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An American Language: The History of Spanish in the United States by Rosina Lozano (review)

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BOOK REVIEWS

An American Language: The History of Spanish in the United States. By Rosina Lozano. (Oakland: University of California Press, 2018. Pp. vii, 364. \$85.00 hardcover; \$29.95 paper; \$29.95 ebook)

An American Language forcefully argues that Spanish in the United States cannot be dismissed as either a foreign language or the language of recent Latin American immigrants. Rather, Spanish was *one* of the nation's languages of governance.

In the first half of the book, Lozano explores the history of Spanish as the language of politics from the mid-nineteenth century until 1902. When the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ended the U.S.–Mexican War, it also ceded almost half of Mexico's national territory to the United States and granted U.S. citizenship to the people who lived on those lands (Indigenous Mexican citizens, however, were excluded). Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, treaty citizens, or “former Mexican nationals annexed with California and New Mexico,” asserted all of their rights—including both citizenship rights and the right to use the Spanish language in public and private spaces (p. 5). The history of Spanish language rights, however, varied dramatically across the heterogeneous territories of California, New Mexico, Arizona, and Colorado. Lozano delves deep into how particular aspects in each case—demographics, landownership, Anglo migration, political status (territory versus state), and the political leadership of treaty citizens—shaped the history of Spanish language rights across the Southwest. From the very beginning, however, Spanish was the language of governance throughout the region—that is, the majority language spoken by landowners and their political representatives immediately after the war.

In the second half, Lozano moves forward to the first half of the twentieth century, when Spanish became a political language. Around the turn of the twentieth century (1890s–1910s), citizenship rights for non-white persons in the United States were incrementally restricted. The limits on Spanish language rights were no different. The years surrounding World War I were shaped by xenophobia, English-only movements, and aggressive Americanization efforts. In the face of this nationwide challenge to Spanish language rights, Lozano explores how treaty citizens, as well as recent post-1910 Mexican immigrants throughout the Southwest, pushed back against attacks on Spanish and asserted the language as a cultural right. At the same time that Americanization

campaigns demanded the assimilation of treaty citizens and recent Mexican immigrants, another policy emerged. Government officials began to see the Spanish language as a tool that diplomats, businessmen, and military men had to acquire in order to facilitate the political and economic dominance of the United States in the Western Hemisphere. During World War II, Spanish was designated a strategic language, and federal funding became available for Spanish-language instruction. Local educators, labor leaders, and higher-education administrators took advantage of this opportunity to fund Spanish-language curricula—deployed differently in the four case studies—that could serve the needs of their communities. Lozano ends the book with a comparison of the debates around Spanish language rights in New Mexico and Puerto Rico in the 1940s. The epilogue efficiently summarizes the history of Spanish in the United States into the present time.

Through the history of Spanish language rights, Lozano explores the central themes of language, identity, and belonging. She documents the “enduring presence of Spanish within the U.S. borders” and defines it as a “colonial, indigenous, and immigrant language” (pp. 2, 3). She asserts that treaty citizens are significant in the study of U.S. history, for they were the “first geographically dispersed, politically significant, and racially ambiguous group to gain U.S. citizenship” and, along with Native peoples, the founding members of the Southwest region of the U.S. nation (p. 6). At the same time, she emphasizes the heterogeneity within the category of treaty citizens. The history of language in the four case studies—California, New Mexico, Colorado, and Arizona—was heterogeneous and diverse.

The breadth and depth of the comparative examples in the region requires that Lozano examine both old and more recent historical documents. While she explores some traditional sources, such as the region’s prolific Spanish-language press, she also makes use of territorial and municipal records, state laws and legislative minutes, official federal letters, political party collections, election rolls, and Senate hearings. It is this variety of archival sources—local, territorial, state, and federal—that allows Lozano to produce a sophisticated and intricate narrative about the foundational history of Spanish in the United States, as well as the history of ethnic Mexican U.S. citizens (treaty citizens, Mexican immigrants, and U.S.-born citizens of Mexican descent). *An American Language* documents how—in varied ways and with divergent outcomes—U.S. citizens of Mexican and Latin American descent have historically rejected the argument that dominant Spanish-language use in public and private spaces undermines an individual’s understanding of and capacity for U.S. citizenship. Rather,

“treaty citizens proclaimed their American citizenship while speaking an American language: Spanish” (p. 17).

In particular, Lozano’s attention to Spanish as the language of governance during New Mexico’s long history as a territory, rather than a state, suggests that scholars of U.S. empire at the turn of the century (of U.S. overseas territories and U.S. military occupations in the Caribbean, Central America, and the Pacific) should also take into consideration the comparative history of the colonization and annexation of contiguous territories. Lozano shows how the “politics of Spanish language use in the U.S. reveals how the idea of nation has evolved” since the mid-nineteenth century (p. 10). New Mexico’s territorial history, in particular, allows historians to consider the varied histories of Spanish-speaking peoples in the making of U.S. empire from the nineteenth century to the present.

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The Black Legend: George Bascom, Cochise, and the Start of the Apache Wars. By Doug Hocking. (Guilford, Conn.: TwoDot, 2019. Pp. 384. \$24.95 hardcover)

With nearly three hundred years of history to investigate the Apache-Spanish-Mexican-American conflict, many historians choose to write about the Bascom Affair of February 1861, that seminal point of ignition of warfare between the Apaches and the United States. Author Doug Hocking is no different. In his follow-up to his award-winning biography, *Tom Jeffords: Friend of Cochise*, his *The Black Legend: George Bascom, Cochise, and the Start of the Apache Wars* seeks to overturn decades of published conclusions that Lt. George N. Bascom single-handedly caused the Apache Wars of 1861–1886. Hocking states emphatically in the acknowledgements: “He [Bascom] did nothing wrong and was neither a drunk nor a pig-headed fool as some accounts would have us believe” (p. viii).

The Black Legend represents Hocking’s lifetime of interest and investigation—much of it by four-wheel drive and along the tracks and trails of Cochise County’s backcountry—into the infamous events and individuals that led to Bascom’s fateful encounter with Cochise and his