

# *Social interaction between civil, military, and mission communities in Spanish colonial Texas during the height of the Bourbon reforms, 1763-1772\**

Félix D. ALMARAZ, JR.

*The University of Texas at San Antonio*

In the occupation and colonization of the province of Texas, situated in the vast northeast corner of Nueva España, roughly bounded by the Red River, the Gulf of Mexico, and the Río Nueces, late in the 17th century the government deployed Franciscan missionaries and presidial soldiers into the wilderness to convert indigenous cultures. Viewed as a more humane and less expensive doctrine of royal policy, the process of conversion involved a tandem arrangement between representatives of the state and the church.<sup>1</sup> In the 18th century, government officials introduced the municipality into the dynamics of the colonial experience in Texas.<sup>2</sup>

Across the northern arc of the Viceroyalty of New Spain in the mid-18th century, no other community included more frontier missions grouped in close proximity than San Antonio de Béxar. Established in 1718, when Spanish officials installed the rustic foundations of Mission San Antonio de Valero and Presidio San Antonio de Béxar in the central region of Texas, the settlement tottered as a fledgling outpost for about two years. In 1720, the Marqués de Aguayo, newly

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<sup>1</sup> H. E. BOLTON and T. MAITLAND MARSHALL: *The Colonization of North America, 1492-1783*, New York, The Macmillan Company, 1920, pp. 249-251.

<sup>2</sup> F. D. ALMARAZ, JR.: «Spain's Cultural Legacy in Texas», in *The Texas Heritage*, ed. Ben Procter and Archie P. McDonald. Arlington Heights, Illinois, Harlan Davidson, Inc., 1992, pp. 8-9.

appointed governor of the province, endowed a second Franciscan mission in the general vicinity, San José y San Miguel de Aguayo.<sup>3</sup>

Renowned in Texas history as the governor who indelibly confirmed Spain's claim to the province, the Marqués de Aguayo posted ten missions in the wilderness (whereas before there had been six) and four presidios (where previously there had been only two) at strategic locations to ward off threats of French encroachment in the territory. To reinforce colonial enterprises in Texas, the governor perceptively recommended the establishment of civil towns whose settlers would complement the contributions of the older institutions of the church and the military. However, for reasons of bureaucratic obstinacy, the recommendations of the Marqués languished in royal cabinets until 1730 when Felipe V appealed for volunteer settlers for the province of Texas from the Canary Islands.<sup>4</sup>

In 1731, Spanish pioneers in the two missions and one presidio along the Río San Antonio in Texas welcomed the arrival of new neighbors. From east Texas, about 250 miles distant, Franciscan friars, due to reductions in government support, transferred three of their missions to the central region. On March 5, 1731, military leaders accompanied the friars to the banks of the Río San Antonio to take possession of land grants in behalf of Coahuiltecan tribes for three mission foundations: Nuestra Señora La Purísima Concepción de Acuña, San Juan Capistrano, and San Francisco de la Espada.<sup>5</sup> Four days later, from a southwestern direction, fifteen families from the Canary Islands arrived at the presidio to inaugurate the first civil government in the province.<sup>6</sup>

The concentration of five Franciscan missions adjacent to a military garrison and a civil town created an atmosphere of security, cooperation, and conflict. On the one hand, the location of seven settlements near only two sources of fresh water (the Río San Antonio and the Arroyo San Pedro) fomented friction in its distribution. Another conflict arose from the compact nature of the *labores* (farmlands), mandated by frequent attacks by aggressor Indians (first Lipan Apaches and then Comanches). During the first two decades in which inhabitants of these frontier communities lived in close proximity, the pendulum of social interaction alternated between conflict and confluence, reaching a plateau of material development by mid-century.<sup>7</sup>

