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Wars for Empire: Apaches, the United States, and the Southwest Borderlands by Janne Lahti (review)

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adapted and sometimes lost. General readers and academics alike will find this to be an engaging and powerful book.

Loyola University Chicago

BENJAMIN H. JOHNSON

Wars for Empire: Apaches, the United States, and the Southwest Borderlands. By Janne Lahti. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2017. Pp. 328. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index.)

The Apache wars of the mid to late nineteenth century continue to be a popular topic in American history, and authors have churned out a broad body of scholarship predominantly focusing on the roles of specific tribes and bands or biographies of participants. Using violence and military culture as an interpretative framework, Janne Lahti offers a new overview of the U.S.–Apache wars that seeks to connect the conflict to recent revisions in borderlands histories. Lahti argues that war and violence “constitute expressions of culture determined by cultural forms and norms” (8). *Wars for Empire*, consequently, pays close attention to the protagonists’ expressions and modes of military ethos, training, leadership, organization, and rhetoric. By understanding how Apache and U.S. military motives, goals, and methods differed and why, one can better understand “how one society was able to break the power of another and occupy its space” (8).

The author divides the book into two parts. The first, “Cultures of War,” provides a fascinating discussion and comparison of Apache (primarily Chiricahua) and U.S. military conceptions of war, their radically different warrior/soldier training methods, and the profound dissimilarities in their strategies, tactics, and equipment. Lahti does a good job showing the complexity of Apache preparations for and responses to war, which varied over time and between culturally distinct Apache communities. The most impressive chapters in the book, “Body” and “Operations,” respectively, examine the profound differences in training and preparing young men in the art of war, the conduct of military leaders, and the inability of U.S. commanders to understand fully the martial mindset of their Apache adversaries. For those commanders, for example, who held an idealized, western vision of war, the Apaches’ use of asymmetric warfare was dishonorable and justified the army’s use of severe means to pacify and “civilize” the borderlands. In addition, the multiple logistical problems facing army commanders, whose unending struggle to feed, equip, train, and care for the soldiers under their command, explain why it took the military nearly four decades to defeat the Apaches.

The second part of the book, “Shapes of Violence,” provides a fairly standard history of the Apache Wars starting with the U.S. invasion of New Mexico during the U.S.–Mexico War and ending with the surrender of Geronimo and the removal of Chiricahua Apaches to the southeast.

Lahti provides a fairly balanced discussion of the many military campaigns conducted against the Apaches by vigilante groups, militias, and army regulars, some of whom, but not all, sought the “extermination” of their Apache foes.

The author’s brief discussion of the forces behind U.S. expansionism and “wars for empire” requires more treatment. While there is an element of truth in Lahti’s assertions that the nation’s identity and social coherence were “built around violence and the taking of other people’s lands” (20) and that empire building may have been “the tool needed to unify diverse interests” (21), he does not provide a convincing argument that this was the case. Slavery, immigration, and religion, for example, played critically important roles in forging national identity; foreign wars, economic depression (or opportunity), and natural disasters also tended to unify diverse interests.

There is enough new material in *Wars for Empire*—the first half of the book in particular—to judge it an important contribution to the study of Native American history, U.S. military history, and the southwestern borderlands. It is also well researched and written. I recommend it to anyone interested in the Apache wars or in the problems facing frontier commanders during the latter decades of the nineteenth century.

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THOMAS A. BRITTEN

Blood Will Tell: Native Americans and Assimilation Policy. By Katherine Ellinghaus. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2017. Pp. 199. Notes, bibliography, index.)

The Indian Reorganization Act (1934) offered the first official federal definition of indigeneity tied to blood quantum. Rather than the beginning of the blood discourse that would come to dominate federal (and, at times, indigenous) understandings of “Indianness,” however, Ellinghaus argues that the act merely made official the long-standing unofficial practice of linking blood discourse to issues of indigenous authenticity. *Blood Will Tell*, then, is the study of how blood discourse affected federal and indigenous actions in practice during the allotment era—initially “operat[ing] as a set of criteria that could determine whether a person did (or did not) deserve enrollment and allotment” (xv), then later determining which individuals should continue to enjoy government protection of their land. Thus, blood discourse became the means by which the government justified removing its obligations to certain indigenous individuals while freeing up Native land for white consumption. At the same time, however, Ellinghaus argues that blood discourse also became a way for both individuals and tribal nations to conceive of indigeneity on their own terms.