

Chapter 2: The Spanish and Mexican Era

When Christopher Columbus landed on the island of San Salvador in the Bahamas chain in October 1492, he set off a more than 500-year-long process of demographic, cultural, biological, and ecological changes that continue in the New World. Following his lead, and in search of the riches Columbus felt certain he found, Spanish and Portuguese explorers came to the Americas. It was a land divided by Pope Alexander I in the Inter Caetera issued May 3, 1493; the split was codified in the Treaty of Tordesillas in 1494, with one section to the west ceded to the Portuguese and the rest — which turned out to be most of North America, all of Central America, and a large section of South America — given to Spain. The New World inhabitants and their claims to land were not taken into consideration. The Spanish avidly pursued conquest in search of souls for Christ and gold for their coffers. Their quest was an extension of the *reconquista*, the retaking of Spain from the Moors completed in 1492— what they saw as a moral quest to spread the power, beauty, and faith of Spanish culture and Catholicism to those who had not yet experienced its glories. Spanish territorial expansion occurred rapidly; Juan Ponce de León first arrived in what is now Florida in 1513; Hernán Cortés claimed Mexico in 1521, Francisco Pizarro conquered the Inca empire between 1531 and 1533, and Hernán de Soto explored the interior of what is now the southeastern United States from 1539-1543. Spanish zeal, the power of diseases that emanated from the crossroads of Europe, Africa, and Asia, and military power gave this proud European nation much more than a toehold in the Americas.¹

When Francisco Vázquez de Coronado marched into the interior of New Spain to search for Cibola and the remaining seven cities of gold at the beginnings of the 1540s, he followed the Spanish tradition in the New World. He departed with one of the most elaborate European expeditions sent to the interior of North America, including more than 300 Spaniards, among them several women, six Franciscan priests, and more than 1,000 native allies. In July 1540 they seized Cibola, today's village of Zuni in west-central New Mexico. The 100-family village was not at all what the Spaniards expected — none of the gold, none of the impressive structures they believed characterized Cibola, was anywhere to be found.

Vázquez de Coronado's men began a program of conversion and conquest while the Spaniards searched for additional souls to convert. Following the Rio Grande, they camped along

¹ David J. Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992, 30-45; Adolph Bandelier and Fanny Bandelier, *Historical Documents Relating to New Mexico, Nueva Vizcaya, and Approaches Thereto, to 1773*; Francis Jennings, *The Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest* (NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 1975): 2-6.

its banks during the winter of 1540-1541. A series of encounters, mostly fractious and sometimes bloody, with Pueblo people followed. By the spring of 1541, the Spaniards destroyed at least thirteen Pueblo villages.

Vázquez de Coronado left the western pueblos and pushed north along the Rio Grande to Pecos Pueblo. Deceived by a native of the so-called land of Quivira whom the Spanish called the Turk, the Spanish left Pecos and followed his guidance to the supposed wealth of this new kingdom somewhere on the plains beyond Pueblo country. They followed a circuitous route, seemingly leading everywhere and nowhere at the same time. Vázquez de Coronado followed the beguiling Turk, past the location of present-day Roswell, New Mexico, north of the Guadalupe Mountains-Carlsbad Caverns region, onto the plains of west Texas near Lubbock.² From there, the expedition marched across the panhandles of Texas and Oklahoma to a frustrating end of the journey, at the Wichita Indian villages on the Arkansas River near present-day Lyons, Kansas. There the Turk's deception became known to the men he led to this faraway place. After discovering that the people of Pecos Pueblo asked the Turk to lead the Spanish somewhere far from the Pueblo homeland, where the foreigners and their horses would starve to death, the Spanish garroted the Turk, leaving themselves without guides or allies in a sea of grass. Soon after they headed back to the Rio Grande pueblos. After a riding injury in December, Vázquez de Coronado returned to Mexico by the route he came, leaving only bad memories for the pueblos. He also left some of his native allies, a few stragglers, and two priests, soon to become martyrs, in New Mexico.³

Vázquez de Coronado's adventure summarized the European approach to the arid Southwest. They stayed close to the major watercourses except for specific purposes, such as the ill-founded search for Quivira, and despite being from the Iberia peninsula, which shared much with the places they found, they looked past remote desert lands in search of gold, water, and produce. In this context, the way in which Vázquez de Coronado skirted southeastern New Mexico and far west Texas is hardly surprising. The Roswell area through which he passed showed year-round streams and creeks as well as a river; the region to the south appeared parched. Vázquez de Coronado could not imagine that the gold he sought could be there, and his deceptive guide told him that the riches he craved were elsewhere. Without first-hand geographic knowledge, blinded by the prospect of gold, and sharing the predispositions about value that Europeans brought along from the Old World, Vázquez de Coronado had neither intellectual nor economic reasons to explore southeastern New Mexico or far west Texas.⁴

Vázquez de Coronado's response characterized the Spanish and Mexican governments, which

² Archeological evidence indicates that Vázquez de Coronado may have traveled southwest of Lubbock, suggesting he may have passed by the present site of Carlsbad.

³ Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America*, 45-49.

⁴ Felix D. Almaraz, Jr. "An Uninviting Wilderness: The Plains of West Texas, 1534-1821" (*Great Plains Quarterly* 12 (Summer 1992): 169-180.

had nominal and frequently interrupted control of the region from the early seventeenth century into the middle of the nineteenth century. In their view, there was little of value on the plains and in the mountains east of El Paso. The Guadalupe Mountains provided a landmark to the east of the area of their greatest interest that also harbored, in the Spanish view, uncooperative and sometimes hostile people. The Rio Grande, winding north through the Mesilla Valley and onto Albuquerque and the Rio Arriba beyond it, defined the range of Spanish interest and control. Even into the nineteenth century, Spanish and Mexican presence in the province of Tejas y Coahuila was typically confined to central Texas, in particular the area around San Fernando de Bexar, today's San Antonio. The area between central Texas and El Paso remained largely devoid of Spanish and Mexican influence.⁵

Lost Spaniards such as the shipwrecked Alvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca traveled through northern Mexico in the 1530s and had contact with the southernmost of the Jumano people near the mouth of the Río Conchos. Later, Fray Augustín Rodríguez in 1581 and Don Antonio de Espejo in 1583 passed through the region; but none of the three initiated any form of settlement. Even the famed *Jornada del Muerto*, the more than 100-mile waterless trek labeled the Journey of Death, passed to the west of the Carlsbad-Guadalupe region. In the 1720s, Spanish explorer and map-maker Francisco Alvarez y Barreiro ceded the region southeast of El Paso to the "Apaches del Natage" and the area to the northeast to the "Apaches Pharaones," both probably forerunners of the people recognized today as Mescalero Apaches. Alvarez y Barreiro's maps show that the Spanish felt they had little control over the region as late as the middle of the eighteenth century. Although at the end of that century the Spanish had become more interested in the area, by that time their New World empire was crumbling and they lacked the resources and initiative to explore the region. In 1821, New Spain declared its independence and the Mexican nation was born.

The Mexican government, which controlled the former colony of New Spain beginning in 1821, and the Republic of Texas, which seized Texas and the Trans-Pecos region in 1835, also had little time to devote to development of this periphery. Both fought to establish primacy in their central areas, battles that often occurred to the detriment of remote regions. Only after the annexation of Texas by the United States in 1845 did forces with the ability to transform the Carlsbad-Guadalupe Mountains region begin to focus upon it.

Spanish exploration in the area began as it did throughout the New World. First came reports of advantages that remote places offered, then military and religious expeditions, often combined but with very different purposes, and then finally the codification of Spanish control that resulted from conflict, negotiation, or settlement. Vázquez de Coronado initiated the colonial process in New Mexico. A lost wanderer such as Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca — who by some accounts crossed the Pecos River after approaching from the east in 1535 and headed south along it, skirting the very edge of the southeastern New Mexico and far west Texas region — was anomalous. He provided perhaps a

⁵ Gladys Collins, "Spanish West Texas, 1535-1759," (*West Texas Historical Association Year Book VII* (1931): 95-99.

source of information, but was hardly part of a pattern of conquest and subsequent colonization.

