

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

SOCIAL PROCESS ON THE PACIFIC COAST

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ABSTRACT

The recurring series of social changes incident to invasion and population succession have made the Pacific Coast an experiment station in human relationships. The meeting of heterogeneous races and cultures has been accompanied by conflict, followed by a conscious adjustment or accommodation. This accommodation often has been faulty and has broken down, resulting in a wholesale releasing of individuals from custom and tradition, or emancipation. The culture systems, especially the Occidental and Oriental cultures that meet in this region, overlap and interpenetrate, resulting in integration or acculturation and bringing into existence a new cultural society.

A "social process" is any recurring Series of social changes, and "Pacific Coast" is limited here to the United States segment of that sweeping semi-circle of territory which extends from Tierra del Fuego by way of Alaska to Australia. This segment is perhaps 1,500 miles long and on the average 200 miles wide. It extends from British Columbia to Baja or Lower California. It was long isolated from the rest of the world—from western civilization by rugged mountains and wind-swept deserts, from eastern civilization by the open expanse of unending seas. Once occupied this elongated pocket of territory became an intriguing experiment station in human relationships.

Nature endowed the area generously. She provided the future successions of population with a soil capable of producing a variety of products; with ores laden with gold and other precious metals; with extensive subterranean deposits of petroleum; with turbulent streams, generators of light and power; with climates of many descriptions, varied enough to suit anybody's taste; with unending vistas, pierced by waterfalls like the Multnomah or the Yosemite; and with wide-stretching forests of virgin timber.

From long before Neolithic days there has been percolating and pouring into this area a wondrous succession of peoples, bringing into apposition strange and contradictory culture systems. The advent of several major culture groups has successively upset social relationships and changed both the face and the pace of society in the area. With each new invasion, there have occurred new social contacts, new economic and social problems, a shift in human relationships, and new outcroppings of social process.

Population and culture invasions have come from the ends of the earth and from the four major points of the compass: from the north, the ancestral Indians; from the south, Spanish explorers and padres and Mexican peons; from the east, gold seekers, sunshine seekers, and Hollywood promoters; and from the west, Chinese laborers, Japanese peasant farmers, ambitious Filipino youth. These invasions and successions of population have been followed by social changes, with clash and conflict flaring up now and anon to block the slow, non-dramatic processes of accommodation and acculturation.

Social and cultural values, all jumbled together at times, have on occasion become integrated into dynamic and creative configurations of art, business, religion, science, and welfare. The dawn of history found this area already occupied, not by an indigenous race, but by peoples who apparently had drifted in from the north, Mongolian in origin; simple-minded, pre-literate tribes, who lived by camp-fires and ate roots; whose men-folk in the south went without clothes, rolling themselves in mud in order to keep warm and healthy, and daily washing oil the mud when the sun came out; whose religion was a crude nature worship with a belief in "A Happy Western Land" beyond the water, "where food was to be had in plenty without work, and where there was nothing to do but eat, sleep and dance"; who were divided into many opposing camps, conducting vigorous wars with sticks and stones; and whose medicine men prescribed that a sick person should take a perspiration bath and then upon coming out of the sweat-house "should run and leap into the nearest stream of ice-cold water."

In 1542, or 78 years before the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth, tiny sailing vessels made their appearance from the south and fought their way up the coast "against powerful headwinds," bringing with them a well-organized set of European culture patterns. At first these ships brought explorers and later settlers, soldiers, and padres. These Spanish invaders established pueblos, presidios, and a chain of twenty-one famous missions. The newcomers were imbued with the idea of treating fairly their predecessors in this area, the Indians, of converting them to the Christian religion, of training them in industry, and of naming the pueblos and missions after their own saints and martyrs from Saint James, or San Diego, and Saint Francis, or San Francisco, to Saint John, or San Juan, of the San Juan Islands lying within sight of British Columbia.

