

RANCHEROS, LAND,
AND ETHNICITY ON THE
NORTHERN BORDERLANDS:

Works on Social and Agrarian History in the Last Decade

Robert D. Shadow, Universidad de las Américas–Puebla

María J. Rodríguez-Shadow, Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia

LAND GRANTS AND LAWSUITS IN NORTHERN NEW MEXICO. By Malcolm Ebright. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994. Pp. 256. \$50.00 cloth, \$14.95 paper.)

THE HISPANO HOMELAND. By Richard Nostrand. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992. Pp. 296. \$32.95 cloth.)

THE SPANISH-AMERICAN HOMELAND. By Alvar W. Carlson. (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990. Pp. 312. \$39.95 cloth.)

THE PRESERVATION OF THE VILLAGE: NEW MEXICO'S HISPANICS AND THE NEW DEAL. By Suzanne Forrest. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1989. Pp. 269. \$35.00 cloth, \$17.95 paper.)

NO SEPARATE REFUGE: CULTURE, CLASS, AND GENDER ON AN ANGLO-HISPANIC FRONTIER IN THE AMERICAN SOUTHWEST, 1880–1940. By Sarah Deutsch. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987. Pp. 368. \$16.95 paper.)

LAND, WATER, AND CULTURE: NEW PERSPECTIVES ON HISPANIC LAND GRANTS. Edited by Charles L. Briggs and John R. Van Ness. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987. Pp. 432. \$19.95 paper.)

MERCEDES REALES: HISPANIC LAND GRANTS OF THE UPPER RIO GRANDE REGION. By Victor Westphall. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1983. Pp. 374. \$24.95 cloth.)

THE COMANCHERO FRONTIER: A HISTORY OF NEW MEXICAN–PLAINS INDIAN RELATIONS. By Charles L. Kenner, with a new preface. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994. Pp. 250. \$14.95 paper.)

Herbert Eugene Bolton, who probably did most to launch the study of the northern Spanish borderlands by U.S. historians, reportedly had little patience for those who claimed that “the Spaniards did not colonize

but merely explored."¹ Although this idea has been thoroughly disproved by numerous studies over the last fifty years or more,² it continues to be expressed in textbooks and even in recent literature written by senior historians.³

Unquestionably, explorers, soldiers, and missionaries contributed in fundamental ways to the expansion of Hispanic society in the New World. But the attraction in portraying Spaniards as essentially noncolonists and Anglo-Saxons as primarily settlers in popular and some academic discourses in the United States is rooted in more than "historical reality." The stereotypes themselves have become elements of ethnic discourse, images created as part of the ideological processes of constructing and maintaining ethnic boundaries, playing the politics of cultural or national distinctiveness, and legitimizing dispossession and ethnic hierarchy. Here, "the Other"—in this case, the Spaniard—is defined in terms of oppositional features assigned to the Anglo-American "Us." Of all the social types present in the history of the frontier, the free and independent settler family has been solemnly elevated to one of the most venerated niches in the historical mythology of the United States. Meanwhile, the rival Spaniard on the frontier has been represented as a man without family or independence serving centralized institutions (whether as explorer, soldier, or missionary), who obtained his livelihood not from "the

1. Cited in David J. Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1992), 7.

2. John Francis Bannon, *The Spanish Borderlands Frontier, 1531–1821* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1970); Arthur L. Campa, *Hispanic Culture in the Southwest*, 2d ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993); Charles E. Chapman, *The Founding of Spanish California: The Northwestward Expansion of New Spain, 1687–1783* (New York: Macmillan, 1916); Nancie L. González, *The Spanish-Americans of New Mexico: A Distinctive Heritage* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1967); Oakah Jones, *Los Paisanos: Spanish Settlers on the Northern Frontier of New Spain* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1979); Jones, *Nueva Vizcaya, Heartland of the Spanish Frontier* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1988); Carey McWilliams, *Al norte de México: El conflicto entre "Anglos" e "Hispanos"* (Mexico City: Siglo Veintiuno, 1968; originally published in 1948); Leonard Pitt, *The Decline of the Californios: A Social History of the Spanish-Speaking Californians* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1966); Michael M. Swann, *Tierra Adentro: Settlement and Society in Colonial Durango* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1982); and Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America*.

3. Gerald D. Nash, "New Mexico since 1940: An Overview," in *Contemporary New Mexico, 1940–1990*, edited by Richard W. Etulain (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994). In the opening section of his historical overview of New Mexico, Nash states, "But the Spaniards were not primarily a colonizing people, and found New Mexico disappointing because it did not yield large hoards of precious metals, unlike Mexico and Peru" (p. 2). New Mexico unarguably disappointed those who hoped to find treasures and a docile labor force. Pre-industrial Spanish settlers, like their Anglo-Saxon counterparts, chose first the most attractive locales to settle in terms of mineral and agricultural resources as well as the possibilities for trade. On these counts, New Mexico certainly was not a prime location. Nash lost sight of the fact that until the coming of the industrial revolution and the railroad in the late nineteenth century, relatively few Anglo settlers found much in New Mexico to convince them to settle there either.

fruits of domestic labor" but from tribute, tithes, or booty exacted from Native Americans.⁴

Without denying the importance of the military and the Catholic Church along the northern Spanish frontier or the reality of Indian exploitation, two points must be emphasized to correct the distortion inherent in this oversimplified image of the Hispanic borderlands. First, the soldier and the colonist along the Spanish frontier were not mutually exclusive social types. The use of soldier-colonists to inhabit *la tierra de los bárbaros* was an ancient Mediterranean pattern that formed part of the Spanish-Mexican colonization strategy from the earliest days into the nineteenth century.⁵

Second and most important for the books under review here, the definitive occupation of enormous expanses of marginal semi-arid lands of broken topography, *las tierras flacas* of northern Mexico and what is now the U.S. Southwest, was achieved by an agrarian-based civil population of rancher-farmers, "common" everyday men and women whose livelihood rested on exploiting family labor, raising livestock, and tending crops. Although often overshadowed by the images of the soldier, the missionary, the *hacendado*, and the *peón*, this free *ranchero* population of mestizo-criollo origin bore striking structural resemblances to the yeoman farmers so admired and idealized by Jeffersonian democrats.

Throughout most of the U.S. Southwest, especially in California and Texas, the *ranchero* tradition was all but extinguished by massive Anglo immigration and far-reaching economic and social reorganization of the rural landscapes. The Upper Rio Grande drainage area in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains of northern New Mexico, in contrast, was less affected by these processes during the first century of Anglo rule due

4. *National Geographic* is obviously a premier source for the creation and perpetuation of popular imagery. Its July 1995 *Map Supplement of the Rocky Mountains* propagates the dichotomy that depicts Spaniards as soldiers and missionaries and Anglos as settlers. In a brief overview of the natural and cultural history of the Rocky Mountains, the article comments, "In the 1500s Spanish soldiers moved north from Mexico, looking for legendary cities of gold. Clerics followed, established missions and converting Pueblo Indians in what is now New Mexico. Most U.S. settlers pushing west in the 1840s wanted only to safely breach the unavoidable mountain barrier on their journey to lush farmland in Oregon and California." See the unbound map, "Heart of the Rockies," *Supplement to National Geographic* (July 1995). This characterization of Spaniards as subjugators and Anglos as colonists and developers is also found in the imagery presented in a 1982 map that divided the post-sixteenth-century history of "the Southwest" into two main periods: "Spanish Conquest, 1540-1820" and "Anglo-American Entry and Occupancy, 1820-1900." See the unbound map, "The Making of America: The Southwest," *Supplement to National Geographic* (Nov. 1982).

5. Philip Wayne Powell, *Soldiers, Indians, and Silver: North America's First Frontier War* (Tempe: Arizona State University, 1975); María del Carmen Velázquez, *Colotlán: Doble frontera contra los bárbaros* (Mexico City: Cuadernos del Instituto de Historia, UNAM, 1961); Andrés Fábregas, *La formación histórica de una región: Los altos de Jalisco* (Mexico City: CIESAS and Casa Chata, 1986); and Robert D. Shadow, "Conquista y gobierno español en la frontera norte de Nueva Galicia: El caso de Colotlán," *Relaciones: Estudios de Historia y Sociedad* 8, no. 32 (1987):40-75.

to the relative scarcity of economic opportunities. Consequently, it remains to this day an ethnic homeland, identified by some local residents poetically and evocatively as "*la nacioncita de la Sangre de Cristo*."

