

Colonial Latin American Historical Review

Volume 15

Issue 4 *Volume 15, Issue 4 (Fall 2006)*

Article 6

9-1-2006

Sara Ortelli, Trama de una guerra conveniente: Nueva Vizcaya y la sombra de los apaches, 1748-1790

José Cuello

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/clahr>

Recommended Citation

Cuello, José. "Sara Ortelli, Trama de una guerra conveniente: Nueva Vizcaya y la sombra de los apaches, 1748-1790." *Colonial Latin American Historical Review* 15, 4 (2006): 446. <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/clahr/vol15/iss4/6>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by UNM Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Colonial Latin American Historical Review by an authorized editor of UNM Digital Repository. For more information, please contact amywinter@unm.edu.

Este libro contribuye a este campo de investigación, haciendo referencia a un gran número de archivos y fuentes primarias y secundarias. Los investigadores de los africanos y sus descendientes en la Nueva España pueden aprovechar estas fuentes, tal vez con un análisis histórico más profundo.

Nicole von Germeten
Department of History
Oregon State University

Trama de una guerra conveniente: Nueva Vizcaya y la sombra de los apaches, 1748-1790. Por Sara Ortelli. (México, D.F.: El Colegio de México, Centro de Estudios Históricos, 2007. 259 págs. Notas, mapas, cuadros, gráficas, apéndices, bibliografía, índice. Precio no disponible.)

Sara Ortelli deconstructs the historical and historiographical myth of the "Apache Wars" that occurred in Nueva Vizcaya between 1748 and 1790. She argues that the historical myth arose from a conspiracy of interests among provincial elites: governors, *alcaldes mayores*, presidial captains, the town council of Chihuahua, and the mining guild all inflated the image of the Apaches as a mortal enemy of the empire in order to take advantage of military subsidies to sustain the presidio system on the frontier. Apaches were blamed for the crimes of rustling and murder that were committed by two other groups, namely the *infidentes* (disloyal subjects of the Crown) and *abigeos* (professional rustlers) who operated within the territory of Nueva Vizcaya. High-level royal officials and modern historians perpetuated the myth despite evidence of the other two groups' activities.

Misconceptions of the internal and external enemies as distinct groups blinded officials to the collaborations between the *infidentes* and the Apaches. The official myth paralleled a popular habit of mind that attributed all rural crimes to Apaches. Ortelli uses the term "Apache" only in quotes to highlight the imagined function of the term that she compares in usage to those of the "Chichimeca" and "Tarahumara" tribes. As Ortelli outlines, historians have missed the importance of the two internal enemies since high-level colonial debates centered on the Apaches while incidents of rustling were recorded only at the local level.

The three enemies of the colonial state—Apaches, *infidentes*, and *abigeos*—operated on an open frontier of highly mobile native and Hispanic populations who were dispersed over great distances. Furthermore, transient miners and traders turned the missions into base camps for profiteering and *mestizaje* (racial mixing). In turn, the mission Indians mobilized to survive disruption in native economies, forced labor, and religious indoctrination. Horses and cattle joined the humans in roaming freely over the unfenced terrain. The multiethnic bands of *infidentes* included "ladrones, vagabundos,

fugitivos, desertores, malhechores e indios huidos" (p. 166) who camped in the sierra. They committed most of the murders in the province and delivered stolen horses and mules to the Apaches in exchange for deerskins, arrows, and buffalo products. The Apaches were the middlemen in a long distance chain of trade that included frontier mission Indians and at least one presidio captain in Nueva Vizcaya. Furthermore, colonized Indians paid Catholic missionaries in Apache deerskins for the holy sacraments. The other internal enemy, the *abigeos*, consisted of clans of professional rustlers who provided goods to both local and long-distance consumers within colonial society. The clans of thieves were protected by the officers of the law who bought their stolen goods. Thus, as Ortelli argues, war and theft fueled trade and profit.

The colonial elites who created the Apache myth set the tone for lawlessness in the province. Ortelli fits them into the mold of the powerful "men of the North," made classic by scholar François Chevalier. Governors and *alcaldes mayores* with military commissions laid violent siege to Indian territories and enslaved the native peoples. They turned the frontier into a bonanza for speculators in land, mining, and commerce. Although they routinely ignored directives to reform their governments, the predecessors of nineteenth-century provincial *caudillos* received royal tax incentives to colonize hostile territories. After the Pueblo Revolt of 1680, control of the government supply contracts for the presidio defense system represented a strong motivation for corruption. Presidio captains obligated their servants to serve as soldiers whose salaries they commandeered with forced purchases and high prices. When Bourbon inspectors and commander generals threatened to make the presidio defense system more economical and efficient, the cabal of frontier *caudillos* loudly cried "Apache!" They knew how to turn a convenient war into a cash prize.

José Cuello
Department of History
Wayne State University

Bajo el Cielo Peruano: The Devout World of Peralta Barnuevo. La Galería de la Omnipotencia and Pasión y Triunfo de Christo. Edited, annotated, and with a critical introduction by David F. Slade and Jerry M. Williams. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008. 379 pp. Illustrations, map, notes, bibliography, index. \$42.50 paper.)

David F. Slade and Jerry M. Williams have published an annotated volume containing two little-studied texts by the Peruvian Pedro de Peralta Barnuevo (Lima, 1663-1743) titled *La Galería de la Omnipotencia* and *Pasión y Triunfo de Christo*. After their introductory essays, Slade and Williams present a careful transcription of the original texts, including detailed