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Review of Tejano Origins in Eighteenth-Century San Antonio

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Tejano Origins in Eighteenth-Century San Antonio. Ed. Gerald E. Poyo and Gilberto M. Hinojosa. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991. Introduction, notes, bibliography, index. xxii + 198 pp. \$19.95.

The decade of the 1990s has already produced pivotal new studies on the northern frontier of New Spain by David Weber and on Spanish Texas by Donald Chipman. Though more narrowly focused in scope, this volume likewise makes a significant contribution in terms of new knowledge and re-assessment.

The basic themes are stated early and reinforced repeatedly: eighteenth-century San Antonio had a diverse population divided by barriers of race, wealth, and interest but bound together by a shared "sense of separateness" (p. ix). In time common experience produced a distinctive Tejano identity.

Separate chapters by different authors detail the role of each group of people. Soldiers from the presidio established the original pueblo and often remained in Béxar after retirement. The arrival of settlers from the Canary Islands, who took over improved lands and monopolized local politics in the 1730s, temporarily set back the development of community identity. However, intermarriage, economic expansion, and political integration undermined the original sense of ethnic exclusivity. Similarly, over the course of the eighteenth century the isolation designed for mission Indians succumbed to forces that bound the community together, even though elements of their traditional culture survived. Another important component—immigrants from east Texas or from other provinces—filled the limited demand for merchants and artisans, acquired land as the missions secularized, or performed day labor. Even the independent Indians ("indios bárbaros") found an acceptable niche in the local economy after Spain implemented a policy of pacifying the "norteños" through trade.

The authors make a convincing case that a long process of adaptation produced a "unified though socially stratified Tejano commu-

nity" (p. 141). Despite the absence of coverage of San Antonio in the critical independence period of 1810-21, the book carries its themes forward into the nineteenth century. The chapter on the Mexican period (placed strangely at the first of the book) demonstrates the continued significance of the Tejano identity. It also shows that desire for economic growth and more local autonomy made the Bejareños initially ripe for participation in the rebellion of 1835 that would quickly transfer external power to Anglo Texans.

Scholars of the borderlands will not only value this book but also see obvious opportunities to follow its lead. The authors avoid speculation about how representative the San Antonio experience might have been. Similar studies of Nacogdoches and Goliad are in order before further generalization can be made even regarding Texas in the eighteenth century, much less other regions of the borderlands or newer communities of the nineteenth century.

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