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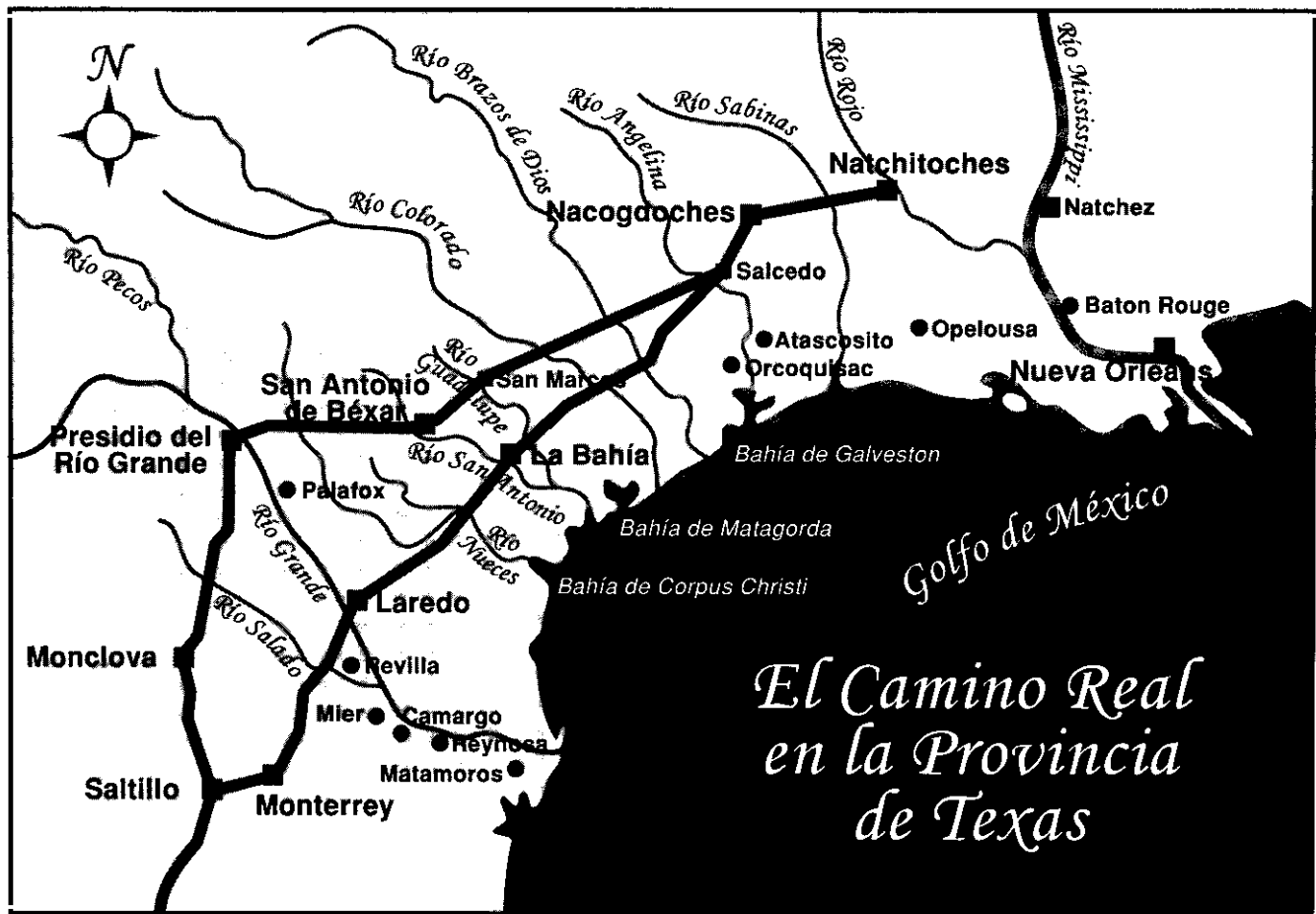
<sup>3</sup> A. HABIG: *The Alamo Chain of Missions: A History of San Antonio's Five Old Missions*, Chicago, Franciscan Herald Press, 1968, pp. 38-39, 84-85.

<sup>4</sup> BOLTON and MAITLAND (1920), pp. 296-297.

<sup>5</sup> F. D. ALMARAZ (1992), p. 9.

<sup>6</sup> G. R. CRUZ: *Let There Be Towns: Spanish Municipal Origins in the American Southwest, 1610-1810*, College Station, Texas, A&M University Press, 1988, p. 63.

<sup>7</sup> F. D. ALMARAZ, JR.: «Franciscan Evangelization in Spanish Frontier Texas: Apex of Social Contact, Conflict, and Confluence, 1751-1761», *Colonial Latin American Historical Review* 2 (Summer 1993), pp. 253-287.



In the second half of the 18th century, particularly during the height of the Bourbon Reforms from 1763 to 1776, the Texas settlements of the Río San Antonio attained an impressive level of material achievement and political stability. The Peace of Paris of 1763 changed the configuration of colonial boundaries in North America. First, the peace accord eliminated France as a colonial rival on the continent. Next, Spain received title to former French-claimed territory west of the Mississippi River including the city of New Orleans. In turn, Great Britain extended its colonial boundary to the left bank of the Mississippi and north of the Great Lakes region. From the Spanish perspective, the removal of France from the mainland theoretically eliminated border tensions in east Texas. Finally, to assess the impact of boundary changes upon frontier defenses in the northern rim of the Viceroyalty of New Spain, the government in 1766 dispatched the Marqués de Rubí on a fact-finding inspection of all presidios with the aim of improving military effectiveness and reducing expenditures.<sup>8</sup> The outcome of Rubí's tour of the Provincias Internas ultimately impinged upon the region of central Texas.

In the seventh decade of the century, the Province of Texas consisted of four outposts distantly located from each other. In the forested northeastern edge, Presidio Nuestra Señora del Pilar de los Adaes functioned as the provincial capital and residence of Governor Angel Martos y Navarrete. It also offered protection to three Franciscan missions administered by friars of the Apostolic College of Guadalupe de Zacatecas: San Miguel, Nuestra Señora de los Dolores, and Guadalupe de los Nacogdoches. In the southeastern corner, near the Río Trinidad and the Gulf of Mexico, a new outpost—Presidio San Agustín de Ahumada and Mission Nuestra Señora de la Luz—ostensibly guarded the region against encroachment by contrabandists from Louisiana. Near the southern end of the Río San Antonio, Presidio Nuestra Señora de Loreto assisted missionaries at Nuestra Señora del Rosario and Nuestra Señora de la Bahía del Espíritu Santo. Finally, in the interior of the province, San Antonio Béxar, commanded by Captain Luis Antonio Menchaca, maintained *escortas* at each of the five missions which drastically reduced the defensive manpower of the garrison.

Notwithstanding the fact that after more than forty years in operation, the presidio still lacked a permanent perimeter wall, its personnel definitely increased the missions' productivity (in agriculture and livestock raising) which, in turn, redounded favorably upon the garrison and the town.<sup>9</sup>

North of San Antonio, on the outer fringe of the province, situated in a craggy terrain devoid of adequate rainfall, Presidio San Luis de las Amarillas (popularly called San Sabá) stood as a lonely sentinel in a futile effort to deter Coman-

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<sup>8</sup> M. L. MOORHEAD: *The Presidio: Bastion of the Spanish Borderlands*. Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 1975, pp. 55-57.