The first expedition to the north after Vázquez de Coronado in 1540 had conversion as its goal. The aftermath of a mining boom in Chihuahua, Mexico, which spawned towns such as Santa Bárbara along the Río Conchos, also fed a desire for the riches of the north. Some of the many rumors about the supposed riches of these lands reached the heart of the mining district, and many who came to mine thought of quicker and easier ways to acquire their fortune. Spanish leaders were less than pleased with such aspirations. Under a royal decree called the “Order for New Discoveries,” the Spanish Crown in 1773 forbade unauthorized expeditions beyond official boundaries, threatened violators with the “pain of death and loss of all their property” for infractions, outlawed the use of the term “conquest” to describe the “pacification” such advances entailed, and appointed missionaries as the primary agents of exploration and so-labeled pacification. This policy slowed commercial intensity, but opened the way for ecumenical advances. Officials regarded the clerical efforts of Catholic priests as the highest form of cultural transmission. In this context, the speed with which Fray Augustín Rodríguez received royal permission for him and two other Franciscans to travel north along the Río Concho affirmed the feelings of the Spanish Crown and New Spain authorities toward gallivanting adventurers. After almost 100 years of Spanish colonizing efforts in the Americas, the Crown placed much more faith in its ecumenical representatives than its civic ones.

In 1581, Rodríguez, the other two friars, and an escort of seven soldiers commanded by Capt. Francisco Sánchez Chamuscado headed up the Conchos to the Rio Grande, to northern New Mexico. Some accounts place them east of the El Paso region; others indicate that they stayed within the confines of the Rio Grande Valley. After a sojourn in New Mexico, most of the expedition headed back to Mexico along the same Rio Grande path, leaving Rodríguez and a companion behind to convert Pueblo peoples to Catholicism. Sánchez Chamuscado died during the return trip, but his men reported to the viceroy’s notaries. Although the report was circumspect and mentioned little of potential riches in the north, the specter of priests alone among the native peoples, even priests who volunteered to stay such as these, attracted the attention of Spanish leadership. There were hidden motives as well; many sought to make the area and its presumed riches their own under the guise of a rescue mission. Soon, an expedition formed to go after them and bring them safely back to New Spain.⁶

Personal motives abounded in this new endeavor. Although many rushed forward to save the lost padres, the rumors of great mineral wealth moved most of the rescuers. Among them was Don Antonio de Espejo, who had come to New Spain in 1571 with the Inquisition as one of its agents and remained to become a wealthy cattle rancher. After a dispute that ended in a death and a trial, Espejo fled to the north and used the pretense of rescuing the priests as a way to escape judgement in New Spain. Supporting Espejo was Father Bernardino Beltrán, who believed it his duty to go north to help

⁶ Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America*, 76-79; Joseph P. Sánchez, *The Rio Abajo Frontier 1540-1692: A History of Early Colonial New Mexico* (Albuquerque: Albuquerque History Museum, 1987), 28-31; Hackett, ed., Bandelier and Bandelier, *Historical Documents Relating to New Mexico, Nueva Vizcaya, and Approaches Thereto, to 1773*, 193-94.

Rodríguez. The new expedition received royal authorization and on November 10, 1582, the group left for the north.⁷

Espejo followed the Rio Grande north. At Puaray, the expedition found that the priests were dead, negating the mission that Fray Beltrán thought was important. Espejo took a different view and continued to explore central New Mexico. At Zuñi, the Spaniards found a book and a small trunk that the Vázquez de Coronado expedition left behind in the 1540s; among the people of the Pueblo were a significant number of Mexican Indians who had come north with Vázquez de Coronado more than forty years before. Some still retained the Spanish words they learned from Vázquez de Coronado's men. While at Zuñi, Espejo and Fray Beltrán argued over control of the expedition. The priest and his faction returned to New Spain along the Rio Grande. Espejo and eight men remained, soon finding themselves in a skirmish with the people of Puaray. Memories of Vázquez de Coronado made subsequent Spaniards unwelcome at best among the Pueblos. The Spaniards fled toward Cicúye, the pueblo at Pecos, fearing the pursuit of Puaray warriors. When they arrived near Cicúye, they avoided the pueblo with its commanding view of the plains.⁸

The Spanish experienced a new emotion in their sojourn to New Mexico: fear. On the run, weakened, trapped between the warriors they thought followed them and the ones they knew awaited them at Cicúye, the Spaniards stayed away from the cities. Instead, they marched south along the Pecos River, which Espejo renamed El Rio de Los Vacas, the River of the Buffalo, after the buffalo they saw near it. The two-month journey back to Mexico was as much a retreat as a march, but following the Pecos River south helped solidify the Spanish perception that two routes — one up the Rio Conchos to the junction with the Pecos River, and the second up the Rio Grande, to New Mexico — offered viable ways to reach this quixotic, if not yet obviously economically valuable, addition to their holdings.⁹

On the way back, Espejo's expedition experienced the first recorded encounter with the people of the southeastern New Mexico and Trans-Pecos region. On August 7, 1583, near the great eastern bend of the Pecos River, probably north of the modern town of Pecos, Texas, but somewhere south of Carlsbad, New Mexico, Espejo encountered three Jumano men, who guided the Spanish to Jumano *rancherías*, most likely near modern Carlsbad, Rocky Arroyo, and the Delaware River. The Jumanos

⁷ Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America*, 78-79; Joseph P. Sánchez, *The Rio Abajo Frontier 1540-1692: A History of Early Colonial New Mexico* (Albuquerque: Albuquerque History Museum, 1987), 35-37; George P. Hammond and Agapito Rey, *The Rediscovery of New Mexico, 1580-1594: The Explorations of Chamuscado, Espejo, Castano de Sosa, Morlete, and Leyva de Bonilla and Humana*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1966: 11-22.

⁸ Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America*, 79; Sánchez, *The Rio Abajo Frontier 1540-1692*, 37-39.

⁹ Sánchez, *The Rio Abajo Frontier 1540-1692*, 39; J. Charles Kelley "The Route of Antonio de Espejo Down the Pecos River and Across the Texas Trans-Pecos Region in 1583: Its Relation to West Texas Archeology. (*Sul Ross State Teachers College Bulletin* No. 7, West Texas Historical and Scientific Society Issue No. 7, December 1937: 8-24.

informed the Spanish that they were about twelve days journey from the mouth of the Río Conchos, and offered to guide the Spaniards to the river. The Jumanas then offered hospitality to their guests, and at their *ranchería* prepared a feast that included catfish, sardines, and mojarra, a small tropical fish.

By the time the Jumanos encountered the Spanish, their *rancherías* were semipermanent or sedentary, sporting gardens and sometimes inhabited by some members of the group throughout the year. They served as trading bases for the Jumanos, and as were always the case in southeastern New Mexico and Trans-Pecos Texas, the *rancherías* were outliers tied to core areas along the Brazos, Red, and Little Colorado rivers far to the east. As in the core areas, the Jumano *rancherías* were nestled in sheltered stream valleys, located where conditions mirrored the environments that the Jumanos favored elsewhere. The Jumanos guided Espejo and his men to a number of *rancherías*, where the Jumanos generously fed their guests, and then took the Europeans to the Rio Grande, which the Spaniards followed south into Mexico.¹⁰

Espejo's travels added knowledge of the area south of Pecos Pueblo, but did little to resolve the considerable tension that still existed on the northern frontier of New Spain. Prompted by ongoing unsubstantiated rumors of riches to be found, unauthorized expeditions headed into the north, some of which met their end as a result of their own failings. Others, such as the Gaspar Castaño de Sosa expedition, were halted by the application of the "Orders of New Discoveries." In 1590, Castaño de Sosa, the lieutenant governor of Nuevo León, the most northeastern province of New Spain, led more than 170 men, women, and children north to pueblo country. Castaño de Sosa's group, with two-wheeled carts called *carretas*, oxen, goats, dogs, and horses, crossed the Rio Grande near present-day Del Rio, Texas, and headed north up the Pecos River. Passing through the southeastern New Mexico and the Trans-Pecos region in the fall and early winter, Castaño de Sosa and the Spaniards faced the land's harsh privations. The area offered little to these people accustomed to the semiarid Iberian Peninsula.¹¹

Along the way, this renegade band of colonists carefully observed southeastern New Mexico and the Trans-Pecos region. Following Espejo's route to the north, they encountered nomads who used dogs for transportation along the Pecos River in Texas. These clearly were not the same people who inhabited the *rancherías* Espejo visited. They found a cache of shelled corn in an *olla*, a pot, near the location of present-day Carlsbad, New Mexico. As they marched north toward Pecos Pueblo, they saw no signs of human habitation and met no one; either the people who used the region were

¹⁰ Hickerson, "Jumano," 10; W. H. Balgemann, Sr., "New Mexico's Guadalupe Mountain Area Noted Years 1535-1977: A Brief Historical Resume of Area," (unpublished mss., 1979), Carlsbad Caverns Library, Carlsbad Caverns National Park; Sebastian and Larralde, "Living on the Land," 96; J. Charles Kelley, "The Route of Antonio de Espejo Down the Pecos River and Across the Texas Trans-Pecos Region in 1583; Its Relation to West Texas Archeology," 16-17.

