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Jeffrey S. Smith

How to cite this manuscript

If you make reference to this version of the manuscript, use the following information:

Smith, J. S. (1999). Anglo intrusion on the old Sangre de Cristo Land Grant. Retrieved from <http://krex.ksu.edu>

Published Version Information

Citation: Smith, J. S. (1999). Anglo intrusion on the old Sangre de Cristo Land Grant. *The Professional Geographer*, 51(2), 170-183.

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Digital Object Identifier (DOI): doi:10.1111/0033-0124.00155

Publisher's Link: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/0033-0124.00155>

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Anglo Intrusion on the Old Sangre de Cristo Land Grant^P

by

Jeffrey S. Smith
Kansas State University

Published by
The Professional Geographer
1999
Vol 51(2): 17-183

For a complete pdf version of this article visit: www.k-state.edu/geography/JSSmith/

^P I would like to thank the three referees who reviewed this paper and contributed their thoughtful insight to the final product. I also thank the editorial staff of *The Professional Geographer*, Richard L. Nostrand, Daniel D. Arreola, and Kevin S. Blake for their assistance.

Anglo Intrusion on the Old Sangre de Cristo Land Grant

Abstract: Positioned on the northern edge of the Hispano homeland, the southern portion of the old Sangre de Cristo Land Grant (present-day Costilla County, Colorado) provides an interesting empirical study of cultural change. After economically displacing Spanish-American residents from villages throughout the homeland's core, incoming Anglos have adopted the region's rich Spanish culture as their own. On the homeland's periphery, however, the cultural traditions of Hispanos and Anglos have been, for the most part, at odds. Most resident Hispanos desire to maintain ties to their traditional past while the younger generations embrace Anglo cultural norms. Considering the vital role it plays in the maintenance of culture, religion provides a window to the study area's modified cultural environment. In 1900 the population in this region was predominantly Catholic Hispano; by 1990 Protestant-dominated Anglos comprised a sizeable proportion of the population. Comparisons are made between traditional Hispano and Anglo-influenced religious landscapes. Changes in church affiliation, the distribution of active Penitente moradas, and the characteristics of community cemeteries demonstrate ongoing cultural change. Geographically isolated communities, where Anglo intrusion is limited, retain their strong Hispano cultural integrity. **Key Words:** Religious landscape, cultural change, Hispano homeland, Colorado, New Mexico.

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Introduction

Except for a twelve year hiatus between 1680 and 1692, persons of Spanish descent have continuously inhabited the upper Rio Grande region for 400 years. San Juan de los Caballeros was founded in 1598 and for the next 300 years the descendants of the original Spanish settlers (who refer to themselves as both Hispanos and Spanish-Americans) solidified their position within northern New Mexico. Anchored by a colonial core around Santa Fe, Albuquerque, and Santa Cruz, the resident Spanish population expanded in all four cardinal directions. By 1900 the zone of Hispano influence stretched north into southern Colorado, west into Arizona, and east onto the high plains of Oklahoma and Texas (Nostrand 1992) (Fig. 1). The landscape of this cultural homeland is the most enduring legacy of Spain's influence in the American Southwest.

Starting at the turn of the twentieth century and accelerating to the present, change has come to this heretofore predominately Hispano region. Anglos (as persons who are not of Hispanic or Native American origin are commonly referred) have intruded upon the region influencing its economic foundation and cultural traditions. Vast numbers of Hispanos throughout the homeland vacated their natal communities in favor of larger urban centers where higher wages and better employment opportunities existed. By 1980, village depopulation had rendered most Hispano communities a mere relic of their former stature (Nostrand 1992). Only a few stronghold communities in the heart of the homeland near Chimayó have resisted the Anglo intrusion (Nostrand 1992).

As Hispanos sold their homes and pursued employment in the cities, Anglos moved in and purchased the real estate. Communities throughout the homeland, particularly in the corridor between Santa Fe and Taos, are attractive to Anglos because of spectacular vistas and natural amenities. As Alvar Carlson (1990) explains, in many of these Hispano-established communities, preserving the appearance and ambience of the Spanish-American landscape was left to the newly arriving Anglos. Instead of maintaining the region's cultural integrity through the continued practice of community and family traditions, an upscale sophisticated Santa Fe lifestyle that builds upon the region's cross-cultural and artistic amenities developed (Carlson 1990). Cultural change is profoundly different on the homeland's periphery.