<sup>9</sup> E. CASTAÑEDA: *Our Catholic Heritage in Texas, 1519-1936*, 7 vols. Austin, Von Boeckmann-Jones Company, 1939, 4: 16-38.



che aggression. West of this location, at the upper Río Nueces, intrepid Franciscans persisted in their resolution to attract Lipan Apaches to settle at San Lorenzo de la Santa Cruz and Nuestra Señora de la Candelaria del Cañón.<sup>10</sup>

Four of the five missions of the Río San Antonio, under the care of the Apostolic College of Santa Cruz de Querétaro, possessed an average population of 206. Overall, their records up to the year 1761 indicated an aggregate of 4,026 baptisms and 2,963 Christian burials. San Antonio de Valero, with its longer tenure, accommodated the most families (67) which in the aggregate exceeded the average level of population.<sup>11</sup>

Mission Statistics for 1761				
<i>Mission</i>	<i>Baptisms</i>	<i>Burials</i>	<i>Families</i>	<i>Persons</i>
San Antonio de Valero	1,572	1,247	67	275
Concepción	792	558	58	207
San Juan Capistrano	847	645	51	253
S. F. de la Espada	815	513	52	107

San José y San Miguel de Aguayo, renowned as the «best organized and best defended of the five missions» in the riverine community, consisted of approximately 280 *conversos* (converts) and neophytes, of whom 113 «were capable of bearing arms.»<sup>12</sup>

The garrison of San Antonio de Béxar, including Captain Menchaca, totalled twenty-two presidial troops. Although fairly equipped with weapons, rawhide shields, powder horns, lead balls, swords, leather chaps, and horses, their capability of mounting an adequate defense against native aggressors depended upon reinforcements by «old settlers and experienced pioneers.» Located east of the presidio, the civil settlement, officially called Villa de San Fernando (to avoid confusion with San Antonio de Béxar and San Antonio de Valero), consisted of fewer than a hundred families. During emergencies, of the total adult males available for combat duty within a radius of sixty miles of the town including the *ranchos*, about twenty-five settlers normally reported for service, the remainder being either very old, sick, infirmed or vagrant.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4-11.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20.

The interaction between these components of frontier society manifested itself in numerous events. For instance, in 1762, three members of the local *cabildo* (town council) found gainful employment at some of the missions. Domingo Delgado worked as a *mayordomo* (steward) at Mission Espada's *Rancho de las Cabras*, while José Cabrera served in a similar capacity at San Antonio de Valero's ranch of *La Mora*. Closer to town, Juan Joseph Padrón (age 50) enjoyed the privileges associated with the role of *mayordomo* at Concepción. Two other *vecinos* of the town —Silvestre Soto and Nicolás Carabajal— occupied positions as servant and steward, respectively, at the other mission *pueblos*.<sup>14</sup>

In the interim, Friar Mariano de los Dolores Viana extended his tenure as father president of the Santa Cruz missions of San Antonio. A new curate, Juan Ignacio Cárdenas, took charge of San Fernando parish and the presidio chapel.<sup>15</sup> In the normal course of frontier assignments, Fray Juan de Dios Camberos temporarily assumed charge of San José in 1762. That same year four new Querétaran friars arrived at the southernmost missions, Manuel Rolán and Benito Varela at San Juan Capistrano, and José Ignacio María Alegre and Tomás Antonio Arcayos at San Francisco de la Espada.<sup>16</sup>

Notwithstanding an earlier disaster at Mission Santa Cruz de San Sabá in 1758, or plausibly because of it, the military resolved to maintain its presence in the hill country north of San Antonio. Consequently, the troop level at San Antonio de Béxar dropped precipitously from forty-four soldiers to one-half of its previous strength, a sign that emboldened Lipan Apaches to renew aggression in late summer of 1762 by attacking the mission closest to the presidio, San Antonio de Valero.<sup>17</sup> Struggling with an untenable situation with limited resources, the presidio, the civil settlement, and the five Franciscan missions withstood the pressure of external belligerence. By the following year the aggression subsided, but the threat of hostility constantly surfaced on the horizon.

By mid-point in the decade on two separate occasions, a twenty-two-mule *requa* (supply train), operated by Juan Manuel Bustamante of Santa Rosa, Coahuila, conveyed cargoes of corn seed from the missions to a new presidio in southeastern Texas, San Agustín de Ahumada.<sup>18</sup> The conveyance of two shipments signified that the *labores* of San José, Indian raids to the contrary, yielded abundant harvests that enabled the resident missionary to earn credit assets by selling surplus grain within the province.

Periodically, religious superiors at Querétaro and Zacatecas rotated missionary personnel in Texas. In the mid-1760s, Fray Juan José Sáenz de Gumiel

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<sup>14</sup> A. MARTOS Y NAVARRETE: List of Citizens who are able to take up arms, June 20, 1762, *Béxar Archives Translations*, Vol. 36: 180-171, 175-177; Office of the County Clerk, Bexar County Courthouse, San Antonio, Texas. (Hereinafter cited as BAT, volume number, pagination).

<sup>15</sup> Statement of Juan Galván, August 6, 1792, BAT 36: 50-51.

<sup>16</sup> HABIG: 1968, pp. 235-237, 252.

<sup>17</sup> Thoribio de Urrutia to Governor Martos y Navarrete, August 14, 1762, BAT 37: 8-10.

