

SPANIARDS IN A FAR NORTHERN FRONTERA



The king's plans to solidify control of New Spain's Far North do not fully account for the development of Spanish settlements in Texas. While the new communities may have acted as buffers against possible French and British incursions into the province, other motives prompted frontierspeople to make their way into the Far North. The expanding *frontera* (frontier) gave some an outlet for escape—from natural disasters, ecological hardships, or unemployment in another province of New Spain. In addition, pulling up roots offered common folks restrained by ethnic prejudice a fresh start, for social distinctions tended to blur on the *frontera*. Frontier living also gave respite from oppressive taxation and miscellaneous duties imposed on the lower classes in some well-established communities. Moreover, the cattle and mining industries that thrust outwardly from New Spain held out the prospects of improvement through gainful employment. The northern lands even extended the possibility of achieving a livelihood in landholding or some modest business venture. Finally, unsavory types visualized the frontier as a wide-open place in which to escape the authorities and continue to engage in smuggling and banditry.

Such motives have propelled migratory movements in other places and times, and they played themselves out in New Spain. By no means, however, did pobladores inundate Texas. Several factors explain why the migrational flow northward never swelled beyond a trickle. Epidemic diseases had so severely reduced New Spain's population in the sixteenth century that overcrowding pressures that generally uproot people did not build for quite some time thereafter. Even in the

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early eighteenth century, European immigration was so slight that few people already in New Spain felt crowded enough to brave adventure by relocating to the unknown hinterlands. Landowners in New Spain, furthermore, faced a labor supply severely reduced and sought mightily to retain control of their workers. Lastly, concerted efforts by royal officials to populate Texas entered a lull during the last half of the eighteenth century. After Spain acquired Louisiana in November 1762, Texas no longer had to serve as a frontier defensive outpost. Accordingly, the Crown shifted its concerns to other, more-pressing problems.

At the same time, Texas was hardly a place with many immigrational "pull" factors. The region lacked an infrastructure, hostile Indian tribes threatened the lives of many a settler, and fruitless searches had convinced people that no great deposits of precious metals lay in the land to fulfill their hopes. Indeed, at the close of the eighteenth century, Texas remained one of the least-inhabited territories of New Spain.

Never, however, did isolation degenerate into imperial neglect. Orders from the viceroy and lesser officials filtered down systematically to colonial officials, primarily the governor of the province. As the king's appointee, the governor (his assignment was to reside in the presidio of Los Adaes, but he sometimes took up residence in Béxar) held a range of duties that included ensuring the execution of military assignments, dealing with the Indians, and tending to law enforcement and various other civic affairs. Settlers were expected to abide by the governor's commands. Benign neglect, however, allowed the Tejanos to carry out Crown directives in their own way or to modify royal mandates to meet the exigencies of frontier life. Therefore, society in Spanish Texas emerged as a compromise between policy prescribed by imperial and national goals and the survival instincts that served the colonists trying to build decent lives in an uncompromising land.

After the 1730s, the Crown made no concerted effort to recruit and dispatch new settlers to Texas. Population increases in the province derived from the voluntary arrival of more settlers (and the periodic assignment of soldiers to the province), most of whom arrived from Coahuila and Nuevo León. On the frontier, the newcomers joined their predecessors in a process of demographic change, cultural growth, and economic activity revolving around the centers of socialization: the missions, presidios, ranchos, and civilian settlements.

FRONTIER INSTITUTIONS

Missions

In the Far North, Catholicism remained the sole religion, disseminated by missionaries belonging to ecclesiastical orders (regular clergy) who labored both for the Crown and the Church in the tradition of the *patronato real*. The king provided the ecclesiastics with government subsidies; the priests reimbursed the monarch by guarding the frontier line and ministering to the un-Christianized Indian flocks, whom the king wanted brought into "civilized life." In such an accord, the king retained title to the plot upon which the friars built their missions. The Church, in turn, owned the mission compound, which included the edifices

deculturized and converted into faithful subjects (and, incidentally, tax-paying citizens), the state-subsidized missionaries left for new grounds, turning responsibilities for the preservation of the faith over to parish priests (secular clergy).

For the *gente de razón* (literally translated as “the people of reason” but meaning members of Spanish colonial society), the missions also served as surrogate agencies that administered religious rites, the friars tending to the people at baptism, marriage, and death. Actually, these responsibilities were carried out primarily by diocesan priests appointed to Texas from the interior of New Spain. To them fell the duty of ministering to the civilian faithful, especially towards the late eighteenth century as the Church reassigned Franciscans elsewhere due to a diminishing commitment to Indian conversion. By the waning decades of the 1700s, most of the Spanish population centers in Texas (i.e., San Antonio, Goliad, and the Laredo area) had a priest (or priests) tending to the spiritual needs of the pobladores. Devotion toward Catholicism thus persisted throughout the settlements, as witnessed in popular and private expressions. Colonists organized community and religious fiestas during specific holy days (such as on December 12, the day of the Virgen de Guadalupe), and engaged in individual worshiping: reciting home prayer, erecting family altars, or respecting the Lenten season.

To be sure, a range of religious expression existed among the pobladores. While some Tejanos displayed fidelity and piety, many others practiced a type of popular religiosity; so did other villagers living on the frontier, where the institutional church did not exert effective influence. These nominal Catholics slighted the more restrictive tenets of their faith and violated certain of its scriptures, as evidenced by the enactment of laws designed to curtail blasphemous behavior. In the town of Nacogdoches, for example, authorities arrested a citizen in 1805 for publicly criticizing the Church by placing “indecorous” posters on trees. Notwithstanding such irreverence, the missionaries sought to minister to families, soldiers, and government representatives throughout the colonial era.

Presidios

Presidios functioned as agents for defense by extending the velvet glove to hostile Indian tribes, such as the Apaches, or serving as trading centers and camps where friendly tribes might take refuge among their new Spanish allies. The frontier garrisons also assisted with missionization. Presidio troops tracked down runaway mission subjects, such as the Karankawas in La Bahía, and even undertook expeditions to replace runaways by kidnapping Indians to work in the missions’ households and fields. In such a role, the presidial staffs helped discipline the Indians and keep them in submission, thereby helping the missions maintain a sufficient labor force.

The presidio also served as the scene of much economic and social development. The presidial payroll influenced local economies. Moreover, the forts provided work for common laborers, purchased produce and finished goods from farmers, ranchers, and merchants, and hired the services of artisans. Furthermore, they helped entice people to the frontier by holding out prospects for steady employment and upward social mobility, especially for the pover-

ty-stricken or the lower castes. Many of the important Tejano families in the early nineteenth century were descendants of presidial servicemen. Those presidios built in territories far remote from civilian settlements attracted pioneers seeking refuge from an isolated or dangerous life. Sometimes extralegal (unofficial, or unauthorized) settlements sprang up near the more remote forts.

Ranchos and the Cattle Trade

On the frontier, civilians made their living off the land, with ranching becoming the principal livelihood of settlers in Texas. The amount of acreage the pobladores worked varied, for the size of a parcel given to an individual varied according to how he planned to use it. For the keeping of large range animals and beasts of burden, the king granted one league of land, or 4,428.4 acres. Those grantees intending to raise sheep, goats, or hogs received approximately 1,920 acres. Cattle breeders received a unit of approximately 1,084 acres. Normal procedure for land concessions called for the completion of an application and the payment of a fee. But in Texas, as in other regions of the Far North, more flexible standards prevailed, as well as a tradition of informal land granting. In Nacogdoches, for example, families acquired land simply by making a verbal agreement with a local official.

The assets of the frontier ranches stemmed from the first *entradas* (expeditions) into Texas. According to records, in 1689 Alonso de León brought to Texas 200 head of cattle, 400 horses, and 150 mules for the sole purpose of propagation. As he returned to Coahuila, he left a male and a female of each species on the bank of every stream he crossed in between the Neches River and the Rio Grande. In 1716, Domingo Ramón's expedition imported 64 oxen, 500 horses and mules, and more than 1,000 sheep and goats into Texas. Aguayo's entourage had included nearly 4,800 cattle, some 2,800 horses, and about 6,400 sheep and goats. José de Escandón and his colonizers marched toward the Rio Grande in 1748 driving herds of equine and bovine stock. Over the years, the animals that survived these *entradas* roamed throughout Texas, their numbers augmented over time through natural reproduction and unintentional release, such as during a stampede.