Spanish-Americans living on the periphery are also attracted to jobs in the cities, yet there is less outright Hispano displacement. Spanish-Americans and Anglos tend to live segregated in neighboring communities; change occurs when Anglo cultural norms begin to dominate the region. As older Hispano residents remain steadfast to their cultural traditions, the younger generations embrace the encroaching Anglo culture. Each community's character and cultural traditions, including religious practices, are altered. This paper documents how Anglo-induced cultural change has modified the religious landscape on the northern periphery of the Hispano homeland.

Background

Scholars with a geographic perspective have extensively studied the built environment in New Mexico's Hispano settlements. Architectural styles (Jackson 1959/1960), village characteristics (Jackson 1952; Luebben 1970), housing designs (Gritzner 1971), and log structures (Gritzner 1974, 1990) are among the many cultural artifacts that are examined in the literature. This body of work suggests that traditional Hispano villages on the periphery of the homeland are typically linear in shape with an *acequia* (irrigation ditch) extending along the length of the community. The Catholic church, commonly in the geographic center, provides a focal point for the village. Homes, running parallel with the acequia, tend to be on higher, more marginal lands above the long-lot irrigated flood plain. The community cemetery and Penitente morada (chapel) are frequently located away from the village center and on lands deemed best suited for those functions. In some communities a *tiendita* (small store) operated by an entrepreneurial resident offers goods (historically bartered) to the resident population. These works provide rich insight into aspects of the landscape of traditional Hispano communities and provide a foundation upon which much research has been conducted. Unfortunately, like some of the features they discuss, these works are becoming dated and their usefulness in portraying contemporary villages where cultural change has occurred is limited.

More recently, scholars from a variety of fields have documented the ecological, demographic, and social impacts of Anglo culture on Hispanos of New Mexico and southern Colorado (Campa 1979; Deutsch 1987; Eastman and Krannich 1995). Alvar Carlson (1990) and Richard Nostrand (1992) provide the most recognized geographical works. Carlson explores reasons for the endemic poverty among northern New

Mexico's Spanish-American population by focusing on land use patterns. Nostrand, on the other hand, meticulously delimits the changing areal extent and characteristics of Hispano concentration while chronicling the salient eras within Hispano history.

The foregoing research contributes much to our understanding of Hispano culture in New Mexico and southern Colorado, but little is known about the built environment in which Hispanos are now living. What cultural messages are the younger generations of Spanish-Americans receiving from their built environment? A greater appreciation of this rich culture can be achieved by understanding the environment in which Spanish-Americans currently live. The cultural landscape in the southern portion of the old Sangre de Cristo Land Grant suggests an interesting empirical case study in filling that void in the literature (Fig. 1).

Costilla County -- Past and Present

In 1843 the government in Mexico City conferred the Sangre de Cristo Land Grant (equal in size to present day Costilla County, Colorado) to two residents of Taos, New Mexico. After Indian raiding rendered three previous attempts unsuccessful, permanent settlement on the land grant began when eleven Hispanos from Taos founded the community of La Plaza de San Luis de la Culebra (known today as San Luis) in 1851 (Lantis 1950; Dietz and Larson 1995) (Fig. 2). Later that same year another small group of Hispanos established the community of La Plaza de los Manzanares (the name was later changed to Garcia, Colorado). In the following five years many more Hispano settlements were established in the watershed region of Culebra Peak including San Pedro/San Pablo (1852), Viejo San Acacio (1853), Chama (1854), Los Fuertes (1854), and San Francisco (1854).