¹¹ Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America*, 79-80; Sánchez, *The Rio Abajo Frontier 1540-1692*, 40-43.

elsewhere during the early winter, gathering the plants that would help sustain them through the cold season ahead, had already migrated to warmer places, or perhaps they had learned to avoid these men wearing metal breastplates, sitting astride large animals, and carrying noisy sticks that left painful wounds. The first fifty years of interaction between Spaniards and natives north of the Rio Grande taught the Pueblos — and possibly through trade networks, other people — to be wary of the white-skinned people who approached from the south.

Castaño de Sosa's men experienced the well-formed Pueblo distaste for Spanish invaders, but upon their arrival, this group initially behaved in a manner different from earlier expeditions: they came to Cicúye in need. Closing in on Pecos Pueblo, the Spaniards and the warriors of the Pueblo skirmished, but weakened by their trek and a lack of food, Castaño de Sosa's men were less belligerent than their predecessors. By the time they reached Cicúye in December 1590, the thin bearded Spaniards only sought food; they lacked the inclination or energy to fight. The hard trip up the Pecos River deprived them of their strength and for the moment any ideas of asserting power. That soon changed, as Castaño de Sosa and his men assaulted the pueblo. After fierce fighting, Pecos Pueblo surrendered. Its fall marked an important moment in Spanish-Pueblo relations. The Indians perceived Cicúye as the most powerful of the pueblos, and after the surrender there, the Pueblo world capitulated to the newcomers. Castaño de Sosa hardly benefitted from the inroads he made. Expecting forgiveness for violating the "Order of New Discoveries" as a result of his success, Castaño de Sosa was surprised to find Juan Morlete, the Crown's Protector of Indians, in New Spain to arrest the explorer. Castaño de Sosa was taken in leg irons to Mexico City, where he was convicted of invading the lands of "peaceable Indians" and sentenced to six years exile in the Philippines.¹²

Spanish expeditions became more frequent. After Don Juan de Oñate's *entrada* in 1598, New Mexico became the northernmost frontier of New Spain. Spanish institutions such as the mission, a structure inhabited by priests who used work and other social structures to bring local people to the Catholic faith, developed; Spanish civil and ecumenical rule prevailed, at least formally, even while church and civil authorities grappled for control. Catholicism was introduced, often with coercion and sometimes through violence. Spanish customs superimposed a grid upon Pueblo life, creating a complicated form of cultural fusion that melded Pueblo and Catholic rituals. Between Oñate's expedition and the Pueblo Revolt of 1680, the area surrounding the Rio Grande spine remained contested cultural terrain as the Spanish sought to translate their military advantage into social power.

The Spanish also considerably influenced inter-Indian trade networks that existed in the region, trading both with the pueblos and with Plains peoples while restricting pueblo goods and trade. In effect, the Spaniards interceded in trade, superimposing themselves atop the existing structure, curtailing the role of the pueblos, and in some instances, venturing onto the Plains themselves.¹³ In general, during the

¹² Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America*, 79-80; Sánchez, *The Rio Abajo Frontier 1540-1692*, 40-43.

¹³ Timothy G. Baugh, "Ecology and Exchange: The Dynamics of Plains-Pueblo Interaction," in Spielman, ed., *Farmers, Hunters, and Colonists*, 107-26.

seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when the Spanish dominated the pueblos, they also determined the nature of Pueblo trade; when ecumenical and civil leaders grappled, when the Inquisition disrupted Spanish life in New Mexico, and at other times when Spanish institutions were weak, preoccupied, or absent, the Spanish role in trade diminished and Pueblos and Plains peoples returned to longer-standing terms of interaction.

Although the introduction of the Catholic religion proved a powerful force within the mountains that walled off the Rio Grande Valley, little of that influence became manifest in southeastern New Mexico and Trans-Pecos Texas. Spanish dominion extended neither far nor deep, and loosely settled areas of nomads such as the Trans-Pecos fell under a different Spanish classification than did the sedentary people of the Rio Grande Valley and the surrounding Pueblos. Southeastern New Mexico and the Trans-Pecos showed little tangible evidence of Spanish voyages through it. Only the river courses revealed the Spanish passage, and most of the little that remained came from explorers' accounts of their journeys. The encounter of people — the mixing of Hispanic and Indian cultures that characterized contact along the Rio Grande — was largely absent in the Carlsbad-Guadalupe region.

Spanish influence appeared in other, more indirect ways. The Spanish offered goods that Indian people coveted, and the Pueblos of the Rio Grande Valley served as intermediaries between the Spanish and the nomadic and sometimes semi-sedentary people outside the valleys. Trade became a crucial part of cultural accretion, of achieving Spanish ecumenical objectives such as conversion as well as attempting to, in the ongoing phrase of the Spanish after 1573, “pacify” unconverted and sporadically hostile people.

Almost all of the Native American peoples of the greater Southwest experienced changes in their ways of life because of the Spanish presence. The combination of Spanish technology and authority impressed its values atop Pueblo life; the sedentary people of the Rio Grande region found themselves with less autonomy and a system that they neither wholly understood nor in which they cared to participate. Yet the choices they faced changed, in part because of Spanish authority, in part because of the range of goods and other accouterments the Spanish brought, and in part because when faced with inexorable change, Pueblo peoples understood the seemingly advantages of the Spanish ways as a magic that was absent in their own beliefs and practices. Pueblo resistance took many forms, but so did acquiescence born of the material advantages of trade.

From the pueblos, Spanish influence extended in concentric rings; the farther away from the Rio Grande, the less the Spanish could assert control or even influence over native peoples. The Plains peoples particularly vexed the Spanish, for the power the European newcomers could assert was muted by the distances of the southern Plains and the intimate familiarity of native peoples with its micro-environments. On the Plains, the Spanish were as much supplicants as conquerors, as much in need of cooperation as able to compel it.

The acquisition of the horse by Native Americans was the single catalyst that empowered many Plains peoples to resist the Spanish and simultaneously trade more effectively with them. The horse greatly changed transportation and mobility for anyone who acquired one; it transformed the Navajos into a pastoral society. For most other Apachean peoples, horses helped to expand their range and

make more resources of different kinds available to them, assuring greater success. The Apaches could dominate where previously they fought to keep their position; they could move more frequently and go farther when they did, taking their bounty and their captives with them and creating a different cultural view of material possessions and wealth, capturing greater bounty, and becoming by their own standards more wealthy. The horse became so important to Apachean peoples that they treasured it as a gift of their gods, not an accidental acquisition that resulted from the inability of the Spanish to manage their animals.¹⁴

The horse became a medium of exchange between Spaniards and nomadic native peoples. It enabled the Spanish to exercise a modicum of control and to assert their diplomatic objectives as it offered nomadic native people the opportunity to extend the reaches of their domain, find new arrays of resources to trade and to sustain them. Horses gave Native Americans new access both to the peoples of northern New Spain and to those of the more humid climates on the eastern edge of the Plains, in what is now Arkansas, river-basin parts of Kansas, and possibly southwestern Missouri. With the ability to move as much as forty miles in a day instead of four, Indian life became more cosmopolitan. Most groups interacted with a significantly larger number of other cultures after they acquired horses than they did before that time.