<sup>18</sup> L. BUSTAMANTE: Petition for effects of Juan Manuel de Bustamante, February 24, 1764, BAT 40: 90-92.

accepted the care of Nuestra Señora de la Purísima Concepción, while downriver at San José, Fray Pedro Ramírez de Arellano returned for a second tour of duty, but with an additional burden as father-president of the Zacatecan missionaries. To assist the aging Friar Mariano de los Dolores Viana, now a sexagenarian but still functioning as father-president of the Querétaran missionaries at San Antonio de Valero, the *guardián* of the Apostolic College of Santa Cruz assigned Fray José Zárate.<sup>19</sup> Fray Mariano's seniority and his exceptionally long tenure as missionary finally persuaded the *guardián* and others at Santa Cruz to consider appointing a younger successor president. To symbolize a transition in leadership, as well as to show favor with the college's selection, the *guardián* assigned Fray Asisclos Valverde, who previously had worked at Espada for several years, as father-president of the Santa Cruz friars in Texas, with headquarters at Concepción. Hardly did Fray Valverde realize, as he returned to the Río San Antonio, that he would serve as the last Querétaran leader in Texas.<sup>20</sup>

Three years after the signing of the Peace of Paris, the acquisition of such vast territory west of the Mississippi with undefined boundaries imposed heavy responsibilities upon frontier officials in Texas. Without increases in either manpower or equipment, the imperial government of Charles III expected royal servants in Spanish America to perform their duty at minimal cost to the treasury. Although France no longer exercised jurisdiction over Louisiana, the Spaniards acknowledged that French-speaking inhabitants who remained at mid-continent would require tight surveillance.

Consequently, frontier leaders routinely conducted reconnaissance expeditions to reacquaint themselves with the terrain. In June, 1766, Governor Martos y Navarrete assigned Colonel Diego Ortiz Parrilla to head an expedition through the coastlands in search of a cluster of *Islas Blancas* believed to be a rendezvous site for alien interlopers. To augment the expeditionary force, the governor directed Captain Menchaca of Béxar to recruit thirty-five Indian auxiliaries from the five local missions. Although the auxiliaries were to remain on standby alert at their mission «dwelling», both the governor and the colonel expected the Franciscans to absorb all expenses for maintaining the complement in the field for the duration of three months.<sup>21</sup> Assuredly the rationale for the request stemmed from the conviction that since the missions had attained a flourishing level of temporal development, it was only fair for the friars to compensate the military for protection the *escoltas* had provided during the fledgling years. In executing the governor's directive, Captain Menchaca reminded the father-presidents that each mission should furnish seven Indians for the expedition.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>19</sup> HABIG: (1968), pp. 250, 252, 256.

<sup>20</sup> Captain Luis Antonio Menchaca to Fray Asisclos Valverde, July 26, 1766, BAT 43: 127-128; HABIG 1968, pp. 254-255.

<sup>21</sup> Martos y Navarrete to Menchaca, June, 1766, BAT 43: 120-121.

<sup>22</sup> Menchaca to Father President Pedro Ramírez, July 26, 1766, BAT 43: 123; Menchaca to Father President Asisclos Valverde, July 26, 1766, BAT 43: 127-128.



Given the proximity of Mission Concepción to San José, as well as the magnitude of the request, it is highly probable that Friars Valverde and Ramírez discussed with their communities, and with each other, the negative effect the loss of manpower would have upon current operations. From a different perspective, each religious leader logically explained the plight that confronted them. Fray Ramírez pointed out that recurring raids by Indian renegades, almost daily during June and July, had virtually depleted San José's horse herd. Notwithstanding the mission's commitment to provide grain to garrisons at San Sabá, El Cañón on the upper Río Nueces, and a recent deployment at Orcoquiza, Father Ramírez pulled workers away from the harvest and reassigned them to large patrols in pursuit of the «evildoers» and the stolen horses. With respect to native auxiliaries, the father president responded that without experienced workers and horses, he would place the mission in jeopardy if he honored the request.<sup>23</sup>

While Father Ramírez appealed to reason, Fray Valverde pursued a circuitous tact, first by reminding royal officials of the Franciscans' long record of dedicated frontier work. Next, he perceived apparent contradiction in the gubernatorial order which was illogical, if not unreasonable, to expect the missionaries to equip and provision the auxiliaries for three months at their expense at a time when some of the «wretched» converts possessed «no other skill or salary» to support themselves and their families except through their daily toil. Unlike his *confrère* Ramírez at San José, Fray Asisclos asked for a «juridical transfer» of the directive (which amounted to a higher review and endless delay) so that he could «prepare the Indians demanded of him» for field duty, provided the military paid the auxiliaries for their work.<sup>24</sup>

The replies of Friars Ramírez and Valverde hardly surprised Captain Menchaca. In his own assessment of local conditions, he informed the governor that there was little of substance to contribute to external projects like the expeditionary force. The garrison itself was so understaffed that he could not even provide a single squad. In response to a specific request for ten soldiers, Menchaca reminded the governor he had «no more than six» including a sergeant, available at the presidio, of whom three were «occupied with the horse herd and the other three as sentries... in the guard house.» Of course, if the governor were to suggest an alternate source of manpower, excluding the missions, Menchaca pledged full cooperation.<sup>25</sup>

A development that created grave impact upon the military's combat readiness was the incursion of Comanche warriors into the tribal territory inhabited by Lipan Apaches. Regardless of whether the ethnic conflict occurred over the dwindling buffalo herds as sources of fresh meat or from an inter-tribal rivalry

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<sup>23</sup> Fray Ramírez to Menchaca, July 26, 1766, BAT 43: 125-126.

<sup>24</sup> Fray Valverde to Menchaca, July 26, 1766, BAT 43: 129.

<sup>25</sup> Menchaca to Martos y Navarrete, August 3, 1766, BAT 43: 132-133.

for control of the plains country, the problem that haunted the military at San Antonio de Béxar was the «fierce warfare» which both Comanches and Apaches conducted against local communities. Toward the end of summer, the villa, presidio and the missions survived «serious and repeated hostilities» from native marauders, which often occurred «without reparation because of the lack of troops» in the presidio of Béxar. In addition to losses in human lives, the escalated aggression resulted in more frequent stealing of livestock from the ranchos of settlers and missions, partly explained by the Indians' substitution of beef in their diet in lieu of the ever decreasing bison.