By the end of the nineteenth century, the U.S. government assumed political control of the region and eliminated Indian raiding. As a result, the San Luis Valley's rich agricultural lands were now deemed safe for additional settlement (especially Anglo). Soon the San Luis Southern Railroad refueling stations of San Acacio, Mesita (first called Hamburg), and Jarosa (first settled by Hispanos) became thriving Anglo communities (nearly all of the railroad tracks were removed in the middle of the twentieth century). In the early years, Hispano and Anglo settlements were segregated. Hispanos preferred the valley's peripheral locations (diverting water from mountain runoff to irrigate their crops) while Anglos settled in the middle of the valley floor (tapping artesian well water for agriculture). Contact between Spanish-Americans and Anglos increased as the Anglo population continued to expand.

In 1900 the total population of Costilla County was 3,249 with an ethnic composition of 89.6% Hispano and 10.4% Anglo (U.S. Census 1902) (Table 1). By 1990, while the total population remained roughly the same at 3,190, the ethnic composition changed dramatically (U.S. Census 1991). Costilla County's percent Spanish-American dropped to 53.6% while its non-Hispano population surged to 46.3 percent. Over those nine decades, some of Costilla County's Hispano-established communities retained a distinctly Spanish-American flavor. Others, however, were influenced by the ever-increasing Anglo presence. Changes in the religious landscape

bear witness to this.

Method of Data Collection

Generations of cultural geographers have used landscape features to identify the cultural character of a region or place (Foote et al. 1994). Language, religion, ethnicity, and class are the underlying themes most commonly used when examining how a culture group modifies its environment (Norton 1989). For example, James Duncan (1973) contrasted two of America's wealthier populations (entrenched money and *nouveau riche*) by examining their respective residential landscapes. Duncan documented that the size and shape of the roads; extent and care of surrounding vegetation; size, style, appearance, and ornamentation of housing; as well as appearance of mailboxes can distinguish income groups. Richard Francaviglia (1978) identified ten landscape features diagnostic of Mormon religious culture. He concludes that any community possessing five or more of the artifacts is Mormon. Daniel Arreola (1988) established that yard shrines, front yard enclosures, and brightly painted houses are all signature features of the Mexican-American culture. His analysis reveals that these "housescape" features have deep cultural roots. These works illustrate that membership within a culture group profoundly impacts and guides individuals' behavior. And, consequentially, culture group members modify their environment in a manner consistent with cultural traditions.

The landscape is continually modified by the prevailing cultural environment. It reflects the ongoing change as one culture group invades another. Nina Veregge's (1993) exploration of five New Mexico and Arizona communities (now highly urbanized areas) illustrates the evolving nature of cultural landscape change. Each community (Santa Fe, Albuquerque, Socorro, Las Vegas, and Tucson) began as a small Hispanic-dominated population and civic center. All five evolved into regional transportation and commercial centers as Anglos moved in and the resulting change was evident in the settlement morphology. An understanding of changes in a region's cultural composition can be achieved by analyzing transformations in the qualities and characteristics of the cultural landscape. This article employs a methodology similar to the research cited above to demonstrate how the religious landscape reflects a modified cultural environment.

Religion, as an institution promoting conformity through shared learned behavior, is fundamental to the dissemination of cultural traditions from one generation to the next. To say that the Catholic faith permeates traditional Hispano village life is an enormous understatement; nearly every facet of the community draws from the local Catholic church. Furthermore, the Catholic religion is central to the life of individual Spanish-Americans from the ceremonies at birth to the final funeral prayer. Therefore, studying changes in Hispano religious practices is an indispensable tool in understanding the region's evolving cultural character.

A baseline was established for the traditional religious landscape (specifically the churches, Penitente moradas, and community cemeteries) in order to assess the extent of cultural change within the eight Hispano-established communities of the southern portion of Costilla County. The religious tables from the 1890 U.S. Census (U.S.

Census 1894) were consulted to determine a baseline for church affiliation. This baseline for the distribution of Penitente moradas was established through a review of the literature and an examination of the landscape.

Fieldwork between 1994 and 1996 provided the main source of data collection to ascertain the characteristics of the contemporary religious landscape. The present church affiliations and the areal extent of active Penitente moradas in southern Costilla County's eight Hispano-established communities were determined through personal observations. Informal interviews with church officials and brotherhood members verified my findings. The characteristics of Spanish-American community cemeteries required a different methodological approach.

