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Peace Came in the Form of a Woman: Indians and Spaniards in the Texas Borderlands (review)

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Peace Came in the Form of a Woman: Indians and Spaniards in the Texas Borderlands. By Juliana Barr. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007. Pp. 410. Illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index. ISBN 978-0-8078-3082-6. $59.95, cloth; ISBN 978-0-8078-5790-8. $19.95, paper.)

Thirty years ago, little was known about Native Americans in colonial Texas. In the past three decades, however, scholars have produced studies that shed much light on the region's Indian tribes—Caddos, Wichitas, Comanches, Apaches, Karankawas, and Coahuiltecans, among others—that detail the diplomatic, economic, and military histories of these groups. In this well-written and meticulously researched work, Juliana Barr, a graduate of the esteemed women's history program at the University of Wisconsin, has examined the indigenous tribes of Spanish Texas through the prism of gender, providing as deep an understanding of Indian-Euro-American relations in Texas as scholarship has produced in other, better studied regions of North America.

Barr's work is based on the correct belief that—unlike in other parts of Latin America—the various Indian tribes, not the Spaniards, dominated colonial Texas. Therefore, they dictated the terms of engagement with Euro-Americans through "the networks of kinship that provided the infrastructure for native political and economic systems and codified both domestic and foreign relations" (p. 9). Because the Indians of Texas used gender as the organizing principle of their kin-based social, economic, and political domains, it also functioned as a communication tool for the often nonverbal nature of cross-cultural interaction between the tribes and the intruding Euro-Americans. Employing these ideas in a highly original manner to interpret the situation along the Louisiana-Texas frontier, in part one of her study, Barr convincingly demonstrates that the Caddos in the region came to prefer the French over the Spaniards not just because the former provided them with a military and trading alliance, as past scholarship has shown. By bringing women with them and settling as families in the post at Natchitoches, as well as by establishing unions with native women, the French were able to incorporate themselves into the kinship system that structured the dominant Caddo society. On the other hand, the Spaniards—mainly priests and soldiers—alienated their hosts by bringing few females to the missions and presidios of East Texas, and by demonstrating little interest in marrying Caddo women. Intriguingly, however, the author shows how, over the course of the early eighteenth century, the isolated Spaniards became absorbed in the Caddo-French trading networks by developing small-scale ranches dispersed among the Indians and by intermarrying with the French "brothers" of the Caddos.

Part two investigates the Coahuiltecans and the Lipan Apaches who dealt with the Spaniards who settled in San Antonio. Barr demonstrates how the ravaged Coahuiltecans incorporated the missions into their migratory subsistence patterns and as a means of formalizing an alliance with the Spaniards, not of declaring subordination to Spanish rule. Concerning the Apaches, the author focuses on the role of women in the initial warfare and subsequent alliance that developed between the Indians and the Spaniards in the first half of the eighteenth century. Part three deals with the Spanish effort to establish peace with the Norteños through male-dominated

negotiations on battlefields and in council houses, and how women then played an important role in transforming the transient truces into a permanent end to the hostilities.

Although the author, particularly in the book's final two sections—heavily influenced by the work of Robert A. Ricklis and James F. Brooks—occasionally has to force the prism of gender onto subjects that are not necessarily applicable, ultimately Barr's study succeeds brilliantly in its effort to provide a more complete understanding of Indian-Euro-American relations in Texas during the eighteenth century. One only hopes that she plans to use her considerable abilities and interpretive skills to examine the situation between Indians, Mexicans, and Anglos in the complex world of Texas during the first half of the nineteenth century.

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Looting Spiro Mounds: An American King Tut's Tomb. By David La Vere. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007. Pp. 266. Illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index. ISBN 978-0-8061-3813-8. $24.95, paper.)

This thoroughly enjoyable and disturbing book bounds effortlessly across centuries deftly chronicling the rise and fall of American Indian empires, the hard times of the Depression, and the intersection of both in the history of archeology. With profit-hungry pot hunters and academics fighting over a bygone civilization, this has the trappings of an Indiana Jones saga.

"Grave robbing" seems to belong in the book's title, but "looting" hits the mark and the reference to King Tut suggests the significance of the graves robbed. The Spiro Mounds, located in central eastern Oklahoma just across the Arkansas border, held the burial goods and bodies of elite political-religious figures from a Mississippian empire that succeeded Cahokia as one of North America's most important political, commercial, and ceremonial centers. These burial goods, in quantities deemed astonishing by those who unearthed them, represented the best in Spiro culture. By about 1450, Spiro and its people fell from the heights they had reached. That changed during the Depression when pot hunters, some organized as the Pocola Mining Company, decided to excavate the mounds hoping to find a lode of artifacts they could turn into quick cash. Their work yielded fantastic results, described by La Vere as the biggest and most exotic collection of pre-Columbian artifacts yet discovered, and sparked frenzied interest from artifact dealers. In their haste, ignorance, and carelessness, the "miners" disrupted graves and destroyed a wealth of goods and their clues about life at Spiro. Their find also started a turf war with academics from the University of Oklahoma who wished to protect the mounds from the Pocola Mining Company and their ilk and to loot the mounds for another pay-off—knowledge and prestige. The conflict resulted in Oklahoma's legislature passing the state's first Antiquities Act, which brought a measure of protection to the site but only after enormous insult and injury. La Vere discusses these issues as they arose in the 1930s and carries them into the 1990s with the passage of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act.