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Seeds of Empire: Cotton, Slavery, and the Transformation of the Texas Borderlands, 1800-1850. By Andrew J. Torget. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015. Pp. 351. Illustrations. Appendixes. Acknowledgements. Notes. Bibliography. Index.

Seeds of Empire: Cotton, Slavery, and the Transformation of the Texas Borderlands, 1800 – 1850 by Andrew J. Torget examines Texas history during the Spanish, Mexican, Republic, and United States eras. It places Texas within the broader context of these decades, but more specifically, it demonstrates how cotton and slavery were central (rather than peripheral) to the events in the state during these years.

Part I explores the conditions in Texas near the end of Spanish rule, which coincided with the growth of U.S. cotton in the Mississippi River Valley, and it closes with Moses Austin’s journey to Spain with a proposal for colonization and how such a proposal fit within the larger context of America’s cotton farming regions. Part II focuses on Texas as part of Mexico and how debates regarding slavery in Texas repeatedly occurred at both the national and state levels. Torget clearly proves that such debates impacted migration to Texas during this time period, with some plantation owners unwilling to leave the U.S. for Texas in the absence of security for the continuation of slavery in Mexico. As the author states, “Adopting a wider perspective, indeed, reveals how a complex tangle of cotton, slavery, and Mexican federalism – rather than any single factor – produced the fights that eventually led to the Texas Revolution.” (140) The author proceeds to examine the actions leading up to and including the Texas Revolution within a wider context of a cotton “boom” (157) and competing visions for the future of Texas.

Part III surveys experiences within Texas as a Republic – between the end of the Battle of San Jacinto and annexation into the United States. Throughout this section, Torget scrutinizes the impact of cotton and slavery in Texas within a wider global context. As the author writes, “What has remained so little understood, however,

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was how the devotion of Anglo-Texans to that institution brought with it remarkable burdens in global politics for the new Texas nation that would cripple the Texas government from the outset and isolate its people. Perhaps even less understood among scholars was how Anglo-Texan efforts to establish a slaveholders' republic served what they considered a greater end: rebuilding the region into a vast cotton empire that promised them a profitable future." (181) The author proceeds to effectively consider these aspects of Texas history, specifically connecting the Republic of Texas within a broader international context (particularly with Mexico, the United States, and Great Britain) and how politics intersected with issues of abolition as well as an economy based around cotton. For example, when examining the annexation of Texas by the United States, the author investigates how Great Britain attempted to sway Texas away from slave labor and toward free labor in order to allow for a free labor cotton source for British factories. As the author states, "If we ever hope to understand how Texas became the far-western outpost of the southern United States, we must first understand what the British did not: why Anglo-Texans chose to abandon their Republic and embrace slavery within the United States rather than save their nation under the guardianship of Great Britain." (221) Part III closes with Texas annexation to the United States.

The Epilogue surveys the U.S.-Mexican War within the context of Texas annexation and also provides a clear summary of the author's content throughout the previous portions of the book connected with how this information relates to future historical events. For example, when examining the Republic of Texas experience and the Confederacy, the author explains, "The rise of the Texas nation, then, reveals in stark detail how these international tensions over slave-based agriculture that led to the Confederacy had been shaping the worldview of American farmers and slaveholders long before the 1860s." (263)

This book is well researched and well written. Formal recognition of this is available in the awards and distinctions (twelve at the time of this review as listed on the publisher's website), including the Ottis G. Lock Prize for Best Book of the Year from the East Texas

Historical Association, the Kate Broocks Bates Award for Historical Research from the Texas State Historical Association, and the Coral Horton Tullis Memorial Prize for Best Book on Texas History from the Texas State Historical Association. Torget's writing in *Seeds of Empire* effectively weaves individual experiences into thorough and multi-faceted research to demonstrate main points, all in a clear and engaging style. For example, the text addresses economic concerns, political disputes, and social changes (particularly among Tejanos, Indians, and Anglos) in a way that reveals the interwoven nature and impacts of these aspects of Texas's transition from a remote location in the Spanish empire to a portion of the United States committed to cotton and slavery prior to the American Civil War. Maps are included at the start of each Part to also help orient the reader geographically for particular time periods. Academics will find the book filled with a wealth of well-researched information, relevant historiography, and clearly made arguments. At the same time, the book can be enjoyed by general readers with little to no background on the subject because Torget provides the necessary context to follow the arguments. I highly recommend *Seeds of Empire: Cotton, Slavery, and the Transformation of the Texas Borderlands, 1800 – 1850* by Andrew J. Torget to everyone and especially those interested in topics related to the history of Texas as well as southern history and economic history.

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