The eight books chosen for review here out of many more published in the last decade are linked by their common interest in documenting the social history of the northern New Mexican rural population and by their common focus in approaching this story from the angle of the significance of the land, its use, and its meanings. All but one deal with the fate of this resilient population after the U.S. invasion and takeover of New Mexico in 1846. Collectively, the books demonstrate the serious shortcomings of the lingering fascination with the Spaniards as soldiers or missionaries and show that the most enduring institutions of the northern Spanish borderlands have been neither the presidio nor the mission but the village and the land grant. The latter was a basic agrarian institution organized around a mix of local customs and formal law that defined, legalized, and regulated communities' and settlers' access to productive resources. Whereas the colonial presidio and mission are now defunct or relegated to the status of museums or historical sites, the Spanish and Mexican land grants in New Mexico remain socially and at times explosively alive, as illustrated by the violent Tierra Amarilla courthouse affair in the late 1960s. Many of the studies reviewed here demonstrate that land grants continue to serve as charters of local identity, reminders of historical injustices, and potent symbols and catalysts of ethnic mobilization for those descendants of the original settlers who remain attached to the land and committed to preserving this tradition.

Charles Kenner's *The Comanchero Frontier: A History of New Mexican-Plains Indian Relations*, originally published in 1969, has now been reissued in a paperback edition with a new preface. It does not deal explicitly with land grants but argues that a key activity influencing the history of the New Mexican borderlands between 1700 and 1900 was the vigorous trade conducted between the sedentary, agricultural New Mexicans and the nomadic Indian pastoralists and buffalo hunters of the southern Plains. Ignoring the Spanish missionaries and considering the history of the soldiers only as they fostered or hindered commerce between the valleys and the plains, Kenner centers his story on one of the most colorful types in frontier society. This was the Comanchero or New Mexican trader, who ventured out of the villages and into the camps of the Plains Indians to barter bread, flour, cornmeal, blankets, tobacco, and iron for horses, mules, hides, and buffalo robes and who later traded guns, powder, and lead for stolen Texas cattle. Kenner documents the development and decline of symbiotic trade relations between the nomads and the Spanish and Pueblo Indian villagers. He also shows how the commercial interests of various residents of the borderlands fit into wider Spanish and U.S. geopolitical considerations in structuring and restructuring inter-ethnic relations and alliances.

Although Kenner eschews any theoretical model or comparative analysis, *The Comanchero Frontier* provides one of the best descriptive syntheses of the sociopolitical and cultural effects of the economic interdependence of the plains and the valleys and of the importance of inter-regional exchange networks for the cultural survival of pre-industrial villagers in northern New Mexico. This region lay far from the major centers of manufacturing, agriculture, population, and imperial Spanish politics. But historians now know—thanks to the work of Kenner and others⁶—that commerce played an essential role in the social dynamics of this periphery as early as the eighteenth century, a finding that makes the notion that the inhabitants lived in isolated self-sufficient communities explicable primarily in terms of local ecological adaptation less tenable than ever.

Despite its lack of theory, the depth and richness of the empirical material presented in *The Comanchero Frontier* provides grist for the theoretical mill of other social scientists just beginning to explore the role of barter. Rather than being considered simply a transaction aimed at satisfying material wants and needs, barter is now being studied as an activity organically connected to the sociopolitical, cosmological, and value systems of the societies engaged.⁷

When the southern Plains Indians were destroyed, the Comanchero trade ended, and by the late nineteenth century, expanded mercantile capitalism and the arrival of the railroad all but eliminated most Mexicans from interregional trade and commerce. But for the villagers of northern New Mexico, local nonmonetary exchange continued to play a major role in socioeconomic and political relations well into the twentieth century. In fact, summer *cambalaches* (“farmers’ markets” centering around the ideology of barter) are still organized in many rural villages of the region.⁸ The persistence of barter in northern New Mexico is often interpreted in purely utilitarian terms, as a primitive and rather inefficient means of exchange resulting from a scarcity of cash. This narrow economic view, however, oversimplifies a complex social institution.

Although the *cambalache* has yet to be studied fully, its importance clearly extends beyond the low-cost movement of farm products between local producers and consumers. Analyzed in their full cultural and symbolic context, today’s agricultural *cambalaches* represent multi-functional institutions that celebrate the ideal of the independent *ranchero*

6. John O. Baxter, *Las Carneradas: Sheep Trade in New Mexico, 1700–1860* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987).

7. See *Barter, Exchange, and Value: An Anthropological Approach*, edited by Caroline Humphrey and Stephen Hugh-Jones (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

8. Like the word *market*, *cambalache* is a generic term referring to both places and modes of exchange. In general, it refers either to the nonmonetary exchange (barter) of goods or to reciprocity between labor and services.

lifestyle, provide an opportunity to extend, reinforce, or redefine social relations through friendship and kinship, and operate as symbols and mechanisms of ethnopolitics. Weekend *cambalaches* are ethnically charged spaces, cultivated consciously to reaffirm bonds of inter- and intra-community solidarity and to strengthen the commitment to defend Mexicano land and culture against Anglo intrusions. Via such institutions and gatherings, the land (in the guise of its products) becomes socialized and is given meaning as an ultimate source of ethnic and community survival while being symbolically withdrawn from the alienating and corrosive effects of commodification by the cash economy. In *cambalaches*, circulation and consumption are not restricted to chiles and calabazas but also include symbols of *communitas* that publically proclaim ethnic unity and pride.

While Kenner's book offers insight into the historical importance of trade for the villagers of northern New Mexico, Victor Westphall's *Mercedes Reales: Hispanic Land Grants of the Upper Rio Grande Region* provides a historical synthesis of the evolution of land grants under Spanish, Mexican, and U.S. jurisdiction. Building on earlier overviews of Hispanic land grants that were unpublished or difficult to obtain,⁹ Westphall added new materials appearing in the aftermath of the raid on the Rio Arriba courthouse. In doing so, he produced a volume that remains required reading for any student of land and society in the upper Rio Grande region. Published as the first volume in the New Mexico Land Grant Series under the general editorship of John R. Van Ness, *Mercedes Reales* reviews the corpus of custom and law that guided Spanish and Mexican land laws. It also recounts how the early meanings and usages assigned to the land were transformed during the second half of the nineteenth century by commercialism and speculation.

In analyzing the activities of lawyers, public officials, and governmental agencies in the scramble for land, Westphall tells the story of how local grant residents were generally dispossessed of their common lands, despite the provisions of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo that in theory protected the property held by Mexican citizens prior to U.S. annexation. The multiple mechanisms of this dispossession included fraud, chicanery, and unethical legal practices, all of which have left a legacy of bitterness and divisiveness among local grant residents, Pueblo Indians, and Anglos.¹⁰ In assigning responsibility for this situation, Westphall echoes the

9. See for example J. J. Bowden, "Private Land Claims in the Southwest," a massive six-volume work presented as an M.A. thesis at Southern Methodist University, 1969; and "Land Title Study," conducted by White, Koch, Kelly, and McCarty and the New Mexico State Planning Office in 1971.

10. John Van Ness, "Foreword," *Mercedes Reales*, ix; and Briggs and Van Ness's introduction to *Land, Water, and Culture: New Perspectives on Hispanic Land Grants*. See also William de Buys, "Fractions of Justice: A Legal and Social History of the Las Trampas Grant, New

accusation leveled by earlier studies at the U.S. Congress, which in his view "has been constantly and infamously remiss in implementing the obligations incurred as a signatory of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo" (p. 273). This contention that the U.S. Congress acted negligently and perhaps illegally in handling the land-grant issue continues to generate controversy in some quarters, as will be discussed subsequently.

Mercedes Reales is a meticulously researched tome, although given its scope, specialists on particular land grants will find minor errors here and there. Like Kenner, Westphall is unconcerned with theory or comparative social-historical analysis, an impediment that hinders the interpretation and evaluation of the land-grant story. Nowhere, for example, does one find mention of the fact that the dispossession and privatization of the former commons occurred within the context of commodification associated with world historical transformation generated by nineteenth-century expansion of the culture and political economy of capitalism. Although the study documents in admirable detail the actions and policies pursued by particular individuals and governmental agencies regarding the evolution of land tenure, it leaves readers uninformed about the structural power that guided and made these actions possible.¹¹ In short, the history of land tenure in the Upper Rio Grande is not connected to the larger issue of the agrarian question and capitalist transformation of the countryside.

The absence of a comparative perspective also leads Westphall to make some untenable affirmations. For example, to underscore his conclusion that the U.S. Congress was largely to blame for the loss of villagers' common lands, he concludes, "Land grants were not protected as they would have existed under Mexico had not sovereignty been transferred to the United States" (p. 87). Thus according to Westphall, the communal land system set in motion under Spanish colonial rule would have experienced little or no change during the second half of the nineteenth century if the villages of northern New Mexico had remained under Mexican rule.

Such a scenario seems improbable. Westphall fails to recognize the fact (a lamentable one for community-based and native systems of land use and tenure) that almost nowhere in the Western world during the late nineteenth century (including the United States and Mexico) were common lands respected by governments committed to capitalist expansion.

