

Catarino Garza's Revolution on the Texas-Mexico Border



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著者:Elliott Young

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Catarino Garza's Revolution on the Texas-Mexico Border rescues an understudied episode from the footnotes of history. On September 15, 1891, Garza, a Mexican journalist and political activist, led a band of Mexican rebels out of southern Texas and across the Rio Grande, declaring a revolution against Mexico's dictator, Porfirio Diaz. Backed by a broad cross-border alliance of ranchers, merchants, peasants, and disgruntled military men, Garza's revolution was the largest and longest lasting threat to the Diaz regime up to that point. After two years of sporadic fighting, the combined efforts of the U.S. and Mexican armies, Texas Rangers, and local police finally succeeded in crushing the rebellion. Garza went into exile and was killed in Panama in 1895. Providing the first full-length analysis of the revolt and its significance, Elliott Young argues that Garza's rebellion is an important and telling chapter in the formation of the border between Mexico and the United States and in the histories of both countries. Throughout the nineteenth century, the borderlands were a relatively coherent region, separate in many ways from Mexico and the United States. Analyzing archival materials, newspapers, travel accounts, and autobiographies from both

countries, Young shows that Garza's revolution was more than just an effort to overthrow Diaz. It was part of the long struggle of borderlands people to maintain their autonomy in the face of two powerful and encroaching nation-states and of Mexicans in particular to protect themselves from being economically and socially displaced by Anglo Americans. By critically examining the different perspectives of military officers, journalists, diplomats, and the Garzistas themselves, Young exposes how nationalism - and its pre-eminent symbol, the border - was manufactured and resisted along the Rio Grande.

作者介绍:

目录:

[Catarino Garza's Revolution on the Texas-Mexico Border_ 下载链接1](#)

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