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## The River Has Never Divided Us: A Border History of La Junta de los Rios. By Jefferson Morgenthaler. (review)

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ans—"friendlies" and "hostiles" alike—that only three tiny groups had a communal land base in the 1900s: Alabama-Coushattas, Tiguas, and Kickapoos.

La Vere's two opening chapters, which take us masterfully from earliest man to Natives at the time of first contact with Europeans, illustrate the strengths of the book. He ventures out of Texas to explain Texas, ranging westward to the world of the Pueblos and eastward to the Mississippi tradition. He emphasizes explanation over description, and reaches for generalizations rather than lose readers in a maze of distinctions and exceptions. Thus, he divides Texas Indians at the time of contact into two groups: hunter-gatherers and agriculturalists (no matter that some were both). These two modes of production, he tells us, shaped gender roles, religion, kinship, and reciprocity. Hunter-gatherers, for example, tended to be patrilineal and patrilineal (although we learn that Apaches were an exception, perhaps because they did not fit entirely in either category).

As Europeans come on the scene and encounter specific Indian groups, La Vere's sources grow richer. Moving chronologically and across the many regions of Texas, he describes the particularities of every significant Indian group in Texas on a "need to know" basis. As Cabeza de Vaca meets Karankawas, Coahuiltecans, and Jumanos, for example, so does the reader. True to his word, La Vere keeps Indians front and center, explaining their motives and responses to outsiders—Indians and non-Indians alike.

The outline of La Vere's story is known to every historian of Texas, but no one has told it so comprehensively. Informed by anthropology, La Vere explains how Indian groups formed and reformed, cooperated and quarreled with one another as well as with whites. Specialists will almost certainly find shortcomings in La Vere's treatment of their areas of expertise, but only the churlish will complain. La Vere has produced a major reference work, distinguished by clear writing and judicious judgments. This worthy successor to Newcomb's classic work is unlikely to be surpassed for another forty years.

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David J. Weber

*The River Has Never Divided Us: A Border History of La Junta de los Rios.* By Jefferson Morgenthaler. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004. Pp. x+318. Acknowledgments, photographs, maps, notes, bibliography, index. ISBN 0-292-70166-7, \$60.00, cloth; ISBN 0-20-92-70283-3, \$22.95, paper.)

In this newest Texas Borderlands study, Jefferson Morgenthaler attempts to present a comprehensive history of La Junta and its people. Located in southwestern Texas around the intersection of the Rio Grande and Rio Conchos, La Junta represents one of the longest continuously populated regions in Texas. Eloquently written and based on a wide variety of primary sources, *The River Has Never Divided Us* lays out, in thirty chapters, rather a mosaic than a coherent history of this culturally rich region and puts its prime focus on historical developments during the nineteenth century and to a much lesser extent the twentieth century.

Even though the Mexican-American War resulted in the establishment of the Rio Grande as an international border running right through the center of La Junta, for the better part of the last two centuries, the region developed beyond the official reaches of Mexican as well as American laws and controls. In chapter after chapter, this monograph convincingly establishes that the Rio Grande never divided La Junta, either as a geographical feature or a political boundary—rather the river was and still is the bloodline that feeds and unites the region. Almost all aspects of social life—friendships, marriages, and business ties—extended and still extend across the river, unaffected by the political demarcation line. Unlike in other Mexican/American border regions, the border through La Junta did not create “two sharply disparate societies” (p. 230). The border created a political division but neither a social nor a cultural one. As far as La Junta in relationship to the United States is concerned, the dividing line was established farther north where first the railroad and later the interstate practically sliced the region off the United States and the rest of Texas, socially and economically.

Morgenthaler is especially enlightening when he places the region's history into the larger context of Mexican and American/Texan developments and demonstrates how these affected La Junta similarly on both sides of the river. Beyond these aspects, the monograph comes really to life in the author's detailed portrayal of personal histories of La Juntans, even though one can detect a potentially too heavy emphasis on Anglo explorers and pioneers.

The strengths of *The River Has Never Divided Us* begin to fade when it reaches La Junta's twentieth-century history. The only seriously addressed modern topic is “drug smuggling” and its treatment is more political than historical. Additionally, in one of the opening chapters Morgenthaler praises La Junta as one of the “oldest continuously occupied settlements in the Chihuahuan Desert, ranking in age and dignity with the Anazasi pueblos of New Mexico” (p. 21). It is disappointing, even given the time frame of the study, that this part of La Junta's history is not explored in any detail at all. The reader begs to learn much more than what is provided by the one page and one footnote allocated to it. The much more important weaknesses of this monograph, however, rest in the author's lack of any serious attempt to analytically place La Junta history and experiences into the broader framework of borderlands studies, as well as his neglect to address issues of ethnicity and ethnic relations in any depth. For the most part Morgenthaler's narrative is of anecdotal, mosaic nature, which actually makes the study a joy to read, and certainly a delight for any connoisseur of Texas history, but at the same time limits the scholarly usefulness of this colorful volume.

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*Ditches Across the Desert: Irrigation in the Lower Pecos Valley.* By Stephen Bogener. (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 2003. Pp. xii+340. Acknowledgments, maps, illustrations, epilogue, notes, bibliography, index. ISBN 0-89672-509-X. \$34.95, cloth.)