Mexico," *New Mexico Historical Review* 56, no. 1 (1981):71–97; and Malcolm Ebricht, *The Tierra Amarilla Grant: A History of Chicanery* (Santa Fe, N.M.: Center for Land Grant Studies, 1980.) See also the various essays published in *Spanish and Mexican Land Grants in New Mexico and Colorado*, edited by John R. and Christine M. Van Ness (Manhattan, Kans.: Sunflower, 1980).

11. See Eric Wolf, "Facing Power: Old Insights, New Questions," *American Anthropologist* 92, no. 3 (1990):586–96; and Wolf, *Europe and the People without History* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1982).

According to nineteenth-century evolutionary thought, which was embraced by Mexican and U.S. elites, common lands were associated with “savagery” or “barbarism” and were unfit for “civilized society.”¹² The social and economic doctrines of liberalism, positivism, and social Darwinism (Spencerism) crossed national borders freely in the Western world, and the ruling classes in Mexico became as thoroughly committed to these ideas in their quest for national salvation, personal enrichment, and property-based power as their counterparts in the United States.

For those familiar with the violent attacks carried out by successive Liberal governments in Mexico against communal lands after 1856, statements like Westphall’s are perplexing as well as dubious. While communal land grants played an important role in certain areas in colonial Mexico (including New Mexico) by the mid-nineteenth century, Mexico was undergoing many of the same transformations in its political economy as those evident in the United States. Land laws in Mexico after mid-century represented a rupture—not continuity—with the land laws of New Spain under the Hapsburgs, and to suggest unchanging attitudes and legal strictures between early colonial Mexico and the country after Benito Juárez is unwarranted. In late-nineteenth-century Mexico, as in the United States, communal lands generally did not fit into the new world order as redefined by the dominant classes who exercised national power and wrote and implemented the laws. Privatization and separation of land from its traditional claimants intensified during the administration of Mexican President Porfirio Díaz (1876–1910). According to Friedrich Katz, the Díaz regime, instead of protecting communities’ properties, “often encouraged or at least tolerated massive expropriations of peasants’ land or curtailed the rights of large segments of the rural population. The government made no effort to preserve even minimal control by villages over their lands. . . .”¹³

Westphall helps his readers understand part of the role played by the U.S. Congress in dispossession but leaves unmentioned the deeper issues underlying the forces to which the congress was responding. These forces were ultimately related to the nature of the relationship between state power and capitalist expansion in the late-nineteenth-century United States. Also, because Westphall’s primary data were obtained from court records that were often biased, his account has left pending the history of the land-grant question as perceived from the villages.

This theme has been taken up in the third volume in the University

12. See Gary B. Nash, *Pieles rojas, blancos y negros* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1988), 81, 148, a Spanish translation of *Red, White and Black: The Peoples of Early America* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1974).

13. Friedrich Katz, “Introduction: Rural Revolts in Mexico,” in *Riot, Rebellion, and Revolution: Rural Social Conflict in Mexico*, edited by Katz (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1988), 11–12.

of New Mexico Press's Land Grant Series, *Land, Water, and Culture: New Perspectives on Hispanic Land Grants*, edited by Charles Briggs and John Van Ness. Consisting of an introduction and six essays by anthropologists, legal scholars, and historians, the book seeks to present to a wider academic and lay audience the history and significance of the ongoing struggle for material resources and cultural spaces in northern New Mexico. Whereas Westphall's volume represents a historical synthesis that privileges the legal and institutional aspects of the land grants, *Land, Water, and Culture* presents a broader vision, thematically and chronologically, of the social history of land-grant communities, but without ignoring the framework of law and custom needed to understand the evolution of land tenure and society in the region.

Unlike many volumes of collected essays, *Land, Water, and Culture* is well organized and impressively coherent. The individual essays complement and reinforce one another in the material and analysis presented. Several factors in addition to the editors' guidance contribute to this happy consonance. First, the subject matter is highly focused topically and geographically. Moreover, the editors and contributors are all recognized authorities in their fields and are well versed in the "core literature" on the area as well as in their colleagues' writings. Finally, all share the idea that scholarship on such topics as land-grant history has inescapable ethical and political implications for questions of social justice and the ongoing struggles of minorities to redress past and present wrongs. The contributors unequivocally reject distanced positivism and perceive their professional activity as being engaged with their subjects, committed to documenting injustice and denouncing dispossession of resources and culture.¹⁴

In the introduction, Briggs and Van Ness set the tone for the essays to follow. They argue, "A large body of evidence suggests . . . that both the United States government and a host of individuals who came to the Southwest from the eastern states systematically violated the rights of individuals and communities to hold and use land and water that they had legally acquired through grants from Spain and Mexico. These violations left a legacy of bitterness . . ." (p. 4).

The lead essay, "New Mexican Land Grants: The Legal Background," by attorney and legal historian Malcolm Ebright, explores the mechanisms by which these violations occurred. According to Ebright, "The Anglo-American system of jurisprudence imposed on New Mexico by the U.S. occupation was the vehicle for wresting control of the land grants from many of their Hispano owners" (p. 15). Ebright discloses

14. For a recent debate on "objectivity" versus "militancy" in the social sciences, see Roy D'Andrade, "Moral Models in Anthropology," *Current Anthropology* 36, no. 3 (1995):399–408; and Nancy Scheper-Hughes, "The Primacy of the Ethical: Propositions for a Militant Anthropology," *Current Anthropology* 36, no. 3 (1995):409–20.

incredible inconsistencies in adjudicating the grants, complicity and conflicts of interest of officials, and an absence of due process. He also pays special attention to the importance of custom as a principle regulating access to resources in land-grant communities. Because the U.S. courts refused to recognize as lawful the customary usages that formed part of the Hispanic tradition, Ebright maintains that land-grant communities suffered grave injustices.

In the other contribution by a legal historian, G. Emlen Hall details the special problems and chaos surrounding the use and ownership of Pueblo Indian lands under Spanish, Mexican, and U.S. sovereignty. Echoing Ebright's contention, Hall concludes, "The different legal systems . . . were used in relentless, centuries-long efforts to wrest from the Pueblos the . . . land and water resources" (p. 127).

As legal historians, Ebright and Hall chose court records, attorneys' papers, and related written sources as their principal sources for understanding the land-grant question. Although their knowledge and interpretations are deeply enriched by residence and long-term personal experiences in land-grant communities, their splendid work is based foremost on analysis of the documents rather than the land itself. Anthropologist Van Ness fills this gap by analyzing the land-grant community from the perspective of human ecology. In examining "Hispanic cultural ecology," Van Ness argues that the land-grant system in New Mexico was not simply the product of a particular cultural and legal tradition transferred rather mechanically from Iberia to New Spain's far northern frontier (p. 142). Rather, the land-grant system—with its mix of communal and private property in land and cooperative activities in grazing and irrigation—had an underlying ecological rationale that was ideally suited to the marginal agro-pastoral possibilities of the semi-arid microbasins of northern New Mexico. The system dictated collaboration, minimized risks, and assured at least the possibility of basic subsistence for most grant residents. Through a "travesty of justice" perpetrated by speculators, lawyers, and others who controlled the legal system, the commons were privatized in the late nineteenth century, and the system was struck a catastrophic blow from which it never recovered (p. 198).

One way to combat the pernicious effects of a written legal system linked to cultural domination and traditionally hostile to community-based systems of resource exploitation is oral history, as Charles Briggs points out in his contribution on the methodology and practical uses of oral history research in land-grant litigation. Briggs demonstrates how oral history contrasts with and enriches the reconstructions based on written documents. He also explains how oral history, as the "only body of evidence over which the community exercises control," is crucial in recording customary law and documenting the struggle for cultural survival (p. 259). According to this perspective, oral history constitutes sub-

altern power, a vehicle for self-definition and defense that challenges dominant power imposed and exercised via written texts and legal codes.

One should not conclude, however, that Mexicanos have responded to the expropriation of their lands only through “everyday forms of resistance” such as oral history. Historians Robert Rosenbaum and Robert Larson remind readers that since 1846, Mexicano opposition to Anglo encroachment and alienation of the common lands has taken more overt and aggressive forms ranging from armed attacks to fence-cutting to political activity aimed at blocking the erosion of community control over local resources. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, many of these movements achieved short-term successes but long-term failures, the most notable being Las Gorras Blancas in San Miguel County and La Mano Negra in Rio Arriba County. The reason for this, according to Rosenbaum and Larson, is to be found in the Mexicanos’ “frames of reference”: grant residents lived in isolated enclaves that impeded inter-village communication and regional mobilization. While a suggestive idea, this interpretation is a hypothesis that some might question, given the wide-ranging webs of kinship, friendship, and commerce that linked villages throughout northern New Mexico. The works of Charles Kenner and Sarah Deutsch are especially important in documenting these extra-village contacts. Recent advances in work on rural rebellions in the Americas suggest that more attention might be paid to the “externalities,” especially the role and influence of the state, to better understand Mexicano opposition.

