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## Borderlands Sourcebook, E. R. Stoddard, R. L. Nostrand, and J. P. Smith, Eds.

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## BORDERLANDS SOURCEBOOK

E.R. STODDARD, R.L. NOSTRAND, and J.P. SMITH, Eds.  
Norman: University of Oklahoma Press. 1983. Pp. 445. \$48.50

The fifty-nine essays in this encyclopedic reference book were written to a common purpose. This is not a loose collection of miscellaneous papers, but a concerted effort by dozens of scholars to provide succinct, overview essays of the history, topics of interest, and bibliographic resources that the beginning as well as experienced person will want to know about the US/Mexican border area. At less than \$1 an essay, one gets 304 pages of double column format, plus 130 pages of bibliography and a subject index (there is no author index).

Part One consists of four discussions of the deceptive concept of a borderland. Simply put, it's the area adjacent to a political border, but what transpires in that area is a challenge to just about every academic discipline's skills. Anglo and Hispanic cultures and national perceptions mix in the border area, which makes the purists of any given academic discipline uncomfortable. They should be uncomfortable; most of the central hypotheses of the traditional academic disciplines apply poorly to mixtures. This book is decidedly interesting because it does *not* try to boil down the complex mixture into preestablished categories. Capitol city Mexicans call their northern compatriots "pachos", or bleached, because of exposure to North American influences. One virtue of this book is that it helps us understand the idiom as well as the facts of the border area. One author calls the border a series of overlays; that definition comes closest to describing the total nature of the volume.

Part Two consists of fifty-three essays, organized under the headings of History and Archeology (12), Geography and Environment (8), The Economy (11), Politics, Law, and Demography (11), and Society and Culture (11). The short essays are rich with references to authors and dates of major works, and frequently provide the seasoned scholar's perspectives on what the important issues and outstanding questions are. At the beginning of each essay, a pictograph is provided consisting of a border area map and of a timeline; shading on the map and timeline tell about the scope of the following essay. This innovation should become standard for collections of this type, because it saves both authors and readers from a lot of introductory paragraphs.

The essays cover all of the contemporary topics—illegal immigration, urbanization, pollution, water, education, and native Americans among others—but they do not particularly attempt to be contemporary, nor are future trends predicted. The book shares the long, retrospective timeline

of the historian and the geographer more than it shares the political scientist's compulsion to state the latest theory or event. Jefferson would be at home with this volume, but Paine less so. Bibliographic references generally stop at 1978, with only a few later citations. We have, in other words, a leisurely book, one that took five years to gather together and get to the market. That kind of delay, in our new electronic era, will probably not happen again. A Jeffersonian grasp of timeless essentials is of course the superior quality, but it is frustrating to encounter demographic observations in 1983 that are based on the 1970 census. If the ads for personal computers are at all true—vast data bases are but a button punch away—this book may be one of the last patient, hand-made bibliographic volumes of our time.

Part Three has two essays on Mexican resources and on maps and aerial photography. There then follow 130 pages of bibliography, arranged alphabetically by author in the case of books and cited dissertations. There is a miscellaneous documents list, given alphabetically by source agency. The list of dissertations and theses is organized under ten topical headings, then authors' names.

There are two important gaps in the substance of the book, one of which is acknowledged by the editors. Authors from Mexico are not sufficiently present; however, as the editors observe, many were invited but did not respond. This is an issue deserving an essay in its own right—Mexican scholarship on North American subjects is not available in proportion to the capacities of Mexican researchers. The other gap concerns law and institutions. Only two essays deal directly with the law, and one of the few blunders in the book would have been avoided by greater awareness of the nature of the legal institutions operating at the border. The blunder was stating "Managing the Rio Grande and the Colorado River is the task of the International Boundary and Water Commission." (p. 91) The treaty describing the powers of the IBWC was carefully drawn by the two countries, and it stops well short of giving river management authority to the international commission, particularly with regard to the Colorado River. The skill of the book in unfolding the cultural dimensions of the relations between the two countries at the border does not, unfortunately, extend far enough into the formal, institutionalized dimensions of the relationship.

The need for more material on the legal, treaty-bound dimensions of the border is illustrated by the absence of analysis of the maritime boundary issues that have occupied the two countries for the better part of the last ten years. One can be a hopeless landlubber and still perceive the importance to the border economy of the Brownsville shrimp industry or the fisheries near Baja. The difficulty the two countries have had obtaining a tuna fishing boundary is no less important a borderlands issue than the

others discussed in this book, even if from our inland universities the sea sometimes seems far afield. Possession of off-shore oil and seabed metallic nodules, and sea-bourne pollution, are very recent border issues, and no less worthy of attention.

Another criticism could be lodged against this publishing effort, but it would be an unfair one. The virtue of concentrating upon the adjacent border states commits at the same time the vice of giving too little overt attention to the *national* policies and economies of which the border events are frequently a dependent effect. But there are already many studies at the national level. This book excels at what it intended to do—concentrate on the borderland area. Everyone who is interested in doing the same thing will find this volume a useful and pleasurable resource.

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