The first persons to enter the ranching industry were the missionaries, those who had received the first land grants in Texas. But their stock soon multiplied beyond their control, with many individual animals straying off mission lands to join free-ranging herds. The frontier people referred to all unclaimed wild stock as *mesteños*. And just as they had laid claim to the roving herds descendent from the animals imported through the early *entradas*, the settlers were quick to claim the missionaries' livestock as soon as the animals had wandered into open pastures. As time passed, civilians who received land grants started their own ranches, often stocking their new enterprises with these "found" cattle.

The plains west of San Antonio to the Guadalupe River proved ideal for stock raising—one scholar refers to the area as the "cradle of Texas ranching"—and the mission ranches in this area enjoyed success. At La Bahía, the number of cattle increased from 3,000 head in the year 1758 to 16,000 head by 1768. In the 1760s, the five San Antonio missions herded close to 5,000 cattle, 1,100

horses, and 10,000 sheep. Naturally, Bédareños engaged in the livestock business to provide for numerous local needs, among them mounts for the military, sheep and goat products, and draft animals, including oxen. The settlers of Nacogdoches (a community surrounded by rich grasslands) after the 1780s also turned to ranching for their sustenance, and they earned a reputation throughout Louisiana and Texas for breeding fine horses. South of the Nueces River to the Rio Grande roamed another concentration of thousands of cattle, sheep, goats, mules, and horses. At the end of the eighteenth century, livestock raising flourished in Texas, the seeds of future, large-scale cattle raising already sowed.

The proliferation of the cattle ranches disguises the tremendous amount of energy that people exerted to wrest a living from a harsh environment. Generally, ranchers made their own corrals and other ranching necessities with the assistance of only their immediate families. They lived in homes better known for their function than their good looks. And because frontier people made their living working the land, they placed little emphasis on indoor living space. Usually, they built small houses with few modern amenities. Furnishings were homemade and often of an improvised design, among them furniture, bedding, and modest decorations. These conditions applied equally to the wealthier members of Tejano society, who also lived a fairly plain material existence. Although they had beef, poultry, and pork, most pobladores still cultivated a garden plot to supply their households with vegetables and fruits; usually, gardening fell to the women of the family.

While most ranches amounted to no more than one-family ventures, some had paid servants and slaves—in some cases Indians served as virtual slaves. The notion that the colonial ranching elite was composed of romantic gentlemen of leisure is misleading. According to lore, these grandees refused to perform any work they considered demeaning, devoting themselves instead to gambling and the chase. In reality, the rancheros, as well as their wives and children, labored long, hard hours.

Nevertheless, the ranchos displayed the Spaniards' ability to adapt to the topography of the new land. The ranchos were well suited to the semi-arid plains, where farming was difficult. Furthermore, even with a shortage of labor the rancho might be very productive. Lastly, the rancheros could move their source of livelihood (their livestock) on short notice in order to save it from an impending raid or attack, a feat that a farmer with a field full of crops could not even contemplate.

During the early 1750s, livestock markets developed in the neighboring provinces of Nuevo León and Coahuila. Before long, Tejano settlers annually journeyed to the fair in Saltillo (in Coahuila), taking with them cattle and horses, suet, and tallow, which they bartered for supplies, implements, and manufactured goods that were scarce in their own settlements.

In the 1770s, Texas ranchers also entered into a fairly regular commercial association with markets in Louisiana. When, in 1780, the Spanish Crown issued a concession permitting Tejanos to trade cattle with merchants in Louisiana (which, though acquired by Spain in 1762, was tied to the administrative structure of Cuba), it proved fortuitous for the stockmen. In the next ten years, Tejanos drove countless herds of cattle east. But because this newly legalized

trade required a tax on cattle and horses exported from Texas, smuggling continued alongside the extensive legal trade. Furthermore, rancheros established a pattern of marketing animals in the United States, taking their stock from Béxar or Goliad through the Piney Woods of East Texas. Such trade with the outside world strengthened the province's capitalist orientation, for it encouraged the concentration of private property, contributed to varying degrees of individual wealth, and abetted the division of labor. This interstate commerce eventually forged Texas's ties to the capitalist economy of the United States.

Farms

While settlers on the frontier planted a number of crops, in Texas farming did not flourish. Most grantees intending to farm received relatively meager parcels of land, usually as a *labor*—approximately 177 acres—and too many other factors worked against farming at this time to make it a major means of support. The setbacks included: the Tejanos' reliance on ranching and commerce in livestock; the lack of available workers to undertake the labor-intensive tasks of clearing land, digging irrigation ditches, and tending crops; the scarcity of and the difficulties in transporting farm equipment to the frontier; the threat of Indian raids on standing crops; the constant battling of insect infestation; the worry brought on by bad weather conditions, and, perhaps most important, the absence of accessible markets that might have fostered commercialization. Ordinarily, then, farms in colonial Texas were of a hardscrabble, subsistence type that enabled their owners to eke out a living.

In the San Antonio settlements, farmers used the waters of the San Antonio River and San Pedro Creek to irrigate their fields. They raised cotton, pumpkins, melons, corn, beans, and peppers—crops raised by the Béxar mission Indians as well. While some in the East Texas community of Los Adaes undertook farming, early settlers there constantly faced natural disasters, usually in the form of crop-destroying floods, so that they often called on the nearby French settlements in Louisiana for needed provisions. In Nacogdoches, farmers nurtured small, town lots or harvested a variety of vegetable products from nearby fields. La Bahía was located in an infertile area before 1749; but neither did its permanent site in modern Goliad (to which it was moved) lend itself to farming, the local garrison forced to rely on San Antonio for its grain supplies.

Towns

As the eighteenth century waned, only four civilian settlements dotted the ranching province. In East Texas, Nacogdoches held 350 settlers as of 1783. South towards La Bahía, approximately 450 pobladores lived in and around the mission and presidio that year. San Antonio, meanwhile, counted 1,248 inhabitants. On the Rio Grande, the population of Laredo comprised 700 residents as of 1789. Attempts to establish other civilian units in the early nineteenth century faltered.

These (relatively) urban sites acted in concert with the other frontier institutions, but they were civilian settlements. Townsfolk included the families of presidial soldiers, Indian neophytes, and even persons on the dodge or those engaged

in contraband commerce. Those in charge of town government came from the civilian sector; the *alcalde* (mayor) cared for the many needs of a *municipio* (the settlement proper plus outlying areas) through the *ayuntamiento*. The *ayuntamiento* further held responsibility for executing imperial directives, building government structures, protecting the urbanites' property, maintaining law and order, boosting town growth, enforcing morality, and organizing community functions. Like other administrative bodies on the frontier, the *ayuntamiento* often interpreted royal directives loosely, bending them to meet local and immediate considerations.

Townsppeople made a living in a variety of ways. Artisans served presidios and missions, vaqueros did seasonal work on ranches, teamsters transported goods and materials on carts pulled by livestock (horses, mules, donkeys, or oxen), and day laborers performed a range of unspecialized tasks. Merchants, bakers, tailors, shoemakers, blacksmiths, and barbers met the needs of an urban populace. But *rancheros* also took residence in town, diversifying and changing the economy. In Béxar, some *rancheros* used their livestock to produce essential commodities—soap and candles, but also hides, from which leathery body armor and shields were fashioned. In Laredo, *rancheros* exchanged livestock products and horses for tools and garments brought in from the interior of New Spain. People in other Rio Grande settlements also exported south a wide selection of products native to the area, from fish to mutton to hides. Money remained scarce throughout the province, but urban-based economic activity, like that on the ranchos, contributed to the nascent Texas economy.

Town living posed numerous problems, but the *pobladores* managed a crude survival. To make homes, they took advantage of materials readily available in wilderness areas, their domiciles ranging from the undistinguished to the attractive. Masons quarried stone for use in the construction of important buildings. Com-
The *pobladores* turned to the environment for materials with which to build homes in the Texas frontera. From "Mexicans in San Antonio, Texas, 1887" series, E. K. Sturdevant, photographer, Daughters of the Republic of Texas Library.