The concluding essay by anthropologist Sylvia Rodríguez sustains the theme of Mexicano resistance by analyzing contemporary ethnopolitics and the struggle for land and water in tourist-swamped Taos. Her central thesis is that “the ongoing process of expropriation and its recent acceleration have . . . intensified rural Hispano resistance to further usurpation and displacement, and stimulated the crystallization of land as a symbol of Hispano cultural survival and social self-determination” (p. 314). Following Frederick Barth’s ideas on the formation and maintenance of ethnic boundaries, Rodríguez views ethnicity as situational and oppositional, “as reactive to intergroup competition, rather than as simply a creature of primordial isolation” (p. 315). As such, “both Taos Indian and Hispano ethnicity, including their respective symbolizations of land, are the products of construction as well as reconstruction” (p. 324). In embracing a dynamic, anti-essentialist framework regarding ethnic persistence and resistance, Rodríguez provides an important critique of much psychologically oriented social science that has reified Mexicano or Hispanic ethnicity by decontextualizing it out of its historical setting. Given the resurgence of ethnic movements throughout the world and Hispano ethnopolitics in particular, Rodríguez questions the scientific accuracy of the assimilationist view that Hispanos will eventually blend

into the famous American (meaning Anglo-Saxon) melting pot. At the same time, she avoids the hazards of neoromantic pining by recognizing the uncertainties and ambiguities implicit in defending ethnicity in class-stratified societies, especially in areas impacted by ethnic tourism, where the culturally exotic has historically been embedded in a “deeply mystified” system of structural inequality sweetened with the images of the “Land of Enchantment” and the “Spanish fantasy heritage” (p. 388).¹⁵ In Rodríguez’s skilled hands, the Taos case takes on wider significance. Its study alerts social scientists to the problems and perhaps to some of the answers to one of the most pressing challenges facing society today: “how ethnic and cultural pluralism can be reconciled with genuine social, economic, and political equality and self-determination” (p. 388).

Malcolm Ebricht’s *Land Grants and Lawsuits in Northern New Mexico* is the fifth and most recent volume in the Land Grant Series. It also represents Ebricht’s most comprehensive and forceful statement to date on the hostile social, economic, and political forces confronting residents of Spanish and Mexican land grants in New Mexico after the U.S. invasion in 1846. The history Ebricht relates is often bleak and exasperating in confirming that economic utilitarianism and elite interests indeed triumphed over social justice. The end result of the multipronged assault on the communities was the massive dispossession of their common lands. Yet the book’s intent is not simply to lament and denounce the past. It also seeks to tie that past to the present and to demonstrate the need for and the utility of empirically detailed, critical historical research in the contemporary struggles of land-grant residents to achieve more just solutions to the ongoing conflicts over land and water in northern New Mexico.

Land Grants and Lawsuits in Northern New Mexico is composed of eleven substantive chapters bracketed by an introduction and a conclusion. The first two chapters provide overview statements dealing with the historic background of land grants and land law in New Mexico and with the legal and social bases of land litigation and conflict resolution in Hispanic New Mexico. The following nine chapters are case studies focusing on particular grants or disputes that collectively illustrate the complexity of land-grant history. As Ebricht states in the introduction, each chapter was written as an essay that can be read independently of the others. All are connected by the central theme that the adjudication of land grants in New Mexico was quixotic and in many cases blatantly unjust: “the courts and Congress did not effectively discharge the obligations assumed by the United States under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo . . . [and] Hispanic property rights were not adequately protected.

15. David G. Gutiérrez, “Significant to Whom? Mexican Americans and the History of the American West,” *Western Historical Quarterly* 24, no. 4 (1993):519–39.

Thus the perception of injustice held by many land grant heirs is largely justified" (pp. 51–52).

Elaborating ideas presented earlier in *Land, Water, and Culture*, Ebright argues that custom, an important legal principle in Hispanic jurisprudence, was systematically ignored by the U.S. courts. He further maintains that the "web of technicalities" created by officials of the U.S. government based on written codes did not serve the goals of justice and fairness and instead facilitated the appropriation of the land (p. 137).

Land Grants and Lawsuits in Northern New Mexico is also concerned with the question of knowledge as power, and how the lessons of history can further the causes of due process and social equity today and in the future. This point is elaborated in the final substantive chapter, which analyzes how the residents of the Jacona grant in northern Santa Fe County, under a dynamic and committed leadership, successfully organized themselves to purchase the grant once the machinery of a partition suit had been set in motion. Through this action, they thwarted the attempts of speculators to obtain ownership of the grant. Although the grant was not preserved in a "pristine state," the land was retained by local inhabitants to use as they saw fit. This case is inspiring in providing a model of social action for today's land-grant residents, who are reliving the experiences of their ancestors a hundred years ago. The difference is that the resource most subject to privatization and local dispossession today is not land but water.

As an attorney actively involved in the current land-grant struggle, Ebright takes an approach to the region's history that is informed by praxis. He believes that if the law was once used to dispossess former grant residents, it can also be used in combination with grassroots organization to stem the tide of resource loss.

The theme of displacement is combined with a critique of cultural determinism and ethnic caricatures in Sarah Deutsch's *No Separate Refuge: Culture, Class, and Gender on an Anglo-Hispanic Frontier in the American Southwest, 1880–1940*. Like Sylvia Rodríguez, Deutsch rejects the ahistorical view of culture that stereotypes New Mexican villagers as passive, isolated, tradition-bound, and fatalistic, an image perpetuated at times even by sympathetic observers. For example, George Sánchez's *Forgotten People* (1940) was basically an integrationist tract written as social criticism by a liberal New Dealer to affirm the basic humanity of Mexicanos¹⁶ and to call attention to the plight of New Mexican villagers and the need for more equitable treatment by the government. Sánchez argued that the typical New Mexican was a helplessly pathetic "stranger in his own home," chained to obsolete practices and beliefs because of socioeconomic isolation resulting from governmental neglect (p. 28). Only through

16. *Ibid.*, 525–27.

aid and investment, according to Sánchez, would the “forgotten New Mexican” cease to be a U.S. “problem child” (p. 98).

Building on the works of Chicano social scientists such as Albert Camarillo, Arnaldo De León, Richard Griswold del Castillo, Mario Barrera, and Rodolfo Acuña, Deutsch constructs an entirely different portrait in *No Separate Refuge*. She does so by focusing on the dynamics of regional cultural interaction and reorganization rather than on the assessment of Hispano culture in terms of its supposed disorganization and “deficiencies” in comparison with the dominant U.S. culture. Deutsch spurns the idea that the Mexicanos of southern Colorado and northern New Mexico were a passive people, lethargic objects of the “dynamic forces” emanating from the Anglo-Saxon expansion westward. Instead, she depicts Mexicanos and especially Mexicanas as active shapers of their lives who incorporated themselves into the expanding capitalist economy as best they could through combined strategies of migration, multiple jobs, and the preservation of kin ties. In the process, they created a regional community that linked Colorado beet fields and mining camps with northern New Mexico “home villages” and agro-commercial centers.

Deutsch studies the creation of this regional community by exploring three interlinked systems of stratification and subordination: culture (ethnicity), class, and gender. She is at her best in analyzing the changing nature of women’s roles, whether they are Hispanic village women and camp wives or the female Anglo missionaries charged with “domesticating” and Americanizing the hearth and thereby the “soul” of Nuevo Mexicanos. Although Mario Barrera previously explored the articulation of race and class relations in the Southwest,¹⁷ Deutsch’s work forms part of the first generation of “Chicano studies” to consider how gender plays a role as important as race and class in social differentiation¹⁸ and how individuals reorganize internal domestic strategies and arrangements in response to external change.

The theme of intercultural relations continues in Suzanne Forrest’s *The Preservation of the Village: New Mexico’s Hispanics and the New Deal*. In this superb volume (the fourth in the Land Grant Series published by the University of New Mexico Press), Forrest provides an ethnic and social history of Hispanos of northern New Mexico cast in terms of “the broader history of U.S. nationalism and romantic thought” (p. xii). Her method is to analyze the “New Mexican Hispanic New Deal” (p. xi), a multifaceted program of contradictory policies that sought to rationalize the village economy while endeavoring to preserve and revive certain facets of traditional culture, such as village arts and crafts.

17. Mario Barrera, *Race and Class in the Southwest: A Theory of Racial Inequality* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979).

18. Gutiérrez, “Significant to Whom?” 536.

The Preservation of the Village achieves three major goals. First, it documents the changing ethnic stereotypes—the essentialized categories of difference—invented by the state and members of the invading Anglo culture to represent the subordinated and impoverished Mexicano minority. While these stereotypes varied from hostile and odious to sympathetic and amicable, the result was Hispanic disempowerment because all such stereotypes were used as weapons of conquest and domination, ideological creations imposed to foster dependence and wielded by those in power to manage, exploit, dismiss, or otherwise “reform” and “civilize” the disenfranchised on terms dictated by the superordinate.