Captain Menchaca succinctly described the threat that constantly plagued his command: «It is with solid reason, therefore, that we must await the destruction, and perhaps the extermination, of these settlements at the least expected hour if the troops the presidio needs are not provided in time.» To improve the defense posture and to save the herds, he strongly advised the governor to reassign to Béxar twenty-five men from Los Adaes and fifteen from La Bahía del Espíritu Santo to defend, even if only sporadically, the settlements of the Río San Antonio.<sup>26</sup>

In the autumn of the year, Indian depredation to the contrary, the mission supply service, now conducted by Fray Francisco Sedano, conveyed numerous products to east Texas, one of which consisted of bundles of tobacco for distribution to adult male converts. As with other imported commodities, the demand quickly exceeded the supply. Consequently, the Franciscans prudently rationed tobacco on the basis of a mixed formula of need combined with meritorious labor. Even under optimum management, the supply never lasted very long.<sup>27</sup> The disclosure about the formula for distribution provided modest insight about the effectiveness of the *requa* system by which the friars supplied their Texas missions and how they used tobacco as a magnet to attract male neophytes to exchange a wilderness existence for the security of *pueblo* life.<sup>28</sup>

After serving nearly seven years in Texas, Angel Martos y Navarrete completed his tenure and withdrew from the province. His successor, Hugo Oconor, an Hispanicized Irishman, arrived in 1767, agreeing to serve on an interim basis until the viceregal administration of the Marqués de Croix selected someone for a longer term.<sup>29</sup> During the first year of Oconor's governorship, the Apostolic College of Guadalupe de Zacatecas dispatched Fray José Gaspar de Solís as *padre visitador* to Texas. Accompanied by Brother José Gómez in charge of supplies and servants, Fray Solís left Zacatecas in November 1767. Travelling

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<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> Statement of Merchant Pisetos, October 20, 1766, BAT 44: 49.

<sup>28</sup> Fray Francisco Xavier de la Concepción to Governor Martos y Navarrete, December 3, 1766, BAT 44: 53-54.

<sup>29</sup> N. RICHARDSON, *et al.*, *Texas: The Lone Star State*, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1988, p. 443.

at a leisurely pace, frequently stopping at ranches, farms, and haciendas, Fray Solís' retinue advanced toward the Río Grande by San Agustín de Laredo. By prior arrangement, Fray Francisco Sedano, *conductor* and purveyor of the mission supply service in Texas, with an escort of eight presidial soldiers, sent by Governor Oconor, and four Indian auxiliaries, assigned by Father President Ramírez of San José, greeted the *padre visitador* and his entourage. Proceeding slowly on the lower *camino real*, Father Solís timed his arrival at San Juan Capistrano for mid-March, 1768. The two father-presidents, other friars, and numerous Indian converts welcomed the reverend inspector on the mission road. With a burgeoning delegation, Fray Solís and party entered Mission San José "with great ceremony." Governor Oconor, knight of the Order of Alcántara, on the verge of leaving the vicinity for the provincial capital at Los Adaes, paid a courtesy call at Mission San José, signifying a willingness to cement relations between church leaders and military officers, extending to the illustrious *padre visitador* "sentiments of friendship and good-will." The next day, March 19, feastday of the mission's patron saint, following the celebration of a solemn Mass of thanksgiving, the governor walked alongside Friar Solís to a work site adjacent to the sacristy where the distinguished cleric "blessed the foundations and first stones" of the new church under construction. With an appropriate gesture of protocol, the church and state leaders participated jointly in an historic ceremony. Fray Solís conceded to Governor Oconor the symbolic privilege of placing the first corner stone, after which he inserted the second piece of quarried rock.<sup>30</sup>

Even in a rustic frontier environment, Fray Solís observed basic rules of protocol. The day after the commemorative event at the new church, he reserved an entire morning for visiting Presidio San Antonio de Béxar where he reciprocated courtesies to Oconor and to the local commandant, Captain Mechaca. In the afternoon the friar crossed the river in a canoe to extend greetings to his *confrère*, José de Zárate, at Mission Valero. Later, the father inspector walked along the riverbank to Mission Concepción for a brief consultation with Fray Valverde before recrossing to the west side of the Río San Antonio and returning to San José.<sup>31</sup>

Padre Solís officially commenced his evaluation of San José on March 21, 1768. For four straight days he inspected every aspect of mission life, meticulously recording his findings in a diary or dictating information to the *visita's* secretary. On the fifth day he interrupted work to receive Governor Oconor, who stopped overnight by the mission to bid farewell before embarking on a long

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<sup>30</sup> P. FORRESTAL: trans., and J. FOIK: ed.: *The Solís Diary of 1767*, Preliminary Studies of the Texas Catholic Historical Society, vol. 1, n.º 6, Austin, Texas Knights of Columbus Historical Commission, 1931, pp. 3-18.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

trek to east Texas. The following morning (a Saturday), after seeing “Don Hugo off,” instead of pursuing the fatiguing drudgery of inventorying mundane objects, Fray Solís decided to finish two appointments of protocol by travelling to San Juan Capistrano and Espada missions “to visit the Fathers.” On Sunday, after liturgic service, he resumed the inventory of San José’s material culture, a task to which he devoted three full days. Then he suspended the process to prepare for Holy Week observances. On Holy Thursday, Fray José Gaspar celebrated Mass in the chapel for “the religious and many of the Spaniards and Indians” to whom he distributed communion. To foster collegiality among the Franciscan brethren, on Good Friday he preached to the faithful at nearby Mission Concepción. Early on Saturday morning (*Sábado de Gloria*), Father Solís concluded his *visita* of San José which he recognized as a gem of Zacatecan missions. On Easter Sunday, everyone at San José and in the adjoining missions and civil-military communities celebrated the joyful triumph in the Christian religion. Except for essential chores associated with the festive occasion, all mundane labor stopped. The next day all activities everywhere returned to normal. Fray Solís intermittently rested and reviewed drafts of inventory lists, reserving two days to arranging documents relating to the *visita*. Even as the mission supply *requa* departed for east Texas, the father inspector stayed behind at San José for a few more days finalizing his reports.<sup>32</sup>

