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# New Voices in Native American History: A Review Essay

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JOSEPH C. PORTER

D. C. Cole's *The Chiricahua Apache* and Albert L. Hurtado's *Indian Survival on the California Frontier* concentrate on two different cultural and regional areas of ethnohistory, and each scholar employs a different methodological approach to his material. Cole focuses on one tribal group—the Chiricahua Apaches—while Hurtado examines several tribes in northern California. Differences in methodology and cultural areas notwithstanding, Cole and Hurtado share a theme that informs much contemporary ethnohistorical scholarship, and this is an examination of the strategies that Native American individuals and tribal groups used to cope with and to survive against the disruption of the Indian world created by Europeans and Euro-Americans. By focusing upon survival strategies, studies such as Cole's and Hurtado's "unfreezes" Indian history from the static moorings assigned to it by some scholars. Cole and Hurtado, by looking at historic change from the perspective of Indian peoples, listen to Indian voices as they articulated their responses to fluctuating environmental and social circumstances. By in-

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cluding Indians as active participants in their own history, Cole and Hurtado note change over time within Indian groups.<sup>1</sup>

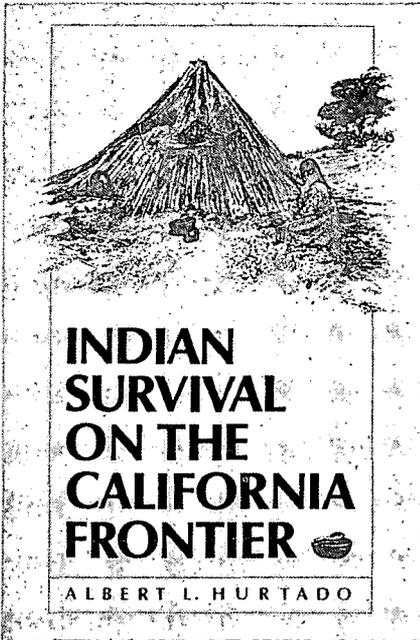
*The Chiricahua Apache* and *Indian Survival on the California Frontier* are timely because they pertain to the present critical debate and dialogue between Native Americans and scholars (Indian and non-Indian) from universities and also from art, history, and anthropology museums. This debate centers on who imbues American Indian cultures (which encompasses Indian histories and Indian arts and material objects) with meaning.<sup>2</sup> Cole and Hurtado emphasize that to deny Indian cultures the capacity for change is to implicitly trivialize those cultures and to demean their historical experiences. In these two volumes they outline the resilient responses of Indian groups who did not passively accept the devastating changes sweeping their areas.

Cole and Hurtado, utilizing two different approaches to their research, develop Indian perspectives to Indian history. *Apacheria* and *California* both invite close examinations of Indian responses to drastic cultural and environmental changes caused by the Europeans. In the

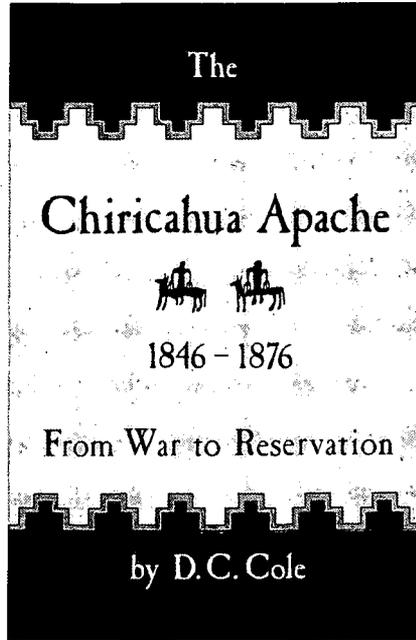
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1. Scholars of other cultural areas have argued for the notion of historic adaptation within Indian groups. Some pertinent works include John C. Ewers, *The Horse and Blackfoot Indian Culture* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1980); Gary Clayton Anderson, *Kinsmen of Another Kind: Dakota-White Relations in the Upper Mississippi Valley, 1650-1862* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984); Gary Clayton Anderson, "Early Dakota Migration and Intertribal War: A Revision," *Western Historical Quarterly* 11 (January 1980), 17-36; Richard White, "The Winning of the West: The Expansion of the Western Sioux in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," *Journal of American History* 65 (September 1978), 319-43; Raymond J. DeMallie and Douglas R. Park, eds., *Sioux Indian Religion* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987); Symmes C. Oliver, *Ecology and Cultural Continuity as Contributing Factors in the Social Organization of the Plains Indians* (Berkeley: University of California Publications in American Archaeology and Ethnology, 1962); John H. Moore, *The Cheyenne Nation: A Social and Demographic History* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987).

