

Lance R. Blyth. *Chiricahua and Janos: Communities of Violence in the Southwestern Borderlands, 1680-1880.* Borderlands and Transcultural Studies Series. Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 2012. Maps. 296 pp. \$60.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-8032-3766-7.



Reviewed by Matthew Babcock

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Commissioned by Benjamin H. Johnson (University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee)

In this arresting work that builds on anthropologist William F. Griffen's classic *Apaches at War and Peace* (1988), historian Lance R. Blyth examines patterns of violence within and between the Chiricahua Apaches and the Hispanic garrison community of Janos in northern Mexico over roughly two centuries. According to the author, Chiricahua and Janos were "'communities of violence' where violence drove relations--both conflictive and cooperative--not only between but also within the two communities" (p. 5). Blyth defines community as a set of "relationships among families and individuals to ensure cooperation for survival," and, drawing on David Nirenberg's thesis that violence promoted coexistence in medieval Spain, he argues that Chiricahua and Janos can serve as case studies for global borderlands communities of violence across time and space (p. 212). Although this work suffers from methodological problems in its comparative analytical structure and minimizes peaceful negotiation as a driving force in global community relations, Blyth's book is still an important contribution to

borderlands history because of its interdisciplinary approach and fresh perspective on violence as a powerful category of historical analysis.

Blyth's engaging study is divided into seven chronological chapters. In chapter 1, he contends that violence dominated relations between the Janos community's ancestors in late sixteenth- and seventeenth-century New Mexico and Native peoples; however, his evidence reveals that Apache relations with Pueblos were more mixed based on reciprocal trading and raiding. The next chapter examines the formation of the proto-Chiricahua and Janos communities in the wake of the Pueblo Revolt, which Blyth maintains were each made by war. Although warfare and displacement played a significant role in the founding of both, Hispanicization also played a major role in Janos's early community formation as 120 Jano, Jocomé, and Suma Indian families peacefully resettled in the town in 1698. Challenging Griffen's assertion that Janos and Chiricahua population increases from 1750 to 1785 occurred in spite of violence, Blyth adeptly shows in chapter 3 that they tran-

spired precisely because of it. The next chapter poses the author's greatest challenge as he attempts to explain how a forty-year period of relative peace from 1790 to 1830 was driven by violence. Blyth argues that Chiricahuas and Janeros negotiated this peace in order to protect their families and to increase their status through the acquisition and redistribution of rations and supplies, but with the onset of the Mexican War of Independence in 1810 both groups increasingly preferred to enhance their status through reciprocal military violence. The book's final three chapters show that violent warfare, treachery, persecution, and imprisonment dominated relations between Chiricahuas, Janeros, Mexicans, and Americans from 1831 to 1910. Although a minority of so-called go-betweens, such as Juan José Compá, tried to maintain their community status via reciprocal exchange as in the previous era, Janos's chronic shortage of rations and resources made sustained peace impossible. In the wake of the U.S.-Mexican War, the U.S.-Mexico border created separation between Chiricahuas and Janeros and threatened the security and survival of each community in distinct ways. The Chiricahuas ceased to be a community of violence when the United States exiled and imprisoned their leaders away from the southwestern borderlands, and Janos ended its dependence on violence at the end of the Mexican Revolution when the Mexican state made violence an unviable survival strategy.

This book has numerous strengths, which include a generally skillful blending of anthropology and Spanish archival documents, well-constructed maps, and the author's penchant for entertaining storytelling. Most importantly, Blyth situates the history of what some might consider a marginalized area of human settlement in a wide regional, continental, and global historiographical context. In addition to Nirenberg, he is influenced by James Brooks's, Ned Blackhawk's, and Karl Jacoby's recent works treating borderlands violence among others, and more surprisingly Richard White's classic *The Middle Ground* (1991). White's

book is routinely referenced by scholars examining patterns of Indian-Euro-American diplomacy and exchange, especially when one side attempted "to find a means, other than force, to gain the cooperation of" the other, for the Middle Ground rested on an alliance built on negotiation and cooperation (pp. 52, 82). To support his thesis that violence drove Chiricahua-Janero relations, however, Blyth draws on White's less well-known argument that "violence and interracial murder as a whole were inextricably bound up with commerce" because "violence was an option both for acquiring goods and protecting them" (p. 75). Blyth deserves credit, then, for showing that violence can serve as a constructive analytical category that individuals and communities sometimes use to produce positive outcomes, whether enhanced status, resource acquisition, or simply survival.

At the most basic level, however, scholars trained in global and comparative history may question the viability of comparing a people, Chiricahua Apaches, to a place, the Hispanic garrison community of Janos. Chiricahuas had a larger population than Janos and interacted with Sonorans, Nueva Vizcayans, and Chihuahuans in dozens of Hispanic communities, not just Janos. Griffen addressed this problem by examining peaceful and violent relations between Chiricahuas, Spaniards, Mexicans, and Americans in the Janos presidio and its jurisdiction, a clearly defined regional space, which he called the Janos district. Blyth attempts to make Chiricahua Apaches and Janos parallel entities by bending the concept of community to denote a cultural group and by calling both groups polities, but he muddies the waters by subsequently defining Chiricahua as a region and Janos as a town, which he freely admits "were different in form" (pp. 6, 211).