Outstanding statistics in material culture to the contrary, such as “an abundance” of raw materials stored in the granary, an inherent achievement in the evangelization process that truly impressed the father inspector was the fact that native converts performed the role of “overseers or administrators” at the mission. Besides multiple tasks at the mission’s *El Atascoso* ranch, the Indian laborers took charge of “the cloth factory, carpenter shop, forge, tailor shop and quarry,” and attended “to all other work” required at the *pueblo*.<sup>33</sup>

At the time of his *visita*, Fray Solís identified the principal Coahuiltecan tribes represented in the mission’s demographic composition: Aguasallas, Canamas, Canas, Mesquites, Pampoas, Pastías, Tacames, and Xaunaes. Probably because of budgetary crunches in the Spanish government, the *padre visitador* deemed it important to indicate the native converts’ contribution to the local defense strategy. Out of a total population of “about 350” neophytes, 110 adult males comprised the warrior company, of whom the presidial *escolta* had armed 45 “with guns” while the remaining 65 defenders utilized “bows and arrows, spears and other weapons.”

Cognizant of the Franciscans’ relatively successful outcomes working with younger Indians, as opposed to neophytes who had arrived at the mission as older adults, Fray Solís praised the educational efforts at San José that modified the Coahuiltecan’s former habits in the wilderness.

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<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 18-19.

All the men and women are very polite, well instructed to the truths of Christianity and know the catechism and the mysteries of our holy faith. With the exception of such (natives) as were already old when they came to the mission, ... all of these Indians speak Spanish and are baptized and know how to pray...<sup>34</sup>

As in any stratified society, some native converts manifested special aptitudes for music, an accomplishment that signified some unheralded missionary had been an effective teacher in recruiting and training talented Indians.

Most of them play some musical instrument, the guitar, the violin or the harp. All have good voices, and on Saturday, the 19th of each month and on (special religious) feasts... a choir of four voices, soprano, alto, tenor and base, with musical accompaniment, sings so beautifully that it is a delight to hear...

Expanding the scope of mission to include an aesthetic facet of mission life, Fray Solís commented on entertainment that definitely showed a fusion of European and indigenous values.

Both men and women sing and dance just as the Spaniards, and they do so, perhaps, even more beautifully and more gracefully. They dress decently, being provided with two suits, one for week days and another for festival days...

More revealing was the friar's generational interpretation of mission society that reflected full participation in the work schedule.

The men are not bad-looking, and the women, except (for) an occasional, coarse-featured one, are graceful and handsome. The able-bodied men attend to the manual labor, the older men make arrows for the warriors, the grown-up girls weave cloth, card wool, and sew, the old women catch fish for the padres, and the younger boys and girls go to school and recite their prayers.<sup>35</sup>

For most of the year from spring to summer, Fray Solís remained in Texas, dividing his schedule between the Zacatecan missions in the eastern timberlands and the coastal plain. His *visita* of Zacatecan missions, with special focus on San José, represented the last significant assessment of evangelization prior to the landmark year of 1772 when Franciscans of Santa Cruz voluntarily withdrew from the region.

In the last quarter of the 18th century, the Franciscan missions of Texas—especially the five older foundations along the Río San Antonio—slowly declined from the zenith of temporal and spiritual growth of earlier decades.

Periodically during the transition from the late 1760s to the early 1770s, the friars of the Apostolic College of Santa Cruz contemplated abandoning the Texas missionary field in favor of accepting new challenges in Sonora and Baja Califor-

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<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 20-21.

nia, precipitated by the royal government's sudden expulsion of the Jesuits in 1767. Shocked by the abrasive nature of the expulsion directed against the prestigious Society of Jesus, the Franciscans of Santa Cruz and other informed residents in colonial Mexico acknowledged that the royal government of Carlos III and his Bourbon advisors lacked replacement personnel in adequate numbers to staff the vacant missions, colleges, and churches. In the summer of 1767, while the shock still reverberated, high-ranking government officials, like Visitador General José de Gálvez, entered into serious discussions with Franciscan superiors of three apostolic colleges—San Fernando in Mexico City, Santa Cruz in Querétaro, and Guadalupe in Zacatecas—to recruit missionary friars for assignment in the far frontier.<sup>36</sup>

Regardless of the immediate outcome of the pending negotiations, for the time being the Santa Cruz friars in Texas devoted their energies to the temporal and spiritual domains of their missions along the Río San Antonio.

Occasionally, unusual incidents disrupted the routine of mission life at San Antonio de Valero, oldest of the Querétaran missions. In the spring of 1771, during the governorship of Juan María Barón de Ripperdá (whose administration extended to 1778),<sup>37</sup> a shoemaker-clerk in the Villa de San Fernando, José María Lara, became involved in a belligerent scrape with another *vecino*, Antonio Valdéz, that resulted in serious wounds to both combatants. Fearing arrest, Lara quickly sought refuge at the nearest mission across the river. Responding to orders from Governor Ripperdá to apprehend the fugitive, Juan Arocha, a "lesser" *alcalde* of the town council, assisted by three soldiers, hurriedly approached Fray Asisclos Valverde, father president of the Santa Cruz missionaries, for permission to search the premises. Invoking the sanctity of asylum, Valverde informed the pursuing party that unless they had a search warrant "he would not allow the... prisoner to be taken out of the Mission." Shortly afterwards, with proper documentation to arrest Lara, the *alcalde* returned to extradite the fugitive. However, owing to the prisoner's wounded condition, Arocha had no other choice but to leave him in care of Señora María Cantú whose house was "located on the outskirts" of the mission pueblo. By such prudent action, Arocha satisfied "necessary proceedings for the cause of both parties."<sup>38</sup>

Periodically government lawyers in Mexico City obligated frontier captains and the clergy to disseminate information about fugitives from justice. The Barón de Ripperdá, anxious to demonstrate efficiency in communication, initiated a relay system for which he solicited the cooperation of the Franciscans at the mission pueblos in posting and announcing official notices to members of local *cabildos* who, in turn, were to inform other resident converts and neophytes.