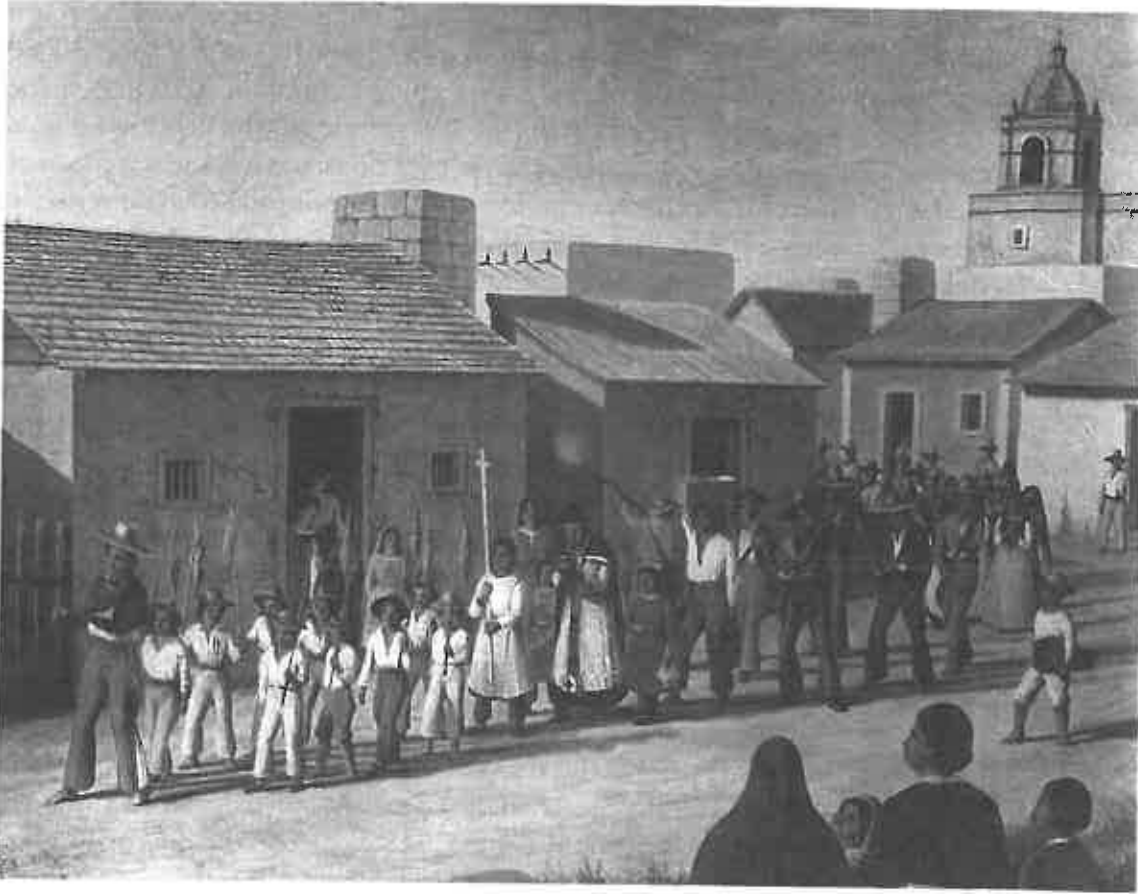
mon people living around San Antonio and southern Texas constructed homes of mud, the type of soil essential for adobe found locally. Mesquite trees, grass, and other natural products were used to build *jacales* (huts): slender mesquite posts placed in vertical rows served as walls, thatched coverings functioned as roofs. Waterworks to serve a town and its adjacent fields had to be constructed communally. In Béxar, citizens contributed their tools and materials to this end. By their own labor, they built the dams, *acequias* (irrigation canals), and aqueducts for the town and the neighboring network of missions. As time progressed, even the Canary Islanders, who had once sought to remain aloof from the rest of Béxar society, came to terms with fellow residents; community and family ties impelled them to pull their own weight and deal cooperatively with the adversities of life on the frontier.

While town living was in some ways safer than life in a rural setting, numerous blights plagued the urbanites. Lack of proper sewage facilities and the concentration of rotting animal waste and carcasses and other litter contributed to the spread of deadly epidemics (such as smallpox and cholera), as did muddy streets (good breeding grounds for mosquitoes during rainy weather). Doctors, drugs, and hospitals rarely made their way to the Far North (the only hospital, which operated for less than ten years, was founded in San Antonio in 1805). Crime committed by vagrants, smugglers, prostitutes, and other social nonconformists became an undeniable aspect of urban life. Finally, attacks by Comanches and other Plains Tribes remained possible.

Despite such difficulties, townspeople managed to live reasonably well. Diversions, often in the way of cultural traditions brought from the interior of New Spain, took several forms. In leisure time, family members gathered to tell folktales or sing *corridos* (story-telling ballads). Religious holidays were observed with a combination of Catholic solemnity and frontier-charged enthusiasm, and they afforded welcome opportunities for entertainment. These and other special occasions might see the holding of a *fandango* (festive dance), those with a talent for playing the guitar or the fiddle providing the music. In a ranching culture, favorite amusements included horseracing and the *carrera del gallo*, a contest that took several forms; in one, mounted vaqueros raced at full gallop to be the first to reach down to pull off the head of a rooster buried up to its neck in the ground.

Though sparse, intellectual life existed on the frontier. A few books made their way there, though only the well-to-do could afford them. Writing was the domain of the literate, which certainly included government officials and the clergy, but most communities comprised a few settlers and soldiers with the necessary skills. Indeed, much of the earliest knowledge of the Texas landscape and its original inhabitants comes from the diaries and chronicles of the conquistadores. Missionaries also told their accounts of working with the neophytes and left to posterity careful records of early Native American civilizations. Historians have used these writings to enhance their knowledge of the colonial era. Especially valuable for this is Father Juan Agustín Morfi's *History of Texas, 1673-1779*, written by the clergyman after an official visit to Texas.

Some of the province's leaders sought out, albeit with mixed success, good teachers within the community to instruct the young. Factors such as poverty, the uncertainty of frontier life, a belief in the general "uselessness" of an edu-



The funeral of an "angel" or baptized infant. Infant mortality rates were high on the frontera. Theodore Gentilz, *Entierro De Un Angel*, Yanaguana Society Collection, Daughters of the Republic of Texas Library.

cation in the hinterlands, and the dearth of books partly account for the absence of an educational system. But by the early nineteenth century, all the urban settlements had established some type of rudimentary educational facility.

Communications, however crude, connected Texas with Mexico over the *Camino Real* (the King's Highway, also called the San Antonio Road). This artery traversed the province from San Juan Bautista, on the Rio Grande, to Béxar, and up to the East Texas settlements. A second route extended from Laredo to La Bahía, then connected to the Camino Real at the Trinity River. Mounted couriers regularly carried mail from throughout New Spain to Texas towns.

FRONTIER SOCIETY

Mestizaje

The nonindigenous population of Texas stood at about 500 persons in 1731. It grew to about 3,000 during the 1770s and 1780s, and then leaped to about 4,000 in 1800. Despite high birth rates, many factors kept the population from growing rapidly. The adversities of frontier life included a high infant-mortality rate, continual warfare with the Indians, farming methods that yielded only a paucity of agricultural foodstuffs, traditional (and by modern standards improper) notions of

diet and hygiene, a lack of doctors and hospitals, and periodic waves of virulent diseases. Epidemics such as cholera, which swept through San Antonio in 1780 and took the lives of three people daily, also kept the population's growth in check.

Other forces, nonetheless, do account for demographic growth. Immigration from the interior of New Spain, much of it sporadic, played a part, as resolute settlers struck out for the Far North. In addition, convicts were at times dispatched to the region to help build presidios; in time, the former inmates intermixed with the indigenous population. Still, natural propagation accounted for most of the Tejano population growth.

Those who peopled Texas in the eighteenth century had a range of ethnic makeups, and they lived with a degree of sexual imbalance, with men outnumbering women. This led presidial soldiers and *mestizos* (mixed-bloods who descended from European-Indian parents) to mix with assimilated Indians, especially those around San Antonio. The process of *mestizaje* (racial and cultural union involving Europeans, Indians, and some Africans), which dated back to the earliest years of Spain's contact with the New World civilizations, continued in Texas unabated.

Although the censuses of the 1780s show that *españoles* (Spaniards) made up about one-half of the population of the province, those figures are misleading, for the term did not designate undiluted Spanishness. Rather, it served as an all-embracing label that described relative wealth, social and occupational standing, degree of cultural assimilation, and even the attitudes of the census takers. In reality, few European Spaniards lived in Texas, and those classified as such really belonged in the mestizo category. Even the Canary Islanders had mixed with the rest of the Tejano population within two generations of the founding of San Fernando de Béxar, so that none of them could truly speak of their own racial purity.

