

Mexico in his head: Slavery and the Texas-Mexico border, 1810-1860.

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"Mexico in His Head": Slavery and the Texas-Mexico Border, 1810-1860

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Abstract

The continual redrawing of the boundaries between the United States, Texas, and Mexico in the nineteenth century prompted slaves to view the border as a symbol of liberation. When the border was first fixed by treaty in 1819, enslaved Texans attached no particular significance to it because slavery was legal in both the United States and Spanish Texas. Slaves only began to associate the Mexican state with freedom in the 1820s, when national and state governments adopted a series of antislavery measures. However, because Texas was still part of Mexico, the border played no role in slave resistance. With the establishment of an independent Texas in the 1830s and with annexation to the United States in 1845, slavery was placed on a firm footing in Texas for the first time. The border soon became the focal point of slave flight and resistance. Even with the end of slavery, black Texans continued to associate Mexico with freedom and equality.



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