<sup>36</sup> K. McCARTY: *A Spanish Frontier in the Enlightened Age: Franciscan Beginnings in Sonora and Arizona, 1767-1770*, Washington, D. C., Academy of American Franciscan History, 1981, pp. 5-9.

<sup>37</sup> RICHARDSON (1988), p. 443.

<sup>38</sup> J. DE AROCHA: Affidavit of arrest of José Antonio Lara at Mission San Antonio de Valero, April 10, 1771, BAT 49: 14-15.

Illustrative of the governor's communication network, on October 23, 1771, Ripperdá received notification from the *Audiencia* of Mexico City regarding an outstanding warrant for the arrest of two Spaniards (José Ybañes de la Cuesta and Juan Pérez de Tagle) who had escaped from confinement. The next day the governor ordered a copy of the document to be published and distributed by relay to the mission pueblos. That same day, Fray Asisclos Valverde, upon receiving the message, promptly conveyed it to the elders of the mission government.

At his Cabildo (he reassured the governor), the entire town of the Mission of San Antonio de Valero the superior order has been published. And since everyone has been informed about the personal description (of the fugitives), let this (notice) be remitted from this Mission to that one of La Concepción.

In rapid succession, the couriers transmitted the message until it reached the last outpost in the chain where Fray Antonio Ramos avowed that Governor Ripperdá's order had been «published at this Mission of the Señor Padre San Francisco.»<sup>39</sup>

Not all flights from justice involved men. In the spring of 1772, Doña Gertrudis Barrón, wife of presidial trooper Juan de Sosa assigned to Orcoquisac, sought refuge at Mission Concepción to avoid inquiry that almost certainly would reveal an adulterous conduct. Only after Captain Luis Antonio Menchaca swore an oath «to God our Lord and to his Holy Cross» in compliance with Spanish law, promising that neither charges nor harm would be aimed at the woman, did Fray Sáenz de Gumiel agree to release the fugitive<sup>40</sup> No doubt, Doña Gertrudis' humiliating testimony surrounding the death of her illicit lover in her own home influenced the tribunal's decision that husband Juan de Sosa had acted within his rights in defending the honor of his household. As minimal restitution the court ordered Sosa to pay for twenty-five Masses, celebrated by chaplain Pedro Fuentes, «for the eternal rest of the soul of the soldier Diego Menchaca».<sup>41</sup> Evidently taking refuge at the closest mission to the presidio was a common occurrence with soldiers, because in the summer of 1772 Governor Ripperdá, administratively neat to a fault, asked Father President Valverde at San Antonio de Valero to return an original arrest warrant so that it could be appended to other related documents «filed in the archives of this my office of the government...»<sup>42</sup>.

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<sup>39</sup> Document quoting order from Audiencia de Nueva España for the arrest of Joseph Ybañes de la Cuesta and Juan Pérez de Tagle; Order for obedience, October 23, 1771; Governor Ripperdá's order for preceding document to be published from town to town, October 24, 1771; Affidavits of respective missionaries of San Antonio de Valero, Concepción, San José, San Juan Capistrano, and San Francisco de la Espada, BAT 50: 117-125.

<sup>40</sup> Luis de Menchaca to Fray Juan José Sáenz Gumiel, April 24, 1772, BAT 52: 36-37; Certification by Fray Sáenz Gumiel, April, 25, 1772, BAT 52: 38.

<sup>41</sup> Affidavit of Fray (sic) Pedro Fuentes, June 28, 1772, BAT 52: 122.

<sup>42</sup> Governor Barón de Ripperdá to Fray Asisclos Valverde, June 22, 1772, BAT 51: 107.

By the summer of 1772, negotiations between government officials and Franciscan superiors culminated in a mutual agreement by which the Santa Cruz friars would voluntarily relinquish administration of their four Texas missions to *confrères* of Guadalupe de Zacatecas. (The Querétarans also agreed to transfer control of their Río Grande missions to friars from Guadalajara in the Province of Jalisco). To expedite matters to a desirable conclusion, Viceroy Antonio María de Bucareli y Ursúa (1771-1779) late in July dispatched formal notice to Governor Ripperdá, which probably reached its destination in mid-September, advising him of the imminent transfer in mission management. As a member of the Third Order of St. Francis (thus privileged to use the term Fray), Bucareli considered the governor's presence «indispensable» at the ceremonies (or as a gesture of cooperation to assign a surrogate in whom he had utmost «confidence»<sup>43</sup>

Coincidental with receipt of the viceroy's order in Texas, the Santa Cruz missionaries effected a slight change in leadership with Asisclos Valverde concluding his presidency and conveying the mantle to Juan José Sáenz de Gumiel. On December 14, 1772, at San Antonio de Valero, Friars Valverde and Sáenz welcomed Governor Barón de Ripperdá and Fray Pedro Ramírez, president of the Zacatecan *padres*, to verify their compilation of a comprehensive inventory of the Querétaran mission's temporalities and account ledgers. The inventory of the temporalities, which required weeks of advanced preparation, consumed several days as the governor's party confirmed the detailed entries in the ledgers.