Second, the book exposes the ambivalence, ethnocentrism, paternalism, and power involved in the ideology and practice of “top-down development” in an inter-ethnic environment. In assessing the many failures and few successes of the “Hispanic New Deal,” Forrest deconstructs the structures of cultural hierarchy and power as well as the relationship between imposed cultural representations and stereotypes on the one hand and public programs on the other.

Third, *The Preservation of the Village* reveals the importance of the state in the socioeconomic configuration of rural New Mexico. It also reinforces the fact (demonstrated by many recent academic works and current events in Chiapas) that the conquest of minority peoples throughout the Americas—whether military, spiritual, economic, or cultural—is not limited to the colonial period.¹⁹ Rather, conquest and the creation or reconstitution of rural communities, social identities, and cultures represent an ongoing reality inseparable from state policies and market influences.

To set the stage for this analysis, Forrest reviews in the first two chapters the history of economic dispossession and cultural domination that led to deterioration of the economic viability of the villages and the endemic resistance of Hispanos to Anglo encroachment. Once again, readers meet the varied cast of social actors who arrived during the economic takeover and reorganization of New Mexico in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—the lawyers, speculators, merchants, railroad representatives, cattlemen, and homesteaders.²⁰

Whereas these first waves of Anglo and European immigrants were scions of economic liberalism who were mainly interested in the profits and power associated with an expanding agro-mercantile economy, the next waves introduced additional cultural agendas. Forrest discusses them in the three subsequent chapters. First came the “early post-modernists,” the urban romantics of the early twentieth century—the

19. Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past and the American West* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1987).

20. One of the most important studies in this genre is Thomas D. Hall, *Social Change in the Southwest, 1350–1880* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1989).

artists, intellectuals, reformers, and dissidents of liberalism influenced by the *indigenista* movement of the Mexican Revolution. They viewed the villages of New Mexico not so much as potential sources of profit but as cultural refuges and repositories of traditional values such as communalism, harmony, and attachment to place and land. The urban romantics recognized that the proliferating technology, materialism, and competition of an urbanizing and industrializing United States were rapidly eroding these villages. The romantic image of a pastoral arcadia of exotic pre-industrial simplicity meshed nicely with business interests dependent on tourism and interested in capitalizing on urbanites' fascination with "primitives" who, even if they did not quite match up to Margaret Mead's South Seas' aphrodites, at least lived free from the time clock.²¹

Nineteenth-century social Darwinists and liberals had stereotyped Mexicano rancheros as "lazy," "unresourceful," and "indolent" in order to legitimize expropriation of their land. Once most of the land had been taken from the former owners, the twentieth-century romantics could disseminate an alternative representation. For them, the Mexicanos were a "simple" and "innocent" people, "uncontaminated" by materialism and "free" from the social anomie and spiritual emptiness purportedly plaguing modern urban society. Forrest shows how the alienated yet influential and affluent romantics from the dominant group "restored" to the Mexicanos the "moral virtue" that the liberal caricatures had "stolen."²²

By the 1920s, social scientists had arrived on the scene and begun to construct yet another portrait of the villagers. Rather than finding idyllic agrarians living in harmony with one another and nature, they found factionalism, environmental degradation, illiteracy, unemployment, landlessness, poverty, and poor health and sanitary conditions (p. 61). To romantics and business and government leaders alike, it was increasingly clear that not all was well in the New Mexican arcadia. Despite their glorification of abstract rural values and their fascination with certain features of the "cultural Other," the creators and promoters of the "mystique of the village" (like their *indigenista* counterparts in Mexico) found Hispanic communities annoyingly deficient and backward in education,

21. For more on the role of artists and the struggle over culture in New Mexico, see Sylvia Rodríguez, "Tourism and Race Relations in Taos: Toward a Sociology of the Art Colony," *Journal of Anthropological Research* 45, no. 1 (1989):77–99.

22. The romantic vision of integrated life in rural communities projected onto New Mexico villagers at this time paralleled the current trends in cultural anthropology, especially evident in the descriptions presented by ethnographers like Robert Redfield of Tepoztlán and other Mexican communities. Years later, Oscar Lewis provided an entirely different and much less attractive interpretation of the same community, touching off one of the first postmodernist debates in anthropology over ethnographic authority, anthropological objectivity, and the question of representation. See Robert Redfield, *Tepoztlán, a Mexican Village* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1930); and Oscar Lewis, *Life in a Mexican Village: Tepoztlán Restudied* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1963).

hygiene, employment, and industrial arts.²³ The consensus was that these material deficiencies and other “negative aspects” of Hispanic culture (such as their “superstitiousness” and “lack of drive”) had to be corrected. But these “problems” were to be remedied without altering the “good” and “desirable” features of native culture (arts and crafts, music, and folklore) and without “spoiling” Mexicanos by making them “too acquisitive.” Herein lies a central contradiction of paternalistic-inspired and -directed social change. As Alan Knight has observed, experience has shown that this “modular model” is inapplicable to cultures because they “cannot be modified according to simple arithmetic principles of addition and subtraction.”²⁴

As the economic situation of the villages deteriorated during the Great Depression, the spectre of social unrest, massive emigration, village abandonment, and even deeper economic collapse led to creation of the Hispanic New Deal. As Forrest explains, the primary goal of the various New Deal programs was to revitalize and preserve the villages, a goal shared by business interests dependent on tourism and by the villagers themselves. In the final chapters of *The Preservation of the Village*, Forrest evaluates critically the checkered history of the various programs and demonstrates how the images and interests created during the preceding decades shaped the ethnocentric, paternalistic, and often racist attitudes of program ideologues, designers, and administrators who sought to change yet preserve the villages as “living museums,” to “keep the people down on the farm” while creating new aspirations. In a glaring example cited by Forrest, sympathetic Anglo artist and leading cultural *caudillo* Mary Austin purportedly considered Hispanos as fit to participate in modern society mainly through crafts and artisan activities because they were racially unfit for college and survival in an industrial environment. According to Austin, Hispanos should be shielded from consumer temptations, which would raise aspirations, stimulate them to seek better salaries and conditions of employment, and eliminate them as a source of “cheap labor” (p. 71).

Forrest concludes that the New Deal was paternalistic, anachronistic, and utopian and that New Dealers were essentially conservatives despite their liberal labels and rhetoric. She attributes the failure of the New Deal to provide long-term solutions to the pressing social and economic problems of the Hispanic villagers to the program’s basic incompatibility with the logic and values of dominant capitalist society. The “traditional” rural economy that the New Deal sought to preserve proved increasingly incapable of satisfying either the basic needs of the popula-

23. For an incisive critique of the ideology and practice of *indigenismo* in Mexico, see Alan Knight, “Racism, Revolution, and *Indigenismo*,” in *The Idea of Race in Latin America, 1870–1940*, edited by Richard Graham (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), 71–113.

24. *Ibid.*, 87.

tion or the growing aspirations associated with an expanding consumer society. In short, the New Deal tried to give the villagers social and economic tools that would enable them to participate in U.S. society not as equals but as dependents.

Many other scholars, however, have located the cause of the New Deal's failures not in the program but in the recipients. In yet another case of blaming the victim, the paucity of profound results was attributed to Mexicano culture. This interpretation required a change in how Mexicanos were imagined, and thus the depression quashed (at least for the time being) what Forrest characterizes as "the idyllic myth of the contented, self-sufficient, 'wantless' Hispanic villager" (p. 94).²⁵ This image was replaced with the idea that the Mexicanos of northern New Mexico, like Mexican-Americans in general, were "chronically indigent, dependent, and disease-ridden, and beyond the scope of federal relief" (p. 94).

In conclusion, Forrest argues that the New Deal, despite all its shortcomings, saved many Mexicanos from starvation and fostered a sense of ethnic worth and identity. Above all, it helped the villagers remain on their ancestral lands and preserve their *nacioncita*, the physical spaces of social and symbolic empowerment that contest the forces of disempowerment and assimilation emanating from dominant social groups. Although others have characterized the Hispanic New Deal as the "ultimate Anglo conquest,"²⁶ Forrest prefers a more nuanced evaluation that recognizes that while the New Deal promoted superordinate interests, it also served and was used by Mexicanos themselves for autonomous purposes, especially defense of the rural community. The villages survived physically and endured as bastions and spaces for cultural reproduction and the maintenance of a collective identity capable of reorganizing to fight another day against the "Anglo conquest." As Rodríguez has shown in her analysis of ethnic politics and mobilization in Taos, the organizations, institutions, and cultural practices of everyday life in the rural community (such as extended kin networks, irrigation and water-user associations, and religious sodalities and brotherhoods) constitute the active centers for the ethnic survival and social reproduction of this unique ethnocultural tradition.