2. Ethnohistorians should remain informed of this important dialogue. Although much of it has arisen from the fields of art history, literary theory, and the history of anthropological thought, this debate carries clear implications about how ethnohistorians approach their source material whether these be indigenous narratives, narratives of non-native observers, or native arts or material culture objects. For a provocative assessment of the general issues see James Clifford and George E. Marcus, eds., *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986); James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988); and Sally Price, *Primitive Art in Civilized Places* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989). For evaluation of American Indian narratives see Arnold Krupat, *For Those Who Came After: A Study of American Indian Autobiography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985); H. David Brumble III, *American Indian Autobiography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988); and Brian Swann and Arnold Krupat, eds., *Recovering the World: Essays on Native American Literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).



*Indian Survival on the California Frontier.* By Albert L. Hurtado. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988. xix + 246 pp. Illustrations, maps, tables, notes, bibliography, index. \$25.00.)



*The Chiricahua Apache, 1846-1876: From War to Reservation.* By D. C. Cole. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1988. vi + 219 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index. \$32.50.)

historic period Apacheria and California shared some ethnohistorical factors common to the Hispanic Borderlands because by the middle nineteenth century Apacheria and California involved many Indian groups and two predominant European groups—Hispanic and Anglo-American.

Apacheria included several distinct Southern Athapascan groups, each forging different and distinctive relationships with each other, with the environment, and with the Europeans. The Hispanics and Anglos were, in turn, divided into various cultural groups, and political and military districts and units. By 1876, the final year of Cole's study, Apacheria straddled the national boundary between the United States and Mexico. Thus the situation facing Chiricahuas and national and local officials on both sides of the border was a complicated and fluid mosaic of competing local political and Chiricahua band interests. North of the Rio Grande one state (Texas) and two territories (New Mexico

and Arizona) and three military departments sought to coordinate consistent civil and military policies toward the Chiricahuas. Similarly, in Mexico, the Chiricahuas contended with two states, each with its own regional interests and military districts. On both sides of the border local Hispanic and Anglo constituencies frequently made their own arrangements with specific Apache bands.<sup>3</sup>

Cole concentrates on the three decades after 1846 when the Chiricahuas were confronted with new problems by the Americans, but first he provides a history of the four Chiricahua bands before 1846. Cole outlines their religious, social, and political organization because Chiricahua cultural values governed how they adjusted to change. For example, Chiricahua religious devotion to specific geographic locales and their band organization shaped their response to the troublesome Anglos. "It is hard to overestimate the significance of territory to the Chiricahua people." Cole writes, "Specific locations were, however, created for Apache use. This was reinforced by the many gifts of the G'an, or mountain spirits, who became the special protectors of Apache people . . . It was unthinkable for the Chiricahua Apaches to give up contact with G'an. This meant holding tenaciously to the mountains that were their mutual homelands. Chiricahuas did not make war to seize or control land. What was common was a very strongly defined sense of homeland" (pp. 11-12). This Chiricahua sense of homeland shaped their efforts to resist all encroachment by Hispanics or Anglos.

Apache cosmology saw the universe as full of competing and often hostile forces that vied with each other, and this guided Chiricahua notions of warfare. Because the universe was a hostile place, raiding and warfare "were found to have ties to virtually every facet of Chiricahua society by the 1840s" (p. 49). A determination to maintain their territorial base, economic needs, and cultural inclination in which "Chiricahuas saw raiding as a practical application of [their] cosmology in which the forces of the universe were at war with one another" (p. 52) made raiding central to Chiricahua culture. Yet as Cole shows, this essential cultural core did not remain static or unchanging. Chiricahua patterns of raiding adapted quickly to new economic needs

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3. Two recent volumes that focus on the Spanish and Mexican responses to Apache affairs are William B. Griffen, *Apaches at War and Peace: The Janos Presidio* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1988) and William B. Griffen, *Utmost Good Faith: Patterns of Apache-Mexican Hostilities in Northern Chihuahua Border Warfare, 1821-1848* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1988). Dan L. Thrapp, *The Conquest of Apacheria* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1967) remains the best one-volume treatment of the overall Apache Wars. Thrapp's study includes the western Apache tribes and bands as well as the Chiricahua groups.

while the tactics of raiding and war parties quickly adjusted to new military challenges presented by the Mexicans and Americans.

