

Diana Hadley, Thomas H. Naylor, Mardith K. Schuetz-Miller, eds.. *The Presidio and Militia on the Northern Frontier of New Spain. Volume Two, Part Two: The Central Corridor and the Texas Corridor, 1700-1765.* Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1997. x + 556 pp. \$65.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-8165-1693-3.



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The military history of colonial Mexico's northern frontier has deep roots in documentary history. In 1965 Sidney B. Brinckerhoff and Odie B. Faulk published the Spanish text and translation of the critical Regulation of 1772, which reformed the presidios--fortified garrisons--in northern New Spain. This began a spate of articles and monographs climaxing with Max L. Moorhead's seminal institutional history of the presidio ten years later.[1] To counter the late-eighteenth-century bias of these and other works and to correct the impression that no other sources were available, the Documentary Relations of the Southwest (DRSW) at the Arizona State Museum at the University of Arizona began a bilingual Civil-Military series. Volume One of *The Presidio and Militia*, covering the years 1570-1700, came out in 1986, providing transcribed documents and translations.[2]

While working on a second volume, the massive amount of information surrounding an earlier attempt at reform in the 1720s led to a separate publication on the subject two years later.[3] Funding problems in the 1980s and the unfortunate death of principal editor Thomas Naylor in

1990, contributed to the long wait for Volume Two, covering the years 1700-1765. The continuing abundance of material split the volume into two geographical parts: Part One: The Californias and Sinaloa-Sonora, and Part Two: The Central Corridor and the Texas Corridor. Part Two is under review here.

Like previous volumes, *The Presidio and Militia, Volume Two, Part Two* is a collection of documents transcribed from the original holographic Spanish, translated into English, and annotated to present raw data for historians and ethnologists "to make critical appraisals and interpretations of the overall history of New Spain" (p. 1). It aims to present a sample of the great variety of documents available in the archives for the central corridor (Nueva Vizcaya and New Mexico) and the Texas Corridor (Texas, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon, and Nuevo Santander). The editors hope the selected documents show the importance of geography and distance in the creation of regional divisions and present the diverse viewpoints of the many actors on the northern frontier.

The work divides into three parts covering mainly Nueva Vizcaya (present-day Chihuahua

and Durango), New Mexico, and Texas. Each part begins with a map of the area and an introduction, followed by two to five sections of documents. Each document has an explanatory preface and presents an annotated translation, followed by the transcribed Spanish text. Other maps and illustrations taken from eighteenth-century Spanish cartographic sources are interspersed throughout and support the text. Documents covering Nueva Vizcaya include the establishment of a new presidio, and attack on a hacienda; a report on Nuevo Leon (although the editors placed this province in the Texas corridor in their introduction), attempts by a major hacendado to form his own defense force, proposals to reestablish missions on the Rio Grande, and a report from a presidial captain on Nueva Vizcaya in 1748.

Documents from New Mexico cover the sentencing of soldiers, a judgment on a disastrous expedition to the Great Plains in 1720, an order prohibiting gambling and attacks on women, a court martial of soldiers for desertion of their post, and a roster and inventory of the garrison of Santa Fe in 1761. Texas documents encompass attempts to locate La Salle's failed colony and the establishment and abandonment of the first missions during the 1690s, the return of missions and the creation of presidios in Texas in the 1710s, and the rising Apache conflict during the 1740s.

Since this is a collection of these documents with no central thesis or argument, a critique is problematic. So, this review will limit itself to three broad areas: selection of the documents, their annotation, and translation. The selection of many different documents is the greatest strength of *The Presidio and Militia*, but it is also its greatest weakness. Facing a sampling of the multitude of documents in the archives, the reader has nothing to compare them to. Were the events discussed, such as the attack on the hacienda, everyday occurrences? Were the court martial and sentencing of soldiers common occurrences? Did

many hacendados want to raise their own forces, or was this out-of-the-ordinary? Further, the selection by several editors of documents results in a sense of unevenness for the reader.