Within each Hispano-established community cemetery, 100% of the plots were examined. The surname on each headstone was logged and the frequency of surnames tabulated. Those grave markers with undecipherable or missing epitaphs were not included in the final tabulations. Ideally, a living relative should be interviewed to determine the ethnicity of the deceased, but, time and financial restrictions prevented this approach. Instead, each headstone surname was cross-referenced against Origins of New Mexico Families in the Spanish Colonial Period (Chavez 1954), a definitive volume containing an exhaustive list and lineage of Hispano surnames. The given name on the grave marker was consulted in those infrequent circumstances where the deceased's ethnicity was uncertain based on the surname.

Imprints on the cemetery landscape such as fencing and spatial alienation were noted to determine if segregation exists within each community graveyard. The veracity of field observations were tested through informal interviews with church personnel, the county assessor, and cemetery grounds keepers.

The Changing Religious Landscape

Church Affiliation

Few would question the essential role that the Catholic church played in the life of a Spaniard residing on New Spain's northern frontier (Burma 1954; Foster 1960; Simmons 1969). The Spanish settlers' first duty was the immediate construction of a Catholic church and the prompt beginning of regular prayers (Spicer 1962). In 1850, less than 2% of New Mexico's Rio Arriba population claimed a religious affiliation other than Roman Catholic (Walker 1991). By the early 1900s the number and geographic extent of Catholic churches throughout the Hispano homeland reached its zenith with nearly every community having its own place to worship (Brewer and McDowell 1990).

Proceeding from the assumption that "to be American one needed to be Protestant" (Walker 1991, 117), at the turn of the century the first wave of Protestant missionaries began recruiting converts throughout homeland villages. The thrust of this early non-Catholic religious activity came from the larger and more extensively organized Lutheran, Baptist, Congregationalist, Presbyterian, and Methodist denominations (Spicer 1962; Walker 1991). By the 1920s inroads into the Catholic stronghold were substantial. As the success of these first denominations began to

wane, a second wave of missionary activity began, led by the Latter-Day Saints and Pentecostal denominations including the Assembly of God and Jehovah's Witnesses. Both waves of non-Catholic missionaries were most effective in communities that were chiefly Anglo or where the Anglo culture was more fully embraced. Communities on the northern periphery of the homeland were particularly susceptible to Protestant sects due to substantial Anglo immigration.

From the time of the first Hispano settlement, Costilla County served as a stronghold for the Catholic faith. Construction of the region's first church (The Catholic church of [Viejo] San Acacio) was completed in 1853. According to the 1890 U.S. Census, five active churches served the resident population and all were Catholic (U.S. Census 1894) (Table 2). They were located in Viejo San Acacio, San Luis, San Pedro/San Pablo, Chama, and San Francisco. The 1906 U.S. Census Special Report on Religious Bodies reports that over 90% of the church-going population was Catholic (U.S. Census 1910). By the 1920s Catholic churches had been built in Jarosa, Garcia, and Los Fuertes meaning every Hispano-established community in the region had its own Catholic house of worship (Fig. 3). Anglo-influenced Protestant infiltration, however, had begun. In Costilla County the Presbyterian, Methodist, Latter-Day Saint, and Assembly of God churches were particularly successful (U.S. Census 1910; Ross 1985).

Within the eight contemporary Hispano-established communities examined there are fourteen churches; seven Catholic and seven Protestant (Table 2). Chama, Los Fuertes, San Francisco, and Viejo San Acacio have never had a Protestant church and only the communities of San Luis and San Pedro/San Pablo continue to have Protestant churches (Fig. 3). The presence of four non-Catholic churches in San Luis is best explained by the fact that since it is the county seat and the county's largest community, it has experienced a great deal of Anglo influence. Two Protestant churches (Presbyterian and Kingdom Hall of the Jehovah's Witnesses) are also found in the community of San Pedro/San Pablo. With parishioners from throughout the region, the Jehovah's Witnesses have been particularly successful in attracting converts because, until recently, the services were conducted solely in Spanish. On the other hand, the San Pablo Presbyterian church once had a congregation of nearly 60 members, but in the last five years has only three and there is talk of closing the church. Historically, Protestant churches also existed in the Hispano-established communities of Jarosa and Garcia. Jarosa (a community now dominated by Anglos) no longer has any church while in Garcia the Asamblea de Dios church closed in 1995 leaving only the very traditional Catholic church. Costilla County's only other Protestant church exists in the Anglo-founded community of Mesita. This community's first church was Presbyterian, but in 1987 the Latter-Day Saints purchased the building and began offering services.