Cole looks beneath the tribal label, because specific Chiricahua bands had their own distinct responses to change. The interest or welfare of a given band might require a course of action different from one taken by another band or group within the same tribe. Against this backdrop of Chiricahua cosmology and individual band agendas, Cole carefully demonstrates how changing ecological and economic circumstances coalesced with Chiricahua cultural patterns. The Chiricahuas, while maintaining their basic values, responded with diverse creativity, and Cole does a fine job of developing the internal dynamics of band history within the Chiricahua group.

Cole is a Chiricahua Apache, and as a historian he strives to present the years from 1846 to 1870 as they were seen through the eyes of the Chiricahuas. This is Chiricahua history as the Chiricahuas perceived it. Cole did extensive interviewing among the Chiricahuas who present their memory of events that have been well studied and much interpreted from the Anglo point of view. Cole's use of Chiricahua informants complements other first-person narratives of Chiricahuas and individuals from related bands. Geronimo, Jason Betzinez, Asa Daklugie, and James Kaywaykla have all left their recollection of events. Their accounts plus interviews by twentieth-century scholars provide detailed Chiricahua perspectives. Also the narratives of prominent Anglos or Hispanics make it possible to evaluate many of the episodes of Chiricahua history from multiple perspectives.<sup>4</sup> Historians can listen to voices of Apaches, Hispanics, and Anglos as these three groups collided, often violently, in Apacheria.

Polyvocality, too, informs Albert L. Hurtado's provocative, inno-

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4. S. M. Barret, ed., *Geronimo's Story of His Life* (New York: Duffield & Company, 1906); Jason Betzinez, *I Fought with Geronimo* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987); Eve Ball, *Indeh: An Apache Odyssey* (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1980); Eve Ball, *In the Days of Victorio: Recollections of a Warm Springs Apache* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1970). Biographers of Victorio, Juh, and Geronimo have written of events from the perspective of their subjects, noting how their subjects tried to hold their bands together in the face of the threats from the United States and Mexico. Dan L. Thrapp, *Victorio and the Mimbres Apaches* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1974); Dan L. Thrapp, *Juh: An Incredible Indian* (El Paso: Texas Western Press, 1973); Angie Debo, *Geronimo: The Man, His Time, His Place* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1976). For first-person accounts of U.S. Army officers who fought the Chiricahua, see John G. Bourke, *An Apache Campaign in the Sierra Madre* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987); Thomas Cruse, *Apache Days and After* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987); Britton Davis, *The Truth About Geronimo* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1976).

vative, *Indian Survival on the California Frontier*. Like Cole, Hurtado recognizes that "Indian history varied greatly depending upon time, place, and circumstances" (p. xv) and that survival is a theme that ethnohistorians must address. Hurtado, like Cole, refuses to dismiss Indians as quaint and passive victims of someone else's history. Focusing upon northern California, Hurtado asks how did the Indians of northern California confront a devastating period of change that saw their population drop from 150,000 to perhaps 30,000 in less than two decades?<sup>5</sup>

Hurtado emphasizes that while much has been written "about the destruction and dispossession of California Indians, historians have published comparatively little about their survival. George Harwood Phillips asserts that historians have failed to write about Indians because of the stereotypical view that they were merely passive 'and therefore historically unimportant has discouraged research.'"<sup>6</sup> In northern California (as Cole demonstrated in *Apacheria*), Hurtado argues that the reactions of Indian peoples to changing, indeed revolutionary, circumstances, were not uniform, predictable, nor quiescent. "Indians, as we shall see," writes Hurtado, "tried to shape their futures, and thus made their own histories" (p. 71). Each tribal group reacted to changing circumstances in culturally specific ways, and in ways that were sparked by the interaction of their distinct cultures with the environment of their locale and with the historical circumstances of that area. As Indians made their own history they affected the history of non-Indians. Hurtado reminds historians that they must understand and appreciate Indian history in all of its variety in order to fully discern our common past and that failure to know Native American history diminishes our understanding of our shared American history.

