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Review of *The Tejano Community, 1836-1900* By Arnolando De Leon

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The Tejano Community, 1836-1900. By Arnolfo De León. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1982. Map, illustrations, appendix, notes, bibliography, index. xix + 277 pp. \$19.95.

Persons of Spanish-Indian or Mexican descent who were incorporated into the United States in the nineteenth century belonged to one of three major subcultures: the *Californio*, the *manito* (Hispanos of New Mexico and Colo-

rado), or the *Tejano*. Leonard Pitt has written a comprehensive social history of the *Californio* (1966), and now Arnoldo De León gives us a counterpart volume on the *Tejano*. De León's purpose is to capture the essence of the "ordinary" *Tejano* in Central, South, and West Texas between Texas Independence (1836) and the turn of the century, and he develops the theme that in the nineteenth century the *Tejano's* culture was basically preserved while at the same time the *Tejanos* had to accommodate themselves to Anglos (pp. xii–xiii).

In his first chapter De León gives an overview of *Tejanos* in the last century. The next eight chapters concern politics; rural workers; urban workers; housing, diet, and family structure; religion; folklore; entertainment; and education, community organizations, and Spanish-language newspapers. The final chapter is a short epilogue. The diverse information presented is drawn from primary sources including city directories, newspapers, and a sampling of the federal census schedules for Bexar County (San Antonio), the lower Rio Grande Valley, and El Paso County. An impressive number of secondary sources are also cited.

De León's major finding is that *Tejanos* were Anglicized and became socially, economically, and politically bicultural, yet in their religion, language, folklore, and daily lifestyles they preserved their culture and maintained their ethnic identity (see especially pp. 138, 141, 153, 182). As De León sorts through items that were Anglicized and those that were preserved, he relates anything but a happy story. Basically a poor and illiterate people, most *Tejanos* were dispossessed of their land and were forced to take menial jobs while, at the same time, they were disdained as backward, were segregated residentially and educationally, and were at least temporarily disenfranchised. De León contends that the *Tejanos* survived through diligence and resourcefulness, and that they countered "white" oppression with a degree of resilience and a sense of cultural pride that is not generally appreciated.

Because he is somewhat sympathetic in his interpretation of the *Tejanos*, De León is not

always convincing. One wonders if most *Tejanos* were genuinely "thirst[y] for knowledge" (p. 187), and one questions whether "a dynamic Tejano community" actually "thrived in Anglo Texas" (p. 203). Moreover, De León leaves a number of questions unanswered. Did *Tejanos* in the nineteenth century identify with the self-referent "*Tejano*" or with "*Mexicano*" (an especially interesting question regarding *Tejanos* in the El Paso District)? Were there any cultural differences between the Texas-born and the Mexican-born of this group? In a broader sense, how were *Tejanos* different from *Californios* or *manitos*? These are minor matters, however, for De León has written a balanced, thoroughly documented, and insightful social history that fills a major void in Chicano historiography.

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