Classification regarding "Spanishness" derived from the accepted feeling on the frontier that people of darker skin hues and of mixed blood could "pass" as Spaniards, especially when they had come to achieve some sort of social standing as ranchers, government officials, or military personnel. Thus, on the frontier, economic success tended to override racial makeup in one's classification. Lower-class mestizos and other people of color such as mulattoes and slaves, however, almost always encountered difficulties in achieving the more prestigious status of "Spanish." At another level, Hispanicized Indians, African-descent people who had attained their freedom, and mulattoes might break through the mestizo stratum.

Social Differences

The social structure of Texas, therefore, did not mirror the stratified order of New Spain's interior, which placed the *peninsulares* (European-born Spaniards who dominated the higher political offices) at the top, ranked the *criollos* (American-born Spaniards who ordinarily inherited their European-born parents' possessions) next, and relegated the mestizos, Indians, and Africans to the bottom. In Texas, as in other frontier regions, the routine mixing of races mitigated ethnic divisions.

Degrees of wealth nonetheless separated some Tejanos from the majority. Government officials and military commandants enjoyed more secure incomes, although they hardly earned enough to claim prosperity. Entrepreneurs in towns and rancheros and farmers working peons or slaves constituted part

of the emerging capitalist sector in colonial society. This group owned the nicer homes, and they had the capacity to derive a better standard of living from their tracts of land. But this upper stratum represented no corporate interest or any attempt to perpetuate and protect specific privileges of a social order. Moreover, their distinction from other Tejanos remained tenuous. In education, racial makeup, cultural heritage, speech, and dress, the "upper class" largely resembled the rest of society. Their status hinged mainly on their material holdings and not on deference owed them because of their skin color, place of birth, or noble family background. The above qualifications applied equally to the Canary Islanders, who eventually became part of the overall Texas population, although some of them did manage to remain at the top of the social hierarchy.

Beneath the small upper crust representing the well to do in Tejano society lay the remainder of the Tejano population, comprising common laborers, semi-skilled workers, and Hispanicized Indians. Once again, their social categorization had less to do with their ethnic makeup than their lack of material assets.

Slavery

The nature of slavery in colonial Texas has yet to be studied adequately. According to the censuses conducted in the latter part of the eighteenth century, the number of black persons in the province barely exceeded fifty, the majority of which resided in East Texas, the region closest to Louisiana, from which some had run away. Most blacks were not slaves; whether they had arrived in Texas as fugitives or as free persons, they integrated themselves into colonial society, adopting Spanish surnames and learning the Spanish language. At least a few Tejano rancheros, however, did acquire slaves in New Orleans, exchanging cattle for bondpeople or acquiring them through barter with the French living in neighboring Louisiana communities. In the latter years of the century, some farmers living around Nacogdoches held slaves. Although Spain did not follow a pattern of exporting Africans to the Far North, the Crown did extend its official policy on slavery to Texas. This prohibited Africans from congregating, lest they plan insurrection, and from possessing firearms. Given the dire need for free laborers to perform so many menial tasks on the frontier, however, doubt exists that colonials stringently enforced such slave codes. More plausibly, Africans worked alongside other day laborers in an integrated workforce.

Tejanas

Women's place in Spanish Texas probably resembled that of other women in similar colonial societies. Living far from the interior, Tejanas escaped some of the sexual limitations more strictly outlined in New Spain proper. The rigors of frontier life tended to soften gender discrimination, as they did that of race, and women engaged in such duties as fighting Indians, helping with ranch and farm chores (including herding) and undertook mercantile activity. Still, women's chief role was that of providing the best possible domestic setting in an isolated place. The drudgery of dragging in water and wood, preparing food, making, repairing, and washing clothes, cultivating local plants, making household necessities such as soap, and passing on to

the children the morals and values of Spanish-Mexican culture all crammed their way into a woman's busy life.

Although frontier life may have featured certain democratizing tendencies, it posed severe problems for women. Isolation limited social mobility—improvement for women could occur only through fortuitous changes, such as marriage to a rising businessman or rancher. The region offered little opportunity for women to establish their own vocations, though some women practiced midwifery as a profession. Indeed, most of the responsibility for taking care of the ill (such as treating snakebites, setting bones, or tending to rheumatism) fell on the shoulders of women. It was women who primarily practiced *curanderismo* (folk healing). In addition, on the frontier, women often were treated as objects. Fathers might arrange marriages for their young daughters, unscrupulous military officers sexually exploited their subordinates' wives, and shameless husbands abused their spouses with impunity.

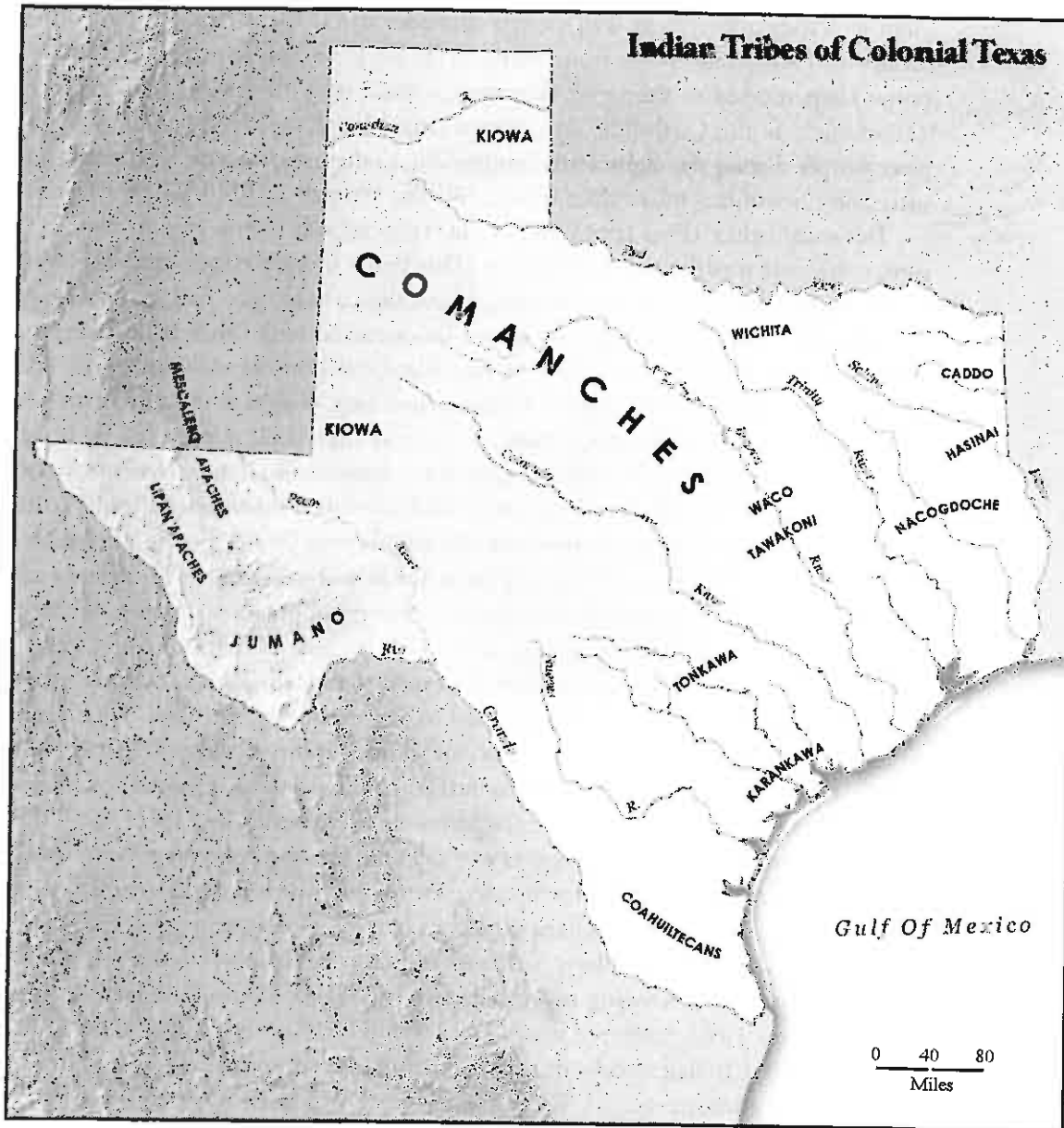
The law denied colonial women certain rights. Women could not vote or hold elective office. Moreover, a man could legally prevent his wife from leaving him. On the other hand, Tejanas enjoyed certain rights under Spanish law. Women could use the judicial system and be parties to suits, either as plaintiffs or defendants. They could hold material assets and investments independently of their spouse. Additionally, they could negotiate on their own for the sale of such goods. Finally, legal tradition did not bestow upon husbands the control of property that a wife possessed before marriage. In short, women in Spanish Texas enjoyed more legal rights than did their contemporary counterparts in French or British North American colonies.