The Catholic church is dominant in most contemporary Hispano-established communities of Costilla County. While Protestant churches in the valley tend to serve a larger area than Catholic churches, Protestant churches are made to feel welcome and remain in communities where Anglo influences are greatest.

Penitente Moradas

The origins of Los Hermanos Penitentes (the penitent brothers) is a topic of considerable debate among scholars examining New Mexico's Spanish-American culture. One of the most accepted explanations is that the Penitentes are descendants of the Third Order of Saint Francis of Assisi. This order was reserved for Spain's laity population (especially males) who wanted to follow St. Francis' teachings yet continue to live in the secular world. It is asserted that as Spaniards emigrated to the new world they took the tenets of the order with them (Woodward 1935; Horka-Follick 1969; Henderson 1977). While their origins might remain a mystery, their importance to community life is well understood. In traditional Hispano villages these pious lay brethren provide organized religious guidance and social support where otherwise it most likely would be missing. Their responsibilities include caring for the elderly, feeding the hungry, enforcing community rules, meting out justice, conducting funerals, and leading church services.

During both the colonial and Mexican periods, one of the greatest problems for remote Spanish-American communities of New Mexico and southern Colorado was the absence of a resident village priest. In 1750, an estimated 25 Franciscan Fathers served New Mexico's 4,200 Spanish residents (Carlson 1990) and the paucity of priests only intensified during Mexican rule. Between 1828 and 1850 no more than 16 priests served the entire population of the New Mexico province (Horka-Follick 1969; Nostrand 1992). During this time a majority of the communities were left without formal religious leaders and the Penitentes filled the vacuum (Woodward 1935; Henderson 1977; Podles and Podles 1992). However, instances of overzealous behavior during Lenten seasons forced the Catholic church to excommunicate the Brothers in 1833 (Horka-Follick 1969; Weigle 1976)¹. In 1947 the Penitentes were reinstated as an official branch of the Catholic church, but by that time membership had dramatically declined (Weigle 1976). "As the New Mexican folk move to the larger population centers and through education and acculturation abandon extreme forms of religious worship, the Penitentes dwindle in numbers" (Campa 1979, 210). Today, the Penitentes continue to exist in the isolated Hispano-dominated communities of northern New Mexico and southern Colorado.

The greatest challenge facing research on the Penitentes is that, due to previous condemnation, many of their activities are relatively clandestine, and non-member Hispanos are reluctant to talk about them. As a result, determining the full areal extent of Penitente membership is difficult. However, one cultural artifact which reflects their presence is the *morada* (plainly colored chapel/meeting house) (Fig. 4). Alvar Carlson contends that "no building distinguished the Spanish-American vernacular landscapes more than the Penitentes' unpretentious . . . morada" (Carlson 1990, 142). The height of morada construction occurred between 1890 and the 1920s (Carlson 1990; Wallis 1994) and nearly every Hispano community in northern New Mexico and southern Colorado had a Penitente chapter meeting in its own morada (Tate 1967; McConnell-Simmons 1992). Presently, Penitentes and their moradas are found only in those settlements which retain a strong Spanish-American culture. On the other hand, where the Anglo culture has been introduced to community life, governmental agencies and

non-profit organizations have assumed the responsibilities once performed by the Penitentes.