The theme of Hispano cultural distinctiveness is analyzed from a geographical perspective in Richard Nostrand's informative book, *The*

25. Although Forrest contends that this image was thoroughly buried during the 1930s, it was exhumed by the "hippies" of the 1960s and 1970s, who (like their romantic ancestors at the turn of the century) believed they had found nirvana among the "simple folk" of northern New Mexico. The "hippie" lifestyle and the pillaging of abandoned homes greatly offended most local residents, who roundly repudiated the "hippie invasion." Study of the similarities and differences between the first wave of artists and "eccentrics" in the early twentieth century and the hippie invasion of the Vietnam era awaits its historian.

26. David H. Dinwoodie, "Indians, Hispanos, and Land Reform: A New Deal Struggle in New Mexico," *Western Historical Quarterly* 17, no. 3 (1986):291–323.

Hispano Homeland. Its stated goals are twofold: to demonstrate "that Hispanos, in interplay with Pueblo Indians, nomad Indians, Anglos, and Mexican Americans, shaped and reshaped a Homeland" (p. xi); and to show that Hispanos constitute a population ethnically and culturally distinct from Mexicans and other Mexican-Americans in the southwestern United States (p. 7). To this end, Nostrand analyzed and plotted the distribution of more than a million surnames contained in U.S. census data. He then identified eight geographical processes that affected the genesis and evolution of "the homeland."

Each process is detailed in its own chapter: formative colonization, Indian articulation, contiguous expansion, Anglo intrusion, peripheral attraction, Mexican immigration, village depopulation, and urbanization. These chapters follow an introductory discussion of Hispano culture and ethnicity and lead to a concluding essay on the content and character of the homeland concept. In addition to using census data, *The Hispano Homeland* is based on an array of secondary sources and even some ethnography. Illustrated with thirty-nine of Nostrand's excellent maps, the volume demonstrates once more the absurdity of the idea that the Spanish borderlands were dominated by friars and soldiers.²⁷

The major achievement of this volume lies in its detailed accounting of the spatial and temporal dynamics of Hispanic settlement and population movements in northern New Mexico and southern Colorado from 1600 to 1980. *The Hispanic Homeland* is certainly required reading for those interested in the historical geography of the region. Most specialists seem to agree with Nostrand's basic thesis that most "Hispanos of all classes of northern New Mexico and southern Colorado see and speak of themselves as related to but distinct from other Mexicanos and Spanish-speaking people."²⁸ Considerable debate exists, however, over whether the homeland concept, which Nostrand first mapped out in a series of publications between 1970 and 1980, is the most adequate tool for understanding Hispanic ethnicity and the social processes of inter-ethnic relations in the Upper Rio Grande region.²⁹

27. The volume falls squarely within the historical geographic tradition perhaps best represented by D. W. Meinig, and it carries forward the work of Oakah Jones, who is committed to studying the history of Spanish-American cultural diversity within the northern borderlands. See D. W. Meinig, "The Mormon Culture Region: Strategies and Patterns in the Geography of the American West, 1847-1964," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 55, no. 2 (1965):191-220; and Meinig, *The Shaping of America: A Geographical Perspective on Five Hundred Years of History*, 2 vols. (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1986, 1993); and Oakah L. Jones, Jr., *Los Paisanos: Spanish Settlers on the Northern Frontier of New Spain* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1979).

28. Sylvia Rodríguez, *The Hispano Homeland Debate*, SCCR Working Paper no. 17 (Palo Alto, Calif.: Stanford Center for Chicano Research, 1986).

29. The principal forum for the debate was the *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*. Many threads are woven throughout this often acrimonious debate, and some of the most extreme accusations and epithets are understandable only in the context of the

For Nostrand, a "homeland" is made up of three elements: "a people, a place, and identity with place" (p. 214). As Nostrand explains this concept, a homeland is created when a given people, drawing on their historical traditions, adjust to a particular natural environment and create a cultural landscape with a particular physiognomy and imbued with a set of meanings that evoke emotional feelings of attachment and identity. Thus the homeland as "territorial consciousness" is more than just objectified territory: it is subjectified and socialized territory, a symbolically inscribed landscape that expresses and represents identity and community. In the case of the Upper Rio Grande villagers, the features that serve as the emblems of *comunitas* and culturally distinguish the region from other social spaces include agricultural long lots, villages, log structures, outdoor ovens, and village churches and *moradas* as well as distinctive last names, cuisine, and vernacular (native) architecture.

Homelands also reveal historical morphologies in that their shapes and sizes vary over time, and Nostrand's principal objective is to map and analyze this changing morphology. Herein lies one of the problems. While Nostrand defines a *homeland* in terms of a subjective and qualitative relation of cultural construction and ethnic symbolization, the criterion employed to delineate the extent and nature of the homeland at any particular moment is limited to a single quantitative, objective measure: the percentage of persons who possessed Spanish surnames in a given area. Because this methodology assumes that surnames reflect ethnicity and because it conflates homeland as territory with homeland as symbol,³⁰ the mapping of the territory occupied by individuals with Spanish last names is put forth as demonstrating the homeland's existence as an emotionally and ideologically charged ethnopolitical space. Nostrand assumes, rather than demonstrates, that the "ethnic land symbolism" associated with the homeland today constitutes an inherent aspect of Hispanic ethnicity present since the earliest occupation.³¹

In this regard, it is important to note that the image of sacred land, so richly conveyed in the appellation "*la tierra sagrada, agua bendita*" used by residents to refer to their homeland, is absent or less developed among

charged political atmosphere of the late 1960s and 1970s. See the following contributions to the *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*: Richard L. Nostrand, "The Hispanic-American Borderland: Delimitation of an American Culture Region," vol. 60, no. 4 (1970): 638–61; Nostrand, "Mexican Americans circa 1850," 65, no. 3 (1975):378–90; Nostrand, "The Hispano Homeland in 1900," 70, no. 3 (1980):382–96; Niles Hansen, "Commentary: The Hispano Homeland in 1900"; and Nostrand, "Comment in Reply," the last two articles both in 71, no. 2 (1981):280–83. Finally, see J. M. Blaut and Antonio Ríos-Bustamante, "Commentary on Nostrand's 'Hispanos' and Their 'Homeland,'" Nostrand, "Hispano Cultural Distinctiveness: A Reply," and the rejoinders by Marc Simmons, Fray Angélico Chávez, D. W. Meinig, and Thomas D. Hall, all in *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 74, no. 1 (1984).

30. Rodríguez "Hispano Homeland Debate."

31. Rodríguez, "Land, Water, and Ethnicity in Taos," 320.

the mestizo-criollo rancheros of western and northern Mexico (cultural cousins of the Mexicanos of the Upper Rio Grande).³² The strong ethnic, political, and sacred meanings assigned to the land in northern New Mexico and southern Colorado seem to go beyond the “*patria chica*” and “*terruño*” identities common to contemporary west and north Mexico.³³ Although this observation reinforces the existence of a distinctive Hispano homeland today, it also calls attention to the need to explain how, when, and why these meanings emerged in the historical experience of the Mexicanos of the Upper Rio Grande. The attractive hypothesis is that they were nineteenth-century (as opposed to sixteenth- or seventeenth-century) creations that evolved in response to U.S. expansionism, similar to the sacred land symbolism that arose among the Yaqui and other Indian minorities besieged by Mexican assaults on their lands during the same era.³⁴ Future research should confront the question of the processes involved in forming the territorialized community that the homeland concept embodies: how and when certain objects of culture and landscape became imbued with meanings and converted into icons of ethnic identity, and how the locale-centered *patria chica* was transformed into the ethnically charged homeland or *nacioncita*. This approach will require an interactional view of ethnicity that focuses on the “historical, interactive processes” through which ethnic boundaries have been maintained for centuries despite profound cultural change.³⁵

Nostrand is not blind to process or to the importance of inter-ethnic relations. He is too conscientious a scholar, and his discussion of the eight mechanisms that shape a homeland gives ample space to the empirical analysis of the social, economic, and political relations that molded the geography of Anglo, Native American, and Hispano settlements in northern New Mexico and southern Colorado. But the homeland concept needs to be enriched by “plugging it in” to wider theory on inter-ethnic relations. A major limitation is that the concept is “Hispano-centric” in that it conceptually privileges analysis of a single ethnic group

32. Despite the sociological reality of the homeland concept for Upper Rio Grande villagers, the term itself is definitely an Anglo academic imposition. In Spanish, local residents convey the ideas and images of this concept with the designations “*la nacioncita de la Sangre de Cristo*” and “*la tierra sagrada, agua bendita*,” ethnopolitical expressions that differentiate, sacralize, and thus legitimize Hispano occupation and possession of the land.

33. See Luis González González, “Terruño: Microhistoria y ciencias sociales,” in *Región e historia en México (1700–1850)*, edited by Pedro Pérez Herrero (Mexico City: Universidad Autónoma de México, 1991).

