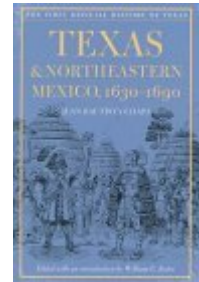


H-Net Reviews

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Juan Bautista Chapa. *Texas & Northeastern Mexico, 1630-1690*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997. xii + 235 pp. \$24.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-292-71188-4.

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Continuing the excellent scholarship evident in *Imaginary Kingdom*, the translation of the Rubi and Rivera expeditions into Texas, William Foster has now published a newly translated and annotated version of Juan Bautista Chapa's *Historia del Nuevo Reino de Leon*. Chapa accompanied Captain Alonso de Leon (the elder) on many military campaigns against the Indians along the lower Rio Grande. He also served under Leon's son on the expeditions that searched for and eventually discovered La Salle's aborted colony. Two themes emerge from Chapa's writings that recur throughout the history of Spanish northward expansion. The first is the continual warfare with the native populations for control of the area. The second is the continuing efforts to keep the French, and later other imperial rivals, away from New Spain's mines.

The most significant problem facing Spanish authorities on the northern frontier was the resistance of the Indians. Chapa describes in great detail the threat posed by these natives to Spanish settlement of the frontier. The ability or inability of a governor to protect settlers could make or break his administration. In addition, Chapa devotes an important section of his history (pp. 69-89) to efforts by Governor Zavala and local officials to evaluate and apply Saint Augustine's definition of "just war" in light of the Indians' hostility. Their 1632 decision to use total war as a means of achieving peace would be a cornerstone of Spanish Indian policy until modified by Viceroy Bernardo Galvez in 1786. The arguments constructed by early Spanish officials grappling over the treatment of the natives provides very interesting reading as well as insight into the functioning of the colonial mind.

Near the end of the seventeenth century, a new problem emerged, the French. Nuevo Leon, with its position

as the northernmost coastal province, took the lead in the search for La Salle's colony. Chapa, as a member of the 1689 expedition that located both the destroyed French settlement and the Tejas Indians, provides an interesting account of the journey. Included as Appendix A is Governor Alonso de Leon's revised diary of the 1690 expedition, during which the first Franciscans in east Texas were established. Published for the first time, it provides a natural accompaniment to Chapa's history.

This is not the first publication of Chapa's history. It was first published in 1909 by Genero Garcia, but attributed to an anonymous author. In 1971, Carl Duaine privately printed the first English translation of Chapa's history. While historians of early Texas have long relied on Chapa's work, Foster's new edition is important. The notes are detailed and well researched and point the reader to other important secondary sources of information. The *New Handbook of Texas* and the *Handbook of North American Indians* are especially well represented in the notes and are both excellent sources of additional information.

Foster's work is significant for many reasons. For historians of Texas, the work provides a more complete and clear understanding of the background events and people involved in the initial settlement of the state. Even those scholars familiar with the events covered by this book from secondary sources such as Donald Chipman's *Spanish Texas*, Robert Weddle's Gulf of Mexico Trilogy (*Spanish Sea, French Thorn, Changing Tides*), or Carlos Casteneda's *Our Catholic Heritage in Texas* will enjoy reading the original accounts. Ethnologists will find a great deal of useful information in Appendix B. This is a compilation of the Indian tribes described in Captain Alonso de Leon's Discourses, Chapa's history, and General de Leon's re-

vised 1690 expedition diary. For others, the descriptions of the weather conditions and animals encountered by the expeditions provide information of the landscape of early Texas.

Teachers below the college level will also find Foster's book useful. With renewed interest in La Salle's settlement stimulated by the recent recovery of one of his ships, this work should be popular. With its clear and easy to follow language, many sections of this book could easily be employed in the classroom at any level, giving students an idea of frontier life and the hardships of wilderness exploration.

This book deserves a place in the library of anyone interested in Spain's frontier experiences. It adds depth to our already extensive knowledge of the period. Chapa's writings should be added to those of Cabeza de Vaca, Fray Juan Agustin Morfi, Brigadier Pedro de Rivera, and the Marques de Rubi which, as colorful contemporary accounts, give modern readers access to the early history of Texas and the Southwest.

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