One branch of the Jumanos, a hunting and gathering group whose origins remain in dispute, became the most significant representatives of this new order. Most likely descended from the Jornada Mogollon people who became hunters and gathers at the end of the proto-historic era, this group came across the Guadalupe Mountains and the Pecos River and headed for the Plains. Between 1540 and 1700, they emerged as the leading social and economic intermediaries across a large area. Their geographical reach was vast, stretching from the Little Colorado River in modern Texas north at least to the Canadian and Red rivers and west to the Rio Grande. These Jumanos established *rancherías* similar to the ones Espejo found in the 1580s along the Pecos throughout their range, and these small centers revealed their presence. The Jumanos took a strong interest in the area east of the Guadalupe Mountains. A prominent settlement and a number of smaller ones were along the lower Pecos River.¹⁵

Whoever they were, the Jumanos served as the primary traders and communicators of cultural variation between Spanish arrival and the *reconquista* of New Mexico by Don Diego de Vargas in the 1690s. The expedition led by the governor of New Mexico in 1692 traveled across the salt flats east of

¹⁴ John, *Storms Brewed in Other Men's Worlds*, 59.

¹⁵ John, *Storms Brewed in Other Men's Worlds*, 155-95, map of the range of various groups on 200-01; Hickerson, "Jumano," 9-10; Sebastian and Larralde, "Living on the Land," 100. Hickerson classes the Jumanos as Tanoan people; Sebastian and Larralde describe them as Caddoan. Sebastian and Larralde also note that another group called Jumano were known near the Roswell area. These people were agriculturalists, offering either an enormous coincidence of nomenclature or support for the idea that both groups of Jumanos were the descendants of the Jornada Mogollon; others, including noted ethnobotanist and Southwestern intellectual jack-of-all-trades Dan Scurlock, concur.

El Paso and explored Guadalupe Canyon, at the base of Guadalupe Peak.¹⁶ The Jumanos' range exceeded that of the Spanish and they could communicate with a wide range of peoples. The Jumanos carried goods such as turquoise and textiles from the pueblos of New Mexico to the many peoples of the Plains, roaming as far as the Caddo world beyond the Trinity River in modern east Texas. They took buffalo meat and hides from their own hunts to both the pueblos and the Caddos. The Jumanos also assisted the Spanish in a range of diplomatic activities and expressed interest in Catholicism, at the same time occasionally presenting a threat to Spanish dominance and authority. Yet they managed to maintain their position; they had little enough direct contact with the Spanish population to provoke animosity from either side, but they remained close enough through their long-standing ties to the Tompiro Pueblo peoples in what is now south-central New Mexico, who themselves may have been Jumano agriculturalists, to acquire the horses and metal goods offered by the Spanish. Between about 1630 and 1680, the Jumanos expanded their traditional role as intermediaries and found an enviable position in the post-contact world. They filled the trade niche left vacant by the collapse of the Casas Grande culture of northern Mexico, gained wealth, power, and status, and enjoyed the fruits of their niche — trade goods, ample food, good horses, and even firearms.¹⁷

The Jumanos found a niche for a moment in time. When it shrank, it diminished rapidly. The Jumanos had been a force on the Plains; their trade contacts and goods, mobility, and political and diplomatic savvy created a wide intermediary role that made them valuable to almost every group between New Mexico and the east side of the Trinity River. As long as that balance of power persisted, the Jumanos remained in a position of control. By the 1680s, parts of their network collapsed. Apachean people — Sierra Blancas and Siete Ríos — attacked Tompiro in 1653. In 1667, the Tompiro Pueblos planned a revolt against the Spanish during an extended drought that began in 1666; it was modeled on a similar plot in 1650, in which the people were to drive all the horses to the Sierra Blancas on Holy Thursday and then kill the horseless Spanish. This revolt also failed. The Tompiro leader, Don Esteban Clemente, was hung for his efforts. With his death, the pueblo became leaderless. Intensive Athapaskan attacks during the following decade decimated the pueblos and even the trading center of Humanas, the largest Tompiro Pueblo, became impossible to defend. Drought, disease, famine and attacks, primarily by the Siete Ríos Apaches, further decimated the pueblo. The remaining Jumano pueblo people drifted away to the missions at El Paso or to other, more secure pueblos, and Spanish control of the *jornada*, the waterless trek east of the Rio Grande from New Mexico to New Spain

¹⁶ John L. Kessell and Rick Hendricks, eds. *By Force of Arms: The Journals of Don Diego de Vargas, New Mexico 1691-93* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1992).

¹⁷ John, *Storms Brewed in Other Men's Worlds*, 169-70; for Vargas, see J. Manuel Espinosa, ed., *First Expedition of Vargas into New Mexico, 1692* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1940) and John L. Kessell and Rick Hendricks, eds., *By Force of Arms: The Journals of Don Diego de Vargas, 1691-1693* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1992); J. Manuel Espinosa, trans. *First Expedition of Vargas into New Mexico, 1692*: 50-160.

became unsteady. By the 1680s, this important Jumano trade conduit was no more, forcing the Jumanos to refocus their trade on other pueblos.¹⁸

The Pueblo Revolt of 1680 also threatened Jumano preeminence. During the revolt, pueblo peoples expelled the Spanish from New Mexico, dramatically in cases such as Pecos Pueblo. There, the pueblo attackers killed the priests, destroyed the church, and sunk a kiva within it to lay their religious symbols and structures atop those of the Spanish symbolically. The Pueblos and their Apachean allies killed 380 Spaniards including seventy-three soldiers — almost half the military presence in the province — and twenty-one priests. They drove the remaining Spaniards and some Christianized native people from the north. Among the Spanish communities in New Mexico, only El Paso survived. In one brief triumphant moment, the Spanish presence in the north became marginal. When that happened, major Jumano markets and sources of goods ceased to exist.¹⁹

At the same time, Northern Athapaskans who likely became the eastern Apaches spilled into the Jumano heartland, most probably from the front range of the Rocky Mountains, threatening all travel across the Jumano trades routes. Numerous and powerful, these Apachean people raided the Jumanos, impinging especially on east-west travel, and invaded their hunting grounds. The Apachean groups became so powerful so quickly that they demolished many smaller groups on the peripheries of the territory they reached. The Apaches reached into central Texas, harassing the small Coahuiltecan groups who depended on the San Antonio River and its environs and the Balcones Escarpment — a geological uplift that runs north-south through modern Austin, stretches to the west and leads into the Texas Hill Country — for their intensive, hunting and gathering subsistence. Mounted Apachean people descended upon the Coahuiltecan, worsening existing tensions among them. In the 1660s and 1670s, the Coahuiltecan turned to the Spanish missions and later the Spanish civil authorities in northern New Spain for protection. They were the first of many groups to seek non-Indian protection in the face of Athapaskan expansion.

By 1683, Jumano dominance of even the Guadalupe Mountains and Trans-Pecos area was in jeopardy. Apachean attacks drove the Jumanos from positions of comfort and power and penned them between the Rio Grande and the seemingly endless advance of Apachean peoples. The proud Jumanos, formerly peers of all peoples they encountered, were reduced to supplicants. Apachean attacks forced them to the weakened Spanish in El Paso. Juan Sabeata, the leader of the Jumanos and a man of consummate political and diplomatic skill, tried to save the Jumano position in regional affairs. For as much as a decade, he maneuvered to revive Jumano fortune and position and save their prerogatives. In

¹⁸ John, *Storms Brewed in Other Men's Worlds*, 93, 170-71; Albert H. Schroeder, "Pueblos Abandoned in Historic Times," in Alphonso Ortiz, ed., *Handbook of North American Indians Volume 9: Southwest* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1979), 237-39; for a more detailed account, see Jack D. Forbes, *Apache, Navaho, and Spaniard* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1960), 163-69.