34. See Edward Spicer, *The Yaquis: A Cultural History* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1982).

35. See Rodríguez, “Hispano Homeland Debate.” On the “icons” and “emblems” of boundary maintenance, see James W. Fernández, “Enclosures: Boundary Maintenance and Its Representations over Time in Asturian Mountain Villages (Spain),” in *Culture through Time: Anthropological Approaches*, edited by Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1990).

and internal cultural uniformity within a multi-ethnic and pluricultural region.³⁶

More than a generation ago, when Fredrik Barth was developing his oppositional or reactive theory of ethnic groups, anthropologists in Mexico argued that the study of ethnicity required a regional approach that could systematically examine cultural identities and distinctiveness as a bundle of power-laden social relations and interactions rather than as a bundle of cultural traits.³⁷ Recent work along these lines by Claudio Lomnitz-Adler continues to advance the idea that cultural differences and distinctiveness associated with class and ethnicity are best understood when studied from an interactionist and dialectic perspective in the context of a regional culture.³⁸ Unlike the homeland concept that privileges homogeneity, the concept of regional culture focuses on the integration of heterogeneity and on analysis of relations and exchanges among the inhabitants of different yet interlinked cultural spaces. In Lomnitz-Adler's view, regional cultures are ultimately organized and derive their coherence through class domination: "In this process, cultural groups are subjugated, classes or castes are created, and those classes or castes are organized in a hierarchical political-economic space" (p. 28). In short, more recent theory argues that culture and identity are reducible neither to a set of norms nor to a list of cultural items but have to do instead with systems of practices and meanings wedded to questions of power, domination, and resistance. Although Nostrand's "Hispano homeland" has withstood the onslaughts of early critics who questioned its very existence, the future task is to historicize the concept and integrate it into recent advances in social science theory concerning the relations between the empowerment of space, the construction and reconstruction of identities, and the defense of community by subaltern groups in multiethnic regions.

Some readers may feel that the concerns with Hispano subjugation and social injustice are overblown or that there is too much moralizing, "Anglo-bashing," or "politics" embedded in the works of Van Ness, Ebright, Rodríguez, Deutsch, Forrest, Briggs, and Westphall. These senti-

36. Anthropologists will recognize the similarities between the geographers' "homeland" and the concept of culture area that U.S. ethnographers and cultural geographers developed during the 1930s. Basically, the culture-area concept envisioned culture as a bundle of "things" such as kinship terms, forms of courtship and marriage, arrow-release patterns, types of shelters, puberty rights, moccasin design motifs, projectile points, penis sheaths, ad infinitum. According to this perspective, the study of culture entailed mapping these traits and trait complexes through time and space to unravel historic connections, patterns of diffusion, and cultural relations.

37. Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, *Regiones de refugio* (Mexico City: Instituto Indigenista Interamericano, 1967). See also John P. Hawkins, *Inverse Images: The Meaning of Culture, Ethnicity, and Family in Postcolonial Guatemala* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984).

38. Claudio Lomnitz-Adler, *Exits from the Labyrinth: Culture and Ideology in the Mexican National Space* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992).

ments have been expressed by geographer Alvar Carlson, and those who prefer a more sanitized interpretation of inter-ethnic history that minimizes questions of differential social power while appealing to the socially dominant can turn to his book, *The Spanish-American Homeland: Four Centuries in New Mexico's Rio Arriba*. Carlson, who claims to be "detached from any political or other cause," presents in this work a revisionist analysis of the region's history that seeks to "temper the harsh criticism" that so many researchers have heaped on Anglo-Americans and especially the U.S. government (p. xv). Carlson suggests specifically that many of the authors reviewed here have exaggerated their claims that the U.S. government violated the rights of individuals and communities in adjudicating village land decisions during the first fifty to seventy-five years of U.S. conquest.³⁹ Armed with questionable logic and a disturbing ignorance of social history, Carlson asserts that because what he calls "Spanish Americans" are "still there" and have not been evicted in large numbers from their homeland, the claims of inequality and unfairness are overdrawn (p. xv). This assertion equates permanence of occupation with rather benign inter-ethnic relations and is equivalent to stating that because the Indian peoples of highland Guatemala are still living in their "homeland" hundreds of years after the Spanish invasion, that region too must be relatively free from racism, exploitation, and inequity. Is it possible that Carlson is unaware that considerable prejudice, subordination, and inequality can exist in inter-ethnic regions even in the absence of "ethnic cleansing"?

The Spanish-American Homeland is divided into four parts. The first discusses the history of settlement and land tenure from 1598 to 1949. The second offers an overview of the region's precarious economic history from 1600 to 1990. The third part, entitled "Maintenance of Culture," approaches the topic by studying vernacular architecture, landscape, and religion and by presenting vignettes of land tenure and demographic processes from four rural communities. One of these is Corrales, just outside Albuquerque, a case presented to demonstrate the fate of rural communities facing urban sprawl. How this community fits into Carlson's study of New Mexico's Rio Arriba homeland is not clear, given that the Albuquerque-Corrales area is twenty-five to thirty miles south of what is commonly referred to as "*río arriba*" (as opposed to the area further down the Rio Grande known as "*río abajo*"). The brief final section discusses what he calls "the waning cultural region." After all the attention devoted to maintenance of culture, the message in the last fifteen pages is suddenly that the "homeland" and the "Spanish Ameri-

39. Other researchers whose studies are questioned by Carlson include William de Buys, "Fractions of Justice"; Robert J. Rosenbaum, *Mexicano Resistance in the Southwest: "The Sacred Right of Self-Preservation"* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981); and Victor Westphall, *Mercedes Reales*.

cans" are on the road to cultural and ethnic extinction. Moreover, Carlson claims that if the villages continue to exist, it will be due to Anglo immigrants who will "rejuvenate" the rural communities (p. 216). This assimilationist prognosis contrasts sharply with Rodríguez's ethnographic analyses of the resurgence of ethnic politics in Taos.⁴⁰ It also contradicts our own unpublished findings from neighboring Mora County, where we observed considerable grassroots effervescence and political action aimed at preserving the integrity of Mexicano cultural spaces. Contrary to Carlson's rather ethnocentric comments, these movements definitely were not led by Anglo "rejuvenators."

Carlson may well be right that "the homeland" will not endure past the twenty-first century. That as yet unwritten history is not predetermined. But empirical and theoretical reasons exist for skepticism. The main problem is that Carlson's conclusions are based on the polemical "melting-pot" or unilineal theory of U.S. ethnic history. This perspective fails to give sufficient consideration to the paradox that ethnic identities are not incompatible with globalization and in many cases are invigorated by it. The quixotic idea of culturally homogenous, sincretic nation-states that is still embraced mightily by some observers is subverted daily by a variety of transnational processes.⁴¹ Assimilation and cultural destruction form only one set of possibilities in an increasingly global yet fragmented world. Alternate scenarios include the emergence of new identities and social movements, the recontextualization of "deep" or "traditional" identities,⁴² and cultural resistance based on local values and shared history in everyday "lived-in spaces." In our own fieldwork, we have noticed how the explosion of satellite communications and television now allows rural residents in Mora, New Mexico, to view Spanish-language programming direct from Mexico City and Miami, thus reactivating long-dormant cultural ties or even activating nonexistent ones with other Latino populations of the Americas. Because Carlson views "modernization" as leading to assimilation, he could have interpreted satellite dishes dotting the landscape (as he has the proliferation of mobile homes) as further evidence of ethnic erosion and loss of "homeland." The cultural processes currently at work, however, seem considerably more complex than he has imagined.

Carlson has conducted many years of research in the region and displays considerable knowledge of geographical issues. His discussion of vernacular architecture is informative, and he presents new data on Hispano homesteading and land use in the national forests. One is led to

40. See Rodríguez, "The Hispano Homeland Debate" and "Land, Water, and Ethnicity in Taos."

41. Cristina Szanton Blanc, Linda Basch, and Nina Glick Schiller, "Transnationalism, Nation-States, and Culture," *Current Anthropology* 36, no. 4 (1995):683–86.

42. José Manuel Valenzuela Arce, "El color de las sombras: Chicanos, identidad, acción social y racismo," 1994 manuscript, 225–26.

wonder nonetheless how well he really understands Hispanic culture.⁴³ Many of his assertions bespeak superficiality. Perhaps the most obvious is his use of the term *Spanish American*. Carlson states, "They became known as Spanish Americans, a term still preferred by many who compose the largest share of the rural population of the four counties . . ." (p. 5, see also p. 88). Most investigators and residents of the region would disagree vehemently with this affirmation.⁴⁴ For many years, the most common self-description used in English has been *Hispano*, and in rural communities of Mora, Taos, and the San Luis Valley, the most frequent self-referent in Spanish is *Mexicano* (used along with *la raza* and, less frequently now, *los manitos*). In our experience, *Spanish American* is used more by urban residents, and we almost never heard it (or its Spanish equivalent, *hispano-americano*) in informal everyday speech in rural Mora County. We have been told that the same usage pattern prevails in the Taos area and the San Luis Valley.⁴⁵

The Spanish-American Homeland is also marred by inconsistencies. For example, Carlson correctly emphasizes the Spaniards' early exploitation of the Pueblo Indians and discusses the resentment generated by religious repression, demands for tribute, and dispossession of Indian lands that culminated in the Pueblo revolt of 1680. But despite this history of hostility, the Indians are "still there." Thus in dealing with Spanish-Indian relations, Carlson demonstrates how ethnic exploitation and injustices can occur without massive removal of the subaltern group. Yet he cites the simple fact of "Spanish-American persistence" to question claims of U.S. inequity toward Hispanos.