The space devoted to Texas, two-fifths of the text, is also questionable. Assigning 219 pages out of 526, almost as much as the heartland of the central corridor, is surprising since Texas remained an underpopulated backwater for most of Spain's time in the Americas. Two of the documents in the Texas section, Espinosa's 1716 diary and Pena's 1720-1722 account, have been previously translated and are available elsewhere.[4] Despite the editor's assertion about the lack of availability of these translations, this reviewer was able to obtain through inter-library loan with a week. To provide a sense of balance and a basis for comparison, perhaps future volumes could present similar documents from across the frontier.

Documentary histories are famous, as the editors noted in Volume One, for annotation. *The Presidio and Militia* annotations aim to supplement and explain material in the text but have been kept as brief and direct as possible.[5] The annotations in Volume Two, Part Two continue this trend. They are primarily biographical or geographical in nature, rather than explanatory, and often given without citations. While the annotations are useful, and long annotations can be the curse of a documentary history, the reviewer kept hoping for more than was often provided and a nonspecialist might not know where to turn to answer any further questions.

Since the reviewer respects anyone who can translate eighteenth-century documents and maintain his/her sanity, translation will only be touched on lightly here.[6] In some ways the translations are too figurative, too twentieth-century vernacular, too verbatim. For example, "la caballada detransporte" may be better translated as "the pack herd," than as "the herd of transport animals" (pp. 180, 209). (While it may be further

minutia, some terms have different meanings today.) A "fusil" was not a "rifle," as translated, in the eighteenth century, but the standard infantry musket; a "lanza" was not a "spear," but a lance; and an "escopeta" was not a "shotgun," but a short-barreled musket (pp. 298, 303). Yet the placing of the Spanish original after the translation allows the reader to check such things out for themselves.

These critiques should not call into question the immense value of this work. *The Presidio and Militia* provides an easily accessed and crucial starting point for researchers and can function as a basic primer on the documents available for northern frontier of New Spain for specialists from other areas of Latin American history and ethnology. It also makes available translated sources for undergraduates and the Spanish texts can give graduate students much translation practice. For these reasons any research library should have all four of DRSW's efforts on its shelves. We can now only patiently await Volume Three of *The Presidio and Militia*.

Notes:

[1]. Sidney B. Brinckerhoff and Odie B. Faulk, eds. and trans., *Lancers for the King: A Study of the Frontier Military System of Northern New Spain, with a translation of the Royal Regulations of 1772* (Phoenix: Arizona Historical Foundation, 1965); and Max L. Moorhead, *The Presidio: Bastion of the Spanish Borderlands* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1975).

[2]. Thomas H. Naylor and Charles W. Polzer, eds., *The Presidio and Militia on the Northern Frontier of New Spain, A Documentary History, Volume One: 1570-1700* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1986).

[3]. Thomas H. Naylor and Charles W. Polzer, eds., *Pedro de Rivera and the Military Regulations for Northern New Spain, 1724-1729, A Documentary History of his Frontier Inspection and the*

Reglamento de 1729 (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1988).

[4]. See Gabriel Tous, trans., "Ramon's Expedition: Espinosa's Diary of 1716," *Preliminary Studies of the Texas Catholic Society* 1:4 (1930): 4-24; Richard G. Santos, ed. and trans., *Aguayo Expedition into Texas, 1721: An Annotated Translation of the Five Versions of the Diary kept by Br. Juan Antonio de la Pena* (Austin, Texas: Jenkins Publishing Co., 1981); and Peter P. Forrestal, "Pena's Diary of the Aguayo Expedition," *Preliminary Studies of the Texas Catholic Society* 2:7 (1935): 3-68.

[5]. See "Annotation" in Naylor and Polzer, *The Presidio and Militia, Volume One*, 14-15.

[6]. Also, see "Editorial Methodology" in *Ibid.*, 11-14.

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