The historical record shows that women played constructive roles in colonial society. Doña María Hinojosa de Ballí, sometimes hailed as Texas's first cattle queen, enlarged the South Texas ranch she received upon her husband's death; the estate eventually covered much of the lower Rio Grande Valley as well as Padre Island. Other women similarly experienced success as ranch managers, among them Ana María del Carmen Calvillo, a single woman from San Antonio who during this era (and continuing until the 1850s) also made a going concern of inherited ranchland. Doña María achieved success despite a series of setbacks in life: a failed marriage, the death of her children, and the untimely murder of her father.

INDIAN ACCOMMODATION AND RESISTANCE

No one knows exactly how many Native Americans lived in Texas during the colonial era, for government officials found it difficult to ascertain a correct count of unsettled tribes. One census in the late 1770s placed the number of Indians (excluding those in the missions) in excess of 7,000, while modern researchers offer a higher figure, perhaps 20,000 for the late eighteenth century.

The Indians who came from the hunter-gatherer bands inhabiting the areas east and south of San Antonio to the Gulf Coast displayed the most interest in the teachings of the missionaries. In many cases, however, reasons other than a true desire for conversion to Catholicism explain their cooperation. For the



Coahuiltecans, a move to the mission represented protection from neighboring tormentors. For other Indian bands, missions acted as temporary shelters during times of stress; the transients would leave once conditions for them improved. For those afflicted with disease or starvation, the mission centers simply offered an alternative to death. Furthermore, once under the tutelage of the friars, the neophytes learned numerous usable skills; prospective converts learned to farm, herd stock, manufacture cotton and woolen products, and make useful items such as bricks, soap, adobe, and footwear. Those in San Antonio helped erect the town's complex of missions by digging irrigation ditches, building beamed bridges and other structures, planting vegetables and cotton, and pasturing horses, sheep, goats, and pigs that the friars then sold locally at modest profits. By the end of the eighteenth century, Indian converts had accepted aspects of Catholi-

cism into their lifestyle, as well as new attitudes toward work and certain other tenets of European civilization. Some in B́exar even had intermarried or become Hispanicized to the point that they became part of the local labor force. Tribes such as the Coahuiltecans, on the other hand, ceased to exist as a distinct people during the eighteenth century due to displacement by Spaniards, the unceasing hostilities of warlike tribes, and the scourge of Old World plagues.

But most other Texas tribes had no desire to submit themselves to the disciplined life that was the mission routine. This fierce independence was displayed by the Karankawas of the Gulf Coast, whom the curates once had seen as likely recruits for conversion. Failure to assimilate occurred with other tribes who remained faithful to their way of life by maintaining economic independence. The Jumanos, for all their clamoring for Christian teaching, sought to use the Spaniards as temporary guards who might protect them as they conducted trade with the East Texas Caddos. The Caddos themselves resisted missionary overtures due to their ability to provide for themselves, both as skilled farmers and traders, the commerce that they had developed with the neighboring French proving favorable.

Ultimately, Native American peoples in Texas suffered irreversibly from such factors as frontier warfare with Europeans, inter-tribal power struggles, diseases, population losses, and climatic changes over which they had no control. For instance, the shortage of people to work garden plots, tend to the hunt, and to prepare products for home use and the trade circuit led to disaster for many tribes. Then there occurred throughout Texas in the early eighteenth century ecological disruptions that posed dire consequences. Whereas buffalo had once roamed throughout many parts of Texas, drought that plagued the plains during the early decades of the 1700s decimated the herds in South Texas as well as in the Jumano regions of West Texas, or at least drove the animals northward. Without as many buffalo grazing traditional hunting grounds, the Indians faced starvation, sickness, and other hardships.

The Jumanos, among others, suffered from a combination of the above factors as well as from changing economic patterns. Their old trading partners, the Caddos, by the 1690s preferred instead to develop business ties with French Louisiana. Incessant Indian attacks during the eighteenth century, furthermore, made conducting commerce across Texas dangerous. The Jumanos were absorbed by the Apache nation, and little is known of them as a distinct people after the 1770s.

The Karankawas, on the other hand, remained at odds with the Spaniards until the last decades of the eighteenth century—bitter towards the Europeans over the diseases they imported and the attacks the outsiders made upon Karankawa camps (in retaliation, it must be noted, for the cattle rustling undertaken by the Karankawas)—and made common cause with the Apaches by supplying them with arms acquired from Louisiana. During the last decades of the eighteenth century, the Karankawas came under constant attack by other tribes, namely the Comanches, and the former experienced rapid population losses because of warfare and pestilence. From 8,000 in 1685, the Karankawa population had been whittled down to approximately 3,000 by 1780. It was, therefore, in the 1790s and early 1800s that the Karankawas finally turned to the missions (at least to Nuestra Seora del Refugio

Mission, in present Calhoun County, established for them in 1793) and integrated the religious institutions into their survival patterns. Missions provided them shelter from the Comanches and extended them sustenance, at least during those seasons of the year when the ecology of the coastal areas made traditional lifeways difficult.

The Caddo civilization in East Texas weathered the calamities of the colonial era better than did the Coahuiltecans, Jumanos, and Karankawas. Although suffering a decline in numbers due to the destructive forces mentioned above, Caddo society remained stable. In the latter decades of the eighteenth century, the great chief Tinhouen (the Elder) played an influential role in the international trade conducted in Caddo country, with Spanish, French, and Indian traders seeking his favor. Commercial links with the French became so intimate that they modified Caddo society during the eighteenth century. In exchange for their own farm goods as well as buffalo hides, bear fat, and mustangs acquired in bartering with nearby tribes, the Caddos received weapons, work tools, hunting equipment, blankets, and clothing from the French. This symbiotic relationship made the Caddos more successful hunters and improved their standard of living, but it had a downside. Old skills atrophied as tribe members no longer needed to produce bows and arrows, traditional crafts, or weave clothing. Their close relationship also brought the Caddo new diseases and an over-reliance on the French for protection. When France turned Louisiana over to the Spanish after the conclusion of the French and Indian War in 1763, the Caddos were left on their own to face hostile Indian tribes, the encroachment of Spaniards from the west, and the threat of American settlers from the east. At the end of the colonial era, the Caddos struggled for their very survival, but they managed to remain in their homelands until the 1850s.

Many other tribes known as out-and-out hostile, belligerent, and nomadic (whom the Spanish referred to collectively as the *indios bárbaros*), survived well into the latter years of the nineteenth century. They did so by pursuing several imaginative strategies, devising new tactics to combat European outsiders, engaging in protracted do-or-die struggles among themselves, and adapting to the changing circumstances that fate dealt them.

The *Norteños*, as the Spaniards labeled the Wichitas, the Comanches, and the Caddos (the Spaniards also referred to these three tribes as the Nations of the North), openly rejected the presence of the Europeans. The Comanches and Wichitas in particular responded with vicious attacks on the foreign settlements. The Comanches stole livestock, horses, weapons, tools, and supplies—items useful for living off the land and waging war. With firearms and other supplies acquired through the Caddos from the French in the Mississippi region, the Wichita kept up their raids on enemy tribes, livestock ranches, and Spanish missions.

The Plains Indians also survived the colonial period by winning bloody turf fights with competitors. Most successful in defeating challengers in such territorial wars were the Comanches.

Buffalo Hump, a Comanche Indian.
Caldwell Papers, The Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin, CN10934.



Along with their allies, the Wichitas and the Caddos, the Comanches engaged in bitter disputes with their mortal enemies, the Apaches. At stake in these clashes were the buffalo-hunting grounds, valuable assets that the enemy possessed (among them horses), and equally important, monopolizing the trade that stretched from East Texas to New Mexico.

