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Review of *Texas and Northeastern Mexico, 1630-1690* by Juan Bautista Chapa

Kimberly Henke Breuer
Vanderbilt University

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BOOK REVIEWS

Texas and Northeastern Mexico, 1630-1690. By Juan Bautista Chapa. Edited with an introduction by William C. Foster. Translated by Ned F. Brierley. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997. Illustrations, maps, appendices, bibliography, index. ix + 235 pp. \$24.95.

This English translation of two seventeenth-century manuscripts concerning the exploration and settlement of northeastern Mexico and Texas is long overdue. The majority of the book is dedicated to Juan Bautista Chapa's *Historia del nuevo reino de León de 1650 a 1690*; the other translated manuscript is the revised 1690 expedition diary of Governor Alonso de León (the younger). This is the first widely published translation of Chapa's *Historia* into English. De León's revised diary is published here for the first time in either Spanish or English. Ned Brierley's translations, from the original manuscripts, are eminently readable and accessible.

In his *Historia*, Chapa (*secretario perpetuo* to the governors of Nuevo León from 1662 to 1694) describes the regional government and local Indian tribes, residences, and uprisings, as well as providing detailed descriptions of the 1687, 1688, 1689, and 1690 military expeditions into Texas in search of La Salle's party of Frenchmen. Chapa's manuscript includes the only known copy of Governor de León's diary of the 1686 expedition. De León's revised 1690 diary, which includes amended and extended entries that differ from the better known diary he forwarded to the Viceroy, details his meetings with the Tejas in their main villages between the Neches and Sabine Rivers, as well as his searches for the stranded Frenchmen.

William C. Foster's introduction traces the detective work into the mystery of the authorship of the *Historia*, offering convincing proof that its author is, indeed, Chapa. The introduction also contains a brief summary of the *Discourses* of Captain Alonso de León (the elder) on the history of Nuevo León, providing background for Chapa's account, and maps that reconstruct the routes of the Spanish expeditions along with the path of the northern leg of the ancient trade routes from Mexico, through Texas, to the Mississippi. Foster's annotation of the two texts gives the reader brief biographies, definitions of key Spanish terms, modern place names, and comments on Indian tribes mentioned in the text. One appendix contains an annotated list of eighty-six Indian tribes reported in Captain Alonso de León's *Discourses*, Juan Bautista Chapa's *Historia*, and Governor Alonso de León's revised 1690 Expedition Diary.

Researchers and general readers alike will find *Texas and Northeastern Mexico, 1630-1690* a useful and engaging account of the region. The volume's presentation is clear and its information comprehensive, although more detailed maps of the expedition routes and of Nuevo León would have been useful. The maps presented are of too great a scale when compared to the detailed information presented in the manuscripts and annotations. But this small fault should not deter an interested reader from these firsthand accounts of the early expeditions into Texas.

KIMBERLY HENKE BREUER
Department of History
Vanderbilt University