¹⁹ John, *Storms Brewed in Other Men's Worlds*, 98-102; Forbes, *Apache, Navaho, and Spaniard*, 177-224; see also Andrew Knaut, *The Pueblo Revolt*, ;

his most bold effort, Sabeata sought the assistance of the Spanish by telling missionaries of a great cross that appeared in the sky during a battle and secured a bloodless victory. This was a ruse to garner a Spanish escort across the now dangerous buffalo plains the Jumanos once ruled. Sabeata also duped Spanish military and civil authorities with tales of the Tejas kingdom, where there was supposedly so much grain that the animals ate it as well as the humans, and near it, the fabled Gran Quivira. "Spaniards" in vessels, he said, built wooden houses along the shore there. To the Spanish, this could only mean their French colonial rivals. In 1684, the governor of New Mexico sent an expedition out on the Plains, which the Jumanos quickly turned into a foray against the Apachean peoples. Missionaries expressed pleasure at the number of Christianized Indians they met and the responsiveness of other peoples along the way. The French were far away, if present at all, and the expedition acquired new goals. Captain Juan Domínguez de Mendoza, who led this excursion, soon ferreted out Sabeata's real goal, but the buffalo hunting was excellent and Jumanos and Spanish alike hunted their share. When the Spanish returned to El Paso, they promised to return the following year to continue proselytizing and renew what must have seemed like a promising relationship. Although the Jumanos expected to see the Spanish every year, with the Spanish presence in New Mexico gone and northern New Spain in disarray, Mendoza did not appear the following year. The missionaries returned the following year in 1688, but the two-year lapse diminished their worth, and with it, the Indians' prime reason for acceptance of a new faith. The missionaries were not military men, who the people facing the Apachean onslaught really needed, and the two-year gap in Spanish presence hurt their credibility as well as the position of everyone but the Apacheans in the Trans-Pecos region.²⁰

Sabeata also cultivated other colonial powers. The Spanish assisted his efforts to maintain some control over trade, but internal strife, revolts, and general reticence prevented them from contributing to the extent that Sabeata desired. In an entirely coincidental meeting in 1686 among the Hasinai, one of the main Caddo groups, Sabeata encountered Sieur de René Robert Cavelier La Salle, the French explorer mistakenly credited with discovering the Mississippi River. In 1685, after an unsuccessful attempt to locate the mouth of the Mississippi, La Salle built a small installation called Fort St. Louis on Garcitas Creek near the San Antonio River on the Texas Gulf coast. La Salle's men traveled all over the Southwest and even reached the Rio Grande, making friends with native peoples, and asking questions about the location of Spanish mining facilities and the strength of the Spaniards. On one of these ventures, he and Sabeata met, and the Jumano leader sought to enlist the French in his increasingly futile attempt to resist the Apachean peoples. La Salle declined, leaving the Jumanos disheartened and vulnerable.²¹

By the early 1690s, the Jumano dominance of the Plains and trade networks had ended. The

²⁰ John, *Storms Brewed in Other Men's Worlds*, 175-81; Forbes, *Apache, Navaho, and Spaniard*, 195-98; 213-15.

²¹ John, *Storms Brewed in Other Men's Worlds*, 181; Weber, *the Spanish Frontier in North America*, 149-53; Forbes, *Apache, Navaho, and Spaniard*, 211-13.

Athapaskan peoples from the north demolished the structure of the Jumanos world, leaving the Jumanos fragmented, weak, and separated. Sabeata continued to seek colonial protection — telling the Spanish that the French tried to turn native groups against them, while telling the French of the aggressive posture of their seemingly common enemy, the Spanish, and suggesting that the Jumanos would help in a war against these newest European intruders. Playing both sides against the middle could not last, and when it ended the Jumanos were shattered, powerless, and destitute. Sabeata had his final contact with the Spanish colonial authorities in 1692, when he arrived at Julime Pueblo on the Río Conchos. He delivered a letter from two Franciscans, reported he was in the midst of a great war, and disappeared from the pages of recorded history. Sabeata's convoluted endeavors were not enough to invigorate the Spanish and bring them to his support nor did they stall the onrushing Apaches, who soon swept the Jumanos from the prominence they enjoyed. Within one century, the Jumanos followed Sabeata into the unrecovered past. They no longer existed independently, with some scholars seeing them as vanished and others arguing that the Jumanos merged into the Lipan Apache and subsequently lost any remaining cultural distinctiveness.

The experience of the Jumanos reflected a pattern evident in colonial processes throughout the world. When colonial powers enter a new area, its officials find pre-existing tensions, rivalries, and relationships that determine the local balance of power before the arrival of outsiders. From Africa and India, to the Americas and Australia, weaker local groups sought out powerful newcomers as protection from indigenous enemies, and in some cases allied with them against aggressive neighbors. Juan Sabeata was hardly unique; he only erred in choosing a patron power not sufficiently strong or enthusiastic to offer broad protection over a wide area. However, Sabeata had few options. The Spanish were the clear power, and one with whom Apachean peoples had at least some, if little, contact. The French were few in number in Sabeata's area, and were less inclined than the Spanish to help. After both colonial powers declined his request, Sabeata ran out of options.

Sabeata's conundrum was typical of an aspect of indigenous experiences around the globe that lasted into the twentieth century. Outsiders were not always bad in the eyes of indigenous peoples; they could be used for local purposes too. In the best-known American version of this tale, Absaroka or Crow scouts led General George A. Custer to the immense Lakota and Cheyenne camp on the banks of the Greasy Grass in the summer of 1876. For more than a generation, Lakota people had pushed the Crows and the Pawnees off the lands they held until mounted Lakotas brought a half-century of terror. The Lakota expansion contributed to the geopolitical situation on the Plains, to turning other Indian people against them and providing knowledgeable and cooperative scouts for the Americans. The battle at the Little Big Horn occurred well outside any area the Lakota people could claim as their own before 1850; the community nearest to the modern Little Big Horn National Battlefield today is called Crow Agency, Montana, not Sioux City, or some other name. In this light, Crow and Pawnee assistance to the incoming Americans acquires a different meaning; it was part of an effort of these tribes to keep their lands and people from feared enemies. To them, as to Sabeata, the newcomers seemed valuable allies; the Pawnees and the Crows erred only in thinking the Americans would fight their battles and then go

away, restoring Crow and Pawnee lands.²²

In the aftermath of the end of the Jumano network, Apaches dominated the Guadalupe Mountains-Trans-Pecos subregion and the Plains so completely that the entire area became known as the *Gran Apachería*. Scholars debate the date of the Apaches' arrival on the Plains; the majority indicate within a decade either way of 1525 as the most plausible date. By the early seventeenth century Apachean peoples were evident, and in fact were regarded as threats along the fringes of the Jumano trading world. Apachean peoples became a powerful force on the Plains by the late seventeenth century. By the 1680s, as Sabeata tried to find a middle ground for the Jumano, Apaches had become powerful enough to endanger Spanish New Mexico; the Siete del Ríos Apaches consistently threatened Salinas and Tompiro Pueblo, waiting for the vigilant sedentary people there to drop their guard. Nor were these powerful newcomers frightened of the Spanish. Mescalero Apaches, who had come to inhabit the Organ, Davis, and Guadalupe mountains, harried the Spanish retreating down the Rio Grande after the Pueblo Revolt of 1680. By the 1690s, a new and powerful force asserted itself across a wide area.