Other invaders from the south have come more recently, namely, Mexicans, who are a mixture of Indian and Spanish, but so changed that they have not been fully accepted in the Pacific area by either their Indian or Spanish kinsmen. Drifting about in search of seasonal labor or settling down in shacks or house courts in town or city, they are doing the pick and hoe work for the Anglo-Saxon conquerors of Indians and Spanish—a third of a million people on the Coast without a country.

In 1849, prairie schooners began to wend their way from the east over mountain and desert; they slowly descended into the central and northwest sections of the area, bringing pioneers and gold seekers from middle western United States. These invaders carried with them a strange culture, a powerful urge for individual success, and the stars and stripes as a symbol of Anglo-Saxon superiority. They slowly but surely came into domination over their predecessors, the plodding Indian and the chivalric Spaniard, and established their own culture patterns.

A half-century later they were followed by fellow Anglo-Saxons and others who had remained in the middle west and achieved a middle class agricultural and business success but who came to the Coast not as pioneers seeking gold but as well-to-do people seeking retirement and sunshine. They have come in larger numbers than all other invaders in this area, past and present combined. They and their children have literally boosted the little Spanish pueblo, Nuestra Señora le Reina de los Angeles, into the fifth city in population in the United States and the nineteenth in the world. They have found it necessary to build a new empire in order to avoid the ennui of inactivity. They paid little attention to the Indian, viewed the Spanish with curiosity, and set up their own social value patterns.

Another group of invaders from the east are urbanites from New York City and continental Europe. They are the widely heralded motion picture promoters and stars, settling in Hollywood and building a new and giant industry. They are emancipated from many traditional standards, although motivated by salaries, profits, and a flare for the grandiose. They create startling culture patterns which in a large measure are showy and ephemeral; they occupy dazzling heights of status. They maintain themselves as objects of envy of a world of youth and half a world of adults. Because of their supreme status and their command of a new and unprecedented mechanism of communication, the behavior patterns they magnify tend to become the behavior patterns not only of the Coast but of the United States and of other lands as well.

From across the vast Pacific the vanguard of still another set of invaders quietly began about 1870 to sift into the area in order to work on the railroads, in the fields and mines, at industrial tasks. In a few decades this vanguard of Chinese laborers was checked by legislation and followed by Japanese peasant farmers who in turn aroused hostile reactions and adverse legislation. Then came the Filipinos only to fall into the snares of competition and prejudice. Chinese, Japanese, Filipinos alike came displaying behavior patterns that were judged strange, peculiar, and undesirable. Proving for the most part to be industrious and frugal, they aroused not only adverse sensory reactions, which may be called antipathy, but also adverse competition reactions, which may be labeled prejudice. The antipathies and prejudices of the Anglo-Saxon and other conquerors of the Coast boiled over periodically, and the Orientals were repulsed one after another in turn.

Thus, both invasion and population succession are inevitably accompanied by

conflict. The sequences of this third expression of social process run somewhat as follows: (a) A few pioneers responding to economic or other stimuli break loose from unsatisfactory moorings and despite discouraging obstacles seek to re-build their status in a new area. (b) Finding valuable opportunities, the newcomers stimulate large numbers of their compatriots to come, with the results that the initial welcome accorded the first invaders is changed into a sullen if not active opposition, because of the strange culture and the menacing competition that the invaders represent. (c) The greater the differences between the culture of the invaders and of the natives, the greater the opposition by the latter. (d) The greater the number of strange invaders, the greater the natives' antagonism. (e) The greater the rapidity of invasion of strange people, the greater the prejudice against the invaders. (f) The greater the superiority feelings of the natives regarding themselves, the greater the objections to strong invaders. (g) Invasion is opposed by the natives at any given time according to the degree at that time of economic depression.

A fourth evidence of social process on the Coast is accommodation or conscious adjustment of conflicts. Accommodation has sometimes taken place between a paternalistically minded group and a lower culture folk. For example: The Spanish padres came to convert the heathen Indians. These Franciscan fathers gathered many of the Indians together, gave them a new religion, taught them simple techniques, treated them with kindness and patience, and did not undertake too much or act too rapidly. The Indians thrived under the paternalistic care, but did not become self-sufficient—a fact which explains in part their later degeneration when the missions were secularized by the Mexican government and the Indians thrown on their own resources. Although some of the Christianized Indians achieved positions of responsibility, the large majority were unable to stand alone when their guardians were removed. Moreover, social distance had developed between the Christianized Indians and the un-Christianized ones so that when the former were released, they were not accepted by their own racial kind. Having no one to fall back upon for support and encouragement, they were unequal to their new circumstances.