Still another factor that contributed to the survival of Plains Indians was adaptation to a rapidly changing scene wrought by the effects of the European traffickers, fights over natural resources, ecological change, and the need to dominate the bartering network. Pressed by the Comanches and their Norteño allies, the Apaches, for one, suffered devastating losses in manpower and material belongings as they retreated deeper into South Texas and then into the wilderness of the trans-Pecos. As a recourse strategy for survival, the Apaches in the last decades of the eighteenth century honed old economic practices, adapting them to their new circumstances. They turned to rustling livestock, having quickly learned that mules, horses, and cattle could fetch finished products that the Spaniards possessed. Simultaneously, the Apaches kidnapped and adopted individuals of other Indian tribes with whom they had trade contacts in order to replenish demographic losses. They attacked vulnerable Native American groups (and even Spanish/Mexican villages) and made off with captives. But they also employed more peaceful means. As stated earlier, Jumano extinction was due in part to their absorption by the Apaches, as indeed, marriage between the two groups became somewhat common by the mid-1700s. This act of reshaping old survival methods and reconciling them to flux is referred to as *ethnogenesis*, and all Indian peoples in Texas (not just the Apaches) during the Spanish colonial period practiced it.

THE BOURBON REFORMS

In the second half of the eighteenth century, New Spain's fear of the invasion of Texas by foreign powers diminished. The French threat to the province dissolved when, in 1762, France ceded Louisiana west of the Mississippi River to Spain during the War for the Empire, known in Britain's New England colonies as the French and Indian War (1754–63), hoping to prevent the province from falling into British hands. Though the 5,700 Frenchmen in Louisiana did not welcome the prospect of becoming Iberian subjects and sought to undermine Spanish rule by forcing their first Spanish governor to depart for Cuba in 1768, the next year a Spanish fleet reestablished Spanish sovereignty over the new acquisition. The British settlements situated along the Atlantic Coast were too far away to cause many problems for Texas. And after 1783, even the new nation of the United States suffered from too many internal problems to pose much of a menace. It was the *indios bárbaros* who continued to present the pobladores and Spanish officials with the most immediate difficulty.

But dramatic changes, with potentially adverse implications for New Spain and its northern frontiers, were taking place in Spain under the new Bourbon

king, Carlos III (r. 1759–88). An admirer of the Enlightenment philosophies then current throughout Europe, Carlos moved to bring about important reforms to make the Crown's administration of the Latin American colonies easier and to restore Spain's diminished great-power status. To Mexico, Carlos dispatched José de Gálvez to investigate the colony and recommend reform policy. Gálvez's fact-finding tour, which lasted from 1765 to 1771, produced a series of changes. The Crown replaced native Mexican lower-level administrators (who allegedly were guilty of institutionalized graft, inefficiency, and flouting the laws) with trusted and efficient officers from Spain who would preside over intendancies, or districts, in the interest of better government. Other edicts lowered the amount of taxes but ensured their collection by an efficient corps not known for corruption, as the old officials had been. Free trade was established in 1778 within most of the Spanish kingdom. Subsequent directives opened more New Spanish ports for trade and lowered custom duties to encourage intercolonial commerce. These reforms brought about a fabulous development within the empire.

In the meantime, the king entrusted the Marqués de Rubí with carefully inspecting the military organization and the state of defenses of the Far North frontier. Rubí spent from 1766 to 1767 gathering information for his report, touring the frontier from the Gulf of California to East Texas. In the process, he entered Texas from San Juan Bautista, on the Río Grande, first inspecting the fledgling presidio complex at San Sabá. From there, his party headed for San Antonio, then to Los Adaes, the designated capital of the province, and to other stations in East Texas, thence to La Bahía, and from there back to San Juan Bautista. After this 700-mile swing, Rubí submitted his recommendations for presidial system reform.

Rubí's recommendations laid the groundwork for the New Regulations of Presidios of 1772. In consideration of the post-1762 conditions, in which Spanish-owned Louisiana now shielded Texas from European enemies, the new regulations directed several maneuvers: pulling back the military and missionary presence in East Texas; the relocation of the settlers of East Texas to San Antonio, so as to strengthen the latter city (the provincial capital would also be moved to Béxar); and the implementation of a velvet-glove policy toward the Comanches and other northern tribes and an iron-fist one toward the Apaches. The last suggestion derived from Rubí's understanding of Indian affairs. The Norteño attacks upon Spanish institutions were not directed at the whites specifically; instead, the Comanches and their allies sought retaliation for the Spanish practice of coddling, through missionization, their common Apache enemy. Rubí reasoned that peace in Texas might be achieved through an alliance with the Norteños against the Apaches.

While the new policy against the Apaches alienated few Spanish colonists, such was not the case with the directives to uproot the people of East Texas. The East Texas pobladores living around the presidio and mission—approximately 500 persons, including Spaniards, Indians, blacks, and some French-descent people who had transferred in from Louisiana—were enjoying relative prosperity and had no wish to leave their homes. The governor of Texas, Juan

María de Ripperdá, sympathized with the pobladores but had his orders to oversee the evacuation. In June 1773, the departure of 167 Los Adaes families, along with soldiers and friars, began. The group reached San Antonio after three months of suffering en route due to illness, floods, poor equipment, and few riding stock. Within a few weeks after arriving in Béxar, some thirty Adaesaños had perished from the hardships they had endured on the march.

Once in San Antonio, the Adaesaños asked the governor for the right to return to their homes, which they already missed. The governor, still sympathetic to their situation, received their supplication without protest and gave them his personal approval to return as close to their former home sites as the Trinity River. Later, the viceroy approved the governor's decision, as there now seemed to be a need to defend the East Texas region from land-hungry British settlers pushing west.

A momentous march in the fall of 1774, led by Antonio Gil Ybarbo, who longed to return to his ranch, resulted in the founding of Bucareli on the Trinity River in September. Named after the viceroy, the little settlement increased in population (347 in 1777) but faced numerous problems, among them dismal harvests, rampant disease, and attacks by Comanches. Consequently, in the spring of 1779, some 500 people left Bucareli and pushed farther east, closer to where their homes once had been. Settling near the abandoned mission Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe de los Nacogdoches, they founded a new town that they logically named Nacogdoches.

Nacogdoches survived to become the only successful civilian settlement in East Texas. Significantly, it owed its origins to actions other than those that had determined the establishment of San Antonio de Béxar and La Bahía. In violation of official settlement policy, the Tejanos had trusted their own instincts and successfully launched what is today one of the oldest municipalities in Texas history.

Throughout Texas, the settlers had continued to have their hands full with fighting the Apaches and Comanches. Gálvez thus pursued strong measures, in accordance with the New Presidio Regulations of 1772. Now assuming the powerful post of minister-general of the Indies for Spain, Gálvez created in 1776 the *Provincias Internas* (the Internal Provinces), an administrative entity that comprised the present north Mexican states as well as Texas, New Mexico, and California. The commandant-general who headed this unit oversaw its military and civil administration. He answered to the king, and the governor of Texas reported to him.

Teodoro de Croix, an experienced military man in Europe and a veteran administrator in New Spain, was designated as the first commandant-general of the *Provincias Internas*. He received instructions to give priority to Indian pacification. Carefully considering which tribes posed the principal threats, which alliances with which tribes would prove most effective, and what troop strength would be needed in the overall campaign, Croix concurred with Rubí that the Apaches were the main enemies and that collusion with the Comanches and other Norteño bands would best serve Spain's purposes. But just as Croix was about to implement his offensive initiative in 1779, higher authorities recommended a new plan to contend with the Apache foes. Spain was at the time readying for renewed warfare in

Europe and found it difficult to allocate precious resources for frontier campaigns. Croix was thus forced to forego his planned military drive against the Apaches and instead offer them small commissions and inexpensive presents in an effort to conciliate them, a strategy that hardly induced the Indians to cease their raids.

TEXAS TOWARDS THE END OF THE SPANISH ERA

Towards the late eighteenth century, the Crown began the secularization of the Texas missions. Secularization involved converting the missions from financial dependency on the government into parishioner-supported institutions; the process assumed that the Indian converts had been transformed into productive citizens who could now function adequately as Spanish subjects. Although a couple of missions remained under the care of the friars towards the end of the Spanish period, the process of secularization proceeded, not culminating until the 1820s.