Carefully they measured the lengths and widths of every structure, complete or unfinished, they described every conceivable characteristic of construction or design, not overlooking interior decorations. As the process continued from room to room, from one building to the next, the group verified the contents of every storage facility. Then they examined the workshops and their contents. Complementing the level of temporal achievement, in the Books of Administration (registers of baptisms, marriages, and burials) the entries disclosed interesting variations in the demographic pattern of the mission. Among the convents, the governor's group found Copanes, Jarames, Karankawas, Lipanes, Muruames, Pacuaches, Papanacs, Payas, Sanas, and Yerbipiames. While the registry included only eleven married couples residing at the mission, the social composition revealed a mixed pattern of integration, the most salient aspect being the presence of three Spanish spouses. An equally salient feature was the inclusion (at least for the heads of households) of Spanish surnames for the native converts, a development that clearly indicated a marked degree of assimilation.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Viceroy Antonio Bucareli y Ursúa to Governor Ripperdá, July 28, 1772, BAT 53: 23-24.

<sup>44</sup> B. LEUTENEGER (trans. and ed.): *Inventory of Mission San Antonio de Valero: 1772*. Office of the State Archaeologist Special Report 23, Austin, Texas Historical Commission, 1977, pp. 7-35.



With a tinge of sadness, Friars Sáenz de Gumiel and Valverde closed the inventory of San Antonio de Valero. As a footnote they appended a few luxury items they had allowed for themselves: chocolate, sugar, saffron, cinnamon, rice, chickpeas, dried shrimp, kitchen oil, caramel candy, flour, handkerchiefs, sandals, undergarments, cigars, writing paper, and quill pens. Governor Ripperdá, representing the royal government, witnessed the formal proceedings as Fray Sáenz de Gumiel, for the Apostolic College of Santa Cruz de Querétaro, conveyed to Fray Ramírez, father president of the Zacatecan missionaries, the administration of the oldest Franciscan foundation in the region.<sup>45</sup>

With the official transfer of San Antonio de Valero, the process merely commenced. The three Querétaran missions downriver remained to be inventoried. Instead of advancing to Concepción, the nearest mission administered by friars of Santa Cruz, Governor Ripperdá and the friars preferred to continue the transfer at the southern end, on the west side of the river, with San Francisco de la Espada. Gradually, they progressed with the same degree of thoroughness. After Espada they continued with San Juan Capistrano. At last, they concluded the work at La Purísima Concepción.<sup>46</sup>

As Father President Sáenz de Gumiel finalized the formal transfer of Concepción and the other three Querétaran missions to Friar Ramírez de Arellano, the Apostolic College of Santa Cruz terminated its responsibility of evangelization in Texas, an effort that spanned eighty-seven years, beginning with the first *entrada* (expedition) in 1685 led by Captain Alonso de León and Fray Damián Massanet and culminating in the inventories of 1772 monitored by Governor Ripperdá. The Querétarans' withdrawal from Texas revealed the inner dynamics of a long-time symbiosis embodied in the *Patronato Real* that served both temporal and spiritual goals of the Spanish state. In accepting the former Querétaran missions along the Río San Antonio, the Zacatecan friars acquired a definitive advantage in being the sole trustees in behalf of the Indian converts vis-a-vis royal officials. For secular leaders the new arrangement simplified matters considerably, because it meant having to negotiate with only one father president—Ramírez de Arellano—whereas in earlier years there had been two avenues of a religious hierarchy from which to seek agreement.

Concomitant with the transfer of the mission management, another significant change that transpired in 1772 was the government's promulgation of its new *Reglamento* for the administration of frontier presidios. Although the Royal Regulations of 1772 required at least two more years to become fully operational, their inevitable application to Texas raised serious questions about forthcoming adjustments. First, with the removal of a French imperial threat in the Red River Valley and elsewhere in the Gulf region, Presidio Nuestra Señora del Pilar

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<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 37-40.

<sup>46</sup> F. D. ALMARAZ, JR.: *The San Antonio Missions and Their System of Land Tenure*, Austin, University of Texas Press, 1988, pp. 16-17.

de los Adaes lost its hegemony in frontier defense in east Texas. Next, the new *Reglamento* identified Los Adaes for suppression and the transfer of provincial authority to San Antonio de Béxar. Then, with the alienation of Los Adaes and the loss of protection it once had provided, the 1772 reform specified that military and civilian settlers living around east Texas missions and the presidio would be relocated to the environs of the new provincial headquarters along the Río San Antonio<sup>47</sup>. Finally, by implication, the imminent closing of Los Adaes assuredly stimulated discussion among Zacatecan Franciscans regarding the future status of their three remaining missions in east Texas.

By the mid-1770s, with the shifting of provincial authority to San Antonio de Béxar, the Texas missions entered a period of noticeable decline due, in part, to reductions in government assistance. In the succeeding decade, the friars of Zacatecas earnestly contemplated the prospect of secularization of their missions. In contrast, along the river corridor, the presidio and the civil settlement slowly grew in strength and stability in the latter decades of the century. All the same, the interaction between the various components of this frontier society continued its cyclical pattern of conflict and confluence. At the height of the Bourbon Reformes in colonial New Spain, the dynamics between the military and the missions rhythmically pivoted on the needs and achievements of the two institutions. Conversely, the civil settlement, with its separatist tendencies, reluctantly accepted the presence of the presidial and mission communities. Even in spurts of growth and decline an interdependence of long duration linked the communities together.

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<sup>47</sup> S. B. BRINCKERHOFF and B. FAULK: *Lancers for the King: A Study of the Frontier Military System of Northern New Spain, With a Translation of the Royal Regulations of 1772*, Phoenix, Arizona Historical Foundation, 1965, pp. 59-61.