Then there has been the attempted accommodation between an individualistically minded people and a communal-minded "lower" culture group. For illustration, reference may be made to the attitudes of Americans toward Mexican laborers who have come from a social situation in Mexico where they have been accustomed to a communal life. The Mexicans came with attitudes of docility and with a willingness to do menial tasks, providing they were not hurried too much. But they fall down in the wide gap between the communal paternalism to which they have been accustomed in their homeland and the individualistic paternalism of the Pacific Coast.

Little is done for them until their condition grows economically serious and they then become the recipients of public charity which is foreign to them and which tends to pauperize them. Few become citizens, for they have been allowed to roam about as childlike foreigners. When industrial depression comes, some one cries "Employ only citizens," and then starts a campaign to deport the Mexicans, even some of those whose children have been born in this

country.

On the other hand, in times of prosperity they are urged to come in numbers greater than they are needed so that they may be hired and fired freely and so that they can be kept in the falsely labeled class of "cheap labor." Under these conditions accommodation breaks down because of the individualism and the lack of social responsibility on the part of the superior group.

Another attempted accommodation has been that between individualistic commercial enterprisers and everyone else. In this case accommodation does little more than emerge from a conflict stage.

An illustration is afforded by the reactions of the Anglo-Saxon and related invaders from east of the Rockies toward other peoples who have come to the Coast. The superiority-minded Anglo-Saxons and others have overcome all—first the Indians, next the Spanish, and then the Orientals in order. Arriving with the spirit of sturdy pioneers they segregated the Indians into reservations, centered the Spanish on their ranchos, and turned the Orientals back across the Pacific. They viewed the Indians as primitives to be set apart, the Spanish as gallant but un-enterprising, the Chinese laborers as low grade or degraded, the Japanese as being too industrious, too frugal, too given to raising children, and the Filipinos as being too dapper.

All who have challenged the Anglo-Saxons and their associates have been met by energetic reactions, by adverse propaganda, by hostile legislation. The Pacific Coast is not large enough for an energetic people and for others unless the latter will submit to an accommodation that almost amounts to virtual surrender of their cultures.

Furthermore it is not strange that aristocratic Anglo-Saxons and others should turn against each other in contests for domination. In San Francisco and Seattle, for instance, labor has made headway in dominating capital, while in Los Angeles capital has had the upper hand. The resultant accommodation is often formal, a deadlock, a stalemate. This form of accommodation is not peculiar to the Coast, but is accentuated at times because of a pioneer setting and a powerful individualism. Pecuniary and materialistic control has been the goal. So strong are the dominance urges that neither labor nor capital trust the other very far; neither is willing to relinquish a hard fought advantage; neither will inaugurate an extensive sixty-forty co-operation. Each doubtless feels that dominance is inherently its own; capital, because it assumes the main financial responsibilities; labor, because it feels that it is putting in more of the human element and that its life-blood is more precious than the capitalists' money.

Moreover, a faulty accommodation is disclosed in the attempts at ones of both organized labor and capital to dominate the general public. A strong individualism has stimulated organized labor on occasion to be more zealous of its own union rules than considerate of public welfare, to be ruthless in crushing out non-union competitors and in denying consideration to the general public. Its more irresponsible friends have resorted in certain instances to the

use of dynamite and bombs even when these involved the loss of lives of non-union laborers or of innocent citizens. Moreover, from Seattle to San Diego organized labor frankly puts its own interests ahead of the international aspects of race questions.