In his depiction of "Spanish-American economic history," Carlson claims that in the late 1800s, Spanish-American landowners, confronted with a growing cash economy, "had little to offer except themselves as unskilled laborers" (p. 83). But only a few pages earlier, Carlson presents a photograph of a late-nineteenth-century commercial flour mill, with this caption: "The Taos Valley was referred to as the 'breadbasket of the Rio Arriba'" (p. 76). Discerning readers will ask, who was producing all the wheat that supplied this and other large milling operations throughout the region? The local rancheros obviously provided the market with more than their unskilled labor. The areas around Taos and Mora were in fact major producers of wheat and other agricultural goods through the 1920s. Out-migration and seasonal wage labor were unquestionably cen-

43. This question has been raised by John R. Van Ness in "Review of Alvar W. Carlson's *The Spanish-American Homeland: Four Centuries in New Mexico's Rio Arriba*," manuscript, p. 2.

44. See Ralph H. Vigil, "Inequality and Ideology in Borderlands Historiography," *LARR* 29, no. 1 (1994):155–71.

45. Personal conversations with Sylvia Rodríguez, Arnie Valdez, and Devón Peña, 1992 to 1995.

tral to the economic strategy of Mexicano villagers. But the notion that local inhabitants were integrated into the market only as “unskilled laborers” completely ignores their importance as skilled petty commodity producers. They contributed to enrichment of the local merchant class and the development of a vigorous regional economy that lasted until drought, the agricultural reorganization of the West, the depression, and World War II ended this chapter of the region’s agrarian history.

Regarding his prediction of the ultimate disappearance of the Spanish Americans, Carlson claims, “After centuries of not having been confronted with the need for change, this way of life will disappear rather quickly . . .” (p. 213). But this image of a tradition-bound, isolated rural population untouched by the need for change seems to contradict his earlier depiction of adaptive villagers who left their communities in large numbers in response to changing economic and demographic conditions. The image of backward stasis he presents (p. 213) certainly contrasts with the assertion that the Spanish Americans are recognized as having a “history of adaptability and activism in retaining the rural region . . .” (p. 216).

Finally, in his most controversial claims, Carlson characterizes the Mexicanos who resisted Anglo invasion of the common lands as harassers and tormentors (p. 111). He states, “No evidence exists that the surveyor-generals and the Court of Private Land Claims had biases against community land grants simply because communally held land was nontraditional in U.S. land policies. Instead, the U.S. government was concerned principally with either the private or community land-grant claims’ validity, legality, and integrity” (p. 18). This rather startling pronouncement requires comment.

First, Carlson makes what he believes to be true statements about the lack of biases among the members of two governmental agencies, but he then inflates them into the U.S. government. While the “U.S. government” may be a behemoth, it is by no means monolithic, nor do its numerous officials and labyrinthine bureaucracies always share common goals, policies, or biases. Even if some surveyor-generals had no biases against communal land systems, this individual neutrality does not justify Carlson’s assertion that the U.S. government acted with fairness in adjudication. Clear evidence has already established that the U.S. Congress in many cases used its confirmation and patent powers to subvert the essence of the communal system and to transform the community land grants into regimes of tenants in common, a move that paved the way for eventual individualization and privatization of the *ejidos*.⁴⁶ In

46. See Malcolm Ebright, *Land Grants and Lawsuits*; and Robert D. Shadow and María Rodríguez-Shadow, “From Repartición to Partition: A History of the Mora Land Grant, 1835–1916,” *New Mexico Historical Review* 70, no. 3 (1995):257–98.

employing an interpretation of the state derived from Max Weber, Carlson would have his readers believe that the U.S. government operated as a rational and objective forum for resolving conflict and administering justice free of prejudice and independent of class, ethnic, and gender interests and the social power that these competing groups can mobilize to obtain their particular goals.

Moreover, Carlson's affirmation that the surveyor-generals and the Court of Private Land Claims (and by extension, other governmental institutions) had no biases against communal lands simply because "no evidence exists" appears empirically flawed. He dismisses the considerable body of data already presented by Ebright and others documenting these biases and demonstrating how land-grant residents were denied justice and due process of law.⁴⁷ Carlson implies that the land-grant villagers have only themselves to blame for losing their commons because the Anglo authorities in charge of adjudication "informed territorial residents in both English and Spanish that if they owned land, they were to file claims to substantiate their proof of legitimate ownership" (p. 12). Again, Carlson appears naively unaware of the realities of power in a colonial context: how writing and an imposed legal system were employed systematically to wrench control away from the villagers over the parts of the grants with the most commercial potential—grazing areas and timberlands.

At a broader level, Carlson's position reflects excessive formalism and parochialism. In arguing that the enclosure and privatization of the commons was a process free from violence, intimidation, and racial prejudice, he inexplicably plucks New Mexican "Spanish Americans" out of the larger historical processes operating throughout the continent. Carlson thus ignores abundant material from Native American and Southwest history that shows rather conclusively that in the late nineteenth century (which Eric Hobsbawm has named the Age of Capital), the U.S. government and U.S. society as a whole were hostile to and intolerant of communal systems of property, especially when they interfered with commerce and profits.⁴⁸ In sum, Carlson's benign appraisal of the U.S. government's attitudes and policies toward Mexicanos (and Indians) in the Southwest disregards the pervasive racism of nineteenth-century U.S. society that stigmatized Mexicans as "nonwhite" and thereby legitimized social discrimination, legal restrictions, and the denial of full rights of citizenship to people of Mexican descent.⁴⁹

47. Ebright, *The Tierra Amarilla Grant*; de Buys, "Fractions of Justice"; Westphall, *Mercedes Reales*; and David Benavides, "Lawyer-Induced Partitioning of New Mexican Land Grants: An Ethical Tragedy," 1990 manuscript.

48. For an overview of Euro-American ideas on native peoples' common lands and the relationship between their conquest and the expansion of private property, see Nash, *Red, White, and Black*.

49. For recent documentation of the extent and nature of racism and discrimination in

Anthropologist Renato Rosaldo observed in 1983 that in terms of theory and methodology, the field of Mexican American studies has lagged behind mainstream anthropology (and by extension, behind social science scholarship in general).⁵⁰ In the case of New Mexican social history and ethnography, this theoretical conservatism is perhaps most evident in the tendency to reify Mexicano culture and represent Mexicano towns and villages as consequences of past history rather than as “products of modern social, political, and cultural processes.”⁵¹

The debate over the Hispano homeland stimulated by Nostrand’s insights has brought this issue to the fore. The works reviewed here, with the possible exception of Carlson’s book, represent significant advances in scholarly understanding of the forces and actors, past and present, shaping the social history and culture of Upper Rio Grande villagers. A good deal of theoretical parochialism remains in the historiography and ethnography of the region, however, and numerous important issues require much more study, such as the relation between class and ethnicity in the culture of politics and the politics of culture of contemporary northern New Mexico. These works point out nonetheless that the story of the emergence and preservation of Mexicano communities—and of the lives of the men and women who make up these communities—demands consideration of the interaction between micro and macro processes. How do individuals respond to and manipulate local ecology, traditions, and actions, state interventions (especially in the arenas of land laws and social programs), and the forces of the market? These eight books concur that a salient issue in the struggle for the borderlands has been control of the land and its resources. But Forrest’s analysis as well as Carlson’s tone and intent demonstrate that the struggle has also involved questions of cultural dominance, negotiation, and confrontation between competing historical perspectives and interpretations. Today, as more than a century ago, the issue of control of material resources is embedded in a cultural dispute over the “correct” characterization or representation of the land and its people. In this dispute, the images and evaluations of Anglo “newcomers” confront ethnically coded contestatory self-representations nurtured by the ideas of community self-determination and cultural survival.

everyday life in the U.S. Southwest, see Menchaca, “Chicano Indianism”; and especially Douglas E. Foley, with Clarice Mota, Donald E. Post, and Ignacio Lozano, *From Peones to Politicos: Class and Ethnicity in a Texas Town, 1900–1987* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1988).

50. Cited in Rodríguez, “The Hispano Homeland Debate,” 4.

51. William Roseberry and Jay O’Brien, “Introduction,” *Golden Ages, Dark Ages: Imagining the Past in Anthropology and History*, edited by O’Brien and Roseberry (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991), 1.