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Review of *Historic Native Peoples of Texas* By William C. Foster

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BOOK REVIEWS

Historic Native Peoples of Texas. By William C. Foster. Foreword by Alston V. Thoms. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008. xvii + 346 pp. Maps, figure, appendixes, notes, bibliography, index. $60.00 cloth, $24.95 paper.

Texas has traditionally been viewed as an expansive landscape occupied by a relatively small and widely scattered Indigenous population. Modern studies by Todd Smith, Robert Ricklis, Nancy Hickerson, Mariah Wade, Martín Salinas, and Morris Foster have questioned this simplistic view by focusing upon the larger stories of Caddo, Wichita, Jumano, Tonkawa, Coahuiltecan, Karankawa, Comanche and other groups who occupied parts of Texas for a long period of time. Now William Foster attempts to synthesize the broader picture for all Indigenous peoples who lived within the state boundaries between 1528 and 1728. This long period, beginning with Narvaez's beleaguered expedition landing on Galveston Island, and ending with creation of a Spanish missionary frontier in East Texas, produced a rich

collection of reports by Spanish and French officials. Foster draws upon more than forty of these eyewitness chronicles and subjects them to new ethnohistorical techniques to produce credible cultural histories of each group.

The book's organization is based upon a spatial rather than tribal approach, as was previously used by W. W. Newcomb in his classic 1961 overview, *The Indians of Texas: From Prehistoric to Modern Times*. Foster divides the state into eight geographic regions and describes the tribal cultures and their prominent village sites within them. He identifies well over two hundred subtribal populations as recorded in the nomenclature of early Spanish and French travel accounts. These Native Americans lived in diverse environments ranging from dense forests to expansive grasslands, and even to mountain and desert terrains in the extreme western areas. Amid these distant landscapes sprang forth a vast array of cultures, sometimes engaged in raiding against each other, but more often involved in long-range trade networks and cross-cultural exchange. These sophisticated societies reached far beyond the attainments of simple hunting and gathering societies that earlier stereotypes belie.

Because much of West Texas is encompassed by the Great Plains, one might expect to encounter a significant amount of information about Plains tribes in this book. Such is not the case for two reasons. First, the author confines the entire Plains region of Texas to only one large "regional study area," thus restricting his coverage to only one out of eight chapters. Second, discussion is limited to the early colonial era, long before West Texas became a preoccupation of Spanish rule. White contact with Comanches and Lipan Apaches was certainly well established in this period, but the years of intense conflict were still in the future, as was the preponderance of written reports about these two tribes. Furthermore, true Southern Plains tribes such as the Comanches and Kiowas are underrepresented in this discussion of a state where both still remain in the public consciousness due to high levels of Indian-white conflict during the nineteenth century.

Regardless of the limitations imposed upon a broad synthesis such as this one, *Historic Native Peoples of Texas* is a valuable work embracing the best of recent scholarship in ethnohistory and archeology. Although intended primarily for the specialist, it can be appreciated by all readers with a casual interest in Texas Indian life.

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