Hurtado listens for Indian voices, but not in fieldwork interviews or narratives of Native Americans. Rather he looks for Indian voices and the Indian presence in his analysis of Indian labor patterns, of sex and birth ratios, and of Indian household arrangements as revealed in state and federal censuses of the period. Hurtado refuses to accept the notion of a docile dehumanizing passivity on the part of the Indians. Instead he studies their active survival strategies, and by bringing new

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5. For a concise summary of the issues relating to the Indian population of California see Albert L. Hurtado, "California Indian Demography, Sherburne F. Cook, and the Revision of American History," *Pacific Historical Review* 58 (August 1989), 323-43.

6. Hurtado points to George Harwood Phillips' study of three important southern California Indian chiefs who led their people's response to the Hispanics and Anglos. George Harwood Phillips, *Chiefs and Challengers: Indian Resistance and Cooperation in Southern California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975).

questions to census materials, he develops a new dimension of northern California Indian history. He asks difficult questions of his material, and his task is much complicated by the number of tribes in northern California. "The plethora of native cultures, each with a distinct history" compelled Hurtado to continually reexamine his evidence because "behavior is culturally determined . . . [and different] Indians reacted to new situations in culturally specific ways" (p. 6).

Hurtado analyzes changing labor patterns, the organization of individual or tribal work and domestic spaces, and the sexual frontier between Hispanics, Anglos, and Indians. This methodology permits Hurtado to define the Indian presence in his material. He evaluates evolving labor practices, varying patterns of subsistence, and the structures of marriages and families within Indian groups. He studies encounters between Anglo men and Indian women in relationships that ranged from marriage to concubinage to prostitution. Alterations in traditional Indian labor, practices of their subsistence economic patterns, and indigenous marriage practices decimated Indian populations as did a cycle of warfare that cost the lives of many warriors. Sexually transmitted diseases like syphilis further eroded native birth rates.

Despite the devastating changes confronting different tribal groups, each responded according to its own needs and cultural inclinations. This makes for a complex ethnohistoric mosaic, but Hurtado has clearly structured his narrative, using Indian labor as the theme around which to organize questions concerning demography, fluctuating family structures, Indian survival strategies, and their ultimate effects on the native populations. He argues that Indian labor was the key Indian resource in the California context, and that labor formed the basis of Hispanic, Native American, and Anglo-American interaction in California. Spanish labor patterns changed traditional Indian practices in Hispanic California. "The missions converted Indians to habits of industry as well as Catholic piety," and the missions with their Indian labor became the foundation of the California economy (p. 25).

Other Europeans copied and then modified the Spanish precedent. John Sutter at New Helvetia used Indian labor; indeed, Sutter depended upon Indian labor for fishing, hunting, construction, and agriculture. Harvest season saw him often using as many as 600 Indians, and his army employed 150 Indian infantrymen and 50 Indian horse soldiers. "In sum," Hurtado notes, "Indian labor created New Helvetia" (p. 50). Other Euro-Americans in California required Indian labor and they adapted variants of Sutter's model just as he had borrowed the Spanish example.

· Laboring for the missions or Euro-Americans meant that the Cal-

ifornia Indians adjusted to new circumstances that continually disrupted their traditional cultural fabric and economies. "Indian labor, therefore, defies simple characterization. It was a complex combination of slavery, peonage, and free labor, defined by white and Indian perceptions and needs." Hurtado notes, "Some Indians, especially Nisenans accommodated to Sutter by providing him with labor. Others like many Miwoks, adjusted differently to this new condition by raiding Sutter and resisting his influence" (p. 69). Different tribal responses in this fluid labor context inaugurated changes in the environmental base and the social foundation of native cultures. Hurtado's key question is what did Indians do to survive within this era of cataclysmic change, and he finds myriad native responses. "Nor were the reactions of native people identical or predictable." Hurtado explains, "Indians, as we shall see, tried to shape their futures and thus made their own histories" (p. 71). As the Indians actively made their own history they affected the history of the region.

Hurtado is clearly innovative in the questions he asks of census material, and *Indian Survival on the California Frontier* richly deserves the Ray A. Billington Award of the Organization of American Historians. The ethnohistorical context of California is somewhat unique, but Hurtado's methodology could be very suggestive for other cultural areas. At first glance, Cole's volume may seem more traditional in its methodological approach, but emphasis on Chiricahua intratribal and band dynamics should prompt ethnohistorians to look beneath the designation of "tribe" in other regions. *The Chiricahua Apache* and *Indian Survival on the California Frontier* not only put the "Indian" into Native American history, these books also underscore that Native American history cannot be considered apart from American history.