Several factors contributed to the desertion of the missions. Certainly, the last years of the eighteenth century tried Spanish tenacity. Carlos III was succeeded by a son lacking in wisdom, and political affairs on the European continent, starting with the French Revolution of 1789, soon engulfed Spain in shifting alliances with France and England. War with both Great Powers distracted attention from Spain's commitment in the New World and diverted monies from New Spain back to the mother country.

Working alongside these developments were newer philosophical trends that questioned the program of missionization. Since the sixteenth century, Christianization had posited the equality of Indians with the rest of humankind. On that premise, Spain had sought to convert indigenous New World populations. The anti-church sentiment buoyed by the Enlightenment, however, wrought bad times for the missionaries. By the late eighteenth century, the Franciscans and the other regular clergy found themselves facing new demands for the secularization of missions. Despite protests from the friars, the intellectual currents of the late eighteenth century undermined efforts to continue missionary work in the name of the state.

Even at the local level, several factors worked against missionary activity in Texas. First, the economic stability of the province depended on a steady, marketable commodity, and livestock seemed to fit the bill closely. As their numbers grew, the pobladores began to covet the mission cattle, and government officials simultaneously saw the potential for increased tax revenue in transforming mission lands into private property. Second, the neophytes played a part in the breakdown of the religious institutions. From the beginning, the mission concept did not make for a happy arrangement between Europeans and Native Americans. Priests and presidial soldiers lorded over literally hundreds of charges, disciplining them with intimidation and cruelty. Confinement to the compound increased the chances of falling victim to everyday illnesses, as the pileup of rubbish and the accumulation of human waste served to breed germs responsible for diseases such as influenza. Mission life for the Indians further meant dehumanization

and the abandonment of traditional lifeways and religious beliefs, not to mention their shameless exploitation at the hands of ranchers and presidial officials. Assimilation offered little hope, as it never entailed full acceptance into Spanish society. Some mission Indians rebelled by resisting the work expected from them by the missionaries, responding as other forced laborers have by feigning illness, turning to gambling or abusing alcohol, sabotaging work implements, intentionally showing up late for work, destroying sacred articles, and deriding the priesthood. Others only pretended to comply with Christian teachings, all the while putting on a front and retaining their loyalty to time-honored customs and old religious precepts. Escape seemed the best alternative to their discontent, and it became the most visible sign of resistance. Actually, by the late eighteenth century, few potential Indian converts remained. As the program of secularization ended, the friars, despite all their work and numerous accomplishments for the Church and the Crown, could claim to have Christianized or Hispanized only a small fraction of the total Native American population in Texas.

As for the *indios bárbaros*, they gave the settlers little respite. The presidial soldiers, upon whose shoulders lay the responsibility of maintaining the peace, never devised truly effective measures to ward off the Texas Indians. In many ways, their inability to carry out their purpose emanated from the design of the presidio system itself. Troops in command of large forts were not effective against such highly mobile enemies as the mounted Comanches and Wichita, who attacked farmers in the fields, struck civilian settlements, raided ranches for horses (which they exchanged for guns available from westering U.S. citizens), and harassed the neophytes who took refuge among the Spaniards. Moreover, many presidial installations were in constant need of repair, and their commanding officers often lacked good administrative skills. Militarily, the posts were understaffed, underequipped (with weapons not upgraded regularly), and often outfitted with horses unfit for service. Shortages of food and proper uniforms and the meager salaries awarded soldiers became perennial problems. Amid such conditions, morale among presidial personnel understandably remained low.

Finally, in the 1780s, the Crown returned to its earlier policy of trying to appease the Apaches by giving them gifts and rewards, applying this as well to the Comanches and the other Norteños. Actually a tactic to divide and rule by playing one tribal band against another, this official bribery aimed to reduce the Indian forces, create animosity among them, and way-lay intertribal alliances. For a time it worked, as a relative peace, albeit one punctuated by destructive clashes, ensued for roughly the next three decades.

Notwithstanding the tribulations of the frontier, the three civilian settlements that traced their origins to the 1710s remained in place as the nineteenth century dawned. San Antonio, now the provincial capital, had a population of 2,500 near its chain of five missions and in the town of Béxar. Some 1,200 persons lived in Goliad's surroundings, and about 500 lived in Nacogdoches. A few more pobladores populated two new towns erected to counter the threat of Anglo-American aggression from the United States: Salcedo, founded in

1806, was situated on the Trinity River near the old outpost of Bucareli; and San Marcos de Neve, established in 1808, was located north of today's city of Gonzales. Neither community thrived. Salcedo's population was listed as ninety-two inhabitants in 1809, but no one lived there by 1813. San Marcos de Neve had a population of sixty-one in 1808, but a flood in June of that year, followed by Indian attacks, persuaded the luckless settlers in 1812 to relocate.

Trade with other frontier areas remained brisk, giving a needed boost to the province's fledgling market economy. Residents of Nacogdoches continued to violate government trade regulations, swayed by the demand for their goods east of the Sabine River; indeed, contraband trade seemed for the isolated community a necessary mode of survival. Natchitoches, Louisiana, was scarcely 100 miles away, which seduced men like Antonio Gil Ybarbo, who carried on such a lucrative extralegal business that the government ultimately investigated and arrested him. Military troops dispatched to Nacogdoches in the mid-1790s hardly discouraged the contraband ventures. Neither were commandants able to prevent foreigners from migrating into the area. Soon after its founding, Nacogdoches had a population composed of various ethnic groups engaged as merchants, Indian traders, and ranchers, many of whom took Spanish wives and acclimated themselves to Spanish-Mexican culture. There, the only American trading company in Spanish territory functioned. With the endorsement of the royal government, the enterprise of Barr and Davenport sought to pacify the neighboring Indians and supply the needs of local soldiers.

For people in the interior, economic activity remained agrarian based, with ranching persisting as the most secure means of making a living. The business of trading horses and mules picked up within the province as well as between Louisiana and Texas during the 1770s, in part due to the success of the British colonies in their struggle for independence. Texas rancheros around San Antonio and La Bahía engaged in illegal intercolonial trade by exchanging their livestock for tobacco and other finished goods that made their way into Louisiana from the newly independent United States or from European countries. A new opportunity for those on the make appeared when the United States bought the Louisiana Territory from France, a move that brought Anglo-American settlers to the New Orleans region. The proceeds of clandestine commerce were not equitably distributed among all segments of Texas society, however, as the large rancheros benefited primarily.

The king had ever prohibited such international trade, but during the 1770s he passed decrees regulating access to wild herds (including the levying of fees upon those rounding up *mesteño* stock), cattle branding, and the exportation of livestock. Then he appointed governors who proved unduly firm in enforcing these laws. Furthermore, legal restrictions upon the rancheros and the reduction of the wild herds due to slaughtering and exportation by Tejanos produced economic difficulties, further angering the ranching elite. Over the years, the *pobladores* of Texas had developed an identity tied more to their daily necessities than to the imperial designs that the authorities sought to implement. During the colonial era, the Tejanos had survived almost on their own, living by their wits, even ignoring the king's decrees when they conflicted with immediate concerns. They had come

to appreciate their semi-autonomous relationship with the heartland, and now they resented what seemed an unnecessary intrusion into their personal affairs.

INDEPENDENCE FROM SPAIN

The Bourbon Reforms of the Enlightenment, which helped Spain make a remarkable recovery, produced resentment and discontent toward the mother country in New Spain. Over the centuries, Mexico had come to perceive itself as something greater than a mere colony. Thus, Mexicans resented the newly appointed peninsular administrators who practically monopolized the intendancy and tax-collection positions enacted by the reforms. Furthermore, they disliked the arrogant attitudes of the peninsulares, who insisted upon deference and even subservience to their positions. Naturally, the people resented these developments, but vexation did not signify a wish to overthrow the system, rather a desire to replace a bad government that denied them full participation.

It was, then, an imperial crisis that ultimately led the people of Mexico, already alienated by the Bourbon Reforms, to talk of doing something about their dependent status. Spain's European wars after 1789 sapped the Spanish treasury, which in turn exhausted the colonies; stepped-up taxation and other forced contributions to the Crown produced financial distress throughout Spain's New World holdings. Mexicans denounced the injustices but, in the traditional manner, continued to pay homage to the king.

The drive for Mexican autonomy mounted following Napoleon's conquest of Spain in 1808. Spaniards resisted the French occupation on May 2 (*Dos de Mayo*), then organized a *Cortes* (parliament) to hold the land while the deposed King Ferdinand VII remained in exile. Copying the Iberian example, the Latin American colonies established *juntas* (committees) to protect the New World empire until Ferdinand could reassume the throne.