Despite the book's broad global context, Blyth's decision to analyze relations between a people and a place compromises regional context. Numerous other regional indigenous groups, in-

cluding Jumanos, Mansos, Ópatas, Conchos, and Pimas, had significant relations with Janos and Chiricahuas, but are introduced only briefly and without adequate cultural description or native viewpoint, while entire paragraphs of context are provided at the first mention of Spanish officers, such as Antonio Cordero. Janeros and Chiricahuas also interacted with and sometimes relocated to and from neighboring regional communities. On one occasion, the author mistakenly tells us that Chiricahua chief Juan Diego traveled “*east* to Sonora, and *west* to Carrizal,” despite the existence of a map on the facing page showing the proper locations of these places (pp. 106-107). Blyth could also afford to elaborate further on the apparent lack of impact the U.S.-Mexican War had on Janero-Chiricahua relations, and why it is necessary to go into such detail on Chiricahua-American relations north of the U.S.-Mexico border, when he had been focusing on Chiricahua relations with Janos for the first two-thirds of the book. Finally, the author’s contention that Chiricahuas’ violent coexistence with Janos ended in the 1880s with their removal to U.S. military reservations in the Southwest and forts in Florida leaves out their ethnogenesis as Sierra Madre Apaches and their subsequent relations with Janos and other northern Mexican communities into the 1930s as described in the works of Carl Lumholtz and Neil Goodwin.

The book’s thesis is also problematic in several ways. By privileging reciprocal violence over reciprocal peace between Chiricahuas and Janeros, it is not at all clear what makes Janos distinctive from any other Hispanic community in which Chiricahua men conducted raids and acts of warfare. If violence is the central driving force behind every significant action that indigenous and European cultures make, it eliminates peace and neutrality as equally valid strategies and motivating factors in cross-cultural human relationships. Relying on such an inaccurate assumption in the Southwest causes the author to make inaccurate transcontinental comparisons. He suggests

that relations between Chiricahuas and Janeros from 1680 to 1880 were as violent as a two-hundred-year King Philip’s War or Creek Wars. This simply is not the case, and it is disingenuous to make such an argument without doing any systematic quantitative research on the intensity of Hispanic and Chiricahua violence anywhere in the study. Spaniards did not officially declare war on Apaches until 1740, and their warfare was not as consistently intense as these Puritan-Wampanoag or American-Creek conflicts. In addition, by presuming that every Chiricahua raid was a status-enhancing act of violence, the distinctions between unsuccessful and successful raids and resource raids, revenge raids, and all-out warfare, which the author obviously knows about, are lost. Although Blyth maintains that leadership, power, and status among Chiricahuas and Janeros were determined by violence, that was not always the case. Spiritual power was a way for Chiricahua leaders to enhance their status, and it was predicated on protection and avoiding casualties. The distribution and redistribution of gifts were also respective sources of power for presidial post commanders and Chiricahua leaders, and effective treaty negotiating could result in promotions for both sides just as easily as effective killing in warfare. In fact, Janos’s uniqueness for much of this period was as a zone of safety, diplomacy, and exchange, not as a center of violence. Whenever trust was broken between Chiricahuas and Janeros, and violence crept into the community, it lost its distinctiveness. From a Hispanic perspective, Chiricahua raiding was the primary obstacle to a vigilant peace, not the root of it as the author maintains.

Lastly, although this is a carefully cited interdisciplinary study overall, the author’s lack of footnoting and selection of Chiricahua oral history passages raise significant questions in several instances. Blyth’s presentation of Kaskiyeh and Goyahkla as Chiricahua synonyms for Janos and Geronimo need citation. He also quotes a portion of the exact same passage from the exact same

Janos archival document that I do in the opening paragraph of chapter 5 of my dissertation without acknowledging it.[1] Although he never cites this document in his own dissertation, he possesses a copy of my dissertation, which is also easily accessible on the Web through Google Books. With respect to oral history, the author chooses to include sexually explicit passages from Chiricahua Coyote tales that are unnecessary to prove his argument and might even make the book unsuitable for classroom use. He also repeatedly relies on Chiricahua testimony to Morris Opler from the early twentieth century for insight into eighteenth-century Chiricahua cultural practices, such as mescal harvesting, alleged war and victory dancing after a resource raid, and even the highly acculturated chief El Compá's subsistence patterns at Janos. Oddly, in the post-1848 era, the period of time to which Chiricahua cultural memory most clearly extends back, Blyth relies far less heavily on Chiricahua testimony.

Blyth's work clearly highlights some of the payoffs and perils of the most recent trends in borderlands and Native American history. Nobody can accuse this book of being marginal or too narrowly focused as U.S. and Latin American scholars routinely did with a previous generation of southwestern borderlands studies. It should also inspire scholars to incorporate violent conflict into their works, rather than shy away from it, which should make for more accurate histories. At the same time, however, scholars should not forget about the efficacy of peace and neutrality as constructive analytical categories in their own right. This book should also remind us of the potential dangers of ethnohistorical upstreaming and the importance of following proper procedures for regional, continental, and global comparisons.

Note

[1]. Matthew Babcock, "Turning Apaches into Spaniards: North America's Forgotten Indian

Reservations, 1786-1831" (PhD diss., Southern Methodist University, 2008).

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