Equally faulty is the accommodation that has existed between capital and the general public. Again the situation is not peculiar to West Coast but accentuated there. The result has been disastrous over-speculation; gigantic campaigns of over-advertising and over-production; and over-stimulation of human wants for the cheap and ephemeral. People have been misled into buying beyond their means to pay, into wanting far more than they need, into sinking hard-earned savings into bottomless wells of valueless stocks. At times capital has led the way to sharp crashes and recurring depressions, dominating to its own possible downfall, promoting autocratic attitudes that have threatened government itself. It is now engaged in fighting back a black cloud, larger than a man's hand, of popular distrust if not of vengeance. It can justly put the blame nowhere except its own shortsightedness.

Accommodation with either labor or capital in the saddle is fearful of criticism. It fights back as though guilty of grievous crimes. It blinds its leaders and membership to the necessity of correcting its own evils and to the superior possibilities of a mutual co-operation.

A fifth phase of social process on the Coast is an emancipation that involves a wholesale releasing of individuals from social customs and traditions. It is Hollywood which sets the pace. A breaking up of customs and traditions is emanating from Hollywood, where a person may achieve world status almost overnight; where lesser stars scintillate for one brief hour and are then blotted out; where Einstein seems to have been entranced almost as much as at the Mount Wilson Observatory; where inventive genius is on tiptoe to combine movie and talkie in a new conquest of home and hotel under the aegis of television; where traditional family life is overridden; where Puritanic morals are taboo; where the latest behavior patterns from Broadway or Monte Carlo are "gone one better," and from where even more emancipated patterns are sent out to the ends of the earth under the magic spell of dramatic film and fascinating talkie; where a new triune God rules, a trinity of individual emancipation, of personality plus, and of box-office receipts, but where the greatest of these is box-office receipts.

Moreover, this emancipation has allowed for the springing up of many cults and creeds. Individualists in fundamental religion, in humanistic beliefs, and in philosophical vagaries abound. Emancipation leads to mushroom growths. Extremes and contrasts flourish.

A bomb is thrown and a criminal syndicalism law is passed. The state of Washington puts no restrictions whatever on racial inter-marriages, while California forbids the marriage of "whites" to either Mongolians or Negroes.

A sixth indication of social process on the Coast is acculturation as illustrated in a possible integration of occidental and oriental cultures. Unique in human history, the Pacific Coast represents an extensive overlapping of Orient and Occident. The culture systems of both the east and the west are beginning to interpenetrate the other.

Despite intolerance and social myopia, the possibilities of a new civilization, a civilization that combines elements of both eastern and western cultures, are being glimpsed. This new social order is coming into being where persons meet who have shaken off superiority myths. Calm and peaceful as the deep across which it comes, the poise of Orientalism has begun to assimilate with aggressive Occidentalism, toning the latter down, and producing a new balance in social dynamics. The better educated Chinese have brought a religion of the simple life (Taoism) and an ethics of mutual respect (Confucianism); the Japanese have demonstrated a perfected loyalty (Bushido) and a goal transcendent over individual strife (Budhism); the Hindu offers a mysticism that rises triumphant over urban bedlam; the Indian, Spanish, and Mexican contribute a love of symbolism that reveals deep and hidden meanings of life; and the Anglo-Saxon offers his genius for invention, education, organization, and democracy. The possibilities rising ahead of this type of acculturation are scarcely yet recognized or even dreamed. These possibilities include a new world of civilization, superior to both western and eastern civilizations.

Thus, social process on the Pacific Coast grows out of a never-ending invasion and succession of peoples from the main civilizations of the world. It is expressed in startling conflicts of cultures and dramatic struggles for domination. It manifests itself in an accommodation that lasts only as long as paternalistic groups are able to maintain themselves, in an accommodation that breaks down through excess individualism and a lack of social responsibility, in an accommodation that defies all who do not bow before it. It is found in an emancipation that bowls over the past and allows for all sorts of new experiments. It rises to an acculturation that has at its heart a new cultural society, a new integration of the most vital experiences of East and West, and a reorganization of social relationships, comprehensive and intriguing beyond anticipation.

Originally published in the *Proceedings of the 1931 Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Society*, pages 1-9.