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## The Spanish American Homeland: Four Centuries in New Mexico's Rio Arriba by Alvar W. Carlson (review)

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illusion in producing a record of their activity" (p. 117). If the task of separating reality from illusion is difficult for an historian of Simmons's caliber, it is much more difficult for the general reader, who is left to deal with such biased original sources as a Spanish governor's tirade against Franciscan missionaries in 1773, a Franciscan's tirade against Spanish settlers in 1778, and a second governor's tirade against nearly everyone in 1803.

*Coronado's Land* is therefore recommended, but only in a split decision: all readers will clearly benefit from the remarkable observations of its first hundred-odd pages, while novices are advised to venture beyond those pages only at the risk of encountering some understandable confusion.

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RICHARD MELZER

*The Spanish American Homeland: Four Centuries in New Mexico's Rio Arriba.* By Alvar W. Carlson (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991. Pp. 294. Acknowledgments, appendices, notes, glossary, index. \$39.95.)

This comprehensive examination of Spanish, Mexican, and United States land tenure systems in New Mexico's Rio Arriba is based on the discipline of geography. Alvar Carlson undertakes his journey into land grant history in order to examine cultural and environmental changes visible in the region after some 400 years of history. He finds that land grant history is certainly in need of revision as he focuses upon the incorporation of subsistence agriculture and land use patterns in Rio Arriba.

In order to right the wrongs of the many scapegoats in this historical process, from the Court of Private Land Claims to the U.S. Forest Service to certain academics who romanticize the past, Carlson presents a four-part revision of social processes and traditional culture in the Rio Arriba area. In parts one and two, he views that culture as somewhat static and uses a submarginal peasant theory to explain why incorporation into the U.S. economy was so difficult for the *Hispanos* of Rio Arriba. As he further outlines the history, Carlson integrates the social, political, and economic subordination of *Hispanos* in Rio Arriba into a conception of capitalist transformation, such as adaptive changes in the form and function of *Hispano* society, even to the living in "modern air-conditioned trailers."

Carlson believes that the U.S. government has been unfairly criticized for late nineteenth-century adjudication of *Hispano* land grant claims, and for twentieth-century policy that hinders rural economic development in Rio Arriba. Federal officials in New Mexico supposedly had the expertise and the talent successfully to litigate land grant claims, but Carlson finds little evidence of wrongdoing. In fact, the Court of Private Land Claims satisfactorily settled most claims. Given the role played by the Surveyor General's Office and the Court of Private Land Claims, Carlson finds that claims were adjudicated fairly and were rejected only with good reason.

Carlson is at his best when he deals with land use and grazing rights in the National Forest. The Forest Service has accommodated the agricultural rights of

many *Hispanos* within a region that has had serious environmental limitations. In part three he works out the dynamic interplay between *Hispano* history and the distinctive material culture of Rio Arriba. Carlson offers important new contributions as he places a dynamic group of people within the cultural realm of seeing land as a dimension of one's self. Social status and class were reflected through land. Social status, not contract, nor economics, for that matter, was foremost. Land in Rio Arriba had multiple dimensions. It was the heart of community and loss of land left one in a position of subordination. Carlson gives us the ancestral struggle to maintain the land, and he seems to understand this struggle even as he attacks the Alianza Federal de Mercedes for its so-called misguided resistance.

A society of modest but prosperous land-holding communities is a present ideal in Rio Arriba. It has its roots in the Iberian legacy and in pre-Columbian Indian history. Despite misapplied U.S. agrarian laws, it has been kept alive in northern New Mexico. As Carlson recognizes, *Hispanos* have not been evicted from their communities in large numbers. His presentation of this reality is balanced, but his partisan attack on the opposition destroys his inquiry.

The book is handsomely designed with excellent maps and charts. The bibliography displays a good use of the sources and of time spent on research. The appendices are also of value.

University of Texas-Pan American

ROBERTO MARIO SALMÓN

*Western Apache Heritage: People of the Mountain Corridor.* By Richard J. Perry (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991. Pp. xiii+298. Preface, maps, black-and-white photographs, appendices, notes, bibliography, index. \$37.50; cloth, \$17.95, paper.)

Of native peoples, the Eyak-Athapaskan are believed to be the most recent immigrants from Siberia. They entered Alaska in small population pulses perhaps beginning two millennia ago, the Bering Strait, recreated by the rising sea level some 4,000 years ago, proving no barrier. The Eyak had split from the Proto-Athapaskan "sometime in the second millennium B.C." (p. 102), no doubt in Siberia. The Athapaskans probably established themselves initially on the Alaskan coast between Anchorage and the Copper River, from there expanding into central Alaska. They now range from the Koyukon River north of the Yukon to isolated groups on the Pacific Coast, to the Chipewyan as far east as Hudson Bay, and southerly by way of the Mountain Corridor to become the presently populous Navajo and dispersed Apaches of the Southwest. Although never until recently a numerous people, they were a vigorous stock. Their many tribes speak related dialects or derivative languages, and their common origin was determined through linguistic and archeological legacies. In this evolutionary process "considerable cultural diversity" has developed, but "they have retained echoes of a common heritage" (p. 9). It is these "echoes" that Perry finds quite as informative as archeological relics and linguistics.

This complex history had been known in general terms, but Perry, in his admirable synthesis of various scientific studies, tells the overall story as it never has