The Mescaleros who made the Guadalupe Mountains and the Trans-Pecos their own were typical of the Athapaskan Apachean peoples who came down from the north. The land they inhabited was abundant for their purposes; with a small population and a wide range of resources at different elevations, the women could gather resources widely. After they acquired the horse, the men could hunt a broader territory inhabited by a larger number of species — especially the buffalo — that made hunting more attractive as a source of subsistence. The Mescaleros lived in thrown-together brush shelter wickiups, a structure formed by placing leafy branches over an oval-shaped framework. The dwellings were flimsy because they were temporary; wickiups did not travel from place to place with these mobile people. For Plains hunting, they used tipi-style dwellings, probably acquired as a result of interaction with peoples of the Plains. Frequent movement prevented the spread of filth-born diseases among the Mescaleros, with historic accounts noting the premium placed on cleanliness among them.²³

As did the Mesilla Phase people before them, the Mescaleros used agave as a major source of sustenance. In May or June, after the red flower stalks that designated mature agave plants pushed up, Apache women took hatchets and four-foot-long sharpened Pinyon sticks and searched for an agave field close to wood and water. The women cut the big leaves as close to the heart of the plant as possible, and used the Pinyon stick to chisel the roots of the plant out of the ground. This work produced an ivory-white bulb as much as two or three feet in circumference. The Mescaleros then cooked their agave in largely the same manner as had the Mesilla Phase people. The syrupy result became a feast, and the leftovers were spread into thin sheets, dried on flat rocks, and taken along.

²² Urs Bitterli, *Cultures in Conflict* brilliantly explicates this idea; see also Evan Connell, *Son of the Morningstar* for the gritty details of the Custer situation in an other-than-chronological fashion.

²³ C. L. Sonnichsen, *The Mescalero Apache* (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1960), 16-18; Opler, "Mescalero Apache," 429-30.

With this seemingly endless supply of agave and other resources, the Mescaleros could survive in their new homeland independent of the outside world.

These Mescalero people left comparatively little cultural remains of their presence. Their nomadic lifestyle and the temporary structures they built assured that archaeologists would puzzle over their presence. In some places, they left tantalizing clues to the nature of their life. In West Slaughter Canyon, almost seventy feet above a dry stream bed, a wide low cave contains several hundred multi-colored pictographs, painted in a variety of natural colors. Called the Painted Grotto, the cave seems to have had consistent ceremonial use. This cave and the main entrance to Carlsbad Caverns appear in the Mescalero oral tradition, strengthening archaeological explanations.²⁴

Spaniards perceived the Mescaleros and other Apaches as a threat to their weakened control both during and after the Pueblo Revolt. In 1682, Governor Antonio de Otermín invaded the Mescalero stronghold of the Organ Mountains from El Paso, in part out of frustrations that stemmed from the success of the revolt. He also sought to reassert the Spanish presence and to punish the Mescalero for their practice of raiding sedentary communities. The 1684 excursion Sabeata persuaded Captain Juan Domínguez de Mendoza to undertake also helped show a Spanish presence in the Apachean world, even if it failed to accomplish Sabeata's goals. Traveling across the Pecos River to the vicinity of modern San Angelo, Texas, a distance of more than 350 miles, spoke volumes about the limits of Apachean power and remaining presence of the Spanish. Yet this Spanish assertiveness was as much for show as for any purpose. As the Apaches ascended, the Spanish, who were limited to the stronghold of El Paso until the 1690s, could do little to slow Apache power or its expansion.²⁵

Even after the successful reconquest of New Mexico by Don Diego de Vargas, the Spanish presence in New Mexico remained too weak to assert dominance over anything but the valleys between the mountains along the Rio Grande. To the north and west of the Spanish colonies lay the lands of the *Indios Bárbaros*: the western Apaches, the Navajos, the Utes, and a new and increasingly threatening group who descended from the plains to the east, the Comanches.²⁶ All these groups frequently raided

²⁴ Jack R. Willams, *Indians of the Guadalupes* (Florissant, CO: Carlsbad Caverns Natural History Association) 2d ed., 26-28.

²⁵ Kenner, *A History of New Mexican-Plains Indian Relations*, 19; John, *Storms Brewed in Other Men's Worlds*, 95-110; Weber, *the Spanish Frontier in North America*, 135-40; Forbes, *Apache, Navaho, and Spaniard*, 173-90.

²⁶ The etymologies for the various Apachean groups are quite complex. Morris E. Opler, "The Apachean Culture Pattern and Its Origins," in Alfonso Ortiz, ed., *The Handbook of North American Indians: 10 Southwest* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1983), 368-92, provides the most comprehensive analysis. Opler identifies seven southern Apachean groups, Chiricahua, Jicarilla, Kiowa-Apache, Lipan, Mescalero, and Western Apache. All except the Kiowa-Apache speak a closely related language, the Kiowa-Apache most likely having diverged before the Apachean peoples entered the Southwest. Mescaleros appear to be named from their practice of, relying on the Mescal or Agave plant. Other groups have been named by their relationship to specific places; the Sierra Blanca Apaches turn to have three distinct historical provenances: the first group are the linear descendants of the Apaches del Perillo, first reported in 1653, and who became known as the Apaches de Faraones after the Pueblo

the poorly defended colonies, carrying off horses, livestock, and in some cases women and children. From the east came the Lipan and Jicarilla Apaches, who both traded with New Mexicans and sometimes preyed upon them. Even more vulnerable were the outlying pueblos such as Zuñi, Ácoma, Laguna, Jémez, Pecos, Picurís, Taos, Santa Clara, and La Alameda. After the death of de Vargas, who took ill while chasing Faraòn Apaches in the Sandia Mountains in 1704 and died soon after, these pueblos were besieged by the *bárbaros*. Defending property and life became an ongoing chore for the Spanish — its success proof of their value to the pueblos, its failure a sorry reminder of pueblo weakness. As a last resort, the Spanish gave common grants to Spanish *vecinos*, citizens who had served their king and country, and encouraged them to settle the Sangre de Cristo and Jemez mountains that border the northern Rio Grande Valley. These poorly protected and easily accessible communities were targets of Indian raiding parties. The Spanish also formed buffer communities to bear these raids; one community, Abiquiu, was founded in the 1730s and peopled by *genizaros*, detribalized Indians who had accepted Spanish ways by choice or force. They were deemed expendable and placed on a vulnerable edge of the Spanish-controlled area. In the southeast, around the Guadalupe Mountains, the Natagè and Faraòn Apaches, most likely branches of the Mescaleros, encroached on the Spanish in the Rio Grande Valley. The Faraòn were deemed the most ferocious and the least amenable to Spanish entreaties. These people's ability to deter the Spanish from the peripheral area beyond El Paso was so great that as late as the 1720s Spanish mapmakers showed the Guadalupe Mountains and the Trans-Pecos as the territory of the hostile Natagè and Faraòn Apaches.²⁷

A fierce Spanish campaign slowed raiding; by 1706, the Spanish could claim success in stopping the attacks on the pueblos from the *bárbaros* and could begin to think of establishing new settlements. However, the Apache dominance central to the Spanish peace was short-lived. Despite all efforts, northern New Mexico remained a drain on Spanish resources. The colony continued to cost the royal treasury large sums each year, and little profit other than trade and the possible collection of souls for Christ seemed forthcoming. After the *reconquista*, Spanish leadership ranged from outstanding to pathetic. The best leaders, such as de Vargas, consolidated the Spanish position and earned respect for the Crown. The worst undermined all positive efforts. As the Spanish struggled and the Mescalero, Natagè, and Faraòn Apaches consolidated their realm in the south, the northern and eastern areas of the

Rebellion of 1680. The second are the ones also known as Carlanas, who lived north of the Raton River in what is now southern Colorado. The final group of Sierra Blanca Apaches are the ones known today as the White Mountain Apaches. Other confusing situations result.

²⁷ John, *Storms Brewed in Other Men's Worlds*, 226; Espinosa, *First Expedition of Vargas into New Mexico, 1692*: 161-208; Charles L. Kenner, *A History of New Mexican-Plains Indian Relations* (Norman: University of Oklahoma 1969), 23; Forbes, *Apache, Navaho, and Spaniard*, 264-67; Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America*, 204-05; Morris Opler, "Mescalero Apache," in Alfonso Ortiz, ed., *Handbook of North American Indians Volume 10: Southwest*, 420-21; see also William deBuys, *Enchantment and Exploitation: The Life and Hard Times of a New Mexico Mountain Range* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1986) and Hal K. Rothman, *On Rims and Ridges: The Los Alamos Area Since 1880* (University of Nebraska Press, 1992).

Gran Apachería came under attack from a new force, the Comanches sweeping down the Plains.

