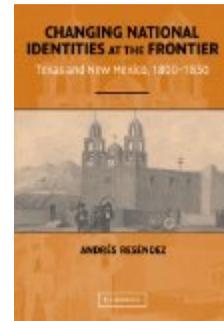


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Andrés Reséndez. *Changing National Identities at the Frontier: Texas and New Mexico, 1800-1850*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005. x + 309 pp. \$68.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-521-83555-8; \$26.99 (paper), ISBN 978-0-521-54319-4.

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Fluid Borders

The traditional histories of the Texas Revolution placed the conflict between Anglo-American settlers and Mexicans within the context of a freedom-toting, Democracy-loving people and the centralizing notions of a despotic nation ill suited to the management of a bountiful land. Later interpretations incorporated the struggles for the Southwest in ethnic or cultural terms, making full use of the concept of Manifest Destiny and the inevitability of American expansionism. Most recently, scholars of the Texas Revolution and the Mexican-American War have added to the understanding of the conflicts on Mexico's far north by presenting the Texas Revolution as an extension of American democracy which collided with the Mexican government's struggle to maintain control over its distant provinces. The common thread in the various histories of the conflict on the U.S.-Mexico borderlands region is the depiction of two nation-states, each with residents who demonstrated clear national loyalties, pitted against one another as clearly identifiable elements destined to collide with one another over issues such as land and politics.

Andrés Reséndez's *Changing National Identities at the Frontier: Texas and New Mexico, 1800-1850* challenges these long-standing views and offers a far more comprehensive analysis of the multifaceted relationships and identities on the borderlands of the U.S. and Mexican nations. The author has produced a valuable study that disputes the notions of pre-existing national identities by examining the external forces which shaped and altered the identity choices of Frontier Hispanics,

Anglo-Americans, and Indians. According to Reséndez, the frontier area of northern Mexico and the American southwest was largely shaped by the impact of state and market, two forces which "conditioned the identity choices of early-nineteenth-century frontier society" (p. 5).

Reséndez lays the groundwork to his study by analyzing the different peoples that came in contact with one another in Texas and New Mexico during the early nineteenth century. As Mexican authorities laid the groundwork for settlement and established boundaries, disparate cultures encountered one another in the form of Anglo-American settlers who arrived in search of land and a new start, and Native Americans who came to the Mexican territory and melted into Mexico's far north. The author suggests that these competing inhabitants were able to coexist as long as the low population density kept interaction between these groups to a minimum. Yet during the early Mexican national period, the nation-state attempted to integrate these distinct populations into the national system by the use of land distribution and incorporating foreign-born residents into the Catholic Church.

Chapter 3 examines the impact of the market revolution on Mexico's attempts to exact loyalty and privilege from its citizens. Reséndez maintains that the burgeoning American economy influenced the lives of frontier residents, creating alliances while at the same time pulling ethnic groups in different directions. The sub-

sequent chapter focuses on the push-pull forces of the nation-state and market economies by tracing the impact of cross-cultural marriages. While individuals who married could extract substantial benefits in the form of facilitating access to land grants and improving a resident's political and economic standing, problems surfaced when dealing with the state bureaucracy as the Church and Mexican authorities attempted to regulate these unions which could potentially alter the landscape of the Mexican frontier. Thus, the struggle between government and the people launched a critical period for frontier citizens as they shifted their loyalties to fit into the political and economic realities of Mexico's far northern region.

Chapters 5 and 6 explore the political struggles which led to the Texas Revolution of 1835-1836 and New Mexico's 1837 Chimayo Rebellion. Even though each secession movement had different outcomes, the author maintains, each movement demonstrated the realities of shifting loyalties and nationalistic rhetoric. Chapter 7 analyzes the various literary cultures of Anglo-Americans, Hispanics, and Kiowa Indians on the frontier in relation to the 1841 Texan Santa Fe Expedition which attempted to annex New Mexico to the nascent Republic of Texas. Resendéz provides an expansive view of the contrasting cultures that intersected on the borderlands region. The study concludes with the military occupation of New Mexico at the outset of the Mexican-American War in 1846 and the subsequent Mexican rebellions that attempted to overthrow the United States established government. Even in the midst of this turbulent period, "Mexicanist" citizens attempted to forge an alliance with the Pueblo Indians against the Anglo-Americans by appealing to religion in order to forge a common bond.

The Mexican-American War clearly recognized disparate paths for the two nations as the war claimed a vast area of land for the United States and gave male residents of the new American Southwest one year to decide whether to stay in the United States and become citizens, or return to Mexico and maintain their nationality. Yet contrary to pre-existing notions of national loyalty and identity for these frontier residents, Resendéz argues that the concept of nationalism was still in transition on the

U.S.-Mexico border and that the story of how Mexico's Far North became the American Southwest goes far beyond the implied certainty of American Manifest Destiny or the political and military incompetence of Mexico's early leaders. Instead, Resendéz's study expands our understanding of the United States-Mexico borderlands by emphasizing the conception of ethnic/national identities as "two-way exchanges, as frontier peoples appropriate and bring the nation to the frontier to further their own local interests" (p. 268).

The significance of Resendéz's *Changing National Identities at the Frontier* is that it incorporates various interdisciplinary approaches into a study which traces the development of two burgeoning nation-states struggling to assert their claims to a frontier region and its inhabitants through political and economic means. The people on the border region emerge not as passive pawns in the struggles between two nations, but rather as active participants in determining their own paths—either individually or collectively—toward establishing loyalty and forging a national identity. The author's ability to look at the shifting allegiances and diverse sense of identities among the citizens of the region leads to a far more comprehensive portrait of the different peoples of the U.S.-Mexico borderlands and lays the groundwork for historians delving into further study of Mexico, the American Southwest, Nationalism, and Borders/Identities. Resendéz accomplishes this by extensive research into the historiographies and archives of both Mexico and the United States, as well as the use of Indian sources grounded in American ethnological studies of indigenous texts and calendars to provide a truly transnational framework. Not only is this study well written and persuasively argued, it transcends previous unilateral views of frontier communities in Texas and New Mexico by raising the bar and carefully looking at the concepts of nationalism and ethnic identity through the eyes of Mexicans, Anglo-Americans, and Native Americans. The picture that emerges from this work adds a new dimension to the Southwest borderlands and helps clarify the complex structure evident in the concept of dual identities and shifting loyalties that continue to exist to this day. This important study will surely stimulate new works on the U.S.-Mexico border region for years to come.

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