The San Luis Valley's first Penitente morada was constructed in Lobatos in 1860 (McConnell-Simmons 1992). Prior to its completion, members of the local Brotherhood were forced to make the arduous journey back to their home morada in northern New Mexico. Around the turn of the twentieth century nearly every Hispano-established settlement in the valley had its own morada with the Penitentes providing valued services to the communities in which they lived.

Fieldwork, a review of the literature, and informal interviews have revealed that in the early 1900s seven active moradas were distributed throughout the southern portion of Costilla County (Garcia, San Francisco, Los Fuertes, San Pedro/San Pablo, Chama, San Luis, and Viejo San Acacio) (Fig. 3). In their heyday the Chama and San Francisco moradas claimed memberships approaching 80 and 300 people respectively (McConnell-Simmons 1992). With the exception of the Garcia morada, the San Pedro/San Pablo morada served as *concilio* (regional Penitente headquarters) for all Costilla County moradas. The Garcia morada is affiliated with the district 3B concilio of northern New Mexico (Steele and Rivera 1985). The only Costilla County Hispano-established community never to have its own Penitente morada is Jarosa. Hispano men in this community were members of the Garcia morada.

One might expect that the Penitente Brotherhood would continue to have a strong presence in the southern portion of Costilla County considering the sizeable Hispano population that continues to reside there. However, the importance of the Penitentes has waned with the influx of Anglos bringing their religious, social, civic, and judicial services. Furthermore, as the above quote by Arthur Campa indicates, few of the younger Hispano males feel compelled to join the Brotherhood as they embrace Anglo cultural norms.

Today, only three of the seven moradas are still active in the southern portion of Costilla County (Garcia, San Francisco, and San Pedro/San Pablo) (Fig. 3). The changing distribution of moradas indicates that Penitente influence and presence within Costilla County has declined. Those communities which retain a strong Spanish-American culture and have not experienced the full impact of Anglo cultural intrusion are the ones which still have an active morada.

Community Cemeteries

Cemeteries are a third religious landscape feature that inform us of cultural change. Cemeteries are a microcosm of the real world reflecting the work, not of professional builders or religious architects, but of average citizens who unconsciously objectify the cultural customs that have accompanied them throughout their life (Kniffen 1967; Francaviglia 1971; Stilgoe 1978). Drawing upon years of fieldwork and the results of other necrogeographers, Terry Jordan (1982) unearthed a list of "truths" about graveyards: cemeteries are culturally unique and defining; as an artifact cemeteries tend to resist cultural change since they are the most conservative aspect of the religious landscape; and yet, cemeteries are not static--they are constantly reworked by

prevailing cultural conditions.

As one of many sources of information, graveyard headstones list the names of families who inhabit an area. Furthermore, surveying newer sections of a cemetery is a good approximation of the community's current residential composition. As such, a community rich in Hispano cultural tradition should continue to have a cemetery with a high percentage of Hispano surnames. On the other hand, an Hispano-established community which has experienced a great deal of Anglo influence, and a diminished Hispano cultural identity, will exhibit a noticeable presence of non-Spanish surnames.

Another geographical expression common in communities inhabited by two or more diverse culture groups is segregation within the village cemetery. Where differing cultures live segregated in life, so too are they segregated in death (Milspaw 1980). On the other hand, graveyard segregation is absent where cultural homogeneity within a community prevails. Numerous studies reveal the patterns of segregation commonly found in cemeteries. Some cemeteries have a corner of the grounds reserved for a less dominant group, while in other cases, a fence is constructed between plots of differing culture groups with access gained only through a separate gate (Jordan 1982; Struble and Wilhelm 1992). In the most extreme examples of segregation, complete exclusion prevails with a discrete cemetery being constructed adjacent to the other (Francaviglia 1971).