Southern Shoshonean people who roamed a wide area northwest of the Wichita lodges on the plains of Kansas, the Comanche became a fierce foe of Apachean peoples, and later of the Spanish, Mexicans, Texicans of the Texas Republic, and the onrushing Americans. Comanches first appeared in the Spanish world view in 1706, when General Juan de Ulibarri took forty Spanish soldiers and 100 Pueblo warriors to Cuartelejo, in modern Scott County, Kansas, where a number of people from Picurís Pueblo fled as a result of the Spanish reconquest of New Mexico, built a pueblo, and found themselves doing the bidding of the Cuartelejo Apaches, one of the many small groups of Apachean peoples on the plains. On the way, Ulibarri found Taos bracing for a Ute and Comanche attack with a fear that the Spanish previously had not seen. The year before, the Comanches had come to the Taos trade fair with their allies, the Utes, and liking what they saw, returned prepared to take it. For a Spaniard leading a sizeable number of soldiers away from the colony, the prospect was as terrifying as it was to the Taoseños. At Cuartelejo, Ulibarri found two other developments that he knew would upset the New Mexico leadership: more fear of a Ute-Comanche raid and a French-made gun that the Apache people there took from attacking Pawnees. The geopolitical concerns of the Spanish expanded once again.²⁸

The problem was larger than Ulibarri and the Spanish imagined in 1706. On the way back to Santa Fe, Ulibarri found that Utes and Comanches raided *rancherías* of the Carlanas, the Sierra Blancas and the Penxaye Apaches. After Ulibarri's departure from Cuartelejo, the Utes and Comanches attacked the Apaches throughout what is now the western tier of counties in Kansas. A new and dangerous alliance had formed on the Plains, linking the Utes and Comanches against the more widely distributed Apachean peoples and the Navajos. By the first decade of the eighteenth century, no Apachean community, *ranchería*, or stronghold within the reach of the Utes and Comanches was safe from attack. Assaults continued to increase in frequency and intensity. In 1719, the Comanches engaged in a destructive raid against Taos. In its aftermath, the Spanish learned of the impact of the Comanches on the *Apachería*. There were depopulated *rancherías* throughout the eastern Apache realm, and the palpable fear of the destruction of many more settlements in the near future permeated Apache life.²⁹

The balance of power was changing, and the Comanches and their Ute allies were in ascendance. The Spanish were neither sufficiently strong nor numerous to intervene regularly. Left to their own resources in isolated valley communities, the Apaches could not readily withstand Comanche assaults. The death of thirty-two of the almost 100 Spanish soldiers assigned to New Mexico in the slaughter of the Pedro de Villasur expedition far out on the Plains in 1720 further diminished Spanish military power. The Comanches and Utes swept the Apachean peoples from the Plains, with fortunate

²⁸ John, *Storms Brewed in Other Men's Worlds*, 226-31; Kenner, *A History of New Mexican-Plains Indian Relation*, 26-31; Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America*, 187-88.

²⁹ John, *Storms Brewed in Other Men's Worlds*, 231-32; Kenner, *A History of New Mexican-Plains Indian Relations*, 28-32; Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America*, 166-71.

survivors fleeing to New Mexico and finding refuge in pueblos. The Comanches impressed the French, who by 1750 supplied the Comanche with arms and encouraged their hostility against the pueblos and the Spanish. The Comanches seemed ever more powerful as the Apaches weakened. By 1766, Apache dominance ended throughout the Plains. Even east of the Pecos River, the plains of West Texas had become Comanche territory.³⁰

Only in far southern area of the Plains did Apachean peoples retain their control, and there only after fighting off serious threats. In the Trans-Pecos region near the Guadalupe Mountains, the Mescalero Apaches tenuously remained in control. Comanche raids destroyed the structure of some groups; the once vaunted Faraòn Apaches were defeated and in decline built a *ranchería* along the Rio Grande before the 1750s, where they traded for the buffalo meat they used to hunt. The Comanches drove other Apache groups into the arms of the Spanish; one settled outside the village of San Elizario, about twenty miles from El Paso, and another found the Hueco Tanks a safe refuge. Even the Mescaleros suffered greatly, finding their territory limited, their sovereignty challenged. With so many prizes for the Comanches to find, they soon left the Trans-Pecos region, driving even farther east to the Spanish settlements in south-central Texas such as San Antonio. The people there were wealthier and the prizes greater than could be expected from the mobile Mescalero bands. The Mescalero bands, which included the Sierra Blanca, the Siete Ríos, other groups, and a number of Apache refugees from the north who assimilated with the Mescaleros, retained a more secure position than most.³¹

Despite an all-out war between the Mescaleros and the presidio, the Spanish garrison, at El Paso during the 1770s and 1780s, a kind of appeasement led the way to a period of relative peace for the first twenty-five years of the nineteenth century. Teodoro de Croix, commander-general of New Spain, led the most effective attacks on the Mescaleros, penetrating the Sacramento, Guadalupe, and Organ mountains as well as the Sierra Blanca range in efforts to dislodge them. A tactical strategist, de Croix also fractured the long-standing alliance between the Lipan and Mescalero groups. When de Croix's successor, Bernardo de Gálvez, took charge of the *Provincias Internas*, the internal provinces of New Spain, in 1786, he inaugurated a policy of plying Indians with liquor and offering them inferior firearms that would not stand up to those of the Spanish. He reasoned that when hungry, Indian people were dangerous to his colony; when full and a little drunk, they might be more pliable and less inclined to concerted aggression. The success of this program surprised other Spaniards. The rations and goods worked as planned, and prolonged strife between the Mescalero Apaches and the Navajos further eased the fears of the Spanish. With other Indian groups pacified and yearning for a truce and the Mescaleros distracted, a period of calm began.³²

³⁰ John, *Storms Brewed in Other Men's Worlds*, 232-57; Kenner, *A History of New Mexican-Plains Indian Relations*, 32-36; Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America*, 196-98.

³¹ Sonnichsen, *The Mescalero Apaches*, 43-49.

³² Sonnichsen, *The Mescalero Apaches*, 47-52; Kenner, *A History of New Mexico-Plains Indian Relations*, 55-60; Opler, "Mescalero Apaches," 420-21.

The Mescaleros were among the many beneficiaries of the new situation. The Spanish offered them goods and amenities to keep the peace, and the Mescaleros willingly took these offerings. With the Comanche menace to these last Apachean peoples in the east diminishing as New Mexico and Comanche interests elsewhere converged, Spanish generosity looked like a promising prospect. In 1793, a large group of Mescaleros agreed to stay on tracts along the Rio Grande near modern Belen, New Mexico, a step toward a mutual relationship that probably had the added advantages of protecting Mescaleros from the Comanches, who made an alliance with the Spanish in 1786. Comanche-Spanish joint raids on the Apaches became common; in 1797, a combination of Spanish soldiers and settlers, Comanches, and pueblo Indians attacked more than 400 Mescaleros in the sand hills of southeastern New Mexico. With such physical coaxing, the Mescalero-Spanish relationship worked well. When U.S. Army Lieutenant Zebulon Pike visited San Elizario in 1807, he reported peaceful relations between the Spanish and the many Apaches in the vicinity. In 1810, the Spanish formally acknowledged the Mescaleros with a treaty that granted rations and the right to occupy a sizable area that ranged from the Sacramento Mountains to Chihuahua and from El Paso onto the Plains. The document was a testament to the harmonious relations that changed the tenor of the Guadalupe Mountains-Trans-Pecos region.

