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*Country of the Cursed and the Driven* challenges scholars to broaden their views about the history of slavery in Texas conceptually and chronologically. Conceptually, the book introduces the notion of borderlands slavery and calls into question the distinction between captivity and kin incorporation as distinctively Native American practices, on the one hand, and slavery as practiced by Europeans, on the other. Chronologically, the author breaks with the scholarly convention of confining the history of slavery in Texas mostly to the nineteenth century and extends the timeline of slaving practices in the region to the eighteenth century and even further back. More than that, this book is a compelling study of how violence, and more precisely “slaving violence,” shaped the history of Texas over the course of centuries. Examining under the same framework several forms of bondage and expanding the history of slavery in Texas are, thus, the most important contributions of this work.

The book presents a chronological narrative that masterfully shows readers slavery and violence as historical processes that changed over time and as practices that were shaped by environmental, geopolitical, and economic factors, as well as by individual and collective choices made by people living in specific historical circumstances. The work is composed of seven chapters and organized into three parts, each with an introductory section. Part 1, consisting of chapters 1 to 3, examines the deep historical roots of the Spanish and Comanche slaving practices that shaped the history of the region we now know as Texas between the 1500s and 1760s. Importantly, in this part the author establishes the contours of the framework that structures the whole book. In this sense, Paul Barba argues that Native American and European slaving practices, although undoubtedly different in some regards, shared at least three features: the violence they involved; the narratives, practices, and vocabularies about kin (like *compadrazgo* in the case of Spanish America) that they shaped; and the underlying economic logic and practices behind them. This section also demonstrates the centrality of slavery as a way to exert dominion over peoples and territories.

The second part of the book, comprising chapters 4 and 5, introduces “Anglo-Americans” and their own slaving practices as new actors in the history of the region after the independence of
the thirteen North American colonies. This section also further develops the argument that the Native American practice of kin incorporation was not that different to slavery as Europeans practiced it in the region. Chapter 4 contends that discourses and narratives of kin incorporation in the case of both communities of European and Native American descent were strategies of social control and exploitation. To advance this argument, Barba compares Spanish and Comanche slaving practices between the 1760s and the 1820s. The author finds that, although Native Americans certainly did not create a plantation economy based on slavery, their captives definitely played a significant economic role in their communities. Similarly, even though Comanche slavery was not inherited, captives were referred to with specific terms that signaled their place in the community, therefore, suggesting the limits of their incorporation as kin.

Chapter 5, for its part, retells the well-known history of Anglo-American colonists in the region from the early 1800s to the independence of Texas from Mexico. This particular section further delves into the commonalities and differences among the Spanish, Indigenous, and Anglo-American slaving systems. We also learn about the failed attempts of the Mexican government to exert its dominion over the area and about its collaboration with the Anglo-American colonists in several anti-Native campaigns.

The final section of the book, containing chapters 6 and 7, narrates the dismantling of Hispanic institutions in Texas and the construction of an anti-Black regime by Texians (as people from the region called themselves during that time). At the same time, in this part, Barba argues that although anti-Black slaving violence dominated the period, Anglo-American rule remained contested until at least the 1860s, when Comanches capitulated and were expelled from the area.

The idea of equating various types of unfreedom and exploitation with slavery is not new in the historiography of the US American borderlands, nor in the history of the Atlantic world. In doing this, Barba joins authors, such as Andrés Reséndez (The Other Slavery: The Uncovered Story of Indian Enslavement in America [2016]) and Simon P. Newman (A New World of Labor: The Development of Plantation Slavery in the British Atlantic [2013]), who have argued in their own way that in everyday life different forms of coerced labor are barely distinguishable from slavery. Barba’s work, however, is arguably unique in its emphasis on the similarities between the vocabularies that people created about kin incorporation as a way to conceal forms of exploitation akin to slavery. This approach, nonetheless, does elicit some questions: What do we lose by equating with slavery different types of captivity? Is there a way to remain true to the experiences of historical subjects while keeping conceptual distinctions (as minor as they might appear) between this set of historical practices? All in all, Country of the Cursed and the Driven is a welcome addition to the scholarship on the subject and a must-read for everyone interested in the history of the US borderlands.
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