Drewal makes clear, when she finds Ogun-like warrior dances in Bahia associated in historical documents not with the Guinea Coast but with os congos (p. 225). This work, written by specialists on a specific ethnographic and historical complex found on both sides of the Atlantic, constitutes a model for a field all too often marked by hasty comparisons.

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Richard Price


Few Native American peoples resisted the incursions of European frontier culture more successfully than the Apaches. Fiercely independent, attuned to their harsh desert and mountain landscape, decentralized into autonomous bands, and possessed of their own concepts of warfare and revenge, they were natural guerrilla fighters, tenacious livestock raiders, and nearly impossible subjects of Spain, Mexico, and the United States. William Griffen’s study of a century in the history of Janos presidio and its districts (including parts of New Mexico, Arizona, Chihuahua, and Sonora) presents excellent opportunities for detailed examination of Apache relations with the frontier pastoral, agricultural, mining, and military communities. Unfortunately, the author sometimes neglected to place local and regional events into the more general picture. There is little mention of later eighteenth-century Indian deportation programs or of the impact of the Mexican independence wars that drew presidial soldiers into other duties.

In the chaotic period following Mexican independence, neither the central government nor the states could maintain adequate presidial garrisons. While earlier colonial administrators bought off Apache bands with rations and subsidies, the breakdown of the administrative system foreshadowed decades of murders, raids, reprisals, atrocities, and endemic violence. In something of an understatement, Griffen described the murder of Apaches by Mexicans as a “trouble-spot in Apache-Mexican relations” (p. 122). The introduction of North American traders and both American and Mexican mercenaries who formed hit squads to kill Apaches exacerbated the chronic violence.

Griffen’s archival research has turned up useful new information on Janos and its districts. The author points out the need for additional research, but the present study is a worthwhile addition to the literature on Mexico’s northern frontier.

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