cotton picking rarely received individual compensation for their labor. This pattern decidedly affected gender relations.

A measure of the wide distinction between the experience of women in cotton production and women in urban production appears when comparing the work of Ruth Allen to that of Vicki Ruiz. Allen's classic 1933 study of women in Texas cotton production noted that among Mexican women who did field work for hire, only a small percentage "received the income from their labor. In the case of the...married women the husbands received all the income." Among 110 women who worked in a family unit not one "reported that there was any arrangement to pay for her labor." Allen further states that

even when the woman is a hired [cotton] laborer, she has no individual economic existence. Her husband, father, or brother handles the financial affairs. She does not collect her own money; she does not know how much is paid for her services; she seldom knows how much cotton she picks a day or how many acres she chops. The wage paid is a family wage, and the family is distinctly patriarchal in its organization.<sup>70</sup>

Vicki Ruiz's study of California cannery and packing women of the 1930s and 1940s reported substantially different results. These women labored as individual wage earners even if they

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70. Ruth Alice Allen, *Labor of Women in the Production of Cotton* (1933; Chicago, 1975), 231, 234.

generally received less than men for the same work. They developed a “cannery culture,” a consciousness of common interests that fueled the movement towards unionization where ethnic women affected “every facet of decision making.”<sup>71</sup>

Female citrus packers who received individual wages responded similarly. The packinghouse, declared one of them, offered “a greater opportunity for women” and provided “a sense of importance and purpose.... I learned about my own rights.” Furthermore, “it was better, a lot better than picking cotton ...which] was miserable.... [I]t was a step ahead...[and] we had a stable life.”<sup>72</sup>

Educational opportunities also varied among the communities. In urban settings they were much greater than in the rural migrant settlements. Rural migrants were far less likely to attend school, or if attending at all, to attend only a portion of the school year. Statistics for Texas in 1945 indicate that only half of the Mexican children were enrolled in school. In part, this was due to a deliberate policy by boards of education to bar Mexican children, especially migrant children, from enrolling in school. In citrus towns, however, opportunities for education were greater due to the absence of family labor, and they were greater still in urban areas where fewer families were engaged in migratory work.<sup>73</sup>

Differences between rural and urban communities can also be detected in other areas, including the civil rights activities of the 1940s and as recently as the 1970s.<sup>74</sup> César Chávez, for example, left the Community Service Organization in the mid-1950s because the latter focused upon urban issues. Chávez had dedicated himself to resolving the problems of rural Mexican communities, a decision with far-reaching and well-known effects on the history of farmworker unions and California agriculture. That urban and rural settlements differ is further underscored by their contrasting emphases on school reform during the 1960s

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71. Ruiz, *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives*, 39.

72. Interview with Julia Aguirre, Aug. 8, 1989, Placentia, Calif.

73. Gilbert G. González, *Chicano Education in the Era of Segregation* (Philadelphia, 1993) and Gilbert G. González *Labor and Community: Mexican Citrus Worker Communities in a Southern California County* (Champaign, Ill., 1994).

74. Ernesto Galarza, “Program for Action,” *Common Ground*, X (1949), 33.

and 1970s. Rural activists generally demanded integration, while urban activists turned toward separatism, community control of neighborhood schools, and bilingual education.<sup>75</sup>

Fortunately, the urban emphasis in Chicano historiography may be waning. For example, Sarah Deutsch's analysis of the transition from rural to urban life, Vicki Ruiz's incorporation of gender issues in her examination of women's organizations in the agriculture-based food-processing industry, Richard Griswold del Castillo and Richard García's forthcoming biographical study of César Chávez, Robert Alvarez's study of Baja California migrating families, and Arnolde De León's several works demonstrate that some communities do not fall into the urban pattern emphasized in the earlier literature.<sup>76</sup> Still, much remains to be done before we will have an adequate understanding of the complexity and enduring significance of Chicano community life.

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We hope that the preceding pages have caused readers to think more deeply about the conventional wisdom that passes for much of Chicano history. Close attention to economic transformations questions the standard periodization of Chicano history and suggests that the nineteenth- and twentieth-century Spanish-speaking populations of the Southwest should be viewed as largely two different populations. And even within those populations, the nature of economic development has produced communities that vary significantly. Behind our approach lies the conviction that culture and economic life should not be kept in separate historical compartments. Moreover, our findings suggest that Chicano history should be viewed as something more than the distinct experience and contribution of one particular regional, ethnic group. Perhaps Chicano historians will also find value in the work of those southern historians who focus on capitalist development as a way of integrating the

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75. Alan Exelbrod, "Chicano Education: In Swann's Way?" *Integrated Education*, IX (1971), 28.

76. Sarah Deutsch, *No Separate Refuge: Culture, Class, and Gender on an Anglo-Hispanic Frontier in the American Southwest, 1880-1940* (New York, 1987); Robert Alvarez, *Familia: Migration and Adaptation in Baja and Alta California, 1800-1975* (Berkeley, 1987).

history of the South into the history of the entire nation. Chicano scholars might then take the first step in demonstrating that Chicano history is an integral component of American history. They might also be encouraged to advance efforts toward a multicultural history by distilling the common as well as the different experiences of cultural, ethnic, and gender groups. To paraphrase Cornell West, keen attention to economic structures can assist historians to contextualize cultural history.<sup>77</sup>

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77. Cornell West, "The Postmodern Crisis of the Black Intellectual," in Lawrence Grossberg *et al.*, eds., *Cultural Studies* (New York and London, 1992), 691.