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SPAN 308

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Spring 2012

Chapter 3: The Mexican Far North

The chapter begins with the background from the independence of Mexico from Spain, which was initiated by father Miguel Hidalgo. Mexico was able to obtain its independence by 1821 and the country began to change. The territories at the North like California, Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico were not very much bothered by the independence movement or involve in it, primarily due to its far distance from the center and capital of the country. However, after the independence, the Mexican government began giving and dividing territories to its citizens of the North. The United States on the other hand, was overlooking at the territories Mexico had in the far North. Anglo citizens began to arriving to Mexican territories (many to California) and began to blend in with the Mexican habitants. Following the so called believe of “Manifest Destiny,” the United states under the government of James K. Polk, began their efforts to gain control of land that Mexico had in the North. The Mexican-American war took place starting in 1846, when Mexico first declared war on The United States. Mexico lost its land and signed the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, establishing a new frontier with the United States.

The chapter was quite interested since the beginning. I already knew some facts about the independence of Mexico and its main characters; however, I had never heard much of how the Northern territories took the independence movement. I also knew that Mexico had lost the Mexican-American War and as a result they have given up 1/3 of its territories to the United

States. Little did I know about the way people in those territories lived and how the Anglo community had begun entering the territory of the North. It became interested to learn about the life of the North. People were predominantly divided into classes, leaving the ranchers or elites at the top, then the Mestizos or pobres (which was the majority, and the Indians or pueblos were left all the way the bottom. Since these times, class range was an issue in society. The ones at the top were the minority but they commanded the rest, and unfortunately the Indians remain the end receiving the least and suffering the most. Also, even though California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas were part of Mexico, it was hard for the country to maintain control in those territories. The capital of Mexico was set hundreds of miles apart from their Northern territory, making it harder for them to keep a good communication with their government and it eventually made easier for the United States to slowly take over the land.

By reading this chapter I was able to see how The United States was able to gain the vast amount of land from Mexico. It was a sad situation for Mexico and eventually for its citizens that remain in the North as the defeated. I think Gonzales makes a good portrayal of the episodes shown in this chapter. He concludes by stating that Americans wanted a war for what Mexico had; “Mexico had what its northern neighbor craved- land” (82).

Chapter 4: The American Southwest

This chapter focuses on the episodes that occurred after the Mexican-American War. The Mexicans left in the territories gained by the United States were set to face some hard times. Many were taken away the land that the Mexican government had given them; they suffered discrimination, injustice, and other losses. The ranchers who were once on top of the society were lowered by the Anglo supremacy. "Hispanos," was the name given to those who spoke Spanish and were the descendants of the defeated Mexicans, and who eventually became outnumbered by the migrating Americans. The railroads began to expand along the American territory and the land acquired by the United States was blended in with the rest of the country.

I had hardly heard about the post Mexican-American War period, especially in regards to the Mexicans that ended up in the North. I was impacted to read about the so called Hispanos had a hard time coming into the American society. From being the owners of their land and elites, many became simple Hispanos that suffered the mistreatment of the Americans. Once again, the color of skin placed the Mexican or "greaser" into a place of discrimination. Injustice was happening throughout these territories and there was little that could be done. Also, it became interesting to know that the Mexican people reacted towards the American with "social banditry." They idealized and protected bandits that to the American government were not more than criminals, but to the Mexican people they were persons rebelling against the American rule and trying to do something for their people. Stories began to emerge after these characters that sat out and challenged the American law. There were few that could and would say something about the injustices that they suffered; they had no other choice, but to deal with it and live according to the new laws or move the Mexican territories south to the border line where there was also a lot of instability with the Mexican government.

I personally like how Manuel Gonzales depicts this whole chapter. There were several pieces of this history I had never heard of before this reading. Also, the way in which Gonzales exposes the material makes it easier to understand. He divides the each state and tells about their situation. Although all the states were experiencing many similarities, the position of each state gave them some differences. I noticed that he is constantly referring to the Chicano perspective that exists in regards to certain pieces of history that are mentioned. Like for example, how many Chicanos view some of the people who stayed in the North during the Mexican-American war as traders, but truly after the war was over they did not have the best conditions with the American rule.