In New Spain, criollos in Querétaro (in the state of Querétaro) established a similar junta. Most had felt the pinch of Spain's money-raising measures during the era of the Napoleonic wars, among them a priest from Dolores, Guanajuato, named Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla. Suddenly exposed as a plotter to overthrow the peninsular officials who had been running Mexico since Napoleon's invasion of the Iberian Peninsula, Hidalgo opted for a war against bad government. Skirmishes broke out in Hidalgo's parish at Dolores on September 16, 1810 (*Diez y Seis de Septiembre*) and developed into the unexpected: a social revolution between the colony's elite and the downtrodden lower classes, many of the former being the criollos who themselves had planned to gain their independence from the peninsulares.

The revolt rippled into far-off Texas. Despite the distance between the core government and the frontier, the province never was so isolated that political winds blowing in the interior did not earn the notice of Tejanos. In Texas, one Juan Bautista de las Casas, a military veteran, took up Hidalgo's cry, garnering the support of some of the soldiers in the B́exar presidio, members of the lower class in the city, and local rancheros who had been alienated by recent Crown policies. On January 22, 1811, Las Casas displaced the few official representa-



The marketplace was the center of life in frontier towns. Courtesy of The Witte Museum, San Antonio, Texas.

tives of royalist government still living in Béxar. From the capital, the insurrection widened to other parts of the province. But Las Casas's rebellion had not gained the support of all Bédareños, and it soon encountered opposition from proroyalist forces in the city who ousted Las Casas on March 2, 1811. Given a trial in Coahuila, Las Casas received a death sentence and was shot in the back for treason; to remind would-be rebels of the penalty for challenging the status quo, royal officials sent his head to Béxar for public display. Meanwhile, Father Hidalgo, who was defeated in battle on March 21, 1811, also suffered execution.

The sympathy Tejanos displayed for the limited independence movement brought destruction to the province, for civil war did not end following the defeat of Las Casas. One Bernardo Gutiérrez de Lara assumed Hidalgo's revolutionary mantle. Apparently encouraged by U.S. officials wanting to develop an appropriate foreign policy toward New Spain once that country had achieved its independence, Gutiérrez de Lara worked to wrest Texas from royalist control. Accompanied by Augustus W. Magee, a former U.S. Army officer at Natchitoches, Louisiana, Gutiérrez forded the Sabine River in August 1812 at the head of the Republican Army of the North and captured Nacogdoches. Soon, the expedition exceeded 700 in number, attracting recruits from among Anglo volunteers in Louisiana and members of the local militia. From East Texas, the expedition marched toward Central Texas, captured La Bahía and San Antonio, and proclaimed Texas as an independent state in the spring of 1813. But in August, a royalist force led by José Joaquín Arredondo crushed the rebels (sans Gutiérrez de Lara, who by then had lost favor among the republicans and had been replaced as commander) south of San Antonio at the Battle of the Medina River. It was the bloodiest battle ever

fought on Texas soil, with some 1,300 rebel soldiers killed. Soon thereafter, the royalists shot 327 suspected rebel sympathizers in San Antonio, and Nacogdoches became the scene of another bloody purge committed by one of Arredondo's lieutenants. The royalists now ravaged the ranchos, compelling many Tejanos to flee across the Sabine River into Louisiana. For the next several years, these agents of peninsular and criollo power dominated the region, living off the land and harassing the frontier people, most of whom sympathized with the insurgents. By 1821, Spanish rule ended when New Spain achieved its independence. Nacogdoches, with much of its populace having fled, faced extinction as a community.

RESILIENCE

Throughout the colonial era, the number of people who lived in Texas fluctuated, reaching the aforementioned figure of about 4,000 early in the nineteenth century, then dwindling to 2,240 (excluding soldiers) by 1821. Remarkably, these few thousand pobladores succeeded in transporting traits of their heritage into the next era. Numbers by themselves, therefore, are deceptive: they do not testify to enduring aspects of the Tejanos, among them a unique character as a people of the frontier. As already indicated, the central government of Spain did not strictly dictate life in the Far North. Relative isolation had always guaranteed a modicum of independence and honed the development of attitudes and skills necessary for survival in an unforgiving environment. Even the governor and other royal officials pursued a compromise with viceregal rule, adhering to the old dictum of *obedezco pero no cumpro* (I obey but do not comply). Military officials behaved no differently. And the Church, burdened as it was with debt and commitments to missionary work, could hardly have acted as an arm of the state.

The atmosphere in colonial Texas, therefore, encouraged informal community building. Tejanos sought their own economic ends by selecting the most convenient and profitable markets for their livestock; this meant turning to Louisiana and even to the United States to engage in contraband trade. The ayuntamiento at times acted as a legitimizing agent when local necessities clashed with imperial dictates. Such adjustments to circumstances at hand permitted Tejanos to survive quite well as a community after the end of Spain's presence in their land.

The Far North also produced traits of ruggedness that traversed cultures and nationhoods. Spaniards in the hinterlands carried the task of establishing roots and the responsibility of perpetuating their civilization hundreds of miles from previous settlements. On the range, settlers had to perfect their skills in handling horses to exact a livelihood from a predominantly ranching culture. This "Norteño" variety of Mexican culture, some historians hypothesize, resulted from these experiences. The north fostered egalitarianism, the will to work, an implied strength and prowess, as well as determination and courage in the face of danger.

At the end of its war for independence, which ended in 1821, then, New Spain effectively preserved traditions with origins in the Iberian Peninsula, which Tejanos transmitted past 1821. Some customs applied to the ranching economic order. Spanish-Mexican terminology, riding gear, and methods



Corrida de la Sandía (Watermelon Race), part of the celebration of the *Día de San Juan*. Theodore Gentilz, *Corrida de la Sandía*, Yanaguana Society Collection, Daughters of the Republic of Texas Library.

of working the range became etched into Anglo-American culture. Among familiar ranch terms are “buckaroo” from *vaquero*, “cinch” from *cincha*, “chaps” from *chaparejos*, “hoosegow” from *juzgado*, and “lasso” from *lazo*. The rodeo, a semiannual roundup of livestock to determine the ownership of free-ranging animals, evolved into a highly competitive sport in the Anglo period.

Also perpetuated were legal practices that had derived from Spanish precedent. Iberian laws, revised for application to frontier situations, allowed outsiders to become part of a family unit. Long-standing rules applicable to community property also lingered: couples shared jointly any assets they had accumulated while married; a woman could keep half of all financial gains the couple earned; and a husband could not dispose of the family’s holdings without his wife’s consent. Women also retained the right to negotiate contracts and manage their own financial affairs.

Furthermore, the Spanish tradition protecting debtors prevailed. Over the centuries, neither field animals nor agricultural implements could be confiscated by creditors, and in the subsequent era this safeguard applied to a debtor’s home, work equipment and animals, and even his or her land.

The legacy of Spain to the Texas experience thus makes for an extensive list that runs the gamut from the esoteric, such as legal influences concerning water laws, to the prosaic. Among the latter are contributions to a bilingual society in various sections of the modern State of Texas, Spanish loan words (for example, mesquite and arroyo), delectable Spanish-Mexican foods, styles of dress, geographical nomenclature (every major river in Texas bears a Spanish name, for example), and architecture. Empires might wane, but their cultures endure.

While Spain's rule over Texas left a lasting imprint on the outpost, few Tejanos mourned its replacement in 1821 by an independent Mexico. Communities had valued their relative autonomy on the hinterland, but they had wanted better administration and military protection. Simultaneously, Tejanos resented the bureaucratic restrictions they believed discouraged profit making in ranching, farming, and other forms of commerce. Spain had not convinced many people to relocate into the wilderness region; a hard enough task given the fact that frontiers hold out few migrational pull factors, nor did sufficient population pressures exist in the interior to push Mexicans northward. Yet some Tejanos saw the solution to their myriad problems—among them Indian depredations and economic underdevelopment—in the arrival of new settlers, in the spread of urban settlements, and in the growth of the pastoral industries. Thus, while Spain retained sovereignty over Texas for three hundred years and Hispanic culture endured there well past 1821, Spain had left a community of people still groping to devise their own survival strategies, political and otherwise. Therefore, in the era of Mexican rule in Texas, 1821–36, the pobladores would continue to pursue political solutions more appropriate to their local conditions and less relevant to their national government's political aims.

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