In Hispano-established communities segregation within the cemetery tends to be along religious lines. There is no segregation where the Spanish-American culture is dominant and Catholicism prevails. On the other hand, where Anglo, non-Catholic denominations have taken root, segregation within the community cemetery develops. Of the eight Hispano-established community cemeteries examined, six had Hispano surname percentages greater than 97%, and in Viejo San Acacio's cemetery traditional Spanish family names were found on 100% of the plots (Table 3). The percent of Spanish-American surnames decreases in those Hispano-established communities where the Anglo culture has had a greater impact. In San Luis and Jarosa the percent Hispano surnames drops to 79.5% and 11.9% respectively. Likewise, while the Jarosa area was first settled by two Hispano families from northern New Mexico, the town's success was not realized until 1914 when an Anglo land speculator persuaded a congregation of midwestern Seventh-Day Adventists to move in (Griswold 1984). Today, just over 88% of the surnames on the headstones are Anglo. The Hispano culture is felt throughout the southern portion of Costilla County, yet the Mesita community cemetery (an Anglo-established settlement) has a very small percent of headstones with Spanish-American surnames; 2.9 percent.

While local variations exist, communities that have maintained their original Hispano cultural traditions tend to construct exclusively Catholic, non-segregated cemeteries. In Viejo San Acacio, for example, the Catholic church is the sole religious provider in the community and there is no segregation within the cemetery. However, segregation based on church affiliation develops in communities where cultural blending occurs (Fig. 5). In San Luis, the local population is served by both Catholic and non-Catholic churches and there is pronounced religious segregation within the cemetery. In fact the cemetery has four discrete areas: two large sections for Catholics and two

smaller ones for Protestants. The other three communities where religious segregation developed are Chama, Garcia, and Los Fuertes. In Garcia a Protestant church once served the local population which helps explain why segregation exists there. In Chama and Los Fuertes, the Catholic church is the only local house of worship, but resident Protestants are served by churches in San Pedro/San Pablo. Four Hispano-established communities in the southern portion of Costilla County have non-segregated cemeteries: Jarosa, San Francisco, San Pedro/San Pablo, and Viejo San Acacio. In all but Jarosa the majority of the population has always been Catholic and, thus, there has been no impetus for segregation.

Segregation based on religious affiliation exists not only at the community level, but also at the county level. The community of San Acacio does not have its own cemetery, thereby forcing the local population to choose where they will be buried. Non-Catholic Anglos are all interred in either the Protestant dominated Mesita cemetery or in one of the San Luis Protestant sections. Catholic Hispanos from San Acacio however, are consistently buried in the Viejo San Acacio cemetery.

Throughout the southern portion of Costilla County, cemeteries have a mixture of surnames and are religiously segregated where the Anglo culture has successfully encroached on Hispano communities. On the other hand, traditional Spanish-American community cemeteries have nearly 100% Hispano surnames and no segregation because they are dominated by the deceased of the Catholic faith.

Role of Geographic Location

Situated at the northernmost extent of the Spanish empire, geographic isolation was one of the greatest obstacles facing early Hispano residents. Prior to Anglo intrusion, Hispano villages were almost completely disconnected from the outside world due at first to hostile Indians and later by impassable roads (Knowlton 1969). Villagers relied on their own devices outside the larger population centers of Albuquerque, Santa Fe, and Santa Cruz. Geographic isolation physically challenged the Hispanos, yet it became a blessing in disguise. Located away from the main transportation arteries, Spanish-Americans in the remote communities solidified their cultural traditions making the Hispanos the last living legacy of Spanish colonialism in the American Southwest. After Anglos began dominating much of the Hispano homeland, the isolated communities became oases of traditional Hispano culture (Campa 1979) because residents made only limited concessions to the outside culture (Hunter-Warren 1987).

For most of the smaller communities in the southern portion of Costilla County, the ethnic composition has remained fairly stable and residents have retained their cultural traditions. The isolating effect of the Sangre de Cristo mountains on the east and the San Pedro Mesa on the west have left many of the communities as they were historically. Additionally, few transportation routes run through the area offering less opportunity for the Anglo culture to permeate that part of the valley.

The two exceptions are the communities of San Luis and Jarosa. San Luis experienced considerable outside influences since it is the region's largest population and commercial center, and serves as the seat of government for Costilla County.

Jarosa on the other hand experienced much Anglo influence due primarily to its location on the former San Luis Southern Railroad. Both communities illustrate that Anglo incursion is greatest in communities where trade and transportation routes are well established.