The harmony was short-lived, disrupted by the tumultuous affairs of Spain and its colonies. Turmoil in Europe resulted from Napoleon Bonaparte's attempt to install his brother as king of Spain in 1808. Not only did Fernando VII, the son of the deposed king, return to the throne in 1814, the New World colonies acquired freedoms they did not want to give up when the rightful king returned. Added to his troubles at home, which culminated in a new constitution in 1820, Fernando VII found the weakened grasp of Spain on Mexico to have become limp. With tacit American approval and modest financial aid, Bernardo Gutiérrez de Lara, commander of a Mexican army rebelling against Spain in the early 1800s, invaded Texas. The Americans captured the port of Mobile, Alabama, from the Spanish during the War of 1812, ostensibly to keep the British away from it; after the war, they refused to return it to Spain. Americans also pressed their claims to Florida and the western boundary of Louisiana, culminating in the Adams-Onís Treaty of 1819, in which the United States acquired Florida and the two nations drew a boundary line along the Sabine, Red, and Arkansas rivers that extended west to the Pacific Ocean along the 42nd Parallel. This extinguished American claims to Texas, which the Spanish feared, and also left a large area, dominated by the Comanches and other Plains groups, between Santa Fe and the growing American migration west.³³

Spanish problems in North America were only beginning. The weakened king could do little to stop the attrition of his holdings. While the Adams-Onís treaty made promises — American subjects, especially in Florida, along the Gulf of Mexico, and in Louisiana — continued to agitate for removal of the Spanish. When a Mexican-born military officer, Augustín de Iturbide, launched a drive for Mexican independence from Spain, the last vestiges of the Spanish empire in North America crumbled. The people of New Spain became the people of Mexico, and in the streets of San Antonio and Santa Fe,

³³ Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America*, 297-99.

shouts of *viva la independencia!* replaced *viva el rey!* Mexico became an independent nation, inheriting all the problems of Spain in North America, in particular the expansionism of the United States that would become known as Manifest Destiny, and few of the fallen empire's worldwide resources.³⁴

From its inception, the Mexican state was feeble and largely unable to exercise even the limited power that the Spanish developed in the far north. El Paso remained a crucial juncture, but on the periphery — and often even in its core — the constantly changing Mexican regimes were barely able to sustain governance of their important northern regions, New Mexico and Texas. Internal political turmoil, economic scarcity, and weak institutions contributed both to the end of the Indian-Spanish harmony that bribery had brought and to a growing lack of control and subsequent lack of respect for the Mexican government that might have been the only sentiment shared by Comanches, Mescaleros, and even the Anglo-Americans who encroached upon Texas, New Mexico, and California.³⁵

The encroachment of Anglo-Americans illustrated the weakness of the Mexican north. *Empresario* grants to faux Catholics such as Moses and Stephen F. Austin in Texas, unauthorized trade along the Santa Fe Trail from St. Louis to Santa Fe, and the Russians and Americans who arrived in California and hungrily eyed the province provided ample evidence of desire. The Texas Revolution of 1835 became the first genuine proof of the intentions of the expansion of English-speakers, but even the Alamo was only a prelude to the gradual diminishment of Mexican power in its north and the rise of its increasingly aggressive northern neighbor.

Its fundamental weakness compelled the Mexican government to maintain existing friendly ties with peoples such as the Mescaleros — a clear acknowledgment of the weakness of the Mexican periphery and the strength of the Mescaleros in their land. The Mexicans had neither the energy nor the capability to fight the Mescaleros; throughout the 1820s and 1830s, the northern control crumbled and Mexican governments succeeded one another with stunning rapidity. For the Mescaleros, this meant that the status quo persisted in the Guadalupe Mountains and Trans-Pecos region and they could raid with impunity beyond it. In those two decades, no travelers on the *Jornada del Muerto* or going to Chihuahua were safe. Even as the raids increased and nearly all of the livestock in El Paso disappeared, in 1832 the Mexican government reaffirmed the 1810 agreement. Although Mexican soldiers dealt the Mescaleros a stunning defeat in a surprise attack at the Hueco Tanks near the end of the 1830s, the Mescaleros clearly controlled the Guadalupe Mountains and its environs. As late as 1842, Mexican officials engaged in negotiations with the Mescaleros in the hope of avoiding internal problems at a time when their external situation seemed grim. This negotiating highlighted the problems of the Mexican government. Too weak to address the genuine threats to its sovereignty, it did what it could to maintain the status quo for as long as possible.

The Mescaleros had one other advantage, one more reason to be left alone as tumult swirled

³⁴ Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America*, 300-01.

³⁵ David J. Weber, *The Mexican Frontier 1821-1846: The American Southwest Under Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1982), 1-14.

around them along the Rio Grande, in Chihuahua, and in Texas. The Guadalupe Mountains-Trans-Pecos region remained fundamentally apart from the conflicts of the time. Its resources were not what the Americans and Mexicans grappled over. It remained too remote to be of interest to the weak core areas of Mexico and the nascent Texas republic. Only a few settlements, such as the land grant village of Santa Rosa to the north of the region settled in 1822, existed, and these had little to offer the burgeoning international trade markets. Nor were these little communities guaranteed to survive in the rugged physical and social environment of the times. In 1824, Pablo Montoya received a large grant in the area, Santa Rosa but pressure from the Comanches, raids, theft of stock, intermittent attacks, and the constant fear these endeavors created, forced its abandonment by about 1840. The Mexican government could sign agreements, but it could not protect its citizens from attacks from beyond its borders.

This was the paradox of the Spanish and Mexicans, not only in a rim area such as the Guadalupe Mountains and the Trans-Pecos but also in the core areas of the northern provinces of New Spain and the northernmost states of the Republic of Mexico. The Spanish and Mexicans claimed these lands and exerted varying degrees of influence over the events that occurred there, but they never established firm control. Their institutions existed, but never genuinely coalesced. Their numbers remained small and a range of factors, from the distances necessary to supply these places to externalities such as the waves of Apachean and Comanche peoples who descended upon the region, prevented the establishment of a core colony or a solid Mexican state. The remote north was within the reach, but beyond the grasp of the Spanish and the Mexicans, assuring that the American arrival — with its attendant sources of capital, better trade goods, and easier access to markets — would be first appealing, next a threat, and finally an irresistible force.

The Guadalupe Mountains and Trans-Pecos region remained marginal throughout the Spanish and Mexican period. Its desert-like conditions and especially the lack of water made it unattractive except as a place to pass through on the way to the sedentary pueblos of northern New Mexico. The people who lived there were hard for the few Spanish to control for any stretch of time and even more difficult to compel cooperation. When the region appeared in Spanish consciousness at all, it was a hostile place populated by hostile people, varieties of Apaches culminating in the Mescaleros. It could not even be harnessed as an area of peripheral defense of the interests of New Spain in the manner of northern New Mexican communities such as Abiquiu, created in the eighteenth century and populated with *genizaros*, detribalized Indians, as a target to satiate Ute, Comanche, and Navajo raiders before they reached the core of colonial New Mexico. Nor could the Mexicans bring anything more to bear on the region. The Mexican government practiced a kind of appeasement inherited from late in the Spanish era; instead of the gifts of the Spanish, the Mescaleros and others received the reaffirmation of treaties, likely fully aware that Mexican officials had little choice in the matter. The Mexican government lacked the resources to change realities and had no incentives to address problems beyond the spine that led north to Santa Fe and the Rio Arriba. The harsh deserts and forbidding mountains east of El Paso were sufficient protection for the denizens of a weak core state.

By the end of Mexican era, the Guadalupe Mountains and the Trans-Pecos region had become

the staging ground that they would remain until industrial technologies such as the railroad and irrigation systems entered the region. The vectors of Spanish, Mexican, and Texican expansion avoided or bypassed the region; it had little to offer people who judged the value of land by the depth of its grasses, the height of its trees, and its access to water. After they ascertained that Northern New Spain lacked significant material advantages, the only interest the Spanish had in the region was as a buffer zone. The sparse desert and waterless flats served to protect a core that governments could not afford to guard with soldiers. Pre-industrial core areas barely attempted and could not sustain the development of the region without the surpluses of industrialization and its technological accouterments.

Before 1845, all kinds of people passed through the region, most stopping only temporarily. Since near the end of the Archaic period, the constellation of people, their practices and the environment had not lined up to make any but the river valleys suitable for sedentary habitation. The people of the area remained what they had been throughout most of human history: nomads who depended on a seasonal bounty from an array of places to survive, thrive, and continue. With its attributes invisible to pre-industrial Europeans and their New World counterparts, the region remained what it had been for most of human history: a place through which to pass, where the people who traversed it were fortunate to find water, game or other foodstuffs. The Guadalupe Mountains, the Trans-Pecos, and their surroundings remained a periphery.