Conclusion

As Spanish-Americans of New Mexico and southern Colorado celebrate the quadricentennial of Spain's first settlement along the upper Rio Grande, attention will focus on the region's rich cultural traditions. This formerly predominate Hispano region has undergone considerable cultural change. Anglos have made substantial inroads into the core of the Spanish-American homeland since the turn of the twentieth century. The corridor between Santa Fe and Taos is particularly attractive to Anglos seeking the rich natural and artistic amenities of the area. The Anglo intrusion has largely displaced the resident Spanish-American population throughout this region with the last remaining Hispano stronghold centered on the area around Chimayó. Furthermore, as older Spanish-Americans maintain ties to their cultural traditions, the younger generations are turning to Anglo cultural norms. Anglo intrusion has changed the homeland forever, yet ironically Anglos are thrilled to celebrate the 400th anniversary of the culture they are responsible for uprooting. This notwithstanding, cultural change is distinctly different on the periphery of the homeland. Larger settlements along major trade and transportation routes have experienced pronounced Anglo encroachment resulting in a loss of traditional Hispano cultural traits. On the other hand, the smaller isolated communities remain culturally homogeneous. Isolation allows the Hispano population to thrive and it is continued isolation that affords many of the Spanish-American communities the opportunity to keep their rich traditions alive. As a result, the last bastion of traditional Hispano culture is not only villages around Chimayó, in the heart of the homeland, but also in the isolated communities on the periphery.

This article has focused on changes in the religious landscape in Hispano-established communities on the Spanish-American homeland's northern periphery. As a microcosm of Hispano culture, the southern portion of the old Sangre de Cristo Land Grant serves as an intriguing empirical case study. Future research is needed to compare traditional and Anglo-influenced Hispano-established communities to understand the degree to which the symbolic meaning of the built environment is changing due to Anglo intrusion, and how this impacts Hispano place attachment.

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JEFFREY S. SMITH is a Visiting Assistant Professor of Geography, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506. E-mail: jssmith7@ksu.edu. His research interests include cultural geography, rural land use, U.S.-Mexico borderlands, and ethnic landscape analysis.

Figure Captions

Figure 1 The Hispano Homeland Circa 1900. *Source: Adapted from Nostrand 1992.*

Figure 2 Settlement Types in Costilla County, Colorado.

Figure 3 Past and Present Distribution of Churches and Penitente Moradas.

Figure 4 Typical Penitente Morada. *Source: Author July 1996.*

Figure 5 Religious Segregation in Los Fuertes Cemetery. *Source: Author July 1996.*

Table 1 Ethnic Composition of Costilla County,
Colorado 1900 and 1990

Population	1900	1990*
Total Population	3,249	3,190
Percent Hispano	89.6%	53.6%
Percent Non-Hispano	10.4%	46.3%

Source: U.S. Census 1900 and 1990.

**Percentages do not add to 100 due to rounding.*

Table 2 Religious Institutions in Costilla County,
Colorado 1890 and 1996.

Church Type	1890	1996
Total Churches	5	14
Catholic Churches	5	7
Protestant Churches	0	7

Source: U.S. Census 1890 and fieldwork 1994-1996.

Table 3 Selected Characteristics of Community
Cemeteries in Costilla County, Colorado, 1996.

Name of Community	% Hispano Surnames	Religious Segregation
Chama	97.8%	Yes
Garcia	98.6%	Yes
Jarosa	11.9%	No
Los Fuertes	98.4%	Yes
Mesita (A)	2.9%	No
San Francisco	98.3%	No
San Luis	79.5%	Yes
San Pedro/San Pablo	98.1%	No
Viejo San Acacio	100.0%	No

(A) = Anglo established community.

Source: Fieldwork 1994-1996.

1. The brotherhood gained national notoriety when the unsympathetic Anglo press repeatedly reported acts of self flagellation, mock crucifixions, and accidental deaths among Penitentes emulating Christ's suffering. The negative publicity led the Catholic church to excommunicate the brothers driving them underground (Horka-Follick 1969; Weigle 1976; Carlson 1990).